

OBJECT

Preferred Option : Sustainable forms for transport

The Leamington Society believes that the stated aspiration – to minimise etc – is admirable but the proposals elsewhere in the document do not merely fail to advance that aspiration; in several particulars they are in direct contradiction to this stated objective:

“Ensuring that new housing neighbourhoods have close range of access to a range of key facilities either within the development or within a short walk (e.g. 15 minutes)”

Low density development is proposed by Garden Suburbs (GS) in PO 14.

This GS layout causes sprawling suburbia and much longer distances to key facilities than in more tight knit communities. There can be no doubt that GS development inevitably relies very heavily on the motor car as the default, almost required, mode of transport.

This is definitely not a sustainable option. It frustrates the best intentions of greener minded citizens (buses not viable, cycling at higher risk, walking long distances) & inhibits mobility to those who do not drive or have use of a car. (children, elderly, the poor). The mention of a “short walk (e.g. 15 minutes)” illustrates the rose tinted unreality of much of this document. Ideally of course we should think nothing of walking 15 minutes to a shop or bus stop ; that may well have been accepted in the days of Ebenezer Howard, when cars were a rare & unreliable novelty. But which WDC officer or councillor nowadays acts on that basis ?

Introduction & Justification

Throughout this document there is much reference to sustainability (see also PO 12 etc).

14.11 quotes the NPPF “The transport system needs to be balanced in favour of sustainable transport modes, giving people a real choice about how they travel.”

Whereas, as shown above, the Garden Suburb layout would more or less deny them this choice.

14.3 states in the Introduction that “cars will continue to play a *vital* role in people's lives ...”. This on its own seems a reasonable statement (although it begs the question – does “people's” assume everybody's lives?).

Compare this with :-

14.4 “It is *important* other forms of transport ...” which clearly assumes that sustainable transport is actually not “vital” like the motor car. This denies the basic tenet of the NPPF quoted above – WDC tips the balance in favour of the car.

This particular example illustrates a running theme of this document: much talk of sustainability but it funks serious policy to further that end.

It is of course true that Transport is mainly a County responsibility and is much driven by national policies (or lack of them). Most of the levers of transport policy are not available to the District. That said, if WDC publishes a chapter headed “Transport” it should not exacerbate the problems (as in the Garden Suburbs) ; nor should it express a prejudice contrary to NPPF; and it needs to target more specific measures for sustainable modes.

Preferred Option : Provision of Transport Infrastructure

PARK & RIDE Ref Map 5

The northern P&R could better be located at the area of Thickthorn roundabout close to the junction of A46 / A452 (on the major bus route Kenilworth-Leamington). This is close to the new housing development proposed to the SE of Kenilworth. This P&R could also be linked via the pick up area just to the north of Leamington as on map 5 – particularly if the proposals for new development at that location take place.

RAIL

The scheme for a renewed rail service, north from Leamington via Kenilworth should be a clearly stated policy objective in the Plan. The present rail system is poorly integrated into the town's transport: buses leave from outside the station at 30 minute intervals at peak times on weekdays and even less frequently at weekends. There are no services after 19:00 hours any day.

A frequent shuttle bus service linking the station to the town and vice versa would make a good substitute for car travel and parking. The University of Warwick subsidises the bus service to the university in term time – cannot the Chamber of Trade and Town and District Council support a shuttle bus?

BUS

Again, WDC has little potential for shaping policy. However the local services fall far short of the stated NPPF policy for balance in favour of sustainable transport. It is for example lamentable that there is no effective evening bus service linking the principal towns of Warwick and Leamington ; nor is there such an evening service from Leamington Station northwards through the town. As a matter of integrity of public policy, it is not acceptable that these failings are camouflaged by vague statements of aspiration which provide no clue as to realistic achievement.

CYCLE ROUTES

As with buses, these fall far short of realistic provision. One potential, but unmentioned policy, could be an increased move to 20 mph speed limits in built up areas: at present many cyclists take to the pavements for lack of dedicated routes, while at serious risk from motor vehicles.

Preferred Option : Parking

The Leamington Society supports (p. 74)

“Our preferred option is to ...:

- ensure that sufficient car parking is provided within new residential developments to allow for convenient and safe parking”

but believes this must also include conversion of existing houses to HMOs, student hostels or other student accommodation, whenever it will increase the requirement for on-street car parking.

PO14 also includes an aspiration to:

- “maintain sufficient parking in town centres so as not to undermine their vitality, whilst ensuring that effective alternatives to the car for access to town centre are provided”

The key words are “sufficient”: does this mean predict and provide for the developers’ wishes? Then there is the phrase “effective alternatives” – when in fact the alternatives vaguely canvassed are not remotely effective.

The balance is set overwhelmingly in favour of wooing the motorist shopper. It is not a serious sustainable policy.

Warwickdc.gov.uk/newlocalplan

PO14 Transport

Full version Whole District

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