

The Old Vicarage, Old Milverton Village, Leamington Spa, CV32 6SA

**WARWICK DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN 2012  
RESPONSE TO OPTIONS**

An era of austerity dictates that profligacy can no longer be tolerated. Spending constraints are a necessity with budgets at all levels. The following comments are submitted to address this particular aspect.

Significant development opportunities have been neglected in favour of a financially wasteful scheme. It has been nigh impossible to find the logic for the planning decisions made. Glossaries and Source References in the published material appear to have been 'lost in translation'; and public access to detailed Planning and Survey documents is limited.

No objective audit of Housing Need (quality and quantity), appears to have taken place. Equally lacking is an audit of Existing Development Opportunity, including canvassing and incentives for Windfall Sites offered up for consideration now or for release within the next 15 years. If demand for these new houses is a fiction, then they will blight the area and depress market values generally for the whole of the District. Added to which Employment Opportunities cannot be guaranteed for the budgeted influx of additional people.

In South Leamington, we have the near perfect basis for a 'Transport Hub', based on the existing Railway Station. Similarly, there is a 'Commercial Hub' already in existence immediately adjacent to the 'Transport Hub' extending to the Warwick Gates development, just begging to be extended and developed. So why have Planners shied away from exploiting these remarkable assets and advantages ?

The selection and use of large areas of Greenbelt land for development is irresponsible, being contrary to accepted National and Local policy. 'Very Exceptional Circumstances' have not been demonstrated, nor can they. Once this land has been developed it is lost to all for ever, depriving those living in the District, of a much loved green lung and offering opportunity for quiet, peaceful recreation in an attractive environment close to Leamington Spa. This unacceptable sense of impending loss is not confined to those living in the two parishes or those adjacent to them !

Large areas of the best local Agricultural Land, in a very sensitive area, have been selected for development regardless of the ultimate consequences, they include :

- a) The loss of land devoted to Food Production.
- b) Irreparable damage to the local ecosystem, comprising the watershed to this loop of the Avon.
- c) Reduced separation between Leamington Spa & Kenilworth and the loss of separate identity.
- d) The present attractive gateway to North Leamington Spa will be significantly diminished.

The Social, Economic & Environmental losses incurred by developing this land far outweigh the gains, particularly when it is perfectly clear that there are realistic and preferable alternative development options, - but see later.

It is generally acknowledged that World demand for food fast approaches the tipping point, where demand is set to exceed supply. This can only accelerate under the influence of Global Warming, Climate change and the detrimental effect on Weather Systems. This in turn introduces the circumstances leading to significant international conflict. It follows that UK food production must be stepped up and be geared towards greater self-sufficiency. This is the only way to avoid serious food shortages the like of which most cannot contemplate and which few UK residents, alive today, have experienced.

At least one thriving Farming Business will be seriously damaged and its viability put at risk. Further loss of Greenbelt land is threatened, as the planned development unfolds identifying sites for the supporting commercial development, new road systems and infill. This is only hinted at in the Local Plan, but it is an inevitable consequence. This further encroachment on Greenbelt land could destroy as much Greenbelt land again.

Two road developments are contemplated, both of which are unnecessary and will achieve little. The dual carriageway proposed for the A452, can only transfer congestion from one place to another, slightly more quickly. The proposed new Northern relief road (additional to the A46), can only realistically be used preferentially by those living in the houses comprising the proposed new development in Blackdown and South of Old Milverton Lane.

Although the planners state the cost of this exercise will fall to the developers, an ambiguity is apparent signifying there will be a cost over-and-above that met by the developers, which can only fall ultimately on Rate Payers; this element has not been quantified. The allowance for the Northern Relief road of £28m seems unduly small bearing in mind the problems faced in driving a road through a large area prone to flooding, together with the construction of a new bridge over the Avon and probably a new bridge over the Railway (or significant re-enforcement of the existing bridge). The additional unknown costs will inevitably fall to Rate Payers.

The most important financial/economic consideration is that despite the recently established comprehensive infrastructure South of Leamington; it is now proposed to develop North of Leamington which will involve the construction of new roads and a whole new infrastructure to cater specifically for the 1,980 houses intended. This is an extravagance which cannot be justified.

Infrastructure includes the major services, Water, Gas & Electricity, Sewers, Roads, Rail, Canal, Recreational & Faith facilities, Schools, Supermarkets, Restaurants, Public Houses, etc. All are successful and well established in South Leamington and in many cases lend themselves to expansion and development. How can it be sensible to duplicate much of this North of the town, only to exacerbate the existing traffic and parking congestion by encouraging unnecessary cross town interaction ?

Access to major road and public transport networks seems to have been largely ignored in deciding where to develop. Access to the M40 and Rail Network looms large in any sensible planning decision. The Mainline Rail Stations and Coach Services have seemingly been ignored. Housing and Workplaces (requiring large work forces) ought to have been considered for location within walking/cycling distance of Leamington, Warwick, Warwick Parkway and Hatton Railway Stations. All this emphasises the imperative to develop South, East and/or West of Leamington, even if solely for the one consideration of access.

It will not have escaped notice that Windfall Development opportunities within the towns and villages have been ignored. They appear to have been 'airbrushed' out of existence. There are significant areas of Whitefield & Brownfield sites available. There are areas of prime re-development opportunity constantly offered up. The old Fire Station, the old Ford Foundry, redundant schools, the many empty shops constantly referred to in the local newspaper as a disgrace and a blight on local communities. Past Planning decisions in this and other towns have resulted in most town shopping centres becoming a ghost of a previous existence through the enabling of 'out of town shopping centres'. So why not re-populate town centres, at basement, ground and above ground level ? Flats over shops have long had an appeal for the young and those relying on public transport. This way of living is accepted as 'normal' in London and other major towns and cities.

If it is seen as particularly desirable to have the major part of the new development largely in one piece, for community identity, sharing infrastructure costs, services etc. The Prince Charles inspired 'Poundbury Development' urban extension to Dorchester offers a useful model. What is wrong with building a 'Royal Poundbury' style extension' to Royal Leamington Spa ?

There are two natural sites for such a development. One to the East, between Radford Semele and Cubbington; another to the West, between Warwick Parkway and Hatton Stations. Achieving this requires the application of objective contemporary problem solving for planning decisions fit for the longer term; and with the Environment, People & Communities, for once, given the consideration they deserve, rather than pandering to the wishes of Developers, Architects, Planners and Politicians who so rarely live in the houses they cause to be constructed for others to inhabit.

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