



Meriden Parish Council

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3rd November 2014

Ms Sarah James
Principal Planning Officer
Policy & Spatial Planning
Solihull MBC
Council House
Manor Square
Solihull B91 3QB

Dear Ms James

Application for Designation of a Neighbourhood Area

Meriden Parish Council, as a relevant body, is to work closely with the local community in the preparation and submission of a Neighbourhood Plan in accordance with the Localism Act 2011.

Currently the intended timetable is to launch an early draft of the Plan at the Annual General Meeting in May 2015 and to have the final version ready for submission by late 2015. This could well be over ambitious and is therefore subject to change.

Please find enclosed the formal application for the Designation of Meriden Parish as a Neighbourhood Area.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Barbara Bland', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Barbara Bland
Clerk to Meriden Parish Council

Enclosure (1)



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Meriden Neighbourhood Plan

APPLICATION FOR DESIGNATION OF A NEIGHBOURHOOD AREA

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Executive Summary

Introduction

The parish of Meriden covers an area that includes the village of Meriden, Millisons Wood, Fillongley, Eaves Green, Church Lane, Harvest Hill, Four Oaks (Back Lane & Cornets End Lane. The parish is broadly bounded by the A45 by-pass to the north, by a tributary of the river Blythe to the east, by another tributary of the Blythe to the south and the A452 by-pass to the west. Extensive sand and gravel workings lie to the south of the application site, forming those parts of the Meriden Quarry complex that are accessed from Cornets End Lane. A large water-filled former quarry also known as the 'Meriden Sandcap', lies north of Hampton Lane; to the north-east there is also a group of detached and semi-detached houses fronting the south side of Hampton Lane together with the existing Meriden Sports Park and Parish Council Offices. To the west are the grounds, buildings and car park of the North Warwickshire Golf Club and to the east there is a large field and, beyond that, the house and grounds of Meriden Hall, including a park home development with more than 60 single story mobile homes.

The wider surrounding landscape, beyond the quarry complex and Meriden Village, includes the Stonebridge Golf Course to the north-west, and Packington Hall and Park to the north, and classic Ancient Arden/Arden Parklands farmland to the south, west and east. Other nearby settlements include Millisons Wood (1.25 miles north-east), Hampton in Arden (1.8 miles south-west), Berkswell (3.15 miles south) and Coventry (centred 6.5 miles south-east).

The area known as 'Arden' in modern planning guidance and policy documents refers to that part of Warwickshire and north Worcestershire that was anciently covered by the vast Forest of Arden. The name is thought to be derived from an Ancient British word 'ardu', meaning 'high land'. In existence before the Anglo-Saxon period and continuing into the Middle Ages, an area roughly corresponding to the north-western half of Warwickshire was then heavily forested and was gradually cleared for new settlements and agricultural land (fields). At the time of the Domesday Survey (1086) there were over 50 square miles of woodland and wood pasture, or some 35% of north-west Warwickshire, including Coventry and Birmingham.

Though the vast majority of this forest has long since gone, the memory has lingered on in place names like Hampton-in-Arden, Henley-in-Arden, Tanworth-in-Arden and Weston-in-Arden (now part of Bulkington). Shakespeare also used the Forest of Arden as a location in his play *As You Like It*, although his was a romanticized version of the real forest that also incorporated elements of the Ardennes Forest in France. Several substantial remnants of the ancient woodland still exist in this region, however, although many of them have been replanted with non-native coniferous plantations for commercial purposes, a process encouraged by the Forestry Commission.



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The Arden landscape we recognize today is essentially a man-made pastoral landscape

The village of Meriden derives its special character from its rural setting and its historic roots, central to which is its Parish Church with magnificent views towards Birmingham and beyond sited on a hill-top, and its collection of historical buildings and the village green that sits in the conservation area.

The publication of a Village Design Statement in 2011 described the qualities and features of Meriden and acts as a point of reference to ensure that local knowledge of the village's character can be taken account of when changes to the village's landscape are proposed.

Meriden's population at the time of the 2001 census was 2734 people in 1210 households. With the new housing development on the Maxstoke Lane playing field site completed in 2014, it is expected to increase by approximately 7%. The village has a range of facilities including a primary school with nursery unit and Sure Start Centre, a library, doctors' surgery, a number of shops including a post office and pharmacy together with excellent sporting and recreational facilities, including Meriden Sports Park and the Village Hall. There are 82 and 900 bus services providing easy access to Coventry and, Birmingham City Centres, Birmingham International Railway Station, Birmingham Airport, Hampton in Arden Railway Station and Solihull Town Centre including access to "ring and ride".

The Meriden Parish Plan was published in 2009 which sets out a vision of what is important for the community. The Plan identifies many key issues and services and explores how they can be safeguarded and developed in the future. The plan identifies issues that are at the heart of the community and describes how they might be developed in the next few years.

The new Localism Act is now an ideal opportunity to revisit the Parish Plan and to work with the local community and Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council to replace it with a Neighbourhood Plan.

The development of the village and the surrounding settlements

The 'centre' of the village today is off-centre, at the intersection of the Birmingham/Main and Fillongley Roads by the village green, which is a Conservation Area. It is along these two roads that the historical development of the village can be traced.

Facing the Green on the corner of Fillongley Road are thatched cottages, while 'Corner House' and 'The Laurels' are later 19th century buildings. Eastwards from the Green along Main Road are a run of older cottages and a cluster of listed buildings from Strawberry Bank to Waterfall Cottages, with the Bull's Head pub and Meriden Hall in its own grounds to the south of Main Road.



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And further to the east, beyond the duck pond four distinctive stone cottages lie intermingled with post-war development before reaching the 'Old Road', its cottages and the Queen's Head. Westwards from the centre is Forest Hall and the remarkable original pavilion, workshop and archery grounds dating from the late 18th century, all listed as of national importance.

The 'old' village (Alspath) on Meriden Hill was designated a Conservation Area in 1977, with its cluster of listed buildings including the Church of St. Laurence, which is of exceptional value.

Growth in the 20th century was extensive. Between the wars, ribbon development took place along the Fillongley Road and to a limited extent along Main Road / Birmingham Road and Leys Lane. At the same time the Millison's Wood development was constructed a mile or so to the east of the centre and there was some development at Eaves Green.

During the Second World War, 'temporary' evacuation centres were established at Eaves Green and in the grounds of Meriden Hall. After the war, these became more permanent 'mobile' home parks which are attractively laid out and well liked by residents.

In the decades following the war the pattern of development was shaped by the roads, with council and private housing developments built on the land enclosed by the Fillongley Road, Main Road and Leys Lane. Frontage development also consolidated housing on the Fillongley Road, Maxstoke Lane, Main / Birmingham Road and Berkswell Road.

In the last decades of the 20th century there were two significant housing developments. The first was on Strawberry Fields, to the south of Main Road near the centre and the second was at Millison's Wood on the site of the former Triumph motorcycle factory. Elsewhere there were some smaller infill developments.

Objective

The development of a Neighbourhood Plan for Meriden is being facilitated by the Parish Council with help from volunteers across the community. The Parish Council believes that this is a real opportunity for the community to have some ownership on future planning policy for the Parish. Through the creation of the Plan, local people will have the opportunity to help shape future policies for land use and the scale of development and what it should look like.

The Neighbourhood Plan will cover the parish of Meriden and, subject to passing the formal tests, a local referendum and assessment; it will become part of the local planning framework. Its policies will apply until 2026.



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Process

In September 2013 the Parish Council agreed to support the preparation and submission of a Neighbourhood Plan in accordance with the Localism Act 2011.

In January 2014 a Neighbourhood Plan Working Group comprising members of the Parish Council, supported by Michael Wellock, Managing Director of Kirkwells - town planning and sustainable development consultants, was established with delegated authority to develop the plan and ensure democratic accountability. The Working Group will make every effort to see that the whole community has real opportunities to engage in the Plan and that the Plan is developed in conformity with strategic and national planning policy. Particular note will be taken of the Solihull Local Plan formally adopted and approved in December 2013.

The Working Group will meet regularly, meetings will be open to the public and their agendas and minutes together with other useful information will be made available on a dedicated part of the Parish Council website and in the Parish Office.

Community engagement

It is intended that the Plan will be launched at the Parish Council Annual General Meeting in May 2015. The Neighbourhood Plan will draw extensively on the findings of the Parish Plan published in 2009. A number of themes emerged from the Parish Plan and these can be summarised as follows:

- the urgent need to provide affordable homes for both low cost sale and rent for families, older and young people
- the need to publicise planning guidelines and planning applications
- the need to promote village shops and restaurants
- the need to facilitate expansion of education and leisure facilities particularly for young people
- the need to promote Neighbourhood Watch schemes and publicise better security in homes

To fulfil its commitment to openness, transparency and community involvement, the Working Group will undertake a further parish-wide resident's survey of all households, and will ask local businesses to complete a separate survey in order to gather local views on the needs of the community and their aspirations for development. The results of these will inform the proposed meetings and events by which the community will help draft the content of the Plan.



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Funding

The Parish Council is aware that Solihull MBC has limited funds available for assisting with the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan and that this is restricted to officer time supporting and advising the community in taking forward the Plan and to cover costs for the examination and any other further steps including organising the referendum. It is further understood that other costs such as printing, surveys, public meetings etc, are a matter for the Parish Council and possible sources of grants towards these costs are being explored. In the meantime the initial costs of preparing the Plan will be met by the Parish Council.

Outcome

The intention is that the Neighbourhood Plan will be substantially drafted by late 2015, although some aspects of the formal processes remain unclear to the Working Group.

Solihull MBC will consider whether the Neighbourhood Plan for Meriden conforms with its adopted strategic policies and, in agreement with the Parish Council, will put it forward for independent assessment.

Subject to a successful referendum, Solihull MBC will have a legal duty to 'make' the Neighbourhood Plan for Meriden and bring it into force.



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Application

The following are included with Meriden's application for designation as a neighbourhood area:

1. A map (attached) which identifies the area to which the area application relates.
2. A statement explaining why this area is considered appropriate to be designated as a neighbourhood area (see 2 below).
3. A statement that the body making the area application is a relevant body for the purposes of 61G of the 1990 Town and Country Planning Act (see 3 below).



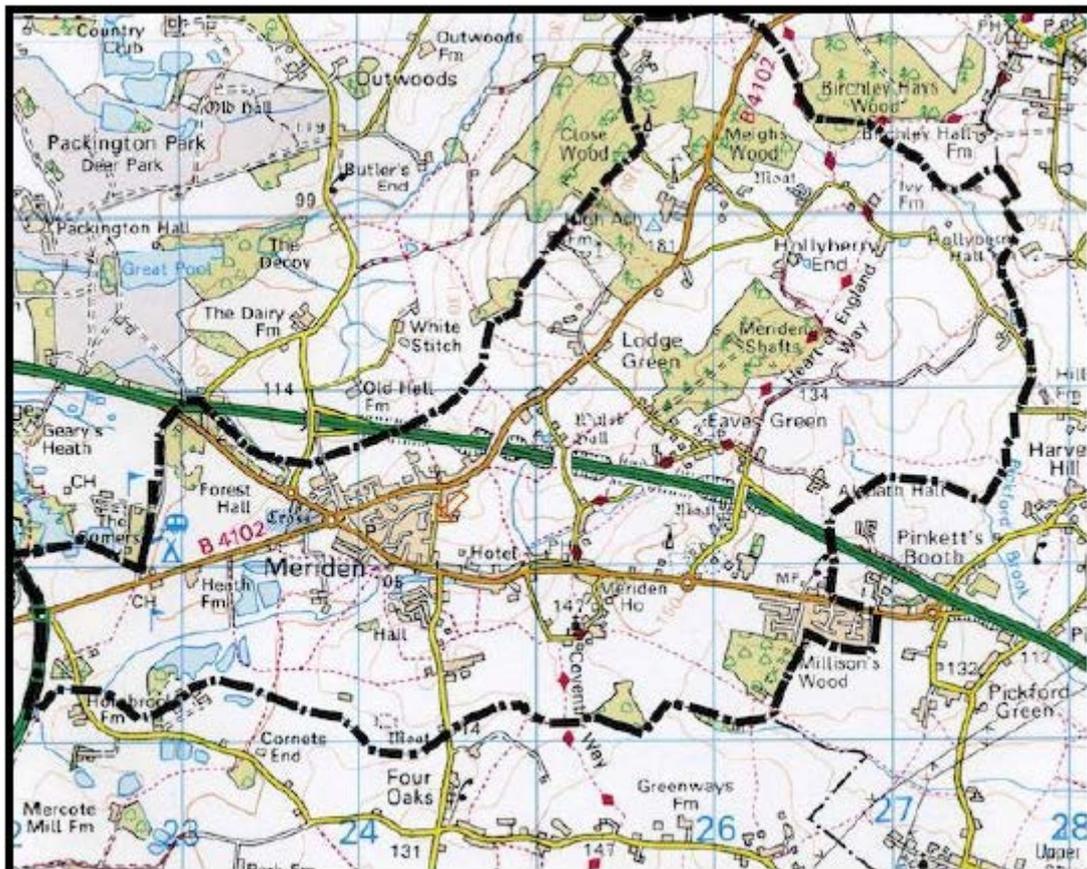
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1. Where is it?

Meriden is at the centre of England and this fact has been marked for centuries by an ancient cross on the village green. The Parish of Meriden lies in the rural 'gap' between Coventry and the Birmingham conurbation. The "Meriden Gap" is the name given locally to the precious Green Belt of attractive countryside and villages that lies at the heart of the most economically successful area of the West Midlands.

The Parish covers approximately 11.5 square kilometres and forms the North East corner of Solihull Metropolitan Borough, bordering Coventry to the east and North Warwickshire to the north. The main settlements are Meriden Village itself where approximately two thirds of the population of the Parish live, Millison's Wood and Eaves Green. Millison's Wood, a mile to the east of Meriden Village is partially built on the site of the former Triumph Motorcycle factory. The Parish is crossed by the A45 Birmingham to Coventry road and is within 10 minutes drive of the M6, M42 and M6 Toll motorways, Birmingham International Airport and rail station. It is extremely well connected and highly accessible. At the same time, its hilly and wooded countryside attracts walkers to many well looked after footpaths, including the Heart of England Way and the Coventry Way.





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2. Statement to be designated as a neighbourhood area

The parish of Meriden is considered appropriate to be designated as a neighbourhood area for the following reasons:

- The Meriden Neighbourhood Plan is being developed to help deliver the local community's ambitions and needs for the plan period 2014 to 2026.
- The Plan will provide a vehicle to guide, promote and enable balanced and sustainable change and growth within the designated area.
- The designated area includes the whole of the civil Parish of Meriden.

3. Statement that the body making this application is a relevant body

In accordance with Section 61G of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, the body making the application to designate Meriden as a neighbourhood area is Meriden Parish Council, a Parish Council established in pursuance of the Local Government Act 1972.

The application for designation includes all of the area covered by the Parish Council.