

PO10 Built Environment

Full version Whole District

OBJECT

The Leamington Society *supports* the fourth bullet point of PO10

“Protect, enhance and link the natural environment through policies to encourage appropriate design of the built environment and set out a framework for subsequent more detailed design guidance to ensure physical access for all groups.”

Specifically we would encourage WDC to put in place procedures to limit and reduce street clutter (A boards, unnecessary roadside signs etc.). Likewise, WDC should have the power to force the owners of homes or buildings to remove vegetation obstructing footpaths.

Our chief objection relates to material in **Appendix 3** (para 10.3):

We are concerned about the proposed development of so called “Garden Suburbs” (GS) on the edges of the District towns with a low density layout. The prospectus is full of green pictures captioned with a number of assertions about the alleged benefits of a GS. It also makes an unsupported claim to inherit the founding principles of such suburbs, for example Brentham Village (London Borough of Ealing).

The facts are:-

1. The anticipated WDC housing developments bear little or no relation to the social and economic principles invoked. The original GS movement was mutual and co-operative in its motivation, providing houses for rent. (Most of Brentham's houses have long since been sold off). The WDC plan is for developer led and financed, commercial development. It may or may not fit the bill, but it is not rooted in GS principles.

2. Many of the alleged benefits claimed for a GS owe nothing specific to the Garden layout, they are simply good architectural practice, applicable to all manner of new development, such as

page 6 “design of individual groups to create variety and character”

page 15 “turning a corner” - an architectural skill unrelated to a GS layout.

page 8 “Community buildings instil a strong sense of identity and community” which is a statement of the obvious - again unrelated to GS layout.

3. Many of the captions have no factual basis:

Page 5 “Green lined streets help create safe and convenient places to work and cycle.”

Page 14 “allows for bus and safe cycling” and

page 16 “Regular bus services to the district and town centre.”

(Bus provision is a big assumption – see PO14 comments)

Page 15 “Tree lined streets feel intimate”
(actually these are less intimate than narrow urban streets)

Page 17 “Cars form an orderly element in the street” (or, more usually, an ugly clutter)

A MISLEADING PROSPECTUS?

The most worrying feature is that the Prospectus is not only full of meaningless assertions, but also seriously misleading.

Page 2 opens with a challenge :-

“We need to find new ways of creating high quality and sustainable homes at a *price people can afford* (our italics)”.

There follow photos of expensive houses in Hampstead Garden Suburb, London and of Northumberland Road.

Sustainable Development Opportunities are cited :-

- Integrated water and other systems “may be possible”
- District heating “may be possible”.
Both are actually least likely in a low density suburb.
- “Car use and parking required” which is a negative feature (See our comments on traffic PO14).

SUSTAINABILITY

The prospectus is full of green pictures – row upon row of suburban lawns – but note that this is not countryside. It is suburbia, sprawling at low density and it is car dependent and extravagant of space. It is the least sustainable type of development – in terms of transport, civic amenities, utilities, and of land use. It is not only extravagant of resources, but also more expensive both in development and living costs.

The muddled thinking, which has perhaps led to these notions of a virtuous, sprawling green suburbia, is best illustrated in Para 7.14 in the HOUSING section.

“Many felt that increasing sprawl around existing towns would damage the rural setting of the towns follow the emerging garden suburbs principles in order to overcome this loss of rural character.”

In essence this is saying that we don't want our towns to sprawl into the countryside - so why not spread developments at low density so that they sprawl over a whole lot more of the countryside. We will call them garden suburbs and suggest that all this extra suburbia is really countryside.

It is argued that the GS layout is good because all the greenery encourages wildlife, food growing, soaks up rainfall, etc. But if the authors only paused to reflect it is obvious that more compact development would leave more acreage of real countryside, as well as scope for green wedges, allotments, etc. in between and at the margins of development.