

Protecting Green Belt:

The Government attaches great importance to Green Belts. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are the openness and their permanence.

Against the five purposes that Green Belt serves there are many and significant questions in the Coventry local plan.

1. To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas.

The large area of land, currently Green Belt, in Eastern Green SUE JE2 provides critical protection from urban sprawl between Coventry and the neighbouring local authorities. It would be easy to see that if this area was allowed to be taken out of Green Belt protection and the proposed development take place then there would be a considerable risk in a ribbon development continuing along the A45 corridor linking Coventry into a much wider West Midlands, Solihull, conurbation. With the development proposed having industrial, warehousing, and office accommodation planned on the A45 on the outward facing city boundary continuing development would seem likely.

Although a Joint Green Belt review was conducted in 2015 with areas in Warwickshire there appears no similar review with Solihull and the wider West Midlands area.

Has there been a review and where is it available?

Why did the previous inspector and Coventry Council conclude this area should not be removed from the Green Belt or reserved for future development as they concluded that this would contribute to urban sprawl by encroaching into the countryside in this sensitive and strategically important gap?

Why has this Council decided to change their own and the previous inspectors conclusion?

2. To prevent neighbouring towns emerging into one another.

The removal of this land from Green Belt protection will mean that the area called the Meriden Gap will be under constant threat. The building of the new HS2 station at Stonebridge with its associated development will also decrease the gap between Birmingham, Solihull and Coventry. This is a real threat with what appears to be no combined plan with Solihull and Birmingham/West Midlands authorities to protect the merging of towns and communities.

3. To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.

This proposed development on a large area of Green Belt will clearly not safeguard the countryside from encroachment. While there is every possibility from other authorities with or

without agreement from Coventry of developing land nearer to the Coventry boundary the countryside will continue to be reduced for the future.

Once the countryside is removed from Green Belt protection there is no going back. Having moved back to Eastern Green 2 years ago, I was surprised and delighted to hear a Cuckoo from my back garden, a sound I had not heard for many years. It must be remembered that the Cuckoo is on the 10 most endangered species list for England and along with other flora and fauna must be protected within the countryside and particularly near to and in an urban environment.

Once again if these critical spaces are lost they will never be gained back indeed the destruction of this habitat would impact on future generations for years to come .

4. To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns.

While it is correct that the historic centre of Coventry and Meriden cannot be seen from the area in question it is still of importance in maintaining a controlled green space between Eastern Green and Allesley.

Allesley is in a designated conservation area and erosion of this gap by removing the Green Belt protection will mean that Allesley, Eastern Green, Allesley Green, and Allesley Park will merge into one massive urban sprawl and destroy the uniqueness of each of these quite separate areas.

5. To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

The plan put forward by the local authority appears to have a very challenging build programme which possibly can only be met by building on green field sites. This I believe is easier, quicker, and more profitable than building on brown field sites. The release of the green belt land in Coventry would provide this opportunity and could be an opportunity too good to miss. This is unlikely to encourage the development of derelict and other urban land.

In summary it is critical that Green Belt land is protected and this area in Coventry serves all five purposes of the planning practice guidance for the protection of Green Belt.

The local plan does not explain where and how Green Belt is to be used by authorities bordering on this side of Coventry so it is critical that this land is retained as Green Belt within the Coventry boundary to safeguard future urban sprawl which would link Coventry, Solihull, and Birmingham along the A45.

House building is not a reason in itself for using Green Belt and building of warehousing, industrial units and offices is even more of an abuse of Green Belt.

