

Statement of Consultation

Solihull Local Plan: Draft Submission Plan

Introduction

This Statement has been prepared to support the publication of the Solihull Local Plan Review, in accordance with Regulation 19 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. The statement sets out how Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council (the Council) has involved the community and stakeholders in preparing the Solihull Local Plan: Draft Submission Plan and how this meets the requirements set out in the Council's Statement of Community involvement (2020) and national Regulations.

The Statement is a statutory requirement for a Local Planning Authority currently in the process of publishing and submitting a Local Plan to the Secretary of State. It outlines how the Council has complied with government requirements, in line with Regulations 17 and 19.

The report provides information on the following:

- An overview of the Council's engagement activities, across all individuals, groups and stakeholders during each stage of the Local Plan making process, including which bodies and persons were invited to make representations under regulation 18,
- Which engagement activities were used during each stage of the Local Plan making process (both informal and formal).
- How individuals, groups and stakeholders were invited to make representations to inform the Local Plan process.
- A summary of the main issues raised by representations received through the engagement activities.
- How those main issues have been addressed in the local plan.

Table 1 shows the different stages of preparation of the Draft Submission version of Solihull's Local Plan and the consultation undertaken.

Date	Consultation Stage
Nov 2015	Scope, Issues and Options Consultation
Dec 2016	Draft Local Plan Consultation
Jan 2019	Draft Local Plan Supplementary Consultation

Consultation Methodology

The Council is committed to involving stakeholders and the local community in the development of Solihull's Draft Local Plan. It has adopted an approach that views consultation as an on-going activity that is integral to the plan making process. The Council has used a range of methods to engage and consult with stakeholders and the local community, in accordance with the Statement of Community Involvement 2007 and the revised version adopted in January 2020.

The Council has a comprehensive consultation database containing more than 1000 consultees, including residents associations, parish councils, elected representatives, community and voluntary groups, developers and businesses, infrastructure providers, government agencies and individuals.

Cross boundary consultation has been carried out with adjoining local authorities and parish councils.

Persons or organisations wishing to be included on the Council's Local Plan consultation database can sign up via the Council's website and are able to update their details. Stakeholders and the local community have been informed by email or in writing of opportunities to get involved in plan making, and given a variety of options for responding, including in writing, email and on line questionnaires.

A range of different approaches has been undertaken, including the following methods:

- Stakeholder meetings and briefings
- Seminars and presentations
- Conferences and workshops
- Drop in sessions
- Exhibitions at libraries
- Questionnaires
- Direct mailing
- Leaflets and posters
- Press releases, media interviews and newspaper articles
- Email alerts using the Council's Stay Connected facility
- Website and on-line responses

The Council has made use of links with local communities through its neighbourhood managers, and with the Solihull Partnership through meetings with working groups and partnership forums.

It has also utilised opportunities presented by sub-regional working to consult local authorities within the West Midlands Metropolitan area and the Coventry Solihull Warwickshire Forum.

Scope Issues and Options Consultation November 2015

This initial stage of the Local Plan Review commenced in July 2015 and involved scoping of the review, consideration of key issues and development of strategic options for growth. The requirements for evidence and the need for review of policies were considered in the context of the Solihull Local Plan. Three key issues were identified; the requirements for new housing, the opportunity presented by the High Speed 2 rail link and the Interchange Station in the Borough, and the impact of growth on the Green Belt. A range of growth options was developed, based on those in the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership's Spatial Plan.

Consultation on the Scope Issues and Options took place between November 2015 and January 2016. As part of the consultation, letters and emails were sent to all stakeholders on the Local Plan consultation database. Documents were made available at libraries and Council offices and exhibitions were held at various venues around the Borough. Briefings were held for Parish Councils and Residents Associations and publicity included use of Stay Connected, twitter and social media, and press releases.

Various consultation events were held over the period November 2015 to January 2016 in support of the Scope Issues and Options Consultation. Briefings for Parish Councils and Residents Associations and a workshop for Council Members were held, together with involvement with a Public Health workshop. A number of Staff Forum workshops were undertaken in February 2016.

More than 170 representations were received in response to the consultation. The main concerns were as follows:

- Updating of evidence was essential to inform the Local Plan Review
- The full objectively assessed housing need for the Borough was likely to be higher and should be regarded as a minimum
- The review should make a contribution towards the wider housing market area shortfall
- The spatial strategy based on North Solihull Regeneration was no longer appropriate given the level of growth required
- There were mixed responses to the growth options indicating that a mix of the options was likely to be necessary.

In responding to the representations, the Council recognised that:

- Significant updating of evidence would be required
- The objectively assessed housing need should be regarded as a minimum
- Joint working with housing market area authorities would need to continue to identify the extent and distribution of housing to meet wider needs
- A new spatial strategy would need to be developed
- The strategy was likely to need to draw from many if not all the growth options considered.

Draft Local Plan Consultation December 2016

Following consideration of representations on the Scope Issues and Options and publication of the Summary of Representations and Council's Response in April 2016, work commenced on the Draft Local Plan. This involved commissioning of evidence, development of the Plan vision and spatial strategy and consideration of options for site allocations. Workshops were held over the summer of 2016 with Council Members and Officers, and further Staff Forums were held. Meetings with key stakeholders also took place.

Consultation on the Draft Local Plan took place between December 2016 and February 2017. As part of the consultation, letters and emails were sent to all stakeholders on the Local Plan consultation database, including all those making submissions under the Call for Sites exercise and property/landowners within or adjacent to the proposed site allocations. Documents were made available at libraries and Council offices and drop-in sessions/exhibitions were held at 8 venues around the Borough. Briefings were held for Parish Councils and Residents Associations and publicity included use of Stay Connected, twitter and social media, and press releases.

There were 1,750 respondents to the consultation making a total of 6,320 separate representations, with 1,150 in support and 5,165 objections, mainly on the location of new homes and infrastructure requirements. The main concerns related to the following:

- The amount of land for new housing was either too great or insufficient
- Concern about the impact on the Green Belt
- Failure to utilise fully brownfield land opportunities
- Too much reliance on large sites
- Disproportionate impact on certain parts of the Borough
- Poor accessibility and lack of infrastructure affecting some sites
- Sites in Balsall Common, Dickens Heath, Knowle, Shirley and Solihull.

In responding to the representations, the Council recognised that:

- Joint working with housing market area authorities would need to continue to identify the extent and distribution of housing to meet wider needs
- Further investigation of opportunities outside the Green Belt was required, although significant Green Belt incursions were inevitable given the level of growth required
- Further investigation of opportunities on previously developed land was needed
- There was a need for a balanced portfolio of sites to enable delivery of a 5 year housing land supply, but that larger sites offered the greatest potential for infrastructure improvements
- Further consideration of the geographical spread of sites was required
- Further work on infrastructure requirements was required
- Other opportunities for housing growth may need to be considered in certain areas.

Draft Local Plan Supplementary Consultation January 2019

Following consideration of representations on the Draft Local Plan and publication of the Summary of Representations in July 2017, work continued on the Draft Local Plan, involving further consideration of housing numbers and the proposed site allocations. This included joint working with housing market area authorities on quantifying and addressing the anticipated shortfall in land for new housing, and the publication of the Strategic Growth Study in February 2018.

A further workshop was held for Council Members in September 2017 to consider the representations on the Draft Local Plan and alternative options for new housing. Meetings with key stakeholders also took place. Work also commenced on concept master planning for the proposed site allocations to address concerns about infrastructure. A number of the proposed site allocations in the Draft Local Plan were no longer pursued, including Site 13 South of Shirley, and additional Sites were proposed in Balsall Common, Catherine de Barnes, Hockley Heath and Shirley, many of which utilise previously developed land.

The Supplementary Consultation on the Draft Local Plan took place between January and March 2019. The consultation included emerging work on draft concept master plans and a number of 'amber' sites not considered to be appropriate for allocation, but which performed better in the site assessments than others. As part of the consultation, letters and emails were sent to all stakeholders on the Local Plan consultation database, including all those making submissions under the Call for Sites exercise and property/ landowners within or adjacent to the proposed site allocations. Documents were made available at libraries and Council offices and drop-in sessions/exhibitions were held at 6 venues around the Borough. Briefings were held for Parish Councils and Residents Associations and publicity included use of Stay Connected, twitter and social media, and press releases.

There were 1,092 respondents to the consultation making a total of 3,807 separate representations, with 415 in support and 2,233 objections, mainly on the location of new homes and infrastructure requirements. The main concerns related to the following:

- Appropriateness of overall housing numbers proposed

- Contribution to the housing market area shortfall in land for new housing
- The environmental and sustainability impacts of growth
- Appropriateness of the site selection methodology
- Infrastructure requirements, particularly for the Balsall Common and Blythe areas
- Site 3 (BC3) Windmill Lane, Balsall Common, Site 4 (BL1) West of Dickens Heath, Site 18 Sharman's Cross Road, Solihull and the 'amber' sites.

In responding to the representations, the Council recognised that:

- Further work on the local housing need for the Borough was required
- Further consideration of the recommendations of the Strategic Growth Study was needed
- Review of the Sustainability Appraisal and other environmental evidence was necessary
- The site selection methodology required review
- Further consideration of infrastructure requirements was required
- Some of the proposed site allocations would need to be re-assessed.

Draft Submission Plan

Following consideration of representations on the Supplementary Consultation and publication of the Summary of Representations in July 2019, work continued on the Draft Submission Plan. This involved using the standard methodology to assess the local housing need for the Borough, and undertaking further work through the Sustainability Appraisal to assess the recommendations in the Strategic Growth Study.

The site selection methodology has been reviewed and the site assessment updated to ensure that environmental concerns are adequately referenced. A number of the proposed site allocations have undergone further consideration, which has resulted in changes to site boundaries, including Sites 1 and 3 (BC1 and BC3) in Balsall Common and Site 4 (BL1) West of Dickens Heath. Site 18 Sharman's Cross Road, Solihull is omitted, although as it is in the urban area and likely to come forward for housing, it is still included in the housing land supply. The 'amber' sites are not considered to be appropriate for allocation, and have not been included.

Conclusion

The Council has been committed to involving stakeholders and the local community in the development of the draft local plan. This is clearly demonstrated by the range and breadth of consultation and involvement since work commenced in 2015. From early meetings and workshops to draw out issues affecting the Borough and options for growth, through formal consultation on the Draft Local Plan, and the Supplementary Consultation on the Draft Local Plan, to stakeholder meetings and discussions to identify needs and opportunities, stakeholders and local communities have had the chance to influence the development of the Draft Submission Local Plan.

The Council is satisfied that it has complied with the requirements of Regulation 19 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended). It is also satisfied that it can demonstrate that consultation and involvement has been undertaken in accordance with the Council's Statement of Community Involvement first adopted in February 2007.

The Council has used a comprehensive range of consultation techniques to keep stakeholders and the local community informed and involved. These have taken advantage of the opportunities presented by web based consultation and questionnaires, as well as using traditional methods such as direct mailing, press releases and articles, exhibitions and drop in sessions, meetings and

briefings. A Fair Treatment Assessment of the Draft Submission Local Plan has been undertaken to demonstrate that hard to reach groups have been involved.

Finally, the Council believes it has provided clear evidence that the representations made by stakeholders and communities have influenced the Draft Submission Local Plan.

