

# **University of Warwick**

## Warwick District Local Plan Examination

Matter 7c – Proposed housing site allocations, safeguarded land and direction for growth (edge of Coventry)

August 2016

**Turley**

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**Client**  
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# 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The University of Warwick has, since its inception just over 50 years ago, become a leading HE institution and has a large modern campus on the edge of Coventry straddling the boundary between Coventry and Warwick District.
- 1.2 The University makes an important economic contribution to Coventry and Warwickshire, the West Midlands and the UK in a wide range of ways that stem from its high quality research and teaching, its international base of students and graduates and its commercial activities, which include collaborations with business, and the University Science Park.
- 1.3 The University had an annual turnover of £513m in 2014/15, with a student population of around 25,000 and 6,000 staff. Its Science Park accommodates 45 companies employing 2,100 people and its Arts Centre hosts 1,500 events a year attracting nearly one million visitors per year.
- 1.4 It has recently been estimated that the University of Warwick generated an estimated £783.6m GVA and supported 14,390 jobs within the Coventry and Warwickshire LEP area in 2014/15. Under the leadership of the new Vice Chancellor, Stuart Croft, this is expected to increase, with significant additional investment and engagement planned.
- 1.5 The University continues to grow and change at a rapid pace, providing high standards of accommodation to suit contemporary research and teaching methods, to enhance the student experience, to attract the best people, to collaborate with partners effectively, and to innovate and ensure future sustainable progress.
- 1.6 The University has participated in each stage of the Warwick District Local Plan. The University has a good working relationship with Warwickshire CC and Warwick DC and is in regular dialogue at several different levels across both organisations. The University also has good relationships with Kenilworth Town Council and nearby parish councils.
- 1.7 This statement supplements the University's representations of June 2014 and April 2016 in respect of the Publication Draft Plan and the Proposed Modifications and deals specifically with **Matter 7c – proposed housing site allocations, safeguarded land and direction for growth – edge of Coventry**. The University's overall stance is supportive of the plan and believes it is sound.

## 2. Planning Status of Campus

- 2.1 Central Campus West, south of Gibbet Hill Road, is designated as a Major Developed Site in the Green Belt in the adopted Local Plan (2007) – see below.



- 2.2 It was on the basis of this designation that outline planning permission was granted in 2009 for 89,000 sq.m of additional floorspace within Central Campus West. This permission runs until October 2019 and is still being implemented. Recent developments include new student accommodation, an extension of Warwick Business School, a conference facility, an Energy Centre, and a current application for a major new Sports Centre and outdoor pitches.
- 2.3 Central Campus East falls within the city of Coventry's administrative area and a similar outline planning permission was granted for a similar amount of development, which also runs until October 2019. Recent developments within Coventry include the National Automotive Innovation Centre (a research collaboration with JLR and Tata Motors), a new Teaching and Learning Building, and various extensions to academic buildings.
- 2.4 Both permissions are accompanied by a single Campus Masterplan and S106 Agreement.
- 2.5 A Travel Plan has been operating successfully with co-operation of the three local authorities and new highways infrastructure includes two new roundabouts along Gibbet Hill Road, a 20mph zone through the campus, a new public transport interchange and Sustrans cycle route.
- 2.6 The University is determined to secure its future for the next 50 years and is commencing a refresh of its masterplan, which it hopes to conclude during 2017, to coincide with the Local Plan's adoption. This thinking is at an early stage but will come

to fruition within the timeframe envisaged for the partial Local Plan Review over the next five years.

### 3. Relevant Policy

3.1 The draft plan contains the following relevant policies which provide the context for the University's comments:

<b>Policy DS10</b>	allocates 2,245 houses on greenfield sites on the edge of Coventry in the period up to 2029, specifically at Kings Hill (1800) and Westwood Heath (425).
<b>Policy DS15</b>	proposes a comprehensive approach to the development of Strategic Sites, including land identified as safeguarded beyond the current plan period (e.g. site S1 at Westwood Heath which immediately adjoins the University).
	sets out key on-site infrastructure and services including, for land at Westwood Heath, a "health centre, community facilities and retail facilities" with reference to this being in "the context of development of this allocation and the potential wider area over the long-term". At Kings Hill, this includes "some employment land, land for secondary and primary schools, local centre, community facilities, health centre and new rail station".
	states that the Development Briefs for these sites "should be broadly compatible with each other, in their approach to development issues, provision of linked infrastructure and commitment to sustainable growth".
	Supporting <b>para 2.66</b> states that "landowners are strongly encouraged to work together closely to produce the most appropriate overall scheme for the site. This might for example be achieved through the setting up of consortia or other formal means of co-ordinated joint working (including the LPA as a full partner)".
<b>Policy DS19</b>	states that land has been removed from the Green Belt at Westwood Heath (H42) and Kings Hill (H43) in addition to the University of Warwick.
<b>Policy DS20</b>	proposes a review of the plan in circumstances including "development and growth pressures arising from the specific circumstances in the area to the south of Coventry (as identified in Policy DS New 1)". <b>Para 2.82</b> states that this will occur within five years of the plan's adoption and "will be undertaken in any event".
<b>Policy DS NEW 1</b>	refers to an "area of growth focussed on strategic housing allocations to the immediate south of Coventry" but covering safeguarded land, emerging infrastructure, strategic opportunities on both sides of the boundary, and the " <b>future plans of the University</b> " (our emphasis).
	In tandem with Policy DS20, a review within five years of adoption will

	<p>consider “whether further land is required within the broad area to allow for future growth”. This will be “subject to sufficiently robust evidence”, relying on close co-operation between stakeholders including the University.</p>
	<p>Amongst the “key objectives” identified to provide “clear guidance” are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The potential for a new road linking the A46 with Kirby Corner and onto the A452 or A45</li> <li>• The potential for future growth at the University (see Policy MS1)</li> </ul>
	<p>New <b>para 1.5</b> refers to the University preparing a revised masterplan within the Plan period, and that any development in the wider area needs to take into account its future growth.</p>
	<p>The safeguarded land at Westwood Heath (S1) is reserved for long-term development needs (Proposal H42 being limited to 425 dwellings) subject to the plan review indicating a need for further housing land and the delivery of significant improvement to the strategic highway network, including the link road from the A46.</p>

## 4. Housing Allocation H42 (Westwood Heath)

- 4.1 The University's representations to the Proposed Modifications to Policy DS10 and DS15 acknowledge the need for some of Coventry's housing needs to be accommodated in the district.
- 4.2 In response to the Inspector's questions, the University has the following comments relating to the group of questions 3-7 about the development itself. Its comments about the Green Belt are addressed in the section on the safeguarded land.

### **The proposed development (Q3-Q7)**

- 4.3 The development of 425 houses during the plan period on land south of Westwood Heath Road, must take account of the committed further growth of the University of Warwick and a reasonable forward assessment of its likely growth over the plan period. We believe that this has been incorporated into Warwickshire County Council's transport assessment.
- 4.4 As set out in section 1, the University is embarking upon a refresh of its masterplan. This will roll forward the current masterplan to the mid-2020s on the basis that:
- (i) There is capacity within the existing campus for further development beyond that committed in its current masterplan, including some redevelopment opportunities
  - (ii) The prospect of significant improvement to the local highway network (as identified in the Proposed Modifications) will create further capacity which will only be available post 2020
- 4.5 Whilst the longer-term growth of the area can be considered through a partial Local Plan Review within five years (as proposed through Policies DS20 and DS NEW 1) it is important that the current allocations are not viewed in isolation, particularly as the traffic generated from the proposed 425 homes will largely be channelled to one of the University's key junctions at Kirby Corner. The minor highways mitigation works associated with the new housing allocations will be of particular interest to the University.
- 4.6 The County Council is currently extending the Kenilworth and Stoneleigh Wide Area Paramics model (KSWA) to the west to provide a better understanding of the impact of the new housing allocations.
- 4.7 The inspector should be satisfied that the County Council has identified appropriate mitigation measures to be brought forward that will the highway network to continue to operate satisfactorily, allowing for reasonable traffic growth from other sources, in addition to that arising from the new housing allocations.



## 5. Safeguarded Land South of Westwood Heath Road

- 5.1 The University has previously acknowledged that the removal of land from the Green Belt at Westwood Heath will provide a logical and defensible boundary, consistent with the NPPF.
- 5.2 The current Green Belt boundary follows the district boundary along Gibbet Hill Road and Westwood Heath Road, with incursions along green wedges into Coventry, surrounding the University and washing over Central Campus West.



- 5.3 The University has sought the removal of all its existing built campus from the Green Belt, effectively since the change in national policy which removed the notion of “institutions in large grounds” being acceptable uses in the Green Belt. In its supporting representations to the Local Plan, the University has demonstrated the exceptional circumstances for this amendment.
- 5.4 The Publication Draft Local Plan showed an altered boundary around the University campus, reflecting the MDS designation in the 2005 adopted plan.



5.5 The Proposed Modifications remove further land for the proposed allocation (H42) and safeguarded land (S1). The latter adjoins the University campus and therefore creates a new Green Belt boundary and coincides with changes proposed in the Coventry Local Plan Review, which removes the two green wedges either side of the University from the Green Belt and designates local greenspace instead.



- 5.6 National policy states that Green Belt boundaries should only be altered in exceptional circumstances (NPPF para 83). The starting point as set out in para 84 should be ensuring sustainable patterns of development.
- 5.7 The Joint Green Belt Study observed that the University represents a significant development in the Green Belt which compromises openness within the majority of the parcel, and has a significant urbanising effect. It referred to the approved masterplan which was already justified through “very special circumstances” and noted that, once completed, the existing campus will therefore make little or no contribution to the five purposes of the Green Belt. The Study gave parcel C19 a score of 8/20.
- 5.8 By contrast, parcel C20, which includes the Safeguarded Land, Allocation H42 and a large swathe of countryside to the south of the University is principally open countryside with scattered dwellings and farm buildings and scores 13/20 in the Study.
- 5.9 There is therefore a distinction to be drawn between the exceptional circumstances for removing the University campus from the Green Belt and for removing the safeguarded land from the Green Belt.
- 5.10 The University is a long-established development in the Green Belt and, for many years was regarded as an ‘institution standing in large grounds’ which was an acceptable use (PPG2). The current removal of the University’s campus (parcel C19) from the Green Belt does not impact on any of the five purposes and, in particular, will not lead to unrestricted sprawl, or encroachment on the countryside, and will not result in the merging of Coventry and Kenilworth.
- 5.11 If the Inspector is satisfied that exceptional circumstances exist to remove land south of Westwood Heath from the Green Belt, the proposed boundary is logical where it meets the University’s land, as it picks up from the south-western extent of the University campus to the west of Whitefields Coppice and continues along the brookcourse to Bockendon Road/Crackley Lane.

## 6. Direction of Growth

- 6.1 The University's representations to the Proposed Modifications to Policy DS20 and the new Policy DS NEW 1 support the recognition of the University's long-term growth in the planning of the area south of Coventry. It cross refers to Policy MS1, which will be dealt with under Matter 11.
- 6.2 The University supports:
- the principle of close co-operation and is willing to participate in comprehensive long-term planning of the area
  - the potential link road (subject to its alignment around Westwood Heath)
  - improvements to rail infrastructure including the new rail stop at Kings Hill
- 6.3 The University intends to prepare a revised masterplan in the next year and will work with the Council and others towards the partial Local Plan review within five years to facilitate the development and infrastructure improvements that will be needed in the long-term.
- 6.4 The University has some concerns about the robustness of the infrastructure requirements in the IDP as to whether they include "those that may be required to support future development in the area".
- 6.5 This session is of particular importance to the University as it addresses the extent to which the local plan can and should foresee and accommodate longer-term needs. The following addresses the four Inspector's Questions:

### **Direction for Growth (Q20 and Q23)**

- 6.6 From the University's perspective, the Direction of Growth is a justified policy. **New para 1.5** refers to the "revised masterplan" that will be prepared within the plan period (Policy MS1) and says that the University's potential growth is both important and should be taken into account in planning for wider infrastructure. It states that "this will ensure that the area has capacity to address development that is currently not known about but which is likely to come forward within the plan period and during the years immediately afterwards".
- 6.7 This is highly relevant because the University is a long-term occupier and its growth has been consistent over the past 50 years. It was gifted the land for the core campus in the 1960s and has since added the former Teaching Training College at Westwood, the HRI campus at Wellesbourne near Stratford, and the adjoining Science Park to its landholdings. There have been masterplans for campus growth roughly every 10 years, the most recent in 2007 (which was approved in 2009). The latest masterplan was founded on the previous Vice-Chancellor's 'Vision 2015' which, by the University's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, aimed to cement its position as a leading UK and increasingly global university with outstanding teaching and research excellence.

- 6.8 Much has been achieved over the past decade towards this goal and the current masterplan has facilitated this. As set out already, the refresh of the current masterplan will look ahead a further 10 years to the mid-2020s. Two key factors influencing it will be:
- the campus can accommodate some further growth through redevelopment of the older academic and residential buildings and higher density on the remaining development plots
  - due to the success of the Travel Plan, the University believes that further development can be served by the existing highway network. This is subject to any improvements needed to support housing development at Westwood Heath.
- 6.9 The campus will be the ongoing focus of development activity for the decade ahead, albeit that there are other strategic locations (including Wellesbourne Campus in Stratford, the Shard in London and in California).
- 6.10 Looking into the 2030s, the physical capacity of the campus and the capacity of the local highway network and public transport systems will potentially limit the University's growth. From the University's perspective, the Directions for Growth policy is intended to acknowledge this and foresees a comprehensive approach to the planning of this wider area, to facilitate the University. The University will be a willing participant in this process.

### **Policy DS NEW1 (Q21-Q22)**

- 6.11 The policy refers adequately to the University's future plans, noting it is a key stakeholder, stating that "development proposals must take into account the potential for future growth at the University of Warwick (see Policy M1)" and referring specifically to a revised masterplan.
- 6.12 New **para 1.5** states that the University's growth is an "important element" to be taken into account and acknowledges that the area should have capacity (ie. infrastructure capacity) to "address development that is not currently known about but which is likely to come forward within the Plan period and during the years immediately afterwards".
- 6.13 This confirms acceptance to development under the remainder of the current masterplan which is known, the forthcoming masterplan refresh which is currently unknown but predictable and a longer trajectory beyond the plan period.
- 6.14 The University sees the Local Plan Review within five years as the appropriate point to address the longer-term as much depends on the potential Link Road and what scale of growth this can support not just for the University but potential housing development on the safeguarded land.
- 6.15 By working with the local authorities and local communities, the University will develop its vision and plans in tandem with the broad strategic principles set out in the supporting text (para 1.4) to Policy DS NEW 1, and work towards the partial review of the Local Plan.

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