

COVENTRY GREEN BELT REVIEW

DLS – PLANNING

FOR COVENTRY CITY COUNCIL

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CONTENTS

- 1 Introduction
- 2 Context
 - National
 - Regional & sub-regional
 - Coventry
- 3 Criteria for Assessment of Locations
- 4 Assessment of Locations
 - Urban Extension areas of search
 - Other areas of open countryside Green Belt
 - Green Wedge areas of Green Belt
 - Potential Green Wedges
- 5 Summary & Recommendations
 - Summary
 - Recommendations
 - Areas recommended for potential removal from the Green Belt
 - Areas where further investigation is needed before removal from the Green Belt can be recommended
 - Areas where Green Belt designation is recommended
 - Management & Implementation recommendations

List of Maps

References

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The five main purposes of Green Belts are set out in the Government's Planning Policy Guidance Note 2 (PPG2) "Green Belts", 1995. This also makes it clear that an essential characteristic of Green Belts is their permanence.... "Their protection must be maintained as far as can be seen ahead" (para. 2.1, PPG2).
- 1.2 Once the general extent of a Green Belt has been approved, and similarly where detailed Green Belt boundaries have been defined in development plans, they should only be altered in exceptional circumstances.
- 1.3 The general extent of Coventry's Green Belt was set out in various development plans in the 1950s to 1970s. Built development in Coventry over the past 30 years has been focused on the existing built-up area through a combination of allocated sites and, increasingly in recent years, by the recycling of previously developed urban sites.
- 1.4 In order to look ahead at the strategic planning needs of the West Midlands to 2026 the existing Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) is currently being revised. Using the Government's long term demographic forecasts the current RSS Preferred Option indicates that Coventry needs 33,500 net dwellings increase between 2006 and 2026. That is an indicative annual average rate of 1,675 dwellings / year.
- 1.5 Related to that housing growth it will be necessary to identify employment land required to provide jobs for the additional people, as well as land for associated social, community and leisure facilities. Given that scale of development it is unlikely that the recycled land supply alone will be sufficient to meet that level of need over the whole period to 2026.
- 1.6 The City Council is currently preparing its Local Development Framework (LDF) Core Strategy in accordance with Government requirements and in parallel with the revision of WM RSS. As a key element of this work it has therefore identified the need to review the Green Belt to see whether there are opportunities for re-designation which might assist Coventry to meet at least some of its projected development land. However, given the strategic importance of Coventry's Green Belt, it is recognised that any release of land must have the least detrimental effect on the underlying and ongoing purposes of that Green Belt status.
- 1.7 This strategic review of Coventry's Green Belt therefore assesses which, if any, Green Belt land within Coventry's boundaries can make a significant contribution to meeting long term development land supply needs in a manner which would be least damaging to the purposes and integrity of the overall Green Belt in Coventry. The principal focus for this assessment is the two areas of search for planned expansion of the urban area identified in the Coventry LDF Core Strategy Options Report, July 2007.

- 1.8 However, all Green Belt areas in the city are considered so that the review also seeks to identify any anomalies or opportunities of Green Belt designation which should be considered for further policy action in preparing local development documents. Green Belt in Coventry's context includes areas of green wedge Green Belt. These green wedges have similar functions to open countryside Green Belt but have been adopted in successive development plans over many years also for their specific importance in extending strategic open land through the body of the built-up area of the City for the benefit of all.
- 1.9 This review does not investigate the detailed infra-structure capabilities of areas. Normally the provision of utilities, road / transport and social infra-structure can be assessed and made at a later more detailed stage of investigation. This strategic review focuses on the Green Belt and general sustainability criteria in making recommendations about whether areas of land should be considered for release from the Green Belt.

2 CONTEXT

National Context

- 2.1 In undertaking a review of Coventry's Green Belt it is important to set out the essential context within which that review needs to take place.
- 2.2 Policy Statement 1 (PPS1) "Delivering Sustainable Development", 2005, sets out the Government's overall approach to planning. It is intended to be read in conjunction with other guidance.
- 2.3 The core principle underpinning planning in the UK is the concept of sustainable development. The Government's four aims for sustainable development are:
 - social progress which recognises the needs of everyone;
 - effective protection of the environment;
 - the prudent use of natural resources; and
 - the maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment.
- 2.4 Planning should facilitate and promote sustainable development by, inter alia, making suitable land available for development in line with economic, social and environmental objectives, and protecting and enhancing the natural and historic environment, the quality and character of the countryside and existing communities. The framework for doing this is through national planning policies combined with regional and local development plans. This plan-led system provides certainty and predictability through setting out a clear basis by which development decisions can be taken. The transparency of this system and its ability to involve the public in the policy making process is critical to its success.
- 2.5 In preparing development plans local authorities should look to the long term, recognise the needs of the community to secure a better quality of life, and not impose disproportionate social, economic or environmental costs. The plans must also be properly based on analysis and evidence.
- 2.6 The Government monitors and forecasts the extent of demographic change and provides guidance to regional bodies in drawing up long-term strategic plans for each of the regions. Recent statements have set out the need to make much higher levels of housing provision in England and Wales over the next 20 years or so to meet anticipated needs. Housing is the biggest user of land for built development and is the principal determinant of how much land should be provided within regions and local authority areas in their development plans.
- 2.7 Planning Policy Guidance 2 "Green Belts" (PPG2), 1995, sets out the purposes and functions of Green Belts, how they should be designated and how development within such areas should be controlled. The main purposes of Green Belt are to:

- check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- prevent neighbouring towns from merging;
- assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

- 2.8 The essential characteristic of Green Belts is their permanence. PPG 2 stresses that... "Their protection must be maintained as far as can be seen ahead". Once the general extent of a Green Belt has been approved, and similarly where detailed Green Belt boundaries have been defined in development plans, they should only be altered exceptionally. In practice this means that, once Green Belt boundaries have been defined, they should only be reviewed if the development needs of a city such as Coventry, looking ahead over the long term, clearly cannot be met from within the urban area, principally through the recycling of previously developed land. Because of the period of time since most of the West Midlands Green Belt was designated, combined with the forecast extent of housing need over the next 20 years, there is a significant likelihood that the boundaries will need to be revised. Para. 2.7 of PPG2 makes it clear that revisions to Green Belts should only take place through the development plan process.
- 2.9 PPG2 makes it clear that sustainable development principles should be used when determining Green Belt boundaries (see para 2.10 of PPG2). When drawing Green Belt boundaries in development plans local planning authorities should take account of the need to promote sustainable patterns of development. They should consider the consequences for sustainable development (for example in terms of the effects on car travel) of channelling development towards urban areas inside the inner Green Belt boundary, towards towns and villages inset within the Green Belt, or towards locations beyond the outer Green Belt boundary.
- 2.10 Recognisable features such as roads, streams, belts of trees or woodland edges should be used to define boundaries wherever possible.
- 2.11 Planning Policy Statement 3 (PPS3) "Housing", 2006, sets out guidance on identifying sustainable locations for housing development. It also gives guidance on measuring performance of development plans in achieving trajectories of housing supply, monitoring this and therefore the circumstances when greenfield release of land may be necessary to ensure that there is no ongoing under-performance.

Regional / Sub-regional Context

- 2.12 The West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS11) is currently being partially revised. Its purpose is to provide strategic planning policy for the West Midlands for the period up to 2026. Phase 1 of that revision is

Coventry Green Belt Review, 2007

concerned with the Black Country while Phase 2 covers the remaining area of the region, excluding certain topics. The Phase 2 Preferred Option was agreed by the Regional Planning Partnership on 22nd October 2007 and was submitted to the Secretary of State in December 2007. It will be the subject of a 12 week period of formal consultation from 7th January 2008 to 28th March 2008.

- 2.13 The key message set out within the revised Vision for the Region is the intention to enable the diverse needs of the Region's population in a manner which is sustainable and minimises the adverse impact on the environment. At the outset of the Strategy it makes clear the need to focus growth and transformation within the Major Urban Areas (MUAs), of which Coventry is one, and for new development outside these MUAs to be focused in "settlements of significant development". All new development is required to:

*"(i) minimise resource demand and encourage the efficient use of resources, especially water, energy and materials;
(ii) encourage the construction of climate-proofed developments and sustainable buildings to help ensure their long-term viability in adapting to climate change;
(iii) avoid development in flood zones, protect essential infrastructure against flooding, and promote the use of sustainable drainage techniques and natural flooding of land in appropriate locations;
(iv) facilitate walking, cycling and public transport;
(v) facilitate effective waste management; and
(vi) protect, conserve, manage and enhance environmental and natural and built heritage assets;..."* (Policy SR1)

- 2.14 The Spatial Strategy can be broadly summarised as enabling all parts of the Region (not necessarily individual settlements or local authorities) to meet their own needs, in a mutually supportive and sustainable way. At para. 3.3 it makes clear that in order to achieve the scale of housing growth envisaged it is likely to require taking some land from the existing Green Belt around the MUAs, but in a sustainable manner... *"the scale of projected housing need is now such that large parts of the West Midlands MUAs do not have the land capacity to accommodate the necessary building without making inroads into Greenfield/Green Belt land. Consequently, while focussing attention on efforts to increase the attractiveness of the MUAs so that they can retain population, some settlements and local authorities in the surrounding Shires are anticipated to provide housing beyond their own generated needs in order to meet this shortfall. Such provision is sought in ways that promote local sustainability and a greater degree of self sufficiency and that complements rather than detracts from the urban renaissance programmes within the MUA."*

- 2.15 Paras. 3.41 – 3.48 describe the Coventry-Warwickshire sub-regional situation and at para. 3.45 sets out the need to focus development and realise the growth potential of the sub-region both within Coventry and also within the wider North-South Corridor running through the sub-region. It states:

“Development will be planned and controlled to ensure that it: a) Maintains the RSS ‘step-change’ in the Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire area i.e. minimum 50% growth to Coventry & Solihull; b) focuses growth on the North-South Corridor and Rugby; with the necessary supporting infrastructure; but that growth in North Warwickshire and Stratford-on-Avon be limited to local needs; c) phases housing land releases to encourage regeneration in the MUAs by giving priority to:

- sustainable locations first and foremost and, within those location (sic) brownfield land before greenfield land;*
- then, if necessary, urban extensions within Local Authority areas; and*
- only as a last resort, cross-boundary urban extensions in the North-South Corridor (later in the plan period), if no more suitable alternative capacity is available.*
- Enables specific local Green Belt boundary adjustment for sustainable urban extensions to be made through LDFs when and where essential to meet long term needs.*
- Proposes releases of land for housing geared to maintain a constant average annual supply across the Sub-region.”*

- 2.16 Table 1 of the Spatial Strategy sets out the Housing proposals by local authority area in the period 2006-2026. For Coventry it proposes a 33,500 net increase in housing provision which equates to an indicative average of 1,675 dwellings per year. At para. 6.14 it states how this level of provision should be met.

“Within Coventry, development will initially be concentrated around the City centre and other priority regeneration areas. If, after further investigation, additional development sites are needed to meet the required housing trajectory, the Local Development Document should seek to bring forward greenfield urban extensions. Any proposed extensions should initially be within the Coventry administrative boundary and then if necessary, and following joint studies with Warwickshire authorities and the City Council, adjacent to the City within other local authority areas. This would involve amendments to the Green Belt boundaries.”

- 2.17 Within the ‘Prosperity for All’ section of the Strategy again the main focus is on meeting the needs of the MUAs. Policies relate to bringing forward specific types of employment sites, including the need to consider making further land provision for the Coventry-Nuneaton Regeneration Zone and the possible need to bring forward another Major Investment Site. Stress is also placed on making strategic site provision for further and higher education institutions. Policy PA6A on Employment Land Provision seeks to ensure a continuous 5 year reservoir of land within each local authority area. For Coventry this amounts to a reservoir of 82ha. and an indicative long-term employment land requirement of 246ha.
- 2.18 The RSS Preferred Option document therefore makes it clear that if Green Belt boundary amendments to meet long term needs are required then a

phased approach should take place. The first phase should focus on potential releases of land within Coventry, followed by a second phase assessment of potential within Warwickshire in the North-South Corridor.

Coventry Context

- 2.19 The Coventry Development Plan 2001 (CDP) (which is a unitary development plan) has a plan period of 1996-2011. Under the provisions of the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, and the subsequent Local Development Regulations 2004, Coventry City Council is currently preparing a new-style development plan called a Local Development Framework (LDF). This will comprise a series of local development documents, including a Core Strategy, which will provide the policy basis for making planning decisions in the time periods to which they relate. The Core Strategy is being prepared in the light of Council's Vision for the City and in conjunction with the Coventry Partnership. The Coventry LDF must be in conformity with the West Midlands RSS.
- 2.20 In relation to the preparation of the Core Strategy it is important to note that in October 2006 Coventry was designated as a Growth Point within the West Midlands as one of the areas working with the Government in its "Partnership for Growth" agenda. The purpose of this Government initiative is to increase the rate of housing delivery in England between 2006 and 2016 at a level at least 20 per cent above 2003 plan levels. For Coventry the target level is 9,000 dwellings between those dates. Funding has been provided by Government to assist in achieving this and in Coventry part of this funding is to enable green infrastructure to be enhanced. The concept of enhancing existing, and developing new, green infrastructure is emerging as an important matter to be pursued in parallel with the Growth agenda both in Coventry and elsewhere.
- 2.21 In the light of the Council's Vision, the Coventry-Solihull-Warwickshire Forum's input to the RSS revision and the emerging RSS Preferred Option, the City Council published a Core Strategy Options statement in July 2007 for public consultation. A key aspect in exploring the Options was the level of development in Coventry to take place over the next 20 years or so. The consultation document asked questions about alternative ways of accommodating growth. It also identified existing regeneration areas and two areas of search for planned expansion of the urban area – at Eastern Green and in Keresley, west of Tamworth Road – as potential ways of contributing to the accommodation of growth.
- 2.22 With the publication of the RSS Phase 2 Preferred Option in October 2007 the levels of development required of Coventry were firmed up – see paras. 2.15 and 2.16 above. The key question then in relation to these emerging figures is the extent to which Coventry is able to make provision from existing sources of supply within the urban area. Monitoring of built development, and particularly housing and employment land, takes place continuously to inform this process. Using data from the City Council's LDF

Annual Monitoring Reports it is clear that there is likely to be a significant shortfall in the projected capacity of Coventry's existing urban area to meet the 33,500 net housing requirement by 2026. Emerging evidence indicates that approximately 26,000 dwellings capacity is likely to become available over that time period, which is a significant amount of recycled brownfield land. However, subject to further detailed work on this capacity, it would mean leaving a shortfall of just under 6,500 dwellings capacity. In addition, the extent of the city's ability to provide 246ha. of employment land over that time period must also be doubtful.

- 2.23 Given these figures for projected land requirements, and the RSS Preferred Option approach, it is clear that exceptional circumstances exist to warrant the review of the Coventry Green Belt in order to establish whether local Green Belt boundaries can be adjusted to enable sustainable urban extensions.
- 2.24 It is not necessary here to go into the detailed history of Coventry's Green Belt. However, there are certain salient points which do need to be noted. In essence, there are two categories of Green Belt in Coventry, which is a somewhat unusual circumstance. The more "traditional" open countryside Green Belt is found in various relatively small pockets within the city boundary, plus the much larger areas of Allesley and Keresley parishes to the west and north-west. These peripheral open countryside areas of Green Belt should be seen in the context that they link directly to Green Belt areas beyond the city boundary, either in Warwickshire or in Solihull. To the west and north-west the Green Belt areas form a part of the strategically important and visually sensitive Meriden Gap between the major urban areas of Coventry and Birmingham. This gap is at its narrowest between Eastern Green to the east and Bickenhill to the west, a distance of approximately 6 miles. To the south lies the relatively narrow gap separating Coventry and Kenilworth, while to the north lies Green Belt (mainly beyond Coventry's boundary), providing a gap between Coventry and Bedworth. See Map 1 for the extent of the existing Coventry Green Belt.
- 2.25 Large areas of the Allesley and Keresley Green Belt have retained a very strong open countryside character and represent a very fine example of Ancient Arden Landscape with a mixture of mature woods, winding country lanes and relatively small fields with hedges and mature trees.
- 2.26 The second type of Green Belt is unusual to Coventry and a few other major urban areas in the country – green wedges, or strategic linear open areas penetrating deep inside the city. These "brookstrays" were originally described in the 1951 draft City of Coventry Development Plan (approved in 1957). The purpose of this type of Green Belt, as described originally in the City of Coventry Development Plan Review draft in 1966 (approved in 1972), was to protect open areas from development so that large areas within the city could experience the recreational, sporting, nature conservation and general visual benefits which they could afford. They also provide a vital corridor benefit in enabling people and wildlife species to travel quite long distances through the urban areas and into the open

countryside and vice versa. By having less formal agriculture such areas have particular ecological value and assist in maintaining diversity.

- 2.27 It should be noted that the boundaries of the Green Belt in the parishes of Allesley and Keresley were defined by Warwickshire County Council in 1960 and were approved by the Government in 1975. The general extent of the Green Belt in the former County Borough of Coventry was approved for the first time by the Coventry Structure Plan Alterations in 1979. Detailed boundaries for the whole of the metropolitan district of Coventry were approved in the City of Coventry UDP, 1993. Further details of all this can be found in reference document 3. Therefore, the Coventry Green Belt general extent goes back to the 1960s and only relatively minor alterations have been made in the intervening period of some 40 years. The Green Belt has therefore satisfactorily served Coventry's needs as originally intended, protecting the surrounding countryside from urban sprawl, preventing the coalescence of urban areas and encouraging the recycling of land within the existing urban areas.
- 2.28 Government guidance and the enduring status of Coventry's Green Belt indicate that adjustment of Green Belt boundaries should only, and need only, be carried out very occasionally in response to a long-term and strategic requirement. It is therefore important that in undertaking a review all the strategic drivers for that review are covered as far ahead as can be seen. The principal drivers are the main land requirements for housing and employment. However, given that much of Coventry's Green Belt is not traditional open countryside, but takes the form of strategic urban open space corridors (i.e. green wedges), the review also needs to ensure that any other long term requirements which cannot be met elsewhere are also taken into account. Of particular relevance here is the need to ensure that certain uses such as schools and colleges which are adjacent to or washed over by Green Belt green wedges are handled, and also that any areas of strategic open space which should be given Green Belt status are incorporated where this is sensible for sustainable development reasons.

3 CRITERIA FOR ASSESSING POSSIBLE CHANGES TO GREEN BELT DESIGNATION

- 3.1 From the information available it appears that exceptional circumstances exist which require that there is a need to assess the potential for adjustment of the Green Belt to help meet long term development needs. Proposed changes to Green Belt designation need to be based upon an assessment of identified land areas against criteria which balance the continuing purposes of the Green Belt and the need for land to meet these development needs. Therefore, these criteria need to enable evaluation as to how well an area of land meets the purposes of Green Belt as set out in PPG2, and whether they can be developed in a sustainable manner if released. A set of seven criteria which enable that evaluation have been prepared which reflect both national and local circumstances, and these are set out below. One or more of the criteria may determine the outcome of the assessment.
- 3.2 The criteria used to assess the potential for Green Belt release in Coventry firstly need to relate to the Green Belt purposes established in PPG2. In this way the extent of the contribution which a given area of Green Belt land makes to those purposes can be assessed. For Coventry this also needs to reflect the more local circumstances of that Green Belt land which lies within green wedges, as acknowledged by successive Secretary of State reports following relevant development plan inquiries when Green Belt has been considered. Secondly, in line with PPS1, PPS3 and the RSS Preferred Option, it is important that sustainability factors are also taken into account, so that such matters as nature conservation, floodplain intrusion and linkage with existing built-up areas are assessed. This approach of assessing a combination of Green Belt and sustainability criteria is similar to other Green Belt reviews which have taken place in recent years, notably at Cambridge, Nottingham-Derby, the South-West of England and at Cheltenham, although each is tailored to local circumstances.
- 3.3 The Green Belt criteria essentially seek to assess whether there are some areas of designated Green Belt which could be released from designation and not undermine the purposes of Green Belt as expressed in PPG2. Given that the general extent and the detailed boundaries of Coventry's Green Belt were established many years ago, it is clear that any release of land from the Green Belt for built development will have some visual or other impact. The point of these criteria, given that exceptional circumstances require that a review takes place, is to ensure that only the least damage is caused to the underlying purposes of the Green Belt by such land being released. The definition of defensible long term Green Belt boundaries is critical in this context, as expounded in PPG2, and these boundaries need to be determined by long distance views relating to features such as ridge lines, tree belts, woodland, field boundaries and sometimes roads.

- 3.4 The sustainable development criteria aim to ensure that any land proposed for release from Green Belt status for potential development can be done in a way which does not damage land with identified nature conservation value, land which performs an important floodplain function and does not cause significant travelling costs and is readily accessible from existing or easily extended facilities or services. These are in accord with the guidance set out in PPS3 concerning sustainable locations for housing development in particular.
- 3.5 The criteria for assessment are as follows:
- 1 Areas of land for release from Green Belt designation will only be recommended if built development on them would result in only modest visual impact on the open character of the Green Belt in the surrounding area. Modest visual impact is defined here as *not giving the appearance* of urban sprawl, reducing important gaps between urban areas and encroachment of the open countryside, thereby addressing purposes 1,2 and 3 of Green Belt in PPG2.
 - 2 Release of designated Green Belt would not significantly harm or detract from views of the city centre or nearby historic towns. (PPG2 purpose 4.)
 - 3 In green wedge areas of Green Belt the release of land for built development will only be recommended if the linear cohesion and openness of that green wedge is not significantly damaged.
 - 4 The addition of designated Green Belt land (including in green wedges) will be recommended only if it would significantly enhance the purposes, character or cohesion of the Green Belt.
 - 5 The release of designated Green Belt land would not damage areas of significant nature conservation value (i.e. Site of Importance for Nature Conservation [SINC] or higher).
 - 6 The release of designated Green Belt land is not in a defined floodplain (see Map 2).
 - 7 Land proposed for release from the Green Belt must be capable of being developed in a sustainable way by being readily integrated with the existing built-up area so that existing and extended key services and facilities (including public transport, walking / cycling routes and social / community / leisure facilities) are easily accessed.
- 3.6 It should be noted that no assessment of infra-structure capacity is included here since this is unlikely to be a strategic constraint, but also that neither is it critical in terms of Green Belt designation purposes. It may be a factor in subsequent detailed analysis, however.

4 ASSESSMENT OF LOCATIONS

- 4.1 The criteria identified in section 3 are applied by looking at three categories of Green Belt locations. Firstly, the two areas of search for potential urban extensions identified in the LDF Core Strategy Options report are examined. Secondly, the other areas of peripheral Green Belt around the city are examined and finally the green wedge areas of Green Belt.

A Urban Extension Areas of Search

4.2 Eastern Green (see Map 3)

- 4.2.1 The LDF Core Strategy Options report identifies a search area to the north of the Eastern Green built-up area. This assessment looks at the broader area from Eastern Green housing area to the A45 (the main road passing through the area) and bounded in the east by Park Hill housing area and to the west by Pickford Green Lane – an area known as Slipperslide Valley. This is mainly an area of sloping farmland with a golf course at the north-eastern end. It comprises two stream valleys with the eastward flowing streams joining to form Pickford Brook just before the Park Hill estate is reached. The resulting landform means that there is a broad plateau to the immediate north of Eastern Green which then slopes down to the first of the two streams. High voltage overhead power cables cross the north-western section of the area.
- 4.2.2 For completeness, the area assessed also includes the Green Belt land to the west of Pickford Green Lane south of the A45 up to the boundary with Solihull. The area assessed also includes the Green Belt land to the west of Pickford Green Lane south of the A45 up to the boundary with Solihull. This area is rolling farmland with some farms and other residential buildings at Pickford Grange, plus the various industrial and office buildings between the A45 and Meriden Road.
- 4.2.3 In assessing potential urban sprawl, the strategic views of the land between Eastern Green and the A45 are looking south / south-east / south-west from the A45, and also looking east from the open countryside around Millison's Wood area. A substantial part of the plateau north of Eastern Green is effectively hidden from these views by the landform, although the further north across the valley the more intrusive would development become. If careful boundaries were drawn to the plateau area the visual impact of its development from the north and west would be relatively minimal. However, by extending beyond the indicative line northward on Map 3 the impact becomes progressively greater to the extent that it would give the appearance of significantly reducing the Meriden Gap.
- 4.2.4 This area contains no views of the City Centre or other nearby historic towns.
- 4.2.5 Development of the area identified would not damage a green wedge or a designated nature conservation area. In fact the green wedge which was created with the development of the Park Hill housing area could be

extended westwards as part of the development and the highly attractive stream, trees and fields should be protected and enhanced. In accordance with para. 2.19, an integral aspect of enabling growth in this vicinity should be the enhancement of the remaining Green Belt area in that vicinity through compensatory investment. Such enhancements would clearly need to have regard to the Ancient Arden Design Guidelines.

4.2.6 Map 3 shows the extent of floodplain within this area of land, relating directly to the two streams. The impact of development on this floodplain will need to be assessed in detail, and particularly in regard to changing the character of the valley environment and the extension of the green wedge.

4.2.7 The potential development area identified should be capable of being integrated with existing areas at Eastern Green and Park Hill via pedestrian and cycle links. Road access will be an issue requiring investigation of the potential to relieve congestion in the Eastern Green / Tile Hill areas by the provision of a new road from the A45. Education, social and community facilities will need to be assessed in relation to what is already present with the need to provide additional facilities identified as an integral part of any development brief.

4.2.8 In looking at the area to the west of Pickford Green Lane it is apparent that any built development here would be isolated from the city's built-up area and would represent a significant visual intrusion into the sensitive Meriden Gap. As such it would not meet the Green Belt criteria relating to urban sprawl, reducing important gaps between urban areas and encroachment of the countryside.

4.3 Keresley (see Map 4)

4.3.1 The LDF Core Strategy Options report also identifies a search area to the north-east of Tamworth Road up to the built-up area of Keresley. The boundaries of the area for assessment here are shown on Map 4. The principal roads through this area are Tamworth Road and Bennett's Road. Tamworth Road is a straight road to the city's boundary with a semi-rural character having parkland and school grounds at its southerly end and 1920/30s large houses further north and predominating on the western side of the road. Bennett's Road is a more curving road with housing on both sides for part of its length, and an open area of farmland each side of Hall Brook where it passes beneath the road. The area east of Bennett's Road is now visually dominated by the large buildings of the Pro Logis Park employment area on the site of the former Keresley Colliery and Homefire Plant, and residential development nearby.

4.3.2 The visual character of the area is complex. The Hall Brook which flows in a south-easterly direction passes midway through the search area through a distinct valley of farmland dominated by small fields, banks and hedges, and field trees. The ancient woodlands, Pikehorne Wood and Bunson's Wood, are dominant features at the northern end of the valley. The area between Tamworth Road and Bennett's Road, with Sandpits Lane to the south and Thompson's Lane / Fivefield Road to the north, has the general appearance

of attractive open countryside with views stretching from the high land around Bunson's Wood across to the city centre. The area to the east of Bennett's Road is far less coherent and is dominated by surrounding development on three sides. Between Bennett's Road and Watery Lane the area is farmland, while to the north-east of Watery Lane is horse grazing land and President Kennedy School. To the south of Sandpits Lane lies Cardinal Newman School which is washed over by Green Belt.

- 4.3.3 If development was to take place generally in the area between Tamworth Road and Bennett's Road then it would clearly have the effect of extending the city across an area of very attractive open countryside. The encroachment of the open countryside would be apparent from all directions. It would not relate well to the existing built-up areas and would not form a natural extension of the urban area, but rather an unnatural intrusion into the countryside. At the southern end of the valley however, immediately to the north of Sandpits Lane, the land falls to the south rather than north towards Hall Brook. Development within a tightly defined area here would not have the same damaging effect in terms of the Green Belt purposes.
- 4.3.4 To the east of Bennett's Road the impact of development would relate much better with the existing built-up area of Keresley and provide the potential for a significant release of land which, like the area immediately north of Sandpits Lane, could be relatively easily integrated with the existing road pattern and facilities. That is not to say that housing should necessarily be built across the whole of this area, since the overall amenity in the vicinity particularly of Bennett's Road and the distant views across the area should be taken into account in any development brief. A green link from the built-up area to the open countryside following the public footpath along Hall Brook should be retained as part of any development, as should ancient trees and hedgerows. In accordance with para. 2.19, an integral aspect of enabling growth in this vicinity should be the enhancement of the remaining Green Belt area in that vicinity through compensatory investment. Such enhancements would clearly need to have regard to the Ancient Arden Design Guidelines.
- 4.3.5 President Kennedy School lies within this area suggested for release from the Green Belt and that will assist in its replacement under the Building Schools for the Future programme. To the south of Sandpits Lane lies Cardinal Newman School which is also likely to be affected by that programme. However, the school land is visually much more integrated with the existing Green Belt to the south and west at Coundon Hall Park. It also provides a link through to the narrow green wedge area at Keresley Brook Road. Therefore, it is considered that the school area should generally be retained within the Green Belt but that the built area plus any necessary expansion area be released with boundaries clearly defined to allow the long term development of the school.
- 4.3.6 The only other area which is considered to be suitable for release from the Green Belt in this search area is the land immediately to the north of

Thompson's Lane and west of Bennett's Road. This area would relate well to the existing Keresley Village without causing damage to clear views across this area which would give the effect of urban sprawl. This area would be capable of integrating with, and adding to, the services and facilities at this relatively remote community in a way which would improve its sustainability.

- 4.3.7 None of the land within the search area is within a defined green wedge or floodplain. There are three ancient woodlands at Bunsons Wood, Pikehorne Wood and Hall Yard Wood with the first two also designated SINCS.

B Other Areas of Open Countryside Green Belt

4.4 West Coventry (see Map 5)

4.4.1 To the west of the built-up area of Coventry, beyond the two search areas described above, lies the remaining large area of Allesley Parish defined by the A45 to the south, Tamworth Road to the north, Browns Lane / Long Lane to the east and the city / Solihull boundary to the west. This is an area of intensively farmed undulating land comprising many narrow country lanes and small fields with strong hedgerows and field trees. There are also several ancient woods in this area – Pinkett's Wood, Elkin Wood, Belcher's Wood, Daddley's Wood and Lord's Wood. As such, the area gives the appearance of a complex and highly attractive lattice of fields, lanes and woods – an area of classic Ancient Arden Landscape which has been carefully managed to retain that character.

4.4.2 Given the central location within the Meriden Gap of the area any built development on the western extremity of the built-up area here would be extremely sensitive. Views across the area are shown on Map 5 and are extensive, making any significant land release highly visible. These are particularly evident looking west and north from the elevated area of Windmill Hill in the vicinity of the Coventry Hill Hotel, and north, west and south from Long Lane and Brownhill Green Lane. Views to the east towards the city across this area exist from sections of the A45, Oak Lane and other lanes across the area further west. Development in this area would therefore have the effect of substantially reducing its open character leading to the appearance of urban sprawl and very significant encroachment of the open countryside in this strategically important area of Green Belt between Coventry and Birmingham.

4.4.3 There are no significant views of the City Centre from this area. The area abuts and interrelates with Coundon Wedge to the south-east but is not part of a green wedge. There are several SINCS within the area but none adjacent to the built-up area of the city.

4.4.4 The floodplain of the upper end of the River Sherbourne passes through the eastern side of the area close to Hawkes End.

4.4.5 Because of the juxtaposition of the area with the city's built-up area, with Coundon Wedge lying between, any development would have to extend the area of Allesley Village or the ribbon development along Browns Lane west into the Meriden Gap in a relatively isolated manner.

4.5 Tile Hill (see Map 6)

4.5.1 On the western periphery of Coventry there are a series of sub-areas stretching from Banner Lane area in the north to Cromwell Lane near Westwood Heath Road in the south. Essentially, there are 5 sub-areas of land:

- a) west of Banner Lane housing / employment area and Conway Farm
- b) west of Tanyard Farm housing estate
- c) west of Nailcote Lane
- d) south of Duggins Lane and north of the Coventry-Birmingham mainline railway
- e) west of Cromwell Lane.

4.5.2 Sub-area a) is an area of open remnant ancient fields adjacent to Rough Close Wood which has been designated a SINC. It is also visually open and provides an important link through to the Tile Hill Green Wedge. It is identified as a Green Space Corridor in the Coventry Green Space Strategy, 1994.

4.5.3 Visually, this area has clear and planned boundaries to the Green Belt while at the same time performing an important nature conservation function and therefore should not be released from the Green Belt.

4.5.4 Sub-area b) is an area of public playing fields called Floyds Fields. It is a flat open area and is shown as forming part of the Green Space Corridor referred to above. A strong hedge boundary exists to the east adjacent to Tanyard Farm estate while to the west the land slopes down to the open countryside in Solihull district beyond.

4.5.5 Visually, this area is clearly set within the Green Belt with defined boundaries along the existing built-up area and therefore should not be released from the Green Belt.

4.5.6 Sub-area c) comprises open private playing fields at the north end, with access from Tanners Lane, and an unused field to the south with access from Duggins Lane. The area is quite flat with strong field boundaries to the north and south and to the rear of the houses on Nailcote Lane.

4.5.7 This whole area relates naturally in visual terms with the area of open countryside to the west which is within Solihull district. There is a strong boundary to the Green Belt at the rear of the houses along Nailcote Lane. Development of these two fields would represent an unnatural extension into the open countryside which forms part of the Meriden Gap and therefore should not be released from the Green Belt.

4.5.8 Sub-area d) is a complex area comprising two fields north of the railway line with a small stream running to the north of these defining a narrow strip of woodland, an old cottage and several modern houses immediately south of Duggins Lane. The railway runs at a higher level than the land here with Tile Hill rail station located just to the south of this sub-area. To the east lies Cromwell Lane and the new road bridge spanning the railway.

4.5.9 The westernmost of the two main fields is visually part of the open countryside to the west lying within Solihull district and its development would be an unnatural extension into the Meriden Gap. The easternmost field immediately to the north of Tile Hill Station lies within the built-up area of the city on 3 sides and the redevelopment of the sports centre to the south will effectively define the planned edge of the city and the Green Belt beyond. Therefore, there is some merit in this field being considered for release from the Green Belt which would give a clear and consistent boundary on both sides of the railway. Being adjacent to the railway station, and being close to the facilities in Tile Hill Village and beyond, makes this a sustainable location for built development. However, there are two matters which do need to be resolved. The wooded area between the field and Duggins Lane should clearly be retained as such and not be built on from an overall visual amenity and nature conservation viewpoint. The degree of its nature conservation status needs to be assessed. The other point concerns the floodplain and the vulnerability of the field to flooding. The Environment Agency map shows the north-east corner of the field / woodland to be vulnerable to flooding and more detailed assessment is necessary before a final decision is made on the release of this part of the sub-area from the Green Belt.

4.5.10 Sub-area e) lies to the south of the railway line and west of the sports centre and Cromwell Lane, and extends west and south to the boundary with Solihull district. It is gently sloping open farmland with little tree cover.

4.5.11 Clear views extend across this sub-area from all directions, except where the houses fronting Cromwell Lane impede that view. Development of the land would clearly amount to urban sprawl, encroachment of the open countryside and the reduction of the Meriden Gap. There are no green wedge, nature conservation or floodplain issues. However, it does seem anomalous that the boundary of the Green Belt here washes over some of the houses fronting Cromwell Lane. A consistent boundary at the rear of the built-up area, as per the other sub-areas, would appear to be more logical.

4.6 Gibbet Hill (see Map 7)

4.6.1 In the vicinity of Gibbet Hill there are essentially 3 sub-areas of Green Belt within Coventry which link with the wider Green Belt to the south in Warwickshire:

- a) west / north-west of the Little Cryfield development;
- b) east of Kenilworth Road and south of the existing housing at Beverly Drive, Gibbet Hill, and bounded by the Coventry-Kenilworth railway line to the east;

- c) south of the existing housing on Stoneleigh Road and bounded by the railway line to the west and the Coventry boundary with Warwickshire to the south.

4.6.2 Sub-area a) comprises two fields at the rear of housing at Gibbet Hill and lies on the eastern side of the slope of the Canley Brook valley as it rises from the University of Warwick playing fields which lie within the Warwickshire Green Belt. The lower (more westerly) of the two fields is clearly sloping ground which is visible from the wider area to the west and its development would represent a visual intrusion into the wider Green Belt. However, the other (more easterly) field lies at the top of the valley at the start of the slope and is more contained by the housing which now exists on 3 sides. Development of this field, suitably conditioned regarding planting up the western field boundary, is unlikely to give the appearance of urban sprawl or encroachment of the open countryside if carefully designed. There are no green wedge, nature conservation or floodplain issues and the site relates well to the surrounding built-up area.

4.6.3 Sub area b) is a large field at the northern edge of the Warwickshire Green Belt as it crosses the boundary into Coventry. It rises up from the Canley Brook valley between Kenilworth and Coventry with clear views from Kenilworth across it. Its built development would be a clear intrusion into the open countryside separating Coventry and Kenilworth, although there are no nature conservation or floodplain issues here.

4.6.4 Sub-area c) comprises an open field and an egg farm with associated buildings. It has a similar position to that of sub-area b) and its development would also represent a clear encroachment into a sensitive open countryside gap between Coventry and Kenilworth in a manner which would amount to urban sprawl.

4.7 Finham (see Map8)

4.7.1 In the vicinity of the Green Lane / Finham area there are several areas of Green Belt within the Coventry boundary with Warwickshire (Warwick District) which are essentially a continuation of the Warwickshire Green Belt up to the boundary of the built-up area. The area to the north-west of the Coventry-Kenilworth railway line comprises playing fields for Bishop Ullathorne RC School, Wainbody Wood (which is an ancient wood and a designated LNR) and a small area of playing fields for Wainbody Wood Special School. South-west of Finham Park School is an area of school playing fields and south-west of Finham Junior School is a narrow area of associated playing fields.

4.7.2 The topography of the land in Warwickshire to the south-east of this area is attractive rolling farmland. Views of the area can be obtained from Stoneleigh Road, A46 and Kings Hill Lane, although the views of the land identified here within the city boundary are distant. If development was feasible on the land within Coventry it would not be unduly visible from these somewhat distant vantage points and would have a modest visual impact. Clearly, Wainbody Wood would be excluded from any development together

with land at least 50m from it, which effectively rules out the Wainbody Wood Special School playing fields. There are no floodplain or green wedge issues which relate to this area.

- 4.7.3 There are two key issues as regards release of any land here from the Green Belt. The first relates to the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme and the possible need to redevelop any of these school sites, and then whether there is sufficient land outside the Green Belt to enable that to happen. From the information available it is only at Finham Park School where this is likely to be an issue. Therefore, it may be necessary to redraw the Green Belt boundary to enable this strategic requirement to happen and if that is necessary it would have minimal impact on the wider Green Belt.
- 4.7.4 The second issue is broader and relates to the need to consider with adjoining local planning authorities, the potential release of Green Belt across local authority boundaries and where that would most suitably happen, if needed. The need for that is dependent upon the capacity of land released from the Green Belt in Coventry to meet its exceptional needs. If insufficient land is available in Coventry to meet those needs then, as referred to in the RSS (Revised) Phase 2 Preferred Option, cross-boundary urban extensions in the North-South Corridor may be necessary. The land in this vicinity is therefore one area where this may need to be considered.
- 4.8 Toll Bar (see Map 9)
- 4.8.1 There are two small areas of Green Belt land in Coventry near the junction of the A45 and A46 at Toll Bar Junction. Sub-area a) is at the rear of houses facing the A45 on its north carriageway. It is planted with trees and forms part of the Warwickshire Green Belt to the east of Coventry of which just this remnant lies within the city boundary. Sub-area b) is to the south-east of Siskin Drive and south of the A45.
- 4.8.2 Major proposals for the multi-level reconstruction of the A45 / A46 junction are at an advanced stage with implementation programmed within the next 5 years. Sub-area a) is affected by these road proposals and therefore its release for other built development purposes is both inappropriate and impractical.
- 4.8.3 Sub-area b) forms part of a much larger LNR extending southwards into Warwickshire and running along the River Avon marsh beds area east of Siskin Drive. It is highly visible from several directions and does not relate to the built-up area of Coventry. It lies within the substantial floodplain of the River Avon. Clearly, this area is unsuitable for Green Belt release or for built development.
- 4.9 Lenton's Lane (see Map 10)
- 4.9.1 This area lies immediately to the north of the M6 and south of Lenton's Lane, stretching from Hawkesbury Lane at Alderman's Green in the west to Woodway Lane in the east. The Oxford Canal passes through the area just north of the M6 and there are 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. The Wyken Pool LNR lies to the south of the area beyond the M6.

4.9.2 The character of the area changes from being more urban in the west, with the associated housing along Lenton's Lane and Hawkesbury Lane, to being much more part of the open countryside to the east. There is a high noise level from the M6 traffic across the whole area. Effectively, the western part of the area forms the connection between the Sowe Valley Green Wedge to the south of the M6 and the open countryside to the north and east of Lenton's Green Lane as illustrated on the Coventry Green Space Strategy Network Plan, 1994. This corridor link, combined with the designation of common and cemetery to the east, and the remote nature of the area, make this unsuitable for release from the Green Belt in isolation within Coventry. Any release in this area should only be considered therefore in relation to a much broader North-South Corridor cross-boundary assessment. There are no floodplain issues.

4.10 Hawkesbury (see Map 10)

4.10.1 The Green Belt designation at Hawkesbury lies adjacent to that at Lenton's Lane, covering the land within the city boundary west of Hawkesbury Lane north of the M6 and with the Oxford and Coventry Canals and housing on Blackhorse Road to the west. Within the area lies Sutton Stop where the canals meet, a section of the Oxford Canal, major electricity sub-station, farmland and the very high spoil mound created with the demolition materials from the former Coventry Power Station. High voltage overhead power lines pass across the area to the north of the Oxford Canal and also south-westward across part of the farmland. To the north lies the open countryside of Warwickshire within the Green Belt.

4.10.2 As is 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, with public footpaths crossing the open farmland and along the canal towpath. The only part of this area which has little value as Green Belt against the criteria is the open farmland north of the M6 contained by the old railway track and Sutton Stop. It is currently designated because of its relationship to the green wedge south of the M6 and the open countryside north of the canal. No nature conservation or floodplain issues are present in this area. However, 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.

4.11 Rowley's Green (see Map 11)

4.11.1 A small corner of land on the north-west of the A444 roundabout opposite the Ricoh Arena forms lies within the city boundary and is designated Green Belt. It forms part of a much larger area of Green Belt land extending northwards into Warwickshire (Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough area) towards Ash Green and the M6. The Coventry land is used for a social club

and pony grazing predominantly. It does not lie within a floodplain and does not have any particular nature conservation value.

- 4.11.2 Because of the nature of development in the vicinity and it being located very much on a key route in the North-South Corridor, it would be logical to consider this area of land, in association with adjoining land in Warwickshire, for built development to help meet Coventry's needs if the city is unable to identify sufficient capacity within its own boundaries.

C Green Wedge Areas of Green Belt

- 4.12 The detailed Green Belt boundaries of the green wedges have been determined as referred to in section 2. This has been largely the result of taking into account pre-existing and planned development along the length of the green wedges. Because of this, the restricted width of the green wedges, and the extent of the floodplain, the opportunity to identify land directly for housing or employment uses is quite limited. However, a number of Coventry's schools are located within green wedges, which is an issue of strategic planning concern underlying the exceptional circumstances which necessitate this Green Belt review. Also, it is important to assess whether there are areas of land which should be incorporated within the Green Belt green wedges. This has hitherto not been possible since exceptional circumstances did not then exist to warrant changing the Green Belt.

4.13 Sowe Valley Green Wedge (see Map12)

- 4.13.1 The Sowe Valley Green Wedge is the most extensive of the Coventry green wedges running right through the east of Coventry from Alderman's Green in the north to Whitley in the south where it joins with the Sherbourne Valley Green Wedge. It varies in width along its length according to the local landform and land uses. The green wedge contains numerous LNRs, SINCs and sports grounds.

- 4.13.2 Moving south along the green wedge the locations where strategic change is considered are:

- a) Wood End, Henley Green & Manor Farm
- b) Potter's Green Corridor
- c) Henley College
- d) Hungerley Hall Farm
- e) Ernesford Grange School.

These locations are considered in turn below.

- 4.13.3 At Wood End, Henley Green & Manor Farm the New Deal for Communities (NDC) programme is working to create a major regeneration scheme over a 10 year programme. Inevitably, this includes looking at the green wedge and among the proposals being considered is the redefinition of part of the green wedge to allow opportunities for development and enhanced green space facilities. Given the scale and depth of these schemes it is inappropriate to assess them in this review. Rather, the outcome of the detailed

consultations and negotiations regarding the redefinition of the green wedge boundaries in this area will need to be taken on board by the City Council in proposing any Green Belt changes.

- 4.13.4 In carrying out that redefinition of boundaries in relation to the NDC proposals, the extension of the green wedge is recommended to incorporate the Potters Green corridor as it runs south from Deedmore Road round Henley Green estate to Henley Road. Although this area does not run alongside a river or stream it incorporates playing fields and open space in a manner which is consistent with the other green wedges in scale and nature. North of Henley Road it incorporates a large SINC.
- 4.13.5 The built area of Henley College is excluded from the Green Belt but it is tightly defined, and the car park is included within it. If the college envisages expansion in the long term on a scale which definitely cannot be accommodated within its existing built area then it is considered that the main floodlit car park could be released from the Green Belt for built development to enable that expansion to take place. This should not damage the integrity of the green wedge at this location given the existing extent of housing development adjacent to the college and relative to that part of the car park.
- 4.13.6 Hungerley Hall Farm is located immediately to the west of the A46 on land rising up from the River Sowe to the east of Clifford Park housing area, and south of the University Hospital of Coventry & Warwickshire and the proposed housing at Walsgrave Hill Farm. A significant area of floodplain lies within the valley in this vicinity, but to the west of that there is an area which could be released from the Green Belt without giving the impression of urban sprawl or damaging its visual integrity or connectivity. However, it is understood that floodplain compensation will affect this area making development infeasible.
- 4.13.7 Ernesford Grange School in Princethorpe Way is one of the schools highlighted in the BSF programme for redevelopment and expansion. The existing school buildings are excluded from the Green Belt. Because of the need to retain the site of the original Ernesford Grange there is only limited scope to redevelop on the existing footprint and maintain school operations. Therefore, if additional land outside the existing built curtilage is required for building, then it should be on the south-west side of the school where it would not eat into the overall width of the wedge and cause least damage to its overall cohesion and openness. Clearly, measures would need to be put in place through landscaping and design which ensured no significant damage to the amenity of residents of properties in March Way, Chard Road and Badger Road. If the long term building requirements of the school allow then land currently built on should be incorporated into the Green Belt.
- 4.14 Sherbourne Valley Green Wedge (see Map 13)
- 4.14.1 Sherbourne Valley Green Wedge extends from Whitley in the south, around the western side of Jaguar Whitley R&D Headquarters, along the A444 /

London Road towards the city centre incorporating extensive allotments near Whitley Village, London Road Cemetery and Charterhouse.

4.14.2 The Green Belt boundaries in this green wedge have been defined in relation to appropriate features, either existing or planned. The River Sherbourne floodplain extends across much of the designated area. London Road Cemetery, which is a conservation area, is not available or appropriate for built development. The green wedge does contain historic views of the City Centre, particularly from the Charterhouse area. No strategic development requirements have been advised and there are no clear changes to Green Belt designation identified.

4.15 Cannon Park Green Wedge (see Map 14)

4.15.1 The Cannon Park Green Wedge extends from the city boundary near Gibbet Hill and the University of Warwick in the south towards the City Centre encompassing Canley Ford, Hearsall Golf Course and the War Memorial Park and associated Kenilworth Road spinneys. Tocil Wood (ancient woodland) is an LNR in the south of the wedge and the fields adjacent to Canley Ford are designated as a SINC. Canley Brook forms a prominent feature through much of the wedge.

4.15.2 The Green Belt boundaries in this green wedge have been defined in relation to appropriate features, either existing or planned. The floodplain of the Canley Brook covers much of the wedge. Significant sections of Kenilworth Road Conservation Area are contained within the wedge. No strategic development requirements have been advised. The only possible change to Green Belt designation could be the addition of Top Green at the northern end of the wedge which would have the effect of extending it almost to the city centre. However, the character of Top Green is different from the more open nature of the rest of the wedge and its inclusion as Green Belt, rather than urban green space, would be anomalous.

4.16 Westwood Heath Green Wedge (see Map15)

4.16.1 Westwood Heath Green Wedge extends from the open countryside south of Kirby Corner northwards and then westwards to incorporate various formal playing fields and the two ancient woods – Ten Shilling Wood and Park Wood. Both these woods are LNRs and are linked by the incorporation of Westwood Stream and associated streamside fields. Westwood School intrudes into the wedge but is excluded from Green Belt designation.

4.16.2 The Green Belt boundaries have been largely the result of deliberate planning in the last 30 years with the laying out of the playing fields, development of Westwood Business Park and Westwood housing estate, and in relation to the previous built development of Westwood Campus of the University of Warwick and the Charter Avenue housing. No strategic development requirements have been advised and there are no clear changes to Green Belt designation identified.

4.17 The Woodlands Green Wedge (see Map 16)

4.17.1 The Woodlands Green Wedge is dominated by the ancient woods of Tile Hill Wood (which is also a SSSI and LNR), Pig Wood (LNR) and Plants Hill Wood (LNR). Open land associated with and linking these woods incorporates old fields and school playing fields. This area links indirectly with the nearby open countryside at Conway Farm (see para. 4.5.2) via Banner Lane.

4.17.2 Several schools have their built-up areas excluded from the Green Belt designation, notably Woodlands School and Tile Hill Wood School. With the development of the Banner Lane housing some 10 years ago the potential for changed boundaries has largely been handled. The only strategic development requirement advised in this vicinity is in relation to the eventual complete redevelopment of Tile Hill Wood School. The difficulty with this is that the open land (likely to be needed for linking Pig Wood and Plants Hill Wood with Tile Hill Wood to the north) is extremely narrow already and the whole functioning of the wedge would be jeopardised by it being effectively severed. Further investigation as to the feasibility of maintaining the existing Green Belt boundary around the school, but allowing temporary incursion and reinstatement, should take place ahead of any decision to amend Green Belt boundaries. If this is not feasible then a “no net loss of Green Belt” approach should be pursued which allows adjustment but maximises the corridor in the amended boundaries. If this is not feasible then the removal of a section of Green Belt designation may be necessary, including Plants Hill Wood and Pig Wood since the linearity and connectivity of the green wedge would be lost.

4.18 Coundon Wedge Green Wedge (see Map 17)

4.18.1 Coundon Wedge is different from the other green wedges in that it is both a corridor from the open countryside into the built-up area of the city and, because of its width and scale, forms part of that open countryside in that part to the north of Pickford Way roundabout. South of that roundabout the wedge incorporates Allesley Park and Pickford Way with its associated landscaping, including Pickford Brook. River Sherbourne and its stream tributary cross the open countryside part of the wedge. Running north from Pickford Way roundabout is the A4076 Coundon Wedge Drive which passes through the wedge and joins Long Lane at Brownhill Green. Within the open countryside part of the wedge are several old field lanes – Staircase Lane, Church Walk and Northbrook Road. The open countryside part of the wedge is contained by Allesley Village to the south, Coundon to the east, and the Jaguar Browns Lane factory buildings and housing to the north-west. The Allesley Park part of the wedge is defined by the Allesley Park housing area to the south, Allesley Village to the north and Coundon to the east. To the west lies the A45 but the wedge has been extended in a purpose-designed manner through the Park Hill housing area to the open countryside beyond.

4.18.2 The defined boundaries of Coundon Wedge have remained very much intact over the years and, apart from the construction of Coundon Wedge Drive in the late 1980s, the main boundary issues have been, and continue to be:

- a) the area of land to the north of the car factory reserved specifically since 1975 for the expansion needs of Jaguar / Ford Cars; and
- b) the occasional extension / partial redevelopment of Coundon Court School.

4.18.3 With the announcements by Ford Cars plc about its cessation of car manufacturing at its Browns Lane site and its intention to sell the site for employment uses, the policy (E7 in the Coventry Development Plan, 2001) and consequent allocation of the expansion area ceases to have great relevance. However, the consequence of that raises the question as to whether or not the land should be put into the Green Belt (as part of Coundon Wedge). In considering the land in relation to the criteria it has no particular nature conservation value and does not lie in a floodplain. Neither would its development significantly harm or detract from views of the city centre or nearby historic towns. The main issue concerns the visual impact of its potential development in harming the open character of the Green Belt or the linear cohesion of the green wedge. Would its development give the appearance of urban sprawl, reduce important gaps between urban areas and encroach upon the open countryside? The area of land in question occupies an elevated position with part of the land facing north / north-east directly down towards Brownhill Green, while a smaller part looks south down towards the factory and houses along Browns Lane. This southern section of the site is not particularly highly visible from the north and the east – that is, from Long Lane, Brownhill Green and Coundon Wedge Drive, although it is obviously visible from Browns Lane near the ridge line. From these observations, the development of the whole area would have a detrimental impact upon the wedge and open countryside, a fact that was obviously weighed in the balance of the job creation / protection benefits when the site was originally allocated. However, development of the southern portion of the land would not be such as to have no more than a modest visual impact. Therefore, the area shown on Map 17 is recommended to be retained for built development and the remaining area designated as Green Belt.

4.18.4 Coundon Court School is one of the schools identified for substantial redevelopment as part of the Building Schools for the Future programme. It is also one of the few secondary schools in the city where the whole of the site, buildings as well as playing fields, are washed over by Green Belt designation. Presumably this was done because of the sensitive location of the school relative to the rest of Coundon Wedge. The adjacent Hollyfast Primary School is similarly washed over by the Green Belt designation. The schools occupy an elevated position on the eastern side of the green wedge with strong views across the wedge to them from the south and west. However, the large number of mature trees on the school site, derived from the original Coundon Court, mean that the school buildings are not very visible, certainly no more so than much of the adjacent housing in Coundon.

4.18.5 Experience in Coventry has shown that usually though not always, where the built area of the school has been excluded from the Green Belt, its extension has been feasible within that defined school built area. Also,

experience in relation to Coundon Court School shows a long history of iterative and incremental exceptional planning permissions granted because of its position within the Green Belt. This is not the intention of Green Belt designations which are designed to last as far ahead as can be seen so that the general public has confidence in the designation. With the growth of the city and the BSF programme there are clear exceptional needs to adjust Green Belt boundaries to meet long-term strategic requirements. Therefore, it is recommended that the Coundon Court School buildings are taken out of the Green Belt to enable redevelopment for sustainable long term educational needs, but only to the extent necessary. This should not include the mature trees which are critical in shielding the existing (and potential) buildings from the broader views across the wedge. In this way the visual impact will be modest and will not have the appearance of creating urban sprawl, encroachment of the open countryside or damaging the linear cohesion of the wedge.

D Potential Green Wedges

4.19 In looking at the existing green wedge areas of Green Belt in the city it is apparent that there are several areas which have some or all of the characteristics of green wedges but have not been so designated. Given that the review of Green Belt is to be undertaken only on a very occasional basis, now is the time to address any anomalies if they exist. It needs to be remembered that all these potential areas will currently have urban green space status within the CDP. The issue here is whether there are any areas which share the characteristics of green wedge Green Belt – that they have a linearity which inter-connects areas for the benefit of people and nature conservation combined with a scale which gives them a visual importance across a wide area. One such anomaly has already been highlighted and referred to in relation to Potters Green corridor at para. 4.12.4 because of its relationship with the Sowe Valley Green Wedge. The other possible anomalies are at Lake View Park, Eastern Green and Canley.

4.20 Eastern Green Corridor (see Map 18)

4.20.1 Within the Coventry Green Space Strategy Network Map, 1994, the Eastern Green Corridor is shown. The area extends alongside the River Sherbourne from the allotments to the east of Four Pounds Avenue out through Lake View Park (where it meets Pickford Brook), between Allesley Park and Whoberley housing areas to the A45. Beyond the A45 the corridor extends through Mount Nod and then much more narrowly through Eastern Green. There is a continuous paved walkway between Allesley Old Road and just west of Alderminster Road at Mount Nod, including under the A45. For the most part the land within the corridor is ornamental public open space although there are also two allotments areas and the school grounds of St Christopher Primary School where general public access is not available. The width of the corridor is generally wider the closer to the city centre. The linearity of the corridor is good over large sections, with a short gap in the vicinity of the east of Allesley Old Road. The corridor presents wide strategic views for travellers passing through the areas, with the exception of the area

to the west of Mount Nod where its effect is much more localised though still important. In short, the corridor possesses the characteristics of green wedge Green Belt in terms of linearity, cohesion and connectivity and its designation is therefore recommended.

4.21 Canley Corridor (see Map 19)

4.21.1 Also shown as a green space corridor on the Coventry Green Space Strategy Network Map is the area alongside and south of the Coventry-Birmingham mainline railway to the north of the Canley housing area. Although the Canley Brook rises in this area there is not really much of a stream presence, the dominant feature giving the area its linearity being the mainly embanked railway line. Most of the area comprises public open space with remnant field boundaries and trees, plus the now disused playing fields of the former Sir Henry Parkes PS. Although the corridor is valuable for the residents of Canley and is apparent to travellers on the railway it does not possess the strong visual character of the other green wedges. Neither is it a clear linear route for people using this open space. Its designation as urban green space is therefore accurate. It is important to note that ongoing master planning work concerning the regeneration of Canley is taking place. This work includes the upgrading of the urban green spaces within the area.

5 SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

- 5.1 Green Belt boundaries should be changed only if exceptional circumstances require it in order that its long term purposes are not undermined. National and regional housing requirements in particular, combined with the regional policy approach of focusing development on the major urban areas including Coventry, mean that it is necessary to provide land for 33,500 dwellings to meet Coventry's needs over the period 2006-2026. Emerging evidence indicates that there is likely to be a shortfall in the amount of land within Coventry to provide for this housing requirement. Associated development land will also be required for employment, and social and educational needs.
- 5.2 The purpose of this review is to investigate the potential to release land from the Coventry Green Belt to help meet these exceptional needs in a manner which would not be unduly damaging to the underlying purposes of the Green Belt. Because a review of the Green Belt should happen very seldom this review also considers other identified long term strategic needs, such as the need to plan for Coventry's school re-building programme ("Building Schools for the Future"). Similarly, this is the correct time to identify any anomalies or opportunities for amending Green Belt boundaries. The results of this review can then be fed into the LDF Core Strategy process to assist in making decisions for the long term development of the city to 2026.
- 5.3 It is most important to balance the needs giving rise to the exceptional circumstances with the ongoing and fundamental purposes of Green Belts, including green wedges. In addition, it is important to ensure that locations for development are as sustainable as possible. Therefore, a set of seven criteria have been used to help make this assessment when looking at specific areas of Coventry Green Belt. These criteria are directly related to the purposes of Green Belts and encouraging sustainable development, in line with PPG2, PPS1 and best practice.
- 5.4 The RSS Preferred Option makes it clear that, if there is insufficient land within the city to meet the long term development needs then it may be necessary to look at urban extensions in cross-boundary areas with adjoining authorities. This review will help to answer the question as to whether this will be necessary.
- 5.5 The City Council identified two search areas for possible strategic urban extensions in the LDF Core Strategy Issues and Options report. These are at Eastern Green and Keresley. This review has looked at all the Green Belt land within Coventry to assess its suitability for potential release for development to meet long term needs. From this review it is apparent that the two search areas were appropriate in that they have yielded land with the most potential for release, although a number of small areas for release have been identified in other areas as well.

- 5.6 In setting out the recommendations this review makes comments about boundaries. However, at each location there will be a need to identify specific boundaries in due course if a boundary is proposed for alteration. In a number of cases it is recommended that further information not available to the review is used to determine whether a boundary change is actually practical before a decision can be made.

Recommendations

5.7 Areas recommended for potential removal from Green Belt

5.7.1 The following locations are recommended to be removed from the Green Belt:

- a) Part of Slipperslide Valley, Eastern Green
- b) Land to the east of Bennett's Road, Keresley
- c) Small area of land north of Sandpits Lane, Keresley
- d) Cardinal Newman School (built & expansion area)
- e) Land at Keresley Village
- f) Houses along Cromwell Lane
- g) Small parcel of land at Gibbet Hill
- h) Finham Park School extension
- i) Coundon Court School (built & expansion area).

5.7.2 An area of land in the Eastern Green area of search shown approximately on Map 3 is capable of being released from the Green Belt without giving the appearance of urban sprawl since it can largely be contained within the landform of the area. Provided that built development of a domestic height is contained within the area and not beyond, important views towards the land from the north and west would not be damaged such as to give the appearance of significantly eating into the Meriden Gap. This aspect could be further assisted by additional tree planting close to the A45 and nearer to the ridge lines across the land. Road access to the area is a matter which would need to be addressed if development on the land was proposed.

5.7.3 At the Keresley area of search four areas of land are recommended as being capable of release from the Green Belt without undermining the character of the surrounding Green Belt. These are shown on Map 4 and are located east of Bennett's Road, a narrow strip immediately north of Sandpits Lane, part of the Cardinal Newman School land and a field at Keresley Village. There are strong and clear views across the remainder of the area which has the character of attractive open countryside which, if developed, would give the appearance of urban sprawl. Within this area recommended to be retained are several areas of significant nature conservation value.

5.7.4 At Cromwell Lane (see Map 6) it is recommended that a minor alteration to the boundary of the Green Belt is made to regularise the situation in relation to excluding existing housing in this area from within the Green Belt.

- 5.7.5 At Gibbet Hill (see Map 7) a single field is recommended to be removed from the Green Belt. This would align the boundary of the Green Belt with the other housing at the top of the valley slope and would not give the appearance of urban sprawl if kept to this alignment.
- 5.7.6 The long term expansion / redevelopment of Finham Park School (see Map 8) may require the release of a small amount of additional land to the rear of the existing built area of the school. The principle of keeping the built area of the school outside of the Green Belt should be retained. No damage to the purposes of the Green Belt at this location will be caused by this modest release.
- 5.7.7 At Coundon Court School (see Map 17) the built area and playing fields are washed over by Green Belt. This is unusual in Coventry where most of the built areas of school have been excluded. It would seem that a different approach has been taken here because of the visually sensitive location of the school in relation to views across Coundon Wedge. However, this has led to numerous difficulties concerning school extensions over the years in a manner which is inappropriate and undermines the long term character of the Green Belt. It is recommended therefore, partly for consistency and partly because the actual buildings of the school are relatively hidden, that the built area is released from the Green Belt and that the boundary is very carefully drawn to ensure that the tree cover is maintained in perpetuity. It is also recommended that additional tree planting takes place to reinforce what is there already and that tree preservation orders are placed on the trees in this area.
- 5.8 Areas where further investigation is needed before removal from Green Belt can be recommended
- 5.8.1 There are several areas where further information is required before a clear recommendation on whether an area of land should be removed from the Green Belt, or if it is, which area should be so removed. These locations are at:
- a) Area of land adjacent to Tile Hill Station
 - b) Tile Hill Wood School extension
 - c) Ernesford Grange School extension
 - d) Henley College.
- 5.8.2 The field to the north of Tile Hill Station (see Map 6) would potentially be a highly accessible and sustainable location for housing and would align visually with the Green Belt boundary and views across the surrounding area. However, this field along with the spinney area immediately to the north need to be assessed for their nature conservation value and whether this value would be significantly undermined by the development of the field. Also, the extent of the floodplain implications at this location need to be assessed in greater detail.
- 5.8.3 At Tile Hill Wood School (see Map 16) the need for a major redevelopment as part of the BSF programme could, if allowed to impinge on the very narrow corridor of Green Belt, undermine the viability of this green wedge.

Further investigation as to the feasibility of maintaining the existing Green Belt boundary around the built area of the school, but allowing temporary incursion and reinstatement, should take place ahead of any decision to amend Green Belt boundaries. If this is not feasible then a “no net loss of Green Belt “ approach should be pursued which sees an adjustment but maximises the corridor in the amended boundaries. Ultimately, if this is simply not feasible, it may be more appropriate to recognise the severance of the green wedge and remove Plant’s Hill Wood and Pig Wood from the Green Belt. The woods will remain protected as LNR ancient woodlands in any event.

5.8.4 At Ernesford Grange School (see Map 12) the need for a major redevelopment as part of the BSF programme may require some Green Belt land to be released on the south-western side of the existing school buildings. If this is actually required then compensatory measures should be introduced to protect the amenities of local residents and any land not required for long term building at the school returned to the Green Belt.

5.8.5 At Henley College (see Map 12) there may be a need for additional land to meet long term expansion needs. If this is proved to be the case then the northern floodlit area of the car park could be released from the Green Belt while causing little damage to the integrity of the green wedge.

5.9 Areas where Green Belt designation is recommended

5.9.1 Anomalies and opportunities to amend Green Belt boundaries have been identified as part of this review on the basis that change to Green Belt boundaries should take place only very occasionally. The areas where change to designation is recommended is at the following locations:

- a) Part of land north of Jaguar factory, Browns Lane
- b) Mount Nod – Spon End Green Wedge
- c) Potters Green Corridor.

5.9.2 To the north of the Jaguar factory at Browns Lane in Coundon (see Map 17) an area of land has been designated in successive development plans as having the potential to meet the long term expansion needs of Jaguar / Ford Cars. This designation is no longer needed. On the basis of the topography of the area and the resulting impact on Coundon Wedge it is recommended that the northern part of the land is taken into the Green Belt and an area at the southern end is allocated for development.

5.9.3 The area identified on Map 18 between Eastern Green and Spon End, incorporating land at Whoberley and Lake View Park, comprises all the characteristics of the other green wedges in the city which are designated Green Belt. It is therefore recommended that this area is also designated as Green Belt green wedge.

5.9.4 To the north-east of the city the Wood End, Henley Green & Bell Green NDC programme is preparing proposals for substantial regeneration of the area. Some of these proposals will affect the Sowe Valley green wedge as it

passes through this area. The Potters Green Corridor (see Map 12) possesses many of the same characteristics as the green wedges in the city and links with the Sowe Valley green wedge. Therefore, it is recommended that this area be considered as part of the NDC proposals for possible designation as Green Belt and incorporation into the Sowe Valley green wedge.

5.10 Management & Implementation Recommendations

5.10.1 PPS3 makes it clear that at least a 5 year ongoing supply of housing land must be available for development relative to the overall development plan provision over the plan period. PPS1 and West Midlands RSS Preferred Option both make it clear that the release of greenfield land for development should be minimised and that existing urban land should be re-used first. PPG2 provides for land to be safeguarded for future development if it is not likely to be needed for development within the normal plan period, but needs to be protected in the interim.

5.10.2 It is therefore recommended that the LDF Core Strategy, in identifying land to be removed from the Green Belt to meet long term exceptional needs, also identifies the timing policies which will apply to this land. The regeneration function of Green Belt may be maintained (even though land has been removed from the Green Belt) by having strict timing / phasing criteria relative to the supply of land for housing and employment. In the meantime the areas removed from the Green Belt may be allocated as "Safeguarded Land" in accordance with PPG2 if that is necessary. This "Safeguarded Land" approach should apply to land likely to be used in the future for housing purposes.

5.10.3 As regards the school sites referred to in paras. 5.7 and 5.8 the "Safeguarded Land" approach is not appropriate. Because the BSF programme is already underway and is integral to meeting the needs of the city's changing population in a sustainable manner, those school sites where Green Belt boundaries are recommended to be revised should be progressed as soon as is feasible within the development planning process. Similarly, with the other non-housing related changes to Green Belt recommended these should be progressed as soon as feasible within the development planning process.

5.10.4 As a generality, where school sites (whether primary or secondary) are currently washed over by Green Belt designation and this is likely to hamper their long term future development, it is recommended that the built area and appropriate expansion area should be removed from the Green Belt. In this way there will be greater certainty about the perpetuity of the Green Belt and the ability to plan for the long term educational needs of the city without conflict. However, such changes to boundaries should not be taken lightly and not simply for the convenience of the schools alone. Every effort should be made to accommodate schools' needs without this recourse where feasible. Where changes to Green Belt boundaries to schools are recommended a clear and transparent approach to redefining boundaries should be taken. The principles of this approach should be to:

Coventry Green Belt Review, 2007

- minimise the land to be removed from the Green Belt consistent with achieving the long term needs of the school to avoid future “tinkering” with the boundaries;
- ensure that the visual amenity of the remaining Green Belt is not significantly damaged or the integrity of green wedges compromised by using logical boundaries (such as hedges, roads, etc.);
- ensure that overall amenity in the surrounding area is maintained, particularly in relation to existing housing; and
- where feasible, to place back into the Green Belt or urban green space land which is not needed for built development by virtue of its detailed position within the school site.

5.10.5 In accordance with the approach being taken as referred to in para. 2.19, where land is removed from the Green Belt for built development the opportunity should be taken to compensate by enhancing the features and facilities of the remaining Green Belt areas in that vicinity. This will give some reassurance about the long term characteristic of the Green Belt. It is recommended that this principle is built into the LDF Core Strategy so that the costs associated with achieving this approach are a natural component of allowing land to be released for development.

5.10.6 If as a result of this review there is still insufficient land within the city to meet its long term housing and employment needs it is recommended that an early assessment of the capacity to meet the shortfall on extension sites across the Coventry / Warwickshire boundaries should take place. If required, this should happen as soon as practicable to ensure that the requirements being set out in the RSS Preferred Option are feasible and that the development plan preparation processes in this sub-region are not jeopardised. The comparative merits of sites with potential for release in Coventry and Warwickshire should be undertaken as part of this assessment jointly by the local authorities within the Coventry-Solihull-Warwickshire sub-region so that only the “least-worst” overall result is achieved in terms of the quality of land being removed from the Green Belt.

List of Maps

- 1 Extent of Coventry Green Belt
- 2 Environment Agency Floodplain Map
- 3 Eastern Green
- 4 Keresley
- 5 West Coventry
- 6 Tile Hill
- 7 Gibbet Hill
- 8 Finham
- 9 Toll Bar
- 10 Lenton's Lane / Hawkesbury
- 11 Rowley's Green
- 12 Sowe Valley Green Wedge
- 13 Sherbourne Valley Green Wedge
- 14 Cannon Park Green Wedge
- 15 Westwood Heath Green Wedge
- 16 The Woodlands Green Wedge
- 17 Coundon Wedge Green Wedge
- 18 Eastern Green Corridor
- 19 Canley Corridor

References

- 1 City of Coventry Development Plan, 1957
- 2 City of Coventry Development Plan Review, 1972
- 3 City of Coventry Unitary Development Plan public local inquiry Background Paper “History of the Green Belt”, Nov. 1991
- 4 Warwickshire Landscape Guidelines – Arden, 1993
- 5 City of Coventry Unitary Development Plan (UDP), 1993
- 6 Coventry Green Space Strategy, 1994
- 7 Planning Policy Guidance 2 “Green Belts” (PPG2), 1995
- 8 Design Guidelines for Development in Coventry’s Ancient Arden (SPG), 1995
- 9 Coventry Development Plan (UDP), 2001
- 10 Policy Statement 1 (PPS1) “Delivering Sustainable Development”, 2005
- 11 Planning Policy Statement 3 (PPS3) “Housing”, 2006
- 12 West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy, Phase 2 Preferred Option Report, Oct 2007