

Matter 7A Written Statement – H44 North of Milverton – Ruth Buckley (7200)

**Warwick District Council
Local Plan – Public Enquiry
Proposed development in Old Milverton**

Dear Mr Ward

I write to express my concerns about Warwick District Council's proposals to build 1,350 homes to help meet Coventry's requirements, together with a park and ride scheme, a railway station and employment opportunities, on Green Belt land in Old Milverton.

I consider that the proposals are unsuitable as, being 9 miles from Coventry, the housing would be unlikely to be popular with people who work in Coventry, for whom it is intended. Those who did live there would inevitably create additional unnecessary congestion and pollution in the corridor to the city.

More importantly, the location is unacceptable since it proposes to use good quality Green Belt land. There are other sites, not on Green Belt land and closer to Coventry, which should be used instead.

The proposals ignore the criteria for allowing building on Green Belt land. Warwick District Council has failed to produce evidence as to why it considers that the proposed removal of this land from the Green Belt falls within the Exceptional Circumstances set out in the National Planning Policy Framework. Furthermore, the removal of the land would contravene the rules of precedence for the release of land from the Green Belt, even if permitted Exceptional Circumstances had been demonstrated, since sites adjacent to Coventry have been assessed as being of lower Green Belt value.

It is essential that this stretch of land be retained in order to protect the invaluable 'green lung' between Leamington and Kenilworth. Were the development to proceed, the green lung between the two towns would be reduced to only 1.5 miles and this area, currently used by very many walkers, horse riders, cyclists and runners from the local area as well as further afield, would be lost. The land concerned is productive farm land, and important wild life habitat would also be lost. The village of Old Milverton, one of the last surviving hamlets in the area, would be entirely subsumed into Leamington, thus changing for ever the character of the area into yet more urban sprawl. All of this is contrary to current government policy, which is placing increasing emphasis on the benefits to the health and well-being of the local population of such green lungs.

A news article published under the 2010 to 2015 coalition government stated: 'Today's (4 October 2014) measures will reinforce the action taken by the government since 2010 to protect the Green Belt'. The article quoted Eric Pickles, the then Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government: 'This

government has been very clear that when planning for new buildings, protecting our precious Green Belt must be paramount. Local people don't want to lose their countryside to urban sprawl, or see the vital green lungs around their towns and cities lost to unnecessary development'. The article further stated: 'Today's guidance will ensure councils can meet their housing needs by prioritising brownfield sites and fortifying the Green Belt in their area'.

I am grateful to you for considering my submission, along with those of others who have expressed similar concerns, about the need to prevent the erosion of this highly valued Green Belt land.

Best wishes.

Ruth Buckley