

## **COVENTRY GREEN BELT REVIEW – Annex 2**

### **Introduction**

This report supplements the Sub-regional Joint Green Belt Study prepared by SSR Planning in January 2009 on behalf of the authorities of Coventry City Council, Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council, Rugby Borough Council and Warwick District Council.

SSR Planning was appointed by the four authorities to undertake a review of the areas of Green Belt, as detailed within their brief. This was to identify parcels of land that contribute the least towards the purposes of including land within the Green Belt and have fewer environmental or physical constraints within and around Coventry, as well as the towns of Nuneaton and Bedworth, Kenilworth, Warwick and Leamington.

Following a detailed analysis, the Study makes recommendations in relation to the individual parcels within the Study areas. It then explains that there will be a range of other factors that will need to be considered at the local level, which may contribute to identifying sites within the above parcels for possible re-allocation within the respective Core Strategies. In order to provide finer grained, more detailed analysis of the parcels to identify specific sites for future development, the Study recommends that factors for consideration should include:

- Agricultural Land Classification
- Archaeological constraints
- Character and setting
- Deliverability
- Ecological issues
- Historic Landscape Character analysis
- Infrastructure availability and constraints
- Land availability
- Provisional Local Wildlife Sites
- Relationship with the Green Belt
- Sustainability issues

The following provides a summary of the analysis of the parcels recommended for further consideration within the Coventry administrative boundary by SSR Planning. It also takes into account the recommendations in the local Coventry Green Belt Review undertaken by DLS Planning in December 2007, together with other independent studies that include:

- Agricultural Land Classification for Allesley & Keresley
- Coventry Core Strategy, Habitat Regulations Appropriate Assessment (Screening Report)
- Coventry Green Belt Ecological Review
- Coventry Habitat Biodiversity Audit
- Coventry Urban Fringe Landscape Assessment and Guidance
- Draft Coventry Green Infrastructure Study
- PPG17 Audit / Coventry Green Space Strategy

The LDF Emerging Core Strategy identified an area of search to the north of Eastern Green built-up area, from the Eastern Green housing area to the A45 and bounded by Park Hill housing area and Pickford Green Lane – an area known as Slipperside Valley. DLS Planning looked at this area and concluded that if careful boundaries were drawn, the visual impact on the Green Belt from the north and west would be relatively minimal.

However, the SSR Joint Green Belt Study recommended that this area remain in the Green Belt and the recommendation has been accepted by Coventry City Council. It has not, therefore, been taken forward for greater analysis and potential release from the Green Belt as part of the Core Strategy.

Looking in turn at the parcels where the Joint Green Belt Study recommended further consideration:

### **Keresley (C19a, C19b, C19c, C19d)**

These Green Belt parcels in the Parish of Keresley represent the largest area that the Study identified within Coventry. It forms part of the Ancient Arden Landscape, supported by 'Design Guidelines for Development in Coventry's Ancient Arden' which is currently Supplementary Planning Guidance. Within the area of assessment, the northern area is a highly attractive and rural habitat mosaic within the Keresley countryside, with high biodiversity value. The Local Wildlife Sites (SINCs) are Pikehorne Wood, The Alders, Hall Yard Wood and Bunson's Wood, which are all Ancient Woodlands, and the large pool known as Keresley Mere, which also feeds the Hall Brook valley. The woodlands and Keresley Mere are currently privately owned with no public access and represent a particularly fine example of the Ancient Arden countryside, including ancient hedgerows.

The woodlands were designated Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation in 1989 and later extended to also include Kerelsey Mere, which in the 1982-83 Coventry Wildlife Survey, was rated as the best aquatic site in Coventry, recording 71 aquatic species. Hounds Hill and the adjoining Bunson's Wood is the highest part of the city, 500 feet above sea level, with impressive views over Keresley and towards the Coventry three spires in the distance. Archaeological surveys also recognise the importance of this area, particularly in relation to its proximity to the Bronze/Iron Age fortifications at Corley Rocks and Burrow Hill; a scheduled Ancient Monument just beyond the city boundary at 561 feet above sea level.

Collectively, this area of Green Belt is considered to be the most sensitive of the Keresley parcels and this has been carefully taken into account in drawing the boundaries of the proposed Green Belt Safeguarded Land and Country Park, linking with the Houldsworth Crescent green space and the Prologis Country Park in Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough Council. Within the area, a biodiversity buffer to help ensure their long-term protection, as recommended by the Coventry Green Belt Ecological Review, is indicated. Existing Public Footpaths have also been protected from development and new footpaths will be required to supplement these and ensure accessibility for passive recreation from the existing surrounding communities. In defining potential long-term development plots to be removed from the Green Belt, but with 'Safeguarded Land' status, boundaries have been drawn to follow ready

recognisable features such as roads, public footpaths, streams, woodlands and hedgerows where possible, in accordance with PPG2 Green Belts.

The proposal to develop this area as an exemplar Eco-Suburb recognises that there will need to be some loss of very good quality agricultural land. However, the areas of particular value for landscape, including historic landscape, biodiversity and ecology, archaeology and visual amenity, will be safeguarded and enhanced by securing their long-term conservation and landscape management within a new Green Belt Country Park, exploring long-term management partnerships and opportunities with Warwickshire Wildlife Trust; the Woodland Trust; Keresley Parish Council and the local community. This will also facilitate enhanced public access and connectivity from the adjoining urban areas, through a Green Wedge to the main area of open countryside in the Country Park, linked to Coundon Hall Park and Community Woodland off the Tamworth Road. It will thus provide a continuous public amenity, the largest in the north of the city, extending from Allesley Park, Coundon Wedge, Coundon Hall Park and Community Woodland, through to the proposed Keresley Country Park, and Prologis Country Park.

As an Eco-Suburb, the associated mixed-use housing and industrial development will also need to meet sustainability standards and respect the Ancient Arden landscape. The proposed breakdown of land within the Eco-Suburb equates to 113 hectares (48%) Keresley Country Park and 120.5 hectares (52%) to be removed from Green Belt as Safeguarded Land for long-term eco-development/redevelopment. Ancient hedgerows and natural features of value to the locality will be safeguarded and integrated into the development. A breakdown of the areas is attached to accompany Map 1. It should be emphasised that this represents the maximum development parcels and further detailed analysis may further reduce the extent of built development. It is, however, considered that the area could readily accommodate 3,000 houses as well as additional employment land. While further studies will be necessary, initial analysis does not indicate any requirement for major off-site infrastructure, although it is likely that there may be requirements for junction improvements on the radials into the city.

Map 1 (attached) provides a summary of the Keresley Eco-Suburb proposals.

### **Lenton's Lane (C2d)**

This parcel lies immediately to the north of the M6 and south of Lenton's Lane and forms part of Lenton's Lane Farm, providing a corridor link from the Sowe Valley Green Wedge. The Oxford Canal, a provisional Local Wildlife Site, passes through the area just north of the M6 and there is high voltage overhead power cables running alongside the canal. At the south-eastern end is the triangular area of Sowe Common. To the north of Lenton's Lane and east is open countryside within Warwickshire, which is also Green Belt. Hawkesbury Village Green adjoins the residential properties off Lenton's Lane, and Wyken Pool Local Nature Reserve lies to the south of the area, beyond the M6. To contribute towards the City's burial requirements over the next 30+ years, 15 hectares of land is reserved for an extension to the existing cemetery.

The DLS Planning Green Belt Review and the Ecological Green Belt Review concluded that the remote nature of the area makes this unsuitable for release from Green Belt in isolation within Coventry and that any release in this area should only be considered in relation to a much broader North-South Corridor cross boundary assessment. However, having regard to the recommendations of the Joint Green Belt Study and the need to identify areas for development within the city boundary, 5.4 hectares of land have been identified as long-term residential land off Lenton's Lane, which may also help to improve and sustain local services, particularly public transport and shopping.

### **Hawkesbury / Sutton Stop**

The Green Belt designation at Hawkesbury, was not included within the Joint Study area. It lies adjacent to that at Lenton's Lane and includes Hawkesbury Junction Conservation Area. Within the area is a major electricity sub-station, farmland and the high spoil mound created with the demolition of the former Coventry Power Station. High voltage overhead power lines pass across the area.

As in the case with the Lenton's Lane area, this area provides a corridor link from the Sowe Valley Green Wedge to the open countryside beyond. 3.2 hectares of land has been identified as a potential site for residential development, although it would be a difficult area to develop, given the noise limitations from the M6, which is on an embankment at this point; the overhead power cables; and the narrow road access. No nature conservation or floodplain issues are present on the land identified. Development may help to facilitate the designation of the adjoining former tipped site as a possible Local Nature Reserve; a long standing aspiration for the City.

### **Wainbody Wood / Kings Hill (C12e)**

This parcel is part of a much larger parcel extending into Warwickshire. The small area of land within Coventry to the north-west of the Coventry-Kenilworth railway line comprises the playing fields for Bishop Ullathorne RC School, Wainbody Wood (Ancient Wood, Local Wildlife Site and statutory Local Nature Reserve) and a small area of playing fields for Wainbody Wood Special School. It is considered that constraints on this land prohibit development. Land within the same parcel to the south of the railway line lies within the administrative area of Warwick District Council and will be considered by them as part of their Core Strategy.

### **Gibbet Hill (C13b)**

This site west/north-west of the Little Cryfield development forms part of a larger parcel extending into Warwickshire. DLS Planning considered that development of the more easterly field that lies at the top of the valley is more contained by housing, which now exists on three sides.

Development of this field for residential, with requirements for extensive planting to the western field boundary, is unlikely to give the appearance of urban sprawl or encroachment of the open countryside if carefully designed. The ecological survey of this site did not raise any particular concerns,

although the woodland in the locality beyond the site is of value for Protected Species.

### **Banner Lane / Cromwell Lane (C15a C15b)**

Parcel 15a comprises a series of sub-areas stretching from the Banner Lane area in the north, to the Coventry-Birmingham railway line. The area in the north is open remnant ancient fields adjacent to Rough Close Wood and has been designated as a Local Wildlife Site (SINC). This leads into public playing fields and an area of semi-improved grassland. Visually, this area is clearly set within the Green Belt with defined boundaries along the existing built-up area. Any development of this land would represent an extension into an area of nature conservation importance or playing fields.

The land immediately adjoining the railway line to the north comprises two fields with a small stream running to the north of these, defining a narrow strip of woodland. The westernmost of the two fields is visually part of the open countryside and its development would be an unnatural extension into the Meriden Gap. It is also constrained by overhead power lines. The easternmost field immediately to the north of Tile Hill Station lies within the built-up area of the city on three sides. Therefore, it is considered that this field could be released from Green Belt for residential, which would give a clear and consistent boundary. Being adjacent to the railway station and close to the facilities of Tile Hill Village and beyond makes this a suitable location for built development. The most important part of the site for biodiversity is the northern strip bordering Duggin's Lane and divided from this field by the Canley Brook. As recommended in the Green Belt Ecological Review, this area should be retained in Green Belt.

Parcel 15b to the south of the railway line and west of Cromwell Lane, extending west to the boundary with Solihull district, is gently sloping open farmland with little tree cover and no recorded areas of ecological importance or major physical constraints. The farmhouse at Westwood Farm is Grade II Listed. Although the land does form part of the Meriden Gap, the 12 hectares site would have potential for residential development, with access from Cromwell Lane. This would be subject to sensitive design considerations, including protecting the setting of the Listed Building, and boundary native woodland planting to protect the visual amenities of the Green Belt and enhance its ecological value. As with the land north of the railway line, being adjacent to the railway station and close to the facilities of Tile Hill Village makes this a suitable location for sustainable residential development.

## **Map 1 - Proposed Keresley Eco-Suburb / Safeguarded Land**

### Area A

From the Tamworth Road, the boundary follows existing ancient hedgerows and Public Footpaths M313, M316 to the Hall Brook Valley Green Wedge and Public Footpath M315, and linking with Coundon Hall Park and Community Woodland to the south of Tamworth Road off Long Lane. As with all parcels, ancient hedgerows and natural features will be integrated into the development. Area safeguarded for housing.

### Area B

From the Tamworth Road, the boundary follows Public Footpath M316 to the Hall Brook Valley Green Wedge and Public Footpath M315; Bennett's Road to the east; and Sandpits Lane to the south, incorporating the existing Royal Court Hotel and Golf Driving Range off Sandpits Lane. Area safeguarded for predominantly housing, integrating identified pockets of semi-improved grassland and field ponds as part of the development.

### Area C

Follows Penny Park Lane to the south; Bennett's Road to the west; residential areas to the east; and the recommended buffer to the Hall Brook Valley Green Wedge to the north, incorporating Public Footpath M315. Area safeguarded for housing.

### Area D

Follows Watery Lane to the west; an ancient hedgerow to the north; school playing fields to the east; and a water pumping station to the south. Area safeguarded for housing.

### Area E

Follows Watery Lane to the west, north and east, and the ecological buffer to the buffer to the Hall Brook Valley Green Wedge to the south. Area safeguarded for predominantly small-scale industry.

### Area F

Follows boundary to Prologis industrial park to the north and east; Watery Lane to the south; and Bennett's Road to the west. Area safeguarded for predominantly industry.

## Area G

Follows Bennett's Road to the west; the rear of properties off Fivefield Road to the north; ancient hedgerows to the north and west; and the recommended buffer to the Hall Brook Valley Green Wedge to the south. Area safeguarded for housing and educational use to provide for a primary school, integrating an identified semi-improved natural grassland field as part of the site.

## Area H

Follows Fivefield Road, and field boundaries to the north and south; and a recommended buffer to the Hall Brook Valley Green Wedge to the west. An area identified as semi-improved grassland to the south has been excluded from the site. Areas safeguarded for housing, integrated with the Ancient Arden landscape.

## Area I

Follows Fivefield Road and residential areas to the south; Bennetts Road to the east; a recommended buffer to Bunson's Wood (Ancient Woodland & Local Wildlife Site) to the north, together with an ancient hedge boundary and along the rear of the existing development on Bennett's Road, wrapping around the existing cricket pitch. This would offer the opportunity to design a scheme to overlook this attractive open space. Areas safeguarded for predominantly housing.

## Area J

Follows Bennett's Road to the east, Thompson's Lane and adjoining properties to the south, a field boundary to the west, retaining the integrity of the open countryside, and a buffer to the ancient hedgerow and public footpath M310 to the north. Area safeguarded for predominantly housing.

## Area K

Not within the area of safeguarded land, this area will be removed from the Green Belt to accommodate the long-term requirements of President Kennedy School. The boundary follows an existing hedge to the west, the hedge and public footpath to the north and Rookery Lane and school buildings to the east and south.

In order to provide for the most appropriate access arrangements for any new school, in the interests of improving highway and pedestrian safety and the amenities of local residents, a new access road off Rookery Lane through the proposed Green Belt Country Park to the school site will be required. This will be designed to have a minimal impact on the openness and appearance of the Green Belt in this location.