



Chris Heaton-Harris

Member of Parliament for Daventry
House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA
Tel: 020 7219 7048

February 2024

Dear Constituent,

Thank you for contacting me about protections for our historic landscapes.

I appreciate the depth of concern about reports of proposals to build a large solar farm on land that inspired *The Hobbit*.

Like you, I believe that the landscapes that inspired some of country's most treasured works of literature should be protected for future generations to enjoy. I agree that our planning system should protect important natural landscapes and heritage assets, and I would like to assure you that my ministerial colleagues are committed to ensuring it does just that.

While literary landscapes are not subject to a separate designation within the planning system, they are protected more generally through the National Planning Policy Framework. This sets out planning guidance for local authorities in England and makes clear that local planning authorities' planning policies should conserve and enhance the natural, built and historic environment, including landscapes.

The framework also states that planning policies should recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.

The Government is introducing changes to the planning system to incentivise more local authorities to adopt and update local plans, which provide a framework for local authorities to set out their vision for their area and a platform for local people to shape their surroundings.

Crucially, local plans can protect the important landscapes communities cherish and direct homes to the places local people prefer.

The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act increases the weight given to local plans when making decisions on applications, so that there must be strong reasons to override the plan. The legislation will also help to foster better environmental outcomes, with a new requirement to prepare Environmental Outcomes Reports to assess the potential environmental effects of relevant plans and major projects.

I believe that, together, these measures will help protect our beautiful countryside and landscapes for decades to come.

I would, however, be happy to convey your concerns to my ministerial colleagues.



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Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Chris'.

CHRIS HEATON-HARRIS MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR DAVENTRY