



Place Directorate

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[REDACTED]

Date: 11/12/2020

Response to Solihull Local Plan – Draft Submission Plan

Dear Sir / Madam,

Thank you for consulting Coventry City Council in relation to the Draft Submission of the SMBC Local Plan review. Please accept this letter as an officer response to the consultation. This letter has not been formally endorsed by the City Council but is intended to support continued and constructive dialogue between the two Councils in relation to the Duty to Cooperate. This is considered of significant importance in this particular case given the strategic connections that exist here, and which are of relevance to both Coventry City Council and Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council.

We recognise that Coventry and Solihull each sit within separate Strategic Housing Market Areas (HMA), with Solihull forming part of the wider Birmingham focused HMA, whilst Coventry forms the focal point of the Coventry and Warwickshire HMA. We also recognise that both areas continue to experience challenges in meeting their housing needs, in-particular Coventry and Birmingham, and the impact this has on neighbouring authorities. Given these challenges, we welcome the allocation of additional sites within Solihull Borough, which go towards meeting development needs within the Birmingham HMA. We recognise the need for on-going discussions across the wider HMA regarding growth beyond 2031, particularly in relation to accommodating unmet need from a neighbouring HMA.

We acknowledge the need to balance economic investment and protection of the environment. We consider that the proposals as currently drafted allow for overall economic growth, particularly around HS2 and UK Central, whilst ensuring the continued protection of the Meriden Gap and wider Green Belt. We consider a sensible balance has been taken between the release of land for development in Balsall Common, which could be considered to be contained growth, allowing for expansion of the village and delivering investment to HS2, whilst not encroaching any further into the Meriden Gap than the existing settlement boundary. Therefore, we are satisfied that the proposals in Balsall Common do not reduce the Meriden Gap and do not reduce separation distances between Coventry and Balsall Common.

As part of on-going collaboration and joint working we will continue to support biodiversity net gain and offsetting with links to both authorities being in the Habitat Biodiversity Audit partnership, and the Enhancement/Net Gain pilot. This continued joint working will enable further projects and evidence to create net gain in biodiversity and offsetting throughout the area and will further add benefit to the wider sub-region in relation to the environment, air quality, public health and biodiversity. On-going work to encourage modal shift to sustainable transport and will create opportunities for habitat creation and protection.

As part of our on-going work under the Duty to Co-operate and as members of CSWAPO and the WMCA and Minerals Working Group, we will continue on-going engagement and joint working over the lifetime of plan development. We welcome ongoing joint working in relation to minerals and waste to support joint agreements around the energy from waste plant and the expansion of the waste processing facility at Whitley in Coventry. The Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire waste partnership will continue to play a key role in the continued successful delivery of recycling and energy generation across the area and will contribute towards the aims of the wider climate change agenda.

We support the concept of UK Central Hub and proposed developments in that locality, especially around HS2 and Arden cross. We see these developments bringing benefits to Coventry given the strategic location and direct links. We will continue to work together to foster those connections and opportunities, which could benefit both Coventry and Solihull, particularly in relation to the higher education sector. We continue to be committed to ongoing work around highway modelling and mitigation measures in partnership with TFWM and Highways England to support measures to promote modal shift across the area, which will also contribute to improvements in air quality and public health outcomes.

Yours Sincerely,

Christopher Berry
Senior Planning Policy Officer
Coventry City Council