

**Solihull Local Plan
Review
Draft Local Plan
Supplementary
Consultation
(January 2019)**

Balsall Parish Council consultation response March 2019

1. Do you believe that there are exceptional circumstances that would justify the Council using an alternative approach, if so what are the exceptional circumstances and what should the alternative approach be?

Q1. Summary Response

- Balsall parish has exceptional circumstances that justify an alternative approach.
- The draft Balsall Parish Neighbourhood Development Plan contains Community Aspiration CA 1: 'Development on allocated Solihull Local Plan housing sites that will utilise the same construction routes as HS2 contractors should be avoided at the same time as HS2 construction because of the potential disruption to existing residents caused by avoidable increased congestion.'
- This consideration affects Frog Lane and Windmill Lane sites.

Resident's views:

Balsall Parish Council Consultation Response to Solihull Draft Local Plan 15/02/17:

We question the distribution of housing and the phasing of housing.

Draft Balsall Parish Neighbourhood Development Plan

73% of respondents agree/support no new housing to be constructed in or around Balsall Common until after the completion of the HS2 construction in 2026. ¹

2. Do you agree with the methodology of the site selection process, if not why not and what alternative/amendment would you suggest?

Q2. Summary Response

- The effect of the site selection process on the settlement of Balsall Common and Balsall parish have not been taken into account and therefore cannot be supported. The cumulative impact of the process should be considered rather than an accumulation of 'appropriate' sites without regard to combined effect.
- SMBC should consider how the settlement is to be expanded by developing a strategic plan taking into account the locations best suited for new residents and new infrastructure. The process should not be driven by choosing ('cherry picking') the most desirable sites to achieve housing numbers for the Borough though availability, ease or readiness but from a strategic settlement expansion plan.
- In considering this 'settlement first' approach, your paragraph 97 to amend the Green Belt boundary would support the maintenance of the existing Green Belt boundary to the southwest of Balsall Common and so negate erosion of that boundary by the greenfield development proposed.

¹ Neighbourhood Plan Household Questionnaire Results 2017 Final Report (compiled & produced Feb 2018), p.2

3. Do you agree with the infrastructure requirements identified for Balsall Common, if not why not; or do you believe there are any other matters that should be included?

Q3. Summary Response

An infrastructure plan is needed to be produced step by step to meet the needs of the population prior to occupation. The emerging Balsall Parish NDP Policies are to be considered by SMBC in relation to all the areas of infrastructure requirements listed
Infrastructure requirements derived from settlement (parish) evidence should include -

- Phasing of housing development to reduce combined construction impact with HS2
- Balsall Common village centre investment in retail, community space and parking
- Balsall Common village bypass to relieve congestion on the A452
- Parking pressure at the station addressed with additional provision
- New primary school and improved secondary school places provision, refer to Balsall Parish NDP Policy COM. 2
- Community and civic provision ideally at a central location
- Improvements to all transport modes (rail, cycle, bus, road vehicle)
- Health service provision to match increased population
- Crime reduction measures
- Housing suitable for older persons built within reach of the centre
- Driven by SMBC through assessment of future settlement need and potential in consultation with Balsall Parish Council

Balsall Parish Council Consultation Response to Solihull Draft Local Plan 15/02/17:

Village centre

The village centre of Balsall Common does not meet the needs of the existing residents in terms of capacity and access to facilities. There is no space for expansion in the village centre to accommodate facilities for more residents from significant new development on the edge of Balsall Common. The village focus needs to extend towards the railway station and the medical centre.

What is the definition and criteria for a “town centre”? Why not at least apply the principles applied to Solihull, Shirley and Chelmsley Wood centres to Balsall Common? Balsall Common residents have a high proportion of entrepreneurial, educated and professional individuals who use the village as a base and are very mobile. There is an opportunity for a focus of retail activity and services for the local community developed around a much needed improved village centre.

The strategic nature of the increased housing being proposed for Balsall Common is not to meet local growth needs, but to meet the housing needs for Solihull Borough and the wider Housing Market Area. The scale of change facing Balsall Common is potentially overwhelming. It will turn a village into a town. Balsall Parish Council seeks to assist Solihull Council through the Neighbourhood Planning process to manage this growth.

Bypass

Our residents overwhelmingly support a long overdue bypass for Balsall Common. The village is a notorious borough hot spot and a bypass will relieve existing congestion, and provide better

access for new housing developments located as infill within the defensible border of the bypass. The bypass will reduce traffic on the main A452 artery and connecting roads through the village and create the opportunity to incorporate cycle paths within the village to reduce car use for short journeys. During our local plan consultation process 87% of residents attending the Local Plan Consultation Event held at St Peter's Hall on 11 February 2017 support a bypass to relieve the congestion on the roads within our village.

School provision

School growth can only be achieved with a suitable site for a new school. Site 1 at Barratt's Farm has sufficient land to be able to accommodate a new school with extensive green space recreation facilities that can be shared by the community. During our local plan consultation process we have received feedback from 528 residents; 92% support building a new primary school. Many residents expressed the opinion that a second two-form entry primary school and day nursery should be built in the east of the village.

Draft Balsall Parish Neighbourhood Development Plan:

Bypass

Community Aspiration CA 3:

A bypass for the A452 to redirect through traffic around the village of Balsall Common and to reduce congestion along the Kenilworth Road is needed. This new bypass would mean the current trunk route along the Kenilworth Road becoming a local road for access. This would replace the existing trunk through road with a more environmentally friendly core for the local community with the potential for walkways and cycle routes.

During the construction of HS2 haul routes should be implemented to minimise the need for construction traffic to use the main trunk road A452 through Balsall Common.

The confluence of through traffic along the A452 and between Solihull and Coventry, and the crossing points between these traffic flows, is the reason Balsall Common developed in the first place, but the time has come to alleviate this ubiquitous and oppressive hegemony.

Our residents overwhelmingly support a long overdue bypass for Balsall Common. The village is a notorious borough congestion hot spot and a bypass will relieve existing congestion and provide better access for new housing developments. The bypass will reduce traffic on the main A452 artery and connecting roads through the village and create the opportunity to incorporate walkways and cycle paths within the village to reduce car use for short journeys.

The Neighbourhood Plan advocates that Balsall Common must be bypassed if our residents are to enjoy the benefits of living in a harmonious and safe environment. This proposal has been the feature of many transport plans in the past and it is time that it came to fruition.

In the Household Questionnaire 2017 there was strong support for a bypass to be built around the village for through traffic (85%)² Support for a bypass increases to 90% of households in responses from Balsall Parish only.³

"72% of business respondents would support a bypass to be built around Balsall Common to reduce congestion in the village and improve transport links."⁴

² Neighbourhood Plan Household Questionnaire Results 2017 Final Report (compiled & produced Feb 2018), p.2

³ Neighbourhood Plan Household Questionnaire Results 2017 Final Report (compiled & produced Feb 2018), p.1

⁴ Neighbourhood Plan Household Questionnaire Results 2017 Final Report (compiled & produced Feb 2018), p. 2

Balsall Common centre

Community Aspiration CA 2:

“This Neighbourhood Development Plan proposes a new design concept for the village centre aimed at achieving:

- a) a reduction in traffic congestion in village centre on the approach to the central roundabout
- b) increasing both driver and pedestrian safety in the shopping area
- c) providing extra off-road parking behind the centre shops
- d) providing a more desirable central location giving better community focus for the village as a whole
- e) reduction in speeding

The new design would consist of providing a “shared space” environment on the stretch of Station Road from the Meeting House Lane junction to the central roundabout. This would incorporate central parking and raised pedestrian crossings. Through traffic would be slowed, parking would be easier with less obstruction to through traffic. Pedestrians would find it much easier to cross from one side to another. The community as a whole would benefit from a central location providing a versatile open space with a relaxing “coffee culture” and café atmosphere. An improved design for the car park behind Tesco would be integrated with the redesign of the shopping parade. The review of this proposal and viable alternatives should be led by SMBC through consultation with Balsall and Berkswell Parish Councils.

Parking

Many also highlighted current parking pressures generally which would be adversely impacted by new development if not improved. 843 respondents (Table 13) expressed an opinion about problems associated with traffic in the parish such as: Overflow parking on main thoroughfares arising from inadequate provision at the rail station.⁵

New Primary School

“During our local plan consultation process, we have received feedback from 528 residents; 92% support building a new primary school.”⁶

Housing development

Overwhelming conclusion from the focus groups with community organisations is that Balsall Common needs more housing to provide affordable homes for younger age residents – single people, young couples and young families with children. There needs to be a corresponding provision of community facilities for more school places, sports outdoor activities and community indoor activities.⁷

4. Do you believe that Site 1 Barratt’s Farm should be included as allocated site, if not why not? Do you have any comments on the draft concept masterplan for the site?

Q4. Response

- No comment

⁵ Neighbourhood Plan Household Questionnaire Results 2017 Final Report (compiled & produced Feb 2018), p.27

⁶ Consultation Response to the Solihull Draft Local Plan February 2017

⁷ Community Engagement Focus Group Interviews with Community Organisations March 2018

5. Do you believe that Site 2 Frog Lane should be included as allocated site, if not why not? Do you have any comments on the draft concept masterplan for the site?

Q5. Summary Response

- Frog Lane should not be included as an allocated site.
- In a 'settlement first' approach, your paragraph 97 to amend the Green Belt boundary would support the maintenance of the existing Green Belt boundary to the southwest of Balsall Common and so negate erosion of that boundary by this single greenfield development proposed.
- Balsall Street East and Balsall Street should remain as the southern defensible boundary for Balsall Common maintaining the Green Belt boundary.
- Development of this site would establish a precedent and potentially open up land adjacent to Balsall Street as far as Saracen Drive
- Development of this site would equate to cherry picking smaller areas of green space and the approach to development in Balsall Common should take regard of this and preserve these.
- It is preferential for this site to be used for sports facilities in addition to the existing Holly Lane playing fields. Frog Lane is one of the few lanes in the village.
- The junction of Holly Lane/Balsall Street East/Alder Lane is already a congestion hotspot creating a threat to highway safety. Buses currently have to use Balsall Street as 'single lane' due to parked cars during school times.
- Location is not highly accessible.
- It is a key local habitat with wildlife biodiversity adjacent to an important local green space.
- Medium density housing conflicts with the character of the existing area.
- Site is the furthest distance from the station and village centre amenities.
- This masterplan proposal for 115 dwellings with only one narrow winding access road to Balsall Street East will mean in the region of 230 vehicles adding to the existing congestion on this stretch of road during peak hours because of the proximity of the local schools.

Residents' views:

Balsall Parish Council Consultation Response to Solihull Draft Local Plan 15/02/17:

The Council suggests that the 115 houses proposed for Frog Lane LPR site ref. 2 is not the right location. We suggest that the ancient medieval Coventry to Knowle road, which forms the existing defensible boundary of Balsall Street and Balsall Street East, should remain the southern border of the village. Breaching the longstanding boundary of Balsall Street East and Balsall Street in one location would in fact make the boundary less defensible for future development south of the road in other adjoining adjacent locations. During our local plan consultation process we have received feedback from 528 residents; 87% support keeping Balsall Street East and Balsall Street as the southern defensible boundary for our village. Release of the strategically critically located land parcel RP59 from the Green Belt would actively threaten adjoining parts and generate pressure for urban sprawl contrary to the green belt purposes. The failure to deliver affordable housing at the recent Crest development of 120 houses in the south of the village is evidence that the Frog Lane will not easily support the desperately needed affordable housing for the village.

The proximity to the primary school is not an advantage because the buildings are at capacity. More housing in this location will increase the congestion. Accessibility scores for this site are not accurate.

Proposed sites for housing to the south of Balsall Common have been identified as low accessibility in the accessibility study.

We strongly oppose developing housing south of the Balsall Street East defensible boundary and there is overwhelming support from residents to retain the important Green Belt protection afforded to the amenity of the playing fields at Holly Lane. During our local plan consultation process we have received feedback from 528 residents; 96% support keeping Holly Lane playing fields as protected Green Belt land. It is recognised that living close to areas of green space directly benefits both physical and mental wellbeing of residents.

Draft Balsall Parish Neighbourhood Development Plan:

77% of respondents from Balsall Parish completing the Household Questionnaire 2017 support Balsall St East as the southern boundary for new development in Balsall Common.⁸

“63% of survey respondents wanted to “Promote the preservation and restoration of key local habitats and wildlife biodiversity.”⁹

The settlement is characterised by popular, low density residential areas with an open plan, cul-de-sac style layout.¹⁰

6. Do you believe that Site 3 Windmill Lane should be included as allocated site, if not why not? Do you have any comments on the draft concept masterplan for the site?

Q6. Summary Response in relation to the proportion of the site in Balsall parish.

- The Parish Council acknowledge the strategic selection of this site however maintain reservations over its development for housing, namely:
- The site has low accessibility
- Residents are likely to require high levels of parking provision
- Housing must be in keeping with local character
- Mixed development with different types and sizes of houses
- Opportunity for low carbon development
- Protection of existing mature or important trees and hedgerows
- Construction phasing conflicts with HS2 construction traffic
- Include at least 10 % bungalows or other suitable accommodation for downsizing by mobile older residents
- The masterplan proposal of 225 dwellings on this site will mean in the region of 450 additional vehicles during peak hours accessing the already congested Kenilworth Road. HS2 construction vehicles together with the existing congestion of the Kenilworth Road caused by 80% of traffic being through traffic during peak periods means this development must be postponed until after HS2 construction is completed or/and the bypass is opened.
- The emerging Balsall Parish NDP Policies are to be considered by SMBC in considering the masterplan detail for this site, in particular Policy BE. 5 Design Review Panels.

⁸ Neighbourhood Plan Household Questionnaire Results 2017 Final Report (compiled & produced Feb 2018), p.1

⁹ Neighbourhood Plan Household Questionnaire Results 2017 Final Report (compiled & produced Feb 2018), p.11

¹⁰ Solihull Local Plan Review Draft Local Plan Supplementary Consultation para 81 p.21

Residents' views:

Balsall Parish Council Consultation Response to Solihull Draft Local Plan 15/02/17:

The accessibility mapping study concludes that sites to the north and south of Balsall Common have LOW accessibility. The piecemeal development of parcels of green belt in the poorly accessible southern location of our village is not a good strategy to integrate new developments into existing communities so as to minimise long term impacts; and to contribute to the health and well-being of our community. Further development of 200 houses at the Kenilworth Road/Windmill Lane location LPR site ref.3 with low accessibility should not be considered.

Draft Balsall Parish Neighbourhood Development Plan:

Positioned on the east side of the Kenilworth Road (A452) Zone A (Elysian Fields) is now an occupied site of 115 dwellings. Although still under construction the site is accessible via two roads (Drovers Close and Meer Stones Road) which are accessed via the Kenilworth Road. There is limited off road parking available within this scheme. The area has recently benefited from traffic management improvements, which have included the installation of a traffic calming cobbled surfaced area on the A452 to Kenilworth, and the introduction of 4-way traffic lights with pedestrian crossing points. It is important to note that Zones A and M are positioned the furthest away from services within the Balsall Common area. There are no retail units or recreation facilities within the immediate locality and public transport does not service these recently developed areas. This development includes 20 properties designated as social housing for rent managed by Walsall Housing Group.

“92 percent “wanted the density of new housing in keeping with the immediate locality.”¹¹

“93% of households strongly agreed or agreed that the height of new buildings should not be higher than buildings in the immediate locality.”¹²

“Asked what future development should look like 93% were in favour of well-designed small clusters of houses, 83% wanted a mixed development with different types and sizes of housing.”¹³

“82% of respondents to the survey agreed/strongly agreed that “New housing should use renewable energy/green approaches to resource use.”¹⁴

“88% felt there should be more provision for car parking in any new development...”¹⁵

Over 85% of Meriden residents who travel to work do so in a private vehicle. In the rural ward of Meriden 58% of households have 2 or more cars compared to 41% for Solihull Borough and 32% in England.¹⁶ The average car or vans per household is 1.73 in Meriden ward compared to 1.34 for Solihull Borough and 1.16 for England.¹⁷

¹¹ Neighbourhood Plan Household Questionnaire Results 2017 Final Report (compiled & produced Feb 2018), p3

¹² Neighbourhood Plan Household Questionnaire Results 2017 Final Report (compiled & produced Feb 2018), p.3

¹³ Neighbourhood Plan Household Questionnaire Results 2017 Final Report (compiled & produced Feb 2018), p.3

¹⁴ Neighbourhood Plan Household Questionnaire Results 2017 Final Report (compiled & produced Feb 2018), p.16

¹⁵ Neighbourhood Plan Household Questionnaire Results 2017 Final Report (compiled & produced Feb 2018), p.4

¹⁶ Ward Plan 2016, p.20-21

¹⁷ Ward Plan 2016, p.20

A parking survey conducted in the parish in February 2019 found that the average number of vehicles parked outside each dwelling was one for one bedroom dwellings, two for two and three bedroom properties and more than two for dwellings with four or more bedrooms.¹⁸

One of the important priorities for respondents to the survey was to “promote the protection of existing mature or important trees and hedgerows, groups of trees or woodland (81%).¹⁹

“63% of survey respondents wanted to “Promote the preservation and restoration of key local habitats and wildlife biodiversity.”²⁰

The overwhelming conclusion from the focus groups with community organisations is that Balsall Common needs more housing to provide affordable homes for younger age residents – single people, young couples and young families with children.²¹

7. Do you believe that Site 21 Pheasant Oak Farm should be included as allocated site, if not why not? Do you have any comments on the draft concept masterplan for the site?

Q7. Response

- No comment

8. Do you believe that Site 22 Trevallion Stud should be included as allocated site, if not why not? Do you have any comments on the draft concept masterplan for the site?

Q8. Summary Response

- Trevallion Stud should be included as an allocated site.
- Brownfield land for housing is favoured however a large proportion is not PDL
- Residents are likely to require high levels of parking provision
- Mixed development with different types and sizes of houses
- Opportunity for low carbon development
- The site contains and is bounded by important natural features, the protection of existing mature or important trees and hedgerows is vital to the aspect and character of this approach to the village
- Site can provide market accessible and affordable homes for younger age residents
- Development requires suitable measures to reduce noise exposure from aircraft
- The developers draft concept masterplan is not acceptable. It shows a substantial loss of trees, leaving those mature specimens in new gardens not protected by sufficient space. There is no well-defined open space or blue infrastructure. There is no indication of an ecology biodiversity study influencing the proposals. It appears to be an estate layout of medium density not integrated with adjacent low density housing which forms the existing character of the area.
- include at least 10 % bungalows or other suitable accommodation for downsizing by mobile older residents
- SMBC to have regard to the emerging Balsall Parish NDP Policy NE. 5
- Balsall Parish Council will commission an in depth ecology study of the site and would expect this to be taken into account.

¹⁸ Balsall Parish survey of vehicles parked outside of dwellings February 2019

¹⁹ Neighbourhood Plan Household Questionnaire Results 2017 Final Report (compiled & produced Feb 2018), p.2

²⁰ Neighbourhood Plan Household Questionnaire Results 2017 Final Report (compiled & produced Feb 2018), p.11

²¹ Community Engagement Focus Interviews with Community Organisations March 2018

Draft Balsall Parish Neighbourhood Development Plan:

“Residents were very keen that any new development in Balsall parish should protect the character of the Parish by encouraging the re-use of land previously developed (98%)”.²²

“Asked what future development should look like 93% were in favour of well-designed small clusters of houses, 83% want a mixed development with different types and sizes of housing.”²³

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“63% of survey respondents wanted to “Promote the preservation and restoration of key local habitats and wildlife biodiversity.”³⁰

The overwhelming conclusion from the focus groups with community organisations is that Balsall Common needs more housing to provide affordable homes for younger age residents – single people, young couples and young families with children.³¹

Environmental noise is an important public health issue, featuring among the top environmental risks to health. It has negative impacts on human health and well-being and is a growing concern among both the general public and policy-makers in Europe. The World Health Organisation (WHO) guidelines 2018 for aircraft noise: For average noise exposure, the WHO Guideline Development Group (GDG) strongly recommends reducing noise levels produced by aircraft below 45 dB Lden, as aircraft noise above this level is associated with adverse health effects. For night noise exposure, the GDG strongly recommends reducing noise levels produced by aircraft during night time below 40 dB Lnight, as night time aircraft noise above this level is associated with adverse effects on sleep. To reduce health effects, the GDG strongly recommends that policy-makers implement suitable measures to reduce noise

²² Neighbourhood Plan Household Questionnaire Results 2017 Final Report (compiled & produced Feb 2018), p.3

²³ Neighbourhood Plan Household Questionnaire Results 2017 Final Report (compiled & produced Feb 2018), p.3

²⁴ Neighbourhood Plan Household Questionnaire Results 2017 Final Report (compiled & produced Feb 2018), p.16

²⁵ Neighbourhood Plan Household Questionnaire Results 2017 Final Report (compiled & produced Feb 2018), p.4

²⁶ Ward Plan 2016, p.20-21

²⁷ Ward Plan 2016, p.20

²⁸ Balsall Parish survey of vehicles parked outside of dwellings February 2019

²⁹ Neighbourhood Plan Household Questionnaire Results 2017 Final Report (compiled & produced Feb 2018), p.2

³⁰ Neighbourhood Plan Household Questionnaire Results 2017 Final Report (compiled & produced Feb 2018), p.11

³¹ Community Engagement Focus Interviews with Community Organisations March 2018

exposure from aircraft in the population exposed to levels above the guideline values for average and night noise exposure.³²

9. Do you believe that Site 23 Lavender Hall Farm should be included as allocated site, if not why not? Do you have any comments on the draft concept masterplan for the site?

Q9. Response

- No comment

10. Do you have any comments to make on potential changes to the Green Belt boundary east of the settlement that would result in the removal of the 'washed over' Green Belt from those areas not covered by a formal allocation?

Q10. Response

- No comment

40. Would the above approach of requiring affordable housing contributions of 40% of total square meterage or habitable rooms/floorspace incentivise developers to build more smaller market housing?

41. If so, what is the most effective approach? Is it to calculate affordable housing as: (a) 40% of bedroom numbers, (b) 40% of habitable rooms, or (c) 40% of habitable square meterage?

42. What is the best way of measuring developable space for this purpose: bedroom numbers, habitable rooms or habitable floorspace?

43. What other measures would incentivise developers to build more smaller market housing?

Q40.41.42.43. Summary Response

- This potential policy proposal to use a percentage of square meter floorspace, percentage of bedrooms or percentage of habitable rooms could lead to undesirable unintended consequences.
- Such a scheme should not be used without evidence from such an approach already in use achieving an improvement in provision of affordable housing.
- SMBC should have regard to the emerging Balsall Parish NDP Policy H. 7

³² WHO, Environmental Noise Guidelines for the European Region, 2018