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

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

26th July 2012

Dear Sir,

I am writing to object to the proposed development of the Greenbelt land in Old Milverton and Blackdown contained in Warwick District Councils' Preferred Options for the New Local plan.

The Greenbelt land at Blackdown and Old Milverton fulfils all five objectives for Greenbelt, as laid out in the National Planning Policy Framework, to which Government attaches great importance. This should have been key to the Council's assessment of their proposals, yet appears to have been over-looked or ignored.

The maintenance of the existing greenbelt is essential, not only to prevent Urban Sprawl to the north of Leamington and the merging of the two distinct towns of Leamington and Kenilworth, but to prevent the destruction of the individuality and character of the hamlet of Old Milverton. This would be destroyed forever if the development of land at Old Milverton were to be allowed and a proposed relief road (budgeted cost 28 million pounds) driven along the route of Milverton Lane to the A46. I believe that, were such development to be allowed it would only be a matter of time before the suggested 'green wedge' to the west of the development would also receive planning permission and Old Milverton would be absorbed forever into Leamington.

The plan also fails to safeguard the countryside from encroachment. The land in question at Old Milverton is high value Grade 2 agricultural land in productive use. As food security becomes ever more important socially, environmentally and economically, it is folly to allow development of productive farmland in the greenbelt when other sites could be used.

The Greenbelt also helps to preserve the unique setting of Leamington, an historic Spa town of special character which has been preserved and nurtured until now. The preservation of Greenbelt also promotes innovative regeneration of derelict and other urban land within the existing developed areas.

The Government's National Planning Policy Framework requires there to be "very special circumstances" for development in the Greenbelt. It also requires the harm caused to the Greenbelt by the development to be outweighed by the benefit of the development. According to Warwick District Council the special circumstances are that there is nowhere else for the homes to be built.

However, in the "2009 Core Strategy" (the previous plan adopted by Warwick District Council) land south of Leamington (not in Greenbelt), was identified and is in fact still available, for development. The assessment performed by Warwick District Council shows that this land is easier to develop and already has a substantial amount of infrastructure (roads etc) to support the development, and the new residents who will live there. It is close to the M40 and there are existing employment opportunities South of Leamington as well as existing out of town shopping facilities and good access to the town centres.

Therefore, the previous plan (the 2009 Core Strategy) is direct evidence that there are alternative areas for development other than the Greenbelt and that the 'special circumstances' put forward by Warwick District Council are wrong.

Warwick District Council argues that land to the South of Leamington is 'less attractive' to developers as it may result in developers making less profit. This is not a 'very special circumstance' to permit unnecessary development in the Greenbelt.

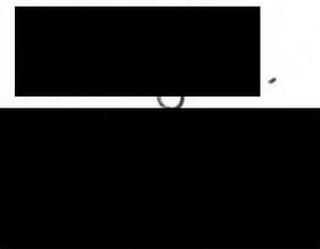
The Greenbelt land north of Leamington is of huge value to the local community. I have used the land recreationally myself for many years on a daily basis and I regularly meet many others using the land, watching and photographing the abundant and varied wildlife, walking, cycling, running, horse-riding and dog-walking.

I do not believe the re-drawing of Greenbelt boundaries is either necessary or appropriate for housing development. I believe the Council has failed to adequately demonstrate the validity of their planning assumptions, and that the number of new houses required is significantly overstated. Warwick District Council has added nearly 1400 homes to the number that it anticipates will be required so as to include a "buffer" in the forecasts. If this "buffer" is removed from the forecast there is no need to include the land at Old Milverton and Blackdown in the proposals.

In conclusion, the New Local Plan is ill-conceived, based on flawed housing requirement projections, and ignores the key principles of the National Planning Policy Framework in relation to the redefining of greenbelt boundaries. There are no exceptional circumstances which outweigh the irreversible harm which would be caused to the whole area, and in particular to ancient and distinct towns and hamlets, by allowing the alteration of Greenbelt boundaries in Old Milverton and Blackdown and by allowing development on this land.

I urge Warwick District council to reconsider the preferred options, omitting the use of Greenbelt land.

Yours faithfully,

A large black rectangular redaction box covers the signature and name of the sender.