

# SECURING OUR FUTURE A PLAN FOR COVENTRY

Our five year plan for Coventry  
Vote Conservative on 2 May 2024



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# A PERSONAL MESSAGE FROM THE LEADER OF THE COVENTRY CONSERVATIVE GROUP

Dear Resident,

At these elections you'll be asked to make a choice over who represents you. It's what sets our nation apart from those governed by tyrants and dictators. Sadly, the majority don't usually vote in a local election. But here's why I hope, and think, you should.

In Coventry we can do better than we are, so much better. After 14 years in charge, this failing Labour administration has hiked council tax by more than 40% and mismanaged debts.

They increase your taxes whilst they fund bail-outs for failing organisations like Coombe Abbey Hotel, Tom White Waste and the City of Culture Trust. They nearly bailed out Wasps RFC too. They've tried to take many of these decisions in secret, away from public scrutiny.

But it doesn't have to be this way. A Conservative administration will deliver on five key pledges. We will deliver sound financial management, improve transparency, deliver better services, make the city greener and create jobs and economic growth.

Our ambitious five-year plan will make Coventry a city where people choose to live, work and invest. I have never been more determined to fight the change we so desperately need. Will you join us?

*Gary Ridley*



Councillor Gary Ridley

**CLLR GARY RIDLEY**  
**CONSERVATIVE GROUP LEADER, COVENTRY CITY COUNCIL**

# SOUND FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND TRANSPARENCY

## CONSERVATIVES IN COVENTRY WILL:

- Improve transparency and focus on debt reduction
- Reduce the amount of money paid out in councillors' allowances
- Review wasteful projects like Coombe Abbey Hotel and Tom White Waste
- Focus on innovation and 'AI' to improve services and reduce costs

In their 14 years in power, Labour has been found wanting when it comes to their management of local finances. Under their administration, council tax has risen by more than 40%. Debt stands at more than £300m - equivalent to around £900 for everyone in the city.

They've slashed basic services while they've squandered your money on fantasy projects like Coombe Abbey Hotel, Tom White Waste and more recently the IKEA building. Many of these 'businesses' have collapsed in value and won't bring in the returns that were forecast.

Last year Coombe Abbey Hotel lost around £1.4m, equivalent to a rise of almost 1% on your council tax. These losses can't continue, so we will review the future of the hotel and other wasteful assets on day one.

Many of these decisions have been taken in secret but later leaked. They illustrate perfectly the need for a more transparent organisation. This year the Council's budget 'consultation' process finished just three days before the budget report was written. How can such a process provide meaningful feedback?

So our mission will be to set a balanced budget which prioritises debt reduction and lower taxes. We won't ask the taxpayer for more than is needed and we will be transparent in our approach.

We will start by looking at the Council's ageing property estate and seeking efficiencies made possible by home and flexible working arrangements. For instance, why does the city keep Broadgate House when it's only 40% occupied?

Another example of waste is the former Coventry Sports Centre building. Subject to a preservation order, it has become frozen in time costing £1m every year whilst becoming older and more decrepit. So we will challenge the listing on the empty sports centre and bring forward a meaningful plan for disposal.

Improvements in technology also offer the prospect of improved and more efficient services. Innovation must be at the heart of our improvement programme, so we will commission an 'AI' taskforce.

We will review our partnership arrangements and the 'One Coventry' approach to ensure the council and the taxpayer are getting the best deal possible.

Finally, we will reduce the amount of money paid out in councillors allowances. We will achieve this by abolishing do nothing deputy cabinet members and reducing the size of the cabinet to eight slashing the wage bill for councillors.

# IMPROVED SERVICES FOR COVENTRY

## HOW WE'LL SHAPE COVENTRY'S FUTURE:

- Increasing spending on better road surfaces and pavements
- Rolling out more average speed-cameras and flashing signs
- Seek a city wide injunction to deal with illegal traveller encampments
- Review access arrangements to the Whitley 'tip'

Service delivery is what the Council exists for. Many services run smoothly improving the lives of residents every day. But there are areas where we can, and must, do better.

Labour's dogmatic approach to academies and free schools is putting good education at risk. So a Conservative council will review schools' admissions to bring it into line with neighbouring authorities. This will give parents greater choice as to the school and/or type of school that they wish to send their child to.

It's also time to do something about illegal traveller-incursions. The actions of a law-breaking minority are making life harder for many people on a regular basis and cost a fortune to put right. So we will explore the feasibility of creating a permanent traveller site. This would enable us to seek a city-wide injunction so illegal encampments can be moved on swiftly.

Quality road surfaces are important for cyclists and drivers alike. After more than a decade of underinvestment by this failing Labour administration they are looking worse for wear. So we will invest more in highway improvements and pot hole repairs and ensure that roads are repaired on a 'worst first' basis wherever they are in the city.

We'll also look at a highways sponsorship programme to raise extra cash for their

upkeep. It's been successful on the city's roundabouts so why not extend the scheme?

Keeping people safe on our network is also important so we will continue to roll-out average speed cameras where necessary. We will also lobby the Government to allow local authorities to keep the revenue raised so it can be reinvested in highway safety.

We will help to get older people active, starting with a street-audit programme to look at how we can make the street-scene more accessible to older people in particular. We will improve signposting to existing group activities, such as led walks and yoga activities.

We will work alongside partners to improve access to GPs and other medical services, raising standards for residents. Where applicable, we will promote the role of pharmacies to take the strain off GPs.

We will also review the current booking arrangements at the 'Whitley tip' and consult on moving to one day a week where no booking is required.

Finally we will work with partners to improve bereavement services. Especially for those ethnic minority and faith communities who have specific requirements around burial time.

# MAKING THE CITY GREENER

## HOW WE'LL SHAPE COVENTRY'S FUTURE:

- Appointing a dedicated Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Sustainability
- Fighting the plastic pandemic with a plastic bottle recycling scheme
- Protect Coundon Wedge and other greenbelt sites with a 'brownfield-first approach' to housing

Within the first 100 days in control, we will appoint a dedicated Cabinet Member for Environment, Climate Change and Sustainability. Then we will review the efficacy of the council's existing strategy and involve the public in a meaningful conversation about the way forward.

However, 'the environment' is about more than tackling climate change. It determines the quality of life we experience, and even our life expectancy.

We will start early, working with schools we will roll-out a city-wide campaign to encourage children to take an interest in the environment. All children of school age will be provided with a packet of wildflower seeds as part of a campaign to green the city. We will also teach children about the importance of Keeping Britain Tidy.

We will also work with local schools on the 'schools streets initiative' to encourage more parents to ditch the car on the school run. As part of this we will seek to recruit more volunteers to support the scheme.

We will make Coventry a 'bee-friendly' city through the planting of more wildflowers. We will also work with the National Trust to plant more blossom trees around the city centre which will breathe new life into our city.

We will support plans to plant a tree for everyone in the city. But we improve consultation and review the maintenance and aftercare provided to them.

It was a scandal that Labour approved huge areas for development on greenbelt land when there was a viable alternative. So we will rigorously defend remaining greenbelt areas, like Coundon Wedge, because once it's gone, it's gone forever.

We will adopt a 'brownfield first' approach to development, prioritising derelict sites like Abbots Lane. Sites that have been blocked by Labour politicians again and again.

On the ground, Conservative councillors have organised and supported resident-led litter picks but we need a proper waste-reduction strategy. As part of this, a Conservative controlled council will consult the public on the introduction of a plastic bottle recycling scheme.

We'll fight fly-tipping by all means necessary with swifter removals and prosecutions. We will learn from other local authorities who have been successful in tackling this problem and increase the use of CCTV to issue fines.

We will also step up the fight against graffiti in our city. And develop a strategy to tackle dog fouling.

# CREATING JOBS AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

## HOW WE'LL SHAPE COVENTRY'S FUTURE:

- We will support shoppers with free late-night parking to ease the cost of living crisis
- We will consult smaller retailers on a turnover-based rent scheme
- Give residents greater say over 'section 106' payments from developers
- Set up a taskforce to examine the economic opportunities presented by hydrogen technology

The future wealth of our citizens depends on the strength of our economy. So we must focus on delivering jobs, suitable homes for people to live in and a transport system that generates growth.

When decisions are made by the Council they are required to consider the impact on a range of factors, such as climate change. We will introduce a new duty to consider how a decision contributes to economic growth and job creation. This will need to be set out in every report to councillors.

We will support measures that help our city centre. So we'll consult retailers on turnover based rents and entice more shoppers by providing free late night parking. We'll also stick with plans to re-open the River Sherbourne and improve the public realm.

We will also set up our own High Street Challenge Fund which will allow district shopping centres to bid for match funding. These grants will fund a range of improvements to the high street and could include anything from flower tubs to Christmas and Diwali decorations.

We still believe there is an opportunity to make Coventry the number one destination for start-up IT companies in the UK. Our aim is to build the next Silicon Valley, creating jobs and wealth. So we will make space available within the city centre and Friargate for this purpose.

We are enthusiastic about battery technology but we want to avoid putting all our eggs in one basket. So we will set up a task force to examine the opportunities offered by hydrogen technology.

It's more important than ever to deliver new housing in Coventry - but they must be the right homes in the right places. So we will carry out a full housing needs assessment to determine what kind of properties are required and where. We will also give residents a greater say over where 'section 106' contributions from developers are spent.

We will also undertake a comprehensive review to understand the main barriers to downsizing for older residents. We will also work with partners to ensure the delivery of a second older people's village in the city.

We will work with government and the West Midlands Combined Authority to create a transport system that promotes prosperity. And we will veto any policies that are harmful to work, such as additional taxes on those who drive to work or a congestion zone charge.

Finally, a good internet connection has never been more important. So we'll work with telecoms providers to ensure the smooth roll out of high speed broadband across the city.

# THE CHOICE AT THIS ELECTION



## CONSERVATIVES

## LABOUR

We know times are tough. So Conservatives will not take one penny more than is needed in council tax and tackle debt.

Labour has increased council tax by more than 40%, and has wasted millions on get rich quick schemes like Coombe Abbey Hotel.

Conservatives will reduce the wage bill for councillors. We'll achieve this by shrinking the size of the Cabinet and axing 'do-nothing' deputy cabinet members altogether.

Labour ignored the findings of an independent pay review. They reduced recommended allowances for some Conservative members and increased it for other Labour members.

Conservatives believe in a 'brownfield first' approach to development. We will defend Coundon Wedge and other green spaces.

Labour enthusiastically approved development on huge areas of greenbelt in Coventry. They recently announced thousands more houses on the greenbelt on top of previous plans.

We will make Coventry City Council more transparent. We will take more decisions in public and will produce an annual spending report each year.

Labour has taken numerous decisions in secret. They even closed down questions about a bail-out for Wasps RFC against legal advice.

We will seek a city-wide injunction to disperse illegal traveller incursions quickly.

Labour has presided over a failure to adequately tackle this issue with problem sites targeted year on year.

Conservatives will invest in our highways and pot hole repairs over the next five years. We'll also explore the feasibility of a highways sponsorship programme to raise additional funds.

Labour blocked our proposed £19.4 million plan to improve the city's roads for the coming year.

We will clamp down on fly-tipping and littering with tougher penalties for offenders. We will also provide more education to children about keeping the city clean

Labour has presided over an increase in fly-tipping and litter during 14 years of mismanagement.

## OUR FIRST 100 DAYS IN CONTROL

- Abolish do nothing Deputy Cabinet Members and reduce councillors pay bill
- Appoint a dedicated cabinet member for climate change and sustainability
- Set up a taskforce to explore how 'AI' can improve services and save money
- Commission a review into failing assets like Coombe Abbey Hotel
- Review booking arrangements at the Whitley 'tip'