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Development Policy Manager
Warwick District Council
Leamington Spa CV32 5QH

Dear Sir,

Local Plan – Preferred Options, WDC May 2012

I enclose my comments on the preferred format forms but I feel there are some matters regarding the proposals that do not comfortably fit within those formats.

Consultation Process.

There have been a number of consultations over the years including the one that was so recently part of the Regional Strategy. These appear to have been largely ignored in this document and while I accept that there is a need for this consultation because of changed circumstances it is disingenuous to ignore the views of the electorate in this way. I understand there was a preference for brownfield and non-greenbelt sites; e.g. with more presence in the north (Bagington) and south of the district around Bishop's Tachbrook etc. which is now watered down.

This lack of respect for respondents views may go some way to explain the poor response rates to the 'Stage 1' Consultation published in December 2011; 504 respondents in a population of 138,800 people cannot be greeted with enthusiasm. However what is more likely is that the means of communication for these matters, whilst technically 'correct' in format, does little to positively engage the public. It is one reason why when a local site is identified the temperature of the process increases! The hurried nature of many of the consultation meetings for this Stage demonstrates that it is not apathy on behalf of the public but mainly a lack of awareness.

The 'Preferred Option' document does not explore sufficiently what was considered and rejected by the Council and therefore it will inevitably lead to negative replies in the response to these proposals. To expect the public to make specific suggestions for alternatives is inimical because it is likely to enhance the sense that the respondents only interest is one of 'Nimbyism'.

Finally through the consultation meetings it would appear that the whole process is developer/landowner lead with scant regard to the very aims of "appropriate distribution" which should precede the seeking of sites and be seen as a purposeful planning process.

Yours sincerely



Part B – Commenting on the Preferred Options

Sheet 1 of 13

If you are commenting on multiple sections of the document you will need to complete a separate sheet for each representation.

Which document are you responding to? e.g. Preferred Options (Booklet) Preferred Options (Full Version)

Full Version

Which part of the document are you responding to? Preferred Option Box (PO1)

Setting the Scene and Summary

Paragraph number / Heading / Subheading (if relevant)

Section 4 – Spatial Portrait, Issues and Objectives. Particularly 4.11.7

Map (e.g. Preferred Development Sites – Whole District)

Please set out details of your objection or representation of support. If objecting, please set out what changes could be made to resolve your objection. (Use a separate sheet if necessary).

What is the nature of your representation?

Support Object

7 Make sure new developments are appropriately distributed across the district and designed and located to maintain and improve the quality of the built and natural environments, particularly historic areas and buildings, sensitive wildlife habitats and areas of high landscape value. In addition new developments should respect the integrity of existing settlements.

The Preferred Options do not meet the aim of 'appropriate distribution' because they largely concentrate on the urbanisation of the countryside failing to respect the green belt and the rural nature of the district. (NPPF Sec 9 para 80 "Green Belt serves five purposes: to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas &.... to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;")

This scheme cannot warrant encroachment on the green belt on such a massive scale as there are no exceptional circumstances to remove their 'permanence' (NPPF Sec 9 Paras 79 & 80)

"5.21. The SHLAA findings demonstrate that these two levels of growth could mathematically be accommodated within the District in strategically sustainable locations. However, examination of the capacity of the SHLAA sites, in terms of dwellings, shows that 87% of the homes would be located on greenfield sites and 43% within the Green Belt. In practice, therefore, the development of all potentially suitable sites would lead to a significant impact on the natural environment through the loss of large areas of open countryside, including land within the Green Belt."

There is non green belt land to the south of Warwick which could be developed but which has not been brought forward as a consideration. [See comments re Consultation Process].

If the Council is creating a new green belt then the NPPF has much to say about and this makes it clear that "New Green Belts should only be established in exceptional circumstances" (NPPF Sec 9 Para 82)

National Planning Policy Framework

9. Protecting Green Belt land

79. The Government attaches great importance to Green Belts. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.

80. Green Belt serves five purposes:

- to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

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81. Once Green Belts have been defined, local planning authorities should plan positively to enhance the beneficial use of the Green Belt, such as looking for opportunities to provide access; to provide opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation; to retain and enhance landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity; or to improve damaged and derelict land.

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If you are commenting on multiple sections of the document you will need to complete a separate sheet for each representation.

Which document are you responding to? e.g. Preferred Options (Booklet) Preferred Options (Full Version)	Full Version
Which part of the document are you responding to? Preferred Option Box (PO1)	PO1 – Preferred level of growth
Paragraph number / Heading / Subheading (if relevant)	Section 5
Map (e.g. Preferred Development Sites – Whole District)	
Please set out details of your objection or representation of support. If objecting, please set out what changes could be made to resolve your objection. (Use a separate sheet if necessary).	
What is the nature of your representation?	<input type="checkbox"/> Support <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Object

Growth predictions

The Scenarios for the level of growth used in the “Helping Shape the District” consultation exercise are just “scenarios”, giving a range of expectations but not defining the only options available. Warwick District has a history of ‘above average’ growth and provision but this should not set a precedent. Why is there a disregard of previous research and predictions? In the **WDC Five Year Housing Land Assessment, 2011-2016 [Report :August 2011]**, there is the following table:

A THE FIVE YEAR REQUIREMENT

Tables 1-3 show how the five year requirement is calculated.

Time Period	Dwellings per annum (maximum)
up to 2007	2,000
2007 - 2011	1,500
2011 - 2021	1,350

Time Period	Dwellings per annum (maximum)	Total Dwellings over Time Period (maximum)
2001 - 2007	526	3,156
2007 - 2011	395	1,580
2011 - 2021	355	3,550
Total 2001- 2011		4,736
Total 2001-2016		6,511
Total 2001-2021		8,286

	Dwellings
Requirement 2001-2016	6,511
Completions 2001-2011	5947
Balance 2011-2016	564
Five Year Requirement	564

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This shows clearly a computed requirement of 355 dwellings per annum in contrast to the 600 proposed currently (para 5.5). Is this due to a different methodology in which case why?

In fact in the 2007 Housing Monitoring Report (Page 18) there was projected an oversupply of 33.4% for the period 2001-2017 (approx 3000 dwellings).

TABLE 13 SUPPLY OF HOUSING 2001 – 2017		Dwells
Housing Requirement 2001-2017		6,866
A. Housing Supply (Completions & Commitments) 2001-2017:		
Completions 2001-2007		4,629
Housing Supply at April 2007 (Commitments only)		2,131
Total Supply		6,760
Under Supply		1.5%
B. Housing Supply (Completions, Commitments & Windfalls) 2001-2017:		
Completions 2001-2007		4,629
Housing Supply (Commitments at April 2007 and Potential Windfalls 2007-2017)		4,531
Total Supply 2001-2017		9,160
Over supply		33.4%

Demographics

We are clearly growing at an unprecedented rate Warwick 10.4% compared to 4.9% England and Wales etc "Source 2001 Census in Warwickshire <http://www.warwickshireobservatory.org.uk/>.

Key Findings

- The population of Warwickshire has increased by 6% in the last 20 years. This is compared to 1.6% regionally# and 4.9% in England and Wales.
- Growth has not been consistent across the County with Stratford-on-Avon and Warwick districts experiencing 10.7% and 9.4% increases respectively whilst North Warwickshire and Nuneaton and Bedworth have seen more modest change (3.1% and 4.6% respectively).
- Since 1981 Rugby's population has remained relatively unchanged (-0.1%)."

Regrettably the 2011 figures are not yet available but it is clear that the figure is still running ahead being 5.4% 2003-2008 compared with 3.7% county wide. (Warwickshire Observatory – District Profile 2009).

Suggestion

The question ought to be asked why can't we opt to grow more slowly? Restricting provision and choosing a lower target has to be a viable option. It was clearly the preference of respondents through the consultation yet has not been reflected in the choices.

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Which document are you responding to? e.g. Preferred Options (Booklet) Preferred Options (Full Version)

Full Version

Which part of the document are you responding to? Preferred Option Box (PO1)

PO3 – Broad Location of Growth

Paragraph number / Heading / Subheading (if relevant)

Map (e.g. Preferred Development Sites – Whole District)

Please set out details of your objection or representation of support. If objecting, please set out what changes could be made to resolve your objection. (Use a separate sheet if necessary).

What is the nature of your representation?

Support Object

The first Preferred Option, "The desire to concentrate growth within, and on the edge of, existing urban areas." is to ignore the character and nature of a rural district with extensive green belt areas.

This plan does not spread the required growth in an organic way and phased way so that it will avoid producing mono-cultural estates. One is reminded of the lyrics "And they're all made out of ticky tacky, And they all look just the same."!

The proposals identify many areas where the existing access routes are already inadequate, suffering excessive pressure and pollution.

All of the other Options can be met if the villages were given an extended target range for housing and ensuring that there are buffers to avoid coalescence.

The targets for the villages, admittedly at the expense of green belt, are woefully unambitious given that there has been a huge decline in rural infrastructure (shops, post offices, green transport and other facilities). Strangely although this is recognised in Para 7.12 it appears to be negated by Para 7.18!

A few bungalows for elderly downsizers and affordable homes for locals will not foster the sufficient growth to make for sustainable, local and green villages!

Neither is there much to encourage local employment opportunities. No recognition is given for the increase in folks who work at home using technology solutions to do so and to promote rural employment and marketing.

It requires a critical mass to sustain these infrastructures and this proposal will not deliver it. These communities are just that, evolved over years of interdependence, and not artificially fabricated by creating estates, even garden estates!

Para 7.19 concedes the strengths of focussing development outside of the green belt and it must be easier to provide mitigation for cross town traffic given the proposed Improvements to Transport Infrastructure in that part of the district. The expansion to provide strong villages would also apply in these non greenbelt areas and would mitigate certain travel problems.

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Which document are you responding to? e.g. Preferred Options (Booklet) Preferred Options (Full Version)

Full Version

Which part of the document are you responding to? Preferred Option Box (PO1)

PO4 – Distribution of Sites for Housing

Paragraph number / Heading / Subheading (if relevant)

Map (e.g. Preferred Development Sites – Whole District)

Please set out details of your objection or representation of support. If objecting, please set out what changes could be made to resolve your objection. (Use a separate sheet if necessary).

What is the nature of your representation?

Support Object

I have already made comments regarding the broad location of sites but there is one site which needs to be opposed for a number of good reasons. I am referring to the Loes Farm proposal for 180 houses.

Green Belt.

NPPF Para 80. says Green Belt serves five purposes:

- to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas; to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

Here is a remnant of green belt that acts in many ways to prevent encroachment and to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas. There are no exceptional circumstances to suggest that this ought to be removed from the green belt.

It is a natural Green Wedge and meets the constraints to development which are set out in PO15 –Green Infrastructure.

"Development Proposals

• Development will only be permitted which protects and enhances important green infrastructure assets and positively contributes to the character and quality of its **natural and historic environment** through good habitat/landscape design and management."

Both of these factors are already present without the need for enhancement.

It is not clear whether the whole area up to the A46 would be removed from the green belt but to do so would potentially then allow for further development. It is doubtful whether the farming activity would be viable after the construction of 180 houses (removal of 28.54 acres).

Historic site

The whole area is part of a major approach to the historic county town. The current arrangement screens the Woodloes Estate and together with the designated Garden Park / Garden of Special Historic Interest provides one of the last rural approaches to the town. *NPPF Para 80. says "to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns;"* also this report "Spatial Portrait, Issues and Objectives 4.11 BPP 7 " *Make sure new developments are appropriately distributed across the district and **designed and located to maintain and improve the quality of the built and natural environments, particularly historic areas and buildings, sensitive wildlife habitats and areas of high landscape value.** In addition new developments should respect the integrity of existing settlements. AND PO11 Historic Environment*

- "Protect the historic environment from inappropriate development, by Including policies which protect Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas, Historic Parks and Gardens, and locally designated Historic Assets.

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In previous documentation e.g The Strategic Land Housing Assessment June 2009, this has been access to this area has been recognised as 'constrained'

Amenity /Landscape value

The views from Woodloes Lane, across to Old Milverton, benefit from this elevated position. The trees, many of which are ancient, give a peerless framework to these views.

The lane is part of the designated 'Millennium Way' which is enjoyed by many visitors as well as locals who ride, cycle, walk and dog walk along its length.



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Bio diversity

NPPF 11. Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

109. The planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

- protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, geological conservation interests and soils;
- recognising the wider benefits of ecosystem services;
- minimising impacts on biodiversity and providing net gains in biodiversity where possible, contributing to the Government's commitment to halt the overall decline in biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures;
- preventing both new and existing development from contributing to or being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability; and
- remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.

Nearly all of these points apply to the proposed site, the residue of the field and adjoining properties.

In 2008 when the area was being considered for development a report was written examining many sites with regard to biodiversity; Warwickshire County Museum Habitat Biodiversity Assessment.

It is worth reproducing the whole of the conclusions:-

Recommendations The pLWS/SINC Woodloes Farm SP26Y2 should be retained and a buffer zone implemented to prevent direct or indirect impact on the site. The sections of woodland are of high biodiversity value and should be protected from development, including designation and implementation of a buffer zone of 35 to 50 metres width around each site. This is to prevent damage to the woodland site from direct impact of root damage, or from indirect issues including changes to site hydrology, compaction, and increased temperature from development. With mature trees in the woodland, it is important that a buffer zone is in place to address health & safety issues of future tree loss impacting on development properties. Some trees are specifically protected if covered by a local authority Tree Preservation Order or housing species protected under the 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act (e.g. all bats and some nesting birds). Section 91 of Planning Policy Statement 9 (ODPM, 2005) states that veteran and other substantial trees can be important for biodiversity conservation and local planning authorities should consider their nature conservation value and the use of TPOs to protect them, in land use change decisions. The veteran trees within this parcel (ID#3) should therefore be retained with a buffer zone of 50 metres implemented to prevent damage to the trees. It is recommended that the species rich hedgerow is retained with a buffer zone. The less biodiverse hedgerows should be replaced with new hedgerow habitat through and around any development, comprising suitable native species, as advised by Arden Character area guidelines. Please refer to the hedgerow regulations for advice on their legal protection and requirements within Planning and Legal Context. The mature trees within the parcel should be retained. Each tree should have a buffer zone to protect the tree's roots from development. It is important that a buffer zone is in place to address health & safety issues of future tree loss impacting on development properties. Please refer to the section on tree preservation and protection within Planning and Legal Context. The ponds should be retained with a buffer zone implemented to protect the biodiversity value of the ponds. The size of the buffer zone will depend upon the presence or absence of protected species. Map 22 has a high level of ecological significance due to the number of mature trees, old pasture grassland, water bodies and the species rich hedgerow. The grassland within this parcel is significant due to the presence of mature anthills and ridge and furrow. This grassland dominates the parcel and therefore the parcel is not favourable for development.

The findings are still valid and we have personal knowledge of the birds, butterflies, moths and other insects that are supported by this habitat and that it is a green corridor for many more.

Concerns have also been expressed locally about the potential of exacerbated local flooding problems to properties including Hinton's Nursery and adjacent properties as a result of development.

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Safety

Clarity about the nature of access to this site has been hard to come by, but the suggestion has been that it would be from Primrose Hill, approximately where the 'speed trap' pad is sited. This is by definition therefore a hazardous area with traffic coming over the blind brow just before Hathaway Drive at excessive speed. There are already problems with cars turning into Woodloes Avenue North and the proximity of two roads would, without serious mitigation, exacerbate this.

Safety for pedestrians or cyclists walking/cycling from the proposed site is also poor with little current access except for cutting through near Woodloes Avenue North and Elliott Close. It is highly unlikely given current preferences by parents to drive their children to school for safety and convenience reasons that the walking/cycling options will be attractive from this more distant location.

The Coventry Road also has a bad track record especially with regard to the access to the Saxon Mill and it is assumed that this would be a wholly inappropriate access point.

Infrastructure

It is impossible to gauge whether there is sufficient capacity in schools, doctor's surgeries, without serious infrastructure costs. There are no proposals for local employment that relate to this add on to the Woodloes Park development.

NPPF 38. For larger scale residential developments in particular, planning policies should promote a mix of uses in order to provide opportunities to undertake day-to-day activities including work on site. Where practical, particularly within large-scale developments, key facilities such as primary schools and local shops should be located within walking distance of most properties.

The Coventry Road, and especially the island servicing Greville Road and Primrose Hill, already have capacity issues which have been recognised in Transport Plans as well as air quality issues. There addition of additional vehicles from such a development will exacerbate the situation especially as there will be an increase of traffic on the estate roads to the school and local shops.

Community Infrastructure Levy

There are considerable costs to a developer for this site not only for the road and pedestrian access but also to provide an extension of the sound barrier along the A46 to mitigate the very high levels of traffic noise.

Alternative proposals

It is unlikely that development here would enhance the green infrastructure assets (see Green Infrastructure) and it really needs a more imaginative use of the area which would retain its essential nature and perhaps permit more public access e.g. a Peri-park with a fitness trail, constrained areas where children could learn to cycle, picnic areas and judicious planting of specimen trees to ensure the existing legacy into perpetuity. This might also be able to preserve the use of animals to manage the meadowland.

By so doing it could be managed to preserve much of the existing the habitat meeting the following objectives:-

Spatial Portrait, Issues and Objectives 4.11 BP9

Make sure new developments provide public and private open spaces where there is a choice of areas of shade, shelter and recreation which will benefit people and wildlife and provide flood storage and carbon management.

Spatial Portrait, Issues and Objectives 4.11 BP 10

Make sure that if buildings and spaces, particularly in historic areas, need to be adapted to meet the changing needs of the economy and to deal with environmental issues, they will be adapted in a sensitive way.

Spatial Portrait, Issues and Objectives 4.12 BP 14

Enable improvements to be made to the built and natural environments which will help to maintain and improve historic assets, improve habitats and their connectivity, help the public access and enjoy open spaces such as parks and allotments, reduce the risk of flooding, keep the effects of climate change (including the effects on habitats and wildlife) to a minimum, and support healthy lifestyles.

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Full Version

Which part of the document are you responding to? Preferred Option Box (PO1)

PO11 - Historic Environment

Paragraph number / Heading / Subheading (if relevant)

Map (e.g. Preferred Development Sites – Whole District)

Please set out details of your objection or representation of support. If objecting, please set out what changes could be made to resolve your objection. (Use a separate sheet if necessary).

What is the nature of your representation?

Support

Object

Broadly supportive of these measures but would again suggest that with respect to the County Town there should be a greater emphasis to ensure the road approaches respect these objectives. The Castle Park area and the Guy's Cliffe areas should be maintained and enhanced as they are the gateways to the historic town.

Detailed comments about the nature of the Guy's Cliffe / Loes Farm aspects are more fully explored in my submission re PO4 Distribution of sites for housing.

[Historic site

The whole area is part of a major approach to the historic county town. The current arrangement screens the Woodloes Estate and together with the designated Garden Park / Garden of Special Historic Interest provides one of the last rural approaches to the town. *NPPF Para 80. says "to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns;"* also this report "Spatial Portrait, Issues and Objectives 4.11 BPP 7 "Make sure new developments are appropriately distributed across the district and designed and located to maintain and improve the quality of the built and natural environments, particularly historic areas and buildings, sensitive wildlife habitats and areas of high landscape value. In addition new developments should respect the integrity of existing settlements. AND PO11 Historic Environment

- "Protect the historic environment from inappropriate development, by including policies which protect Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas, Historic Parks and Gardens, and locally designated Historic Assets.

In previous documentation e.g The Strategic Land Housing Assessment June 2009, this has been access to this area has been recognised as 'constrained']

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Which document are you responding to? e.g. Preferred Options (Booklet) Preferred Options (Full Version)

Full Version

Which part of the document are you responding to? Preferred Option Box (PO1)

PO14 - Transport

Paragraph number / Heading / Subheading (if relevant)

Map (e.g. Preferred Development Sites – Whole District)

Please set out details of your objection or representation of support. If objecting, please set out what changes could be made to resolve your objection. (Use a separate sheet if necessary).

What is the nature of your representation?

Support

Object

Broadly in support of these objectives but would emphasise that if my suggestions for enlarged villages to preserve the existing community were implemented then PO14 **Preferred Option: Rural Transport** might be extended as a result of increased demand.

Our Preferred Option is to support a choice of effective and affordable transport options for people who live in rural areas by locating new development in villages with an existing bus service (See Housing – section 7 - for details of which villages this applies to)

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Which document are you responding to? e.g. Preferred Options (Booklet) Preferred Options (Full Version)

Full Version

Which part of the document are you responding to? Preferred Option Box (PO1)

PO 15 – Green Infrastructure

Paragraph number / Heading / Subheading (if relevant)

Map (e.g. Preferred Development Sites – Whole District)

Please set out details of your objection or representation of support. If objecting, please set out what changes could be made to resolve your objection. (Use a separate sheet if necessary).

What is the nature of your representation?

Support

Object

Generally supportive of these measures but as I have already registered in PO4 I have concerns for the local area.

PO 15 Green Wedges

• The Council will identify and protect a network of green wedges important for their ecological, landscape and/or access functions in the setting of differing urban areas and urban rural fringe. It is intended that this approach will revise and replace the existing policy of Areas of Restraint in the Local Plan 1996 – 2011 (see Map 6).

Therefore in respect of Loes Farm it is a natural Green Wedge which deserves protection because this is an important area having three outstanding environments; historic, landscape and ecological.

It also meets the constraints to development which are set out in PO15 –Green Infrastructure.

"Development Proposals

• Development will only be permitted which protects and enhances important green infrastructure assets and positively contributes to the character and quality of its natural and historic environment through good habitat/landscape design and management."

It is unlikely that development here would enhance the green infrastructure assets and it really needs a more imaginative use of the area which would retain its essential nature and perhaps permit more public access e.g. a Peri-park with a fitness trail, constrained areas where children could learn to cycle, picnic areas and judicious planting of specimen trees to ensure the existing legacy into perpetuity. This might also be able to preserve the use of animals to manage the meadowland.

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