



Dickens Heath Parish Council

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December 11th 2020

Dear Sir/Madam

Ref. Solihull MBC Local Plan – Publication Stage Consultation Representation by Dickens Heath Parish Council.

Dickens Heath Parish Council set out below their response to the Solihull MBC pre-submission consultation setting out policy views, and certain specific changes relating to site BL1 Land to West of Dickens Heath village on which they wish to propose amendments on part of that site.

Introduction

In terms of the overall concept of the plan review, the Parish Council has established a positive and ongoing dialogue with Solihull Planners throughout the process and participated throughout in the consultation process, and is therefore not raising objection to the legality, soundness or the details arising from the duty to co-operate within the Housing Management Area.

The Parish Council is comfortable with the level of public consultation that has taken place, and their experience of co-operation and assistance provided by Solihull MBC Planning Officers at a number of consultation meetings has been good.

The Examination in Public – Dickens Heath Parish Council would wish to participate in the Examination hearing in respect of Site BL1 and their proposed specific amendments to relocate existing sports grounds within a section of the site plan area and its related land use.

Background and Observations

At the time of the January 2019 Supplementary Consultation, the Parish Council highlighted a number of concerns over the related Infrastructure Requirements necessary in order to deliver the proposed housing sites in a sustainable manner.

These will remain key issues in delivering the individual site plans that include addressing existing traffic and parking congestion issues as well as facilitating the new development going forward.

The Parish Council would expect to be closely consulted on such detailed plans, especially relating to Highways and Traffic Management, during the life of the plan. The Parish Council have specific concerns in respect of a number of junctions, due to bottlenecks and highway safety considerations, of which SMBC are clearly aware - especially around the Dickens Heath Road, Tanworth Lane junction at Miller & Carter's traffic island, the junctions onto Tilehouse Lane from Birchy Leasowes Lane & Tythe Barn Lane, plus the flow of traffic through the village due to hazardous parking on sections of Dickens Heath Road.

The Parish Council is satisfied with the **proposed education facilities** to meet the needs of the enlarged Parish Community in respect of both primary and secondary places during the plan period.

In respect of **Health Service provision (NHS)** the Parish Council understands that adequate facilities and enhanced services will be provided, especially to meet the needs of a growing elderly community within the wider local south Shirley area that will include for a degree of immigration from outside Solihull – however they have reservations over the ability of the Solihull and South Birmingham Area Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) to provide the necessary additional provision in a time effective manner.

With the exception of the **village centre parking provision**, they believe it would be inappropriate for the draft local plan to be making additional detailed infrastructure representations at the present time.

The village centre area is privately owned as to highways and public accessed surface parking for both residents and retail/business occupiers, with ineffective planning controls, and has been a long-running unaddressed issue.

The Parish Council would expect to see an ongoing dialogue with SMBC for action to address these shortcomings prior to increasing the size of the village, with its additional pressure on the centre which represents the services hub to a wider area. The Parish Council sees a need for Solihull to seriously address the village centre parking shortcomings as a key priority.

The Parish Council also recognises the importance of improving **public transport links and highway improvements along Tythe Barn Lane** to improve connectivity together with an enlarged parking facility at Whitlock's End Station.

Site BL1 Housing Element 350 Homes

The Parish Council has welcomed the reduction in housing numbers within the draft plan and has previously drawn attention to the high level of community opposition to this development, and especially the related loss of sports grounds involved in the draft site proposals.

The Parish Council sees it as important to retain these links with the village and their contribution to the health and well-being of the local community.

However in respect of the proposed housing development, given the present assessment our views would be very much dependent on the details of the final scheme should the site be approved through the Examination in Public into the final plan including the necessary highways and links into the village centre. Following experience with other local developments, and the loss of mature prominent trees, the Parish Council would seek more formal protection of existing important mature trees and adjacent woodlands within the site area wherever practical by application of appropriate Tree Protection Orders.

Site BL3 Woods Farm, Bills Lane

This is the second site in Dickens Heath Parish, and while the Parish Council would have preferred to see a reduced housing number of 250 rather than 300 homes, they recognise it is a more sustainable solution in terms of traffic management and access to the public transport train and bus hub at nearby Shirley Rail Station than the previous area 13 site proposal.

Overview

The Parish Council policy is not to comment on sites outside the Parish where the impact on the parish from adjacent developments specifically (BL2) relates mainly to highway issues that will need to be addressed at the site planning stage.

However, the Parish Council regards the proposed revised Greenbelt boundary as at Tilehouse Lane and Birchy Leasowes Lane as being very important.

In view of the deferred Bromsgrove Local Plan, with significant potential development sites along the Solihull boundary, there should not be any further development sites allowed in Tidbury Green Parish in order to retain a firm Greenbelt peripheral greenbelt buffer and prevent further urban sprawl in years to come.

Dickens Heath Parish Council – Proposed Alternative Concept Sports Pitch and Facilities Scheme on part site BL1 West of Dickens Heath.

See attached plan – Appendix 1.

Dickens Heath Parish Council are proposing an important alternative modification to site BL1 that is focussed on retaining the existing sports clubs within the site BL1 site parameters.

This seeks to relocate the sports clubs presently located to the South of Tythe Barn Lane into part of the site to the North of Tythe Barn Lane incorporating existing clubs in that location into a new consolidated sports hub with enhanced facilities.

Our indicative concept scheme has the support of the common landowner of the whole site, land including the existing sports fields involved and can be delivered in a timely manner that would allow a seamless transfer of the clubs involved and also takes account of changes that have occurred in the intervening period.

The proposed sports hubs multifunctionality and enhanced facilities would provide a qualitative improvement on current facilities and greatly enhance more general health and well-being activities that would be a much greater benefit to the Dickens Heath Community. It would also better enhance the open access to the village than the provisions indicated in the draft plan.

The area of the site involved is already partly existing sports grounds and the PC seek to simply replace part of a proposed wilding area that would not provide the same healthcare and recreational benefits of the proposed hub.

The Parish Council see the sporting use as a greater community benefit than the designated wilding area and a much more efficient use of land that they would anticipate being supported by Sports England as a logical alternative and less disruptive site for longstanding sporting activities.

The site would have adequate parking and good access, and would also provide certainty to existing clubs rather than being displaced into an undetermined new and more remote location further into the countryside.

A large section of the designated wildlife area includes an important and longstanding **Equine (Horse) Rescue Charity with stables and grazing** which would be relocated by the landowner under this scheme. The scheme would also retain the adjacent popular nationally recognised **Akamba Heritage Centre**.

The proposals would **relocate the existing large key active clubs** Highgate United FC & the Old Yardlians Rugby Football Club and retain the Shirley Town FC on the site plus provide facilities for other users as necessary.

It would also retain an extensive perimeter of greening as informal amenity land that would incorporate tree planting and public pathways along the lines set out in the attached plan.

It is the view of the Parish Council that the plan provides better community access to open space for healthy community recreational use, with potential to contribute to climate change objectives by additional planting, while reducing unnecessary travel and the incursion of a new sports hub further into the countryside.

The proposals would require no changes being necessary in the SMBC key housing site proposals, plus would retain and enhance the existing clubs within the immediate area together with their close links with the village.

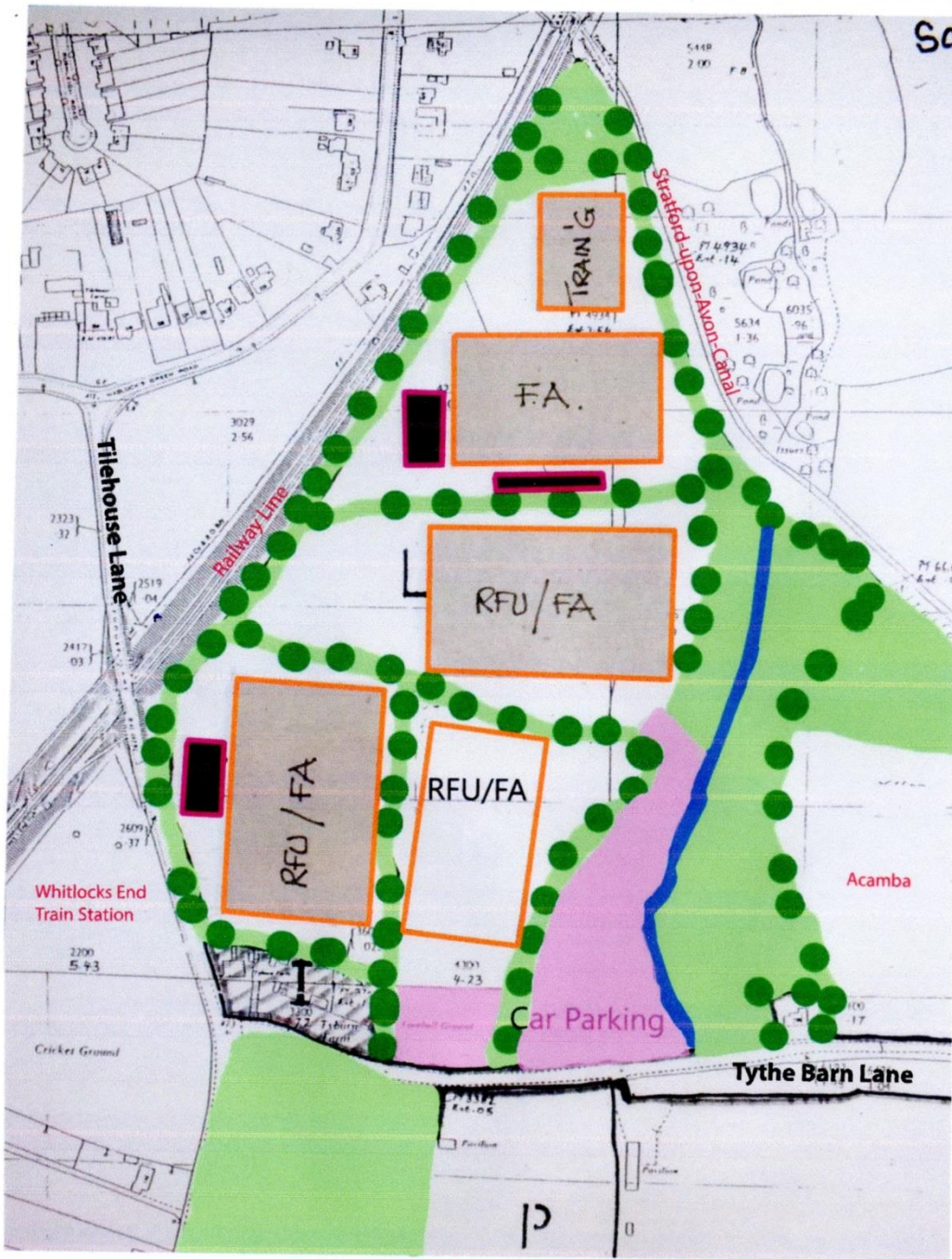
The Parish Council are long time partners of SMBC in delivering local community services in the Dickens Heath Parish and would expect Solihull to be closely involved with the Parish Council in the planning process of the Sports Hub that is regarded as being in the best interests of our community and a more efficient use of the land.

I would be grateful if you could acknowledge receipt of these representations.

Yours Faithfully

Helen Marczak
Parish Clerk & RFO

Appendix 1



 Green space and landscape (including existing Local Wildlife Sites)

 Existing watercourse

 Indicative car parking and associated sports facilities

 Indicative clubhouse and changing facilities

 Proposed sports pitches - comprising:

4 x Full-size Football/Rugby Pitches + 1 x Junior Pitch.
 Full-size pitches double to provide 2 x Junior pitches making 9 pitches in total.
 2 x pitches to be Desso GrassMaster style all-weather hybrid playing surfaces.

Dickens Heath Parish Council Alternative Concept Sports Pitch and Facilities Scheme on part site BL1 West of Dickens Heath