

# INDEPENDENT EXAMINATION OF THE MERIDEN NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER:  
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To Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council and Meriden Parish Council

By email to Joanne Wort, Senior Development Officer, Policy & Delivery, Solihull  
MBC, and Barbara Bland, Clerk, Meriden PC  
Cc Maurice Barlow SMBC

Dated 18 December 2020

Dear Joanne and Barbara

## **Meriden Neighbourhood Development Plan Independent Examination – Examiner Letter Seeking Clarification of Matters**

Further to my initial letter of 2 December 2020 I am writing to seek clarification of the following matters:

### **Habitats Regulations Assessment**

1. The Basic Condition *“the making of the neighbourhood development plan does not breach the requirements of Chapter 8 of Part 6 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017”* came into force on 28 December 2018. This basic condition replaced a basic condition *“the making of the neighbourhood plan is not likely to have a significant effect on a European site or a European offshore marine site, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects”*. Please advise me where it is confirmed the making of the neighbourhood development plan does not breach the requirements of Chapter 8 of Part 6 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and that Natural England agree with that conclusion.

### **Policy H1**

2. The Borough Council has not provided a formal housing target at neighbourhood area level and the Parish Council have not requested an indicative housing requirement figure.

The Borough Council has advised me that all the policies of the Solihull Local Plan (adopted 3 December 2013), are regarded as strategic policies by the Local Planning Authority.

The Meriden Housing Needs Assessment prepared by AECOM in March 2019 states *“However, a legal challenge to the SLP post-adoption has resulted in the overall housing requirement being deleted, and the Council is currently undertaking a Local Plan Review (LPR).”*

The AECOM study uses the Local Plan annual housing requirement of 500 for the Borough or a total housing requirement of 8,500, between 2011 and 2028 to calculate a proportional share for the NP area concluding 7 homes (1.45% of 500) should be allocated annually as the 'fair share' of the Borough's target (or a total of 123 homes between 2011 and 2028, up to end of the Plan period for the NP).

Please confirm it is the housing requirement that has been deleted by the Courts that is being used in the calculation of housing need for the Neighbourhood Area, and can you provide any information why this is acceptable.

3. The Meriden Housing Needs Assessment prepared by AECOM in March 2019 states *"In arriving at a final total for Meriden, it is important to take into consideration that 160 dwellings were built between 2011 and 2017 in the NA. Considering these completed dwellings, Meriden has met the Local Plan's housing target and does not need to build more homes between 2018 and 2028."* Consequently, Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council (SMBC) does not put forward a specific housing requirement for the Neighbourhood Area (NA)."

It appears the Neighbourhood Plan is based on the following "As housing completions in the Neighbourhood Area exceed the proportional requirement of the Local Plan for the Neighbourhood Area then no further dwellings are required in the period 2011 to 2028". The Neighbourhood Plan however has a start date of 2018. Please direct me to the evidence that demonstrates the Neighbourhood Plan does not promote less development than set out in the strategic policies for the area for the period to 2028.

4. Please direct me to the existing evidence that sets out the assessment of the housing requirement for the Neighbourhood Area for the remainder of the Neighbourhood Plan period, that is 2029 to the Plan end date of 2033.
5. Paragraph 5.6.2 of the Neighbourhood Plan states the Meriden Housing Needs Assessment (AECOM) 2018/19 has shown that 86 affordable housing units should be built from "now" until 2033. What date does "now" refer to? The AECOM assessment appears to relate to a period to 2028. Please explain this discrepancy and advise me if the period 2029-2033 is included in the assessment and any implications of this.
6. Paragraph 5.1 of the Neighbourhood Plan refers to *"planning applications with permission to build already granted"*. What is the number of dwellings completed and the number of dwellings committed but not yet completed in the Plan period since 2018 up to the submission date of the Neighbourhood Plan?
7. Please direct me to evidence supporting the Neighbourhood Plan that explains how the alignment of the Village Boundary has been determined?
8. Areas of land proposed for designation as Local Green Space:
  - 6. Whittle's Copse and Green off Strawberry Fields;

- 12. Mulberry Gardens Public Open Space; and
  - 13. Leys Lane Allotments,
- are all within the Green Belt inset but only the first named is included in the Village Boundary. Please explain this.
9. Please explain Part H1.2 of the policy which states *“All areas outside the Village Boundary are classed as countryside and fall within the Green Belt.”*
10. Please explain why Part H.1.3 of the policy refers to some but not all of the circumstances referred to in paragraph 79 of the NPPF?

### **Policy LC1**

11. Please confirm the term designated is not appropriate and should be removed from the policy, and policy title.
12. Please confirm that at least a part of the Meriden Archery Club and Clubhouse is in the Neighbourhood Area; at least a part of the Stonebridge Golf Centre is in the Neighbourhood Area; and at least a part of the Somers Wood Caravan Park is within the Neighbourhood Area.

I request any response to these requests for clarification is agreed as a joint response of the Parish and Borough Councils wherever possible. This request for clarification and any response should be published on the Borough Council website.

In order to maintain the momentum of the Independent Examination I would be grateful if any reply could be sent to me by 12.00 Noon on Tuesday 5 January 2021.

As the Independent Examination progresses, I may seek clarification with respect to other matters. For the avoidance of doubt recommendations of modification of the Neighbourhood Plan that may be contained in my report of Independent Examination will not be limited to those matters in respect of which I have requested clarification.

I should be grateful if the Borough Council and the Parish Council could acknowledge receipt of this email.

Best regards

Chris Collison  
Independent Examiner  
Planning and Management Ltd