

Matter 7A Written Statement – H44 North of Milverton – Michael Rayner (14059)

Dear Mr Ward

I am writing to object, in the strongest possible terms, to the proposed development of land in Old Milverton that would allow the building of 1,350 houses on greenbelt land. My objection to this proposal stems primarily from the fact that Warwick District Council has failed to demonstrate that there are exceptional circumstances that would justify the release of this land from the greenbelt.

The appropriate sequence for identifying sites for development should look at the greenbelt as a last resort and a substantial part of the site is to be “held in reserve” to meet the District’s future housing need. There are alternative sites, outside the greenbelt, that should be used in preference to the land North of Milverton. Further any development north of Leamington can only be achieved by using more of the greenbelt.

The proposed site is also unsuitable to meet Coventry’s housing needs, as proposed by the District Council. The site is nine miles from Coventry City centre, has poor public transport links to Coventry, which would encourage increased commuting by car and cause further congestion on already over crowded roads – so hardly a sustainable development. In addition, there are alternative sites with a lower greenbelt value, closer to Coventry, which should be used in preference to the land North of Leamington.

It should be stressed that the greenbelt land in Old Milverton is particularly valuable in comparison with many other areas. It has been very successful in preventing the spread of Leamington northwards and has stopped Leamington merging with Kenilworth. If the proposed development goes ahead the gap or “Green Lung” between Leamington and Kenilworth will be reduced to less than 1.5 miles which would serve as a precedent for further development in the greenbelt north of Milverton, leading to more urban sprawl and the eventual merging of the two towns. Productive arable land and a valuable wildlife habitat would be also lost if this land is developed for housing and other urban uses. Secondly, the greenbelt North of Milverton has preserved the setting of the historic, regency town of Royal Leamington Spa when approached from the north.

The greenbelt land north of Milverton also has a great amenity value for local residents and those of the neighbouring towns (Leamington, Warwick and Kenilworth), as it is used extensively throughout the year by walkers, dog walkers (and dogs), runners and cyclists.

Finally, Old Milverton is one of the last surviving hamlets on the outskirts of Leamington and its integrity will be destroyed by the Council’s proposals which would see it become part of Leamington. Development north of Milverton would repeat past planning mistakes which have seen the merging of Warwick and Leamington and the loss of former discrete villages e.g. Milverton, Lillington and Whitnash, all now part of Leamington Spa.

Two other aspects of the Council's plan seem to be "pie-in-the-sky" thinking on the part of the planners and should be rejected outright. One is the proposed immediate development of a park and ride scheme in Blackdown which, if implemented, will not be used and so would be a waste of scarce resources. The proposed site is too close to Leamington to reduce traffic on the A452. There will be no dedicated buses, as the proposal is for a "virtual service" using the existing bus services. As a consequence commuters (and others) will have to time their use in accordance with the bus timetables, making it rather inflexible. In fact there is plenty of parking available in Leamington Spa and Warwick District Council is even planning a new multi storey car park. In addition, there is no funding presently available for the park and ride scheme. Experience shows that park and ride schemes do not work, Oxford being the only real success because there is so little car parking available in Oxford. The scale of the Stratford upon Avon park and ride scheme has been reduced.

The second is the inclusion in the District Plan of a proposal for a railway station in Old Milverton. Anyone familiar with Old Milverton will know that the Leamington to Coventry railway line runs in a fairly deep cutting when passing through Old Milverton, hardly making Old Milverton a suitable location for a railway station.

Yours sincerely

Michael J. Rayner

PLEASE DO EMAIL MR WARD. IT WILL MAKE A REAL DIFFERENCE

Jonathan Lander
Chair Old Milverton and Blackdown Joint Parish Council
12 August 2016