

Sustainability Appraisal (SA) of the Solihull Local Plan

SA Report Non-Technical Summary (NTS) to accompany
the Regulation 19 consultation on the Local Plan

October 2026

Quality information

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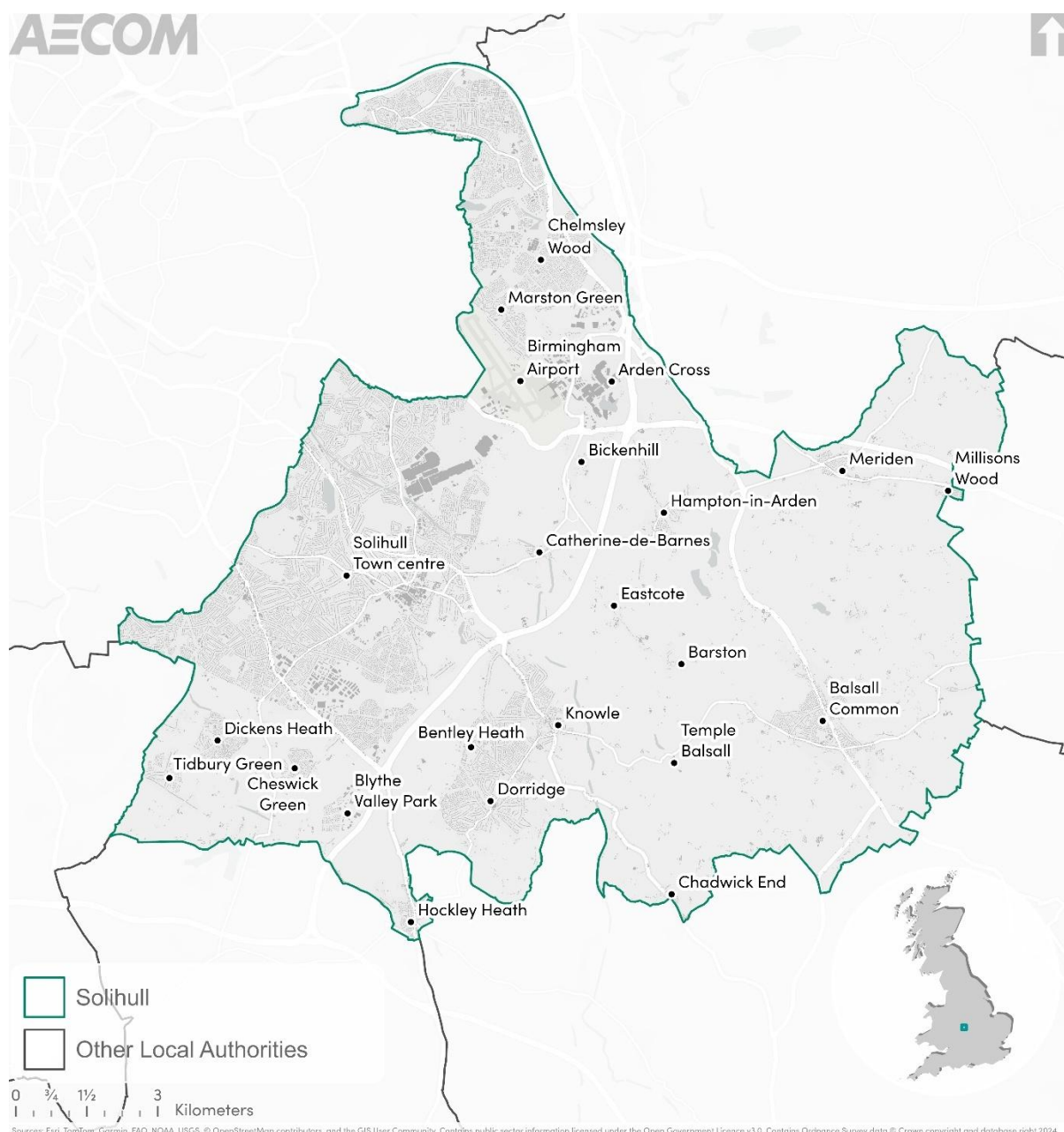
1. Introduction

1.1. Background

- 1.1.1 AECOM has been commissioned by Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council (SMBC) to undertake a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) in support of the preparation of the emerging Solihull Local Plan (hereafter referred to as the Local Plan).
- 1.1.2 The SA Report is the latest document to be produced as part of the SA process and accompanies the Regulation 19 consultation for the Plan, to be undertaken for a period of six weeks between **27th October 2026** and **8th December 2026**. The SA Report answers the following three questions to meet regulatory requirements, structured into three 'Parts':
- **Part 1:** What has plan making / SA involved up to this stage?
 - **Part 2:** What are the appraisal findings at this stage?
 - **Part 3:** What are the next steps?
- 1.1.3 Once adopted, **the Local Plan will provide the statutory framework for managing growth and change across the borough to 2043**. It will allocate sites to deliver the plan strategy and establish planning policies against which planning applications and development proposals will be assessed and determined.
- 1.1.4 The area covered by the Local Plan is shown in **Figure 1-1** and encompasses the whole of the Metropolitan Borough of Solihull.

1.2. SA explained

- 1.2.1 **SA is a mechanism for identifying, describing and evaluating the likely significant effects of an emerging plan and its reasonable alternatives**, with a view to avoiding and minimising adverse effects and enhancing beneficial effects wherever possible.
- 1.2.2 In accordance with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (the 'SEA Regulations'), an SA Report must be published for consultation alongside the draft plan. The SA Report presents an appraisal of the plan and its reasonable alternatives, with a particular focus on identifying, describing and evaluating the likely significant effects of implementation of the plan.

Figure 1-1: The Metropolitan Borough of Solihull

1.3. The SA Report

- 1.3.1 **The Plan is currently published under Regulation 19 of the Local Planning Regulations**, such that representations can be made ahead of the plan being submitted to the Government and subjected to an Examination in Public (EiP) overseen by the Planning Inspectorate.
- 1.3.2 As such, this document (i.e., the Non-Technical Summary) comprises part of the formally required SA Report. It is published alongside the Plan (and the full Regulation 19 SA Report) in order to inform representations and subsequent plan finalisation as part of the EiP.
- 1.3.3 The SA Report must then be taken into account, alongside consultation responses and other relevant evidence, when finalising the plan.

2. The plan scope

2.1. Context to plan preparation

- 2.1.1 Central to national planning policy is an expectation that local planning authorities should adopt a positive approach to sustainable development through the preparation of up-to-date plans that seek to meet identified development needs, including housing and employment needs, as far as reasonably possible. **A Local Plan also provides an opportunity to consider a range of strategic issues in an integrated way**, including the distribution of development, infrastructure provision, climate change mitigation and adaptation, biodiversity enhancement, town centre regeneration, design quality, and meeting needs of different communities.
- 2.1.2 **The Local Plan covers the 17-year period from 2026 to 2043. This timeframe has been selected to ensure consistency with national policy**, with paragraph 22 of the NPPF stating that local plans should look ahead over a minimum 15-year period from adoption. A plan period extending to 2043 ensures consistency with this requirement and provides an appropriate framework for addressing the borough's longer-term development needs.
- 2.1.3 **An up-to-date Local Plan will also strengthen the Council's ability to make planning decisions on a plan-led basis** and provide greater certainty for communities, developers and infrastructure providers.

2.2. The plan area

- 2.2.1 The Metropolitan Borough of Solihull (**Figure 1-1**) is located in the West Midlands and forms part of the West Midlands Combined Authority area. The borough occupies a strategically important location at the heart of the national transport network, benefiting from direct access to the M42, M6 and M40 motorways, Birmingham Airport, the National Exhibition Centre (NEC), and the West Coast Main Line. The borough is also home to nationally significant economic assets, including the UK Central Hub area and the emerging HS2 Interchange station.
- 2.2.2 With respect to the key settlements across the borough, at the highest level of the hierarchy is **the urban area**, comprising the contiguous built-up area associated with Solihull, Shirley, Monkspath, Olton, Lyndon, Elmdon, Marston Green, Chelmsley Wood, Kingshurst, Fordbridge, Smith's Wood and Castle Bromwich, together with the NEC and associated development. This area contains the borough's greatest concentration of population, services, employment opportunities and transport infrastructure, and therefore represents a logical focus for accommodating development.

- 2.2.3 The settlement hierarchy also identifies **two rural towns**: Knowle, Dorridge and Bentley Heath; and Balsall Common. These settlements contain a relatively broad range of services and facilities and are generally regarded as the most sustainable locations outside the urban area. Consequently, there is a clear rationale for considering the role that the rural towns might play in accommodating future growth. The Council's consultation material has also highlighted the potential role of the rural towns in accommodating larger infrastructure-led developments, recognising their relative accessibility and service provision.
- 2.2.4 Beyond the urban area and rural towns is a **network of villages and smaller rural settlements**, including Barston, Berkswell, Bickenhill, Blythe Valley Park, Catherine-de-Barnes, Chadwick End, Cheswick Green, Dickens Heath, Eastcote, Hampton in Arden, Hockley Heath, Meriden, Millisons Wood, Temple Balsall, and Tidbury Green. Whilst these settlements vary considerably in terms of scale, accessibility and service provision, some provide a greater range of facilities than others and may present opportunities for accommodating proportionate levels of growth. In particular, some settlements contain a primary school, convenience store and other local facilities, whilst Dickens Heath is notable for its scale and service provision relative to other rural settlements. It is recognised that several of these rural settlements are 'washed over' by the Green Belt.
- 2.2.5 **A significant proportion of the borough lies within the West Midlands Green Belt**, which plays an important role in managing development patterns and maintaining the separation of settlements. Alongside Green Belt constraints, the borough contains a range of environmental, heritage and landscape assets that contribute to local character.
- 2.2.6 The borough has experienced significant investment and growth in recent years, including major development associated with UK Central, Birmingham Airport, the NEC and the HS2 Interchange area. These initiatives are expected to continue to influence patterns of development over the plan period and provide important opportunities for housing, employment and infrastructure delivery. They are also likely to represent key components of Solihull's longer-term growth strategy beyond the current plan period, reflecting their strategic economic and transport functions. Furthermore, given their significance within the West Midlands economy, these opportunities are expected to be important considerations in the preparation of the emerging West Midlands Spatial Development Strategy (SDS) and wider discussions regarding the future distribution of growth across the region.

2.3. Plan vision

- 2.3.1 It is important to establish a clear strategic direction for the Local Plan at an early stage in the plan-making process. Therefore, the Local Plan is informed by an overarching vision that describes the Council's aspirations for the borough over the plan period.
- 2.3.2 The vision is also relevant to the SA process, helping to guide consideration of alternative approaches and providing a context for the appraisal of the plan.
- 2.3.3 The Local Plan vision is as follows:

'By 2043, Solihull will have built on its distinct reputation as an attractive and aspirational place to live, learn, invest, work and play.

It will have taken advantage of the unique opportunity to maximise the economic and social benefits of HS2 Interchange; reflecting the Borough's location at the heart of the national rail and motorway network, and the role of UK Central as the international gateway to the West Midlands. In particular the opportunity will have been taken to ensure that HS2 Interchange is well integrated and key economic assets, including Birmingham Airport, the NEC and JLR, are supported by privately and publicly funded transport infrastructure to unlock the full potential for economic growth.

The Borough will play a part in meeting, in a sustainable manner, the needs of its housing market area so that its residents have access to a range and choice of quality accommodation.

The Borough will retain its sense of identity, both in its urban and rural area (including protection of the Green Belt which contains the strategically important Meriden Gap); and the quality of the environment that make it a special place.

This vision will be underpinned by ensuring all relevant activities are underpinned and fully integrated with measures to tackle the Climate Change emergency; recognising that this has a cross-cutting dimension that extends across economic, social and environmental objectives.

Achieving this vision will contribute towards the ability for everyone to have an equal chance to be healthier, happier, safer and prosperous, through growth that creates opportunities for all'

3. The SA scope

- 3.1.1 The scope of the SA defines the sustainability issues, objectives and assessment criteria that form the basis for the appraisal of reasonable alternatives and the Local Plan. **The SA scope provides the framework for identifying, describing and evaluating likely significant effects.**
- 3.1.2 SMBC consulted on the scope of the SA in January 2026, with the identified key issues and SA framework of assessment questions subsequently refined and updated to reflect the responses received. A post-consultation version of the SA Scoping Report was finalised in July 2026 on this basis and forms part of the evidence base for the Regulation 19 version of the Local Plan.
- 3.1.3 The regulatory requirement is that ‘when deciding on the scope and level of detail of the information that must be included in the Environmental Report, the responsible authority shall consult the consultation bodies’. As such, the consultation bodies (the Environment Agency, Historic England and Natural England) were consulted on the SA scope in January 2026.
- 3.1.4 Responses were received from all three consultation bodies and have informed the ongoing development of the SA Framework and evidence base. A summary of the responses, and how they have informed the SA, are provided in **Appendix B** in the main body of the SA Report.
- 3.1.5 Drawing on the review of the sustainability context and baseline, the SA Scoping stage identified a range of key sustainability issues that should be a particular focus of SA, ensuring it remains targeted on the most important issues. These issues were then translated into an SA ‘Framework’ (summarised in **Table 3-1** below).
- 3.1.6 **The SA Framework provides a way in which the likely significant effects and sustainability implications of the Plan and alternatives can be identified and subsequently analysed based on a structured and consistent approach.** The SA Framework and the appraisal findings in the SA Report have been presented under thirteen SA themes, reflecting the range of information being considered through the SA process.
- 3.1.7 The selected SA themes incorporate the ‘topics’ suggested by Schedule 2(6) of the SEA Regulations. These were refined to reflect a broad understanding of the anticipated scope of plan effects.

Table 3-1: The SA Framework

Topic	Objectives
 Accessibility	• To fully integrate the planning, transport, housing, cultural, recreational, environmental and health systems to create sustainable neighbourhoods and promote healthy lifestyles. • To ensure that development is served by or can be served by frequent sustainable transport modes that connects to key centres, includes safe and accessible walking and cycling routes and reduces reliance on private vehicles.
 Air quality and noise	• Limit air and noise pollution across the borough and support opportunities to enhance air quality and attenuate noise pollution where possible.
 Biodiversity and geodiversity	• Protect and improve the integrity, function and connectivity of ecological sites. Achieve net gains through the creation and enhancement of species-rich habitats that meet the Lawton principles and are resilient to climate change. • To facilitate the delivery and enhance the quality of areas providing multi-functional green and blue infrastructure, including open spaces for recreation, sport and interaction with nature.
 Climate change adaptation	• To ensure that development is resilient to the effects of climate change including extreme weather events, urban heat island effect, adaptable species, with a focus on nature-based solutions. • Reduce the risk of flooding from all sources to protect communities and businesses including vulnerability to climate change.
 Climate change mitigation	• Limit greenhouse gas emissions, reduce energy use, maximise energy efficiency and deliver renewable energy generation in aiding Solihull's net zero objectives.
 Communities and health	• To contribute to regeneration and economic development initiatives that benefit the Borough's communities; especially those in fifth quintile of Indices of Deprivation 2025. • To contribute to inclusive growth, address social determinants of health and reduce inequalities within the Borough.

Topic	Objectives
	- To fully integrate the planning, transport, housing, cultural, recreational, environmental and health systems to create sustainable neighbourhoods and promote healthy lifestyles. - Reduce crime, fear of crime and anti-social behaviour.
 Economy and employment	- Deliver development that supports inclusive economic growth and the investment in infrastructure required to support the vitality and prosperity of the local economy. - To improve equitable access to employment, education and training opportunities, regardless of background.
 Historic environment	- To sustain and enhance the significance of heritage assets in Solihull. - To deliver improvements in townscape and enhance local distinctiveness.
 Housing	Improve the supply and affordability of housing, with an appropriate mix of types that is of good quality, energy efficient design and resilient to climate change.
 Landscape	To value and protect the Borough's landscape character and manage the landscape effects of development in recognition of the European Landscape Convention. As well as addressing the risks and opportunities associated with measures to address climate change.
 Soils and natural resources	Limit the use of natural resources such as land, water and minerals, and limit waste, whilst increasing reuse and recycling and contributing to a circular economy.
 Transport	To promote sustainable patterns of movement and increase use of public transport, walking and cycling whilst reducing reliance on private vehicles.
 Water	Protect and enhance water quality and resources, ensuring sustainable water management to support current and future needs while reducing pollution risks.

4. Part 1: What has plan making / SA involved up to this stage?

4.1. SA work to date

4.1.1 In line with regulatory requirements, there is a need to explain how work was undertaken to develop and then appraise reasonable alternatives, and how the Council then considered the appraisal findings when finalising the Local Plan. **Part 1** of the SA Report is given over to:

- Presenting the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with (summarised under the heading ‘defining growth scenarios’ below, with full details provided in **Section 5** of the SA Report).
- Presenting a summary of the appraisal of the alternatives (summarised under the ‘appraising growth scenarios’ heading below, with detailed appraisal findings provided in **Section 6** of the SA Report); and
- Explaining the Council’s reasons for selecting the preferred approach (summarised under the ‘developing the preferred approach’ heading below, with further detail provided in **Section 7** in the SA Report).

4.1.2 Importantly, this work builds upon existing SA work undertaken for the now withdrawn Local Plan, along with the SA work undertaken at the ‘Issues and Options’ stage of plan making for this emerging Local Plan (January 2026). See **Section 4** in the main body of the SA Report for further details.

4.1.3 A key consideration for plan making that has emerged since the withdrawn Local Plan is the increase in housing need arising from the Government’s standard method calculation. **This establishes an LHN figure of 1,289 dwellings per annum for the borough, equivalent to 21,913 dwellings over the proposed 17-year plan period (2026 - 2043).**

4.1.4 The strategic planning context for Solihull has also evolved through the reintroduction of strategic planning at the regional scale. **The West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) has begun work on their SDS, which will provide a long-term framework for housing, employment, infrastructure and environmental planning across the region.**

4.1.5 Whilst local plans will continue to allocate sites and establish detailed planning policies, the SDS will consider growth and investment priorities that extend beyond individual local authority areas. In particular, this reflects the expectation that any future redistribution of growth across the West Midlands combined area, including the identification of strategic growth opportunities within Solihull, should be considered through the SDS as part of a coordinated regional process.

5. Defining growth scenarios

- 5.1.1 The growth scenarios tested as ‘reasonable alternatives’ through the SA have been defined by considering a range of strategic (top-down) factors and locally specific (bottom-up) factors.

5.2. Top-down (strategic) factors

Housing context

- 5.2.1 For the Metropolitan Borough of Solihull, the revised standard method identifies a housing need of 1,289 dwellings per annum (dpa). As a result, LHN across a 17-year plan period (2026-2043) equates to 21,913 homes.
- 5.2.2 At the ‘Issues and Options’ (Regulation 18) stage of plan making in January 2026, one of the scenarios tested through the SA was framed in the context of planning for unmet need in light of the significant constraint to development across the borough. Primarily, the extent of Green Belt land. Whilst there is a strategic case for remaining open to unmet need, the findings of the SA and the availability of land identified through a ‘call for sites’ exercise demonstrates that there are a number of potential pathways to meeting LHN. For this reason, the basis for the growth scenarios considered within the Regulation 19 SA Report is the delivery of LHN in the borough, with lower growth scenarios ruled out at this stage.

Employment context

- 5.2.3 The economic strategy in the Local Plan is driven by the unique opportunities presented by the UK Central proposals. As a nationally significant infrastructure led project driven by the delivery of HS2 and the HS2 interchange station it will contribute towards the delivery of local, regional and national objectives for economic growth. The UK Central area and its components are identified by the WMCA as a key driver in the delivery of regional economic growth objectives.
- 5.2.4 Due to the importance of these proposals the Council does not consider there to be any alternative options to deliver economic growth at this scale in the Borough. It is anticipated that longer-term employment needs for the borough (and wider area) will be addressed through an early review of the Solihull Local Plan and the emerging West Midlands SDS.

Broad Spatial Strategy

- 5.2.5 The discussion is **Section 5** within the main body of the SA Report is structured under a series of thematic headings reflecting the principal spatial considerations relevant to the preparation of the Local Plan and the development of reasonable growth scenarios.

5.2.6 Specifically, the discussion considers:

- The legacy of the previous spatial strategy established through the withdrawn Local Plan;
- The borough's settlement hierarchy and pattern of development;
- Potential 'new settlement' opportunities;
- Major economic growth and investment opportunities; and
- Green Belt and potential 'grey belt' considerations.

5.3. Bottom-up Factors

Land availability (i.e., potential site options)

- 5.3.1 As part of the preparation of the emerging Local Plan, SMBC undertook a Call for Sites exercise between November 2024 and January 2025. Landowners, developers, residents and other interested parties were invited to submit land that may have development potential.
- 5.3.2 The exercise generated over 330 site submissions distributed across the borough (available to view on this Interactive Map). Whilst site promotion does not in itself indicate that a site is suitable or available for development, the Call for Sites exercise established a comprehensive pool of potential development opportunities for further consideration through subsequent evidence-gathering workstreams.
- 5.3.3 Individual site options are an important component of the plan-making process; however, they do not generally constitute reasonable alternatives in their own right within the context of a Local Plan (especially where there is a need to allocate multiple sites across a range of settlements). Nevertheless, each site has been appraised against a range of sustainability criteria within the Council's site assessment methodology.
- 5.3.4 Through their site assessment work, SMBC highlight that many sites across the borough are expected to perform similarly in sustainability terms, meaning the most meaningful distinction between alternatives may be the broad spatial distribution of growth rather than differences between individual sites. This is considered below.

Constraints and opportunities at key settlements and locations

- 5.3.5 The SA has evaluated the relative sustainability merits of promoting development at various broad locations in the vicinity of key settlements and locations across the borough (following the points of the compass). The purpose of the appraisal is to inform the growth scenarios tested as reasonable alternatives through the SA at this stage of plan making.

- 5.3.6 The key settlements and locations considered through the points of the compass appraisal reflect the broad spatial strategy considerations introduced above, and fall within one of the following categories:
- Adjacent to the urban area or a highly accessible settlement; or
 - Adjacent to a settlement that, whilst potentially less accessible, provides a wide range of local services (e.g. towns); or
 - A proportionate extension to an existing settlement that has a more limited range of services (e.g. villages); or
 - Unless captured by the categories above, located in close proximity to a suitable railway station that is, or can be made, accessible to necessary services.
- 5.3.7 For each key settlement and location, the following information is presented within the appraisal (see **Section 5** in the main body of the SA Report):
- Overview of the key environmental constraints including in relation to biodiversity, flood risks, the historic environment, landscape quality (including its role and function within the Green Belt), water resources, and agricultural land quality.
 - Consideration of potential growth opportunities including in relation to potential site options which have come forward through the Council's 'call for sites' process, and wider factors relating to the 'broad spatial strategy' components of plan making.
 - Constraints and opportunities mapping (see **Appendix C** within the main body of the SA Report).

5.4. Arriving at the growth scenarios

- 5.4.1 Now that the 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' factors have been introduced, the next stage is to consider how different sources of supply might be combined in order to arrive at the growth scenarios tested as reasonable alternatives through the SA at this stage of plan making.
- 5.4.2 All growth scenarios incorporate a consistent set of 'constants' in relation to the distribution of growth across the borough. The 'variable' components of the growth scenarios are derived from a review of the potential opportunities at key settlements and locations around the borough as explored through the 'points of the compass' appraisal.
- 5.4.3 The purpose of this exercise is not to identify a preferred development strategy. Rather, it is to establish a range of credible and distinct alternatives that reflect the principal choices available to the Council for meeting housing and employment needs across the borough during the plan period (2026-2043).

Constants

- 5.4.4 A number of supply components were treated as constants across all scenarios. These comprise sources of housing supply that are either already committed, have a high degree of certainty, or are consistently available regardless of the spatial strategy ultimately pursued. Just over 65% of supply is delivered via 'constants', which are presented via twelve 'rows' within the growth scenarios table (see **Table 5-2**) as follows:
- **Row 1:** sites with planning permission up 31st March 2026 which are currently under construction.
 - **Row 2:** sites with planning permission up 31st March 2026 which are not currently under construction.
 - **Row 3:** sites identified in land availability assessments.
 - **Row 4:** sites identified in the Council's latest Brownfield Land Register supporting the regeneration of previously developed land (PDL).
 - **Row 5:** opportunity sites within town centre environments, comprising sites within Solihull Town Centre and Chelmsley Wood Town Centre as discussed within the Points of the Compass Appraisal.
 - **Row 6:** sites which have rolled forward from the previous Local Plan.
 - **Row 7:** application of a 10% discount in the totals across Rows 2-6 in recognition of uncertainties around delivery rates and site capacity.
 - **Row 8:** anticipated windfall to 2043, comprising no windfall allowance in the first two years of the plan period, followed by 150 per year for the remaining years of the plan period reflecting historical rates of windfall delivery across the borough.
 - **Row 9:** the withdrawn Local Plan identified 1,600 homes for UK Central (Arden Cross) which was supported at examination. The variable components tested through the SA have considered additional growth at this location.
 - **Row 10:** comprises site allocations which provide a total supply of 4,877 homes during the plan period.
 - **Row 11:** anticipated windfall across 'grey belt' sites; and
 - **Row 12:** presumption of approvals around railway stations (i.e., within an 800m distance) based on known site options from the 'call for sites'.

Variables

- 5.4.5 Following a review of the potential opportunities at key settlements and locations around the borough as identified through the 'points of the compass' appraisal, 'variable' components comprise:

- Opportunities within seven broad locations of growth (BLG) which encompass a 1,000m radius around rail stations across the borough.
- Growth at Meriden which has a high frequency bus network (i.e., up to four services per hour).
- Growth through sustainable urban extensions (SUE) via the release of Green Belt land, at Catherine-de-Barnes, Knowle, and west of Coventry; and
- Additional growth at Arden Cross given its strategic role within UK Central, future HS2 connectivity and wider economic significance.

5.4.6 It is acknowledged that theoretically there are several potential combinations which could be applied to the scenarios. The combinations which have been tested seek to avoid an under-delivery or over-delivery of homes, i.e., from applying lower growth or higher growth across all of the variable components, whilst also reflecting the key choices for plan makers tasked with selecting the preferred approach for the Local Plan at this Regulation 19 stage of plan making.

5.4.7 The growth scenarios are as follows, and summarised in **Table 5-1**:

Scenario 1: Constants plus maximum growth across BLG at 40 dph

5.4.8 Scenario 1 assumes full delivery of 7,382 homes across the identified BLG through applying the higher growth figure at 40 dph and would deliver approximately 105% of LHN. Applying the medium growth figure at 35 dph would fall short of LHN and contribute less towards maximising opportunities around sustainable transport networks (i.e., rail stations).

Scenario 2: Constants plus growth across BLG at 35 dph, and additional growth around Meriden at 35 dph (medium density)

5.4.9 Scenario 2 incorporates 1,219 homes across land to the north, east, and south of Meriden at 35 dph, delivering growth at a location which benefits from a high frequency bus network. This scenario would deliver approximately 107% of LHN.

Scenario 3: Constants plus growth across BLG at 35 dph, and SUE via Green Belt release at 35 dph (medium density)

5.4.10 Scenario 3 incorporates 2,033 homes via SUE on land to the west of Catherine-de-Barnes, north of Knowle, and west of Coventry, at 35 dph. A higher percentage of Green Belt land would be facilitated through this scenario, but in locations where public transport networks are not as well established in comparison to Meriden. The Local Plan would meet and slightly exceed LHN through this scenario. This scenario would deliver approximately 110% of LHN, providing a higher supply 'buffer'.

Scenario 4: Constants plus growth across BLG at 35 dph, and additional growth at Arden Cross (higher figure)

- 5.4.11 As discussed, the withdrawn Local Plan identified 1,600 homes for Arden Cross which is applied as a 'constant' across all growth scenarios, with the variable components being an additional 400 (lower figure) or 1,400 (higher figure) to take the totals to 2,000 or 3,000, respectively. The higher figure would be required in this scenario to deliver approximately 107% of LHN.

Scenario 5: Constants plus 75% growth across BLG at 40 dph, plus Meriden and SUE via Green Belt release at 35 dph (medium density), and additional growth at Arden Cross (lower figure)

- 5.4.12 Scenario 5 considers the implications of reducing the reliance on BLG, recognising their intended role in accommodating growth in the medium to longer term (i.e., between years 6-17 of the plan period). A total of 5,537 homes is calculated via applying a 40 dph density multiplier across 75% of the total areas covered by the BLG.
- 5.4.13 In order to meet (and slightly exceed) LHN through a scenario with a 75% reliance on BLG, land to the north, south, and east of Meriden would be required at medium densities, along with the SUE at Catherine-de-Barnes, Knowle, and west of Coventry at medium densities, and the lower figure of 400 additional homes at Arden Cross. This scenario would provide an approximate 14% supply 'buffer' or headroom above LHN.

Scenario 6: Constants plus 50% growth across BLG at 40 dph, plus Meriden and SUE via Green Belt release at 40 dph (higher density), and additional growth at Arden Cross (higher figure)

- 5.4.14 Scenario 6 also considers the implications of further reducing the reliance on BLG. A total of 3,691 homes is calculated via applying a 40 dph density multiplier across 50% of the total areas covered by the BLG.
- 5.4.15 In order to meet (and slightly exceed) LHN through a scenario with a 50% reliance on BLG, land to the north, south, and east of Meriden would be required at higher densities, along with the SUE at Catherine-de-Barnes, Knowle, and west of Coventry at higher densities, and the higher figure of 1,400 additional homes at Arden Cross. This scenario would also provide an approximate 14% supply 'buffer' or headroom above LHN.

Scenario 7: Maximise growth across the borough

- 5.4.16 Scenario 7 is a maximum growth scenario for the borough, combining all of the 'constant' and 'variable' components to deliver an approximate 22% 'buffer' or headroom above LHN. The scenario comprises the total growth of 7,382 homes across the identified BLG at 40 dph, Meriden and the three SUE via 'Green Belt' release at 35dph, and the lower figure of 400 additional homes at Arden Cross.

Table 5-1: Growth scenarios tested through the SA

Supply component	1: Broad location focus	2: Broad locations + Meriden	3: Broad locations + SUEs	4: Broad locations + Arden Cross	5: Less focus at broad locations (75%)	6: Less focus at broad locations (50%)	7: Maximum growth scenario
Constants							
1. Sites with planning permission (started)	493	493	493	493	493	493	493
2. Sites with planning permission (not started)	2,249	2,249	2,249	2,249	2,249	2,249	2,249
3. Sites identified in land availability assessments	665	665	665	665	665	665	665
4. Sites identified in Brownfield Land Register	21	21	21	21	21	21	21
5. Town Centre Sites	2,169	2,169	2,169	2,169	2,169	2,169	2,169
6. Solihull Local Plan Allocations	65	65	65	65	65	65	65
7. Less a 10% discount (Rows 2-6)	-517	-517	-517	-517	-517	-517	-517
8. Windfall to 2043	2,250	2,250	2,250	2,250	2,250	2,250	2,250
9. UKC HUB TO 2043	1,600	1,600	1,600	1,600	1,600	1,600	1,600
10. Allocated Sites To 2043	4,877	4,877	4,877	4,877	4,877	4,877	4,877
11. Windfall Grey Belt Sites	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
12. Railway Station CFS (within 800m)	837	837	837	837	837	837	837
Variables							
Broad Locations (Total)	7,382	6,435	6,435	6,435	5,537	3,691	7,382
Meriden (N, E, S)		1,219			1,219	1,393	1,219
SUE/Grey Belt			2,033		2,033	2,838	2,033
Arden Cross				1,400	400	1,400	400
Totals							
TOTALS (to 2043)	23,091	23,363	24,177	23,544	24,898	25,031	26,743
LHN	21,913	21,913	21,913	21,913	21,913	21,913	21,913
% of LHN	105.38%	106.62%	110.33%	107.44%	113.62%	114.23%	122.04%

6. Growth scenarios appraisal

6.1. Introduction

- 6.1.1 The aim of this section is to appraise the reasonable alternative growth scenarios identified in **Section 5** against the SA framework presented in **Section 3**. The appraisal considers the likely significant effects of each scenario across the sustainability topics and objectives, enabling the relative sustainability performance of the scenarios to be compared.

6.2. Appraisal methodology

- 6.2.1 Under each SA topic the aim is to: **1)** rank the scenarios in order of performance; and then **2)** categorise the performance in terms of 'significant effects' using the following characters and colours:

- **Red (--)**: major negative – significant adverse effect
- **Amber (-)**: minor negative – adverse effect of limited or uncertain significance
- **Light green (+)**: minor positive – beneficial effect of limited or uncertain significance
- **Dark green (++)**: major positive – significant beneficial effect
- **Yellow (+/-, ++/--)**: mixed effects – a combination of beneficial and adverse effects
- **Blue (0)**: neutral effect

6.3. Summary of appraisal findings

- 6.3.1 The full appraisal findings are discussed in detail within **Section 6** of the SA Report, including a detailed overview of the relative sustainability merits of each scenario presented as a commentary of effects for each SA theme. A summary of the overall rankings for each scenario and likely effects (including significant effects) is provided in **Table 6-1** below.
- 6.3.2 **The appraisal identifies that all scenarios are likely to result in a combination of positive, mixed and negative effects across the SA topics.** This reflects the inherent trade-offs associated with accommodating growth, particularly in a borough characterised by a high-quality environmental baseline. While all scenarios meet LHN and employment land requirements and provide opportunities for economic growth, they differ in how effectively they balance environmental, social and economic objectives.

Table 6-1: Reasonable growth scenarios appraisal summary (rank and significance scoring)

Topic	1: Broad location focus	2: Broad locations + Meriden	3: Broad locations + SUEs	4: Broad locations + Arden Cross	5: Less focus at broad locations (75%)	6: Less focus at broad locations (50%)	7: Maximum growth
 Accessibility	=1 ++	3 +	4 +	=1 ++	=5 +	=5 +	=5 +
 Air quality and noise	1 -	3 -	4 -	2 -	=5 -	=5 -	7 -
 Biodiversity and geodiversity	1 -	2 -	=3 -	=3 -	=5 -	=5 -	=5 -
 Climate change adaptation	1 -	2 -	=3 -	=3 -	=5 -	=5 -	7 -
 Climate change mitigation	1 -	3 -	4 -	2 -	=5 -	=5 -	7 -
 Communities and health	6 +/-	=2 +/-	=2 +/-	1 +/-	5 +/-	4 +/-	7 +/-
 Economy and employment	7 +	6 +	5 +	=2 ++	4 ++	1 ++	=2 ++
 Historic environment	1 -	=3 -	2 -	=3 -	=5 -	=5 -	=5 -
 Housing	7 ++	6 ++	=2 ++	5 ++	=2 ++	=2 ++	1 ++
 Landscape	1 -	3 -	4 --	2 -	6 --	5 --	7 --
 Soils and natural resources	1 --	2 --	4 --	3 --	5 --	6 --	7 --
 Transport	=1 ++	3 +	4 +	=1 ++	=5 +	=5 +	=5 +
 Water	1 -	2 -	=3 -	=3 -	=5 -	=5 -	7 -

7. The preferred approach

- 7.1.1 In the context of the above, and informed by the findings of the reasonable alternatives appraisal and wider evidence base accompanying the Regulation 19 version of the Local Plan, the Council's preferred spatial strategy is based principally on **Scenario 1** and is set out as follows:

“The 2020 Plan was based on a spatial strategy that sought to accommodate development needs close to where they arise. As around 75% of the Borough’s population live within the urban area, it was appropriate to (at least initially) follow options that made more efficient use of land in this area.

“However, it was acknowledged that there was extremely limited land available that could fulfil this approach, and therefore it was necessary to look elsewhere, including Green Belt options as follows:

- *The UK Central Hub Area and HS2;*
- *Limited expansion of rural villages/settlements; and*
- *New settlements, large-scale urban extensions or significant expansion of rural villages/settlements.*

“With the exception of a new settlement, a combination of the above options was included as the basis for the spatial strategy. It was noted that this approach would strike a balance between concentrating development in a relatively small number of locations and dispersing development across a greater number of locations: a “balanced dispersal” approach.

“The publication of the new NPPF and National Development Management Policies (NDMPs) in August 2026, following consultation commencing in December 2025, has some effect on this overall approach, most notably through the introduction of national policy promoting growth around railway stations. The location of the majority of stations within the Borough (and in close proximity to neighbouring authorities) means that directing growth towards these areas remains broadly aligned with the spatial strategy. Accordingly, the approach continues to provide an appropriate basis for accommodating development needs through the Plan period.

“The strategy also seeks to focus significant development in locations that are, or can be made, accessible and sustainable. These locations will typically be situated on the edge of the urban area or within rural settlements that provide a greater range of services. This is achieved by focusing development on locations that are:

- *Adjacent to the urban area or a highly accessible settlement; or*

- *Adjacent to a settlement that, whilst potentially less accessible, provides a wide range of local services (e.g. towns); or*
- *A proportionate extension to an existing settlement that has a more limited range of services (e.g. larger villages); or*
- *Unless captured by the categories above, located in close proximity to a suitable railway station that is, or can be made, accessible to necessary services.*

7.1.2 *“This approach offers a number of advantages:*

- *It supports the UK Central masterplan and HS2 growth strategy, together with the investment priorities contained within Solihull Connected;*
- *Focusing growth on urban areas and sustainable urban extensions provides the greatest opportunity to improve accessibility and deliver public transport enhancements;*
- *Larger-scale developments can support the delivery of significant infrastructure improvements;*
- *Smaller sites can assist with early housing delivery and support existing services and facilities; and*
- *A wholly dispersed pattern of growth would be less likely to deliver the scale of growth required and more likely to result in piecemeal development affecting a wider area.*

“Accordingly, the strategy discourages development that:

- *Is isolated from existing settlements;*
- *Represents a disproportionate addition to a settlement with only a limited range of services and facilities; or*
- *Occurs in relatively inaccessible locations.*

“Focusing development in existing sustainable locations, and/or locations that can be made sustainable through the delivery of supporting infrastructure, enables an “infrastructure first” approach to be pursued...”

8. Part 2: What are the appraisal findings at this stage?

8.1. Introduction to the appraisal

- 8.1.1 **Part 2** of the SA Report presents an appraisal of the Regulation 19 version of the Local Plan against the SA Framework, with the findings presented under each of the SA topics.
- 8.1.2 The appraisal in **Part 2** has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations, assessing the likely significant effects of the Plan.
- 8.1.3 Within the main body of the SA Report (see **Section 9**), a series of narratives are presented under each SA topic, providing a commentary on the spatial strategy, borough-wide policy provisions, cumulative and in-combination effects, and overall conclusions (relevant to each SA topic – i.e., there is no systematic consideration of each individual policy, instead policies are drawn upon as relevant to the SA objective in question).
- 8.1.4 A summary of the appraisal findings is presented below (for each SA topic), followed by any recommendations for plan-makers at this stage.

8.2. Summary of appraisal findings

Accessibility

	Reasonable alternatives significance score	Plan appraisal significance score
	Major positive (++)	Major positive (++)

- 8.2.1 Overall, the Regulation 19 version of the Local Plan is expected to result in **major positive effects (++)** in relation to accessibility.
- 8.2.2 The preferred spatial strategy performs strongly due to its focus on growth around higher-order settlements, public transport corridors and railway stations. This will facilitate growth in accessible locations in proximity to locations with the greatest variety of local services, facilities, and amenities.
- 8.2.3 These benefits are reinforced by policies supporting rapid transit, strategic growth at UK Central and Arden Cross, the concentration of employment development within accessible strategic employment locations, infrastructure delivery and improved walking, cycling and public transport connectivity.

Air quality and noise

	Reasonable alternatives significance score	Plan appraisal significance score
	Minor negative (-)	Neutral (0)

8.2.4 Overall, the Regulation 19 version of the Local Plan is expected to result in a **neutral effect (0)** in relation to air quality and noise.

8.2.5 Whilst growth will inevitably increase population levels and has the potential to generate additional traffic movements and increase exposure to existing sources of transport-related noise, these effects are moderated by the spatial strategy's focus on accessible locations and the package of mitigation measures contained within the draft Local Plan. These include policies supporting rapid transit, infrastructure delivery, and support for healthy communities.

Biodiversity and geodiversity

	Reasonable alternatives significance score	Plan appraisal significance score
	Minor negative (-)	Mixed (+/-)

8.2.6 Overall, the Regulation 19 version of the Local Plan is expected to result in **mixed effects (+/-)** in relation to biodiversity and geodiversity.

8.2.7 The scale of growth proposed means that development will inevitably result in some loss of greenfield land and has the potential to affect habitats, ecological networks and designated biodiversity assets. Several allocations are located within SSSI Impact Risk Zones and in close proximity to LWS and LNRs, as well as containing priority habitat.

8.2.8 However, the draft Local Plan also contains measures designed to protect biodiversity, through green and blue infrastructure requirements, comprehensive masterplanning and environmental mitigation requirements. Furthermore, all major developments will be required to deliver BNG as per national policy.

Climate change adaptation

	Reasonable alternatives significance score	Plan appraisal significance score
	Minor negative (-)	Neutral (0)

8.2.9 Overall, the Regulation 19 version of the Local Plan is expected to result in **neutral effects (0)** in relation to climate change adaptation.

- 8.2.10 Although several allocations are affected by fluvial and/or surface water flood risk, these issues are addressed through site-specific mitigation measures, strategic green and blue infrastructure requirements, sustainable drainage systems and comprehensive masterplanning. Together with BNG, these measures are expected to improve resilience to flooding and other climate-related hazards in the borough.

Climate change mitigation

	Reasonable alternatives significance score	Plan appraisal significance score
	Minor negative (-)	Minor positive (+)

- 8.2.11 Overall, the Regulation 19 version of the Local Plan is expected to result in a **minor positive effect (+)** in relation to climate change mitigation.
- 8.2.12 Whilst the scale of growth proposed has the potential to increase greenhouse gas emissions through construction activity, energy consumption and transport movements, the draft Local Plan incorporates a series of policies aimed at reducing emissions and promoting lower-carbon forms of development. These include directing growth towards highly accessible locations, supporting rapid transit infrastructure, promoting active travel, maximising opportunities for sustainable transport, encouraging resource efficiency and supporting low and zero carbon energy principles.

Communities and health

	Reasonable alternatives significance score	Plan appraisal significance score
	Mixed (+/-)	Major positive (++)

- 8.2.13 Overall, the Regulation 19 version of the Local Plan is expected to result in **major positive effects (++)** in relation to communities and health.
- 8.2.14 The Plan will deliver substantial housing growth which meets LHN, support access to employment opportunities and provide a range of affordable, specialist and adaptable housing.
- 8.2.15 These benefits are reinforced by allocation-specific requirements for healthcare, education, open space and recreational infrastructure, together with a strong policy framework promoting health, wellbeing, community cohesion and inclusive growth.

Economy and employment

	Reasonable alternatives significance score	Plan appraisal significance score
	Minor positive (+)	Major positive (++)

8.2.16 Overall, the Regulation 19 version of the Local Plan is expected to result in **major positive effects (++)** in relation to economy and employment.

8.2.17 In addition to supporting workforce growth through substantial housing delivery, the draft Local Plan provides significant opportunities for employment growth through investment within the UK Central Hub Area, Arden Cross and the borough's existing strategic employment locations.

8.2.18 These benefits are reinforced through the provision of additional employment land, support for small and medium-sized enterprises, investment in infrastructure and improvements to connectivity.

Historic Environment

	Reasonable alternatives significance score	Plan appraisal significance score
	Minor negative (-)	Neutral (0)

8.2.19 Overall, the Regulation 19 version of the Local Plan is expected to result in a **neutral effect (0)** in relation to the historic environment.

8.2.20 Whilst several allocations are located within, adjacent to, or in close proximity to designated heritage assets and areas and therefore have the potential to affect their significance, the draft Local Plan incorporates a strong policy framework designed to conserve the significance of designated and non-designated heritage assets and areas and their settings.

Housing

	Reasonable alternatives significance score	Plan appraisal significance score
	Major positive (++)	Major positive (++)

8.2.21 Overall, the Regulation 19 version of the Local Plan is expected to result in **major positive effects (++)** in relation to housing.

8.2.22 The preferred spatial strategy meets (and slightly exceeds) LHN and is supported by a comprehensive policy framework that promotes affordable housing, specialist accommodation, accessible and adaptable housing, self and custom build housing, housing choice and housing delivery.

8.2.23 Although some uncertainty remains regarding the delivery of development within the broad locations of growth (BLG) in the longer-term, the overall effect is expected to remain strongly positive.

8.2.24 Following adoption of the Local Plan, the Council intends to move directly into a further Local Plan review. That review is likely to consider a broader range of strategic growth options (including within the broad locations), recognising that these locations may also form part of the longer-term direction of growth for Solihull within the emerging West Midlands SDS (due to their proximity to rail stations and the NPPF direction on unlocking growth in sustainable locations).

Landscape

	Reasonable alternatives significance score	Plan appraisal significance score
	Minor negative (-)	Minor negative (-)

8.2.25 Overall, the Regulation 19 version of the Local Plan is expected to result in **minor negative effects (-)** in relation to landscape.

8.2.26 The majority of allocations are located on Green Belt land and will result in the loss of areas of open countryside and changes to landscape character. Whilst mitigation measures have been incorporated within the allocation policies and wider policy framework, negative effects are still anticipated. However, these effects are generally expected to be localised and moderated through the retention of landscape features, green infrastructure provision and comprehensive masterplanning.

8.2.27 It is important to acknowledge that the borough is significantly constrained by Green Belt land, and the Council's Green Belt Assessment identifies a number of locations where potential 'grey belt' land is identified. Further opportunities for Green Belt release are expected to form longer-term considerations for the borough alongside the wider growth aspirations for the West Midlands region as a whole (and accompanying SDS)

Soils and natural resources

	Reasonable alternatives significance score	Plan appraisal significance score
	Major negative (--)	Major negative (--)

8.2.28 Overall, the Regulation 19 version of the Local Plan is expected to result in **major negative effects (--)** in relation to soils and natural resources.

8.2.29 The majority of allocations are located on greenfield land, and several would result in the loss of substantial areas of 'best and most versatile'

(BMV) agricultural land. Although the draft Local Plan includes policies promoting resource efficiency, recycling, circular economy principles and the effective use of previously developed land, these measures are unlikely to offset the permanent loss of BMV agricultural land associated with the scale of development proposed.

- 8.2.30 Nonetheless, it is important to note that major negative effects for soil and natural resources were concluded for all growth scenarios tested through the SA process at this stage of plan making, reflecting the scale of the challenge in meeting LHN in the absence of suitable and available larger-scale brownfield site options across the borough to accommodate major development.

Transport

	Reasonable alternatives significance score	Plan appraisal significance score
	Major positive (++)	Major positive (++)

- 8.2.31 Overall, the Regulation 19 version of the Local Plan is expected to result in **major positive effects (++)** in relation to transport.
- 8.2.32 The preferred spatial strategy is strongly aligned with the borough's rail and bus network and focuses growth within locations capable of supporting sustainable travel patterns.
- 8.2.33 These benefits are reinforced by the concentration of development around railway stations, the strategic role of UK Central and Arden Cross, the promotion of rapid transit infrastructure and numerous site-specific requirements to improve walking, cycling and public transport connectivity.

Water

	Reasonable alternatives significance score	Plan appraisal significance score
	Minor negative (-)	Neutral (0)

- 8.2.34 Overall, the Regulation 19 version of the Local Plan is expected to result in a **neutral effect (0)** in relation to water.
- 8.2.35 Whilst growth will inevitably increase demand for water resources and wastewater infrastructure within a water-stressed borough, the draft Local Plan contains measures intended to manage flood risk, protect water quality and support sustainable drainage.
- 8.2.36 The inclusion of site-specific requirements relating to SuDS, flood mitigation and integrated drainage strategies further strengthens this position.

8.3. Recommendations

8.3.1 The SA has identified the following opportunities to strengthen the policy framework within the Regulation 19 version of the Local Plan and increase certainty that potential significant effects are appropriately managed:

- Consider strengthening climate change adaptation provisions within **Policies SMBC/BC5, BC6, SO1 and UK1** through the inclusion of explicit requirements for SuDS and green-blue infrastructure, consistent with the approach taken for other allocations affected by flood risk and climate resilience considerations.
- Consider strengthening **Policy SMBC/KN1B** to ensure that effects on the setting of Grimshaw Hall (Grade I listed building) are considered consistently across both Knowle allocations. This could include the introduction of a site-specific heritage requirement similar to that contained within **Policy SMBC/KN1A**.
- Consider strengthening **Policy SMBC/UK1** (Arden Cross and HS2 Interchange) through the inclusion of a specific heritage criterion relating to the conservation of Park Farmhouse (Grade II* listed building) and its setting. This would provide greater certainty that heritage considerations are incorporated into future masterplanning and development proposals.
- Consider strengthening biodiversity safeguards within **Policy SMBC/SO1 (East of Solihull)**. The site contains priority woodland and traditional orchard habitat and is adjacent to a LWS, but the allocation does not currently include specific biodiversity protection or enhancement measures.

9. Part 3: What are the next steps?

9.1. Publication of the Proposed Submission Local Plan (Regulation 19)

- 9.1.1 This SA Report has been prepared alongside the Proposed Submission Local Plan, published under Regulation 19 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. The report documents how sustainability considerations have informed plan preparation and presents an appraisal of the Proposed Submission Local Plan and the reasonable alternatives considered.

9.2. Representations on the Proposed Submission Local Plan

- 9.2.1 The Proposed Submission Local Plan and accompanying SA Report are being published for representations on legal compliance and soundness. Representations received during the consultation period will be considered by the Council prior to submission of the Plan for independent examination.

9.3. Submission, examination and adoption

- 9.3.1 Following the close of the Regulation 19 consultation period, the Council will review the representations received and prepare the necessary documentation for submission. The Local Plan and accompanying SA Report will then be submitted to the Secretary of State for independent examination.
- 9.3.2 The appointed Inspector will consider the submitted Local Plan, the SA Report and representations made during the consultation period in determining whether the Plan satisfies the relevant legal requirements and whether it is sound.
- 9.3.3 Where modifications are identified as necessary during Examination, these will be considered through the SA process, as appropriate. Where required, the findings of any additional appraisal work will be published in an SA Addendum alongside consultation on the proposed modifications.
- 9.3.4 Following completion of the examination process and receipt of the Inspector's Report, the Council may proceed to adopt the Local Plan. An SA Adoption Statement will then be prepared setting out how environmental, social and economic considerations, consultation responses and the findings of the SA have been taken into account in the adopted Plan.

9.4. Monitoring

- 9.4.1 The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (2004) require the significant environmental effects of implementing the Plan to be monitored. Monitoring helps to identify any unforeseen adverse effects arising from implementation of the Plan and enables appropriate remedial action to be taken where necessary.
- 9.4.2 The Local Plan contains a comprehensive monitoring framework which includes a range of indicators relating to housing delivery, employment growth, biodiversity, climate change, infrastructure provision, heritage, transport and other sustainability objectives. The monitoring framework therefore provides an important mechanism for tracking many of the environmental, social and economic effects identified through this SA.
- 9.4.3 Particular attention should be given to monitoring potential negative or mixed effects identified through the SA, with proposed measures outlined in **Section 11** in the main body of the SA Report.
- 9.4.4 Where monitoring identifies significant unforeseen adverse effects, or where the Local Plan is not performing as anticipated, the Council should consider whether additional mitigation measures, policy interventions or a review of the Local Plan are required.

