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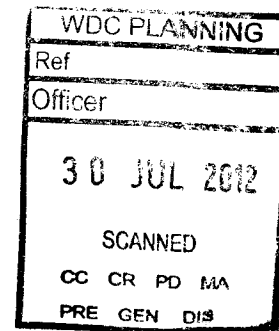
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Dear Sir/Madam

Warwick District Council: New Local Plan, Preferred Options May 2012

On behalf of our client, Warwick Castle, we set out below representations to the Warwick New Local Plan Preferred Options document, which has been issued for consultation until 27 July 2012.

Background

Warwick Castle is one of England's finest examples of a medieval Castle, first fortified by William the Conqueror in 1068; it is one of the UK's most visited attractions. The Castle is operated by Merlin Entertainments Group Ltd and offers a range of experiences and attractions including 'The Castle Dungeon' and 'Winged Warriors' as well as housing a working trebuchet and a model ballista.

The Grade I listed Warwick Castle is a privately owned and run property. The wide ranging benefits of the Castle, as a major heritage attraction, including the ongoing repair and maintenance of the property, is entirely funded from income received from visitors. As an example, the repair to the river wall requires expenditure of £750,000 over four years. In order to ensure that the Castle continues to be a successful attraction there is a requirement to maintain its visitor numbers. This, in part, requires the 'offer' to visitors to be maintained and updated. The Castle therefore needs to review the range and quality of its facilities in order to ensure regular and repeat visits from new and existing visitors.

Representations

We set out below our comments on the preferred options which are particularly relevant to Warwick Castle; the historic environment and culture and tourism.

P011: Historic Environment

Warwick Castle welcomes the recognition that the historic environment is of 'vital importance' for culture, education, leisure, tourism and the wider economy. Warwick Castle is a regional tourism



and cultural asset which is a major contributor to the local tourism offer and local economy and provides a diverse mix of jobs.

Warwick Castle supports the Council's preferred option to "*...work with property owners and other stakeholders in the historic environment to both protect the historic environment and ensure its economic viability for future generations.*" Further, Warwick Castle supports the statement that to achieve this they will "*encourage appropriate regeneration of the historic environment...*" However, this point should acknowledge that whilst heritage assets, such as Warwick Castle, should be protected, the value of these assets to the regional economy should be explicitly recognised. Specific historic environment policies should therefore be dynamic enough to enable heritage assets to be enhanced, improved and/or developed, particularly where they are vital to the regional tourism and cultural offer and consequently the regional economy.

As set out above, Warwick Castle is a privately owned attraction and, therefore, repairs and maintenance of the heritage asset are undertaken with income received from visitors. It is therefore vital that Warwick Castle can continually improve its tourism offer to continue to attract visitors as this will ensure the historic environment is maintained. Any historic environment policies should explicitly recognise this to ensure the Council's preferred option, to secure the economic viability of the historic environment, can be realised.

P017: Culture and Tourism

Warwick Castle supports the recognition that tourism is a key part of the local economy and that the Local Plan "*...should positively promote and actively deliver tourism.*" Warwick Castle welcomes the Council's support for the growth of visitor facilities and particularly the specific recognition of, "*...those assets associated with the historic environment.*"

Whilst Warwick Castle supports the Council's intention to encourage the development of tourism and visitor accommodation, we consider that it should not be the Council's sole approach to refer to new tourism development. The tourism sector is highly competitive and existing attractions need to continually improve and enhance facilities to continue to attract guests. Therefore, the Local Plan should better acknowledge the needs of **existing** tourism facilities and, in particular, the need for an attraction to diversify its offer to meet with ever changing visitor demands.

Given the importance of tourism within the region and the various wider benefits it provides such as jobs and visitor spending, the Local Plan should place a greater emphasis on the retention, enhancement and expansion of existing tourist attractions, subject of course to the need to balance the requirement to protect and enhance the historic environment. We consider that the Local Plan should include a policy on existing visitor attractions as part of the tourism strategy.

Warwick Castle

The importance of Warwick Castle as a visitor attraction within the region is clear, indeed, this is reflected in the role of the General Manager, Tim Harrison-Jones, as the 'tourism champion' for Warwick District Council. In view of the Castle's importance, we consider that there is scope for the New Local Plan to include a specific policy on development at the castle. This could acknowledge the importance to the district and wider area, that the Castle is privately owned, maintenance costs are met by income from visitors and, therefore, it is vital that Warwick Castle continues to improve



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its facilities and maintains its attractiveness to visitors. Warwick Castle is keen to discuss with the Council a policy to support the future of the Castle to ensure its ongoing viability and success.

We trust that the above response will assist you in developing the New Local Plan further. If you wish to discuss any element of our client's response, please contact Rachel Hill or me.

Yours faithfully

[Redacted Signature]
Director

Copy Jamie Charlesworth - Warwick Castle
 Tim Harrison-Jones - Warwick Castle