



Stone-Well,  
Pye Court  
Willoughby  
Warwickshire  
CV23 8BZ

Rugby Borough Council - Local Planning Consultation Team,  
**Formal Objection to site 73 (Lodge Farm)**

Dear Planning officer

I am writing on behalf of the members of the Willoughby Society regarding the inclusion of Site 73 at Lodge Farm, Woolscott in Rugby Borough Council's Local plan as a secondary option. This objection focuses on the negative impact to the historic and natural environment of the Upper Leam valley.

**Historic Environment**

This site is in an area of open countryside near to locations where Roman archaeological discoveries have been made and adjacent to ancient trading routes.

Our research shows the settlement network of the upper Leam Valley being in place when the Domesday Book was compiled, with the current villages having grown organically since in line with employment opportunities locally and latterly with the ability to travel further afield for work. The surrounding landscape is notable for the amount of Ridge and Furrow surviving from the open field systems operating before inclosure in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. This is deemed to be of National Importance. Research showed the remaining ridge and furrow around Willoughby, Barby, Wolfamcote, Grandborough, Onley and Shuckburgh was not only extensive but interconnected. Historic England provided advice to Ministers stating; *'Overall, therefore, it is evident that the entire landscape of ridge and furrow surrounding the modern village of Willoughby is of National importance by virtue of its extent and the proportion of the medieval area under plough that it represents.'* If the proposed village is built it will forever severely damage this landscape and its setting.

**Natural Environment**

The Rainsbrook Valley and the Upper Leam Valley have long provided corridors for all types of wildlife not least because much of the area has been used for pasture. No systematic survey has been carried out but I regularly walk up Woolscott Lane and I have seen Brown hare, various Raptors, Little Owls, Barn Owls, Sky Larks, Lapwings, Yellowhammer and even Woodcock (both of which are on the endangered list), I have also seen Badgers, Otter and Red deer. A Local survey (at Toft Farm near Dunchurch) recorded some of Warwickshire's highest densities of these birds.

Natural England guidance recommends a 400 metre buffer zone around their nesting habitats - yet this proposal would place dense housing directly in the centre of their known breeding zone area. Around our village there is also a thriving population of now rare Hedgehogs. Many of these creatures need extensive inter related territories to thrive.

The impact of development across the entire area needs to be considered. It is not sufficient to merely consider the specific site alone. The wider area surrounding it must also be considered so that the inter-relationship of habitats, territories, and terrain, are understood. In the absence of such evidence it can only be concluded that this proposed development would have a very severe impact upon the ecology of the entire upper Leam Valley.

### **Sustainability Assessments**

Despite the new plan including a High Tec employment zone, the plan does not take into consideration the fact that High Tec is becoming an industry where AI will perform most functions so there will be few employment opportunities created by the inclusion of this park. With little other employment on site people will have to travel to work. Most will not be going to destinations served sufficiently well by public transport therefore there will be a significant increase in commuter traffic.

A significant portion of this increased traffic will use the Dunchurch cross road junction exacerbating the already serious Air Quality problem there. Some of the increased traffic will take to the lanes toward Southam but the Transport Assessment doesn't extend this far precluding any understanding of how this might impact the small winding lanes. This is a serious omission. Further there has, so far as we have found, been no consideration of the impact on traffic flow on the A45 of the proposed two new roundabouts and the economic costs thereof bearing in mind the business nature of this traffic route with a high volume of freight being transported.

### **Garden Village**

It is our assessment that the proposed development does not meet the criteria set by the Department for Communities etc. in their paper 'Locally led garden villages towns and cities'. Not least because:

- the new village would be a dormitory suburb.
- It will not be self-sufficient.
- there is insufficient separation between the proposed new village and the current villages of Woolscott and Onley.

Further, a modern garden village involving a large number of new houses built over a short period in a planned framework would be at odds with the surrounding settlements which all exhibit buildings from different periods laid out by peripheral expansion or infill.

The increased scale of the proposed village (Small town without the infrastructure) is such that it would be a significant intrusion on the valley floor. The Rainsbrook and Upper Leam valley being surrounded by hills means that when approached from any direction the new development of Lodge Farm Village would dominate the landscape. In 2019 when the previous proposal was rejected by the Planning Inspector it was recorded as the '*Development at Lodge Farm would cause major adverse landscape effects that cannot be mitigated due to the valley's openness*' So



the previous rejection of the site by Rugby Borough Council on ecological and landscape grounds should still be considered as valid, and the fact that the new proposal extends to the East of the A45 compounds the issue. It is also of note that the amenity and infrastructure plans are located on the eastern side of the development with a busy trunk road dividing most of the residential properties from the facilities, the result will mean that rather than walk or cycle to school, to the health centre or work, residents will primarily drive as crossing the A45 will continue to be dangerous.

### **Conclusion**

The proposed village (Town) would not only damage a setting of National importance being the ridge and furrow, but it would also disrupt critical wildlife migration routes, isolate wildlife populations and reduce the long-term resilience of Warwickshire's ecosystems.

The proposal does not provide a sustainable development and given the distances to the nearest shops, the resulting increase in vehicular traffic would be substantial.

Therefore we call upon Rugby Borough Council to permanently remove Site 73 (Lodge Farm) from the current plan.

**For and on behalf of The Willoughby Society**