

OBJECT

PO4 Allocation of sites

There are clearly difficulties in allocating for a substantial increase of housing numbers, while avoiding coalescence and the Green Belt, within the district landscape. It looks as if, to quote a public meeting comment, WDC have decided to spread the pain around while avoiding difficult choices.

Brownfield Sites & “Windfall” (para 7.10 and “Within the Urban Areas”, p.20)

The details on which these have been calculated (also ref “committed” sites) is by no means clearly set out, for example the substantial area north of Leamington Station is not mapped.

Sites Beyond Urban Areas (“Category 1 and 2 Villages” p.21)

Fairly modest, round figure totals have been uniformly allocated to villages. These look like generalised, indiscriminate guesses. One criterion is expressed as concern for sustainability of transport and other services. But (see our response under Built Environment) the Garden Suburb proposals would also be very heavily dependent on the motor car.

We suggest a much more careful and determined focus on one or more settlements outside the towns. Hatton, for example, could provide an area for substantial housing development with enhanced potential for transport links & community services.

Density of Development

Under PO 10, we make strong and specific criticism of the Garden Suburb proposals. Many of the claimed benefits are bogus, while the low density sprawl is extremely profligate with land and damaging to sustainability of transport and local services.

It would not be difficult to increase the planned average density and the proposed suburban additions around Warwick / Leamington - which cover broadly 3 areas - could be concentrated in only 2 of the three locations. There would still be choices to be made and not easy ones. But this illustrates that the arbitrary adoption of sprawling, “Garden” layout has a major perverse effect on the wish to maintain natural green landscape and/or Green Belt.

We remark elsewhere that low densities are not a magic formula for community cohesion and safety, or indeed for good design of desirable and varied types of dwelling.

Phasing & Locations (Para 7.20, p.18-20)

The Inspector may well doubt WDC's “exceptional” reasons for developing the green belt. With more imaginative and concentrated plans for housing development, the number and extent of suburban sites could be reduced. Meantime the overall extent of growth over the three phases is at best an educated guess.

The rationale for phasing is unclear. There seem to be at least three vague notions driving the idea of spreading development over time and locations. These are

- a reference to employment in different areas (eg to north or south of Warwick / Leamington);
- the idea the developer might like a wide choice;
- the previously mentioned “spreading the pain”, which is a defensive political strategy.

People change jobs and family members may work in different areas, often commuting long distances quite unlike the early garden city days of the 1920s.

The phasing should be concentrated first on Urban Areas: any plans afoot for the sites indicated should be accelerated to phase 1.

The Green Belt locations should be limited to phase 3 if, and only if, they are found to be essential.

As stated above in our response to PO3, the Leamington Society wishes to avoid the threat of coalescence in both north and south Leamington.

We are also keen to see new communities developed in a sustainable way with good access to amenities and transport links. We should like the Council to consider an extension to Hatton Park instead of some of the proposed sites where there is good access to the A46, Warwick Parkway Station and bus and cycle routes. An increase in population at Hatton Park would enable the area to support local shops, a school and community centre activities near residents’ homes.