

Berkswell Parish response to Solihull Local Plan 2020

Recommendations of the Working Group

1. Background to final consultation and examination

- 1.1. The Examination allows for objection on only 3 grounds
 - Legal compliance
 - Soundness
 - Failure in duty to cooperate
- 1.2. Those grounds can challenge the whole basis of the submitted plan or just aspects of it. There is a minimum period of 6 weeks for objectors to submit objections. Objections must be made in writing and may be supplemented with a face to face presentation if there is a reason for that.
- 1.3. An authority without a “made” plan and without a 5-year land supply can be subject to planning applications anywhere within its area and difficulty in resisting them. A lack of a 5-year land supply can amount to “very special circumstances” thereby removing the greenbelt protections within the NPPF. It is noted that currently there is a 5-year land supply of 5.37 years (an increase from 4.6 a year ago approx.) but as time progresses that will diminish as allocated sites under the 2013 plan are developed
- 1.4. This document is an overview of the options for objection by the parish council. Actual input to consultation to be considered separately due to prescribed response methodology. (i.e. which paragraph numbers and detailed wording)

2. Before engaging in any detailed discussion the Parish Council needs to consider whether it is seeking to have this plan rejected or to have details changed to make it a better plan. In making such a decision Council need to balance:

2.1. The consequences for Berkswell Parish of Solihull Borough not having a “made” Plan

- 2.1.1. Potential for “unplanned” planning applications using very special circumstances exception to greenbelt protections
- 2.1.2. Lack of supporting infrastructure plan
- 2.1.3. Lack of cohesive layout plan for any particular area particularly Barrett’s Farm where the large number of landowners would lead to piecemeal development.
- 2.1.4. The attractiveness of Balsall Common to developers
- 2.1.5. The potential for reducing SMBC officials (officers and Cabinet members) willingness to positively consider smaller requests for changes to mitigate/improve the Plan

2.2. The grounds for making such an objection

- 2.2.1. Evidence of predetermination from 12 March 2016 meeting between SMBC and Berkswell PC representatives,
- 2.2.2. Draft 1 version of the plan ignoring brownfield sites contrary to its own selection criteria in favour of greenfield sites
- 2.2.3. The rural east being the most car dependent area in the borough for residents daily needs as shown in Solihull Connected

- 2.2.4. The Meriden gap being the narrowest in the Balsall Common area and Coventry also building in that narrow gap.
- 2.2.5. As acknowledged in the plan that much of the allocated land on Barratts farm is of high greenbelt value
- 2.2.6. The process failed to give proper consideration to building a new settlement in the north of the Parish close to employment locations and the rapid transit bus service to Solihull
- 2.2.7. The plan acknowledges that there is little local employment and residents have to travel to work. The plan mentions improved bus services but there is no evidence that such an approach will work and the evidence is that current services are only lightly used

The Council needs to decide whether it wishes to make such an objection in principle

3. Principles behind detailed objections to some plan elements

- 3.1. The Council resists any *material* encroachment into Greenbelt but supports development of brownfield sites.
- 3.2. The Council does not currently support a bypass for Balsall Common. However, if a major new housing development is to be on Barratt's Farm then Balsall Common does need new access routes from the A452 both North and South of Balsall Common to divert external traffic away from the village centre and minor roads given that internally generated traffic will increase.
- 3.3. appropriate traffic management plans should be put in place to avoid increased traffic on narrow lanes (especially those without pavements)
- 3.4. The Berkswell Neighbourhood Plan requirements should be followed for all strategic policies within the plan impacting Berkswell Parish and in any supporting text
- 3.5. Infrastructure must be delivered in a timely and coordinated way so that it is there to support new housing as it arrives and does not follow new housing unless there is demonstrated spare capacity within the existing infrastructure
- 3.6. School numbers to be monitored to ensure sufficient places are available in line with the increase in homes.
- 3.7. Village centre and other community facilities to be planned and delivered in the early stages of the developments

4. Proposed comments/objections to soundness to be made on overall Local Plan

4.1. General Comments/Objections

- 4.1.1.** Balsall Common Relief Road – a relief road around Balsall Common from the Kenilworth Road South to North needs to be in place before any significant new housing is built because all sites in Berkswell will have a significant impact on local roads within the settlement or on its approach roads. The creation of a link solely from Waste lane to Station Road will create a very significant “rat run” down Windmill Lane to a “difficult” junction with Kelsey/Waste Lanes past a site entrance to the Windmill Lane site. Windmill Lane is narrow and unsuitable for HGVs. Entering or exiting at the junction of Windmill Lane with the A452 is also problematical given the acute angle of the junction and the poor sight lines.
- 4.1.2.** New Primary School – Whilst the total numbers of pupil places should be sufficient with the new school at the end of the plan period, the housing phasing will not match school provision in phase 1 and potentially early in phase 2, hence the plan is not sound. Room for expansion should be allowed for the 300 extra houses proposed after the plan period and for any atypical year groups.

4.2. Comments on specific sites:

4.2.1. Site 43 Land adjacent to Old Lodge Farm, Kenilworth Rd (capacity 40)

This site should be included in the allocation and an outline Concept Plan based on the Berkswell NDP developed to include safe vehicle and pedestrian access from the A452 and/or Hallmeadow Road. A contribution should be made to nearby pedestrian and cycleway improvement and public open space. This site should contribute to improvements to pedestrian and cycling access to Berkswell Village which will be the closest school until the new school is completed and has the nearest CoE church.

4.2.2. LP Site 19 – Riddings Hill/Hallmeadow Road (Capacity 65)

This could be an appropriate site for a care home and/or sheltered/specialist accommodation including alms-houses and/or other community led housing.

4.2.3. BC1 – Barratt’s Farm (Allocation 875 dwellings)

A wildlife corridor of a minimum of 6.5 metres should be created to link the many ecological sites around the edge of this development before it commences. This can then be protected during the construction phases.

Note Policy P10 and its requirement for a 10% improvement in habitat and the requirement for connectivity

NB We need an ecology report to support this.

4.2.4. BC2 – Frog Lane (Allocation 110 dwellings)

This site is a Greenbelt site in Balsall Parish.

4.2.5. BC3 – Kenilworth Rd/Windmill Lane (Allocation 120 dwellings)

This site is split between Balsall and Berkswell Parishes.

A wildlife corridor of a minimum of 6.5 metres should be created behind the houses on Wellfield Crescent and on the western side linking the small wooded area on Kenilworth road with the Great Crested newt area before construction commences. The concept plan recognises the need to retain wind movement for the Windmill. This site should contribute to the construction of the line of the bypass from Waste Lane to the Kenilworth Road to reduce the impact of traffic on Windmill Lane.

4.2.6. BC4 – Pheasant Oak Farm (Allocation 200 dwellings)

This is a partly Brownfield site and the development of that proportion is supported. This site should contribute to the construction of the line of the bypass from Waste Lane to the Kenilworth Road to reduce the impact of traffic on Windmill Lane.

4.2.7. BC5 – Trevallion Stud (Allocation 230 dwellings)

This is a mostly Brownfield site in Balsall Parish.

This site should contribute to improvements to pedestrian and cycling access to Berkswell Village which will be the closest school until the new school is completed and has the nearest CoE church.

4.2.8. BC6 – Lavender Hall Farm (Allocation 80 dwellings)

This is a mainly Brownfield site and as such its' development is supported.

The bridge at Lavender Hall is narrow and safe access options should be considered as should improvements to Lavender Hall Lane to ensure safe pedestrian and cycle access to both Balsall Common facilities and Berkswell Village facilities. The site should contribute to that cost. This should take account of the changes that HS2 will bring to Lavender Hall Lane and their timing.

Pedestrian access to the site should not require walking alongside Hallmeadow Road when it becomes Relief Road/Bypass.

This site must contribute to the public open space available in Balsall Common either in this site or on another allocated site in line with the Solihull Green Space Strategy and not merely make a financial contribution to an existing green space.

NB Informally make SMBC aware of the existing permissive path and the options to extend it and improve the footpath to Station Rd

5. Further action:

- 5.1. Gain approval from Berkswell PC at EM on 12th November
- 5.2. Share with Balsall PC
- 5.3. Share with Borough Councillors
- 5.4. Identify appropriate paragraphs in the consultation for comment and the wording to be used and agree at further PC EM.
- 5.5. Share with residents
- 5.6. Lobby SMBC