



To: Cllr Andrew Mobbs
Warwick District Council
Riverside House
Leamington Spa

Dear Councillor Mobbs

I feel sure that those of us who have had any interest in the local planning issues suffered by Warwick District Council over the last few years will have understood your plea in the Courier some time ago for nothing to stand in the way of the adoption of the new local plan. I feel sure, like me and colleagues in local community groups, you are sick and tired of local plans and local planning. The record, however, of your authority as far as the tortuous progress made with the local plan, and particularly in relation to community involvement, is not one you should be proud of. However, I think we have gone too far along the road for anything to be gained at this stage by enumerating a long series of complaints. Nevertheless, I feel you should understand the substance of my latest representation on the plan and my reasons for submitting it in spite of your plea.

Firstly, many of us reading the papers associated with the consultation on the latest modifications may have concluded that the representations that were submitted in response to the previous version of the local plan had been subject to examination by the inspector. As you will know, this is not the case as it was essentially only the housing numbers that were dealt with. For officers to maintain that representations repeated this time from the last consultation would not be considered is likely to be untenable.

Take for example the impact of the development proposals on transport. The proposals which formed the basis of the transport assessments associated with the last plan were shown to be unrealistic in a peer assessment and were unfunded - and would therefore not be achievable. Since then, the increase in development permitted south of Warwick is going to put even more pressure on an inadequate transport infrastructure. For this concern not to be repeatable as a basis for representations on the new proposals is clearly not acceptable.

Secondly, members of our community believe that the proposal for the "Strawberry Field" at the northern end of Gallows Hill to be developed represents:- (i) a betrayal of the personal commitment you gave to some of our associates that no more development to the south of Warwick would be provided for in the new local plan; and (ii) is a proposal that is particularly damaging to the settings of the Grade 1 listed Warwick Castle and Warwick Castle Park, and the Warwick Conservation Area.

Furthermore, the fact that its inclusion was "slipped in" to the proposals map without separate mention in the text looked very much like dissembling on the part of the officers, a sense reinforced by the response given to Bishops Tachbrook Parish Council's enquiry about the justification for its inclusion. (a copy of this can be made available).



I dare say that you may not be fully aware of the history associated with this site and this is summarised in the attached note but you may feel you need to confirm this with your officers.

You may be aware that the Save Warwick group is in the process of disbanding. That has nothing to do with us considering that WDC has proved its point on the planning of Warwick. It is actually because of a loss of faith in a system that proclaims that it welcomes community involvement but makes little or no attempt to respect or respond to the views of the community. I write in hope, rather than expectation that in the light of all this you will ensure that an amendment is made to the local plan to exclude the strawberry field from the development area for the good reasons we submit in this letter and in line with your previous commitments.

Yours sincerely

D S Williams

Save Warwick Group



Appendix: Reasons why the Strawberry Field should be excluded from the areas for development

1. The inspector into the appeal against the proposed development at the Asps supported objectors and Warwick District Council by agreeing the importance of ensuring there should be no new development adjoining the Banbury Road on the southern approach to Warwick because of its potential impact on the settings of the Grade 1 listed Warwick Castle Park, the Grade 1 listed Warwick Castle and the Warwick Conservation Area. This was consistent with the position taken by the Council when a planning application was submitted for 250 houses on the "Strawberry Field" site. (Ref. No: W/13/1434). The application was withdrawn following the officers informing the applicant that they would recommend refusal of the application because of the damage the development would do to the heritage assets of Warwick.

2. The officer's decision on the strawberry field proposal was influenced by the representations of English Heritage - They opposed the application (letter from Nick Molineux dated 3rd November 2013) and this was consistent with that expressed in the more strategic views of the impact of development on the setting of Warwick Castle and Warwick Castle Park expressed in the English Heritage letter to WDC (Rohan Torkildsen, dated 23rd July 2013).

3. To an extent the developers of the Asps recognised the potential impact of their development on the context of Warwick and Warwick Castle Park in their application for 900 houses by leaving a broad marginal strip between their development and the Banbury Road. In the event, the development was permitted by the Secretary of State who, despite accepting the Inspector's view of the importance of the "heritage" and landscape factors, decided against the inspector's recommendation to reject the appeal, and agreed to the development on the basis, primarily, that (in the absence of an adopted local plan and a five years housing land supply) satisfying the predicted demand for housing should take precedence.

This factor is no longer relevant because the new plan can cater for the anticipated demand for housing elsewhere in the District. Therefore the planning authority should take note of the inspector's comments and those of English Heritage and safeguard and protect the important heritage areas of Warwick from further harm by excluding, in particular, this area from development. For this reason we object to the allocation for housing of the land west of Banbury Road and at the northern end of Gallows Hill, known as "The Strawberry Field." (much of which is, in any case, liable to flooding) - a development which would be even more damaging than the Asps to the setting of the heritage assets referred to above.

4. The Council's proposals for the site disregard the judgment of the Inspector at the Asps appeal that recognised the importance to the settings of Warwick Castle Park, Warwick Castle and the Warwick Conservation Area of maintaining the "rural" approach to Warwick. The area is part of this approach and is indeed the key site whose loss would irreversibly ruin the last vestiges of the rural southern approach to Warwick which provides an essential feature of the character of Warwick's conservation area and forms part of the context of Warwick Castle Park, Warwick Castle and the 300 plus listed buildings of the conservation area.

The solution to this problem is to delete this area of land from the proposals for development.

DSW