



14th January 2014

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



cc: Mr David Barber; Ms Tracy Darke

Dear Sir or Madam,

Comment on Warwick district Council Local Plan, Village Housing Options and Settlement Boundaries Consultation

I am writing to object in the strongest possible terms to the planned development on Site 1 (East of Church Lane) in Radford Semele. As joint owner of a house in the village I am both a former and future resident and have a lifelong association with Radford. By contrast, I can only assume that whoever proposed building 100 houses next to the Church has no knowledge of the village or its surroundings, as this development would completely and irrevocably destroy Radford Semele for ever.

Firstly, the requirement for 100 additional houses is far too high. Offchurch Lane and the Southam Road are both major through routes for commuters as well as being heavily used by villagers, and the likely 200+ additional vehicles caused by the new houses would produce gridlock every rush hour as well as likely causing more traffic accidents. (There was an accident at the junction of these roads only last week.)

Secondly, the Council's 'preferred option' (1) is the worst possible location for any additional development, as I shall outline below.

The Church adjacent to the threatened fields is listed, as are several surrounding buildings. According to statute the setting of listed buildings must be destroyed only as a last resort, in exceptional cases, where there are no alternatives. In this case the entire site provides the setting, which is integral to the listing, and the democratically elected Parish Council has already provided alternatives. All previous development near this area has been concealed in order for

the Council to meet its duties, whereas the currently proposed development would monopolise the view from all directions and be a total eyesore. The 1994 Planning Inspector's Report has already made it clear that such a development on this sort of site is completely unacceptable, and it would remove the last open space in the village.

There is no way to safely accommodate the 200+ cars which would need to access this development. The area between Offchurch Lane, School Lane and Church Lane is extremely congested during peak times and adding another road is completely impractical. It is also unreasonable to widen the existing Church Lane to take extra traffic: as well as further ruining the setting of the Church, this would involve chopping down several ancient trees. Either of these access options would require additional traffic controls, causing unacceptable levels of congestion, pollution and vibration as well as being highly dangerous in view of the bend in the Southam Road. Additional controls would, of course, also be even more detrimental to the look of the village.

The Church and its fields are vital to the identity of the village. The Church must retain its countryside setting and to place an ugly modern development between listed buildings and attractive individually-styled houses is not only in breach of the Council's duty to protect the listed buildings but also nothing short of barbarous. These fields have been central to the village since medieval times. We are mentioned in the Domesday book. The Council should be seeking to protect rather than obliterate local heritage.

The fields provide necessary natural drainage for the surrounding roads and destroying them would likely lead to flooding of these roads and the Church itself. School Lane and Offchurch Lane have already seen occasional floods, including an incident of raw sewage in the case of the former. Further pressure at this site could also endanger the water of the canal and the River Leam.

The 'preferred option' site has been imposed on the village without alternatives or sufficient consideration. There is no information on the look of the development, although with that number of houses in such a small area it is sure to be hideously cramped and completely out of place in an otherwise beautiful rural setting. This open space has previously been seen as necessary to maintain a 'planning balance' and other sites in the village have been developed to protect it. The balance needs to be maintained, or the other sites should not have been developed in the first place.

Parish Councillors were not consulted about this site. They have proposed an alternative site on the Southam Road which developers are already keen to use. Ignoring this and overriding their decision is unreasonable, undemocratic and verging on illegal. There has been no proper consultation of either the Parish Council or the residents, most of whom have heard about the planned destruction of the village only from fellow residents and with very little time remaining in which to make their protests. For every objection you receive there will probably be at least ten other villagers who wished to protest but had insufficient time or knowledge. Council

representatives at the local meetings - again only discovered through contact with other residents - have had no local knowledge and have been unable or unwilling to answer relevant questions on the development. One representative rudely sneered at my objection on the basis that it's what everyone else had said. Most people would consider that hearing the same argument from all the people who actually know the area might mean it has some merit, but here the whole attitude shows a complete lack of respect for taxpayers.

The discounting of the other possible development locations seems severely flawed. Sites 2 and 3 were ruled out on the basis of 'high landscape impact and insufficient vehicle access'. This is ludicrous. Site 1 has much higher landscape impact - in that the landscape would be utterly destroyed - and also has far less potential for safe vehicle access. The Environmental Report used to discount these sites also does not appear to truly reflect the areas of sites 2 and 3. Site 4 was apparently rejected for 'impact on the main village centre and potential to encourage coalescence of settlements'. This is also incorrect: it is not the centre of the village and would not take the village closer to Sydenham. It would add too many cars to the Southam Road, but that seems to have been ignored as apparently the Council do not consider gridlock and carbon monoxide poisoning to be a problem. There do not even appear to have been any studies on levels of CO on the Southam Road.

In summary, Site 1 must be rejected. The only possible site for development is Site 2, if necessary with a moving of the village boundaries, but with a vastly reduced number of houses to reflect not only the traffic problems but also the insufficient infrastructure.

Yours faithfully

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of the sender.

Miss F Coogan