

Policy and Spatial Planning,  
Solihull MBC,  
Council House,  
Solihull,  
B91 3QB

30 Winterbourne Road,  
Solihull,  
B91 1LU

7 March 2019

Ref: Local Plan Review – Draft Local Plan Supplementary Consultation January 2019  
Site 245, Proposed Housing Allocation 18 Sharmans Cross Road

Dear Sirs,

I am, with my wife, owner of, and resident in, the property and land at 30 Winterbourne Road, Solihull. The proposed housing allocation is to the rear of my home beyond land currently owned and used by Solihull Arden Tennis Club.

I would urge that the Rugby Club Ground be removed from the Local Development Plan for new houses and that the site be retained as a sports ground as specified in the current SMBC lease with Oakmoor (Sharmans Cross) Ltd.

In 2013 SMBC affirmed that its policy was to maintain the sports only covenant and not to sell the freehold of the Rugby pitch. In the strongest possible terms, I call upon this generation of policy makers to be faithful to their predecessor's clear position.

I have watched with dismay as that valuable facility has been allowed to fall into decay. I cannot believe that this has happened accidentally and I suspect that it has been a deliberate strategy by the developers to bring it to a point where it is judged to be derelict. This is borne out by what happened to the former clubhouse: a profitable and socially valuable pre-school group was suddenly given notice and the premises were then shut down, neglected and allowed to decay to the point where demolition was inevitable. It seems that Oakmoor has not only not attempted to let or use the sports ground as required by the terms of their lease but that it has, at the very least, not encouraged such use leading to the point where it can be asserted that the ground currently unused.

As a former secondary school headteacher, I have been greatly concerned to see levels of childhood obesity rise (with the ensuing costly health issues and loss of quality of life) and participation in physical sports activity has dropped. Here, in this sports ground, with good drainage installed by SMBC, we have a facility in the centre of a well populated area where physical sports could thrive. Out of town facilities are not nearly so attractive and, of course, there are few if any publicly accessible sports grounds where changing room facilities can be hired.

Previous assessments by SMBC of playing fields provision identified a shortfall within St Alphege and Silhill wards and I would argue that the provision of local (as opposed to "edge-of-town") facilities is the only way to encourage regular participation in sports activities, which have both health and social benefits. I note that Sport England has found that Solihull is in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quartile nationally for over-16 participation in sport 3 times per week and that it continues to fall in the national league tables.

The Arden Tennis Club which is adjacent to the proposed development is, however, an active and viable sports club. I think that nothing should be done that will diminish the viability of that active club. The proposed development would limit the club's parking space and increased congestion on Sharmans Cross Road could well make users less inclined to use the Arden Club.

I have spoken about congestion on Sharmans Cross Road in relation to the tennis club but the increased traffic from the proposed development on that already overburdened route would make for even more difficulties than current residents experience at present when using that road. There are times of day when driving along that it is both very slow and hazardous.

The development proposals make it clear that the housing density would be, at least, four to five times that of this well-established, attractive and highly desirable suburb. Such density of development would be out of keeping with the character and ambience of the area: this character and ambience is a major contributor to making Solihull such a desirable place to live and it is a quality that I would hope that planners would cherish.

There are numerous other points which could be made, including the increased likelihood of flooding with reduced surface area for the absorption of rainfall, but I conclude by returning to my main point: my demand that the 2013 SMBC all party policy, that the freehold of this land be retained by the Council and that the covenant that the land be maintained as a sports ground, is both honoured and reaffirmed.

Yours faithfully,

Keith Dennis