

# The Old Vicarage - Old Milverton Village - Leamington Spa - CV32 6SA

Development Policy Manager  
Warwick District Council  
Riverside House  
Milverton Hill  
Leamington Spa CV32 5QH

## 2012 Proposed Development Plan

Dear Sir/Madam

When I came to Old Milverton 35 years ago, L.Spa enjoyed an enviable reputation as a Shopping Centre and was recognised as having a thriving 'community spirit'. Latterly, much of this has been lost. Independent retailers appear to have lost confidence in trading in the town. In places empty shops and offices show a town in decline.

By implementing the plans now proposed, the two plots of sequestered Green Belt land in the Parishes of Blackdown and Old Milverton are set to become 'housing in isolation', which will result in a 'Dormitory Development'; some say a 'ghetto'. The outcome can only be a feeling of isolation and a huge increase in unnecessary commuting across L.Spa, adding to the existing congestion at well known bottlenecks which so far WDC have found impossible to resolve.

This is particularly pertinent as there is no detail admitted of the proposed infrastructure intended to service this development. It might not even materialise - for example, if the sale of the housing proposed founders; a not unlikely outcome in view of the land value and expected high market value of the new housing in this area. If on the contrary, a major and inspired infrastructure component is built in and it is successful, it can only be to the detriment of L.Spa town Centre as shops, offices, services and places of work are dispersed away from the Town Centre.

By developing a transport hub based on the Railway Station and the commercial/recreation and services already in place to the south of the town; and locating new housing development as laid out in the 2009 plan south of the town, it may still be possible to retrieve much of what has been lost. To develop at Old Milverton & Blackdown can only have the reverse effect. Our political representation appears to have completely lost sight of this important consideration.

Why has it not been possible for Warwick District Council to take a grip and reverse the deterioration experienced in Leamington Spa and exploit the many assets and advantages associated with the existing infrastructure, services and trading opportunities south of the town. Significantly, in the first instance, build Affordable Housing where they are needed, upgrading the empty/derelict buildings and return the many houses originally built for families to live in but no longer in family occupation.

**In summary, It seems the social and cultural life of L.Spa is about to be finally ripped out of the town and be dispersed into isolated units on the northern**

**periphery. WDC should be regenerating L.Spa by concentrating its development from the town centre to the south and not fragmenting it by developing to the north of the town. What a prospect for legacy !**

At the Parish Council Meeting held in Old Milverton Church on Monday 16 July it became apparent that the Preferred Options Plans, nominally open for consultation and discussion were nothing of the sort. The new plans have been presented as the 'only option' even though the key component of what constituted, 'Very Special Circumstances' for the justification of the Green Belt Grab, was not made. It was agreed even by the DCEO that the plans lack this very necessary robust argument.

Robert Solt demonstrated further weaknesses in the case for the Preferred Options Plans by explaining that the numbers did not add up, on several counts. Mainly that the model used was outdated and most of all, the input data was flawed being based on earlier projections which are no longer valid, resulting in a very considerable overestimate of housing need. No allowance appeared to have been made for the recent changes in the nature of the local work force from manual to blue and white collar and a very significant increase in numbers of professionals and academics.

It follows that a contemporary detailed audit is outstanding and is required to quantify housing need, specifically to include the changes outlined above. An audit of similar rigor is required to establish the total availability of development options to include all sites Whitefield, Brownfield and Windfall (for which a particularly rigorous assessment is needed and with inducements offered up to encourage this process). An explanation for the 'apparent loss' of development sites since the previous assessment (see 2009 plans) would not go amiss.

Missing from the report is a statement covering the impact of changes which must be taken far more seriously such as the austerity measures and other significant events in process, including the fate of the Euro and our EU member States and our Trading Status as a nation committed to the practice of a disproportionately large scale Food Importation Policy. Food Security has simply not been considered. In large conurbations this could become the single most important consideration for Local Government.

If Climate Change and an increasing demand for western living standards are to be aggressively pursued by Indians Chinese and Africans etc., we have the makings of 'the perfect storm' in the ability of these countries to feed their own people, let alone export. The UK is one of the more densely populated countries, at least in the EU and perhaps the one at greatest risk from global food shortages. A consideration not to be taken lightly when seeking to destroy Green Belt and good quality Agricultural Land.

Yours faithfully

Michael Kelsey  
22 July 2012