

Matter 7A Written Statement – H44 North of Milverton – Simon Lieberman (5717)

I am writing to express my concerns about Warwick District Council's plans to build 1,350 homes and a park and ride on vital green belt land north of Leamington towards Old Milverton. For many reasons I believe this proposal is highly inappropriate and would be very damaging to the people of the town.

My understanding is that green belt land should only be used as a last resort if there is no other suitable non-green belt that could be developed and Warwick District Council has shown there are alternative sites that are not designated green belt, that should be used before green belt land North of Milverton is used.

The green belt north of Milverton has ensured that Leamington and has not continued to grow in this direction and end up merging with Kenilworth. If the proposed development goes ahead there will only be about 2 km of green area between Leamington and Kenilworth and the prospect of further creep towards each other.

The green belt land that it is proposed to build on is a much loved piece of countryside used by a really significant amount of local people. I have just walked from Bamburgh Grove in North Leamington to Old Milverton and on to the Saxon Mill at Warwick. I counted the number of people using the footpath and there were over 50 people in a 25 minute walk. These were mainly people taking a leisure walk, runners and dog walkers. It would be a great loss if this vital leisure amenity were lost as it gives huge numbers of local people easy access to the countryside without having to take the car out.

Although I do not live there I walk through Old Milverton regularly using the right of way from Bamburgh Grove and it would be irresponsible to destroy a the last surviving hamlet just outside of Leamington which would be lost and subsumed into and become a suburb of Leamington. In addition the green belt is currently productive farmland and an important wild life habitat will be lost forever. Where I live we have a communal garden that attracts owls and woodpeckers because we back on to the fields and this wildlife habitat would be lost.

I believe the proposed park and ride scheme is ill-conceived and I cannot see that it would be well used. Firstly the proposed site is too close to Leamington to reduce traffic on the A452. The proposal is to use the existing bus services rather than a dedicated service so commuters will have to time it in accordance with the bus timetable, which given the terrible traffic already experienced coming in to Leamington, will not encourage people to use it. Experience elsewhere shows that there are hardly any park and ride schemes that work in practice and where they do it is because there is very little parking in the town / city which isn't the case in Leamington.

Originally Warwick District Council recognised the value of this important green belt and didn't intend to build in their first plan to meet the housing needs of the District. However they are now looking to develop it because they say they need to meet the development needs of Coventry, but this site is wholly inappropriate for this purpose. For a start the proposed location is over 15 km from Coventry city centre. Furthermore it is irresponsible to build houses to meet Coventry's housing need on the greenbelt north of Leamington when there are several alternative sites nearer to Coventry, which should be used in preference to the green belt land North of Leamington. Surely if the need is to meet demand for housing in Coventry the homes should be built as near to the city as possible not in a neighbouring town. All this would do is bring about a significant increase in the number of people commuting by car and add further congestion on roads that are already very badly congested at rush hour.

Lastly, but I believe most importantly, the exceptional circumstances required by the National Planning Policy Framework to release land from the green belt for development have not been demonstrated for one crucial reason: there are several alternative, more sustainable, sites that should be used in preference that are much nearer Coventry.

Thank you for taking my views into consideration.

Yours sincerely,
Simon Lieberman