

OBJECTIONS TO THE PREFERRED OPTION IN THE LOCAL PLAN

1 Our objection is to the very substantial amount of development which is envisaged in the Green Belt area, notably in Blackdown (1,170 new houses) and in the area north of Milverton (810 new houses). This would have a very substantial and probably permanent effect on our local community, depriving forthcoming generations of the legacy benefits which older residents have enjoyed.

2 As is well known, section 9 of the National Planning Policy Framework of March 2012 emphasises the great importance which the Government attaches to Green Belts and the purposes which they serve (paras 79 and 80). It also states that, once established, Green Belt boundaries should be altered only in 'exceptional circumstances' (para 83). Further, local planning authorities 'should regard the construction of new building as inappropriate in Green Belt', except in certain specified circumstances listed in paragraph 89 (e.g. buildings for agriculture and forestry), which do not include the type of substantial encroachment on the Green Belt which the preferred option envisages.

3 The requirement of demonstrating 'exceptional circumstances' such as to justify encroachment on Green Belt land through a new local plan sets a high hurdle. At the very least, it envisages that all other alternatives have been carefully considered and found to be wanting as a means of achieving the overall goal. In our opinion, the lengthy full document written in support of the preferred option (all of which we have read) does not come close to demonstrating that the building of an annual average of 600 new houses in the period running up to 2029 can be achieved only by building on Green Belt land. In particular, there is little evidence that the target could not be achieved by building further houses in the south of Leamington with its relatively easy access to the motorway network. Indeed, several such areas (e.g. Heathcote) have been recognised by the Council as being suitable for development. Anecdotal 'evidence' suggests that it is believed that builders would not be interested in or able to deliver all of that which is claimed to be necessary within that area and time-frame. Obviously, such an untested belief would be insufficient to establish the 'exceptional circumstances' which must be present in order to justify the plan.

4 Our particular concern is with the proposal to build a combined total of almost 2,000 houses in the Blackdown area and the area north of Milverton in the period running from 2019 to 2024/29. To this one must add the full range of supporting buildings and associated works. However, our objection is of more general application. It is further enhanced by the increased road and parking infrastructure which would be needed to support the plan, some of which would also encroach on Green Belt land.

5 A further related concern is that the proposals in the preferred option may be expected to lead in the medium term to the merging together of Leamington and Kenilworth and the eventual loss of their separate and distinctive identities, This will be facilitated by the proposed building of a dual carriageway along the A 452 which would do little more than shift the current back up of traffic in rush hours from one roundabout to another and barely more than a mile further to the north. This seems an absurd waste of public money. The plan is, in our opinion, deeply and irredeemably flawed.

6 Please note that this submission is written jointly and separate forms are included.

