

Standing up for the Warwickshire Countryside

5 January 2018

RUGBY LOCAL PLAN EXAMINATION

MATTER 3b – SOUTH WEST RUGBY

The Examination lists a number of detailed subjects for discussion. It is however important not to lose sight of the fundamental facts about the population of Rugby Borough, the current growth rate, and the level of housing supply that already exists under the adopted Core Strategy. The Local Plan proposes new housing allocations and reserved land for further housing. But the planning authority has a large amount of commitments already, of land allocated or with planning permission. The most up-to-date population and household projections for Rugby to 2031 are for fewer additional households than the committed housing supply provides for. The proposed further allocations, particularly on land in the Green Belt and in open countryside, are both unnecessary and make the Plan unsound.

The Housing Background Paper (September 2017) discusses South West Rugby at para 3.50-3.53 (page 30) and shows the proposals at Fig 16, page 32.

Para 3.50 states that of the potential 5,000 houses at South West Rugby, “1,010 dwellings have full planning permission or planning permission subject to a signed S106, i.e. the Ashlawn Road site for 860 dwellings, Land South of Coventry Road and North of Lime Tree Avenues”. It appears that this is included in the total of commitments of 9,248 houses allocated or with permission (Housing Background Paper para 2.23).

The housing requirement based on the mid-2014-based SNPP for Rugby is lower than the commitments, by some 1,000 dwellings (to 2031). It is therefore unclear why any more of South West Rugby should be shown as an allocation in the Plan beyond the part with planning permission.

There is also strong reason for removing the remainder of South West Rugby from the Plan because of the impact the full development (up to 5,000 houses) would have on the traffic levels on roads between South West Rugby and the town centre, and in the central part of the town.

There has been a marked increase in traffic volumes in Rugby in recent years. Particular congestion blackspots are the Gyratory in the centre of Rugby, the A426 linking the town to Junction 1 of the M6 motorway and into Leicestershire, and the cross-roads at the centre of Dunchurch. Not only are these causing significant delays to drivers, bus users and others; they also lead to rising air pollution that often breaches European standards.

Housing development has only been one of several causes of this increasing congestion. Another key factor has been the glut of ill-advised retail development along the A426 to the north of the town. However there can be no doubt that a substantial escalation in the rate of housing development would greatly worsen traffic congestion and no doubt add further congestion blackspots. The traffic analysis carried out by Warwickshire County Council concentrates on traffic implications for the road network immediately adjacent to the major development sites. It is far less convincing in its treatment of knock-on effects on the rest of the road network. Although the work as a whole underplays the likely effects, it identifies numerous potential problems without putting forward convincing ways of addressing them.

Freezing South West Rugby at the extent of current permissions, and not permitting any more housing to be added to it until 2031 or therefore, would have a beneficial effect on the town's road system.