

CHAPTER 9: SPORT, RECREATION, LEISURE AND THE ARTS

INTRODUCTION

Objections to First Deposit There were no objections to First Deposit draft

Objections to Revised Deposit 1275/127/R – CPRE.

Key issues

- *Rev 9/1: Does the revision make it clear that the greatest need for good quality open space and recreational facilities is to serve urban areas where housing densities are being maximised, and could it be interpreted as supporting recreational facilities in the Green Belt.*

Inspector's reasoning and conclusions

9.1 Paragraph 9.0.4 confirms that the provision of adequate, high quality, accessible open space and recreation facilities to meet the identified needs of the local community is vital to offset the impact of higher densities and the higher percentage of new housing being developed in urban areas, reflecting national guidance in PPG17. Rev 9/1 retains the reference to urban areas and indicates the main reason for the need for such provision. It is, after all, the *local community* rather than *urban areas* that need open space and recreational facilities.

9.2 As for the concern about the Green Belt, outdoor sport and recreational facilities may not be inappropriate in such areas, particularly in the urban fringe, as PPG2 (¶ 1.6) & PPG17 (¶ 25) confirm. Issues about floodlit sports pitches largely depend on site-specific considerations, in terms of their impact on the amenity and openness of the Green Belt, as confirmed in PPG17 (¶ 19). I therefore cannot see that the revised text diminishes the importance of making such provision in urban areas or gives any support for additional recreational facilities in the Green Belt. Consequently, no further amendments are needed to this Revision, which I understand was made to address a previous objection from Sport England (1175/630).

Recommendation

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

POLICY R1: SPORT AND RECREATION FACILITIES

Objections to First Deposit 1101/711 – Balsall Parish Council; 1275/154 – CPRE; 1305/244 – Berkswell Society; 1413/98 – Solihull Youth Council;

Objections to Revised Deposit 1362/289/R – Cala Homes Ltd.

Key issues

- *Does Policy R1 provide an appropriate basis for considering proposals for sport and recreation facilities, bearing in mind the Green Belt policies that apply in the countryside;*
- *Should the Policy include a specific commitment to protect the Green Belt;*
- *Should the Policy include facilities in settlements, rather than just in town centres;*
- *Should the Policy address the provision of affordable public leisure facilities and the improvement of existing facilities;*
- *Rev 9/2: Should the reference to locations highly accessible by public transport be reinstated in the Policy.*

Inspector's reasoning and conclusions

- 9.4 Policy R1 supports the provision of a range of new and improved sport and recreation facilities, subject to specific criteria. It is intended to cover the provision of such facilities over the whole Borough, encouraging facilities in the town centres, but not outside such areas unless it can be shown that no suitable alternative can be found. This reflects national policy in PPG6 & PPG17, as well as SMBC's *Sports & Recreation Plan [CD93]*. Criterion (ii) deals with other sport and recreation facilities that are not *major*. Developments in the countryside, outside towns and other settlements, would be subject to the Plan's Countryside and Environment policies, including Green Belt policies, as criterion (iii) confirms. At the inquiry, SMBC confirmed that major facilities would be unlikely to be permitted in such areas.
- 9.5 It therefore seems to me that the questions of scale and Green Belt locations are adequately covered in Policy R1, with sufficient emphasis on the protection of the Green Belt and the countryside. There is consequently no need to include a specific commitment to protect the Green Belt, since this is covered in the cross-reference to Countryside policies in criterion (iii). Questions about the scale and intensity of use would largely depend on the nature and location of the particular development. It therefore seems to me that the concerns of CPRE and the Berkswell Society are fully covered in the Policy as amended in the Revised Deposit draft.
- 9.6 Policy R1 makes provision for facilities in both town centres and other locations, subject to accessibility and the availability of alternative sites, and compatibility with other policies in the Plan. It confirms that major facilities should normally be located in or on the edge of town centres, whilst other facilities should be accessible by public transport. This would cover BPC's concerns about facilities in settlements outside town centres.
- 9.7 The affordability of public leisure facilities is not a matter for the SUDPR, but for SMBC and others as providers of public leisure facilities. Recreational facilities should primarily be determined by identifying the needs of the community, in line with the guidance in PPG17. Policy R1 supports the improvement of existing facilities, whilst Policy R8 supports the provision of leisure, arts and entertainment facilities in town centres or other appropriate locations. This should meet SYC's concerns.
- 9.8 On Rev 9/2, the reference to the need for locations to be highly accessible by public transport is retained in the final clause of the Policy, rather than in criterion (i), thus addressing Cala Homes' point.

Recommendation

9.9 <i>I RECOMMEND NO MODIFICATIONS</i> to the Plan to meet these objections.

**PROPOSAL R1/1: TUDOR GRANGE AND NORTH SOLIHULL
SPORTS CENTRES**

There were no objections to this proposal.

PROPOSAL R1/2: LOCAL ASSESSMENTS OF NEED

Objections to First Deposit 1349/1058 – Taylor Woodrow Developments Ltd

Objections to Revised Deposit 1275/129/R – CPRE;

Key issues

- Does Proposal R1/2 adequately reflect national guidance in PPG17, since the adequacy of national standards cannot be determined without undertaking local assessments of need, and different standards may be needed for urban and rural areas;
- Rev 9/3: does the revised text acknowledge that the rural area is subject to Green Belt policy.

Inspector’s reasoning and conclusions

9.10 Proposal R1/2 confirms that SMBC will undertake local assessments of the need for sport and recreational facilities. Rev 9/3 & 9/4 confirm that such assessments will be undertaken in line with advice from Sport England and PPG17, and will set local standards for the provision of such facilities. I understand that this revision meets Sport England’s original objections (as confirmed in CD144), and would also address Taylor Woodrow’s concerns.

9.11 Rev 9/3 confirms that SMBC will set local standards for provision taking account of the different requirements for urban and rural areas of the Borough. Para 9.1.4 has to be read in the context of Policy R1, which confirms that any development should accord with the Countryside and Environment policies of the Plan, including Green Belt policies. Policies C2(ii) & C10 also set specific criteria for sport and recreational developments in the Green Belt countryside. I recognise that, in Solihull, the rural areas and Green Belt are close to the urban areas where most sport and recreational facilities are located, but para 9.1.4 confirms that the standards for the rural areas would differ from those of urban areas. This would ensure that only those facilities appropriate to the Green Belt would be permitted, in line with PPG2 & PPG17, thus addressing CPRE’s concerns.

Recommendation

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

POLICY R2: PROTECTION OF EXISTING OPEN SPACE

Objections to First Deposit 1016/359 – Mrs L Ashman; 1106/1082 – Solihull Residents Association; 1134/216* – English Nature; 1349/1057 – Taylor Woodrow Devts Ltd; 1380/47 – House Builders Federation; 1424/588 – Westbury Homes (Holdings) Ltd.

Objections to Revised Deposit 1362/290/R – Cala Homes (Midlands) Ltd; 1493/200/R – David Wilson Estates/Taylor Woodrow Devts Ltd.

Key issues

- Is Policy R2 unclear and vague, unrelated to the Proposals Map and failing to reflect PPG17 in terms of types of open space needing protection;
- Should Policy R2 allow development in parks and open spaces, subject to appropriate compensatory measures;
- Should Policy R2 be strengthened by including standards for accessible natural greenspace;
- Has the objective of Policy R2 been rationalised with the urban capacity study;
- Should Policy R2 provide for local assessment of open space and assess housing proposals on open space against local provision;

- *Should the open space at Four Ashes be deleted from the Plan;*
- *Rev 9/9: should the text recognise the need for reasonableness in local standards, and specify local standards in the Plan rather than in SPG, and should the word “normally” be deleted from the Policy.*

Inspector’s reasoning and conclusions

- 9.13 Policy R2 seeks to protect existing open space from development, including protecting and enhancing the character and quality of parks and public open spaces, reflecting SMBC’s *Parks & Open Spaces Strategy [CD94]*. The Policy and supporting text have been amended in the Revised Deposit draft to cover local assessments of need and the types of open space to be protected (Rev 9/5-9/9).
- 9.14 The Proposals Map also shows all major new open space proposals. Although existing open spaces worthy of protection could have been shown on the Proposals Map, Policy R2 would help to protect all valuable existing open spaces. I am satisfied that these revisions have brought the Policy and supporting text into line with the guidance in PPG17 and that no further amendments are needed to address Taylor Woodrow’s concerns.
- 9.15 Policy R2 protects existing parks and open spaces, but recognises that appropriate compensatory provision should be made if development takes place within such areas, as confirmed in para 9.2.2. Although this may not reflect SRA’s views, it reflects the guidance in PPG17 (¶ 10-17).
- 9.16 Rev 9/9 (following ¶ 9.2.2) confirms that whilst standards should be defined by local assessments, national standards such as English Nature’s accessible greenspace standards will be applied in the interim. This meets English Nature’s concerns (*O/R2/1134/216/1*) whose objection is conditionally withdrawn. Since open space is not included within the definition of *previously developed land* in PPG3 (Annex C) & PPG17 (¶14), HBF’s concern about consistency with the Urban Capacity Study is misplaced.
- 9.17 The open space at Four Ashes was included as a proposal in the adopted UDP [*CD111; Proposal R1/7*], but it has now been implemented and completed. It is not now therefore necessary to specifically designate this open space on the Proposals Map, since the protection of valuable open space like this would be covered under the terms of Policy R2.
- 9.18 Rev 9/10 introduces a new Proposal (R2/1) which commits SMBC to undertaking local assessments of the need for sport and recreation facilities, along with setting local standards of provision. This will enable housing proposals to be considered against a local assessment of open space, as requested by Westbury Homes. Disputed housing sites 14, 16 & 18 have now been deleted (Rev 3/11).
- 9.19 On Rev 9/9, SMBC confirms that local standards for open space provision will be set out in SPG, subject to consultation with developers. This will ensure that there is public scrutiny of the local standards and address their reasonableness. Until then, national standards, such as those used by NPFA & English Nature, will be used. I consider this addresses David Wilson/Taylor Woodrow’s concerns. In response to Cala Homes, the deletion of the word *normally* accords with the views of GO-WM & POS, reducing uncertainty and clarifying the application of the policy.

Recommendation

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

PROPOSAL R2/1: LOCAL ASSESSMENT OF NEED FOR OPEN SPACE

Objections to First Deposit

There were no objections to First Deposit draft.

Objections to Revised Deposit

1493/364/R – David Wilson Estates & Taylor Woodrow Developments Ltd.

Key issues

- *Rev 9/10: Should Proposal R2/1 recognise the need for local open space standards to be reasonable, without being too onerous and stifling development.*

Inspector’s reasoning and conclusions

9.21 Proposal R2/1 (Rev 9/10) confirms that SMBC will undertake local assessments of need for open space and set local standards for the provision of open space. I understand that local standards for open space provision will be set out in SPG, which will be subject to consultation with developers and the community. This will help to ensure that any standards are reasonable and realistic, and ensure that the process is open to public scrutiny, in line with guidance in PPG17, as confirmed in Rev 9/9 (¶ 9.2.2). No changes are therefore needed in response to this objection.

Recommendation

9.22 I RECOMMEND NO MODIFICATIONS to the Plan to address this objection.

POLICY R3: PROTECTION OF PLAYING FIELDS

Objections to First Deposit

1349/1061 – David Wilson Estates & Taylor Woodrow Developments Ltd; 1380/48 – House Builders Federation; 1424/589 – Westbury Homes (Holdings) Ltd.

Objections to Revised Deposit

1362/291/R – Cala Homes (Midlands) Ltd.

Key issues

- *Is Policy R3 unclear and do the criteria go beyond the terms of PPG17;*
- *Has the objective of Policy R3 been rationalised with the urban capacity study;*
- *Should Policy R3 provide for a local assessment of playing fields;*
- *Rev 9/11: should the word “normally” be deleted from the Policy.*

Inspector’s reasoning and conclusions

9.23 Policy R3 seeks to protect playing fields, unless specific criteria are met. Rev 9/11 confirms that the criteria can be met individually, whilst Rev 9/12-9/13 confirm that SMBC will utilise the assessment of need for playing pitch provision to set local standards for provision. I understand that SMBC’s *Playing Pitch Assessment & Strategy [CD108]* includes the latest assessment. In addition, criterion (iii) confirms that any loss of playing fields would be replaced by provision of equivalent or better quality and quantity. In my view, the revised Policy and supporting text now adequately reflects national guidance in PPG17, thus addressing David Wilson/Taylor Woodrow’s concerns.

9.24 As with Policy R2, HBF’s concern is misplaced, since open space is not included within the definition of *previously developed land* in PPG3 & PPG17. As for a local assessment of playing field provision, Rev 9/12-9/13 specifically address Westbury Homes’ concern.

- 9.25 In Rev 9/11, the deletion of the word *normally* accords with the views of GO-WM & POS, reducing uncertainty and clarifying the application of the policy. No further amendments are therefore needed in response to these objections.

Recommendation

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

PROPOSAL R3/1: STANDARD OF PLAYING FIELDS PROVISION

Objections to First Deposit 1349/1062 - Taylor Woodrow Developments Ltd.

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

Key issues

- *Is Proposal R3/1 contrary to PPG17, particularly given the assertion that "there is little evidence that local assessments would result in significantly different standards for the Borough", and the lack of an assessment of playing field provision.*

Inspector's reasoning and conclusions

- 9.27 Proposal R3/1 confirms that SMBC will use its assessment of need for playing field provision in the Borough and set local standards accordingly (Rev 9/13). Rev 9/12 (following ¶ 9.2.5) explains that an assessment of need for playing pitch provision has been undertaken, but until local standards have been set, NPFA standards [CD40] will apply. The previous reference to the lack of evidence about different local standards applying to the Borough has been deleted. In my view, these revisions bring the Proposal and supporting text into line with PPG17 and no further amendments are needed.

Recommendation

9.28 I RECOMMEND NO MODIFICATIONS to the Plan to address this objection.

POLICY R4: NEW AND IMPROVED OPEN SPACE

Objections to First Deposit 1349/1059 – Taylor Woodrow Developments Ltd; 1408/939 – Second Site Property Holdings; 1413/97 – Solihull Youth Council; 1426/893 – William Davis Ltd.

Objections to Revised Deposit 1493/365/R – David Wilson Estates/Taylor Woodrow Developments Ltd.

Key issues

- *Is the adoption of the NPFA 2.4ha standard appropriate in Policy R4;*
- *Is Policy R4 unduly prescriptive and inflexible, particularly in terms of assessments of the need for open space and site characteristics, which might prejudice the redevelopment of sequentially preferable housing sites;*
- *Should Policy R4 specify the type and location of recreational facilities, the consultation arrangements and the minimum threshold for provision;*
- *Should land north of Main Road, Meriden be allocated for open space use, associated with adjoining proposed housing;*
- *Rev 9/14: Should the Policy address the implications of standards for development, to ensure that they are not too onerous or stifle development.*

Inspector's reasoning and conclusions

- 9.29 Policy R4 sets out SMBC's requirements and standards for the provision of new and improved open space, reflecting SMBC's *Parks & Open Spaces Strategy [CD94]*. Rev 9/14 (criterion (i) clarifies the standard of provision of public open space, whilst Rev 9/16 (¶ 9.2.7) confirms that this standard relates to outdoor playing space and children's play areas. When read in the context of Policies R1 & R2, which confirm that local assessments of need will be undertaken, I am satisfied that the amended wording applies an appropriate standard of provision. However, to avoid any doubt, it would be clearer if the reference in Policy R4 (i) to NPFA standards [CD40] specifically confirmed that this relates to outdoor playing space and children's play areas.
- 9.30 In response to Second Site/Lattice Property, I do not consider that the Policy and supporting text is unduly prescriptive or inflexible. Rev 9/14-9/17 adequately clarify the position and would not, in my view, prejudice the redevelopment of sequentially preferable sites, including brownfield sites with significant development costs. Conversely, I consider the suggested amendments would noticeably weaken the policy.
- 9.31 SYC's concerns relate to the details of new and improved recreational facilities and open space. However, these largely concern the details of specific provision, which are outside the remit of this Plan. The SUDPR seeks to provide a framework of policies within which recreational and open space provision can be made, addressing these detailed issues at the development stage. Rev 9/17 gives some examples of recreational facilities for young people, and I cannot see that the Plan needs to go any further.
- 9.32 As for the possibility of designating land north of Main Road, Meriden for public open space, this is closely associated with William Davis' proposal for new housing off Fillongley Road to the north and west of the site. I deal with this matter under Policy H1/1, in Chapter 3A of my report (1426/892-894). In any event, the proposed site for public open space is not well related to the settlement of Meriden, and Proposal R4/3 confirms the designation of land south of The Green as the preferred site for a replacement recreation ground.
- 9.33 As for Rev 9/14, standards for open space provision are likely to be set out in forthcoming SPG, which will be subject to consultation with the community and developers. This will ensure that the standards are subject to public scrutiny and that they are reasonable and do not stifle development.

Recommendation

9.34 I **RECOMMEND** that the Plan is **modified** by **amending criterion (i) of Policy R4**, replacing the words "public open space" in the first sentence with "**outdoor playing space and children's play areas**".

PROPOSAL R4/1: DICKENS HEATH PUBLIC OPEN SPACE

Objections to First Deposit 1349/1060 – Taylor Woodrow Developments Ltd.

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

Key issues

- *Should the extent of public open space for Dickens Heath new village be substantiated by an assessment of existing and required provision.*

Inspector’s reasoning and conclusions

9.35 Proposal R4/1 re-confirms the designation of land at Dickens Heath as a village green, parkland and nature reserve, as shown on the Proposals Map. The extent and location of public open space at Dickens Heath associated with this new village was established in the adopted UDP [CD111; Proposal R1/4], as confirmed in para 9.2.10. Since this proposal has not yet been fully implemented, it is appropriate for the SUDPR to carry forward the proposal, and there is thus no need to further justify the proposed provision in this Plan.

Recommendation

9.36 I RECOMMEND NO MODIFICATIONS to the Plan to address this objection.

PROPOSAL R4/2: MARSTON GREEN PUBLIC OPEN SPACE

There were no objections to this proposal.

PROPOSAL R4/3: MERIDEN RECREATION GROUND

Objections to First Deposit 1275/156 – CPRE; 1362/769 – Cala Homes Ltd.

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

Key issues

- *Should Proposal R4/3 be deleted from the Plan if proposed housing site 6 is deleted, since the existing recreation ground is an attractive, valuable and better located facility than the proposed replacement;*
- *Should the site at Hampton Lane, Meriden be designated for housing rather than as public open space, in view of its sustainable location close to facilities and services.*

Inspector’s reasoning and conclusions

9.37 Proposal R4/3 re-confirms the designation of land to the south of The Green, Meriden as a replacement recreation ground, originally designated in the adopted UDP (Proposal R1/8) [CD111]. This proposal is associated with the development of the existing recreation ground off Maxstoke Lane for housing (Proposal H1/1; Site 6), also proposed in the adopted UDP. I have already concluded that there is a soundly based case to continue to allocate the existing recreation ground for new housing and it therefore follows that a replacement facility is required (see Chapter 3). Although the existing recreation ground is well placed to serve the needs of the local community, the proposed replacement facility is almost as well located and would provide an enhanced recreational facility for Meriden. Since there is no change in these proposals, I consider the designation of the replacement recreation ground should remain in the SUDPR.

9.38 The site at Hampton Lane is the same site as that proposed for the replacement recreation ground. I deal with the possibility of allocating this site for housing under Policy H1/1, earlier in my report (see Chapter 3A; Site ME22) (1362/747). Since I have concluded that there is insufficient justification to allocate the site for housing, and since it is well placed to provide replacement recreation ground facilities, it follows that the recreation designation should be retained in the SUDPR.

Recommendation

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

PROPOSAL R4/4: BLYTHE VALLEY COUNTRYSIDE PARK

Objections to First Deposit 1275/157 – CPRE.

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

Key issues

- *Should Proposal R4/4 be deleted as it relies on an extension of inappropriate business uses into the Green Belt.*

Inspector’s reasoning and conclusions

9.40 Proposal R4/4 designates 14ha of land within the extension to Blythe Valley Business Park (BVP2) as a Countryside Park. Its designation is directly related to the proposed extension to the business park, which I have dealt with in Chapter 4 of my report. Since I have concluded that the extension to the business park is fully justified, it follows that the Countryside Park is similarly justified, as an integral element of this overall project.

Recommendation

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

PROPOSAL R4/5: PLAY AREA STRATEGY

There were no objections to this proposal.

POLICY R5: ALLOTMENT GARDENS

Objections to First Deposit 1359/740 – Taylor Woodrow Developments Ltd.

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

Key issues

- *Should Policy R5 also refer to the possibility of relocating the allotment use if the site is suitable for development in all other respects.*

Inspector’s reasoning and conclusions

9.42 Policy R5 seeks to protect existing allotment sites throughout the Borough and only supports their development for other uses in specific circumstances. SMBC explains that it has a statutory duty to provide allotment gardens where there is a demand, and unless there is no proven demand and the site is disused, development for other purposes would be inappropriate.

- 9.43 Allotments are defined as open space in PPG17 (Annex A1 (vii)) and also fall outside the definition of *previously developed land* (PPG17; ¶ 14). Under the terms of PPG17, allotments would therefore come under the definition of existing open space which should not be built upon unless an assessment has been undertaken which clearly shows that the facility is surplus to requirements. The possible replacement of existing allotments as a result of development would need to be considered on a site-by-site basis, in the context of Policy R4 and national guidance. Since Policy R5 directly reflects the approach set out in PPG17 and the Companion Guide: *Assessing needs and opportunities* [CD39; ¶ A14], I cannot see that any further amendments are needed to this Policy or the supporting text in response to this objection.

Recommendation

9.44 I RECOMMEND NO MODIFICATIONS to the Plan to address this objection.

POLICY R6: WATERWAYS

Objections to First Deposit 1101/707 – Balsall Parish Council;
1301/664 – Warwickshire Wildlife Trust.

Objections to Revised Deposit 1275/128/R – CPRE.

Key issues

- *Should the Policy ensure that canals are maintained to ensure upkeep;*
- *Should the Policy recognise that canals form important wildlife corridors;*
- *Rev 9/19: Does the addition of “where feasible” weaken the Policy.*

Inspector’s reasoning and conclusions

- 9.45 Policy R6 aims to realise the recreation and leisure potential of canals for both waterborne and other users, and requires adjoining development to protect and enhance the amenity of the canal corridor. The maintenance of canals is the responsibility of British Waterways and is not a matter for the SUDPR. Policy R6 aims to safeguard the natural environment of canals generally, whilst Policy ENV12 specifically addresses the conservation of biodiversity, including canals, ensuring that the nature conservation value of wildlife habitats along canals is fully taken into account.
- 9.46 Rev 9/19 adds a new phrase, improving public access to canals, *where feasible*. CPRE accepts that it may not always be possible to provide access to a canal immediately adjoining a development site, and the disputed term recognises the reality of this situation. I am satisfied that this is a soundly based approach to the question of public access to canals and that no further amendments are needed.

Recommendation

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

- PROPOSAL R6/1: CANAL STRATEGY**
- PROPOSAL R6/2: TOWPATH ACCESS**
- PROPOSAL R6/3: EARLSWOOD LAKES**
- PROPOSAL R6/4: OLTON MERE**

There were no objections to these proposals.

POLICY R7: RIGHTS OF WAY AND CYCLING

Objections to First Deposit

1101/708 – Balsall Parish Council; 1126/295 – Hampton-in-Arden Society.

Objections to Revised Deposit

There were no objections to the Revised Deposit draft

Key issues

- *Should the Policy ensure that the Heart of England Way is maintained to ensure its upkeep;*
- *Is it necessary to have a separate policy in the Recreation chapter covering cycling and walking in addition to Policies T16 & T17 in the Transport chapter of the Plan.*

Inspector's reasoning and conclusions

- 9.48 Policy R7 seeks to promote the benefits of walking and cycling by protecting and enhancing existing routes and identifying and prioritising new routes, in accordance with national guidance in PPG17. The *Heart of England Way* is subject to a specific proposal (R7/2), which recognises the regional importance of this footpath route. Para 9.3.10 confirms that SMBC will give priority to its maintenance, addressing BPC's concerns.
- 9.49 Policies T16 & T17 promote the maintenance and improvement of the strategic cycle network and footpath network, and require developers to make provision for cycling and footpaths in their developments. Although there is some overlap between these policies and Policy R7, at the inquiry, SMBC explained that the aim was to separate the transport elements of walking and cycling from the recreational elements. I note that the adopted UDP [CD111] covers these matters in the Transport chapter and I am also aware of SMBC's Cycling and Walking Strategies [CD91/103]. Having considered this matter, I conclude that it is appropriate to retain separate policies to cover the transport and recreational elements of walking and cycling, since these are distinct and different aspects. However, as suggested at the inquiry, it would be helpful if the wording of Policy R4 is reviewed to ensure that it concentrates on the recreational and leisure elements of walking and cycling and avoids any direct duplication with Policies T16 & T17, with a cross-reference to these policies in the supporting text. This would go some way to addressing HIAS' concerns.

Recommendation

9.50 *I RECOMMEND that the Plan is **modified** by reviewing Policy R7 to ensure that there is no direct duplication with the contents of Policies T16 & T17 in the Transportation chapter of the Plan, with a cross-reference to these policies in the accompanying text of Policy R7.*

PROPOSAL R7/1: WALKING AND CYCLING ROUTES

PROPOSAL R7/2: HEART OF ENGLAND WAY

PROPOSAL R7/3: BLYTHE VALLEY WALKWAY

There were no objections to these proposals.

POLICY R8: LEISURE, ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT FACILITIES

Objections to First Deposit

1413/99 – Solihull Youth Council.

Objections to Revised Deposit

There were no objections to the Revised Deposit draft

Key issues

- *Should the Policy consider the provision of affordable public leisure facilities and the improvement of existing facilities.*

Inspector’s reasoning and conclusions

9.51 Policy R8 supports the provision of leisure, arts and entertainment facilities in the town centre and other appropriate locations. The affordability and improvement of new and existing public facilities is outside the scope of the SUDPR, and is largely a matter for the service provider. These matters can also be addressed in the *Cultural Strategy for Solihull*, referred to in para 9.4.3. Policy R8 merely seeks to support the provision of such facilities, as part of the framework of policies within which the provision and improvement of such facilities can be made.

Recommendation

9.52 I RECOMMEND NO MODIFICATIONS to the Plan to address this objection.

POLICY R9: PUBLIC ART

Objections to First Deposit

1359/741 – Taylor Woodrow Devts Ltd; 1362/770 – Cala Homes Ltd; 1365/861 – Chase Midlands plc; 1398/806 – Persimmon Homes Ltd; 1380/55 – House Builders Federation; 1427/838 – Wimpey Homes Ltd.

Objections to Revised Deposit

There were no objections to the Revised Deposit draft.

Key issues

- *Is it appropriate to require the provision of public art in developments, especially when other infrastructure provision is being required;*
- *Should the Policy recognise that any public art should be related in scale and kind to the development and may not be required for all developments;*
- *Is the Policy vague and of questionable benefit in residential developments.*

Inspector’s reasoning and conclusions

9.53 Policy R9 promotes the benefits of public art and seeks provision of new works of art in new developments. This reflects SMBC’s *Public Art Policy* and the *UK Percent for Art* scheme. In my view, it is a soundly based policy that would help to reap the benefits of public art in the Borough, helping to create a sense of place and identity for local communities and at key “gateways” and public places in Solihull. The Policy has already had some success in new developments, such as in Solihull town centre and Blythe Valley Park.

9.54 SMBC confirms that the Policy does not *require* developers to provide public art in new developments, but *encourages* them to do so, suggesting setting aside a proportion of the development costs. The provision of public art would also be subject to S106 agreements, negotiated with developers and related in scale and kind to the proposed development. It may not be appropriate in all new developments, but in residential areas, it may help to improve the quality of the environment. Consequently, I consider the Policy is clearly worded, appropriate and reasonable, without being unduly onerous.

Recommendation

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

POLICY OMISSION

Objections to First Deposit 1389/1143 – Meriden Parish Council.

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

Key issues

- *Is there a need for more investment in sport and leisure facilities, especially in rural areas, with particular reference to the development of the existing playing fields at Meriden.*

Inspector’s reasoning and conclusions

9.56 This objection is made in the context of proposals to develop the existing playing fields at Meriden for housing (Proposal H1/1; Site 6), which I deal with in the Housing chapter of my report. Policies R1, R3, R8 & C10 support the provision of leisure, arts and entertainment facilities in appropriate locations and protect sport and recreation facilities in the countryside, in line with national guidance in PPG17, PPG2 & PPG6. In Meriden, replacement playing fields are proposed under Proposal R4/3, and further provision of local sport and recreation facilities could be considered under Policies R1, R4 & R8.

9.57 Issues about the need for more investment in sport and leisure facilities are largely for the service providers, including SMBC and commercial bodies. Existing policies will ensure that accessibility to sport and recreation facilities, whether in Meriden or elsewhere, is properly assessed when particular proposals are being considered. In rural areas, it is important to provide a balanced approach between providing facilities and protecting the rural environment. In the absence of any additional firm proposals, it is difficult to see what more the SUDPR can do other than providing an appropriate framework for considering further provision.

Recommendation

9.58 I RECOMMEND NO MODIFICATIONS to the Plan to address this objection

PROPOSALS MAP

Objections to First Deposit 1101/709 – Balsall Parish Council.

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

Key issues

- *Should “The Greenway” footpath be identified on the Proposals Map.*

Inspector’s reasoning and conclusions

9.59 SMBC confirms that the Berkswell-Kenilworth *Greenway* is not a proposal of the SUDPR and I understand that other existing greenways and footpaths like this are not shown on the Proposals Map. Neither PPG12, nor PPG13 & PPG17 specifically advise that existing public rights of way should be shown on Proposals Maps. The identification of this particular route would therefore be inconsistent with national guidance and the approach of the SUDPR.

Recommendation

9.60 I RECOMMEND NO MODIFICATIONS to the Plan to address this objection.
