Catherine de Barnes Residents Association Response to SMBC Draft Local Plan (January 2019)

Introduction

1.1 At their AGM meeting on Monday 27th February there was a majority show of hands for the major grounds for objection covered in this response .

1.2 *Catherine de Barnes* R*esidents Association wishes to record some significant concerns and objections to the currently proposed SMBC Draft Local Plan. These relate in part to:-*

- *the General Presentation of the Plan*
- *Questions 16,17, 18 and 26 within the Plan*

The General Presentation of the Plan

2.1 We feel the plan needs to reflect the new reality following the **Community Governance Review** effective from April 2019. Specifically this means that all references to Site 16 need to be moved for inclusion within the Hampton-in-Arden section. This site can no longer be regarded as an urban extension to Solihull's residential sprawl but must now be considered within the context of the infrastructure and rural environment of the Hampton-in-Arden Parish Council Area.

2.2 We feel that the plan needs to recognise the other threats to the Green Belt in this part of the Meriden gap, such as HS2, M42 Junction 6 and the possible Motorway Service Area, which if they proceed will offer new potentially attractive 'defensible' boundaries to developers and thus hasten the absorption of Catherine de Barnes into Solihull's suburbia.

2.3 In addition, the opening paragraph of the Hampton-in-Arden section (para 161 onwards) refers to the two villages, whereas the subsequent paragraphs refer to village in the singular making it unclear which settlement is being described.

2.4 We draw your attention to page 92 of the Plan document and in particular to the references to sites 12, 85, 96, 106, and 143. The parish segment for these sites has been left blank. In fact these sites will fall within Hampton Parish from April 2019.

Question 16 (Hampton Infrastructure)

3.1 We feel the Plan provides no meaningful analysis of the extent of supporting infrastructure in the two settlements, compared with that given in other sections, e.g. on Balsall Common and Hockley Heath. In this context we note that the primary schools and doctor's surgeries in both Hampton-in-Arden and Yew Tree Lane are already at capacity. Catherine de Barnes has neither.

Question 17 (Meriden Road)

4.1 We are concerned that any development of Site 6 will add pressure to local infrastructure, particularly the primary school and the doctor's surgery which are both currently operating at capacity.

4.2 In addition, we are concerned that the extra traffic generated by this site will overload the existing priority junction of Lapwing Drive and Meriden Road. We believe that approval of this proposed site should be conditional on providing an upgraded junction to cater for the additional generated traffic. This conditional approval should also include a pedestrian crossing on Meriden Road as no roadside path exists on the development side of Meriden Road.

Question 18 (Oak Farm)

5.1 Our primary concerns relate to the density of the proposed development. We are alarmed at the suggestion that this site could support 80 dwellings and suspect that this number is a remnant of an earlier plan for a larger site. We are concerned that any development here needs to include sufficient car parking space as local public transport services are wholly inadequate. We fear that 80 dwellings could only be achieved through the construction of multi-storey apartments or tightly packed terraced homes with no or limited parking facilities, which would be wholly inappropriate.

5.2 When the Oak Farm site was considered for development in the 2012 SHLAA the conclusion reached was that it was 'outside desirable parameters for access to primary schools, so not suitable for family housing. Good accessibility to other local services and facilities… However access to secondary schools by cycle is along unsuitable routes'. It was also acknowledged that the site was 'within the Meriden Gap and contributes to the purposes of the Green

Belt safeguarding the countryside from encroachment and helping prevent coalescence between settlements'.

5.3 In the event that the site is to be included in the plan we feel it would be suitable for elderly retirement, sheltered housing. This would, we feel, help limit the impact of traffic in the area which is a significant issue now.

5.4 We note a level of inconsistency in the information provided in the accompanying presentation 'Solihull Local Plan Site Assessment Masterplan'. In particular we refer to slides 35 and following 'Site 24: Oak Farm, Catherine de Barnes'. This section is light on Landscape Assessment and lacks a Developer Masterplan Proposal, unlike other sites referred to in the document.

5.5 On a more detailed point we feel it is important that development of this site should be conditional upon

- pedestrian crossings on either side of the canal bridge across Hampton Lane
- provision of a roadside footpath between the development and the canal on the eastside of the canal
- vehicular access being to/from Friday Lane only, not Hampton Lane.

5.6 We do not understand why the proposed site includes the additional strip encircling the excluded property, and seek further information about this area of the site.

Question 26 (Site 16, Lugtrout Lane)

6.1 We do not believe Site 16 should be included as an allocated site, nor are we content with the addition of land north of Lugtrout Lane to this site.

6.2 Our objections are based on;

- the loss of Green Belt
- the loss of an effective rural gap between suburban Solihull and the rural settlement of Catherine de Barnes
- the abandonment of any real defensible boundaries to protect the Green Belt
- the inability of the local infrastructure to handle the development

6.3 We consider its development to be inconsistent with *Challenge E* of Solihull's Local Plan as adopted in 2013 – *Protecting Gaps between Urban*

Areas and Settlements. The two settlements of Hampton-in-Arden and Catherine de Barnes sit vulnerably within the Meriden Gap and lay exposed already to the threats to the rural environment imposed by HS2, M42 Junction 6 and the potential MSA as mentioned earlier. Within the Meriden Gap there is a swathe of Green Belt to the north and south of Hampton Lane which is known locally as the '**Catney Gap'**. This is all that stands between the Solihull sub-urban area and the settlement and arguably is one of the few tracts of land left which gives any credence to SMBC's motto '*Urbs in Rure'*. We believe the development of Site 16 would reduce the Catney Gap to a small sliver with indefensible boundaries and therefore compromise the settlement's rural village setting.

6.4 What is now Site 16 was reviewed in the SHLAA 2012 assessment. Its suitability for development was rejected then for reasons which we feel were correct at the time and remain equally valid today. The assessment also noted in connection with sites closer to Catherine de Barnes (e.g. site 48:351 Lugtrout Lane) that 'development would erode the narrow gap between Catherine de Barnes and Solihull'.

6.5 The land north of Lugtrout Lane included in Site 16 has a more direct impact on the gap and we fail to see what justification there is to move the boundary of site 16 north of Lugtrout Lane. This increases the indefensibility of the proposed boundaries and we see no reason why this would not lead to the loss of all Green Belt between the Lane and the Canal in the face of future applications.

6.6 The infrastructure is, in our view, wholly unable to meet the pressure from 600 new dwellings (other parts of the document refer to 650 dwellings!). This is because;

- there is no public transport along Lugtrout Lane and that along Hampton Lane is inadequate (for example there is no Sunday service).
- the medical services in Yew Tree Lane and Hampton are at capacity. Catherine de Barnes has none.
- the primary schools at Yew Tree Lane and Hampton are at capacity. Catherine de Barnes has none.
- there would be inadequate convenient shops for local basic requirements.
- the rural roads serving the proposed site, Lugtrout Lane and Field Lane, are narrow and rural in character, and unsuitable for greatly increased traffic.

- the existing road junctions either end of Lugtrout Lane do not have the capacity to handle additional traffic generated by this proposed development. Other local junctions are also likely to be overloaded. An additional junction onto Yew Tree Lane/Damson Parkway is likely to be required.
- there is no footpath along most of Lugtrout Lane.

6.7 If the development of Site 16 had to include schools, shops and medical services, and possibly new roads, we believe this would reduce its capacity to significantly less than 600.

6.8 It has been brought to our attention that there are significant water table and drain off issues affecting the land south of Lugtrout Lane, causing not infrequent flooding onto the lane. These problems would only be increased by further construction of hard surfaces on that site.

6.9 Finally extending Site 16 to the north of Lugtrout Lane would severely compromise Lugtrout Lane's position and ambience as a rural route.

6. 10 Much of this site is long established, active agricultural use, as well as there being sports fields at the other end of the site . We accept that the sports facilities may not all be included in the potential site but the fact remains that unless they will be ultimately re located the position within the overall development we believe will be unsustainable . The site is

home to a thriving bat population as well as a wide variety of bees, insects, wild birds and animals that feed, roost, nest and live their lives here. A habitat that should be preserved.

Summary

- The Plan needs to reposition discussion of Site 16 into the section on Hampton-in-Arden and Catherine de Barnes
- The Plan should recognise the multiple threats posed against the Meriden Gap by HS2, M42 Junction 6 and MSA
- The Plan needs a more objective and detailed review of available infrastructure in the two settlements
- We believe the capacity of Site 24 (Oak Farm) is overstated
- We propose some conditions on developing Site 24 (Oak Farm)

- We propose some conditions on developing Site 6 (Meriden Road)
- We strongly oppose development of Site 16 (Lugtrout Lane)
    - in regard to protecting the Catney Gap in accordance with Challenge E of the 2013 Plan
    - due to loss of defensible boundaries for Green Belt protection
    - due to severe infrastructure restraints
    - due to the reasons given for rejecting this development in SHLAA 2012
- We strongly oppose the extension of Site 16 north of Lugtrout Lane

Catherine de Barnes Residents Association 08/03/2019