

Mr Martin Dando
Black Country Core Strategy
Planning Services
Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
The Council House
Priory Road
Dudley
DY1 1HF

Name Tom Houghton

Address [REDACTED]

Date 13.8.17

Dear Mr Dando

Review of the Black Country Core Strategy 2017
Objection to Housing and Industrial Development in the Green Belt

We know that our environment is under severe threat.

1. Air pollution; endangered wildlife species and global warming, for instance, frequently make the news headlines. Countryside plays an important role in the strategy to address these issues and urban expansion into it will incrementally exacerbate these problems.
2. Countryside on the urban fringe plays a very important role in the physical and mental welfare of those living in the urban areas.
3. The Green Belt countryside around Halesowen, and that penetrating into the urban area through the Leasowes and Coombeswood Green Wedge, have been substantially improved for leisure by the work of volunteers over a thirty year period. It is now an important informal recreational resource, not only for Halesowen, but for the whole of the Black Country and beyond.



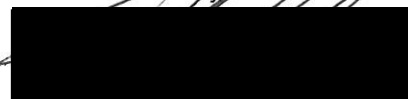
Noticeboard in Manor Way

This was installed by volunteers, with the support of Dudley Council and the Countryside Commission, to encourage the public to appreciate and enjoy the beautiful and historic countryside of Illey and Lapal. Volunteers have restored the footpaths. This special countryside, and the project to improve it for public benefit, is now seriously threatened by potential industrial and housing development. That would be disastrous. The setting of Halesowen Abbey is also threatened.

4. The Halesowen countryside is important to the character and distinctiveness of the Town and surrounding areas. It is the important foreground to the landscape quality of the famed and loved Clent Hills. The Premonstratensian Cannons of Halesowen Abbey; Viscount Cobham of Hagley Hall; Lord Dudley of the Grange; William Shenstone of the Leasowes; and the Canons of Wolverhampton; all played a part in the evolution and quality of it. Much of the area has been identified by Dudley Council as a 'Landscape Heritage Area'. **That recognition needs to be upheld and reinforced.** There are many recorded finds of archaeological significance on the lands of the former monastery, dating as far back as the Iron Age. Manor Farm, the site of Halesowen Abbey, which is a '*Scheduled Ancient Monument of National Importance*', has the highest density of Public Rights of Way in Dudley Borough, reflecting its monastic importance, with paths from all directions leading to the Abbey. There are 'Green Lanes' of mediaeval origin. The area is extremely important with defendable Green Belt boundaries and the Lutley countryside, prevents major areas of Halesowen from coalescing with Stourbridge.
5. The '*Black Country Core Strategy*', adopted relatively recently, in February 2011, **recognises sufficient land for housing and industry to the year 2026, without development in the Green Belt.**
6. There are many opportunities for redevelopment of urban sites, other than the environmentally sensitive countryside ones that the Council intend to identify in future plans. Such '*windfall*' sites for housing include the former Law Courts; the defunct Police Station and the former Council House in Halesowen Town Centre. The Council now acknowledge these, but these '*urban*' opportunities were identified by developers forced to concentrate on regeneration of the urban areas, rather than being allocated precious countryside. Protecting Green Belt is therefore **essential** to make developers concentrate on regeneration and identify further '*windfall*' sites. **It is premature and environmentally irresponsible to allocate Green Belts sites at this juncture.**
7. The 'Review' claims that we now need to allocate substantial areas of Green Belt countryside for industry and housing. The obvious and inevitable conclusion that follows from this is that we cannot therefore define defendable Green Belts for the future, and that we have embarked upon a perpetual, ongoing, release of such countryside for development. That concept is of huge concern; is unnecessary and is totally unacceptable.

Will you please record my objection and reply to acknowledge safe receipt? Please keep me informed of progress and of future stages.

Yours Sincerely

A black rectangular box redacting the signature of the sender.

Signature