

## Matter 7A Written Statement – H44 North of Milverton – Martin Davis (5761)

29 August 2016

Dear Mr Ward,

### **Objections to the Proposed Erosion of the Greenbelt North Leamington Spa**

I am writing in connection with the revised outline district plan and in particular the proposals to build on the Green Belt land in the North Leamington and Old Milverton area.

#### **Preserving the Greenbelt**

Although I would not be so dogmatic as to oppose the loss of greenbelt land for residential and commercial purposes in absolutely any context this should only be undertaken in *exceptional* circumstances, as the National Framework requires. Emphatically these proposals do not demonstrate this.

The Green Belt in North Leamington is of particular importance both in preserving the separate characters of Leamington and Kenilworth and in enabling leisure pursuits such as walking, including dog walking, running and cycling for local residents. There is only a limited open publicly accessible space in this part of Leamington..

- These proposals will very significantly accelerate a drift towards urban sprawl and is therefore in contravention of the principles of the National Planning Framework. This rejects proposals urban sprawl and certainly is not justified by any exceptional circumstances. Moreover it was as relatively recent as 2009 in the core strategy that this area was stated in the district plan to be greenbelt which it was vital to preserve.. This proposal therefore goes against the whole principle of the Green Belt as developed since the 1940s.
- Old Milverton is the last hamlet between Leamington and Kenilworth and the green belt in this area has been particularly effective in preventing the merger of Leamington with Kenilworth leading to an urban sprawl which would run from Kenilworth right through to Warwick
- some of the proposals verge on the bizarre, Park and Ride schemes can work in exceptional circumstances, for example Oxford, which I have used ,where there are very great visitor pressures of visitors as well as commuters. But this scheme is supported by a regular timetabled bus service, for which there is sufficient demand, which takes people from the car parks to Oxford centre.
- The proposals will lead to increased traffic near to the line of the A 452 and A46 which will simply further accelerate the erosion of the Green Belt between Leamington and Kenilworth, in addition to the new housing.. It would also destroy the surviving rural character of Old Milverton. This would over a relatively short time lead to Leamington, Old Milverton and Blackdown joining up with Kenilworth a very large conurbation

- Nor does the proposal address the key issue which is the movement of people from North Leamington to work in the major industrial estates all on the south side of Leamington. Major development of the northern side of Leamington would in fact worsen traffic pressure particularly at peak hours which flow through Leamington from north to south and would increase pollution and reduce safety in the central area.
- We already have Leamington and Warwick running into each other with all the attendant traffic problems, deriving from a time before proper planning was in place. With hindsight this ought to have been avoided. With future sight we must not let this happen in north and central Leamington.

- **Other Possible Housing Development**

How much extra housing is really required depends upon assumptions and projections based upon census and other data. And the history of demographic projection is not a happy one. In the current difficult economic climate, likely to be sustained over a long period, it is very difficult to anticipate what the demand will be but surely unlikely to equal the recent past. And if part of the argument is to meet Coventry's housing needs it is surely sensible to locate very near to Coventry, to minimise commuting pressures. There are alternative sites closer to Coventry to cope with whatever the city's housing needs really are or may be.

However there is surely a powerful case for basing what development is needed in areas of South Leamington, identified by Warwick District Council previously for possible development and which is not in the green belt.

- Given the extensive open character of the countryside to the south there is much less danger of urban sprawl
- In terms of commuting and development many of the major industrial centres and attendant employment opportunities are very much in South Leamington. The value of allocating residential development there is that it would reduce commuting pressures, given its proximity to an M40 access point. In this context new housing in North Leamington is thoroughly perverse since commuters wishing to access work in South Leamington or to access the M40 for work further afield would have to traverse the central area of Leamington. This would increase pollution and lead at peak times to traffic gridlock in the central area of Leamington..

- **The Leamington Community**

It is very important to stress that this is not simply a matter of people in North Leamington preferring development in South Leamington and vice versa. The increased traffic flows through the central area which development in the north – at least on the scale proposed – would affect *all* Leamington residents and detract from the amenity of all residents. It would also greatly reduce the leisure opportunities available to some Warwick and Leamington residents coming into the Old Milverton area..

Appreciating the pressure on the district council's local plan there may be scope for some modest infilling development in North Leamington which would not threaten the erosion of the Green Belt in any significant way. It is the *scale* of the proposed development in north Leamington and the associated infrastructure needs which are so significant. This will send us on the high road to the merging of the Leamington and Kenilworth areas with further degradation of local leisure amenities and wildlife.

### **Motivation**

I would stress that my objection is based not on personal interest but on a wider community interest and a sense of trusteeship for the future. Indeed from a personal viewpoint the impact upon house values, which are not part of the planning criteria, would almost certainly benefit me as the owner of house with a large garden. The reduction of accessible *public* space nearby would certainly raise the value of properties with substantial *private* space. So if I was thinking of my own personal interest I would not object at all to these planning proposals. But in opposing this development I take a wider community based view. Any decision to erode the Green Belt in North Leamington now would inevitably lead to its disappearance.

Yours sincerely,

Martin Davis