**COVENTRY CITY COUNCIL PLAN TO INVADE GREEN BELT AGAIN.**

**Just over 5 years after having their previous plans thwarted by a Government Inspector, Coventry City Council have come forward with a new and more invasive plan to take away yet more of the precious Green Belt between Coventry and Birmingham by building thousands of houses plus commercial, retail and warehousing units and consequent roads adjoining the A45 between Eastern Green, Allesley and Meriden.**

Despite the Council’s expressed commitment to make the use of brown-field sites paramount in the City before using green land and seemingly ignoring the current

Communities Secretary, Savid Javid’s recent statement that Green Belt should be “sacrosanct”, and Gavin Barwell, Housing and Planning Minister’s statement that development on Green Belt would be “inappropriate”, plans have been made to build 2420 houses plus various commercial units, retail outlets and warehousing on Green Belt land, known as the Meriden Gap which adjoins the A45 road and Pickford Green Lane on the edge of the city.

Why are the Council planning to sacrifice prime Green Belt land for retail space and warehousing when it has already demonstrated its inability to attract businesses for the vacant shops and commercial units that are currently available in the city?

The Council’s plans involve a new slip road from the new development onto an already busy A45 into the city and pedestrian and public transport connections to the local road network, especially around **Upper Eastern Green Lane, Pickford Green Lane, Appledore Drive and Juniper Drive.**
Residents in the Allesley and Eastern Green areas are concerned, not only about the permanent loss of Green Belt but at the large increase in vehicles, which will cause virtual gridlock at certain times of the day on the main routes into the city centre and will force cars and lorries from those routes through estate roads which were never intended to take such traffic.  In addition to the chaos they say this will greatly increase danger to children and vulnerable people living on those estates.

Over several decades planning applications in this area and immediately adjoining areas have been turned down by the Council on the basis that applications are on sites which, for example, “lie within a particularly vulnerable part of the Green Belt” or “would constitute inappropriate development at the edge of the Green Belt which is not justified by very special circumstances” or “is located within the Green Belt and Ancient Arden Landscape and would result in a conspicuous and incongruous development”

After similar but lesser proposals were turned down by a Government Inspector only a few years ago the revised proposals are part of a new City Council Planning Policy which is currently the subject of a new Government Inspectors’ report which will be prepared after meetings at the Council House.  Several of these meetings have already been held and further meetings, which are open to the public, will take place in October.  The Inspector will report back with her findings later in the year.

The Council appear to have been uncertain about the timing of responses to the proposals which could have meant those responses would have been ignored by the Inspector when coming to her decision.  It has only just been confirmed that written responses must be received by the **5th September** to ensure that they are considered. At least one major interested organisation, the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England had been operating on the basis of the **20th September**, which would have meant their input would have been totally disregarded.

As recently as 2010 a previous Government Inspector concluded that any development on the Green Belt would be entirely inappropriate and many residents are at a loss to know what circumstances could possibly have changed in that time that would make the current, and increased, proposals a reasonable proposition.  The Council’s intention is that Coventry should become one of the “top ten cities”, which has been confirmed as merely meaning a city with one of the top ten highest populations in the country. The Council predicts a large increase in the population of the city over the next decade or so.  Residents express considerable doubt about this.

Tony Simons, chairman of the Allesley Green Residents Association said,

“The Council’s plans are flawed.  They are accepting as accurate, figures from various organisations, which on past experience have produced figures shown to be anything but.  Not only that, even the figures they quote do not take into account any impact of the Brexit referendum and they also predict a large increase in student accommodation needs which currently appear to be levelling off.

Questioning of Council officers on the matter of road congestion seems to suggest that little or no thought has been given and so-called plans about future cycle ways and a rapid transport system to ease the situation are not so much plans as “pie-in-the-sky” hopes.  No thought about other infrastructure is in evidence.  No real plans about schools or health provisions are apparent and the Council does not consider it their area of responsibility. The Council’s record on delivering its plans is poor.  Residents in the Allesley Green area were given the expectation of health provisions when they bought their current houses.  Thirty-three years later we are still waiting!  Bannerbrook Park also, has not had their promised medical centre.

As for schools, the largest in the immediate area, Woodlands Academy has just closed down.  Where is the planning in that? Is it going to be mothballed pending the increase in population?

The consultation period given to residents was ill publicised and as short as could legally be given, suggesting a certain anxiety on the Council’s part to get this through as quickly and easily as possible.  **If people want to be heard, now is the time to send in their written responses by 5th September, before it is too late and personal attendance at the hearings in October, particularly the Green-Belt hearing on 12th October will be their last opportunity to influence the Inspector’s decision”.**

ENDS.