



14 March 2019

Supplementary Consultation - Solihull Local Plan Review
 Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
 Council House
 SOLIHULL
 B91 3QB

166 Windy Arbour
 Kenilworth
 Warwickshire
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Dear Sir/Madam

Solihull Local Plan Review – Supplementary Consultation

The Shakespeare Line Promotion Group (SLPG) is the recognised Rail User Group for train services and railway route between Stratford upon Avon and Birmingham and Stratford upon Avon and Leamington Spa/London. The railway route and train service between Stratford upon Avon and Birmingham travels through Earlswood, Whitlocks End and Shirley. These locations are situated in the administrative district of Solihull determining that the Local Planning Authority is Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council. Dorridge, Solihull and Olton, also being within Solihull MBC’s area are served by a train service between Birmingham and Stratford upon Avon.

We wish to formally submitting the following to the supplementary consultation being held in relation to the Draft Solihull Local Plan (SCSDLP).

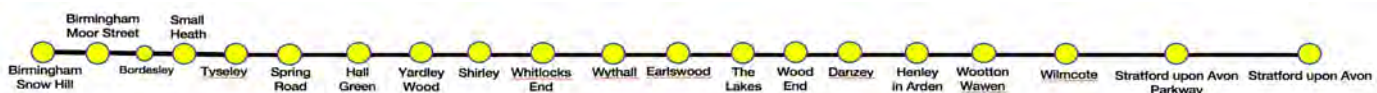
Relationship to Other Plans & Duty to Cooperate

We consider that Wythall being sandwiched by Earlswood and Whitlocks End stations yet which is situated within the administrative area of Bromsgrove District Council is in a unique position and requires to be highlighted and recognised between the two respective Local Planning Authorities (LPA’s). Both LPA’s are required by the NPPF to absorb significant levels of new housing over the next ten to fifteen years. The level of growth indicated by Solihull MBC’s Draft Local Plan is up to 15,029 new homes with up to 7,700 new homes within Bromsgrove District. Combined, the two administrative districts are set to accommodate up to 22,729 new homes by around 2030.

SLPG formally submitted its views to the Bromsgrove District Plan Review held in Autumn specifically because of the position of Wythall and the fact that there is an existing railway station and train service that operates from the settlement. It is welcome that SGSDLP makes reference to Wythall railway station in relation to Tidbury Green.

We believe that Wythall and Whitlocks End railway stations require to be considered holistically for the following reasons:

- The need to provide adequate and environmentally sustainable connectivity by public transport between the two districts, Birmingham City Centre and the wider West Midlands.
- The current high level of passenger demand at both stations and different train service frequencies.
- The impact on Whitlocks End station caused by no parking facilities currently available at Wythall.



- The proposed scale of new housing development which will place significant increased demand upon train services which in turn manifests pressure upon the rail network and infrastructure.
- The benefits of a holistic approach at Whitlocks End and Wythall would extend to Earlswood and Shirley.

6. Blythe

Whitlocks End Railway Station

The community of Dickens Heath but also a wider area relies upon Whitlocks End station to access the railway network. The proximity of the location to several local communities and crucially its facility for car parking determines that a significant proportion of homes over a radius of four or so miles wish to use the station. Indeed, the train operator, West Midlands Railway Ltd, have confirmed that Whitlocks End is the busiest unstaffed station within the whole of the West Midlands area.

The existing car park at Whitlocks End has a maximum capacity for 111 vehicles and is over subscribed every weekday before the conclusion of the morning peak. This has the effect of choking off demand and causing potential users to commute by car adding to vehicular congestion. With no car park at nearby Wythall and extremely limited car parking at Earlswood or Shirley using the train service is not an option if users cannot park their vehicles.

With housing numbers proposed in terms of additional residential development at nearby Dickens Heath, Cheswick Green and Blythe Valley Park the facilities and infrastructure at Whitlocks End require to be significantly enhanced. Paragraph 129 of the SCSDLP suggests increased infrastructure arising from additional development and we contend that this must apply to rail infrastructure and train services.

SLPG support the desire as set in the SCSDLP to improve pedestrian and cycling access between Whitlocks End and Dickens Heath. Such an improvement is an absolute requirement as is the provision of additional adequate car parking that caters for growth. In addition, there can be no enhancement of car parking at Whitlocks End without the grade separation of pedestrians and vehicles that currently both use the busy Tilehouse Lane overbridge. Consequently, a pedestrian footbridge at car park level needs to cross the railway and descend onto Platform 1 at Whitlocks End thus eliminating the serious risk of a pedestrian/vehicle collision on the narrow and totally unsuitable Tilehouse Lane overbridge.

We believe that Paragraph 132 is not robust enough in terms of supporting better train services and the provision of support for enhanced infrastructure enabled through investment in transport infrastructure arising from development that is a power available to LPA's through the Community Infrastructure Levy.

Consequently, SLPG request the SCSDLP should ensure:

- Any future housing development in the Blythe area of Solihull District be subject to financial support being made by developers towards improving the railway as the most sustainable existing transport service and infrastructure.

- That funding for a bigger car park adjacent to the existing railway station providing up to 200/250 spaces be provided by an equitable financial charge upon the developers from each allocation of land designated for development within the Blythe area of the Draft Solihull District Local Plan.
- That co-operation between Solihull and Bromsgrove District be established to enable a joint strategy to be developed, agreed and implemented that addresses the railway station housing catchments for Earlswood, Wythall, Whitlocks End and Shirley.

SLPG have suggested the provision of car parking at Wythall enabled through the Bromsgrove District Plan. We have suggested two options:

- Funding for a car park adjacent to the existing Wythall railway station of between 200/250 spaces be provided by an equitable financial charge upon the developers from each allocation of land designated for development within the Bromsgrove District Plan Review and for the areas of Wythall and Hollywood.
- If car parking as set out above adjacent to the existing railway station cannot be achieved then an alternative site should be proposed from land where a housing development allocation is approved that would provide for a new purpose built railway station. SLPG suggest such a site should be approximately some 300/400 metres south of the existing Wythall railway station and which should provide around 200/250 car parking spaces. If this option were proceeded with it would be possible to consider closure of the nearby existing Earlswood station which has poor access, very limited parking and is remote from significant housing development.
- We would expect the financing of either of these options to come partly from each allocation of land designated for development within the revised Bromsgrove District Plan for the areas of Wythall and Hollywood plus other agencies potentially such as Midlands Connect, Train Operators and LEP's.
- Car Parking provision at Wythall would enable much greater use of the railway service from and to Wythall from the wider area of Wythall and Hollywood. This would also relieve pressure from the oversubscribed Whitlocks End station (which SLPG are pressing WMRE to expand). This would also enable released and enhanced car park capacity at Whitlocks End to be used by people from the Shirley area.

Our view is based upon the demand from existing users and communities along the route of the Shakespeare line and the scale of proposed housing development in the Bromsgrove and Solihull Districts over the next fifteen years. The scale of proposed housing development between 2018 and 2030 along our existing railway line and in the area to the south and west of Stratford upon Avon exceeds 30,000 new homes with an associated population growth of 69,000.

SLPG believe that the SCSDLP and the planning policies of adjacent local authorities must not be oblivious to the additional demand that will arise for transport connectivity, particularly to service home><employment journeys but also shopping and leisure too and the opportunity that new development provides to finance upgraded infrastructure required to meet the needs of the local population and visitors and which is endorsed by several objectives outlined in the SCSDLP.

SLPG believe it is better to look forward and determine a vision so funding, which is a crucial element in obtaining and securing any infrastructure, is locked into planning approvals for further development. Our view is that only by following this approach can the local community secure the necessary infrastructure to ensure the continued amenity that everyone wants for the existing community while absorbing the pressure and need to accept further housing.

We are copying this response to the SCSDLP to Bromsgrove District Council, Warwickshire & Worcestershire County Councils and WM Rail Executive for their information.

Thank you in anticipation of your consideration and engagement.



Fraser Pithie
Secretary