

LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

For the attention of:

Emma Spandley - Case Officer

Coventry City Council Planning Department
PO Box 7097
COVENTRY CV6 9SL

23 May 2025

Dear Ms Spandley, Emma

Ref: PL/2025/0000826/PIP and PL/2025/0000828/PIP

This letter constitutes formal advice from the Warwickshire Solihull and Coventry Local Access Forum. Coventry City Council as the relevant section 94(4) body is required, in accordance with section 94(5) of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, to have regard to relevant advice from this forum in carrying out its functions.

The DEFRA Guidance for Local Access Forums requires forums to have regard, in carrying out their role and duty to:

- the needs of land management both rural and urban
- desirability of conserving the natural beauty and recreational importance of the area for which it is established, including the flora, fauna and geological and physiographical features of the area.
- improvements to public access to the countryside and public rights of way for the purposes of open-air recreation and enjoyment of the area.

The developments proposed are on land owned by Coventry City Council and the application is published to be decided by delegated power which we believe, in the circumstances, is inappropriate. We advise and recommend that these applications are brought before the Coventry City Council Planning Committee for detailed discussion prior to the decision making process.

These two PIP applications are both on former grazing land owned by Coventry City Council and now constitute important green space as part of the Keresley Jubilee Community Wood, which was created in 2012 to provide a 'living commemoration' to Queen Elizabeth II on the occasion of her Diamond Jubilee in 2012.

We understand these meadows have been used for horse grazing in the past and have since been incorporated into the Jubilee Woodland and protected in the Coventry Local Plan - 2017 (Policy H2:1) and the ongoing Local Plan Review as part of the Keresley Sustainable Urban Extension, as highlighted in the Keresley SUE Masterplan. Over time, these meadows have also developed considerable Green Infrastructure value as defined in Local Plan Policy GE1, including wildlife, landscape and community value as part of the Community Woodland within the Keresley SUE.

The Masterplan for the Keresley SUE states:

'Woodlands.

The Plan highlights the 4 Ancient Woodlands at The Alders, Pickhorne Wood, Bunson's Wood and Hall Yard Wood. It also highlights the relatively newly planted area at Jubilee Woodland. All woodlands are identified within Policy H2 as needing to be protected and incorporated into the wider SUE.'

<https://www.coventry.gov.uk/downloads/file/27657/residential-design-guidance-draft-spd-appendix-1-keresley>

We believe this is the only Community Woodland planted in Coventry that commemorates our late Queen, which is managed by the Council's Park Rangers in partnership with Keresley Parish Council and the local community, and these meadows now form an important green space part of the site. The Jubilee Woodland was planted on Council owned land with the support of Keresley Parish Council and the local community, schools, the Woodland Trust and Warwickshire Wildlife Trust, to provide a 'living commemoration' to Queen Elizabeth II. It was partially funded by a Forestry Commission Small Woodland Grant in partnership with The Woodland Trust. This normally requires that the owner of the land (i.e. the City Council), has to maintain the woodland in accordance with good forestry practice and agree not to fell the woodland for a minimum of 20 years (see page 9):

‘The Small Woodland Grant Scheme is paid as part of an agreement under which the woodland owner undertakes to maintain the woodland in accordance with good forestry practice and must not fell the woodland for a minimum of 20 years following the first annual payment. If it is found that the woodland is not maintained in accordance with good forestry practice we may recover the establishment grant payments already made with interest. However, the woodland owner will be allowed to thin the woodland in accordance with normal silvicultural practice and remove nurse trees.’

<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/daera/Small%20Woodland%20Grant%20Scheme%20-%20Information%20Booklet%20-%202022-23.pdf>

In December 2023, two memorial trees were also planted by the then Lord Mayor Councillor Birdi and the Lady Mayoress, commemorating the reign of Queen Elizabeth II and the accession of King Charles III, in the meadow area now proposed for housing. These meadows form an important part of the Community Woodland and collectively provide a living and everlasting green memorial and a ‘special gift’ to the late Queen Elizabeth II as part of the Keresley Sustainable Urban Extension, complementing the Queen’s Green Canopy initiative in 2021:

<https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/plant-trees/schools-and-communities/queens-green-canopy>

In the future, these meadows will also become increasingly important in helping to provide some compensatory biodiversity provision (Local Plan Policy GE3) when the Keresley Link Road is built in close proximity to this land as part of the SUE. Development of the Watery Lane frontage to the woodland, including the mature native hedgerow (possibly ancient), would also significantly reduce the biodiversity and amenity value of the remaining woodland, and particularly when the Keresley Link Road is built, which may also have some adverse impact on a Local Wildlife Site and the Jubilee Woodland, as shown on the Council’s interactive Policy Map:

<https://maps.coventry.gov.uk/connect/analyst/mobile/#/main?mapcfg=localplan>

The Warwickshire Solihull and Coventry Local Access Forum are dismayed by the insensitivity shown by Coventry City Council in attempting to develop such historically

important land which commemorates the reign of our late Queen Elizabeth II and also the accession of King Charles III.

The Warwickshire Solihull and Coventry Local Access Forum advise **REFUSAL** of both applications for all of the reasons as stated above. We will wish to send a representative to speak at the Planning Committee Meeting to **OBJECT** to planning applications. **PL/2025/0000826/PIP** and **PL/2025/0000828/PIP**.

We request a formal acknowledgement of receipt of this **OBJECTION** and ask to be kept apprised of its passage through the planning process.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Sheila Cooper'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'S' and a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Sheila Cooper

Acting Chair: Warwickshire, Solihull and Coventry Local Access Forum

Please respond to: sheila.ann.cooper41@gmail.com

Copy to Acting LAF Secretary: charlesbarlow@warwickshire.gov.uk