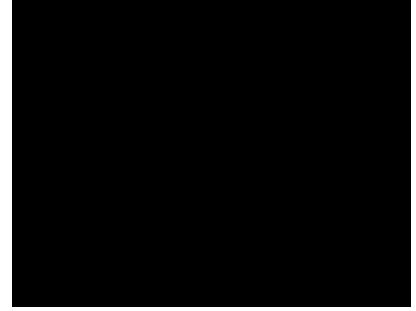


Cllr George R Illingworth



Ian Kemp,
16 Cross Furlong
Wychbold
Droitwich Spa
Worcestershire
WR9 7TA

23rd August 2016

WARWICK DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN POLICY DS16

Dear Ian

I refer specifically to Matter 6 – Sub-Regional Employment Site.

I write as an individual local councillor.

I made representation a couple of years objecting ago in response to the Draft Local Plan. That was representation 65411 and for convenience I have attached a copy. The gist of my argument was that the necessary procedure to justify removing this area from the Green Belt had not been followed and that there had been inadequate public consultation for it was a last minute change introduced at that final stage. I see no change in procedure or National Policy to alter that position and the simple answer to Question 14 remains No.

However since my submission there have been two significant events which are directly relevant and therefore I thought it necessary to update my submission and objection. Firstly Planning Application W/12/1143 “The Gateway” has ultimately been refused by the Secretary of State. This sought to allow massive speculative development across the entire site whilst acknowledging that it was Green Belt. At a second attempt it was approved by the Planning Committee of Warwick District Council and then understandably called in by the Secretary of State as it was contrary to National policies. At the subsequent Enquiry in 2013 I gave evidence and again I have attached my submission for convenience. It was this Enquiry which prompted the last minute change in the Publication Draft

Secondly Planning Application W/16/0239 “Whitley South” which sought more modest development only in the area to the West of the Airport was approved by the Planning Committee of Warwick District Council in the Spring of 2016 but has not yet been granted as the Section 106 agreement has not yet been signed. The deadline according to the WDC website is 14 September 2016 so by the time of the Enquiry the situation should be clear. This application was close to meeting my criteria in paragraph 10 of my 2013 Enquiry submission:

“10. Were the applicant’s argument to be accepted then no part of the green belt in the country would be safe from such a speculative application and indeed the whole protection given to green belts would be meaningless. It is a totally different situation from when a particular company wishes to develop a particular facility for a particular purpose in a particular place and can therefore envisage employing a particular number of people.”

as it was by Jaguar Land Rover for specific purposes in a location close to their existing facilities. There was, however, no condition requiring the majority of the site to be occupied by JLR or related companies, which I would have expected. I did not object to this application.

Since it has been found possible (subject to the S106) to grant this application whilst it was in the Green Belt so that “exceptional circumstances” must have existed and the Secretary of State did not call it in, I can see neither need nor justification for removing that area from the Green Belt retrospectively. Leaving it in would ensure that the high standards of design and landscape mitigation promised would be delivered.

The other area to the South East of the Airport is a quite separate matter. For issues of landscape, character and appearance and access it is an unsuitable area and is probably undeliverable because of access and remediation. There is no justification that I can see for speculatively removing that area from the Green Belt and certainly not for allocating it as a Sub-Regional Employment Site.

I maintain my objection to Policy DS16 which should be deleted. I note that as it is for sub-regional employment purposes the removal of this policy and site would not affect the employment allocations in the District and the overall soundness of the Local Plan.

I am willing to attend the Enquiry if you consider it helpful.

Yours faithfully

George Illingworth



The Planning Inspectorate
c/o Paul Bennett
4/02 Kite Wing
Temple Quay House
2 The Square
Temple Quay
BRISTOL
BS1 6PN

5th September 2013

COVENTRY GATEWAY

Your References:
NPCU/CONS/T3725/71165
NPCU/CONS/U4610/71513
NPCU/RTI/T3725/71295
Application No W/12/1143 Warwick District Council

Dear Sirs

1. I was the Chairman of the first WDC Planning Committee meeting on 19th December 2012 which did not determine the application but deferred for further information to clarify issues such as likely job formation and alternative sites. For that reason there is no input from me in the large collection of documentation concerning the application. At that meeting I spoke clearly against the application, giving, in my opinion, sound planning reasons. I (together with two other councillors who had spoken against the application) was removed from the Planning Committee at the AGM of the Council and therefore took no part in the subsequent meeting on 12th June 2013 which granted the application. Had I been on the committee at that second meeting I have no doubt that the further information supplied as requested would have confirmed and

strengthened my reasons for refusal. I write now as an individual local councillor.

2. A vast amount of documentation has been produced both by the applicant in support and by the various and numerous objectors, a number of whom have produced detailed reports from authoritative sources. However it seems to me that much of the application detail and indeed some of the objection detail are not relevant to the actual determination of the application. For example the applicant claims that much of the proposed mitigation justifies the application whereas all it actually does is make the development more acceptable were it to be justified.
3. There is common ground in accepting that the proposed development, with the exception of certain minor aspects, is inappropriate development in the green belt.¹ In consequence the presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply and development should be restricted and only approved in very special circumstances.² I am not sure that everyone involved at the first planning meeting fully understood this.
4. The green belt in question is around the West Midlands conurbation and separates it from the more rural shire county towns. At its narrowest point, less than 4 miles away from the application site, just north of Kenilworth it is only 600m wide and therefore this is generally a sensitive area where any erosion of the green belt is to be avoided. At the application site the green belt actually performs all five defined purposes and has proved effective for around 50 years.³ The application site straddles the boundary between the City of Coventry and Warwickshire and also the boundary within Warwickshire between Warwick District and Rugby Borough is on the Eastern boundary. On the ground the administrative boundary follows a complicated and illogical route so that where that boundary forms the existing limit of development there is often

¹ NPPF Paragraph 87

² NPPF Paragraph 14 footnote 9

³ NPPF Paragraph 80

no physical feature to form a natural boundary to the green belt. It should also be noted that there is much green belt within the City boundary both in this particular area and elsewhere.

5. A relatively small proportion of the site is previously developed land, having been a tank testing track with associated buildings currently used for other industrial purposes. There are also some minor developments on the western edge of the airfield. Significant areas are contaminated land being long-abandoned sewage works and tip sites, but these in no way compromise the openness of the green belt and indeed provide a habitat for wildlife. Much of the area is agricultural and consists of two working farms which would be closed down by the development.
6. The determination of the application therefore depends on deciding whether the scheme provides the very special circumstances adequate to outweigh the substantial harm to the green belt arising from the erection of a large number of very large buildings and associated roadways and other infrastructure. There are in addition secondary aspects such as the effect on the setting of the scheduled ancient monument of the Roman Lunt Fort in Baginton and the conservation areas and villages of Baginton and Bubbenhall, and also the fact that within the application there are non-industrial buildings such as car-showrooms and hotels.
7. The mainstay of the application is the creation of jobs. Initially a figure of 14,000 was bandied about, but this turned out to include 4,000 jobs on the Whitley site in Coventry for which planning permission has already been granted, and was therefore double counting. The figure of 10,000 still appeared extremely optimistic and was one reason for the request for extra information. The later report reduced the most optimistic potential employment figure to around 8,000 assuming the site

to be fully developed and occupied. Of these only just over 6,000 would be new jobs.⁴

8. However this is a purely speculative venture. There is no guarantee or even forecast that these jobs will be created within any foreseeable horizon. All that has been done is to calculate the capacity of the proposed buildings, using the notional layout, to employ people at the generally accepted densities for the types of employment envisaged. As someone said you could build a cathedral seating 3,000 but that would not ensure a full congregation each Sunday. Furthermore there is no obvious link between uses on the different areas of the total site and with the actual site itself, and no obvious link to the airport so the same buildings and operations could be dispersed on to several separate and unrelated sites.
9. In order to provide the very special circumstances needed to justify the use of this particular green belt area I believe it is necessary to show not only that no alternative exists in any previously identified employment areas but also that no reasonable alternative exists anywhere in similar green field or green belt such that this particular area is the only choice. Clearly jobs numbers, however large, based as these are simply on the scale of the development cannot do this as they are equally applicable in any location.
10. Were the applicant's argument to be accepted then no part of the green belt in the country would be safe from such a speculative application and indeed the whole protection given to green belts would be meaningless. It is a totally different situation from when a particular company wishes to develop a particular facility for a particular purpose in a particular place and can therefore envisage employing a particular number of people.

⁴ G L Hearn Report

11. Both the draft core strategies for Coventry City and Warwick District indicated that there was no current shortage of employment land. Indeed within Coventry City a number of large industrial sites have recently been developed for housing and the use of green belt has been avoided. Indeed similar development on brownfield land within Coventry has been refused because of green belt considerations. In Warwick District there are proposals to utilise some surplus employment land for housing if there is employment in the green belt, but it would make more sense to build these houses in the green belt if it could be justified and retain identified employment land for employment.
12. A number of existing vacant identified sites have been examined and have been shown to be capable of taking much of the proposed development, which being unlinked could be successfully dispersed to several separate locations. Most of these sites have better road connections and do not suffer from contamination so will be more likely to be developed in preference because they will be economically more attractive. The sluggish rate currently on some of these sites is more likely to be indicative of market conditions rather than location. There appears to have been no investigation of alternative sites in green field or green belt locations in either the County or the City.
13. At the time of the first consideration of the application there was only a vague mention of the possible Gateway development in the Warwick District draft core strategy and Local Plan. This is not surprising as there was already adequate employment land identified and the sub-regional employment needs were seen to be within the Coventry and Nuneaton regeneration zone once identified in the Regional Spatial Strategy. The likely need for some additional employment land, particularly for logistic parks was within the evidence for the now-defunct RSS, but even there no requirement was envisaged in this particular area south of

Coventry and the figures appear to have been a projection rather than a forecast.

14. In the last consulted version of the new Local Plan the specific scheme was upgraded to a sub-regional level, whilst retaining it in the green belt, in an attempt to justify it. I am not aware of any evidence of consultation with and agreement from other LPAs in the sub-region. I raised an objection to that proposal as follows:

Following the decision to call in the Gateway application what is the status of Section 5.5 in the Revised Development Strategy in the Draft Local Plan? This makes specific reference to the Gateway, though does state that the planning application has yet to be determined.

It seems to me that it is no purpose of the Local Plan to anticipate or favour specific applications and particularly speculative commercial ones in the Green Belt. If it is intended that land in the Green Belt should be reallocated for employment or similar uses then it should logically be proposed for removal from the Green Belt and re-designation in the same way as has been done for housing in Kenilworth and Lillington. This will require detailed justification in the same way with a detailed map showing the exact area involved. Leaving the area in the Green Belt until completion would mean applying Green Belt policies which would ultimately be irrelevant and indicates a lack of conviction. If removal cannot be justified at the start then the site must be unsuitable and to consider it as a strategic sub-regional site makes no sense at all.

I therefore OBJECT to Section 5.5 in total and RD8 in particular.

14a Of course that paragraph has been overtaken by the Publication Draft agreed last week.

15. One of the aspects of this location which makes it particularly unsuitable is the poor road access. From the

residential areas in the south such as Warwick and Leamington there are only minor country roads, and it is equally awkward to approach from other directions through the village of Baginton. A complicated new system of roads and traffic-light controlled junctions has therefore had to be proposed with a new junction and bridge on the A45, a new route across the airfield requiring buildings to be re-sited and a sunken roadway at the end of the runway. It would be much more logical to access directly via Toll Bar end and Siskin Drive. Perhaps that is the ultimate intention.

16. This road development is cited as a benefit of the scheme. In fact it is no benefit as it is entirely required to enable the scheme to function and without the development would be totally unnecessary. This has been clearly demonstrated by the recent decision of Coventry City Council to progress with the improved access to Whitley site which was quite misleadingly included as an essential part of and benefit of the whole Gateway concept. Other local improvements are planning gains which are independent of the actual location.
17. I will not comment in any detail about the effects on the Conservation Areas and the Scheduled Ancient monument as these are to me totally overshadowed by the major policy issue.

I hope that these various thoughts are helpful

Yours faithfully

George Illingworth

Response 65411 to Publication Draft April 2014

From George Illingworth

In paragraph 2.81 it is proposed to include "Land in the vicinity of Coventry Airport (sub-regional employment site)" among the areas to be removed from the Green Belt. It is national planning policy that changes to the Green Belt can only be made in exceptional circumstances through the Local Plan process involving public consultation and robust examination. On this particular change there has been no public consultation. Indeed the exact opposite has happened. In the previous Revised Development Strategy of June 2013 it was logically argued with some conviction that the area should remain in the Green Belt despite being a possible site for industrial development. The public were therefore reassured that should the very special circumstances to enable development at that site be justified it would require standards of design and mitigation appropriate to the unusual circumstances of developing in the Green Belt.

It was therefore a complete surprise and the exact opposite of the expected policy following the previous stages of consultation in the preparation of the Plan when, without any obvious explanation, the policy was completely reversed in the Publication Draft.

It has been made very clear in the Guidance Notes to this Consultation on the Publication Draft that comments can only be made on the legal requirements and soundness and therefore this consultation cannot itself constitute the public consultation required on the the idea of removal of this particular area from the Green Belt.

However further comments will be made in the evidence to the Enquiry as that will be then be relevant.

Change proposed

In paragraph 2.81 delete the bullet point "Land in the vicinity of Coventry Airport (sub-regional employment site)" and remove the areas from the relevant Policies Maps 1 and 8 reverting them to the established Green Belt