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WDC PLANNING
Ref
Officer
27 JUL 2012
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CC CR PD MA
PRE GEN DIS

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Development Policy Manager  
 Development Services  
 Warwick District Council  
 Riverside House  
 Milverton Hill  
 Leamington Spa  
 CV32 5QH

26/07/12

Dear Sir / Madam,

I write to object to the Warwick District Council Preferred Options, New Local Plan. I thought the detail prepared and presented was thorough, informative and clear. But as a result I highlighted errors in decision making which strike me as proposing "policy based evidence" not proposing evidence based policy.

First, residents of Leamington Spa (indeed Warwickshire), take into account Green Belt when deciding where they can and aspire to live. To propose a plan which arbitrarily ignores current boundaries, redraws them and reconstructs the balance of Green Belt is poor planning (and negligent). The Green Belt is there for the opposite of your proposal - to protect urban sprawl. The current plan does not demonstrate evidence of "exceptional circumstances" necessary to build on Green Belt as required by the National Planning Policy Framework. Please answer why you have chosen to ignore land east of Europa Way and South of Heathcote towards Bishop Tachbrook which you previously identified as available, from the Preferred Options. Until sufficient and available sites outside the greenbelt have been used it is not valid to propose development on the greenbelt.

This leads to a second point of objection. Why does the council invent a need in the Preferred Options Plan of development on the greenbelt by generating housing requirement projections in excess of population and demand projections? It appears that the council is using the Preferred Options Plan as a trojan house for providing developers prime locations for development - regardless of necessity, as once the Local Plan is set it would be nearly impossible for developers to move into these valuable areas in the future if not included. Preferred Options based on Developer Preferences is not a Planning Policy, it's a political policy. Equally the proposal to develop "around" Leamington (many have used the term "spreading the pain" - I will too) is a political policy rather than respecting Planning laws and the National Planning Policy Framework.

Which brings into question the financial decisions of the plan. Why would the Preferred Options Plan generate a dependency / necessity on a £28m North Leamington relief road? You wouldn't need a relief road if you didn't plan to develop the Green Belt, and if you didn't need a relief road you wouldn't spend £28m of tax payers money unnecessarily. This is irresponsible, worse in the current climate when bins can only be emptied every 2 weeks.

I live in North Leamington, but equally have lived (and still own property) in South Leamington, I am a resident of Leamington Spa, not just Lillington Road - even I know, day to day that North Leamington infrastructure cannot support these proposals - even with a £28m relief road. The Local Council has ensured all supermarkets including a new Morrisons are in South Leamington / Emscote. Why generate another 2000+ households who need to traverse the town centre for their weekly shop? The train station, Motorway access, trading estates, industrial units are in South Leamington - why generate housing for 2000+ who need to traverse Leamington to access work, transport and services in these areas? Whilst I am interested in the Coventry development options for industry, there will be equally competitive plans from Coventry authorities to attract residents to South Coventry for these employment areas with which Leamington does not need to compete. You can argue that the plan will a new station in North Leamington, however the recent failure to open a station in a whole town without one (Kenilworth) makes this proposal a platitude to handle objections to the plan not a commitment to infrastructure. Finally, the sacrifice of even more Green Belt for the proposed Northern Relief Road is a further ingress into land which should not be scarred in the first place by the housing proposals.

Finally, the Local Plan proposals go against Planning Policies designed to protect the very aspects which make Leamington, Kenilworth, Warwick and many towns in the region unique, attractive and valuable in terms of quality of life and premium GDP generation. Planning policy to prevent urban sprawl must be taken into account. The planning authorities can act in a detailed enough way to prevent a Lillington Road neighbour developing on their property because it would negatively affect the unique sightline and character of the streetscape in the area - but the Local Plan proposes to blight the Green Belt, create urban sprawl and coalescence of the local towns of Leamington and Kenilworth and generate a traffic flow the infrastructure cannot hold - it seems hypocritical, and political rather than an evidence based plan respecting law and policy. All this whilst development opportunities outside the green belt, with better infrastructure capacity, transport options, access points and employment zones exist elsewhere and do not form part of the plan.

In summary, I object strongly as a resident of Leamington Spa, a taxpayer, a voter and an informed member of society to the Local Plan Preferred Options proposal. The Plan is flawed, creative and needs significant changes to stay within the policies set out at National Level, starting with the protection of the Green Belt. Once towns like Leamington Spa start to flout such policies and intents we set an example we cannot expect to put in reverse when future, more aggressive proposals come forward. The Council has a duty, empowered by the voter to protect Green Belt, protect taxpayer money and manage the uniqueness of the towns we live in until all viable alternatives can be evidenced as exhausted. The Local Plan Preferred Options is contradictory to this in too many respects and I demand it is revised.

Yours Faithfully

