

# THE WARWICK DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN

## OPENING STATEMENT BY WARWICK DISTRICT COUNCIL

- 1 There is an urgent need to adopt a Local Plan for Warwick.
- 2 The issue is that the district is a most attractive place in which to live and do business. The historic towns of Warwick, Royal Leamington Spa, Kenilworth and Whitnash are buoyant and vibrant. The district's wider economy is performing well, assisted in part by its close connection with the City of Coventry. The rural economy is strong and the wider countryside is generally in a good condition. The district has needs which must be met. But the quality of the district's environment magnifies the pressures to which those needs give rise.
- 3 Since the UK economy began to emerge from recession most pressure for development has been focused on the south of the district in and around the towns of Warwick, Whitnash and Leamington and some of the larger villages, such as Bishop's Tachbrook and Radford Semele. In large measure that reflects the constraint on development that is imposed by the Green Belt, which extends over much of the north of the district. It is also a function of this Council's positive and proactive approach to meeting its need for housing, business and other forms of development. At each stage in the preparation of the Local Plan the authority has sought to identify the land that is required to meet the whole of the district's objectively assessed need for all kinds of development rather than argue that the extent to which need should be met is constrained by environmental factors. Warwick has also worked closely with neighbouring authorities to shoulder an appropriate share of the need for new homes and jobs that will arise in Coventry over the Plan Period.

- 4 The Council has not stopped there. It understands that there is a need to boost significantly the supply of new homes and promote economic growth now. Therefore when it has received applications for planning permission in respect of land which is allocated in the submission draft version of the local plan, planning permission has generally been granted.
- 5 But there are limits to what can be achieved without a development plan in place.
- 6 The Framework intends that planning should be genuinely plan-led, empowering local people to shape their surroundings. Yet over the last 12 – 18 months several applications for substantial new housing development have been made in respect of land to the south of Warwick and Leamington and in the rural area in locations which the Council considers are unsustainable because of their environmental sensitivity. Without a plan and with challenges to the Council's position on 5 year supply of housing land, it is difficult for the Council to ensure that development is focused in the most sustainable locations. Further, the particular needs of Kenilworth and some of the growth villages cannot be met without releasing land from the Green Belt, which of course can only be done through the Local Plan. An effective mechanism is also required to ensure essential strategic infrastructure is secured and properly funded and coordinated.
- 7 The draft Plan indicates how the Council has sought to resolve those and other issues. And over the course of the next week or so the Council hopes to demonstrate that the work it has carried out is legally compliant and sound, thus clearing the way for an examination of its more detailed policies and proposals, with a view to it being adopted late 2015 or early in 2016.

8 This short opening is not the place to set out the detail of the Council's case on legality and soundness. The headlines are as follows:-

- (i) Under the duty to cooperate the Council has engaged constructively with other local authorities within and beyond the Coventry and Warwickshire Housing Market Area and Local Enterprise Partnership. That engagement has been highly structured, carefully focused and rigorous. It has enabled the Council to closely integrate housing and economic considerations. That work is fully evidenced. Viewed in the round, the duty under s.33A has been discharged diligently.
- (ii) The full objectively assessed need for market and affordable housing has been derived from the 2012-based SNPP and tested against the 2012-based SNHH projections. That indicates a need for 606 dpa. Having considered evidence regarding market signals and affordable housing in the round, the Council considers that there is no clear case for an uplift. It will also demonstrate that there is no need for any further uplift in the light of economic trends; that is not justified by economic forecasts, nor is it necessary in order to avoid unsustainable patterns of commuting.
- (iii) The Council recognises that Coventry City is unable to meet its objectively assessed need in full and has therefore planned for a housing requirement of 714 dpa that is substantially above the OAN as a way of providing for some of Coventry's needs. This additional "policy-on" uplift also enables a positive approach to the provision of affordable housing.
- (iv) The Council is confident that it is able to demonstrate a 5 year supply of deliverable land for housing. Planning permission has already been granted for several strategic sites. There is robust evidence to demonstrate allocated sites are

deliverable. The allowances that have been made for C2, student and windfall sites are properly evidenced and reasonable.

- 9 On that basis, when this part of the EIP has been completed the Council will invite you to conclude the Plan is legally compliant and that its key policies for the provision of housing are essentially sound.

DAVE BARBER  
Planning Policy Manager  
Warwick District Council