

Matter 7A Written Statement – H44 North of Milverton – Robert Lane (13913)

Dear Mr Ward

I have farmed the land to the North of Leamington Spa, currently included in Warwick District Council's Local Plan for development for the past 26 years. The majority of this land is Agricultural grade 2 soil, a very good quality soil that has always produced well above the National average yields and is some of the best on my farm. I have grown a variety of crops ranging from Starflower, used in the pharmaceutical industry, to Fabae Beans exported to Egypt for human consumption. This year we grew wheat and achieved 4 tonnes/acre (national average being 3.2 tonnes/acre) .We have won a contract to grow top quality oats for the gluten free flour and 'oat milk' market, some of which will be exported for Germany's expanding 'health food' market. This land will next be planted with oats in spring 2017.

I have always grown a rotation of crops in order to maintain the health of the soil, minimise chemical inputs and maintain the biodiversity of the land. The land is a Wildlife corridor connecting Old Milverton Parish with the countryside to the East. I am proud to say that over recent years, mainly since we have set aside the river meadows into non farmed land, we have seen an increase in diversity of wild life. We have noticed Muntjac and Roe deer, which can only have come in via the A452 roundabout, but also quite rare birds like Snipe, Woodcock, Lapwings, Sky larks as well as Gold finches and Buzzards. There are a number of active Badger setts on the land as the sandy bank (called Sandy Knob) adjacent to the A452 is an ideal habitat for them. Other wildlife have been observed in the recent past to include Great Crested Newts identified when the Northumberland Road building development was undertaken. Development of this land will lead to a loss of Wildlife activity over a large part of the Parish mainly through closing this corridor. Old Milverton Parish is still rural with all the hall marks of a rural landscape. This is part of the reason why people enjoy walking here rather than around the parks in the town.

I acknowledge that a 'wildlife survey ' has been carried out. I met 2 young people walking down the middle of a field at approximately 11 am. They told me they were undertaking a 'wildlife survey'. Having farmed this land for 26 years, most of the wildlife is to be seen outside of normal working hours. The hedgerows are far more likely sites for the wildlife, so I doubt very much if this survey will reflect the true picture of this landscape even if they did come more than once. I introduced myself as the farmer and I would have been more impressed with the quality of their service had they asked me the history of the wildlife on the land so they at least knew what to look for.

There are alternative sites, outside the green belt, that should be used in preference to the land North of Leamington Spa and closer to Coventry.

Kind Regards

Robert Lane