

CHAPTER 5: TRANSPORT

INTRODUCTION

Objections to First Deposit 1275/133 - CPRE

Objections to Revised Deposit There were no objections to the Revised Deposit draft.

Key issues

- (5.0.2) – *is the reference to the economic regeneration of the West Midlands region necessary.*

Inspector's reasoning and conclusions

5.1 CPRE argues that the reference to Solihull's role of underpinning the economic regeneration of the West Midlands region could be misleading. However, although the latest RPG11 constrains development in the areas to the south and south-east of the region, Solihull clearly has a key role in helping the economic regeneration and urban renaissance of the wider West Midlands region. The latest regional strategy includes economic regeneration as a key challenge, and confirms the role of Coventry/Solihull as an important growth engine for the region [CD51G; ¶ 3.4/3.11]. Paragraph 5.0.2 is essentially a factual statement, which helps to provide the background and explanation to the policies in this chapter of the Review. It fully reflects the latest RPG11 and consequently needs no amendment.

Recommendation

5.2 I RECOMMEND NO MODIFICATIONS to the Plan to meet this objection.

POLICY T1: AN INTEGRATED AND SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT STRATEGY

Objections to First Deposit 1080/202 – West Midlands Friends of the Earth; 1275/135 – CPRE; 1293/3 – National Farmers Union; 1305/229 – Berkswell Society; 1369/988 – David Wilson Estates & Taylor Woodrow Developments Ltd.

Objections to Revised Deposit 1126/521/R – Hampton-in-Arden Society.

Key issues

- *Is Policy T1 being put into practice in selecting proposed development sites, such as BVP, and should a transport hierarchy be established, along with policies to reduce speeds and road danger and ensure road safety;*
- *Does Policy T1 give sufficient priority to public transport, cycling and walking over the private car, in the interests of creating a sustainable and integrated transport network;*
- *Would criteria (ii) & (iii) constrain farm diversification schemes;*
- *Does Policy T1 lack the necessary degree of commitment;*
- *Is criterion (v) ambiguous and properly reflects transport policy objectives;*
- *Rev 5/3: Should further details and dates of particular strategies be included in the text accompanying Policy T1.*

Inspector's reasoning and conclusions

5.3 Policy T1 expects development proposals to help create an integrated and sustainable transport network for Solihull, and sets out relevant criteria. At the inquiry, SMBC confirmed that Policy T1 generally accords with national policy in PPG13 and RPG11 Policy T1(A), and I have no reason to disagree with this general view.

- 5.4 WMFOE argues that Policy T1 does not go far enough in establishing a transport hierarchy, with pedestrian modes at the top and the private car at the bottom. However, when seen together with other policies in this chapter, Policy T1 aims to reduce the need to travel, tackle road congestion, promote alternative modes of travel other than by car, and encourage use of public transport, walking and cycling. This is wholly in line with national policy in PPG13, which does not suggest establishing a hierarchy of transport modes. Policy T1 also addresses road safety and traffic calming. Proposals for new developments, such as BVP2, are dealt with elsewhere in the Plan and in my report, and would need to have regard to the context and aims of Policy T1.
- 5.5 CPRE argues that the Policy should give a more positive steer towards means of transport other than the private car, especially for developments that generate significant volumes of traffic. However, Policy T1 addresses the needs of all transport users, including motorists, other users of roads and public transport, by seeking to reduce congestion and pollution and achieving better access to development and facilities, in line with PPG13 (¶ 3). Detailed decisions about locating new development where it would offer realistic, safe and easy access by a range of transport are more related to the specific developments concerned, in the context of Policies T1, T2 & T3. Policy T1 also promotes travel choice, in line with PPG11 Policy T1(A), whilst other policies (such as Policies T5, T6, T7, T8, T9, T10, T16 & T17) promote alternative means of transport to the private car. Although CPRE's suggested amendments would not result in fundamental changes, as a policy that provides the context for the chapter, it is important to provide for all modes of transport, in order to create a sustainable integrated transport network for Solihull. No changes are therefore needed to address CPRE's concerns.
- 5.6 NFU is concerned that farm diversification schemes in more remote rural areas might not be able to comply with criteria (ii) & (iii) of Policy T1. However, PPG13 (¶ 40) makes it clear that the aims of promoting sustainable transport, access by public transport, cycling and walking, and reducing the need to travel apply to rural and urban areas alike. This is particularly important in areas like Solihull where the rural areas are relatively close to the main built-up areas. PPG13 (¶ 43) also confirms that farm diversification schemes can help to reduce commuting and that LPAs should be realistic about the availability of alternative means of travel to the private car. It therefore seems to me that Policy T1 sets out appropriate guidelines for all new developments, and any exceptions would have to be justified in terms of the circumstances applicable to each farm diversification scheme, in the light of the general encouragement given to such proposals in Policy C6.
- 5.7 In response to Berkswell Society, the current wording of Policy T1 sets out the framework against which development proposals that generate traffic will be assessed and their contribution to the aim of creating a sustainable transport network. The *expectation* that development proposals will make a positive contribution to this aim and meet the specified criteria is a starting point, rather than a prescriptive requirement. It does not, in my view, weaken or undermine the aims of the policy.
- 5.8 Criterion (v) in the original Policy T1 sought to reduce the environmental impact of travel. SMBC accepts that although land-use planning can affect journey length and influence travel patterns and mode of travel by policy and locational criteria, it cannot directly reduce the environmental impact of travel. Consequently, this criterion has been deleted (Rev 5/1), fully meeting David Wilson/Taylor Woodrow's objection.
- 5.9 In Rev 5/3 (¶ 5.1.4), HIAS asks for the dates of the various strategies to be specified. I understand that the current Local Transport Plan [CD85] is the 2003 version, the Public Transport Strategy [CD153] was formally approved in

2002, and Centro's 20-year strategy is the latest version. However, these strategies are revised periodically, and including the dates of the current strategies would soon make the Plan out-of-date and misleading.

Recommendation

5.10 I RECOMMEND NO MODIFICATIONS to the Plan to meet these objections.

PROPOSAL T1/1: PUBLIC TRANSPORT STRATEGY FOR SOLIHULL

Objections to First Deposit 1126/327 – Hampton-in-Arden Society.

Objections to Revised Deposit There were no objections to the Revised Deposit draft.

Key issues

- *Is Proposal T1/1 soundly based, particularly in view of the relevance and status of the Council's Public Transport Strategy.*

Inspector's reasoning and conclusions

- 5.11 Proposal T1/1 supports proposals that contribute towards the aims of Solihull's Public Transport Strategy and improve the public transport network and accessibility. Public transport has a key role to play in the local transport network by helping to encourage modes of travel other than the private car, particularly important in the context of increasing demand for travel. In helping to achieve the aims of providing a sustainable and integrated transport network, Proposal T1/1 is clearly related and contributes to Policy T1, as paragraph 5.1.1 confirms. It therefore has a sound basis.
- 5.12 HIAS questions the status of the Public Transport Strategy. At the inquiry, SMBC confirmed that the current version is that approved in February 2002 [CD153], although the document is not formally adopted as SPG. Proposal T1/1 helps to promote greater use of public transport, in line with the aims of the Public Transport Strategy summarised in paragraph 5.1.4. I cannot therefore see any justification for deleting this policy, as suggested by HIAS.

Recommendation

5.13 I RECOMMEND NO MODIFICATIONS to the Plan to meet this objection.

POLICY T2: ACCESSIBILITY TO NEW DEVELOPMENTS

Objections to First Deposit 1275/134 – CPRE; 1382/354 – Lafarge Aggregates Ltd.

Objections to Revised Deposit 1013/189/R – Lafarge Aggregates; 1275/144/R – CPRE.

Key issues

- *Should Policy T2 make it clear that improvements to the highway network should be required only in exceptional circumstances;*
- *Does Policy T2 ignore the needs of mineral developments that require suitable transport facilities and infrastructure, and does the reference to financial contributions prejudice such developments;*
- *Rev 5/4: Should the word "significant" be clarified or deleted.*

Inspector's reasoning and conclusions

- 5.14 Policy T2 expects developers to demonstrate how access to new development sites will be achieved in a sustainable manner, including financial contributions towards public transport, highway improvements and cycling/walking facilities.
- 5.15 Policy T2 confirms that improvements to the highway network, requiring financial contributions, may be needed in *some* cases. To replace that term with the word *exceptional*, as CPRE suggests, would make it more difficult to secure any necessary highway improvements and undermine the objectives of the Policy. I recognise that some developments in the Green Belt may require highway improvements, which may affect the character of the Green Belt, but this would be necessary for traffic reasons, and could include improvements to access by bus, cycle or pedestrians, as well as for cars. In my view, the Policy is appropriately worded to address relevant sustainability and accessibility considerations.
- 5.16 SMBC explains that Policy T2 seeks to promote access to developments in a sustainable manner, in line with national guidance in PPG13 (¶ 4). To exclude mineral developments from this requirement, as Lafarge suggests, would be inconsistent and inappropriate, since they would require proper access to and from the sites. In any event, the particular circumstances of each site would be a material consideration in specific proposals that come forward.
- 5.17 Rev 5/4 clarifies the application of the Policy to new development *which may have significant transport or sustainability implications*. Although accessibility to all new development is important, the specific requirements of Policy T2 do not necessarily have to apply to all new development proposals, since minor proposals might not justify a full travel analysis. The key consideration would be whether particular proposals have *significant* implications in terms of transport and sustainability. This would be established on a case-by-case basis as part of normal development control procedures, having regard to national policy guidance in PPG13. Consequently, there is no need to make any further amendments to Policy T2 or the supporting text.

Recommendation

5.18 I RECOMMEND NO MODIFICATIONS to the Plan to meet these objections.

POLICY T3: DESIGN FOR ALL MEANS OF TRAVEL IN NEW DEVELOPMENTS

Objections to First Deposit

1126/325 – Hampton-in-Arden Society; 1293/4 – National Farmers Union; 1359/727 – Taylor Woodrow Devts Ltd; 1360/1123 – BT Group plc; 1362/756 – Cala Homes (Midlands) Ltd; 1365/850 – Chase Midland plc; 1380/49 – House Builders Federation; 1398/794 – Persimmon Homes (South Midlands) Ltd; 1427/830 – Wimpey Homes (Holdings) Ltd.

Objections to Revised Deposit

There were no objections to the Revised Deposit draft.

Key issues

- *Does Policy T3 adequately reflect national guidance in PPG13, particularly in terms of the needs and safety of all in the community, and provide sufficient detail and criteria for prospective developers, including all forms of transport, as well as deliveries and service vehicles;*
- *Should the supporting text recognise that some farm diversification schemes might not be able to provide for public transport due to their remote rural location;*

- *Should Policy T3 make it clear that any financial contributions should be reasonably related in scale and kind to the development, in accordance with Circular 1/97;*
- *Does Policy T3 unnecessarily duplicate the controls of the Building Regulations as regards access for all.*

Inspector's reasoning and conclusions

- 5.19 Policy T3 expects the design of new developments and highway schemes to provide for the existing and anticipated needs of users of all means of travel. At the inquiry, SMBC explained that the purpose of this policy was to establish a basis for asking developers to cater for all means of travel, not just motorists, in line with national guidance in PPG13 (¶ 29).
- 5.20 In response to HIAS, the nature of any proposed development would be established at the development control stage, sufficient to enable provision for access by different transport modes and address the needs and safety of all members of the community. Policy T3 essentially aims to make developments accessible by a variety of transport modes, rather than dealing with operational matters such as deliveries. Accessibility to new development, including goods vehicles, is covered by Policy T2. The type and frequency of goods deliveries cannot be controlled through the UDP, but the size, weight and dimensions of HGVs are controlled by national/EU legislation. Design for travel by the elderly and disabled is also covered under separate legislation. Although SMBC has no SPG on design for travel, detailed design criteria is well established in other guidance, including DfT advice on the promotion of *green travel*, and detailed parking standards are also available [CD155]. It would be up to developers to consult SMBC & Highways Agency to ascertain what would be appropriate in each case. Policy T3 relates to all forms of development, including housing, employment and retail. Questions about the occupation and precise use within various Use Classes would be determined on a case-by-case basis. The issue of travel and transport by horses in the Green Belt is neither a frequent nor realistic alternative.
- 5.21 In response to NFU, PPG13 (¶ 40) confirms that the principles of sustainable transport apply to both rural and urban areas. PPG13 (¶ 43) specifically acknowledges that LPAs should be realistic about the availability or likely availability of alternatives to access by private car. I recognise that, in some cases, it might be difficult for farm diversification schemes to provide for the needs of users of all means of transport, especially public transport. However, many of the rural areas in Solihull are relatively near the main built-up areas and major public transport routes. I also recognise that Policy C6 generally encourages farm-based diversification. In these circumstances, it seems to me that the general principles outlined in Policy T3 should be a starting point, with any exceptions justified on a case-by-case basis.
- 5.22 SMBC confirms that any requirements to fund measures or services to achieve the aims of Policy T3 would be made in accordance with Policy IM1, as confirmed in the text of Policy T3 and in paras 12.1.1-12.1.3. To do otherwise would contravene national policy in Circular 1/97. Consequently, since the Plan has to be read as a whole, I cannot see that any further clarification is needed to meet the house-builders' concerns. In response to HBF, Policy T3 has broader aims and requirements than those of the Building Regulations. It is more concerned with ensuring that the needs of those travelling by various modes of transport are accommodated in the design of new development, rather than with detailed design or access considerations.

Recommendation

5.23 I RECOMMEND NO MODIFICATIONS to the Plan to meet these objections.

POLICY T4: INTERCHANGES

Objections to First Deposit 1126/324 – Hampton-in-Arden Society; 1424/592 – Westbury Homes (Holdings) Ltd.

Objections to Revised Deposit There were no objections to the Revised Deposit draft

Key issues

- *Is Policy T4 sufficiently clear and specific in terms of interchanges, and does it adequately reflect national guidance in PPG13;*
- *Should Policy T4 identify opportunities for residential development at transport interchanges and list appropriate interchanges.*

Inspector's reasoning and conclusions

- 5.24 Policy T4 encourages interchanges at key locations to improve accessibility and support an improved transport network. At the inquiry, SMBC explained that an interchange is anything which facilitates a change between different modes of transport, ranging from a bus stop to a more elaborate facility such as BIA. National guidance does not include a definition of an interchange, but I am satisfied that Policy T4 generally accords with PPG13 (¶ 48) and reflects new RPG11 Policies T1 & T5. No amendments are therefore needed to address HIAS' concerns.
- 5.25 Although transport interchanges may be appropriate locations for new housing development, in line with guidance in PPG3 & PPG13, Policy T4 is essentially concerned with facilitating changes of transport mode in order to improve accessibility across the Borough. As a transport policy, it is not concerned with promoting associated development. The appropriateness of housing development at transport interchanges would be considered under the housing and other locational policies in the Plan. In this context, I note that several existing and potential transport interchanges lie within or adjoining the Green Belt, where associated development may conflict with Green Belt objectives. No amendments are therefore needed to Policy T4 to address Westbury Homes' concerns.

Recommendation

5.26 I RECOMMEND NO MODIFICATIONS to the Plan to meet these objections.

POLICY T5: PROMOTING GREEN TRAVEL

Objections to First Deposit 1352/776 – Cala Properties; 1359/728 – Taylor Woodrow Devts Ltd; 1362/757 – Cala Homes (Midlands) Ltd; 1365/851 – Chase Midlands plc; 1380/50 – House Builders Federation; 1398/795 – Persimmon Homes (South Midlands) Ltd; 1424/593 – Westbury Homes (Holdings) Ltd; 1427/831 – Wimpey Homes West Midlands Ltd.

Objections to Revised Deposit There were no objections to the Revised Deposit draft.

Key issues

- *Should Policy T5 give further guidance on the circumstances when travel plans are required;*
- *Should Policy T5 identify the role that travel plans can play in identifying sustainable residential development.*

Inspector's reasoning and conclusions

- 5.27 Policy T5 requires travel plans to be submitted with new development proposals within specific categories and sets out the requirements for such plans. National guidance on the need for travel plans is set out in PPG13 (¶ 89), which specifies the type of developments that need such plans. This is summarised in the text accompanying Policy T5 (¶ 5.1.10), and so I can see no need for any further clarification in the policy itself. As for the reference to SPG in the Policy, the supporting text indicates that local targets for adopting travel plans may be set (¶ 5.1.8) and confirms that SMBC is promoting the *Travel-Wise* campaign (¶ 5.1.12). If these are the elements to be included in subsequent SPG, they would supplement the guidance in Policy T5, rather than diverting decision-making to SPG, as feared by HBF. I am therefore satisfied that the content of Policy T5, along with the clarification given in the accompanying text, is soundly-based and appropriate.
- 5.28 SMBC explains that the purpose of Policy T5 is to promote *green travel*, rather than promoting particular sites for residential development. Policy T2, along with Policies H5 & ENV2, includes criteria to ensure that the sustainability of new housing developments in terms of transport is addressed. No further amendments are therefore needed to address Westbury Homes' concerns.

Recommendation

5.29 I RECOMMEND NO MODIFICATIONS to the Plan to meet these objections.

POLICY T6: METRO

Objections to First Deposit 1399/557 – Principal Point Developments.

Objections to Revised Deposit There were no objections to the Revised Deposit draft.

Key issues

- *Should the Plan propose a multi-modal sustainable transport interchange at Village Farm, Coventry Road, Elmdon.*

Inspector's reasoning and conclusions

- 5.30 Policy T6 supports proposals that are an integrated part of the expansion of the Midland Metro, particularly through corridors linking key parts of Solihull with Birmingham city centre.
- 5.31 PPD proposes a multi-modal sustainable transport interchange at Village Farm, linked to the Metro, bus showcase routes and park-and-ride facilities. Although this site may be well placed, along the main A45 road and near BIA/NEC, no detailed proposals or justification are put forward. Any proposal of this nature would need to be fully justified, not only in transportation terms, including compliance with PPG13 (Annex E), but more particularly, on Green Belt grounds. It would also have to be included in the Local Transport Plan, with a firm commitment to completion within the Plan period. Since none of these criteria are met, there can be no justification for including such a scheme as a firm proposal in this UDP Review at this time. When proposals for the Metro are further advanced, the question of transport interchanges can be considered under Policy T4 and other relevant policies.

Recommendation

5.32 I RECOMMEND NO MODIFICATIONS to the Plan to meet this objection.

PROPOSAL T6/1: METRO ROUTE ALONG THE A45

There were no objections to this proposal.

POLICY T7: RAIL***Objections to First Deposit***

1002/63 – Packington Estate Enterprises Ltd; 1003/69 – Packington Estate Trustees; 1080/213 – West Midlands Friends of the Earth; 1091/108 – Balsall Common Village Residents Association; 1106/1081 – Solihull Residents Association; 1126/322 – Hampton-in-Arden Society; 1185/703 – Birmingham City Council; 1275/168 – CPRE; 1401/1090 – Railtrack Property.

Objections to Revised Deposit

There were no objections to the Revised Deposit draft.

Key issues

- *Clause (i): Should the existing infrastructure on the WCML be examined to evaluate how it might better be used, rather than widening the route;*
- *Clause (iii): Should the Plan clarify which former rail lines, chords and links are referred to;*
- *Clause (iii): Is it appropriate for Policy T7 to support the principle of reinstating former rail lines, particularly that from Whitacre Junction-Hampton-in-Arden, in view of the likelihood of such reinstatement and the potential environmental and other consequences;*
- *Clause (iv): Would the proposed Land Rover rail link further erode the Green Belt;*
- *Should Policy T7 refer to the Birmingham International Rail Connection and protect its route;*
- *Should the supporting text recognise the strategic role of Birmingham International Station;*
- *(5.2): Should more explanation be given to enable schemes to be suitably prioritised.*

Inspector's reasoning and conclusions

- 5.33 Policy T7 supports the upgrading of the rail system, including 5 key railway proposals in Solihull. Most of the objections concern specific rail proposals and the general support given to them. At the inquiry, SMBC confirmed that Policy T7 reflects national guidance in PPG13 (¶ 45/74) and regional policy in new RPG11 (Policy T10).
- 5.34 Policy T7(i) supports the widening of the WCML to four tracks and upgrading Birmingham New Street station. This is a major strategic rail improvement project which is currently ongoing. In response to WMFOE, the detailed evaluation of the proposed widening of the WCML between Birmingham-Coventry, its environmental impact and the use of the route is the responsibility of the appropriate rail authority, and is beyond the remit of this UDP. Policy T7(iii) is a general statement that seeks to ensure that former rail lines can be reused, if necessary. It is therefore inappropriate to specify particular routes, especially given that, in reality, there are few such routes.
- 5.35 Packington Estate, CPRE & HIAS are all concerned about the implications of Policy T7(iii), which supports bringing back into use former rail lines with appropriate chords and links. The main concern relates to the former rail line from Whitacre Junction-Hampton-in-Arden, particularly the environmental impact of engineering works and reopening the rail line on nearby residents in Hampton-in-Arden and on the interests of Packington Estate, as well as the effect on the character of the sensitive *Meriden Gap* tract of the Green Belt. I understand that this line was lifted in 1952, but much of the route remains intact. However, at Hampton-in-Arden, new buildings obstruct the route and

its connection with the WCML, and around the A45 junction near Arden Brickworks at Middle Bickenhill, the route has been obliterated by road improvements and slip roads. Other sections of the route have been tipped, are used for other purposes, or remain as a wildlife corridor.

- 5.36 At the inquiry, SMBC confirmed that there is no specific proposal or definite requirement to reopen this line, and the route itself is not specifically safeguarded, reflecting SRA's views. However, Policy T7(iii) supports the *principle* of reinstatement and ensures that this possibility is examined. Much of the route lies within NWDC, and has no specific protection in the NWLP. There are no proposals to reinstate this line in the current LTP or other rail/transport programmes, but the general support provided by Policy T7(iii) directly reflects RPG11 Policy T10(v). The possibility of utilising this route was considered as part of the "BIANCA" study [CD173] to provide a new rail link to BIA/NEC, and referred to in WMMMS [CD71;p.72]. However, this proposal does not now feature in the latest RPG11 [CD51G] and it is unlikely to proceed before 2011. The reopening of this route could make a valuable contribution to public transport and could also be used in connection with waste development proposals (see Chapter 10 of my report). Moreover, the more recent *Future of Rail* White Paper does not suggest that the principle of supporting the reinstatement of former rail lines is in question.
- 5.37 More particularly, any proposals to reinstate and reopen the line would have to be considered against Green Belt policies, including an assessment of the impact on the character, environment and amenity of nearby residents, land interests, historic buildings, SSSI/RIGS, wildlife, flooding and the surrounding countryside. I realise that Packington Estate is totally opposed to the reopening of this rail line, some of which it owns, but this opposition can be considered if and when a detailed proposal is put forward. In the absence of any firm proposals, I cannot see that the general terms of Policy T7(iii) would seriously blight property or land interests. Questions about the precise route, the necessary engineering works and the environmental and amenity impacts of reopening this rail line would be considered at the same time, with a full EIA in accordance with planning and T&WA procedures. Any proposal would also have to accord with other policies in the UDP, as Rev 5/9 (¶ 5.2.4) confirms.
- 5.38 The key point is that Policy T7(iii) supports the general principle of bringing former rail lines back into use, without making any specific proposals for particular routes or requiring them to reopen. It certainly makes no specific proposals to reinstate or specifically safeguard the former rail line from Whitacre Junction-Hampton-in-Arden. In my view, this properly reflects national and regional policy and is a wholly appropriate and reasonable stance to take in this instance, reflecting national and regional planning policy and within the terms of primary legislation.
- 5.39 Policy T7(iv) supports the construction of a rail link from the WCML to the Land Rover factory, reflecting a previous proposal, supported by SMBC, but now abandoned. This element of the policy reflects national guidance in PPG13 (¶ 4), which supports the principle of transporting freight by rail rather than by road, and also reflects RPG11 Policy T10. It could also help to secure the long-term future of the Land Rover factory in employment terms, subject to environmental and other land-use considerations. If and when detailed proposals are brought forward, the impact on the Green Belt would be considered at that stage, with the benefit of a full EIA in accordance with planning and T&WA procedures.
- 5.40 BCC seeks a reference to the Birmingham International Rail Connection (BIRC), especially in view of its inclusion in the WMMMS and the future expansion of BIA. I understand that BIRC is no longer included as a regional priority in RPG11 and, in any event, would be unlikely to be constructed within the current UDP Plan period. Most of the route lies in the Green Belt, where

very special circumstances would have to be shown to justify the construction of a new rail link. This link was also examined as part of the “BIANCA” study [CD173] and could involve part of the former rail route from Whitacre Junction-Hampton-in-Arden, which I deal with above. The issue of the future expansion of BIA is not for this UDP Review, since it first needs to be considered at regional level. At present, I can therefore see no need or justification for referring to this possible rail link or protect a route which, as yet, has not been determined.

- 5.41 Policy T7 essentially supports the upgrading and improvement of the rail system, recognising the positive contribution that rail transport can make towards sustainable transport. Apart from Birmingham New Street, the policy does not identify any particular railway stations or specify their significance. Although Birmingham International Station undoubtedly has an important strategic role, given its location next to BIA/NEC, in response to Railtrack, I see no reason to specifically identify it under this policy.
- 5.42 SRA seeks more explanation to enable schemes to be prioritised. However, the schemes listed in Policy T7 do not fall within SMBC’s control, being the responsibility of WMPTA and the appropriate rail authority, as para 5.2.4 confirms. It is therefore inappropriate and unnecessary to indicate any criteria for prioritising these schemes.
- 5.43 Both the Policy and the supporting text refer variously to the *Strategic Rail Authority & Railtrack*, but these bodies have been replaced by other organisations. To avoid any doubt, the final version of the Plan should refer to the current appropriate rail authorities, and I recommend accordingly.

Recommendation

5.44 I **RECOMMEND** that the Plan is **modified** by replacing the references in *Policy T7* and the supporting text to the “*Strategic Rail Authority*” and “*Railtrack*” with the current bodies responsible for rail transport.

POLICY T8: BUSES

The objections to this policy have been withdrawn.

PROPOSAL T8/1: BUS SHOWCASE ROUTES

There were no objections to this proposal.

POLICY T9: PARK & RIDE FACILITIES

Objections to First Deposit

1080/214 – WMFOE; 1126/321 – Hampton-in-Arden Society; 1185/704 – Birmingham City Council; 1275/139 – CPRE; 1305/232 – Berkswell Society; 1399/556 – Principal Point Developments.

Objections to Revised Deposit

There were no objections to the Revised Deposit draft.

Key issues

- *Should Policy T9 identify locations for remote park-and-ride sites, particularly those sited in the Green Belt;*
- *Should Policy T9 support strategic park-and-ride facilities for remote car parking, and does it provide an appropriate basis for considering such proposals, particularly given the possible Green Belt implications;*

- Does Policy T9 provide sufficient detail and clarity in terms of park and ride facilities, including those at Hampton-in-Arden station;
- Should Policy T9 support park-and-ride facilities at Earlswood station, encourage the improvement of existing park-and-ride facilities, and refer to such facilities at Metro stations;
- Should Policy T9 allocate a specific site at Village Farm, Elmdon for a park-and-ride facility.

Inspector's reasoning and conclusions

- 5.45 Policy T9 seeks to protect existing park-and-ride facilities at railway stations and supports their increased capacity, along with strategic park-and-ride for remote parking for traffic-generating locations. In general terms, this reflects national policy in PPG13 (¶ 59-63) & RPG11 (Policy T6).
- 5.46 WMFOE opposes remote park-and-ride sites in the Green Belt and argues that such locations should be identified in the UDP. However, it is important to realise that national guidance in PPG13 does not preclude the provision of park-and-ride sites in the Green Belt provided that specific criteria are met. SMBC explains that such sites are only supported where they support more sustainable means of travel. Any sites would need to be appropriately located to fulfil this function and be acceptable in environmental terms. In the absence of details of potential sites and specific proposals, it is unnecessary to positively identify or propose specific sites, especially given that any site in the Green Belt would have to meet the criteria in PPG13 (Annex E).
- 5.47 CPRE is also concerned about the impact of strategic park-and-ride schemes for remote car parking on the vulnerable *Meriden Gap* Green Belt, particularly in terms of BIA/NEC, and points out that NWBC's emerging Local Plan resists such development within its area. However, SMBC confirms that it is not intended to use Policy T9 to support strategic park-and-ride facilities outside the Borough boundary, so there is no conflict with the emerging NWLP, and of course, this UDP cannot influence or control developments outside Solihull. Strategic park-and-ride schemes would also fall within RPG11 Policy T6 (¶ 9.37), which requires a network of strategic park-and-ride sites. At the inquiry, SMBC confirmed that Policy T9 does not envisage or support strategic remote park-and-ride sites in Green Belt locations, and that such park-and-ride facilities would be inappropriate unless they met the criteria in PPG13 (¶ 62 & Annex E). However, in view of my recommendation on Policy C2, it would be helpful if a cross-reference is provided in the supporting text to this policy and the national guidance in PPG13 (Annex E), to ensure that Green Belt considerations are given sufficient priority.
- 5.48 Berkswell Society has similar concerns about the impact of park-and-ride facilities on the Green Belt, seeks criteria for assessing proposals and argues that expansion of park-and-ride facilities in rural areas and new facilities in the Green Belt should not be permitted. In addition to the points made in response to HIAS & CPRE (above), I share SMBC's view that the suggested strengthening of the policy would be contrary to national guidance in PPG2 & PPG13, and further specific criteria are unnecessary. I realise that remote off-site car parking for BIA/NEC is sometimes controversial, especially during special events, but I am satisfied that Policy T9, along with Green Belt and other relevant policies, would enable proposals to be objectively assessed.
- 5.49 In response to HIAS, SMBC confirms that the "P" symbol at Hampton-in-Arden station on the Proposals Map relates to Policy T9, rather than Proposal T9/1, and also that Policy T9 it is not intended to be used to support park-and-ride proposals outside Solihull's boundary. The reference to *other strategic locations within the West Midlands* refers to the fact that existing park-and-ride sites in Solihull also serve Birmingham and Coventry. SMBC does not propose to support other development at park-and-ride sites, such as shops or housing. However, additional car parking, including multi-storey car parks,

could be considered, provided that it complied with Policy T9, PPG13 and Green Belt policy. Policy T9 *supports* strategic park-and-ride sites for remote car parking, which differs little from *encouraging* such proposals, as suggested by HIAS. In my view, Policy T9 and the supporting text provide sufficient detail about park-and-ride facilities.

- 5.50 In response to BCC, Policy T9 already supports proposals to increase the capacity of park-and-ride facilities at all railway stations in the Borough. Rev 5/22 acknowledges the existing facilities at Earlswood station, meeting this element of the objection. Policy T6 supports the principle of expanding the Metro network into the Borough, but there are no park-and-ride facilities serving it at present. In view of objections to the Birmingham City Centre-BIA/NEC route (Rev 5/7), proposals are not sufficiently advanced to refer to the possibility of supporting park-and-ride facilities at Metro stations at present. Any such proposals would be considered in the context of Policy T9 when further details are available.
- 5.51 PPD seeks an allocation for a park-and-ride site at Village Farm, Elmdon, a site which I have previously considered in the context of a transport interchange (see Policy T6 above). Although this site may be well placed, along the main A45 road and near BIA/NEC, no detailed proposals or justification are put forward. Any proposal of this nature would need to be fully justified, particularly on Green Belt grounds, including compliance with PPG13 (Annex E). It would also have to be included in the Local Transport Plan, which it is not. Consequently, in the absence of any specific proposal and detailed justification, I can see no case for including a specific proposal for a park-and-ride facility at this site at this time.

Recommendation

5.52 *I RECOMMEND that the Plan is **modified** by amending the text supporting Policy T9 to confirm that proposals for park-and-ride facilities in the Green Belt will be considered against the criteria in PPG13 (¶ 62 & Annex E) and Policy C2 of the Plan.*

PROPOSAL T9/1: CAR PARKING FACILITIES AT RAILWAY STATIONS

Objections to First Deposit 1126/1132 – Hampton-in-Arden Society;
1275/138 – CPRE.

Objections to Revised Deposit There were no objections to the Revised Deposit draft.

Key issues

- *Does Proposal T9/1 provide sufficient clarity and detail in terms of car parking facilities at railway stations;*
- *Should Proposal T9/1 recognise that not all railway stations may be appropriate for increased car parking and list those unsuitable stations.*

Inspector's reasoning and conclusions

- 5.53 Proposal T9/1 supports proposals for additional secure car parking at all railway stations in the Borough. Most of the points raised by these objectors have been considered under Policy T9 (see above). I am also satisfied that Proposal T9/1 and the supporting text provides sufficient detail and clarity about car parking facilities at railway stations in the context of HIAS' concerns.
- 5.54 CPRE argues that not all railway stations may be appropriate for increased car parking provision, particularly those in the Green Belt such as Hampton-in-Arden, Berkswell & Whitlocks End. However, this approach would not reflect the objective of providing facilities at all stations to meet local needs, or enable any necessary road improvements and encourage travellers to use rail

transport. I realise that, in some cases, it might result in more traffic using country lanes and rural villages, but in the interests of sustainability and reducing the need to travel by private car, it is important that park-and-ride facilities are provided at the Borough's railway stations to encourage local people to travel by rail. I recognise that the existing park-and-ride facilities at some stations may have an impact on the character of the settlement and/or the Green Belt, but this may be outweighed by the benefits of the facility in transport sustainability terms. Other policies (eg. Policies T1, T4, T5, T8 & T9) would help to encourage improved bus services to railway stations, also reducing the need to use the private car. Consequently, I can see little justification for making the amendments suggested by CPRE.

Recommendation

5.55 I RECOMMEND NO MODIFICATIONS to the Plan to meet these objections.

POLICY T10: PUBLIC TRANSPORT LINKS SERVING THE NEEDS OF THE EAST BIRMINGHAM/NORTH SOLIHULL REGENERATION ZONE

Objections to First Deposit

1080/203 – West Midlands Friends of the Earth;
1275/136 – CPRE.

Objections to Revised Deposit

There were no objections to the Revised Deposit draft.

Key issues

- *Should Policy T10 give further clarification about the type and location of transport infrastructure envisaged;*
- *(5.2.15) – should the reference to Hams Hall be deleted and replaced by reference to employment opportunities in the main conurbation.*

Inspector's reasoning and conclusions

- 5.56 Policy T10 encourages proposals that improve accessibility by public transport between EB/NSRZ and employment areas. SMBC explains that the Policy aims to encourage bus and light rail links, but confirms that any new roads or lines crossing the rural part of the Borough would have to be considered against Green Belt policies and justified on the basis of very special circumstances. In the absence of any firm proposals at this stage, I consider no amendments are needed to the Policy or supporting text to address WMFOE's concerns.
- 5.57 Hams Hall is one example of an employment opportunity in an outlying area given in the text supporting Policy T10 (¶ 6.2.15). It lies within 3km of EB/NSRZ and is a large (170ha) site providing a variety of employment opportunities, mainly in the storage/distribution business, but also providing more skilled jobs at the new BMW engine plant. Bus services to the site are relatively poor at present, but could be improved under the terms of Policy T10. In my view, it is a timely and relevant reference. Other employment sites within Solihull (including BVP & BBP) and further afield in Birmingham and Coventry would also benefit from the support of Policy T10. No further amendments are therefore needed to meet CPRE's point. However, SMBC acknowledges an error in the third sentence of para 5.2.15, where the first reference to *employment need* should be to *employment opportunity*. I recommend in favour of this minor amendment.

Recommendation

5.58 I RECOMMEND that the Plan is modified by amending the third sentence of paragraph 5.2.15, replacing the first reference to *employment need* with *opportunity*.

POLICY T11: MOTORWAY DEVELOPMENT

Objections to First Deposit

1054/1074* – Highways Agency; 1080/204 – WMFOE; 1126/320 – Hampton-in-Arden Society; 1275/176 – CPRE; 1305/233 – Berkswell Society; 1306/1153-1154 – Dorridge & District Residents Association; 1378/520 – Hockley Heath Parish Council; 1410/377, 570 – Shirley Estates (Developments) Ltd; see also Hockley Heath Schedule (Annex D).

Objections to Revised Deposit

1080/169/R – WMFOE; 1126/513/R, 516/R – Hampton-in-Arden Society; 1275/143/R – CPRE.

Key issues

- *Should Policy T11 protect the route of the M42 widening from development that could prejudice its implementation;*
- *Should Policy T11 positively support proposals for motorway widening;*
- *Is Policy T11 relevant and does it adequately address motorway development in Solihull;*
- *Does Policy T11 make sufficient reference to the environmental impact of motorway development, including the need for mitigation;*
- *Should Policy T11 include stronger criteria, particularly in demonstrating need, environmental impact, noise and congestion;*
- *Should Policy T11 indicate that Motorway Service Areas are unacceptable within Solihull Borough;*
- *Should the Plan include a policy promoting a Motorway Service Areas within Solihull Borough, including a specific proposal at M42 Junction 4;*
- *Rev 5/11: should the text also refer to other environmental policies, and does this amendment show an unnecessary bias against non-motorway development;*
- *Rev 5/11: is the text consistent with Policy ENV13, and would the environmental impact of widening undermine Policy ENV13.*

Inspector's reasoning and conclusions

- 5.59 Policy T11 supports the widening of the M42 motorway (J3A-J7), subject to specific criteria being satisfied. I understand that M42 is the only motorway within the Borough which has current proposals for improvement, and Policy T11 sets out the parameters to SMBC's support for widening. The SUDPR does not itself include any commitment or proposal for such improvements, since these are the responsibility of the Highways Agency.
- 5.60 The original proposals for widening the M42, published in 1994, have been superseded and the Highways Agency is proceeding with the installation of an *Advanced Traffic Management System* to maximise the safe and efficient use of the motorway [CD140]. The M42 corridor will be reviewed after the ATM pilot has been evaluated. No final decision has yet been made on widening the M42, but it could be made before 2011, although implementation is unlikely to occur before 2015 according to RPG11 (Policy T12). Moreover, SMBC is keen to ensure that M42 can satisfactorily handle existing and future traffic flows, especially as it functions as part of the national and local strategic road network. SMBC also proposes a further amendment to para 5.3.2 to update the situation in terms of the ATM pilot [CD175].
- 5.61 In response to the Highways Agency, it is difficult for the UDP to safeguard land for motorway widening when the detailed extent of the land required is not known. Most of the potentially affected land adjacent to the M42 lies in the Green Belt, where there is a presumption against inappropriate development. However, Rev 5/11 recognises the importance of avoiding development proposals which may compromise any widening and includes a commitment to consult the Highways Agency on such proposals. I am satisfied that this revision meets the objection.

- 5.62 WMFOE, Berkswell Society & D&DRA argue that motorway widening proposals should not be supported, with resources better spent on alternative modes of transport and infrastructure. However, Policy T11 does not provide an open-ended commitment to supporting motorway widening; specific criteria have to be met, with the aim of linking widening to reducing congestion and encouraging more sustainable modes of travel. This is consistent with the WMMMS [CD71] & RPG11 (Policy T9). Contrary to D&DRA's view, Policy T11 includes criteria to ensure that traffic management is improved and traffic congestion is reduced. Detailed operational measures, such as restricting HGVs to the nearside lane, are outside the scope of this UDPR.
- 5.63 In response to HIAS, there is no need to refer to the M6, since although this passes through the Borough, there are no current proposals for widening or improvement. Similarly, there is no need to refer to M42 in the title of the Policy, since that is clear in its text. Policy T11 is not premature, since even though any improvements would take place beyond the current Plan period, it is important to have a policy in place to ensure that consultations and decisions can be made in the light of a sound policy background with firm parameters. Environmental impact would be dealt with when firm proposals are drawn up, in the light of a full EIA and in the context of Policy T11(iv), and hopefully reduced to an acceptable level. Similarly, I do not consider that Policy T11 in any way fetters SMBC's view on any detailed proposals that may come forward. Policy T11 clearly reflects SMBC's conditional support to proposals to improve the M42, subject to specific criteria set out in the Policy.
- 5.64 CPRE is mainly concerned about the environmental impact of any proposals to widen the M42. I have already indicated that environmental impact would be fully addressed at the detailed stage, through a full EIA, as specifically covered by Policy T11(iv). The Highways Agency has its own measures in terms of environmental impact, including landscaping and other mitigation measures, which would be fully considered at the detailed stage. Noise, lighting and pollution would also be considered as part of the overall environmental impact. In any event, a stronger policy would probably have little influence on the Highways Agency's design and criteria for motorway building, and I doubt whether the concept of *no net environmental loss* would have much support, given its previous rejection at RPG stage. In my view, the important question is to focus on minimising any environmental impact and providing appropriate mitigation measures, which is provided for in Policy T11.
- 5.65 HHPC argues that the criteria in Policy T11 should be much stronger, particularly given its likely impact on increased light, air, noise, pollution and urbanisation of the Green Belt. However, in the absence of detailed proposals for motorway widening, I am satisfied that the criteria in Policy T11, clarified in the supporting text, provide a sound basis against which to consider such proposals, especially since they would also be subject to detailed assessment as part of the EIA process.
- 5.66 Residents in Hockley Heath also argue that motorway widening and junction improvements should be resisted. However, support for widening the M42 is consistent with RPG11 (Policy T12) & WMMMS [CD71], and is not open-ended, but subject to specific criteria being met, linked to reducing congestion and encouraging more sustainable modes of travel. Details of any widening or improvements to motorway junctions are the responsibility of the Highways Agency who is also responsible for consultation procedures. Such proposals would be subject to public scrutiny through the normal planning procedures.
- 5.67 Policy T11 makes no reference to Motorway Service Areas (MSAs), simply because there are none within the Borough. The nearest MSAs are at Hopwood (M42), Warwick (M40), Tamworth (M42), Corley & Hilton Park (M6) & Frankley (M5). Within Solihull, the motorways mainly lie within the Green

Belt, where there is a presumption against inappropriate development unless very special circumstances can be demonstrated. National policy on MSAs is set out in PPG13 and associated guidance, which does not indicate any case for a blanket preclusion of such development as a form of development. To include such a policy, as suggested by D&DRA, would be contrary to national and strategic policy.

- 5.68 Shirley Estates seek a site-specific policy on the location of a MSA on the M42 within Solihull, proposing a specific site on the north-east quadrant of Junction 4. They also argue that the Plan should acknowledge the Secretary of State's conclusions after a 1999/2000 inquiry confirming the need for a MSA between Junctions 3A-6 on the M42 [CD171]. Following that inquiry, the FSS has indicated that he is minded to permit a new MSA on the M42 at Catherine-de-Barnes, but by the close of the SUDPR inquiry, no formal decision had been issued [UDP-162]. I understand that highways, access and listed building issues remain to be resolved. At the same time, the FSS dismissed appeals for MSAs on the M42 at Junctions 4 & 5, including an earlier proposal by this objector. However, the FSS has confirmed a need for a new MSA on the M42 between Junctions 3A-6 to infill a gap in existing provision.
- 5.69 Until the FSS has resolved the position on the proposed MSA at Catherine-de-Barnes, it is difficult to determine the issue of need and the provision of a potential alternative MSA in the SUDPR. More particularly, there are some distinct drawbacks of the site proposed by Shirley Estates. Firstly, like most other alternatives, the site lies in the Green Belt, where a MSA would have to be justified on the grounds of very special circumstances. Secondly, the FSS has previously rejected this site as being unsuitable for a MSA because of the harm to the Green Belt. Thirdly, the proposal would be an off-line facility and not entirely self-contained and related to the M42. Fourthly, the Highways Agency has directed refusal of the current proposal on prematurity, highways/ATM and access grounds [UDP-162]. The Highways Agency also wishes to concentrate on completing the "30-mile network" of MSAs, with "infill" MSAs such as this only being permitted exceptionally and where clear and compelling need and a safety case has been demonstrated. I find it difficult to believe that these fundamental objections could be overcome.
- 5.70 I recognise that the amended scheme has been drawn up to overcome the inspector's criticisms of the previous inquiry scheme, particularly about visual impact and effect on the Green Belt. However, the proposed development would still encroach into the countryside, eroding the relatively narrow gap between Solihull & Knowle/Dorridge and conflicting with the main aims and functions of the Green Belt, possibly having implications for the *Meriden Gap*. It would also conflict with the aim of restricting urban sprawl, have a significant visual impact on an attractive and prominent area of farmland, and intrude into the landscape. Furthermore, there is no evidence before me to show that the proposal would have a satisfactory impact on the motorway and local road network, or that the motorway junction would operate satisfactorily. Although reference is made to the possible expansion of BIA, the ongoing ATM on the M42 and a previous CPO on this site, I can see no fundamental changes in circumstances since this matter was last considered at the 1999/2000 inquiry. Given the distinct shortcomings of the suggested site and the current uncertainty over the Catherine-de-Barnes proposed MSA, I can find no sound case to justify making a site-specific allocation for a new MSA in this location.
- 5.71 As regards a specific policy for MSAs in this UDP, national policy is currently set out in Roads Circular 1/94 & PPG13, updated by a more recent 1998 ministerial statement. At the inquiry, SMBC confirmed that MSA proposals would be considered in the context of national policy and Green Belt policy. However, in order to confirm this context, it would be helpful if some explanatory text is added to Policy T11, to provide some basic guidance for prospective developers. Furthermore, if the situation on the Catherine-de-

Barnes MSA is resolved before the Plan is adopted, this should be clarified in the supporting text, to provide some background to the provision of ancillary motorway facilities in this part of the UDP. I realise that the adopted UDP is silent on the issue of MSAs, and that SMBC does not support proposals for additional MSAs in its area. However, although it is difficult to make a specific plan-led proposal, I consider there is a noticeable omission in the UDP in failing to acknowledge the present situation and potential need for a further MSA within the Borough or in the wider area.

- 5.72 Rev 5/11 refers to minimising the impact of M42 widening on the River Blythe SSSI and also emphasises the need for development proposals to avoid compromising motorway widening. In response to HIAS, it specifically refers to Policy ENV13 because motorway widening could directly affect the River Blythe SSSI, which is of national importance. Since the Plan has to be read as a whole, it is unnecessary to cross-refer to all potentially relevant policies. I understand that Rev 5/11 was included at the Highway Agency's request, since it is important that land that may be needed for motorway widening is safeguarded. Like SMBC, I cannot see that Rev 5/11 would conflict with Policy E4 or any future proposals for a runway extension at BIA. If such a proposal comes forward, it could be considered in terms of its possible direct effect on motorway widening at the detailed design stage. Similarly, I cannot see that Rev 5/11 would conflict with Policy ENV13, since all environmental impacts would be considered at the detailed design stage.
- 5.73 However, in response to CPRE, SMBC is prepared to amend the wording of Rev 5/11 (¶ 5.3.2) to confirm that *"the Council will seek to ensure any proposals for M42 widening do not harm the quality of the River Blythe SSSI"* [SOL-T11-1: 143R]. Provided that the cross-reference to Policy ENV13 is retained, this would meet CPRE's concerns and appropriately clarify the situation.

Recommendation

- 5.74 I RECOMMEND** that the Plan is **modified** by:
- (i) *amending paragraph 5.3.2 by updating the situation on the M42 ATM project [CD175];*
 - (ii) *amending paragraph 5.3.2 by replacing the words in the sentence after "Furthermore," (Rev 5/11) by **"the Council will seek to ensure any proposals for M42 widening do not harm the quality of the River Blythe SSSI (see Policy ENV13)"**;*
 - (iii) *adding explanatory text outlining the general policy approach towards considering Motorway Service Areas in the Borough, and updating the position in respect of the proposed motorway service area at Catherine-de-Barnes.*

POLICY T12: STRATEGIC HIGHWAY NETWORK

Objections to First Deposit 1095/608 – Centro/WMPTA; 1275/140 – CPRE.

Objections to Revised Deposit There were no objections to the Revised Deposit draft.

Key issues

- *Should Policy T12 refer to funding mechanisms and the need to consider public transport infrastructure funded by developers;*
- *Should Policy T12 contain a commitment to protect the lines of by-passes.*

Inspector's reasoning and conclusions

- 5.75 Policy T12 gives priority to the strategic highway network, as defined on the Proposals Map. SMBC explains that this Policy considers the strategic highway network in broad terms, with the purpose of setting out the Council's priorities for maintaining and improving roads and the need to protect by-pass lines.

- 5.76 In response to Centro, Policy T12 is not directly concerned with funding and it is therefore inappropriate to refer to funding mechanisms in a policy such as this. In any event, the implementation of road schemes is largely dependent on the Local Transport Plan, and the need to consider developer funding of bus routes and public transport is specifically addressed in Policy T8 (¶ 5.2.8).
- 5.77 CPRE does not support the protection of by-pass lines in the second part of Policy T12, due to the impact on the settlements and surrounding countryside. Although the issue of releasing Green Belt land between the line of the by-passes and the settlements is a matter for the SUDPR, no such proposals are made, and such land would be protected for the Plan period by Green Belt policies. Any need to consider releasing such land in the future would depend on the outcome of reviews of regional guidance and this UDP. In any event, the existence of a by-pass line does not necessarily determine the location of new development, particularly since much of the adjoining land lies in the Green Belt.
- 5.78 These by-pass lines have been safeguarded for many years, providing certainty for the community and developers. The deletion of this element of Policy T12 would reduce certainty and conflict with the detailed proposals that follow. SMBC confirms that the cost of these road schemes is within the normal level of financial resources available to the highway authority. As for the general justification for these road schemes, much depends on the need to provide an alternative route for local traffic if the M42 is not widened. I note the guidance in PPG12 (¶ 5.17/6.24) about only including proposals that are firm, realistic and with a reasonable degree of certainty of being implemented during the Plan period. However, a decision to retain this element of the Policy largely depends of the judgement on each of the road schemes. I am generally satisfied that its inclusion would provide certainty and commitment, rather than blighting property or reducing the need for these schemes.

Recommendation

5.79 I RECOMMEND NO MODIFICATIONS to the Plan to meet these objections.

PROPOSAL T12/1: STRATEGIC HIGHWAY NETWORK

There were no objections to this proposal.

PROPOSAL T12/2: HOCKLEY HEATH BY-PASS

Objections to First Deposit 1080/205 – WMFOE; 1275/171 – CPRE; see also Hockley Heath Schedule (Annex D).

Objections to Revised Deposit There were no objections to the Revised Deposit draft.

Key issues

- *Should the line of the Hockley Heath by-pass continue to be protected, particularly bearing in mind the justification for the scheme, its timing and potential effect on the Green Belt;*
- *Should Proposal T12/2 be amended to resist any local motorway work or development which would increase traffic levels along the A34 through Hockley Heath.*

Inspector's reasoning and conclusions

- 5.80 The line of the Hockley Heath by-pass was established some years ago, partly in response to local concerns about the effect of through traffic in the centre of the village. It was established after the consideration of possible alternatives and in line with the normal procedures, including consultation with the local

community. The line has been protected by SMBC since 1990 and is included in the adopted UDP [CD111; Proposal T4/1]. It runs from the roundabout with Box Trees Road/Kineton Lane passing to the west of Hockley Heath. The rest of the by-pass line to the south, outside Solihull Borough, is safeguarded in the adopted/emerging Stratford-on-Avon Local Plan [UDP.170/1-3].

- 5.81 The justification for this scheme is to protect the environment in the centre of Hockley Heath which sometimes experiences heavy traffic flows along the A3400. It would also reduce segregation, prevent traffic domination and enable the village centre to be developed in a more environmentally and pedestrian-friendly manner. A single carriageway road is envisaged, which would be expected to take about 50% of the traffic currently passing through the village centre. No other development proposals are dependent on, or related to, the road scheme, and it would be funded from resources available to SMBC as Highway Authority. The road scheme is not currently included in the Local Transport Plan or other road programmes, and the land required for the by-pass has not yet been acquired.
- 5.82 At the inquiry, SMBC confirmed that, at present, there is no need for this by-pass, but it would be needed if and when traffic along the A3400 reached pre-M40 levels. On the opening of the M40, traffic south of Hockley Heath fell by about 40%, but is currently growing at about 3 times the average rate for Solihull, and would be at pre-M40 levels in about 10 years time. In the absence of any firm commitment to widen the M42, traffic growth through Hockley Heath is likely to continue. At the previous UDP inquiry, the inspector concluded that it was right to protect the by-pass line until the effects of the M40 are assessed and understood [CD129; ¶ 4.17].
- 5.83 It is clear that a firm proposal to construct this by-pass has not yet been put forward; the SUDPR merely safeguards the line of the route. I also realise that PPG12 (¶ 5.17/6.24) advises that plans should only include proposals that are firm, realistic and with a reasonable degree of certainty of being implemented during the Plan period. However, in this case, a decision on whether to construct this by-pass cannot be made until the results of the current traffic management scheme on the M42 are available and a decision in whether to widen the M42 has been taken.
- 5.84 Issues about the detailed impact on the character of the village and the surrounding Green Belt could be considered if and when detailed proposals for the by-pass are put forward in the future. The presence of a protected line on the Proposals Map gives no commitment to its actual construction and does not necessarily encourage further development, given the Green Belt status of the adjoining land. Contrary to CPRE's view, I find little to suggest that traffic levels through Hockley Heath have been overstated, traffic calming or traffic management would overcome current problems, or that future funding is in doubt. Reducing car dependence is an important aim of planning policy, but cannot be relied upon as a means of negating the eventual need for the by-pass, especially in the context of rising trends in car ownership. Similarly, traffic management or traffic calming could create congestion and accelerate the need for the by-pass.
- 5.85 I also note that PPG12 encourages certainty in the planning process, and the deletion of this long-standing line would increase uncertainty and may preclude the construction of the by-pass if the need eventually arises. SMBC has not made any decision not to proceed with this road scheme, and since it largely passes through farmland, there is little actual blighting effect on land or property. The line is long-established, and little has changed since the scheme was considered at the last UDP inquiry.

- 5.86 In response to residents in Hockley Heath, one of the main purposes of the by-pass is to reduce the amount of traffic passing through the village centre, and there are no current proposals to release land for development in or around the village. The fears about increased traffic along the A3400 through the village therefore seem to be misplaced.
- 5.87 In these circumstances, it seems to me that it is appropriate to continue to safeguard the line of this by-pass at least until the position on the ability of the M42 to meet future traffic demand becomes clear and decisions on future proposals for the M42 are made. However, I consider it would be helpful if the text accompanying Proposal T12/2 is updated to refer to the relationship with the M42 and its possible future widening, as well as the M40, along with correcting the reference to the A3400 rather than the A34.

Recommendation

5.88 *I RECOMMEND that the Plan is **modified** by amending paragraph 5.3.6 to also refer to the relationship with the M42 and its possible future widening, and correcting the reference to the A3400, rather than A34.*

PROPOSAL T.12/3: KNOWLE RELIEF ROAD

Objections to this proposal have been considered by Inspector Stuart Wild

Objections to First Deposit

1049/361 – Mrs V Brown; 1059/365 – Mr D Chan; 1068/358 – Mr D J Coates; 1080/206 – WMFOE; 1085/351 – Mr K Dan; 1115/75 – Mr C Fletcher; 1121/58 – Mr A Gilbert; 1275/172 – CPRE; 1446/356 – Mr & Mrs A Campbell.

Objections to Revised Deposit

There were no objections to the Revised Deposit draft.

Key issues

- *Justification for the road scheme;*
- *Likely timing of the road scheme;*
- *Effect on the Green Belt.*

Inspector's reasoning and conclusions

- 5.89 The proposed Knowle Relief Road (KRR) would be a two-lane carriageway with at grade junctions. The route starts at the roundabout junction between the A4141 and Langfield Road, follows a route to the southern side of the centre of Knowle along an undeveloped corridor of open space land, crosses Longdon Road where some dwellings would need to be demolished, and proceeds across the public open space until Station Road. Again limited demolition of property would be required before crossing the Arden School grounds, between the buildings and the playing fields, and then crossing an area of open countryside to rejoin the route of the A4141.
- 5.90 The road is of a local nature and does not form any part of the regional or national highway network road proposals. No other proposals of the SUDPR are dependent on the provision of the KRR. It is, in effect, a proposal which can be considered on its own merits. The explanation for the policy in the SUDPR states that traffic is often delayed in Knowle High Street and also is very intrusive in the centre of the Conservation Area.
- 5.91 The KRR has been a common factor of Council plans since the early 1970s. It was discussed at the previous UDP inquiry when it was decided to retain the KRR in the adopted UDP [CD111]. I am not aware of any significant changes either on the ground along the route of the KRR or within the general locality

since the previous inquiry. SMBC expects that the KRR would remove about 50% of the current traffic from High Street. A range of options was considered in the Knowle Traffic Study by JMP Consultants which included the KRR.

- 5.92 The justification for the KRR has always been closely linked with traffic on the M40/M42 network. Prior to the construction of the motorways, Knowle High Street was the A41 with heavy volumes of traffic. On completion of the motorways in the early 1990s traffic volumes were significantly reduced. Since then the increase in congestion on the motorway network has seen a steady increase in traffic using alternative routes such as the A4141, although there has not been the same increase in HGV traffic.
- 5.93 SMBC accepts that there is no current need for the scheme. However, work is currently underway to install Active Traffic Management Trials on the M42 which is expected to be operational by the end of 2004. SMBC anticipates that it will take 6 months to settle down and then about 12 months to evaluate its success. This is seen as a trial for further capacity enhancement of the motorway network in the West Midlands. When the evaluation is complete it will be possible to take decisions on the need to provide extra lanes or amended junctions on the M40/M42 network in the area around Knowle. At that stage, SMBC will be in a position to decide whether or not to proceed with the KRR.
- 5.94 After the close of this session of the inquiry, I visited Knowle to view the line of the KRR across the school playing fields and open countryside. It was about 5.30 pm and there was a serious delay on the M42 near to Junction 5. I observed that the general traffic levels in Knowle High Street resulted in long queues of traffic with a significant number of vehicles using the alternative routes through and around Knowle, including Lodge Road and Lady Byron Lane. If the problems of congestion on the M40/M42 are not resolved in the foreseeable future then I consider that there is justification for the KRR.
- 5.95 Turning to the timing of the KRR the gist of the objections are that it is most unlikely that the road will be built within the Plan period. National government advice as set out in PPG12 states that proposals should be commenced within the lifetime of the plan. This proposal has been in the public domain for over 30 years and there is now little chance of the issues relating to the M40/M42 being resolved in the near future. Any decision to build the KRR is unlikely in the lifetime of the plan and so the proposal should be removed from the plan.
- 5.96 The resolution of the traffic problems which will eventually influence a final decision on the KRR are outside SMBC's direct control. They must await the outcome of other activities before deciding whether or not to proceed. In the meantime, the retention of the line does not appear to cause significant harm in the locality. There is no evidence of blight and SMBC has purchased properties in the past to protect the line. The position can be reviewed in the normal review procedure for the plan. Removal of the protection of the line at this stage would inevitably mean that there would be pressure for residential infill development on some of the land currently safeguarded for the road line. Such development would lead to the loss of the most appropriate line for the KRR.
- 5.97 The concern regarding the Green Belt is the loss of the openness and the possible precedent for the loss of further Green Belt land to new development. Most of the line is within the built up area of Knowle. Only south of Station Road does the route pass through the Green Belt. Part of the Green Belt is the school and its grounds before one passes into more typical open countryside. The Green Belt designation surrounds the settlements of Knowle and Dorridge. Any road line which joins the A4141 south of Knowle would inevitably pass through the Green Belt. The proposed line is probably the shortest length of road in the Green Belt which could effectively form a by-

pass for High Street. The alternative considered in the past to the east of Knowle would be almost entirely in the Green Belt.

- 5.98 The KRR is not intended to be a road serving other new development and therefore there is no direct link between the proposal and other enabling development which might be used to finance the road in whole or in part. The land south of Station Road lies within the Green Belt and I see no reason to believe that the KRR would be seen as a precedent to allow other development to be located within the Green Belt.
- 5.99 A number of other objections were raised such as the effects on the open space, severance, noise, pollution, effects on water quality etc. These are material considerations, but generally they are matters where there is a balance of benefit in removing a significant amount of traffic from the Conservation Area as opposed to harm to the area adjoining the KRR, and/or are matters where the normal detailed design of any road scheme would mitigate any potential harm to an acceptable level. In my view these matters do not outweigh those key issues which I have dealt with in more detail above.
- 5.100 In my view there is sufficient evidence for the justification of the KRR. There is time within the lifetime of the plan to decide whether or not to proceed with the scheme when the future proposals for the motorway network are known. The effect on the Green Belt can only be assessed in detail when the KRR is designed, but I take the view that the need for the road is capable of representing very special circumstances sufficient to justify a line through the Green Belt. I conclude that the KRR should remain in the plan as proposed.

Recommendation

5.101 I RECOMMEND NO MODIFICATIONS to the Plan to meet these objections.

PROPOSAL T12/4: BALSALL COMMON BY-PASS

Objections to First Deposit

1080/207 – WMFOE; 1275/173 – CPRE; 1305/234 – Berkswell Society.

Objections to Revised Deposit

There were no objections to the Revised Deposit draft.

Key issues

- *Should the line of the Balsall Common by-pass continue to be protected, particularly in view of the justification for the scheme, its timing and potential effect on the Green Belt;*
- *Would Proposal T12/4 generate traffic and open up land for development after the period of this Plan.*

Inspector's reasoning and conclusions

- 5.102 The line of the Balsall Common by-pass was established some years ago, partly in response to local concerns about the effect of through traffic in the centre of the village. It was established in 1989 after the consideration of 5 possible alternatives, including consultation with the local community. The line has been protected by SMBC since 1990 and is included in the adopted UDP [CD111; Proposal T4/3]. It is a primary route single-carriageway road, providing a by-pass to the main A452 and runs to the east of the settlement. The northern section (about 30% of the total route) has been completed as part of new housing development, but the rest is uncompleted. The scheme is not currently included in the Local Transport Plan or other road programmes, and the land required for the by-pass has not yet been acquired. No other development proposals are dependent on, or related to, the road scheme, and it would be funded from resources available to SMBC as Highway Authority.

- 5.103 The justification for the scheme is based on increased traffic levels along the A452 through Balsall Common. On completion of the M40/M42, traffic along this route declined significantly, but even though HGV traffic has reduced, traffic levels have been growing at about 3 times the average rate for Solihull and are now close to pre-M40 levels. At the inquiry, SMBC confirmed that, at present, there is no need for this by-pass, although there is a greater need than that for Hockley Heath. At 1989 traffic levels, the by-pass was justified, and since traffic levels are now approaching those figures, the need for it should soon be considered again. At the previous UDP inquiry, the inspector concluded that the by-pass line should be protected until the effects of the M40 are assessed [CD129; ¶ 4.31].
- 5.104 In this case, although the M40/M42 has partly alleviated traffic pressures through Balsall Common village, traffic levels are likely to increase to the extent that the by-pass may be necessary. At this time, no firm proposal to construct this by-pass has been put forward, and the SUDPR merely safeguards the line of the route. I realise that PPG12 (¶ 5.17/6.24) advises that plans should only include proposals that are firm, realistic and with a reasonable degree of certainty of being implemented during the Plan period. However, like other road schemes, a decision on whether to construct this by-pass cannot be made until the results of the current traffic management scheme on the M42 are available and a decision on whether to widen the M42 has been taken.
- 5.105 The presence of a protected line on the Proposals Map does not necessarily encourage further development, given the Green Belt status of the land. Contrary to WMFOE's fears, there are no proposals to release further Green Belt land around Balsall Common, either now or in the longer term. Issues about the detailed impact on the character of the village and the surrounding *Meriden Gap* Green Belt could be considered if and when detailed proposals for the by-pass are put forward in the future.
- 5.106 Contrary to CPRE's view, I find little to suggest that traffic levels through Balsall Common have been overstated, or that funding is in doubt. Reducing car dependence is an important aim of planning policy, but cannot be relied upon as a means of negating the eventual need for the by-pass, especially in the context of rising trends in car ownership. Since the line mainly passes through open countryside, there is no serious blighting effect or adverse amenity impact on land or property. As I have said before, PPG12 encourages certainty in the planning process, and the deletion of this long-standing line would increase uncertainty and may preclude the construction of the by-pass if the need eventually arises.
- 5.107 SMBC has not made any decision not to proceed with this road scheme, and confirms that traffic levels will be closely monitored. The line is long-established, and little has changed since the scheme was considered at the last UDP inquiry. Consequently, I conclude that it is appropriate to continue to safeguard the line of this by-pass at least until the position on the ability of the M42 to meet future traffic demand becomes clear and decisions on future proposals for the M42 are made.

Recommendation

5.108 I RECOMMEND NO MODIFICATIONS to the Plan to meet these objections.

PROPOSAL T12/5: M42 JUNCTION 4 IMPROVEMENTS

Objections to First Deposit

1080/208 – WMFOE; 1275/174 – CPRE; see also Hockley Heath Schedule (Annex D).

Objections to Revised Deposit

There were no objections to the Revised Deposit draft.

Key issues

- *Should the Plan include a proposal to improve Junction 4 of M42 to serve Blythe Valley Park, particularly in view of the potential impact on the character of the wider rural countryside to the east of the M42;*
- *Would Proposal T12/5 generate traffic and open up land for development after the period of this Plan;*
- *Should Proposal T12/5 be resisted if it would lead to increased traffic levels along the A3400 through Hockley Heath.*

Inspector's reasoning and conclusions

- 5.109 Proposal T12/5 is closely linked to proposals to expand Blythe Valley Business Park (BVP2), and envisages further minor improvements to M42 Junction 4, probably within the boundary of the existing highway. The scheme would be funded by the developer of BVP2 and timing would depend on the eventual implementation of the business park extension, but would be likely to be within the current Plan period and before 2020. I deal with the issue of extending BVP in Chapter 4 of my report, where I conclude that the extension to the existing business park is justified. It therefore follows that it would be appropriate to retain Proposal T12/5 in order to accommodate any improvements required to this junction as a result of the new development.
- 5.110 As SMBC says, it is important that M42 Junction 4 operates efficiently and safely to serve existing and proposed development along the A34/A3400 corridor. Given the nature and extent of the improvements envisaged, it is unlikely that the scheme would have a significant impact on the adjoining countryside. CPRE's concern about possible improvements to Gate Lane and the junction with A3400 are largely unfounded, because this is outside the scheme currently envisaged and there are land ownership constraints. Contrary to WMFOE's views, there is no evidence that the improvement of this junction would open-up further land for development beyond that already proposed, and the surrounding land would remain protected under Green Belt policies. Similarly, there is no evidence that traffic levels would increase through Hockley Heath as a direct result of this proposal.
- 5.111 In response to residents in Hockley Heath, the main purpose of this proposal is to facilitate development at BVP2. The detailed impact of this proposal in traffic terms would be considered when firm proposals are drawn up. At this stage, there is no suggestion that Proposal T12/5 would necessarily increase traffic along the A3400 through Hockley Heath, and so these fears seem to be misplaced.
- 5.112 In these circumstances, and given my conclusions on the BVP2 business park extension (Proposal E1/4), I am satisfied that it is appropriate to include this proposal within the SUDPR.

Recommendation

5.113 I RECOMMEND NO MODIFICATIONS to the Plan to meet these objections.

PROPOSAL T12/6: A34 IMPROVEMENTS THROUGH SHIRLEY

Objections to First Deposit 1080/209 – WMFOE.

Objections to Revised Deposit There were no objections to the Revised Deposit draft.

Key issues

- *Should Policy T12/6 clarify the definition of the proposed improvements.*

Inspector's reasoning and conclusions

5.114 Proposal T12/6 proposes phased schemes to maintain and enhance traffic capacity and safety and improve the local environment between School Road and the Birmingham boundary. The nature of the proposed improvements are outlined in the accompanying text (¶ 5.3.10), to improve highway safety and alleviate congestion, as part of ongoing work commenced in the late 1990s. I consider this gives sufficient information about the nature of the proposed improvements without needing any further elaboration. I also note that WMFOE supports Policy T12/6 in terms of on-road improvements to safety.

Recommendation

5.115 I RECOMMEND NO MODIFICATIONS to the Plan to meet this objection.

PROPOSAL T12/7: DICKENS HEATH HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENTS

Objections to First Deposit 1080/210 – WMFOE; 1275/169 – CPRE.

Objections to Revised Deposit There were no objections to the Revised Deposit draft.

Key issues

- *Should the Plan give more details about the nature and extent of the proposed improvements;*
- *Does Proposal T12/7 give sufficient priority to improvements by providing access to Dickens Heath by all road users, including public transport, cyclists and pedestrians.*

Inspector's reasoning and conclusions

5.116 Accessibility by road to the new village of Dickens Heath is an important factor influencing the quality of life for local residents. The need for improvements to road access was recognised in the adopted UDP [CD111; Proposal T6/3; ¶ 4.32], which proposed the new settlement. The proposed improvements are needed to facilitate highway and pedestrian safety, to provide safe access to the settlement to all road users, including bus, cycle and pedestrians. At the inquiry, SMBC explained that these improvements envisage pedestrian and cycle routes along Tythebarn Lane/Dickens Heath Road, along with easing the bends along the northern section of Dickens Heath Road and a new roundabout. These improvements would improve, rather than preclude, bus, cycle and pedestrian access. The timescale is short-term and the works would be partly funded by developers. As they are minor works, they are not included in the LTP or any other road programme.

5.117 Given that these improvements were envisaged at the time the new settlement was proposed, and are directly related to improving access to the settlement by various modes of transport, including vehicles, cycles and pedestrians, I cannot see any sound argument to delete this proposal. The improvements would facilitate easier access by buses, cars, cycles and pedestrians, without necessarily increasing dependence on the private car.

5.118 However, as currently worded, Proposal T12/7 only refers to *road improvements* to serve the new settlement. As suggested at the inquiry, I consider it would be more appropriately worded to refer to *improvements to access, including by public transport, cyclists and pedestrians*. The supporting text should also highlight the nature of the proposed improvements, including the need to improve access and safety for pedestrians and cyclists and access to the settlement for all road users. This would go a long way towards alleviating the concerns of WMFOE & CPRE, and I recommend accordingly.

Recommendation

5.119 I RECOMMEND that the Plan is **modified** by:

- (i) *amending the wording of Proposal T12/7 to refer to “improvements to access, including by public transport, cyclists and pedestrians”;*
- (ii) *amending paragraph 5.3.11 to highlight the nature of the proposed improvements and the need to improve access and safety for pedestrians and cyclists and access to the settlement for all road users.*

PROPOSAL T12/8: A45 IMPROVEMENTS AT ELMDON

Objections to First Deposit 1080/211 – WMFOE; 1095/609 – Centro/WMPTA.

Objections to Revised Deposit There were no objections to the Revised Deposit draft.

Key issues

- *Should Policy T12/8 clarify the definition of the proposed improvements;*
- *Should Policy T12/8 refer to funding mechanisms and the need to consider public transport infrastructure where necessary funded by the developer.*

Inspector’s reasoning and conclusions

5.120 Proposal T12/8 proposes the improvement of the junction between the A45/Damson Parkway and the old terminal at Elmdon. The accompanying text (¶ 5.3.12) explains the strategic importance of the A45, its links to BIA/NEC and the need for improvements to this junction to improve highway safety and alleviate traffic congestion. In my view, this provides sufficient information on the principle and need for this proposal, with further details being available when the scheme is progressed. The possibility of developers funding public transport infrastructure is already addressed under Policy T8 (¶ 5.2.8), so there is no need for this point to be repeated under this specific proposal.

Recommendation

5.121 I RECOMMEND NO MODIFICATIONS to the Plan to meet these objections.

POLICY T13: CAR PARKING PROVISION

Objections to First Deposit 1069/1044 – GO-WM; 1275/175 – CPRE; 1352/777 – Cala Properties; 1353/672 – Arlington Business Parks GP Ltd; 1359/729 – Taylor Woodrow Devts Ltd; 1360/1124 – BT Group plc; 1362/758 – Cala Homes Ltd; 1365/852 – Chase Midland plc; 1380/51 – House Builders Federation; 1386/813 – Marcicity Devts; 1387/563 – Marks & Spencer plc; 1398/796 – Persimmon Homes Ltd; 1423/998 – WM RSL Planning Consortium; 1427/832 – Wimpey Homes.

Objections to Revised Deposit 1359/264/R-265/R – Taylor Woodrow Devts Ltd; 1362/284/R-285/R – Cala Homes Ltd; 1365/308/R-309/R – Chase Midlands plc; 1386/237/R-238/R – Marcicity Devts; 1378/83/R – Hockley Heath Parish Council; 1037/337/R – Network Rail 1504/173/R – Tidbury Green Res. Assn.

Key issues

- *Should the Plan include car parking standards in Policy T13 and delete any reference to SPG in the Policy;*
- *Should the Policy and supporting text confirm that SPG will not impose more stringent parking standards at BBP than already exist;*
- *Rev 5/15: Should car parking standards be included in the Plan;*
- *Rev 5/16: Should Policy T13 adopt a more flexible approach to reflect local circumstances, ensuring good design and avoiding on-street parking;*
- *Rev 5/16: Should the text recognise the pivotal role that station car parking plays in securing national and local sustainable transport objectives.*

Inspector's reasoning and conclusions

- 5.122 Policy T13 requires car parking provision in new developments in accordance with the standards set out in SPG. PPG13 (¶ 52) requires policies in development plans to set maximum levels of parking for broad classes of development. The SUDPR does not include car parking standards within the plan itself, but proposes to prepare SPG outlining such standards.
- 5.123 The situation has progressed since the First Deposit SUDPR was published. Rev 5/15 deletes the second sentence of Policy T13, since it is inconsistent with PPG13, and meets some of the objections. Rev 5/16 (¶ 5.3.15) clarifies the nature of the car parking standards which will be adopted, and confirms that SPG will accord with national guidance and be consistent across the region. The Transport Background Paper [CD140; ¶ 6.5] confirms that further work on car parking standards needs to be undertaken at regional level, requiring some collaboration between LPAs. SMBC has now produced draft car parking standards for consultation purposes [CD155], which are generally consistent with PPG13 (Annex D) and also reflect regional guidance in RPG11 (Policy T7). They will operate until any changes resulting from regional work become necessary. As SMBC says, these standards can be more readily updated through the SPG process than by amending the UDP.
- 5.124 It is unfortunate that detailed car parking standards are not included in the SUDPR, as advised in PPG13. However, SMBC is in a difficult position. On the one hand, it has now produced draft car parking standards in SPG, but by the end of the UDP inquiry, I had no details about the results of any consultation. These standards may have to be revised, following consultation and as a result of any work to ensure regional consistency. At present, there is no certainty that the draft standards will be adopted in the current form. However, the SUDPR (Rev 5/16) confirms that any standards will reflect national policy in PPG13, PPG6 & PPG3 and will be maximum figures. Should the position become clearer by the time the SUDPR is modified and adopted, then Policy T13 and the supporting text should be suitably updated. In the meantime, I am satisfied that Policy T13 and the accompanying text provides a sound basis and starting point for assessing car parking requirements, with the emerging SPG providing further details reflecting current national and regional policy.
- 5.125 Arlington is concerned that any reduced car parking requirements do not adversely affect the success of Birmingham Business Park, which requires ample car parking in terms of attracting footloose companies. SMBC confirms that any amended standards emerging through SPG would not override existing car parking requirements set in planning permissions already granted at BBP. Equally, when considering new developments, it is important that car parking provision reflects the latest national policy. In these circumstances, I consider it is more appropriate for each case to be considered on its merits against the current standards, with any relaxation being justified in the particular circumstances of the case. To do otherwise would run contrary to national and regional planning policy.

- 5.126 In Rev 5/16, HHPC & TGRA are concerned about making better provision for car parking in new developments in rural settlements, particularly Dickens Heath. I recognise that, in some cases, there are examples of cars parking along the roads in the new housing areas in Dickens Heath, and that parking provision may not actually reflect the demands and needs of residents. There is also a need to reflect local circumstances, including the type and location of new housing. However, PPG3 (¶ 59-62) makes it clear that LPAs should revise parking standards to allow for significantly lower levels of off-street parking provision, with an average of no more than 1.5 off-street spaces/dwelling. A subsequent ministerial statement confirmed that this should represent the average over the LPA's area and that, in some cases, higher levels may be appropriate, especially in rural areas where there is a heavier reliance on the private car. Much of the new development at Dickens Heath is already built or permitted, so the room for manoeuvre is limited. However, I am satisfied that there is sufficient flexibility in national policy and in the draft parking standards to ensure that local circumstances can be taken into account without needing any further amendments to Policy T13 or the supporting text.
- 5.127 In Rev 5/16, Network Rail emphasises the important role that car parking at railway stations plays in securing sustainable transport objectives, and argues that ample provision in such locations is important in encouraging more people to switch to public transport. However, the importance of car parking facilities at railway stations is specifically recognised in Policy T9 & Proposal T9/1, and I consider this is sufficient to address this matter. The role of the relevant TOC in meeting passenger demand and requirements is outside the scope of this UDP, particularly in view of the responsibilities of Centro/WMPTA in this area.
- 5.128 I therefore conclude that, subject to any updating to reflect the latest position in terms of the draft car parking requirements in the emerging SPG [CD155], no further amendments are needed to Policy T13 or the accompanying text.

Recommendation

5.129 I RECOMMEND that the Plan is **modified** by updating Policy T13 and the accompanying text to reflect the latest position on the Council's car parking requirements in terms of the emerging SPG [CD155].

PROPOSAL T13/1: NEW CAR PARKING GUIDELINES

Objections to First Deposit

1069/1045 – GO-WM; 1275/170 – CPRE; 1352/778 – Cala Properties; 1359/730 – Taylor Woodrow Devts Ltd; 1362/759 – Cala Homes (Midlands) Ltd; 1365/853 – Chase Midlands plc; 1386/814 – Marcity Devts; 1395/943 – National Mutual; 1398/797 – Persimmon Homes (South Midlands) Ltd; 1427/833 – Wimpey Homes West Midlands Ltd; 1305/235 – Berkswell Society; 1084/220 – Catherine de Barnes Residents Association.

Objections to Revised Deposit

There were no objections to the Revised Deposit draft.

Key issues

- Does Proposal T13/1 duplicate Policy T13 and should therefore be deleted;
- Should car parking standards be included in the Plan rather than in SPG;
- Should Proposal T13/1 acknowledge that certain strategically located sites may require higher levels of parking provision for operational reasons;
- (5.3.16): Should the text indicate that park-and-ride should not be acceptable in remote Green Belt locations;
- (5.3.17): Is the text correct in stating that short-stay parking in Solihull town centre has increased.

Inspector's reasoning and conclusions

- 5.130 Proposal T13/1 confirms that new car parking guidelines will be prepared as SPG. To some extent, it repeats the terms of Policy T13, but specifically commits SMBC to preparing new car parking guidelines. As such, it is a relevant and necessary policy. I have dealt with the question of including car parking standards in the SUDPR above (see Policy T13), and most of these objections raise no new points.
- 5.131 As regards certain strategic locations, such as Trinity Park, Bickenhill, requiring higher levels of parking provision, it is important that levels of parking on new developments reflect the latest national guidelines. These standards should be no less rigorous than those set out in PPG13. To do otherwise would conflict with national and regional policy. In my view, any departures from these standards should be justified on a case-by-case basis, taking account of the particular circumstances applicable. There is sufficient flexibility in both national and emerging local car parking standards to enable this to be considered without needing any amendments to paras 5.3.13-5.3.15.
- 5.132 In response to Berkswell Society, national policy on park-and-ride schemes in the Green Belt is set out in PPG13 (Annex E). This sets out specific criteria to be met and outlines the circumstances when such proposals may be acceptable. To establish a blanket prohibition of such schemes in the Solihull Green Belt would not comply with current national guidance and I can see no local circumstances that would justify departing from established national policy. In my view, para 5.3.16 adequately reflects current national policy.
- 5.133 In para 5.3.17, CdBRA disagrees that short-stay parking has increased following the development of Touchwood Court, and points out that this has increased demand for parking causing traffic congestion. I do not have any figures on short-stay parking capacity in the town centre, but I am aware of the increased demand for parking resulting from Touchwood Court, especially at busy periods. CdBRA does not suggest any alternative wording and so I am happy to accept SMBC's view that short-term parking capacity in Solihull town centre has actually been increased as a result of recent developments.

Recommendation

5.134 I RECOMMEND NO MODIFICATIONS to the Plan to meet these objections.

PROPOSAL T13/2: PARKING PROVISION IN SHIRLEY

Objections to First Deposit 1388/604 – McLagan Investments.

Objections to Revised Deposit There were no objections to the Revised Deposit draft.

Key issues

- *Should Policy T13/2 refer to the possibility of providing additional car parking as part of any redevelopment of the former Powergen site.*

Inspector's reasoning and conclusions

- 5.135 Proposal T13/2 proposes additional car parking as opportunities arise between Union Road/Olton Road in Shirley. The *Powergen* site lies north of Haslucks Green Road on the northern edge of Shirley centre. In the past, it has been subject to redevelopment proposals for retail use, but this was refused following a public inquiry in 1998. Any proposals to provide additional car parking on this site would inevitably depend on the nature of any redevelopment.

5.136 I deal with the principle of redeveloping this site for retail purposes under Policy S4, Proposals S4/1 & S4/2 & Policy S8, in Chapter 8 of my report. In retail terms, this is very much an edge-of-centre site and in the absence of any specific and acceptable proposals for its redevelopment for town centre/retail uses, it would be inappropriate to indicate the possibility of providing additional car parking on this site at this time.

Recommendation

5.137 I RECOMMEND NO MODIFICATIONS to the Plan to meet this objection.

POLICY T14: ROAD SAFETY & TRAFFIC CALMING

Objections to First Deposit

1359/731 – Taylor Woodrow Devts Ltd; 1360/1125 – BT Group plc; 1362/760 – Cala Homes (Midlands) Ltd; 1365/854 – Chase Midlands plc; 1386/815 – Marcity Devts; 1398/798 – Persimmon Homes (South Midlands) Ltd; 1427/834 – Wimpey Homes West Midlands Ltd.

Objections to Revised Deposit

There were no objections to the Revised Deposit draft.

Key issues

- *Should Policy T14 confirm that any requirements from developers would be reasonably related in scale and kind to the proposed development.*

Inspector's reasoning and conclusions

5.138 Policy T14 confirms that traffic-calming and road safety measures will continue to be implemented on existing highways. It also requires developers to incorporate or fund measures in appropriate developments to promote road safety and environmental improvements.

5.139 Policy IM1 outlines the nature of any contributions from developers, confirming that planning obligations would be sought where the requirement is fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the proposed development (¶ 12.1.1). Since Policy T14 may require developers to provide road safety and traffic calming measures, it would be helpful if there was some reference to the fact that the nature and extent of any such requirements would be in accordance with Policy IM1, for the avoidance of any doubt, as in Policies T16 & T17.

Recommendation

5.140 I RECOMMEND that the Plan is modified by amending Policy T14 to confirm that the nature and extent of any requirements from developers would be in accordance with Policy IM1.

POLICY T15: FUTURE DEVELOPMENT AT BIRMINGHAM INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

Objections to First Deposit

1054/1070* – Highways Agency; 1080/212 – WMFOE; 1095/615 – Centro/WMPMTA; 1126/319 – Hampton-in-Arden Society; 1153/947 – Birmingham International Airport Ltd; 1275/141 – CPRE; 1424/594 – Westbury Homes Ltd.

Objections to Revised Deposit

1080/167/R – WMFOE; 1095/332/R – Centro/WMPMTA; 1126/511/R – Hampton-in-Arden Society; 1153/78/R – Birmingham International Airport Ltd.

Key issues

- *Does Policy T15 adequately reflect the latest position on airport development in national and regional policy and provide an appropriate context against which future proposals for development can be considered;*
- *Are the criteria in Policy T15 (i)-(iv) sufficiently strong or ill-defined;*
- *Should Policy T15 confirm that any proposals would require a comprehensive transport assessment to demonstrate that there will be no detrimental impact on the trunk road network;*
- *Rev 5/17 (¶ 5.4.1): Should the text require contributions to support mitigation measures for residents and buildings affected by airport activity;*
- *Rev 5/17: Should the requirement for contributions towards access by public transport be included within the text of Policy T15 rather than in the supporting text;*
- *Rev 5/19: Should the additional text be clarified and also refer to Public Safety Zones.*

Inspector's reasoning and conclusions

- 5.141 Policy T15 supports further development at Birmingham International Airport (BIA) subject to certain criteria. It essentially deals with all the transport aspects of BIA, including air transport and public transport, and is associated with Policy E4 which deals with employment and other development/expansion aspects. At the inquiry, SMBC confirmed that Policy T15 covers development only within the current boundary of BIA, as defined on the Proposals Map.
- 5.142 I have already dealt with the current position on airport development in national and regional policy (see Chapter 4 – Policy E4). In terms of Policy T15, further work is needed at regional level to address the possible future expansion of BIA [CD51G; RPG11; Policy T11; ¶ 9.85]. This issue will therefore be considered in a future review of the SUDPR, rather than being covered in this current review. Bearing in mind that Policy T15 only deals with transport developments *within the current boundary*, I consider this should be confirmed in the accompanying text. I also draw attention to my earlier recommendation (see Chapter 4- Policy E4) to transfer the elements of Policy E4 that relate to proposals to extend the main runway to Policy T15. SMBC suggests a minor amendment to the end of para 5.4.2 to update the position on the *Airports White Paper* [CD175], but by the time the SUDPR is modified and adopted, the position on the future expansion of BIA may have moved on. The text accompanying Policy T15 should therefore be updated to reflect the correct position at the time the Plan is adopted, as SMBC suggests [UDP139/1].
- 5.143 In response to the detailed points made by HIAS, I am satisfied that the title of the Policy is appropriate, provided that its purpose and scope as covering the transport aspects of future development within the currently defined boundary, is clarified in the supporting text. The SUDPR is essentially a land-use planning document, and so it is not appropriate to include details of any financial involvement in BIA by SMBC, particularly since the SUDPR has been prepared independently of these interests. I am also satisfied that it is appropriate for Policy T15 to support further development at BIA, particularly

given its regional and economic importance. I cannot see that this conditional support, subject to specific criteria, in any way fetters SMBC's consideration of future proposals. Since further regional work needs to be undertaken on the implications of further expansion at BIA, including the possibility of a second runway, it is not appropriate for the SUDPR to address these matters at this time. Similarly, the SUDPR recognises that some aviation development would be permitted under the terms of Part 18 of Schedule 2 to the GDPO.

- 5.144 Turning to the detailed criteria in Policy T15, criterion (i) seeks to protect the surrounding area from the unacceptable environmental impact of airport development and to mitigate any harmful effects. Rev 5/17 (¶ 5.4.1) confirms that everything possible will be done to mitigate harmful effects in order to achieve an acceptable level of environmental impact. I am satisfied that this is an appropriate and reasonable test which would ensure that the environment for surrounding residents would be adequately protected. The revised wording suggested by Westbury Homes & CPRE would neither improve the Policy nor provide greater clarity, and cannot be fully justified.
- 5.145 The wording of *best endeavours* in criterion (ii) is not explained, but it is a readily understood term that needs no further clarification. Criterion (ii) refers to *the* agreed travel plan, but BIA points out that there is no single document or plan which constitutes such a plan. I therefore share their view that the text should refer to *an* agreed travel plan. *Green Travel Plans* are specifically covered by Policy T5, which confirms that developers may be required to contribute to public transport to serve major developments (¶ 5.2.8). Rev 5/17 (¶ 5.4.1) also confirms that contributions will be required towards achieving adequate access by public transport to BIA. In response to WMFOE, HIAS and other objectors, I consider the wording and tests outlined in criteria (ii)-(iv) are sufficiently clear and precise, especially when read along with the supporting text and other relevant policies. Some matters, such as reducing the amount of air and surface traffic, future changes in the type and utilisation of aircraft and BIA's Airport Master Plan, are outside the scope of the SUDPR.
- 5.146 In response to the Highways Agency, Rev 5/1-5/2 (Policy T1 & ¶ 5.1.1) set out the SUDPR's requirements for transport assessments, in line with PPG13, which I understand would satisfy this objection. Such assessments would have to address the impact on the trunk road network, and consequently, there is no need for these requirements to be repeated under Policy T15.
- 5.147 As regards Rev 5/17, I am satisfied that the amended wording is clear and precise, and would ensure that any harmful effects of future development proposals at BIA on nearby residents and buildings are satisfactorily addressed, with the necessary mitigation measures. Rev 5/17 acknowledges that financial contributions will be needed towards access by public transport, as part of the aim of providing surface access by sustainable travel modes referred to in Policy T15(ii) & Policy E4. I cannot therefore see the need to include this requirement in the Policy itself. Any development plans would also undoubtedly require changes to BIA's Surface Access Strategy.
- 5.148 In Rev 5/19, BIA seeks clarification of the Safeguarding Areas, with specific reference to Public Safety Zones at the airport. The additional text in Rev 5/19 outlines the current position on Safeguarding Areas, in line with guidance in DfT Circular 01/2003. Since the whole of the Borough lies within the boundaries of the safeguarding areas for BIA and/or Coventry airport, it is unnecessary to show these areas on the Proposals Map. However, DfT Circular 01/2002 (¶ 23) advises LPAs to include a policy stating that Public Safety Zones have been established for a particular airport, the extent of which should be shown on the Proposals Map. Rev 5/19 makes no reference to the Public Safety Zones that have been established at the ends of the main runway at BIA, or any reference to this latter Circular. To remedy this

omission, I consider additional text along the lines suggested by BIA [O/T15-Rev 5.19/1153/78/R/1] should be added to Rev 5/19 (¶ 5.4.2).

- 5.149 Subject to these minor amendments and additions to the accompanying text, I conclude that Policy T15 provides an appropriate framework for considering the transport implications of future proposals for further development at BIA.

Recommendation

5.150 I RECOMMEND that the Plan is **modified** by:

- (i) *including the elements and criteria in Policy E4 relating to proposals to extend the main runway in Policy T15;*
- (ii) *updating the text accompanying Policy T15 to reflect the current situation on the future expansion of Birmingham International Airport;*
- (iii) *clarifying the purpose and scope of Policy T15 in the accompanying text, as essentially covering the transport aspects of future development at Birmingham International Airport within the currently defined boundary, including air transport and public transport;*
- (iv) *amending criterion (ii) to refer to **an** agreed travel plan;*
- (v) *adding additional text at the end of Rev 5/19 (¶ 5.4.2) to state that: **"Public Safety Zones are located at the ends of the main runway at Birmingham International Airport, within which development is restricted and where there is a presumption against most types of development, extensions to existing properties and certain changes of use, in accordance with DfT Circular 1/2002 "Control of Development in Airport Safety Zones".***

POLICY T16: CYCLING

The objection to this policy has been withdrawn.

PROPOSAL T16/1: IMPLEMENTING THE CYCLING STRATEGY

There were no objections to this proposal.

POLICY T17: WALKING

Objections to First Deposit

1293/5 – National Farmers Union

Objections to Revised Deposit

There were no objections to the Revised Deposit draft.

Key issues

- *Should the text accompanying Policy T17 refer to consulting landowners on any proposals for routes on private land.*

Inspector's reasoning and conclusions

- 5.151 Policy T17 promotes the maintenance and improvement of the public footpath network, with developers being required to provide safe, secure and attractive routes for pedestrians in new developments. This Policy reflects work on Solihull's *Walking Strategy* [CD103]. Any proposals for new public rights of way across private land would be governed by separate legislative procedures, which ensure that landowners are formally consulted. It is therefore unnecessary to make specific reference to this matter in the SUDPR.

Recommendation

5.152 I RECOMMEND NO MODIFICATIONS to the Plan to meet this objection.

PROPOSAL T17/1: IMPLEMENTING THE WALKING STRATEGY*There were no objections to this proposal.*

POLICY OMISSIONS***Objections to First Deposit***

1033/1128 – Chiltern Railways; 1037/694* – Network Rail; 1042/1147 – General Aviation Awareness Council; 1054/1073* – Highways Agency; 1261/1121 – Countryside Agency–WM Region; 1389/1141– Meriden PC.

Objections to Revised Deposit

There were no objections to the Revised Deposit draft.

Key issues

- *Should the Plan take account of re-franchising of rail services consistent with the WM Transport Plan;*
- *Should the Plan include a policy promoting the transportation of freight by alternative modes to the motor vehicle, including a policy safeguarding sites served by rail for storage and distribution uses and protecting existing and former rail freight facilities from non-rail development;*
- *Should the Plan include a policy covering general aviation, setting out relevant criteria for establishing general aviation activities and flying sites;*
- *Should the Plan include a policy covering development affecting the trunk road network, including the need for a transport assessment and outlining the Highway Agency's approach to considering development proposals;*
- *Does the Plan pay sufficient attention to the transport needs and difficulties faced by the rural communities in the Borough, including cross-boundary issues, and encourage small-scale sustainable transport projects;*
- *Should the Plan indicate that more research is needed to establish the need for innovative demand-responsive bus services, to adopt a more proactive approach towards reducing journeys by car.*

Inspector's reasoning and conclusions

- 5.153 Chiltern Railways are keen for the Plan to consider the implications of re-franchising of rail services. Policy T7 supports the upgrading of the rail network, along with specific proposals for lines used by Chiltern's services. It also recognises that upgrading and improvement of rail services can make a positive contribution to sustainable transport. However, the detailed arrangements for providing and operating rail services are not within SMBC's control. Consequently, it would be inappropriate to make reference to any re-franchising arrangements in the SUDPR, particularly since the operational arrangements may change over the period of the Plan.
- 5.154 Network Rail is keen to promote the transport of freight by rail, and seeks policies with this aim and also to safeguard existing and future sites for rail freight facilities. Policy T7 (¶ 5.2.6) supports the principle of transferring freight to rail, since it can reduce road congestion, and specifically supports measures that would facilitate the transfer of freight from road to rail. In my view, this reflects national guidance in PPG13 and the SRA's Strategic Freight Plan. Further support for new rail freight terminals and the use of rail to transport freight is provided in RPG 11 Policy T10. However, neither Network Rail nor SMBC suggest any specific sites, and in any event, sites within the Green Belt would have to meet the test of very special circumstances before releasing such land. I therefore consider the Plan makes sufficient reference to rail freight without needing any further policies.
- 5.155 PPG13 (Annex B5) confirms that LPAs should take account of the economic, environmental and social impacts of general aviation on local and regional

economies. RPG11 (¶ 9.87) also confirms the need to consider the general aviation needs of the region, but confirms that such needs will be provided for by the smaller airfields across the region and contains no specific requirement to provide further small flying sites. SUDPR Policies E4 & T15 cover future development at BIA, with specific criteria to be met, and recognise the economic, environmental, employment and social impacts of aviation development. I understand that BIA has some general aviation use, whilst Coventry airport lies too well to the east of the Borough. I am not aware of any smaller airfields or other airstrips within the Borough, and no specific sites are suggested by GAAC. As SMBC says, it would be difficult to identify any general aviation sites within the urban area, since it is predominantly built-up, and possible sites in the rural area would be covered by Green Belt policies, requiring very special circumstances to be demonstrated. In view of these constraints and in the absence of any suggested sites, it is unnecessary to include a specific policy along the lines suggested by GAAC in this UDP Review.

- 5.156 National policy towards development affecting trunk roads is set out in PPG13 (Annex B) and DTLR Circular 04/2001, *recently amended by a Ministerial statement in October 2004*. It is not usually necessary to duplicate national policies in development plans, since they would apply to development proposals as a matter of course. Policy T1 confirms the need for transport assessments for developments having a significant transport implications, and has been amended to better reflect national guidance in PPG13 (Rev 5/1). Rev 5/2 (¶ 5.1.1) also outlines the requirements for transport assessments, and I understand that the Highways Agency has conditionally withdrawn its objection as a result of these amendments. The Highways Agency would also be consulted on any development proposals likely to affect the trunk road network. Subject to checking that the text accompanying Policy T1 reflects the most recent policy guidance on this matter, I can see no need to include a detailed policy on development affecting trunk roads in the SUDPR.
- 5.157 The rural areas form about two-thirds of Solihull Borough. However, they are reasonably close to the main urban areas, with bus routes linking the main settlements with Solihull town centre. Policy T8 supports the importance of buses, and includes specific measures to promote improvements. Rev 5/10 amends clause (iii) to specifically encourage appropriate, innovative, demand-responsive bus services to improve links between villages and the main urban centres, rail stations and other parts of the conurbation. In my view, this amendment satisfactorily addresses the Countryside Agency's concerns.
- 5.158 The amendments to clause (iii) of Policy T8 would also go some way towards recognising MPC's points about the need for innovative, demand-responsive bus services. The SUDPR sets out SMBC's strategy for land-use related transport issues, consistent with the Local Transport Plan. Provision for research and educational measures are largely outside the remit of this Review and are better addressed in other strategic transport documents. The *Solihull Public Transport Strategy [CD153]* includes a range of policy measures for public transport and the public transport network, identifying the need to investigate needs and opportunities, and also includes information on relevant market research and targets/monitoring measures. Proposals T1/1 & T8/1 are effectively the delivery mechanism for public transport, although SMBC is not involved in operating buses, relying on WM Travel/Centro. Apart from mentioning delivery and monitoring mechanisms, MPC does not suggest any specific changes to the text of the Plan. I consider Policy T8 & Proposals T1/1 & T8/1 address these points as far as they can, and in view of the other documents and initiatives available, no further amendments are necessary.

Recommendation

5.159 I RECOMMEND that the Plan is **modified** by checking the text accompanying Policy T1 to reflect the latest (October 2004) national policy guidance on development affecting trunk roads.
