

## SOLIHULL LOCAL PLAN REVIEW

### Draft Local Plan Supplementary Consultation 2020

Response by Gordon Walters

Respondent ID 5512

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The SLPR is unsound for the reasons given below.

### Site BL1 (formerly Site 4)- West of Dickens Heath

The Draft Local Plan Supplementary Consultation includes a proposed housing site allocation on land west of Dickens Heath, between Birchy Leasowes Lane to the south, Tilehouse Lane to the west, the Stratford-upon-Avon Canal to the north, and to the west Ancient Woodland and established hedgerow and tree line. The revised proposal for the whole of Site BL1 is for a development of 350 dwellings. I strongly **object** to part of this allocation on the land west of Dickens Heath and south of Tythe Barn Lane for approximately 250 dwellings, which I will refer to as Site BL1a, and suggest that the smaller site to the north of Tythe Barn Lane and bounded by the canal to the north is acceptable for development of approximately 100 dwellings towards the end of the Plan period due to its high performing (8) Green Belt status. This total site was previously proposed for an allocation of 700 dwellings which the Council have now reduced by half owing to the severe restrictions of this site.

Further to my responses submitted in March 2019, I am submitting further comments following the updated evidence by Solihull MBC and based on my previous responses which have largely been ignored by the Council and some addressed by mitigation and reduction by half of the original proposed housing numbers. The site selection methodology is unclear and its application seriously flawed.

#### **Policy Site BL1a summary of objections**

The main reason for the choice of this site for new housing is its location close to Whitlocks End railway station but detailed analysis, together with local knowledge, shows that it is not sustainable and should have been considered as a red not a green site in terms of the initial sustainability appraisal (SA). The combined significant adverse effects given below from developing the land west of Dickens Heath makes the proposal wholly inappropriate in terms of sound planning practise, and does not accord with both national and local planning policies.

Dickens Heath, which was granted planning permission in 1994 as a new village, has increased from the original award-winning design of 850 dwellings to 1,757 units today. The

proposed new housing would make this Village around 2,100 dwellings. However, the roads and infrastructure have not been designed or improved to accommodate this increase. The vast number of dwellings proposed in the Local Plan Review for the Blythe area, together with the large housing estates given planning permission in the general area in the last few years, being 2,252 between 2011-2018, has caused considerable congestion at peak times. Given the parking problems in the Village centre, the narrow rural roads and historic hedgerows, it will be difficult to make all the required road improvements to take any more traffic. In addition, Site BL1a is a high performing Green Belt site (scoring 7); there are more Local Wildlife Sites surrounding than any other of the proposed allocations being 4 in all, and 8 within a 1km radius, with protected species inhabiting the Site; there are ancient woodlands and hedgerows; the land is liable to flooding as the sub-soil is deep boulder clay that does not allow adequate percolation; the site is not within walking distance from the facilities in the Village Centre; there would be a loss of character and identity as Site BL1a is outside the confined, identifiable Village boundaries; the Site is in an area of landscape sensitive to development; there would be a loss of playing fields with no alternative proposals submitted at the time of writing. The proof that this Site is un-sustainable is borne out by the fact that the Council is proposing such a significant amount of mitigation, some of which are unachievable, in an attempt to make the Site sustainable. Despite pointing out all these concerns to the Council in previous submissions this Site is still in the Plan. I do, however, appreciate the enormous workload and pressure the Council's officers are working under with severely stretched shortages of staff necessitating more external consultants working on the various reports who have insufficient local knowledge.

No other proposed site in the Draft Local Plan has so many adverse effects, particularly to the natural environment and should therefore be removed from the proposed allocation for development, particularly as there are alternative sites readily available which are more sustainable. Although the housing figures have been halved for site BL1, if removed from the Green Belt, further development is likely in the future on the undeveloped green space.

**I therefore strongly object to the allocation of part of site BL1 in the Plan west of Dickens Heath.**

Contact details: -

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1

Recent and Proposed developments (attached separately to email)

### Appendix 2

Road junction at Dickens Heath Road/Birchy Leasowes



**APPENDIX 3** Local Wildlife Sites and Ancient Woodland. See separate attachment to email.

