

**ROYAL LEAMINGTON SPA TOWN COUNCIL
RESPONSE TO WARWICK DISTRICT COUNCIL REVISED DEVELOPMENT
STRATEGY, JUNE 2013**

The Town Council of Royal Leamington Spa broadly welcomes the Revised Development Strategy for Warwick District and below gives a more detailed response on particular items within it.

Plans for Housing

The Town Council acknowledges that Warwick District Council was unable to proceed with its original strategy to spread the new developments throughout the District, and understands that the major sites are all to be in an area to the south of Warwick and to the west of Whitnash.

This presents both threats and opportunities to residents of Leamington, Warwick, and Whitnash. This Council urges Warwick District Council to minimise the negative consequences and enhance the opportunity to create living communities that will enrich the District.

We wish to see the strategy, and its subsequent policies, as a positive vision for the whole District. We support the intention to create a District that is a sustainable mixture of housing, with 'neighbourhoods that are well designed and distinctive'. These intentions will only be realised through **intelligent and well organised planning**.

In particular we have to plan for a society that is less car dependent. The area designated for housing will have an enormous road infrastructure to accompany it. We believe that new housing developments must be accompanied by investment in public transport, strategic cycle routes to Town Centres and employment sites and pedestrian networks, or people could become isolated in their housing areas.

We like the 'Smart Growth' approach, that addresses housing, land-use, sense of place, transport and community together.

Threats

*The size of the development could create a large urban area that has no identity, or natural connections, with existing towns.

* Delays in finalising the plan will result in a developer's charter, with the Planning Department unable to prevent developers building unwelcome areas, with no overall planning of design, or size of dwellings.

*The area designated for housing is very far from the area designated for employment, creating a potential additional problem for traffic chaos.

* The District clearly needs a range of homes, and particularly a range of affordable and social housing. There is a potential threat that many properties could be bought to let, and this trend destroys the potential to build enduring communities.

*There appears to be no pro-active planning layout. The housing developments would benefit from an overall Master Plan, which reduces the threat of urban sprawl.

Opportunities

* If the South of the District is to take the brunt of the development, then more effort could be made to create a new area, in which homes are not seen as isolated units of investment, but as parts of a greater social whole. Alternative forms of housing could be explored, e.g. Community Land Trusts, co-housing etc.

*The idea of Garden Suburbs may now be a little out-dated, and present very low density development. Garden City/Town/Suburbs were reliant on car transport. We need higher density housing (as older parts of Leamington and Warwick), that would allow for a proper public transport system.

*Higher density layouts must be considered. Warwick, Leamington and Kenilworth have examples of good Victorian, Edwardian, and Georgian building at high density.

* Developers must be required to demonstrate affordability and diversity, in addition to sustainability.

* Warwick District Council must take the opportunity to create neighbourhoods that are distinctive, that have individual identities, and that contain all the elements needed for family living, and that do not depend on the use of private transport.

* The increasing importance of Allotments to peoples' leisure and well-being must be recognised with the provision of appropriate sites in close proximity to new housing development.

The Town Council looks forward to the publication of further policies that will detail how this is to be achieved.