

9 December 2020  
Covering Letter 9 December 2020



LPR Consultation Policy and Delivery  
Solihull MBC  
Solihull  
B91 3QB

Jessica Graham

**Sent by email – [psp@solihull.gov.uk](mailto:psp@solihull.gov.uk)**

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Dear Sir / Madam,

### **Response to the Solihull Draft Submission Local Plan Review Consultation**

On behalf of St Phillips, we have prepared the following submission in response to the Solihull Local Plan Review – Draft Submission consultation document (DSLSP).

St Phillips have previously submitted representations to the Scope, Issues and Options consultation (January 2016), Draft consultation (February 2017) and Draft Supplementary consultation (March 2019) in order to promote their land interests at Smiths Lane, Browns Lane and Widney Manor Road, Bentley Heath (SHELAA Reference 207).

We have submitted 8 consultation forms with this Covering Letter responding to the following Policies in the DSLP:

- Policy P4A
- Policy P4E
- Policy P17
- Policy P4C
- Policy P5
- Policy P17A
- Policy P4D
- Policy P9

### **Site Context**

St Philips' site at Smiths Lane, Browns Lane and Widney Manor Road, Bentley Heath (Site reference 207) is being promoted for circa 250 dwellings, 2.2ha for a community facility and public open space. The site is located immediately adjacent to Knowle, Dorridge and Bentley Heath which is identified for expansion in the Submission Draft given its accessibility and sustainability.

As part of this submission we have resubmitted a Promotion Document for the site which includes a summary of technical work undertaken to date, key design principles and an Illustrative Masterplan.

In the Council's evidence base, St Philips' site has been assessed as follows:

- Category 1 site in the Site Assessment Paper as it performs well against the suitability, availability and achievability assessments;
- Located within a lower performing Green Belt parcel and is bound by roads which could be a suitable and permanent revised Green Belt boundary in accordance with the NPPF (Paragraph 139);
- Located within a Medium / Low landscape parcel;
- Has 'Medium / High' accessibility.

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Having met with SMBC's planning policy team, in March 2020 we provided SMBC with an update Technical Note setting out some additional information on key matters discussed which related to:

- Landscape / Green Belt – concern was raised that the development of St Philips' site would narrow the gap between Bentley Heath and Solihull and could have a negative impact on the 'rural feel' of this gateway into KDBH.
- Highways improvements – potential highways benefits of the proposals and improvements that could be made to improve connectivity between the site and Widney Manor Train Station to the north west.
- Potential community benefits – as well as providing much needed market and affordable housing, St Philips' is also proposing to provide circa 2.2ha of land for a community use. Three different masterplan options showing different potential community uses for the site were submitted to SMBC.

A summary of the Technical Note is set out below:

#### Landscape

- The design proposals for the site will address the sensitive nature of the approach into the settlement from the west to maintain its 'rural feel'.
- There is already existing development within KDBH and proposed development elsewhere in the District where there is a smaller gap between settlements than that which will result from the development of our client's site. There is also no Local Plan Review evidence to support the protection of this 'green gap'.
- There is already built development between the M42 and KDBH. However, landscaping / 'green uses' can be proposed along Widney Manor Road in order to provide a 'rural feel' at this entrance into KDBH.

#### Highways

- A continuous pedestrian route can be provided between the site and Widney Manor Station.
- Improvements can be made to improve the cycle environment along Widney Manor Road e.g. signage and road markings.
- A spine road will be delivered with the development of the site which will improve pedestrian / cycle accessibility from Tilehouse Green Lane to Widney Manor Station.
- Smiths Lane will be downgraded and will be suitable for pedestrian recreational purposes.
- Cycle parking facilities could be provided at Widney Manor Station to encourage commuters to use sustainable transport modes.

#### Community Benefits

- The site would be a suitable alternative location for a new primary school as the site is on the edge of a settlement, not within a residential area and has direct links to Widney Manor Train Station and the M42. We have previously had meetings with SMBC Policy, SMBC Education and a local catholic primary school about the potential for the site to assist in meeting catholic school place provision given that a recent application to extend St Augustine Catholic Primary School in Solihull was refused and we understand from the local catholic primary school that they have aspirations to expand given their limited capacity.
- The site could be a suitable location for a community facility such as a health centre, dentist or community hall and extra care accommodation. The end use can be agreed with SMBC, the local community and the CCG.
- The site would also be a suitable location for strategic green infrastructure and potential Green Belt compensatory improvements.



In summary, SMBC's evidence base demonstrates that the St Philips' site has limited constraints and is in a very accessible and sustainable location. The allocation of the site could provide additional market and affordable housing to meet Solihull and the Greater Birmingham Housing Market Area's housing needs (this is discussed further in our response to Policy P5) as well as providing land for a community use or other community facility and public open space. It is considered that the benefits of allocating this site within the Local Plan Review far outweigh any potential concerns SMBC have relating to the narrowing of the gap between Bentley Heath and Solihull. We therefore consider that this land should be released from the Green Belt and allocated within the Local Plan Review.

We trust you find the above and enclosed helpful, please contact me in the first instance should you have any queries.

Yours sincerely



Jessica Graham  
**Associate**

Inc. Promotion Document and 8no. Consultation Forms