
General Development Strategy



2. GENERAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

2.1 Overriding Purpose

Policy GD.1 OVERRIDING PURPOSE

The overriding purpose of the Structure Plan is to provide for a pattern of development which:

- (a) allows homes and jobs to be provided to meet the needs of the whole community including households moving into the County from Birmingham and Coventry during the plan period;
- (b) promotes greater use of public transport, walking and cycling, to avoid restricting future generations of Warwickshire residents to a style of living which depends on use of a car to get to work, school, shop or for leisure;
- (c) nurtures Warwickshire's legacy of distinctive towns and villages, countryside, environmental wealth and heritage which continue to make it an attractive place in which to live, work and visit;
- (d) enables the economy to grow and change, diversifying in rural areas in ways appropriate to the location, bringing new industry to the towns where old ones have been in decline, and ensuring that disadvantaged communities share more fully in the County's prosperity;
- (e) emphasises the benefits of town centres as places to live and work, as well as re-asserting their role as the main providers of shops, financial and professional services and places of entertainment; and
- (f) conserves resources of land and energy, including minerals and water, and makes maximum use of renewable energy resources.

INTENT

2.1.1 Policy GD.1 explains the underlying principles of the Structure Plan and sets them out as a matter of land use policy.

CONTEXT

2.1.2 These principles reflect the Council's key objectives which are set out in the introduction to the Plan. They are based on national and regional policy guidance issued by Government through Planning

Policy Guidance notes (PPGs), and on local aspirations that were identified in the early stages in the preparation of this Plan.

OPERATION

2.1.3 Because GD1 is an overarching policy, the other more specific policies in this Plan are related to it, and the principles it sets out will provide the basis for assessing the extent to which the Plan succeeds in future years.

2.2 Regional and National Role

Policy GD.2 REGIONAL AND NATIONAL ROLE

The County will continue to play an important part in the West Midlands Region and the Nation following regional planning guidance (RPG11) and national planning policy guidance (PPGs). In particular, this means:

- (a) accommodating housing for people moving from Birmingham and Coventry, amounting to about 18,400 new dwellings within the overall total of 31,100 new dwellings needed in Warwickshire over the period 1996-2011;
- (b) providing up to 768 hectares of land for industrial development (Use Classes B1, B2 & B8) which includes an allowance for one possible major investment project which would serve regional and national economic needs;
- (c) balancing mineral extraction to meet national and regional as well as local needs for energy and building and construction, with environmental and transport constraints; and
- (d) promoting waste recycling to reduce waste imports as well as locally generated waste which has currently to go to landfill.

INTENT

2.2.1 Policy GD.2 identifies the contribution that the Plan will make in implementing regional and national policy guidance.

CONTEXT

2.2.2 The strategic planning context for this Plan is set out in Regional Planning Guidance for the West Midlands (RPG11):

- Paragraph 9.1 of RPG11 sets out the additional dwellings to be constructed in each county and metropolitan district area in the Region over the period 1991-2011.

For Warwickshire, 40,700 dwellings are required to be constructed within that period. However that figure was derived from an updated assessment of housing need over the 1996-2011 period and it is these updated figures that are shown in Policy GD2(a). Within the total of 31,100 referred to in the policy, 18,400 new dwellings are needed to meet the migrant need from Coventry and Birmingham, with 12,700 meeting local needs arising from Warwickshire, after account has been taken of inter-regional migration.

- In relation to Policy GD.2 (b), RPG11

directs structure plan authorities to provide a portfolio of employment sites to meet the needs of business. Specifically, it identifies the need for two Major Investment Sites in the Region, not necessarily adjacent to the Metropolitan Area, of a minimum of 50 ha each for development by single large multi-national firms that would bring major benefits to the regional economy. Subsequent work by the West Midlands Local Government Association (WMLGA) identified Ansty as a suitable location within the county for that purpose.

- RPG11 highlights the importance of conserving mineral resources whilst minimising and recycling waste. The Guidance recognises that most of the 12 million tonnes per annum of controlled waste generated in the

Region goes to landfill in the shire counties as exports from the Metropolitan Area. Structure plans are required to set out a broad policy framework for mineral working, in the national and regional context, within which the minerals local plan and the waste local plan should identify detailed policies and proposals. Policy GD2 (c) and (d) provide the context for those plans.

OPERATION

- 2.2.4 Policy GD.2 links the strategy in RPG11 to the overall development strategy set out in Policy GD.3. Changes to the regional development strategy through the review of RPG11 and their effects on the Plan's overall development strategy should therefore be monitored carefully.



2.3 Overall Development Strategy of the Structure Plan

Policy GD.3 OVERALL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Most new development will be directed towards towns of over 8,000 people (at 1991) because they offer the best prospect of expanding public transport and job opportunities across the community. So living in towns should be made more attractive, new housing and industry should be located within easy access of public transport serving the main town centres in the County, and Coventry and Birmingham.

- (a) This urban development should be planned in a compact and disciplined form, as far as possible avoiding the Green Belt, and controlled to use previously developed land and buildings and greenfield land in the proportions indicated in this Plan.
- (b) New housing and industry should be developed in tandem with supporting integrated transport, education, leisure, sport and other necessary facilities in the same broad location.
- (c) Developments should be planned so that provision for all of the necessary supporting infrastructure and services can be secured.

INTENT

2.3.1 Policy GD.3 aims to apply to Warwickshire the regional development strategy set out in RPG11. The sub-regional strategies within RPG11 provide specific guidance on the approach to be taken in this Plan:

- In relation to the northern part of the County, including Nuneaton, Bedworth and Rugby, RPG11 concludes that employment growth should be encouraged to the extent that it is compatible with the character of the area and in those locations, particularly in the north of the sub-region, where it can

contribute to environmental improvement. Housing growth in the sub-region should take place in balance with employment growth. In considering locations for growth, RPG11 directs that authorities should concentrate development on existing larger settlements rather than at free-standing locations adjacent to motorways and trunk roads. Development in Nuneaton and Bedworth should be considered in association with the scope for reintroducing through services on the Nuneaton-Leamington rail line. Rugby is likely to have an important role in this part of the Sub-Region, and has potential for growth as a balanced community.

- The towns of Warwick, Leamington, Stratford-upon-Avon and north-west Warwickshire are regarded by RPG11 as part of the 'Central Crescent' of towns around the metropolitan core of the Region. They have seen rapid growth in recent years and, despite urban regeneration policies, RPG11 expected a continuing, but reduced, need for this area to accommodate migrant households from the metropolitan area. These households will continue to work in the metropolitan area, and should thus be accommodated within the Central Crescent in order to keep commuting distances to a minimum. Strategic authorities are therefore directed by RPG11 to decide where it is reasonable to make housing provision, having regard to public transport corridor studies. Employment provision in the Central Crescent should be in the larger settlements in the Central Crescent to match the employment needs of the area and contribute to a better balance between housing and employment. It should not be at a level, or of a type, which will undermine the regeneration activities of the Metropolitan Area, which will continue to be the centre of manufacturing (and other) activity.

2.3.2 Policy GD.3 directs most housing and employment development to the nine

main towns in Warwickshire, as illustrated on the key diagram. This strategy offers the best opportunity of achieving a sustainable balance in the growth of housing and industry, minimising the need for commuting in large numbers over long distances by private car, of utilising previously – developed land and achieving the economies of scale to provide the choice of housing and level of services needed by the whole community in the future. The Policy is intended to divert most if not all development pressures from rural areas where housing and industrial development beyond very modest local needs would be bound to result in significant levels of commuting by private car, with poor levels of public transport provision and support facilities, and the attendant social exclusion of vulnerable sections of the community.

CONTEXT

2.3.3 Warwickshire has been subject to comprehensive planning control for 50 years and in that time the strategic approach taken to development has consistently been to direct most new housing and employment towards the main towns and to plan that urban development in a compact and disciplined form. This has been reinforced by an approved Green Belt in the last 25 years. As a result, the

essential character of Warwickshire, as a County of separate and distinct towns and villages set in a gently rolling countryside, remains with us to enjoy today - even though it has accommodated a population increase of nearly 50%. Two-thirds of the County's 500,000+ population and 200,000+ jobs are located in the nine main urban areas that occupy less than an eighth of its land area.

2.3.4 In guiding the future pattern of development within the County, Policy GD3 takes account of Government policy and the pattern of development that is already established in Warwickshire. The policy is underpinned by the need to achieve sustainable development, to maximise the use of previously-developed land, and to reduce the need to travel. The integration of land use and transport

objectives set out in PPG13 and the change in housing policy contained in PPG3 is a key consideration. However, the application of the Government's sequential approach to housing development, set out PPG3 (Housing), has to be considered in relation to the nature and distribution of the County's settlements. Warwickshire has no pre-eminent centre and is essentially made up of a small number of main towns - Nuneaton, Rugby, Leamington, Bedworth, Warwick, Kenilworth, Stratford-upon-Avon, Atherstone and Dordon - and then a far larger number of relatively small market towns and villages which are predominantly rural in character.

2.3.5 In 1991, two-thirds of Warwickshire's population lived in the nine towns with populations of 8,000 to 75,000 people.



The remainder lived in 185 settlements of less than 8,000 at 1991, with only 5 of these settlements accommodating 4,000 to 8,000 people. These nine towns stood out as significantly larger and of a more urban character than the rest of the settlements in the County, including the five with populations between 4,000 and 8,000. However, despite the predominant size of these nine towns, between 1989 and 1999, only about 58% of housing growth has been directed to these towns. In Stratford-on-Avon District, for example, less than 20% of the new housing growth has been in the town of Stratford-upon-Avon. Of the housing development identified in local plans that remains to be built, at 1999 only 50% is to be in the main towns identified in the Structure Plan (WCC Housing Information Monitor H99/1).

2.3.6 The level of 58% of development in main towns is in itself a concern, yet with only 50% of the remaining housing to be found in main towns this level is set to fall further. This represents an increasingly worrying trend towards decentralisation and the reinforcement of unsustainable development patterns.

2.3.7 There may be a case in particular instances for limited growth outside of the main towns. The justification for such development will be based on local needs and should not impinge on the

thrust of this Policy to direct most housing and industrial development to the main towns. Any proposed development in these circumstances will need to meet the criteria set out in the Rural Area Policies of this Plan.

2.3.8 Directing development to these smaller settlements, as a matter of strategic policy, would be likely to increase the dispersal of population and facilities. It may well also compromise the ability to maximise the use and support of existing communities and facilities and, consequently, endanger regeneration objectives both within Warwickshire and in neighbouring authorities. Bearing in mind the relatively limited level of development left to be provided for in each local plan and the introduction of the “plan, monitor, manage” approach, it would be imprudent and contrary to Government policy to direct development to the least sustainable locations in Warwickshire.

2.3.9 Following the advice given in RPG11 that strategic authorities assess the scope for development in transport corridors, the Warwickshire Transport Corridors Study was published in 1997 which, on balance, favoured growth directed towards the Central Crescent towns and the towns of north-east Warwickshire. RPG11 indicated that within corridors a sequential approach be adopted, giving priority to

accommodating development within the metropolitan area and, next, at free-standing towns beyond the Green Belt, and only in exceptional circumstances should locations within the currently defined Green Belt be identified, and then only if there is a significant reduction in travel needs. The logical follow-through of RPG11's housing distribution would be to direct the Plan's housing provision towards the main urban areas. Although this has had a significant influence on the preferred direction and form of development advocated in the Plan, the process of consideration of this issue took account of four options to test the robustness of a strong urban focus.

2.3.10 Consideration of growth options was based on assessments against the following criteria:

- Consistency with RPG11's urban focus: Making the most of the existing housing stock and previously developed land and buildings within built-up areas before using greenfield land; growth proportionate to urban population; and directing migrant growth to the Central Crescent towns in public transport corridors;
- Local needs first and closest: Making provision for local housing needs as close as possible to

where that need arises;

- Funding the delivery: Maximising developer contributions to the provision of transport facilities, infrastructure, services and affordable housing;
- Environmental impact: Minimise impact of development in terms of Green Belt, 'town-cramming' and greenfield land; and
- Balancing where we live and where we work: Minimise journey-to-work length, out-commuting and the export of local housing need especially in the north of the County.

2.3.11 Appendix B sets out the four options for the basic development strategy of the Structure Plan that were considered: 'Windfall Plus', 'New Settlements', 'Conurbation Edge' and 'Urban Expansion'. It was concluded that 'Urban Expansion' is the option which:

- Responds best to the pressures for commitment to meeting housing needs where they arise;
- Reflects the importance of transport corridors and the potential for re-using previously developed land and buildings;
- Addresses the issue of out-commuting in a manner consistent with the principles underlying RPG11's strategic housing

- distribution; and
- Reduces the impact on the Green Belt and the risks posed in terms of traffic congestion and town-cramming which should be manageable.

The time is still appropriate for continuing the growth of Warwickshire through urban expansion and, although the supply of available land may run out in some places after 2011, continuation of this policy avoids the risk of an early commitment to new settlements which may be the appropriate response to housing needs as we approach 2021. The Examination-in-Public Panel supported this conclusion and recommended no change to the basic strategy that underpins the distribution of development and associated policies in the Structure Plan. The Structure Plan and Commuting Patterns in Warwickshire Technical Paper sets out the estimates of future commuting patterns used to assess the impact of the Structure Plan's basic development strategy.

OPERATION

2.3.12 In sustainable development terms, Policy GD.3 is the single most important policy in the Structure Plan. It will be applied to local plan reviews

and, where necessary, to individual development proposals. It will be for the district/borough councils through their local plan reviews to justify their interpretation of 'most development' in the context of this Policy. The County Council interprets 'most development' as meaning all the equivalent of the migrant component of the housing provision for each district and, at the very least, the equivalent of the local growth of the relevant town or towns.

2.3.13 In order to illustrate the County's interpretation of 'most development', the example below uses the housing requirement, which is the main driver of the Plan's basic development strategy.

Worked Hypothetical Example: for District X:

Assume a total Structure Plan housing requirement (1996-2011) of 10,000 dwellings, made up of:

- Coventry/Birmingham migrant element 4,000 and
- a local needs element (including effect of inter-regional migration) of 6,000 (see Housing chapter).

If the main town(s) of District X had 1996 population(s) representing 50% of the District X population @ 1996, then at the minimum, 'most' new housing in terms of GD.3 would

be the migrant provision $4,000 + 50\%$ of the local need $(3,000) = 7,000$.

Consequently, the maximum provision for new housing in rural areas of District X would be 3,000 dwellings over the Plan period 1996-2011.

In addition, if there are villages - say with a total population amounting to 25% of the 1996 District X population - located close to the main town(s), the opportunity should be taken to provide for all (or a significant proportion) of their local needs in the main town(s).

This option would then take the minimum housing provision in the main town(s) to 8,500 and maximum housing provision in the rural areas to 1,500.

2.3.14 It follows that the very maximum housing provision to be made in the rural areas beyond the main towns should be the equivalent of the local growth in households attributable to the rural community in any rural location. Any lesser degree of concentration would perpetuate past trends towards an unsustainable dispersed pattern of development. Where possible, main towns should accommodate the local housing growth from surrounding rural areas within reasonable travelling distance by public transport. Only where rural areas already have community facilities and public transport should the level of the housing growth planned approach the equivalent of the locally generated household growth.



2.4 Strategic Constraints

Policy GD.4 STRATEGIC CONSTRAINTS

The allocation of land for development in local plans must take the following strategic constraints into account:

- (a) The Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), and any other area or feature with national or international statutory protection.
- (b) The West Midlands Green Belt which, in Warwickshire: serves to prevent the spread of the built-up urban areas of Coventry and the Birmingham Conurbation into open countryside; maintains a rural setting for the towns in Warwickshire; preserves the special character of historic towns and areas of open countryside, and supports urban regeneration.
- (c) Conservation areas, Areas of Restraint, special landscape areas, and areas of acknowledged importance for their natural or heritage value.
- (d) The ability of settlements to absorb long term growth without a fundamental adverse change in their character.
- (e) The feasibility of securing the substantial reconstruction of town centres, major transport network improvements or the large scale provision of community facilities.
- (f) Proven and potentially workable mineral deposits which represent valuable finite resources which should not be sterilised by other development.
- (g) The best and most versatile agricultural land, which includes grades 1, 2 and 3a.
- (h) Sources of ground and surface water.

INTENT

2.4.1 Policy GD.4 is intended to act as a guide to the strategic development constraints that local plans should take into account in formulating policies on the allocation and release of land for development.

CONTEXT

2.4.2 Although this Policy relates to Warwickshire, it reflects regional and national planning policy guidance set out in RPG11 and PPGs.

2.4.3 There is a statutory obligation that falls on local authorities to protect international areas or features such as

the Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty which, because of their environmental or cultural value, attract development pressures that in many instances threaten to undermine that value. Other areas and features that do not have the same degree of statutory protection also play an important role in defining and enriching the character of the County and warrant appropriate protection in local plans.

2.4.4 The role of the Green Belt is important to the character and identity of Warwickshire and to Warwickshire's role in the Region. The Green Belt should act as a strong constraint on 'inappropriate development' as defined in PPG2, because it represents a considerable asset to the character of the County. The Structure Plan provides no remit for the general review of the Green Belt boundaries in local plans.

2.4.5 The nine main towns, and in particular the town centres, have an important role in fulfilling the Structure Plan's strategy for promoting a more sustainable pattern of development. Town centres offer the best opportunity to:

- maximise the re-use of previously developed land and buildings,

- promote alternative modes of travel to the car, and
- reduce the need to travel.

However, the physical structure of many of those town centres is based on an historic fabric and street pattern that contributes much to the character of Warwickshire. In these circumstances, the main towns may be constrained in their ability to absorb long-term growth or major town centre construction, and this needs to be carefully investigated in local plan reviews.

2.4.6 The County's resources of land have an asset value in terms of agricultural quality, mineral value and use as ground and surface water supply. The unnecessary depletion or sterilisation of these resources could have implications that extend well beyond the County. For this reason they are strategic constraints that need to be taken into account.

OPERATION

2.4.7 Local plan reviews should reflect these strategic constraints and demonstrate how they have been taken into account in the formulation of policy on the allocation and release of land for development.

2.5 Development Location Priorities

Policy GD.5 DEVELOPMENT LOCATION PRIORITIES

Each district local plan will provide for most new housing and employment development to be accommodated in a combination of the following locations, in the following order of priority:

1. within the existing built up areas of towns of over 8,000 people (at 1991), that lie within recognised transport corridors
2. the identified broad locations;
 - a. in Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough: Keresley, in association with the redevelopment of Coventry Colliery; and
 - b. in Rugby Borough: East of Rugby, and for a Major Investment Site (MIS) at Ansty.
3. locations, including existing local plan allocations, meeting the following criteria:
 - i. adjacent to the built up areas of towns of over 8,000 people (at 1991), that lie within recognised transport corridors, where they can be integrated into the fabric of the town; and are
 - ii. outside of the Green Belt; and are
 - iii. easily accessible to town centre services and facilities; and are
 - iv. well served, or can be made to be well served, by public transport.

In considering the allocation and release of land, local plans should have regard to the availability of previously developed land and buildings and allocate and provide for sites to come forward where they meet these criteria. Where there are no appropriate sources of previously-developed land and buildings, or they have become exhausted, local plans should then provide for the release of greenfield sites that meet the criteria of this policy.

INTENT

2.5.1 Policy GD.5 directs local plans as to how they should go about allocating specific sites and framing criteria based locational policies in a way which is

consistent with the overall strategy set out in Policy GD.3. In broad terms, this is to direct most new housing and industrial development to the County's nine main towns. All of these locations are nodes on transport corridors and

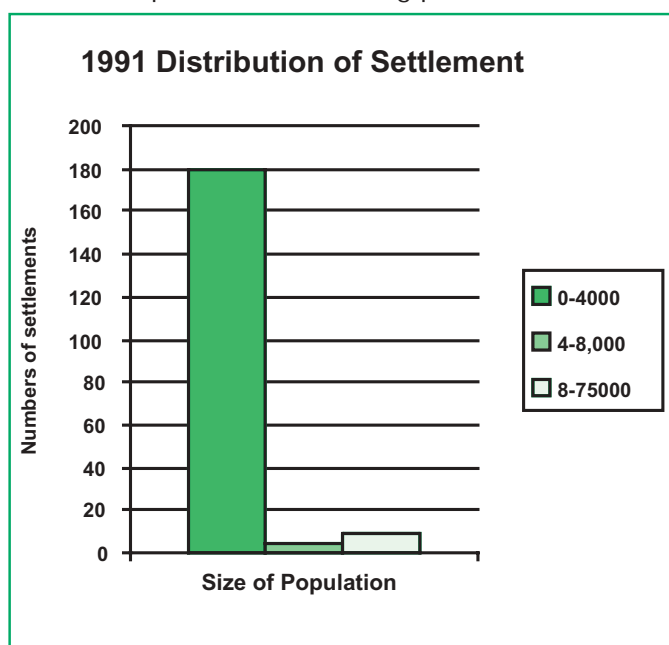
have a significant range of facilities and services.

2.5.2 These main towns were the only settlements in the County to have a population of over 8,000 in 1991. However, this figure is not a threshold and if other towns in the County reach a population of 8,000 post-1991 this would not qualify them as being a main town for the purposes of this Plan.

CONTEXT

2.5.3 The diagram below shows the very large proportion of small settlements in the County. Consequently, policies which do not focus development tightly on the main towns would almost certainly have the effect of increasing the dispersal of people, services and facilities.

2.5.4 Dispersal is a continuing problem since



the creation of low population densities makes it difficult to provide commercial or public services, making access to a private car a priority and giving rise to problems of social exclusion. By focusing development in the main towns Policy GD.5 prevents the continued dispersal of development which might otherwise reinforce existing unsustainable development patterns, or set in motion momentum to create new ones.

OPERATION

2.5.5 In the general application of policy GD5 through local plans, district/borough councils will be expected to undertake exhaustive search of the development possibilities at each priority level, giving preference to previously developed land and buildings over greenfield land, before considering the next tier of opportunities. At each level, local plans should apply the relevant current Government policies, in seeking to maximise the use of previously-developed land and buildings and minimise the use of greenfield land whilst securing transport sustainability. This would apply to the recycling of previously-developed land and buildings in the smaller settlements where, for example, housing and employment development may be required to meet locally generated needs.

2.5.6 In all instances local plans will be expected to pursue the general policy goals in PPG3 that are not expressly covered in Policy GD.5. These relate to: the capacity of existing and potential infrastructure to absorb further development; the ability of proposed new developments to build communities which support new physical and social infrastructure and provide sufficient demand to sustain appropriate local services and facilities; and the physical and environmental constraints on development.

2.5.7 When considering development possibilities in third priority locations, local plans should have regard to the definition of urban extensions as set out in 'Planning for Sustainable Development: Towards Better Practice' (DETR 1998). In particular, the term 'adjacent' in Policy GD5 should be interpreted as referring to locations which have 'a landscape structure incorporating and building on existing

assets and creating a distinct edge to the urban area'.

2.5.8 In relation to the second priority locations, the sites at Keresley and Ansty have already been identified, but an East of Rugby site has not. It will be a matter for the Borough Council in their review of the Rugby Local Plan to assess and take into account local site constraints on development in determining the nature, design, extent and timing of development within the framework of the Structure Plan policies. The Plan does not make development in the 'East of Rugby' location mandatory on the Borough Council. However, if, for example, convincing evidence was available in the context of the Review of the Borough Local Plan to the effect that the scale of development was insufficient to support the infrastructure requirement, this could justify looking to make the provision elsewhere on the edge of the town.

2.6 Green Belt

Policy GD.6 GREEN BELT

The Green Belt will continue to cover the area adjoining the West Midlands Conurbation, broadly extending to Alcester, Stratford upon Avon, Warwick, Leamington Spa, Rugby, Nuneaton and Kingsbury. It should exclude land for industrial provision at Keresley in association with redevelopment of the former Coventry Colliery. Land associated with either the extant Premium Employment Site permission or a Major Investment Site permission under Policy I.6 at Ansty, should only be excluded from the Green Belt if and when the site is completed. The general location of the Green Belt is indicated on the Key Diagram, and the detailed boundaries should be defined in local plans which should, in accordance with PPG2, specify policies for the restriction of inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

INTENT

2.6.1 Policy GD 6 confirms the broad extent of land in Warwickshire that will continue to be subject to Green Belt policy, as illustrated on the Key Diagram. Detailed boundaries are set out in current local plans. In the review of these plans, the policy argues that in strategic terms there are no grounds for change in the extent of coverage with the exception of the sites stated. Local plans will be expected to include policies, in line with Government guidance, that seek to control development in the Green Belt.

CONTEXT

2.6.2 Government policy on the establishment of and control of development in Green Belts is set out in Planning Policy Guidance 2 on 'Green Belts' (PPG2). This offers the five purposes for the creation of Green Belts and also lays down a national code for the control of development within them. The main thrust of this is a general presumption against inappropriate development that, by definition, is harmful to the Green Belt. The Guidance lays down the limited forms of development, such as the construction of buildings for agriculture or forestry, which may be considered as appropriate development, and this should be reflected in local plans.

2.6.3 A Green Belt in the County was first proposed in 1960 and eventually approved by the Secretary of State for the Environment in 1975. Whilst the Structure Plan proposes the general extent of the Green Belt, the drawing of detailed boundaries is a matter for the district-wide local plans prepared by the district/borough councils.

2.6.4 PPG2 advises that once the general extent of a Green Belt has been approved it should only be altered in exceptional circumstances. It also implies that opportunities for development within the urban areas contained by the Green Belt and those that lie beyond it should be considered before any changes are made to existing Green Belt boundaries. Regional Guidance (RPG11) echoes PPG2 and advises that there is no case for a fundamental review of the Green Belt in the Region, although it does concede that in many cases boundaries remain too tightly drawn round built-up areas. It considers that in order to achieve sustainable development objectives, authorities may exceptionally need to review the boundaries of settlements excluded from and on the edge of the Green Belt. This could apply particularly where development might contribute significantly to the objective of reducing the need to travel.

2.6.5 In line with PPG2, local planning authorities are expected to take account of the need to promote sustainable patterns of development and to relate any proposals for changes to the Green Belt to a time-scale which is longer than that normally adopted for other aspects of the plan. In some cases this will mean safeguarding land between the urban area and the Green Belt that may be required to meet longer-term development needs.

2.6.6 Given the thrust of national and regional planning advice and its acceptance of the Structure Plan's basic development strategy, the EiP Panel took the view that, despite the appeal to take a longer-term view (especially in the context of tightly drawn boundaries) and to consider sustainable development objectives, changes to the Green Belt should be considered only exceptionally, and only if other options have been exhausted. In this sequential-type approach, the Panel noted the County Council's view that adequate development land is available within the County without recourse to the Green Belt. Given this view, the Panel concluded that it was understandable that the County Council had not undertaken a thorough review of the Green Belt to identify any possible land releases. Nor did it appear to the

EiP Panel that the longer term options suggested by the County Council of establishing new settlements or expanding certain existing settlements were invalid and that therefore future development patterns would have to involve land between the urban edge and the Green Belt. As the required objective (set out in RPG11) of reducing the need to travel has not been proven in any instance, the EiP Panel did not consider that land should be released from the Green Belt.

2.6.7 Policy GD.6 recognises the redevelopment proposal at the former Coventry Colliery at Keresley and the consequent exclusion of land from the Green Belt, a position that was supported by the EiP Panel. In accepting the case for the Ansty MIS proposal, the EiP Panel was aware of the extant permission for a Premium Employment Site (PES) on a slightly smaller site and concluded that it was likely that one or other of these will be developed. However, until such time as development for the defined purpose or purposes has been completed, the site will be afforded Green Belt protection to prevent its development for an alternative purpose.

2.6.8 Taking into consideration the ability of Coventry to provide for its own

employment needs, the need to find further employment land in the County and the implications for the replacement of the PES at Ansty if the MIS goes ahead, there is no requirement for the Green Belt to be altered to provide for further land release on the Coventry fringe, a position accepted by the EiP Panel. Furthermore, the Panel accepted that, in view of the emerging proposals of the Worcestershire Structure Plan, there is no need to provide for the employment needs of Redditch, a situation supported by Regional Guidance. In relation to smaller rural settlements, there is no evidence that the Green Belt needs to be revised to permit their expansion in order to

maintain local services and, as stated earlier, PPG2 advises that options within urban areas should be considered first.

OPERATION

2.6.9 Policy GD.6 is intended to inform the local plan review process of the strategic Green Belt considerations that apply to the allocation and release of land for development. In certain instances, this Policy would be an important consideration in the development control process, for example in the specific instances referred to above, pending the completion of local plan reviews.

2.7 Other Large Scale Previously-Developed Sites

Policy GD.7 PREVIOUSLY-DEVELOPED SITES

The redevelopment of very large unallocated areas of previously-developed land and buildings for a strategically significant purpose, will only be acceptable where:

- (a) the development does not provide for needs accommodated elsewhere in the Plan or prejudice the redevelopment or regeneration of urban areas, subject to provisions laid out in Policy I.8 or the RA Policies; and
- (b) there is no adverse impact on the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) or any other feature with national or international statutory protection; and
- (c) the travel demands for the development are, or can be made to be, satisfactorily accommodated by existing transport infrastructure taking into account the mix of development; and
- (d) it can be demonstrated that the benefits of the development have been thoroughly assessed and clearly outweigh the benefits of developing other sites; and
- (e) a development brief is agreed by the County Council and the district councils.

INTENT

2.7.1 Policy GD.7 is aimed at circumstances where very large areas of previously-developed land become redundant, when the location may conflict with Policy GD3, but where re-use has to be considered through the planning process. The policy seeks to guide that process and ensure consistency across the County.

CONTEXT

2.7.2 RPG11 advises that a key objective of each development plan should be to make the best possible use of previously-developed land and existing buildings. This should have a number of positive benefits, but should avoid unnecessary loss of countryside, reduce the need to travel, and counter long-standing trends of decentralisation. Reference is particularly made to major disused previously-developed sites and RPG11 suggests that the re-use of such sites can make a helpful contribution to meeting housing and employment needs, although proposals should be brought forward through the development plan process. Special considerations apply within the Green Belt (through Annex C of PPG2).

2.7.3 Within that context, policy GD7 relates to very large partially developed sites in the countryside, where the local plan

had not been able to anticipate their release, and where the proposed development would not contribute to any of the needs already provided for. This was evident from the debate at the Examination-in-Public, which largely centred on the examples of two sites at Long Marston and east of Rugby. The EiP Panel accepted that the matter should be covered by a Structure Plan policy, not least because of the huge sites involved and the extent of the potential for large-scale development.

2.7.4 To avoid the risk of allowing large-scale development in the wrong locations, GD7 has been framed as a criteria-based policy, rendering it unnecessary and inappropriate for it to name sites. As such, it addresses any situation where very large areas of previously developed land become redundant and there is a need for their re-use to be considered. It also reflects the EiP Panel's concern that the Policy should not encourage or permit development which has been more appropriately provided for elsewhere in the Plan i.e. proposals that could harm the overall strategy for the County or the Region, especially by prejudicing urban regeneration objectives and ignoring sustainable commitments. However, as an exception to this generalisation, Policy GD.7 recognises that there may be instances where development envisaged under Policy I.8 or the RA

policies could, with advantage, be located on these areas of previously developed land. The EiP Panel supported inclusion in the policy of a sequential approach to previously developed land development, accessibility, the opportunity for mixed or self-contained development, infrastructure, environmental criteria and the benefits of development. It also supported the need to prepare a development brief.

2.7.5 No attempt is made in Policy GD.7 to balance the various criteria in terms of a fixed formula because it is not realistic and could lead to poor decision-making. For example, the retention of local employment and the requirement to reduce the need to travel would be quite different at an intensively-used remote rural site from that at a lightly-used site close to the urban edge. For this reason the EiP Panel rejected the possibility of indicating the relative weight to be given to competing criteria, and considered instead that the matter of balance must be left to the relevant council in any particular case.

OPERATION

2.7.6 Policy GD.7 is activated by the potential windfall proposals relating to large-scale areas of previously-developed land whose approval and development could have strategic implications. The Policy would allow for a mixed-use proposal where it can be demonstrated that the development is not intended to provide for development needs accommodated elsewhere in the Plan. Rather, it represents a major investment opportunity which, because of its particular location, size, character, mix of use and the constraints on other land within the district/borough, cannot realistically and demonstrably be achieved elsewhere.

2.7.7 The exact form of development will, of course, emerge through the local plan review process, which will have regard to the national planning guidance, (especially as contained in PPG3) and Policy GD.7, as well as the particular development circumstances of the district.

