

Options for Future Urban Expansion in Warwick District Considerations for Sustainable Landscape Planning 2014 Addendum



Appendix B

Review of two representation sites:

- 1. Land off Warwick Road, Kenilworth.**
- 2. Proposed southern extension to Red House
Farm allocation, Lillington.**

4. **Land off Warwick Road, Kenilworth.**

- 4.1.1 The landscape around the south-east edge of Kenilworth is located within the West Midlands Green Belt and was therefore included in the original JGBS study as areas K6 and K7 – where the northern half of the ‘Land off Warwick Road’ representation site lies within K6. Land further south towards Cattle Brook (now partly promoted for a new Rugby Club facility) was not covered by the original study area.

JGBS Study Findings – 2008:

Study Area Description	Area K6. An arbitrarily defined area on the southern edge of Kenilworth lying between the A46 at the east end and the historic Rouncil Lane in the west end. A south facing aspect as the topography drops down to <i>Cattle Brook</i> – a tributary of the Avon.
Landscape Character	K6 lies within the <i>Arden</i> landscape character area and <i>Arden Parklands</i> character type.
Visual Issues	Trees and hedgerows provide some visual enclosure. Some longer views possible to the south and Leek Wootton.
Historic and Cultural Issues	No historical data established. Manor of Woodcote bought by Henry Wise, Royal Gardener, in 1709. Bullimore Wood at east end is ancient woodland whilst the field pattern at the western end, near ‘Little Woodcote’, is indicative of ancient origins. Rail corridor to Leamington. No footpaths shown on OS data.
Ecological Features	Woodland, hedgerow, pasture.
Landscape Condition	Some large scale agriculture. Opportunities for improvement to hedgerows.
Conclusion	The urban boundary includes a school, playing fields and allotment gardens that help form a reasonable transition to the countryside. Residential boundaries seem well established, although there may be some opportunities for minor infill. This area appears to be an important strategic gap between Kenilworth and Leek Wootton. We recommend K6 is retained within the Green Belt.

- 4.1.2 The site was not included in the WDC 2012 SHLAA.

4.2.0 **2014 Review:**

4.2.1 General: Richborough Estates are promoting residential development on agricultural land south of Kenilworth, east of Warwick Road and immediately to the south and east of Kenilworth Cricket Club. The site extends to an area of around 8 Ha including green infrastructure provision. In addition the representation promotes the development of a new site for the Kenilworth Rugby Club on agricultural land to the east and south of the housing development – indicatively covering another 15 Ha.

4.2.2 The residential development is proposed within a disused paddock and two arable fields, where the second field is also partially proposed for the rugby club site. The Leamington/Kenilworth railway line passes through the site, so that a significant proportion of the proposed rugby club pitches would be located east of the railway and accessed by an existing bridge over the railway line. Access to the housing site is shown from Warwick Road near Wootton Grange Farm, and for the rugby club a separate access is shown some 200m further south on Warwick Road.

4.2.3 Existing Landscape: Much of the proposed housing site is essentially flat and lies at around 83m AOD – although topography drops away a few metres towards the southern boundary. To the north the site is defined by post war residential development (Newey Drive, Swift Close) and the Cricket Club. The eastern section of the site adjacent the Cricket Club is the disused paddock. To the east the site is defined by the railway line and scrubby woodland on the embankment and along the field boundary. The railway is in cutting at this section. To the west the boundary with Warwick Road is defined by an overgrown ‘hedge’ of vegetation including trees. The residential development covers one existing arable field and extends into a second to the south – where presently a field boundary defined by a mixed native ‘shelterbelt’ (birch, ash, cherry, poplar, dogwood, holly, hazel to 8-10m

tall), separates the two. The shelterbelt and an adjacent veteran oak tree is shown retained in the representation concept plan. A field pond shown on OS data appears to have been filled in and there has also been some field agglomeration and hedge loss to the south. The western boundary with Warwick Road further to the south (at the proposed access to the rugby club) includes a significant change in level and a long established roadside bank with veteran oaks and other mature vegetation. The southern field falls away towards Cattle Brook and there is one low, predominantly hawthorn boundary hedge shown retained in the concept plan. A copse (which includes a significant change in level and a pond) is shown retained (between the '1st' and '2nd' pitches) in the concept plan. There are two existing stone bridges over the railway line – although only the southern one appears to be functional at present. A triangular arable field of approximately 9Ha is proposed for five senior and three junior rugby pitches. This area is enclosed by Bullimore Wood to the north and north-east, by the A46 road corridor to the south-east and by the railway line to the west (which towards the southern corner is partly on embankment). The topography falls away to the south by approximately 10 metres from around 80m AOD to 70m AOD. There are two notable pits within this eastern field, both apparently permanent waterbodies and both supporting a variety of mature trees (including veteran oaks).

4.2.4 Ecological / Historical: The arable land is anticipated to have limited ecological value, but the adjacent woodland, hedges and shelterbelts, pits and especially the veteran trees can be expected to have moderate or high ecological value. Bullimore Wood is an ancient woodland. It is understood the railway line opened in 1844. The stone bridges over the line are notable features. No other detailed historical information has been researched for the site, but aspects of this landscape are expected to be ancient in origin.

4.2.5 Potential Landscape and Visual Impacts: It is assumed that much of the vegetation around the site could be retained with a sensitive design approach and much of it is presently shown retained on the concept plan. The housing site is essentially flat and it is anticipated that physical landscape impacts could be minimised. For the rugby club development the topography at the site seems likely to require some extensive earthworks in order to create suitable flat terraces for pitches. The proposed access to the site would appear to require cutting into the bank on the Warwick Road frontage – with impacts to topography and vegetation and the likelihood of sight-line problems. Other sections of hedge would be lost and further study would be required to assess the impact of secondary development requirements (eg drainage provision and turf management adjacent trees and woodland). The housing development is expected to be visible from existing dwellings and the cricket club to the north and north-west, from positions at Leek Wootton to the south (refer also to Figure 3.2 in the main report) and from Warwick Road. The Rugby Club may additionally be visible from a short section of the A46 (northbound traffic). The size and height of the proposed rugby club building will have a bearing on visual impact – as will the inclusion of floodlighting which is often provided at sports clubs.

4.2.6 What if ? If this site was brought forward for development, the following issues would need to be carefully considered:

- How to ensure sustainable retention of the principle landscape features at the site. Further analysis of infrastructure requirements to ensure that the proposed scheme is deliverable as shown.
- Detailed design for housing layout and types. It is recommended that dwellings no taller than 2 storeys would be constructed at this site so as to minimise visual impacts from the south. The viability of the existing cricket club in a residential setting needs to be reviewed – including perhaps appropriate setback and boundary design requirements.
- An alternative access to the rugby club is recommended to avoid impacts to the bank and mature trees along the Warwick Road frontage.
- Further review and detailed design for the proposed rugby pitches would be required to show that they can be implemented without short or long-term impacts to existing landscape

features. Consideration of secondary impacts including surface water drainage requirements and potential impacts to adjacent water bodies (eg from fertilisers or turf-culture chemicals).

- Potential views of embankments for pitch terraces should be mitigated with woodland planting. A full implementation and long-term management plan for pitch areas including boundary vegetation would ideally be a condition of development.
- Flood lighting would ideally be avoided. Conditions on hours of use and design to minimise light spill would otherwise need to be agreed.
- Further review of the land allocation would be required to establish the most land-efficient arrangement of functional pitches and the optimum viability of remaining agricultural land parcels.

4.2.7 Potential development area ? Proposed development as illustrated in the representation concept plan would constitute a notable extension into the Green Belt and would be contrary to the functions of Green Belt. However the proposed residential portion of development has some potential to fit with the overall settlement pattern at Kenilworth, would appear to have few landscape constraints and presently proposes appropriate green infrastructure provision that in time could provide for a high quality residential development and a successful urban/rural interface. The proposed rugby club facilities are potentially more problematic in terms of landscape and visual impact – but there is potential that such impacts could be addressed with further design development and a sensitive approach to the development and operation of the site.

4.3.0 **Landscape Planning Issues:**

4.3.1 Infrastructure requirements: As noted, further studies will be required to confirm infrastructure requirements. These will include surface water management planning, confirming road access for the sites and energy services. Links to existing community facilities need to be considered. A condition review of the railway bridges may be required.

4.3.2 Cumulative impacts: Although the site is only 350m west of the development allocation site at Thickthorn, no intervisibility is anticipated due to the screening effect of Bullimore Wood. The site is approximately 400m east of the Kenilworth Sixth Form College site, where there is some potential for intervisibility. However intermediate topography and tree cover is likely to prevent such views. As noted in analysis for the school site, both sites will be visible from positions around Leek Wootton to the south. The rugby club development is likely to be partially visible from the A46 and together with the other development sites to the north, there is potential that perceptions of Kenilworth and its setting will be altered along a section of approximately 3km of the road.

4.3.3 Potential landscape and visual impacts: The magnitude of landscape change for the residential development is anticipated to be medium-low, but could be medium-high for the rugby club pending detailed design. The magnitude of visual change could be high – especially in views from the south and substantial mitigation works would be required and then successfully and appropriately managed for the long term. The impact for near neighbours to the north and north-west is likely to be medium given that they presently adjoin open countryside. However present outlooks appear to be restricted by existing topography and vegetation cover and it is not clear that any particularly important views will be affected.

4.4.0 **Conclusions:**

4.4.1 The representation site will intrude into Green Belt but landscape and visual impacts might be mitigated with appropriate design and commitment to long-term landscape enhancement.

Opportunities and Assets:

- Essentially flat site (for proposed residential development) with apparently viable road access and existing boundary vegetation assets providing enclosure and visual mitigation.
- Potential asset in the proximity / outlook to Cricket Club?
- Potential asset of proximity to major open space provision in shape of new Rugby Club (albeit private). (There would be some potential synergy and benefit to the public if peripheral areas of the rugby club were considered for public access round-walks, fitness trails or links to other areas, such as Bullimore Wood).
- Existing trees and mature boundary vegetation, southerly aspect and views over countryside.
- Reasonable proximity to Kenilworth town centre and community facilities.

Constraints and Challenges:

- Levels, proximity to mature landscape assets and access issues for proposed Rugby Club.
- Proximity to railway line and A46 (noise?).
- Potential unsustainable impacts to Cricket Club?
- Retaining landscape assets and landscape character in the Green Belt. Retaining sufficient space between Kenilworth/Leek Wootton to avoid perception of settlement coalescence.
- Retaining site biodiversity and wildlife corridors.
- Retaining viable parcels of agricultural land.

5. Land south of the Red House Farm Allocation, Lillington, Leamington Spa

5.1.1 This is located within the West Midlands Green Belt and was therefore included in the Joint Green Belt Study (JGBS - 2008). The site was part of a much larger land parcel at the eastern edge of Leamington.

JGBS Study Findings – 2008:

Study Area Description	WL10 is essentially the head of a small valley, which drains south to the River Leam. It is defined by the edge of urban Cubbington and Lillington and is defined by field boundaries to the south and Welsh Road to the south east. The large Thwaites engineering works is a notable feature in the locality.
Landscape Character	WL10 is within the <i>Dunsmore and Feldon</i> character area. The landscape character type is the <i>Feldon Plateau Fringe</i> – and is a very definable valley landscape with a tree lined valley bottom and permanent pasture. The setting is greatly influenced by the post war development of Lillington – which finishes at the ridge above the valley. The 14 floor Eden Court flats are particularly notable.
Visual Issues	An attractive valley setting – relatively open due to modern agriculture – but you cant get away from the Lillington backdrop. Visual connections with Offchurch to the south.
Historic and Cultural Issues	No historical information gathered. However Offchurch and Offchurch Bury are ancient settlements and there is a possible connection to the Saxon King Offa. A Saxon burial ground has been excavated near to the Church. Offchurch Bury was later a seat of the Earls of Aylesbury. WL10 and 11 both lie within the visual catchment of Offchurch. Footpaths including the Shakespeare Way long distance path.
Ecological Features	Watercourse, hedges and hedge trees, woodland, permanent pasture.
Landscape Condition	Reasonably good condition in valley – but the boundary of Lillington could be improved.
Conclusion	In general we feel that expansion of Leamington on this eastern boundary would be difficult to justify in landscape planning terms. However WL10, defined as it is by Lillington and Cubbington and on land that drops below the existing ridgeline settlement - could be quite visually contained. The lower valley will have flood risk constraints and ecological values – but it is conceivable that the upper slopes could be developed – and with sensitive design might enhance the existing situation. We recommend that this area is considered for further detailed study, but that the majority of it is retained within the Green Belt.

5.1.2 ‘Land at Red House Farm’ was included in the 2012 SHLAA (L23) and reviewed in the original *Considerations for Sustainable Landscape Planning* report (2012). The land proposed in this representation was previously recommended for retention within the Green Belt and it was a portion of WL10 to the north that was proposed for further review.

5.2.0 2014 Review:

5.2.1 General. Consultants have submitted a representation on behalf of HE Johnson to promote 17.5 Ha of land for development south of the current Red House Farm preferred development allocation. However the concept plans supporting the representation show both the allocated site and the land to the south as one development (which they calculate at 29Ha).

5.2.3 Existing Landscape: The proposed site comprises several paddocks presently used as grazing for the Red House Farm stables and riding school. The site straddles a concrete road (public right of way) that runs south from Lillington and down to the main Red House Farm and links with the Avon Way and footpath links to Offchurch and Newbold Comyn. Land at the edge of the existing settlement lies at just above 95m AOD and the main portion of the existing Red House Farm allocation site lies above 90m AOD. The Red House Farm stables are situated at the edge of a break of slope where land to the south falls away sharply to around 70m AOD. To the west of the road/footpath the representation site is essentially one large paddock defined by mainly hawthorn hedgerows, with

Newbold Comyn country park located adjacent the western boundary. To the east of the road the land is managed as three paddocks with more complicated topography defining a south-west facing 'bowl'. There are a number of hedges with hedge trees and a small scrub covered 'edge' which appears to have been a previous quarry or working near the road. The southern boundary of the representation site is defined by hedgerows, beyond which lies a flatter landscape of mixed arable, pasture and small woodlands stretching away towards Offchurch and Radford Semele.

5.2.4 Ecological / Historical: The representation has included an ecological appraisal which has concluded that the improved pasture and mainly hawthorn hedgerows have low ecological value. However the veteran trees should be considered as having moderate to high ecological value. Adjacent ecological assets include the Runghills woodland to the east (partly ancient woodland and a local wildlife site) and local nature reserves and extensive mixed habitats at Newbold Comyn country park to the south-west. Landscape condition appears fair but field agglomeration and hedge loss has probably taken place in the past. The representation has included a preliminary archaeological appraisal which has concluded that there is little evidence of historic heritage at the site. However the remaining field pattern is likely to be partly historic, supported by historic mapping in the archaeological report. Further ecological and historic review will be required.

5.2.5 Potential Landscape and Visual Impacts: In previous reviews of the Red House Farm site it was concluded that the flatter land between the farmstead and the existing settlement footprint at Lillington would be straightforward to develop, that appropriate design could enhance the urban/rural interface, and that landscape and visual impacts could be minimised if development didn't extend onto the steeper, south-facing slopes south of the farmstead. The representation masterplan now brings development beyond the identified 'break of slope' and consequently is likely to result in more significant landscape and visual impacts. The masterplan indicates principal existing trees and hedges retained – although ground modelling is likely to be required in order to bring development onto the sloping ground and therefore detailed design will have to show that such retention is practicable. Related development infrastructure requirements will need to be confirmed. Development on the south facing slopes is likely to be prominent in views from the south – from scattered dwellings and footpaths within 2km (including *Shakespeare's Avon Way* long distance footpath within 500m) and more distantly from properties at Offchurch, Radford Semele, the edge of Sydenham and the A425 corridor and high ground beyond. The development will be notable from the east (Welsh Road and adjacent dwellings) and from a footpath in Newbold Comyn country park near the western site boundary.

5.2.6 What if ? If this site was brought forward for development, the following issues would need to be carefully considered and confirmed:

- How would the likely landscape impacts be successfully mitigated. The representation masterplan proposes extensive woodland planting on the lower slopes of the development – approximately along the 75m contour. Above this planting development is proposed commencing somewhere between the 85m and 90m contour. It is likely that trees would need to be more than 20 metres tall to adequately screen or filter views of this development from visual receptors to the south - which is likely to require non-native species and a timeframe of perhaps more than 40 years.
- Further detailed design would be required to fully ascertain likely landscape impacts. The masterplan presently provides little indication of access provision to the outer areas of the development – but it is likely that road access will be needed to all dwellings and on a sloping site this is likely to require considerable ground modelling and engineering work.
- Acceptable building heights would need to be fixed. It has been previously envisaged that the Red House allocation site would be restricted to 2 storey housing at the outer edge of development – but that it could be taller towards the boundary with existing settlement. The representation promotes 30-35dph which may be difficult to achieve on a sloping site without going above 2 storey height.

- The representation masterplan appears to promote substantial public open space (more than 7Ha) at the southern edge of the site which could become a beneficial green infrastructure asset. However, given the proximity to Newbold Comyn country park and current financial constraints for local authorities, it would have to be clarified how such an area would be developed and maintained in the long-term. The landscape areas would be necessary to mitigate likely impacts of development on south-facing slopes, but may not represent 'good value for money' in terms of the additional development land provided beyond the existing allocation site.
- Further studies would be required to assess the viability of remaining agricultural land parcels. The land has been classified as Grade 3 and 4 due to underlying clays and the steep topography. In previously assessing the Red House Farm allocation site it has been assumed that the existing Red House Farm riding school site could remain viable and operable. The current representation appears to suggest the riding school operation would cease and the site redeveloped. Access and future use of remaining fields to the east would need to be clarified (especially as they appear to include substantial mitigation planting).

5.2.7 Potential development area ? Although the proposed southern extension to the Red House Farm allocation has been estimated at 17 Ha, the actual developable site may be as little as 5-6Ha as depicted on the representation masterplan. Expanding development onto the south-facing slopes undoubtedly introduces greater landscape and visual impacts, and it is suggested that the extent of these impacts cannot be fully assessed without further detailed design, a review of infrastructure requirements and civil engineering advice. If it is the case that the owners of the riding school do not wish to continue the business at this site, then it is possible that a minor expansion of the proposed Red House Farm allocation into the area presently occupied by the farmstead and stables might be achieved without significant impacts to the wider landscape setting. A minor flat ridge that runs south-east from the farmstead and is shown with housing in the representation masterplan may also have few development constraints. However development here would be prominent in views from both the south and east and would constitute an anomalous protrusion of the proposed settlement footprint into the surrounding landscape. It is difficult to see how this could be supported in landscape planning terms.

5.3.0 Landscape Planning Issues:

5.3.1 Infrastructure requirements: As noted, further studies will be required to confirm access, requirements, drainage and other service infrastructure. Proposed development towards the edge of the site is becoming more distant from existing community facilities and detailed review to ensure a 'walkable' development is achievable will be required.

5.3.2 Cumulative impacts: The site has been considered in relation to the Red House Farm preferred allocation site and the proposed 'Lillington extension' (NE of Red House Farm) – (refer to Figure 2.2 in the main report). From Cubbington and the north-east, views of development in a southern extension to the allocation site may be limited – (although this would depend on the height of buildings on the flat ridge south-east of the farmstead noted in 5.2.7 above). The development is likely to be visible from the east (Welsh Road and scattered dwellings) and to have cumulative impacts with the allocated site and the Lillington extension site. The site will be visible from the south and will result in cumulative impacts with the allocated site at Red House Farm – which would otherwise be likely to have minimal landscape and visual impacts assuming a sensitive approach to the southern boundary design. Any assessment of visual impact must be considered in the context of the existing tall flats at Lillington (Eden Court, Southorn Court and Ashton Court) which are prominent landmarks for several kilometres around Leamington.

5.3.3 There are preferred allocation sites at Cubbington (not likely to be intervisible with this site) and Radford Semele (possibly distantly intervisible with this site). The proposed allocation site at

Campion Hills, Leicester Street is not expected to be intervisible with this site – but both developments could be prominent additions to the landscape seen in succession by those using the footpath around the edge of Newbold Comyn. Development of the HS2 rail line corridor is located 2km to the east where it could be partially and distantly intervisible with the proposed development site.

5.3.4 Potential landscape and visual impacts: Landscape impacts are likely to be medium-high as it seems likely that there will need to be substantial ground modelling and engineering works to create appropriate building platforms on this sloping site. Further design review will be required to ascertain the viability of retaining trees and hedges where they exist. As noted in 5.2.6 above, even with the extensive landscape mitigation works proposed in the representation masterplan it is unlikely that development here could be adequately screened from the south for many years. For visual receptors in scattered dwellings to the south and on local footpaths including the *Avon Way* and the boundary footpath in Newbold Comyn, the magnitude of change in views is likely to be medium-high and the significance moderate to substantial. The magnitude of changes in views from visual receptors to the east might also be medium-high – especially as there will be potential cumulative impacts with the adjacent sites. However there will be more potential to mitigate potential views with the careful placement and design of buildings and the introduction of appropriate screen planting. A further detailed review of landscape and visual impacts would be required as plans develop.

5.4.0 Conclusions:

5.4.1 The previous studies considering the landscape setting of Lillington and the potential for development at Red House Farm have assumed that no development would be appropriate on steeper south and east facing slopes as it is likely to be visually prominent, with significant construction impacts and limited opportunities for meaningful mitigation. It seems most likely that these concerns would all be relevant for the proposed southerly expansion of the Red House Farm allocation site. The extensive green infrastructure proposed in the representation, whilst potentially providing a significant new public resource, may be difficult to balance/justify with the relative small addition of developable land that seems possible. It also seems unlikely to adequately mitigate landscape and visual impacts within an acceptable time frame. It is possible that if the small area occupied by the existing farmstead and stables was redeveloped, this could provide a small extension to the existing allocation site without significant landscape impacts and with more potential for successful mitigation within a reasonable period of time.

Opportunities and Assets:

- Small areas of flat land that might be relatively straightforward to develop.
- Potential to integrate with the existing allocation site.
- Existing trees and hedge boundaries that could benefit development if retained.
- Proximity to existing public open space, footpaths and countryside.

Constraints and Challenges:

- The sloping topography is anticipated to require ground modelling to enable development and to result in associated landscape and visual impacts.
- Further design development required to confirm all infrastructure requirements and associated impacts.
- Development of the south-facing slopes and a prominent small ridge of flat land south-east of the present farmstead are likely to result in significant landscape and visual impacts.
- To ensure that provision of green infrastructure is viable for the long term and that proposed landscape mitigation works will achieve their goals.
- To ensure that retained agricultural land parcels are viable.