

Berkswell Parish Neighbourhood Development Plan 2019 - 2033

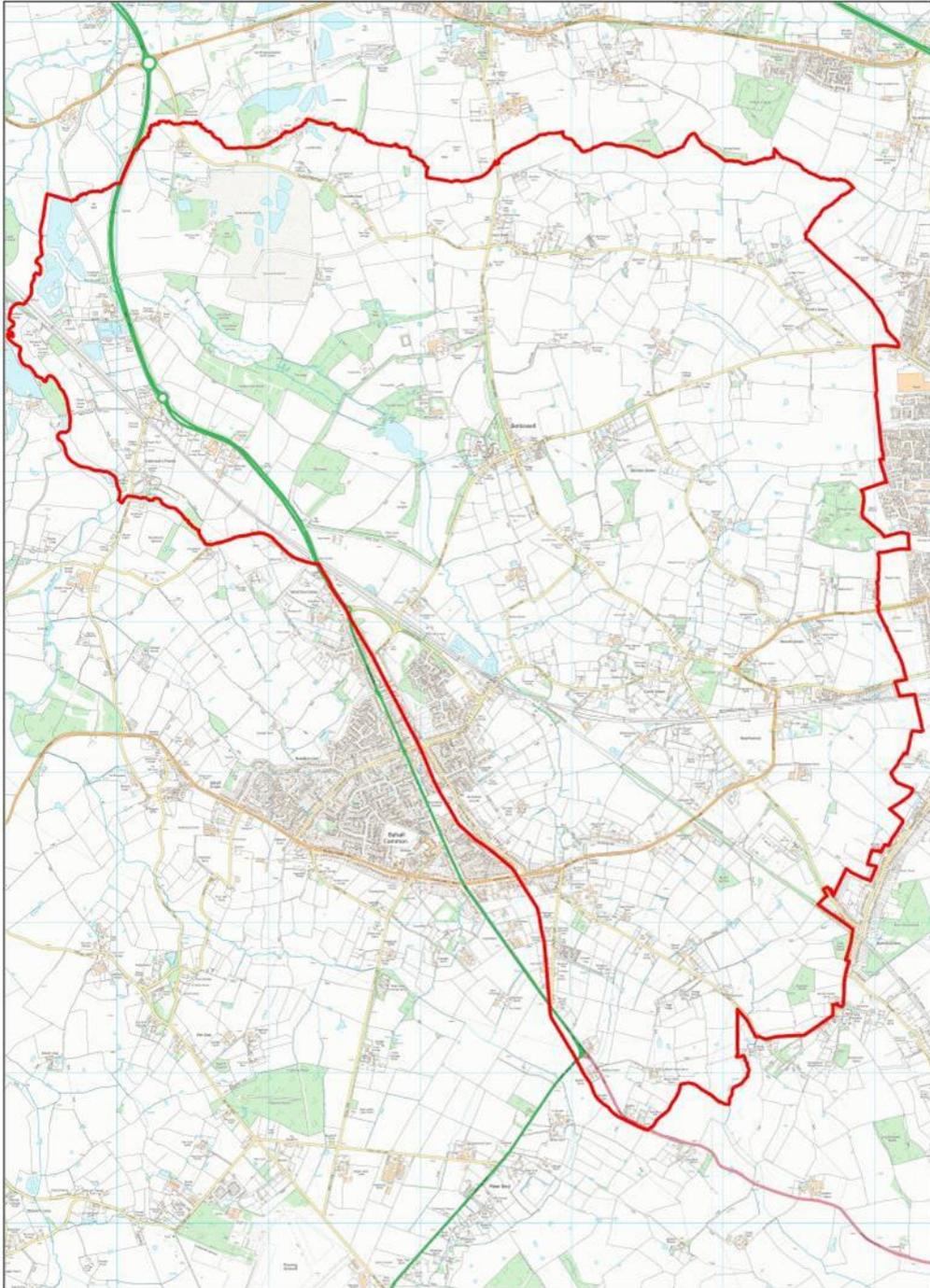


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1. A Portrait of Berkswell Parish

Map 1 Berkswell Parish and Designated Neighbourhood Area



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- 1.1 The Parish of Berkswell lies within the local authority area of Solihull. It is at the narrowest part of the Green Belt between the West Midlands conurbation (including Solihull town) and Coventry and lies in the heart of the Meriden Gap.
- 1.2 The parish comprises the eastern third of Balsall Common and the countryside between there and Coventry. The population according to the 2011 census was 3139 and the parish covers 2,343 hectares. The rural area includes Berkswell village and a number of settlements and scattered farms. A majority of residents live in Balsall Common and the remainder in Berkswell village and other rural settlements.
- 1.3 Balsall Common is a large village whose residents largely commute elsewhere to work. The portion within Berkswell Parish is physically closely linked to the rural area by easy public access through an extensive network of public footpaths. The built-up area is also significantly enhanced by large areas of green space in public parks, ecological areas with significant numbers of mature trees with tree preservation orders and hedgerows maintaining a rural feel.
- 1.4 There is a railway station within the parish on the eastern edge of Balsall Common which is on the west coast mainline with trains to Birmingham, London and stations in between. The A452 in the west of the parish provides access to the national motorway network (M6, M42).
- 1.5 There is the Balsall Common medical centre, part of the shopping centre, several small businesses, two churches, the Berkswell and District British Legion and two pubs within the Balsall Common part of the parish. On the edge of Balsall Common is the Grade II* listed Berkswell windmill. Lavender Hall Park to the north of Balsall Common is one of only 15 Green Flag areas within Solihull Borough.
- 1.6 The proposed line of HS2 also cuts through the parish north west / south east.
- 1.7 Berkswell village dates from Saxon times and includes a church dating from the Norman period. The village retains a traditional village character with a primary school, public house, parish church, the reading rooms (village hall) and shop, clustered around a village green. The village is largely within a Conservation Area and this was extended in 2012 to include areas of farmland particularly around the parkland at Berkswell Hall, which contribute to the Conservation Area's context and setting. There are limited public transport services to/from Berkswell village and the principal road (Lavender Hall Lane) to facilities in Balsall Common has no separate pavement for walkers or a cycle path.
- 1.8 Berkswell village has a centre for small businesses nearby which includes with high quality buildings converted from former brick farm buildings and converted steel framed agricultural buildings. This also houses the office for the Berkswell estate, a significant landowner with several farms in the area.
- 1.9 The rural area of Berkswell contain a number of hamlets and settlements including Carol Green, Bradnocks Marsh, Duggins Lane, Catchems Corner, Benton Green and Back Lane.

2. An NDP for Berkswell

- 2.1 From July 2015 some early work was undertaken together with neighbouring Balsall Parish Council to prepare a joint NDP for both parishes. A neighbourhood area extending across both parishes was designated by Solihull MBC, and some informal community engagement and consultation activity was undertaken including surveys at fêtes, an exhibition, discussions with community groups and schools, and sessions with business groups. However, in December 2016 Balsall Parish Council gave notice of their termination of the agreement to undertake a joint NDP.
- 2.2 On 16th March 2017, Berkswell Parish Council therefore resolved to work towards its own NDP and to seek approval from SMBC for the designation of the whole area of the parish as a Neighbourhood Area.
- 2.3 The parish council applied to Solihull MBC for designation of the parish as a neighbourhood area on 17th March 2017 and this was approved on 18th July 2017. The designated neighbourhood area is the same as the parish boundary and is shown on Map 1 above.
- 2.4 A steering committee of parish councillors, representatives of the two residents' associations and interested local residents from Berkswell and Berkswell Parish held its inaugural meeting on 12th June 2017 at the Jubilee Centre, Balsall Common with an expert consultant, to oversee the preparation of the Plan on behalf of the parish council. Local residents were invited to this meeting, as is the practice of Berkswell Parish Council, to give their views. The Consultation Statement provides more detailed information about the planning issues identified at this stage.

Issues and Options

- 2.5 An Issues and Options document was prepared which set out the further ideas of the Steering Committee linked to the above identified planning themes. The document included a number of key questions to help guide residents to consider the key planning issues and was consulted upon from 30th September 2017 to 28th October 2017. Further information about the process and how the responses were used to shape the content of the emerging First Draft Plan is provided in the Consultation Statement.

First Draft Plan

- 2.6 A First Draft Plan was prepared building on the results of the informal public consultations, including the Issues and Options consultation, and with the advice and support of planning officers from Solihull MBC. The First Draft Plan was published for informal public consultation from March 25th to April 26th 2018 to allow local residents and stakeholders to consider the emerging draft NDP policies and to provide comments and the Consultation Statement provides more detail about this process and how the responses were used to revise the Draft Plan.

Publication of Draft NDP for Formal Regulation 14 Public Consultation

- 2.7 The Draft Plan was published for 6 weeks formal public consultation (Regulation 14) from 16th June to 31st July 2018. There were a significant number of detailed responses to the NDP from Solihull MBC, statutory consultation bodies, residents, stakeholders and landowners/developers. The responses were all considered very carefully and the NDP was

revised in response to a number of comments, suggestions and objections. The Consultation Statement and accompanying response tables provide further information about this process.

- 2.8 More details about the NDP consultation process, the comments submitted by residents and other organisations including SMBC and local landowner / developers, together with the suggested changes to the NDP which these generated, can be found on the relevant pages of the NDP website¹.



Jordan Room, Berkswell Church, Berkswell village
7th April 2018

¹ <https://www.berkswellparishcouncil.org.uk/projects/ndp>

3. Vision and Objectives

- 3.1 An NDP is required to have a vision and a clear set of objectives. The planning policies should be designed to meet the identified objectives.
- 3.2 It is very clear from consulting residents that they identify strongly with the rural nature of Berkswell Parish and are passionate about what makes the area a special place to live. The Vision and Objectives have been prepared to reflect these local priorities.
- 3.3 In the consultation on the Issues and Options document 95% of Berkswell residents who responded indicated that they agreed with the Draft Vision and Objectives and 88% of other respondents (almost all from Balsall Parish) agreed with them. The Draft Vision and Objectives were also supported in 95% of responses to the public consultation on the First Draft Plan. Some modifications have been made in response to suggestions from consultees at the various consultation stages.

Vision for Berkswell Parish NDP

Our vision is that Berkswell Parish is and will remain a pleasant and safe place in which to live and bring up families; it will continue to be a supportive and inclusive society; it will remain distinct from the neighbouring conurbations by protecting the rural environment within the Meriden gap but have good transport links and modern and enhanced communications.

The many historic features that emphasise and enhance the rural character of Berkswell, whether in the countryside or built environment, will be conserved and new development will be designed to be sensitive to our local heritage, character and distinctiveness.

NDP Objectives

In order to deliver the vision, the NDP has the following objectives:

Housing Objectives

- 1. To provide the types of property to attract young people to live and work here and resizing opportunities for older current residents.**
- 2. To promote high quality housing designs and layouts that allow for space, privacy, visual amenity and ecological sustainability and water management;**
- 3. Designs and layouts should create and maintain safe neighbourhoods by including measures to reduce crime and the fear of crime.**

Landscape Character and the Rural Area Objectives

- 4. To secure development which protects and enhances the structure and characteristics of the Arden Warwickshire Landscape.**
- 5. To ensure development incorporates high quality green and blue (water related) landscaping schemes to integrate the new built environment with the rural and the existing built environment.**
- 6. To retain wildlife habitat within the developed, to be developed, and rural areas of the parish.**
- 7. To support the continued conservation and appreciation of Berkswell village as a Conservation Area and other heritage assets across the parish.**

Accessibility and Infrastructure Objectives

- 8. To promote improved and safe accessibility to public transport links including walking, cycling, horse riding, and public rights of way.**
- 9. To improve vehicular traffic flows throughout the parish.**

10. To provide adequate space for off-road parking in residential areas and for businesses.

11. To support improved community spaces such as meeting halls and public open space for purposes of enjoyment for Balsall Common.

12. To encourage the development of infrastructure for facilitating safe and secure environments, health, wellbeing, leisure and the community for all residents.

Business Objectives

13. To support investment in local economic development to meet local businesses' needs in the parish including farming that are not met more appropriately by the Solihull Local Plan and which do not adversely impact on rural roads in the parish.

14. To work with Balsall Parish Council to improve the shopping area.

Not all of these Objectives will be pursued through the land-use Neighbourhood Plan and an Annex addresses other actions for the Parish Council.

Planning Policies

4. Housing in Balsall Common



- 4.1 Berkswell Parish's location within the Green Belt means that opportunities for significant housing growth are very constrained. However, the 2013 Local Plan provided for 65 houses on allocated Site 19 Riddings Hill, Balsall Common (adjacent to the Medical Centre), removing this site from the Green Belt. This NDP notes the emerging Solihull Local Plan Review (LPR) which has identified 2 potential sites for new housing within the parish to the east and south of Balsall Common (Policy P5). The proposed sites are Barratt's Farm (800 houses) and Windmill Lane / Kenilworth Road (200 houses shared with Balsall Parish).
- 4.2 The release of these two additional major sites would require a change to the Green Belt boundary and this can only take place through the LPR.
- 4.3 The LPR document sets out that *"the boundaries for these sites are not yet fixed and further work will be undertaken in conjunction with the site promoters/land owners and local communities (including parish councils) considering various detailed planning matters with an outcome of a concept masterplan for each of the allocations incorporated into the submission version of the local plan."*
- 4.4 The development of these strategic sites would have a significant impact on the character and setting of Berkswell parish, and in particular the built-up and undeveloped areas around Balsall Common. The NDP has a potential role in setting out criteria for new housing in terms of design, size, affordability etc to ensure developments respond positively to the local context and provide the types of housing that will meet local needs. The results of the public consultation on the Issues and Options demonstrated significant local support for a housing policy to guide new residential development on the three proposed strategic sites with 97.5% of respondents supporting the inclusion of such a policy. There were a range of suggestions for criteria to be addressed in such a policy and these have informed the preparation of Policy B1.
- 4.5 There is a timing issue as until the new Solihull Local Plan is adopted, the NDP has to be prepared to be in general conformity with the existing adopted Solihull Local Plan 2013, and the two additional strategic sites are currently within the Green Belt. If the NDP supports major development in the Green Belt it would not be in general conformity with the adopted

local plan or have regard to national planning policy, both of which protect the Green Belt from development. NPPF para 87 states that *“Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.”*

- 4.6 Planning Practice Guidance sets out that the reasoning and evidence informing the policies and proposals in an emerging Local Plan should be taken into consideration during the preparation of the NDP, and therefore, at this stage a Policy has been included in the Berkswell NDP. In addition, Berkswell NDP Policy B1 is appropriate at the current time as it should be applied to the existing allocated Site 19.
- 4.7 Overall, there is a need to ensure that the new development is integrated into the existing built form to provide sustainable extensions to the existing settlement of Balsall Common and to help ensure new residential communities can access local services and facilities and take part in community life.
- 4.8 Berkswell is an area of high car ownership (see Section 10) so accessible pedestrian and cycle linkages should be provided linking to existing routes to reduce reliance on the private car and associated increased pressures on the local rural road network.
- 4.9 The Preliminary Ecological Report for Berkswell Parish 2018² advises that in relation to the Barratt's Farm site, the small fields are characteristic of the Arden landscape and retention of the species-rich hedgerows should be a priority to maintain the connection with the open countryside south of Balsall Common.
- 4.10 The Ecological Report also advises that at Windmill Lane / Kenilworth Road, the existing stand of semi-natural woodland should be retained and hedgerows where possible should be retained and restored. Consideration should be given to the wet marshy grasslands as areas for habitat creation as wetland retention areas incorporating ponds and patches of inundated (waterlogged or marshy) vegetation.
- 4.11 The consultation on Issues and Options also demonstrated that residents would prefer to see new housing schemes providing a mix of starter homes, smaller houses for older residents wishing to downsize or resize and some 3 to 4-bedroom properties for larger families. Developers will be required to provide evidence that schemes are providing a suitable housing mix to meet local needs. The responses to the First Draft Plan included detailed comments about Policy B1, many of which are already addressed in the policy, and some of which have led to minor changes and additional criteria.
- 4.12 The Solihull MBC LPR Topic paper, Housing Need by mix, type & tenure, December 2016³, para 201 sets out that in the Borough, “PBA SHMA 2016 Part 2 findings identify that of the 14,268 dwellings, 3,831 need to be affordable (26.9%) and these should be of the tenures of shared ownership and rented (both social and affordable) to meet the identified need for affordable housing taking into account the borough’s circumstances.”

² Preliminary Ecological Report Parish Neighbourhood Plan for Berkswell Parish Council Habitat Biodiversity Audit Partnership for Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull Warwickshire Wildlife Trust Ecological Services Warwickshire County Council, January 2018

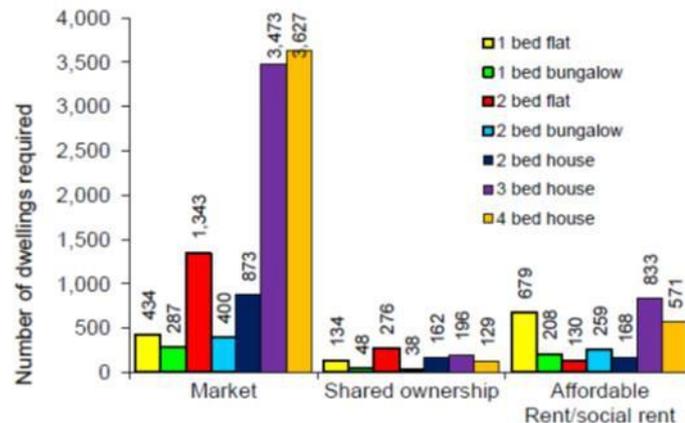
<https://www.berkswellparishcouncil.org.uk/projects/ndp/1st-draft-additional-evidence>

³ See Reviewing the Plan for Solihull’s Future Solihull Local Plan Review Draft Local Plan: Topic Papers December 2016. Part 16 - Housing Need by mix, type & tenure

<http://www.solihull.gov.uk/lpr/evidence>

- 4.13 In terms of house types and sizes, paragraph 206 advises that the Borough’s housing need by bedroom size, type of dwelling, and tenure, is shown in Figure 6.1 in the SHMA part 2 and is the requirement for all new housing between 2014 and 2033. This table is replicated in Figure 2 below and shows that the predominant need for market housing is 3 to 4-bedroom housing, followed by 2-bedroom flats and 2-bedroom houses. The greatest need for shared ownership housing is for 2-bedroom flats and for affordable rent / social rent housing the greatest need is for 3-bedroom houses, 1-bedroom flats and then 4-bedroom houses.

Figure 2 Solihull Housing Requirement 2014 – 2033 (Figure 6.1, SHMA Part 2)



- 4.14 Principles relating to layout and design are drawn from the character assessment work undertaken describing the existing context of residential areas in Balsall Common and would help to ensure better integration with existing housing areas. This is set out in Section 7.
- 4.15 At Regulation 14 consultation stage West Midlands Police submitted detailed comments relating to the need for the NDP to consider design and planning to improve community safety and reduce opportunities for crime. These suggestions have been taken on board both in the objectives and additional text in Policies B1 and B3. The Parish Council is committed to working in partnership with the Police to promote safe and secure environments and communities to deliver the NDP’s objectives.
- 4.16 In addition at pre-submission checking stage SMBC commented in relation to Policy B1 2j and advised that, rather than the proposed minimum 50m distance between buildings, it may be preferable to avoid a minimum figure, or to consider a figure more in line with the Housing Development Guidelines SPG⁴, such as 30m. The figure for the distance between existing and new buildings has therefore been amended to 30m.

⁴ <http://www.solihull.gov.uk/Resident/Planning/appealsenforcement/planmaking/ldf/OtherPlanningPolicyDocuments>

Policy B1: New Housing – General Principles

Where new housing proposals come forward they will be required to address the following criteria:

1. Brownfield sites

The reuse of brownfield sites will be preferred to the loss of greenfield land.

2. Layouts and Accessibility

Where practical, developers should incorporate the following principles into the layout of schemes:

- a. Vehicle access to new development should be from main roads.
- b. Layouts should be designed to help facilitate social cohesion and community security. In the Berkswell Neighbourhood Area context this suggests that larger developments should have character areas of around 250 dwellings and all developments should aim for clusters of around 20 dwellings. Good legibility⁵ is required but the security and amenity of the development should not be compromised by excessive through route permeability.
- c. Longer new roads should include grass verges as well as pavements and tree planting wherever possible.
- d. For ease of use and permeability without recourse to motorised transport, access for pedestrians and cyclists should be maximised through provision of attractive and accessible non-vehicular routes linking to the safe routes identified in Section 9 and to local facilities such as shops, Berkswell rail station, schools, community facilities and health centres.
- e. Quality public open and children's play space should be provided in accordance with the Solihull Green Space Strategy Review⁶ or the successor document. New open and play spaces should normally be located between new and existing housing to serve the whole community; play spaces should benefit from natural surveillance. Where this location of the open space is not feasible, to help the transition the distance between new and existing dwellings should be toward the upper end of the range

⁵ Note - **Legibility** is the degree to which an area or neighbourhood can be understood or "read" by residents and visitors. Good legibility allows people to understand how an area is organised and to find their way around easily.

⁶SMBC Green Space Strategy Review 2014 (p26)

http://www.solihull.gov.uk/Portals/0/StrategiesPlansPolicies/LandscapeandEcology/Green_Spaces_Strategy_Review.pdf

in the Solihull Housing Development Guidelines SPG⁷ or successor document ie around 30m.

- f. Schemes should aim to integrate the natural environment into the layout and form of new development through the provision of gardens.
- g. Development schemes should create and maintain safe neighbourhoods by including measures to reduce crime and the fear of crime, and to strengthen the sense of local community. Such measures should incorporate the principles of 'Secured by Design' and be agreed in consultation with the West Midlands Police.

3. Landscaping and Drainage

Landscaping schemes should aim to incorporate the following wherever possible:

- a. A site specific survey should identify which mature trees and hedgerows make the most significant contribution to local landscape character and biodiversity and should therefore be retained and protected. New planting to replace losses or enhancing existing planting should use characteristic native species.
- b. All areas of priority habitats (as defined by the NERC [Natural Environment and Rural Communities] Act 2006)⁸ as amended should be retained and naturalised to support local wildlife and enhance biodiversity. Such habitats may include existing water courses, field ponds and areas of wet marshy grasslands.
- c. All new development should be located within Flood Zone 1 and where this is not viable, development must be steered to land at the lowest flood risk, following the application of the Sequential Test.
- d. Effective surface water drainage measures should be provided to protect existing and future residential areas from flooding. New development should be designed to maximise the retention of surface water on the development site and to minimise runoff. Sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) should be implemented in accordance with the SuDS hierarchy⁹ wherever possible. Hard-

⁷ http://www.solihull.gov.uk/Portals/0/Planning/Housing_Development_Guidelines.pdf

⁸ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/16/contents>

⁹ See: Planning System - Guidance - Flood risk and coastal change

'Generally, the aim should be to discharge surface run off as high up the following hierarchy of drainage options as reasonably practicable:

1. into the ground (infiltration);
2. to a surface water body;
3. to a surface water sewer, highway drain, or another drainage system;
4. to a combined sewer.'

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/flood-risk-and-coastal-change>

- standing surface areas should be permeable wherever practical.
- e. Hedgerows, tree lines or other locally appropriate habitats should be provided within development sites as narrow corridors to support a gentle, green transition between built-up areas and the open countryside.

4. Building Design Principles

New housing designs should incorporate the following wherever possible:

- a. Generally buildings should not exceed 2 1/2 storeys, including rooms in the roof space. However to aid efficient land use some building heights could be varied and 3 storeys may be appropriate provided the buildings are not adjacent to, and do not have an adverse impact on or conflict with existing and surrounding properties and should be appropriate to the position proposed;
- b. Provision of basements for storage or parking is supported to maximise efficient use of land;
- c. Provision should be made per dwelling for electric vehicle charging;
- d. Developments should incorporate principles of sustainable design, maximising energy, water and resource efficiency both in terms of construction methods and for the benefit of future occupants. Where roof mounted solar panels are provided, houses should be orientated to maximise solar gain; and
- e. Suitable provision should be made within curtilages for secure storage and refuse/recycling bin enclosures.

5. Housing Mix

- a. A suitable mix of housing should be provided, informed by the latest Strategic Housing Market Assessment and / or other local data, for example, Parish Surveys and developers' assessments. Housing mix, having regard to location, site size and scheme viability, should contain a range of types and size of housing needed for different groups in the community such as:
 - those who require affordable housing,
 - families with children,
 - older people,
 - people with disabilities,
 - people who rent their homes, and
 - people wishing to commission or build their own homes.

Overall schemes should have an emphasis on 2- or 3-bedroom properties including some single storey dwellings, smaller units

suitable for starter homes and residents wishing to downsize or resize and some larger houses (4 bedrooms or more) for families or those requiring multi-generational homes.

- b. Residential units which provide live / work accommodation will be supported, provided that residential amenity of surrounding occupiers is protected and any adverse impacts on the surrounding road network are minimised.

6. Natural Environment

Development should aim to protect and enhance local biodiversity in line with Policy B3.

- a. Where possible new buildings should incorporate wildlife friendly features such as bird boxes and swift bricks.
- b. Layouts should support open spaces for wildlife areas and corridors.

5. Housing in the Rural Area



Rural housing in Bradnocks Marsh

- 5.1 The emerging new Solihull Local Plan will set out the requirement for the majority of new housing in Berkswell Parish and this will be provided on the proposed strategic sites, subject to changes to the boundary of the Green Belt.
- 5.2 In addition to requirements for affordable housing¹⁰ as part of the strategic allocations, there may be a need for some small scale, local needs “rural exception” housing in Berkswell village over the plan period.
- 5.3 In terms of Berkswell village and the wider rural area, the Solihull Local Plan 2013 Policy P4 – Meeting Housing Needs identifies under b) Rural Exceptions that:
- “The provision of affordable housing developments on Green Belt land to meet the local needs of households in that parish or neighbourhood will be supported in circumstances where:*
- *The development proposal is consistent with the village, parish or Neighbourhood Plan; or*
 - *There is evidence that people with a local connection to the parish area have a housing need that cannot be met through affordable housing provision on an allocated housing site and the proposed development is supported by the parish council or Neighbourhood Group.”*
- 5.4 The Local Plan Review Policy P4 carries forward this policy and therefore a small amount of local needs housing could be provided in Berkswell village or wider rural area over the plan period.
- 5.5 Local Plan Policy P17 Countryside and Green Belt sets out that: *“Limited infilling will not be considered to be inappropriate development within the Green Belt settlements, providing this would not have an adverse effect on the character of the settlements. Limited infilling shall be interpreted as the filling of a small gap within an otherwise built- up frontage with not more than two dwellings.”* However, LPR Policy P17 identifies only 4 settlements in the whole of the Borough where limited infilling may take place without constituting an inappropriate development, and Berkswell and other rural settlements within the parish have not been included in this list.
- 5.6 It might be possible to provide some local needs housing within the rural area if there is a robust evidence base to support such a planning policy or proposals within an NDP. In the

¹⁰ See NPPF Glossary for a definition of “affordable housing”.

Issues and Options consultation, 61 respondents indicated that they thought they needed some affordable or local needs housing outside Balsall Common, and primarily within Berkswell village. However, the reasons provided were generally considered to fall outside the definitions of local needs housing and included such matters as needing to be nearer the local primary school or desiring a more rural location. The responses to the First Draft Plan included comments about the lack of affordable housing proposed in Balsall Common (this is addressed in Solihull Local Plan) and suggestions both that Berkswell could accommodate more development or should have less.

- 5.7 Berkswell village has 25 homes for social rent such as council houses, alms houses and some Berkswell Estate homes within a total of 79 homes.
- 5.8 The results of the Issues and Options consultation did not demonstrate that the NDP should include a site allocation at the current time for affordable housing in Berkswell village. However, it is possible that proposals for local needs housing schemes which meet a demonstrable local need may come forward over the Plan period – up to 2033. Therefore, a suitably worded criteria-based policy such as Policy B2 would be helpful in guiding any such proposals.

Policy B2: Rural Exception Local Needs Housing in Berkswell Village

- 1. Small-scale affordable housing developments (of around 1 to 2 homes) in Berkswell Village will be supported where proposals would meet a proven local need in Berkswell village, as identified in the Strategic Housing Market Assessment or other up to date and robust local housing needs evidence.**
- 2. A detailed needs assessment will be required to be submitted with the planning application, and this should set out why residents with a proven local connection to the village of Berkswell have a housing need that cannot be met through affordable housing provision on an allocated site elsewhere in the parish.**
- 3. Housing proposals should not lead to a detrimental impact on the character of the village and should demonstrate that appropriate access and car parking can be achieved within or adjoining the site, and that any adverse impacts on the residential amenity of neighbouring occupiers is minimised.**
- 4. Where possible, development for local needs housing should take place on previously developed (brownfield) land and / or be located on small infill sites, so that it does not expand the village beyond the existing built up area.**

6. Protecting Rural Area and Local Landscape Character

Green Belt and the Rural Area

- 6.1 Opportunities for new development in Berkswell’s countryside will be very limited due to the Green Belt designation. The NPPF is very clear about the protection of the Green Belt. Paragraph 87. sets out that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Paragraph 88. goes on to say that ‘Very special circumstances’ will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations. Paragraph 89. sets out that a local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in Green Belt but provides a number of exceptions to this. Solihull adopted Local Plan Policy P17 Countryside and Green Belt reinforces this protection.
- 6.2 Berkswell Parish Council recognises that Green Belt, and the scale of the proposed housing developments within it, are major issues for the residents of Berkswell and Balsall Common. The parish council supports the principle in national planning policy requiring appropriate brown field sites to be developed before green field land.
- 6.3 The preservation of the Green Belt is of significant concern to the community in the parish. The community sees the parish positioned as a natural boundary between Coventry and the Birmingham/Solihull conurbation – referred to as “The Meriden Gap”. The delineation of the Green Belt is a strategic matter for the Local Development Plan review and the LDP policies toward Green Belt protections derive from national policy set down in the NPPF (section 9) which says at the outset: “*The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence*”. Release of Green Belt land is an issue for the Local Development Plan review and cannot be determined by a Neighbourhood Development Plan.
- 6.4 Similarly, major housing development in Berkswell and Balsall Common in what is currently Green Belt land, but which is proposed to be released in the draft Local Development Plan, is outside the scope of an NDP (see Section 5).
- 6.5 Landscape and built character are protected in Solihull adopted Local Plan Policy P10 Natural Environment and the Policies in Section 11. Promoting Quality of Place: Policy P15 - Securing Design Quality, Policy P16 - Conservation of Heritage Assets & Local Distinctiveness Policy P17 - Countryside and Green Belt.

Local Landscape Character in the Rural Areas

- 6.6 The Issues and Options consultation demonstrated that 97% of Berkswell residents supported policies in the NDP to protect local landscape character and 94% of other respondents also supported such a policy. There were also many comments supporting the protection of local features such as trees, hedges and ponds in the consultation on the First Draft Plan.
- 6.7 Berkswell Parish lies within Natural England National Character Area (NCA) 97 Arden. Key characteristics include:

- *Well wooded farmland landscape with rolling landform*
- *Contrasting patterns of well hedged, irregular fields and small woodlands interspersed with larger semi regular fields on former deer parks and estates, and a geometric pattern on former commons*
- *Numerous areas of former wood pasture with large old oak trees, often associated with heathland remnants*
- *Narrow, meandering river valleys with long river meadows.*

6.8 As part of the evidence base for the LPR Solihull MBC published a Solihull Borough Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) in 2016¹¹. This identified ten broad character areas in the Borough and within three of these sub areas are also defined. The rural area around Berkswell village falls within Landscape Character Area 4 Rural Centre, (Sub Area 4D). The parish also has areas within LCA 5 Balsall Common Eastern Fringe and LCA 6 Eastern Fringe.

6.9 LCA 4 Rural Centre (Sub Area 4D) has a rolling landscape comprising pastoral and arable fields, deciduous woodland and conifer plantations. Key characteristics include:

- *Small to medium sized fields boarded [sic] by field ditches and hedgerows*
- *A strong hedgerow structure with mature hedgerow trees*
- *Oak and ash are the dominant species with poplar shelter belts*
- *The approach to Berkswell village from the east is well treed.*
- *Red brick buildings and render are typical.*
- *Lanes tend to be narrow and winding with high hedgerows and a number of roads are lined with mature trees and grass verges.*
- *Lavender Hall Park is a Local Nature Reserve and Principal Park located within Berkswell Parish to the north of Balsall Common.*
- *Berkswell Marsh SSSI*

6.10 The sub area is considered to have an overall very low landscape capacity to accommodate change. Very restricted areas of small-scale new development could be accommodated which would need to be of an appropriate type and form and in keeping with the existing character and local distinctiveness of the area. Any new development should not be detrimental to the setting of Berkswell Conservation Area or result in the loss of the inherently rural landscape.

6.11 The proposed new site allocations in the LPR fall within LCA5 Balsall Common Eastern Fringe. The area's close proximity to Balsall Common has led to the introduction of strong elements of suburbia including manicured lanes, close mown grass verges and footways and a loss of the definitive edge between the urban area and countryside. Key characteristics include:

- *Land managed for arable use with smaller grassland fields around settlements*

¹¹ See <http://www.solihull.gov.uk/lpr/evidence>

- *Small sized fields with strong hedgerow pattern and some ditches. The fields are historic, most likely post medieval enclosed fields that may have medieval origins*
- *Tree cover is largely limited to the hedgerows and streets with occasional scattered trees in fields*
- *Oak and ash are the dominant species*
- *Ridge and furrow within fields on Old Waste Lane*
- *Little Beant Farm Meadows is a Local Wildlife Site*

6.12 LCA 6 Eastern Fringe includes the eastern part of the parish adjoining the City of Coventry. Key characteristics include:

- *Mixed land use with arable fields interspersed by deciduous woodland and coniferous plantations*
- *Medium to large fields with regular rectilinear pattern to the north and more irregular field pattern to the south*
- *Plantation blocks and deciduous woodland*
- *Strong tree cover including hedgerows and street trees*
- *Local Wildlife Sites at Beant Green Lane, Big Pools and Little Pools Woodland and Beant Farm Hedge.*



Berkswell countryside – arable farming and tree cover near Balsall Common



Another Berkswell scene situated between Balsall Common and Berkswell village showing hedges and tree cover

Historic Landscape Character

- 6.13 Berkswell Parish is rich in historical buildings and monuments. The Historic Environment Report prepared by Warwickshire County Council for Berkswell Parish (HES)¹² details 63 buildings and designated monuments listed with English Heritage plus a further 7 on a local listing. These include 23 listings in Berkswell village and also a number in and around Balsall Common including the Grade II* listed Berkswell windmill just beyond the south/ eastern edge of Balsall Common. The Berkswell mill is said to be the only mill in “old Warwickshire” that can still operate with its original machinery. It was recently restored with a grant from English Heritage.
- 6.14 One of the core land-use planning principles in the NPPF (paragraph 17) is to “conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of this and future generations.
- 6.15 Paragraphs 126 to 141 of the NPPF details policies that should be adopted to preserve both listed and non-listed heritage assets.
- 6.16 The protection of listed assets in accordance with the requirements of the NPPF is an aspiration of this NDP.



Ridge and furrow field on Waste Lane, Balsall Common. Reference no MSI8867
Picture taken from the public footpath through the field

- 6.17 The Historic Environment Record (HER) for Berkswell Parish details in addition to the listed buildings and monuments various other historical features. Most notably ridge and furrow fields. Berkswell has roots back to pre-Norman times and early farming has left traces. The HER states on page 4:

“Medieval (1066 – 1540) Ridge and Furrow

Across the neighbourhood plan area there is evidence for a number of areas of ridge and furrow which may date back to the medieval period although much of it may be later in date and most of it has been levelled flat from 20th century ploughing. These are spread across

¹²Berkswell Neighbourhood Plan Historic Environment Summary Report, Warwickshire County Council, February 2018

<https://www.berkswellparishcouncil.org.uk/projects/ndp/1st-draft-additional-evidence>

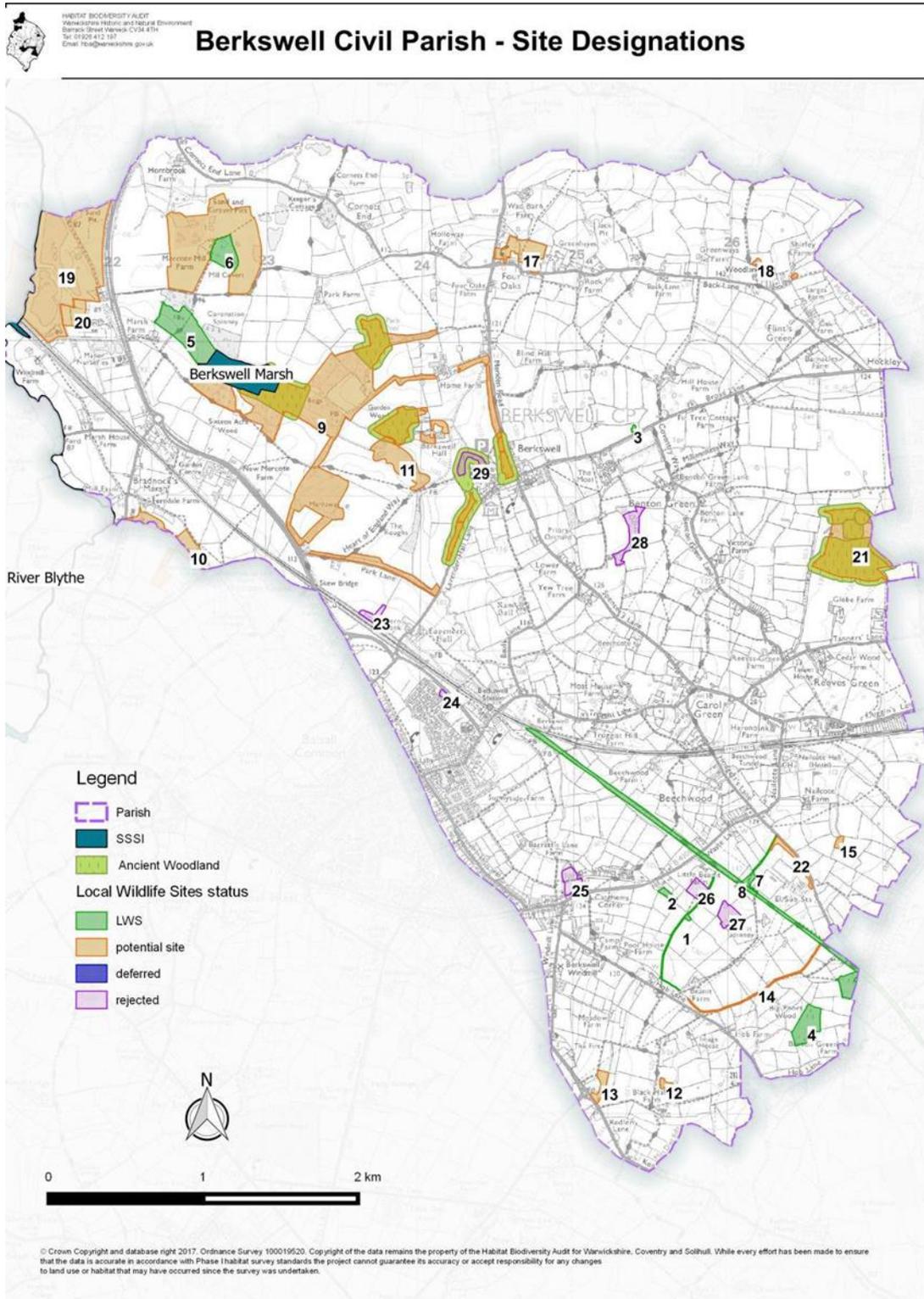
the parish with a particular focus around the Berkswell village area.” There are some good examples of ridge and furrow but few with open to public access. The protection of ridge and furrow fields where the ridge and furrow is visible to the untrained eye is an aspiration of this NDP.

Biodiversity

- 6.18 The parish has a number of areas of significant national and local wildlife interest. In January 2018 Berkswell Parish Council commissioned Warwickshire County Council to undertake an Ecological Report of the Parish¹³ for the Neighbourhood Plan. The report sets out that the River Blythe SSSI runs along the western edge of the parish and the Berkswell Marsh SSSI, which is part of the Berkswell Estate, together create important core habitat areas for wildlife which are complimented by the adjacent local wildlife sites, Berkswell Marsh Meadow and Mercote Mill Pool. In addition are the nearby potential local wildlife sites, including Marsh Lane Nature Reserve. To the south and west are some smaller local wildlife sites including the Kenilworth Greenway, Big Pools and Little Pools Wood, Berkswell Moss, Little Beanit Farm Meadow and Beanit Farm Hedge. These are shown on Figure 2 which is reproduced as Map 2.

¹³ Preliminary Ecological Report Parish Neighbourhood Plan For Berkswell Parish Council, Habitat Biodiversity Audit Partnership for Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull Warwickshire Wildlife Trust Ecological Services, Warwickshire County Council, January 2018
<https://www.berkswellparishcouncil.org.uk/projects/ndp/1st-draft-additional-evidence>

Map 2 Wildlife Designations



(Page 17 of the Ecological Report provides the names of the sites referenced by the site numbers on this map)

6.19 Important habitats in the parish identified in the report include the following:

Ancient woodland

Scattered blocks of ancient semi-natural woodland occur throughout the Arden and Berkswell has 6 areas of ancient woodland all of which are also potential local wildlife sites. Many woods on the ancient woodlands register have been substantially replanted. However their rich ground flora and fauna built up over centuries is often still present, particularly along rides and around the edge of the woodland. This makes them superior wildlife sites to more recent woodland plantations.

The two areas of ancient woodland in the parish are Berkswell Hall Wood and Rough Close Wood.

Hedgerows

Ancient mixed hedgerows often more than two metres wide are a special feature of Arden, and some may represent remnants of the original wildwood as it was cleared and converted into small hedged fields by assarting. A wide variety of woody species are typically present, often dominated by hazel, with dogwood, field maple, blackthorn and holly.

Hedgerows also provide important wildlife corridors and provide the connection for plants and animals to move between woodlands and grasslands.

There are two designated hedgerow local wildlife sites and approximately 5km of species rich hedgerows recorded by the Phase 1 habitat survey. Further hedgerow surveying would identify more species rich hedgerows across the parish.

Semi-natural grasslands

Areas of semi-improved permanent grassland are still a feature of the more pastoral Arden landscape. Many sites existed up to the Second World War are now largely destroyed or damaged as a result of agricultural intensification and development, but many areas do remain, particularly on marginal land including roadside embankments and verges; steep hillsides; disused railway cuttings; or as isolated groups of hedged fields.

Examples include Little Beanit Farm LWS (local wildlife site) and Marsh Lane Nature Reserve as well as other potential sites. A number of potential semi-natural grassland sites have been rejected for LWS status including a meadow at Catchems Corner and Berkswell Churchyard. Although these sites have been rejected they remain sites of opportunity for restoration.

Field ponds

Field ponds, often fringed by scrub and trees, are found throughout Arden and are associated with a history of stock-rearing. Where they are managed to avoid silting up and over shading by surrounding scrub vegetation they can be valuable wildlife habitats. Although many ponds have been lost as a result of agricultural intensification and neglect they are still an important feature of the parish.

More than 200 ponds have been recorded across the parish including one designated LWS site

Mercot Mill Pools and four potential sites with ponds. These field ponds are important for the great crested newt population as they provide important breeding habitats. Many pools across the area remain under surveyed both as habitats and for the presence of great crested newts.

River wetlands

Historically river floodplains were managed as wet meadowland. These were floristically rich and of great nature conservation value. Some areas of particular wildlife interest include marsh and marshy grassland. Examples of these rare sites are found in the parish including; Berkswell Marsh SSSI, Berkswell Marsh Meadow LWS and Berkswell Moss LWS. Potential wetland sites are associated with former or close by gravel working areas including for example Marsh Lane Nature Reserve alongside the River Blythe SSSI.

Character of Built Up Areas

- 6.20 Over 60% of the population of Berkswell Parish live in Balsall Common. The residents appreciate the rural feel with the countryside blending into the built-up area of Balsall Common. The area is characterised by mature trees and hedgerows incorporated within the built-up area, retention of historic hedge lines and wide grass verges. Many houses are set in large plots with extensive mature gardens. The residential areas are in close proximity to the countryside and the rural area is accessible through an extensive footpath network. The general “greenness” of the suburban areas is a key local characteristic and provides a soft, gentle transition from the suburban built up area to the open countryside.
- 6.21 The general “greenness” of the area is an important characteristic of Balsall Common and is clearly illustrated in the following photographs.

1. Meeting House Lane Area



Meeting House Lane. No pavements, narrow road and high hedges/trees create a rural feel



Meeting House Lane further north

2. Sunnyside Estate Area



Sunnyside Estate showing mature trees



Sunnyside Estate showing green character

3. Station Road



Station Road looking west towards the shops



Station Road looking east towards the station

4. The Riddings Hill Estate

6.22 The Riddings Hill Estate in Balsall Common is the most recent large estate in Berkswell Parish built approximately 20 years ago. Comprising a mix of owner-occupied properties from 2 to 5 bedrooms plus housing association rented properties it provides around 250 homes. Built to fit in with the rural surroundings it retains mature trees from the previous farmland, has an extensive park including a nature reserve, and is largely separated by design from the older properties in Balsall Common by the extensive parkland.

6.23 The Riddings Hill Estate is largely surrounded by “green” thereby separated from existing homes. See photos below.



Wild areas adjoin the housing



Mature trees from an old hedge line



The park is close to every home on the Riddings Hill estate



Hallmeadow Road. This is the access road to the Riddings Hill estate which is on the right

Local Built Character in the Rural Areas

6.24 The rural areas comprise about 550 homes with about 125 of those within or close to Berkswell village and most of the remainder in 7 scattered settlements. The rural area is 100% greenbelt but as the following map (Map 3) shows there is considerable development surrounded by the Green Belt.

6.25 Policy B3 seeks to protect local landscape and built character.

Map 3 – Developed and Undeveloped Areas



Note – areas in red are existing development)

Source : Richard Lloyd 2017

Berkswell Village

The alms houses in Berkswell village. About 30% of homes in the village are low cost Council, Berkswell Estate or Berkswell Charities homes.

The predominant building materials in the village are traditional red brick or render and tiled roofs. Buildings are modest in scale and generally up to two storeys in height.



The houses & the school in Berkswell village

- which has about 235 pupils



Duggins Lane

A largely linear area of development as large as Berkswell village. Photo of new affordable homes



Benton Green hamlet

(seen from the Berkswell to Benton Green footpath)



Carol Green



Policy B3: Protecting Local Landscape and Built Character

1. Landscape Character

- a. The location, design and layout of new housing development should respect local character within the Neighbourhood Area as set out in the Solihull Borough Landscape Character Assessment¹⁴.
- b. Landscape features of heritage or wildlife value (as identified in the Historic Environment Summary Report¹⁵ and the Preliminary Ecological Report¹⁶) should be conserved according to their significance. Where mitigation measures are appropriate the evidence based proposals should include for locally-appropriate features such as tree-planting, hedges and ponds.

2. Built Character

- a. Designs should respond positively to the distinctive local and historic character of individual settlements and character areas of the parish.
- b. Scale, massing, density and layout should relate to the surrounding built form.
- c. The use of traditional materials used locally is encouraged such as traditional red brick and render for elevations and tiled roofs.
- d. Innovative design and materials to achieve enhanced environmental performance are encouraged.

3. Heritage Assets

- a. Development proposals that impact upon the character and significance of the parish's heritage assets and their setting will be expected to demonstrate how this impact has been assessed to avoid or minimise conflict with the heritage asset's conservation.
- b. The Parish's heritage assets should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance. Proposals will be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal as appropriate; it should be demonstrated that all reasonable efforts have been made to sustain the existing use, find new uses, or mitigate the extent of the harm to the significance of the asset; and whether the works proposed are the minimum required to secure the long term use of the asset.

¹⁴ Solihull Borough Landscape Character Assessment for Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council, December 2016

<http://www.solihull.gov.uk/Portals/0/Planning/LPR/landscapecharacterassessment.pdf>

¹⁵ Berkswell Neighbourhood Plan Historic Environment Summary Report, Warwickshire County Council, February 2018

<https://www.berkswellparishcouncil.org.uk/projects/ndp/1st-draft-additional-evidence>

¹⁶ Preliminary Ecological Report Parish Neighbourhood Plan For Berkswell Parish Council, Habitat Biodiversity Audit Partnership for Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull Warwickshire Wildlife Trust Ecological Services, Warwickshire County Council, January 2018

<https://www.berkswellparishcouncil.org.uk/projects/ndp/1st-draft-additional-evidence>

- c. All applications that affect the historic environment will be expected to have considered and used, as a minimum, the evidence in the Berkswell Historic Environment Record to inform the principle and design response of the proposal.
- d. Scheduled monuments and other non-designated archaeological sites of equivalent importance should be preserved in situ. In those cases where this is not justifiable or feasible, provision should be made for excavation and recording with an appropriate assessment and evaluation. The appropriate publication/curation of findings will be expected.

4. Non-Residential Buildings in the Open Countryside

- a. Proposals for large agricultural, commercial, and infrastructure developments in the countryside should be sited, designed and landscaped with sensitivity, taking into account the characteristics of the Arden landscape of the rural area of the parish.
- b. Prominent, metallic or bright colours should be avoided in buildings or parts of buildings which are highly visible from or located within sensitive landscape areas. Natural and earth colours and materials are preferred wherever possible.
- c. Boundary treatments should be designed taking into account the Landscape Character design criteria under this Policy and Policy B6, and obtrusive security / palisade type fencing should be avoided.

Local Green Spaces

- 6.26 The NPPF sets out in paragraphs 76 – 78, that subject to certain criteria, local communities can identify and protect local green spaces.

Para 76. Local communities through local and neighbourhood plans should be able to identify for special protection green areas of particular importance to them. By designating land as Local Green Space local communities will be able to rule out new development other than in very special circumstances. Identifying land as Local Green Space should therefore be consistent with the local planning of sustainable development and complement investment in sufficient homes, jobs and other essential services. Local Green Spaces should only be designated when a plan is prepared or reviewed and be capable of enduring beyond the end of the plan period.

Para 77. The Local Green Space designation will not be appropriate for most green areas or open space. The designation should only be used:

- *where the green space is in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;*
- *where the green area is demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife; and*
- *where the green area concerned is local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.*

Para 78. Local policy for managing development within a Local Green Space should be consistent with policy for Green Belts.

- 6.27 One site is proposed as a Local Green Space for protection in Policy B4. This is the triangle of land off Lavender Hall Lane which includes the football ground – see Map 4.
- 6.28 The proposed Local Green Space was generally supported in the comments on the First Draft Plan, although there were suggestions that the Local Green Space designation should be extended to cover other areas of Lavender Hall Park. This was not considered necessary by the Steering Group as the park is a public open space and already has protection under Solihull's planning policies.

The Football Ground at the north of Balsall Common off Lavender Hall Lane and bordered by Hallmeadow Road - Identification and Justification

Close Proximity to Local Community	Demonstrably Special	Local in Character
<p>This site is at the north of Balsall Common adjacent to Lavender Hall Park.</p>	<p>This site has a high recreational value.</p> <p>It is the home of the Hornets Football Club which provides football to over 200 hundred children and young people plus some adults. It also provides a cricket square for use by the Berkswell Cricket Club and in particular their youth team (the main cricket ground is over capacity and is situated in the centre of Balsall Common on charitable land).</p> <p>The area is also served by a public footpath and is used for casual walking by members of the community to provide longer walks in conjunction with Lavender Hall Park.</p> <p>The northern part is lightly wooded and provides habitat for wild birds and animals, therefore having a wildlife value.</p> <p>In the First Draft Plan consultation 95% of respondents (876 in total) supported the designation.</p>	<p>Balsall Common is without any publicly provided facilities for children and young people in the form of sports centres, swimming pools etc. The Hornets Football Club who use this site are a voluntary organisation dedicated to young people from the area. With assistance from the Football Association and other donations they have built a changing facility and installed extensive drainage to create football pitches.</p> <p>It extends over a couple of small fields and is enclosed by secure boundary fencing. It is bounded by roads and the rear gardens of residential properties.</p>

Photographs of The Hornets at their Ground on Lavender Hall Lane



Policy B4: Local Green Space

The following green area as shown on Map 4 is designated as a Local Green Space:

The Football Ground on Lavender Hall Lane, Balsall Common.

Map 4 The Football Ground, Lavender Hall Lane, Balsall Common



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7. Protecting Berkswell Conservation Area



View towards Church Lane, from Village Green

- 7.1 Berkswell Conservation Area was designated in November 1968. Solihull MBC published a Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Proposals¹⁷ document in 2011 and this describes the key characteristics of the Conservation Area, different character areas and includes a number of recommendations for the management of the area. The extent of the conservation area is shown on Map 5.
- 7.2 The Conservation Area includes all the buildings along the four limbs of Berkswell's crossroads plan with the exception of the later housing of Pound Close. In the north west quadrant, it also includes the village green and almshouses on Church Lane, the extensive grounds of Well House and of the Church of St John the Baptist.
- 7.3 Although a small village, Berkswell has 17 listed buildings including all those fronting Church Lane, and 6 scheduled monuments. They illustrate building types and materials from the rubble and dressed sandstone of the 11th century church through timber frame and plaster infill panels to brick built houses and 19th century estate buildings. Plain clay tiles, thatch and slate are the predominant roof materials.

¹⁷ See <http://www.solihull.gov.uk/Portals/0/Planning/BerksCAApp.pdf>

- *A consistent street scene of continuous frontages on Church Lane*
 - *A low density of buildings elsewhere making gardens an important element*
 - *Evidence of the rural economy in farm buildings and estate houses*
 - *A significant landscape context of historic field patterns and designed parkland*
 - *Important views over countryside and parkland*
 - *Consistent two storey height with pitched roofs*
 - *Consistent use of building materials – timber and brick with clay tiled roofs and occasional survival of thatch*
 - *Important focus of parish church and of the Bear Inn at the main cross roads*
 - *Winding rural character of Lavender Hall Lane contrasting with the straight line of Meriden Road and Spencer’s Lane*
 - *Important open spaces at the churchyard and village green*
 - *Historic connection with sporting figures.*
- 7.5 The recommendations in the management proposals include a suggestion that to help protect buildings in the area, Solihull Council and Berkswell Parish Council should collaborate to publish guidance on the management of change to heritage assets. Such guidance could be prepared and brought forward through the NDP as a possible design policy to guide new development in the Conservation Area and to guide the management of heritage assets under updated supplementary planning guidance.
- 7.6 Whilst it is evident that the Conservation Area has great value and charm it does not appear that there is a consistent building style within it. House building types vary from timber framed Tudor houses to 20th century Council housing. The predominant scale is of two storeys and modest footprint, often with a vernacular appearance or more formal estate building group members.
- 7.7 The responses to the consultation on Issues and Options suggested that the buildings are an eclectic mix with no particular vernacular style and only 28% of respondents supported a policy in the NDP to provide design guidance for the Conservation Area. The responses to the First Draft Plan included several comments supporting the need to protect the rural character and history of the parish. However, it is possible that some limited development (such as for local needs housing) could take place during the plan period within or close to the Conservation Area, which could impact on its setting and character. Therefore, a policy is proposed in the NDP to provide design guidance for new development in the Berkswell conservation area.
- 7.8 The adopted Solihull Local Plan seeks the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas and listed buildings (including their setting) in Policy P16 - Conservation of Heritage Assets & Local Distinctiveness.

Policy B5: Berkswell Conservation Area

- 1. Development proposals for new buildings, extensions and conversions of existing buildings will be supported where designs enhance and reinforce local character and distinctiveness, and the character and appearance of Berkswell conservation area.**

2. All proposals should demonstrate how the design is appropriate in terms of scale, height, materials and detailing to the character and appearance of the conservation area. Where relevant development should also preserve listed buildings and their settings.

3. New Buildings

New buildings should be of a scale, massing and overall height which respond to the characteristics of the site and its setting within the local character area as identified in the Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Proposals document. Where relevant they must also have regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting.

New buildings in the conservation area:

- a. Should be modest in scale, no more than two storeys in height with pitched roofs and either detached or grouped in small terraces.
- b. Should adopt building lines up to the back of footpath in the Church Lane area and set slightly back behind footways or front gardens elsewhere so that they are in context with their surroundings.
- c. Should use rooflines consistent with neighbouring buildings.
- d. Should use materials chosen to complement the design of a development and add to the quality or character of the surrounding environment; locally appropriate materials such as traditional red brick or timber frames with plain clay tiled roofs and possibly thatch should normally be used.
- e. Can employ contemporary designs where that would contribute positively towards the visual interest of the local street scene; such proposals must use high quality traditional materials, such as local brick in innovative ways where appropriate.

4. Extensions

Extensions to existing properties will be supported where they meet the following criteria:

- a. The scale and form are subordinate in scale to the existing building, the roofline does not exceed the existing rooflines and the character of the street scene is protected.
- b. Materials are compatible with the materials of the original building or distinctive in a fully justified manner.
- c. Traditional boundary treatments are retained.

5. Conversion or Sub-Division of Non-Residential Properties

Proposals for conversion or sub-division will be supported where the existing building can accommodate such alteration without substantial or complete rebuilding, and where the alterations do not detract from the character of the original building, the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, or the special interest and setting of any relevant listed buildings. Careful thought is required about the treatment of external areas in terms of enclosure, lighting, garden structures and the like.

6. Views and Open Spaces

- a. **Proposals should take account of the important views over open countryside and parkland as identified in the Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Proposals document, and particularly views towards the focal points of the Parish Church and the Malthouse and Bear Inn at the main crossroads.**
- b. **The important open spaces at the churchyard, the well and village green should be conserved for their strong contribution to local character and distinctiveness.**

8. Conversion of Former Agricultural Buildings



“Framed” barn conversion, Barrett’s Lane Farm

- 8.1 The sensitive conversion of former agricultural buildings can provide a new economic use for redundant or underused buildings in the rural area. However, conversions of field barns and vernacular buildings can have an adverse impact on local landscape character and this is identified as a pressure for some LCAs in the Solihull Borough Landscape Character Assessment. It is worth noting that not all conversions will require planning consent.
- 8.2 There have been a limited number of conversions in the parish for a range of uses in recent years. These include: Barrett’s Lane Farm as a multi-unit housing development near Balsall Common, buildings at Home Farm for offices together with approved planning applications for conversions at Back Lane and Bradnocks Marsh.
- 8.3 The responses to the Issues and Options consultation showed that there was overall support for a policy in the NDP to guide conversions of barns and former agricultural buildings. 79% of Berkswell respondents and 86% of other respondents supported such a policy. The responses to the First Draft Plan included several comments querying the need for conversions of agricultural buildings to residential properties.
- 8.4 Solihull adopted Local Plan Policy P17 Countryside and Green Belt sets out that *“where the re-use of buildings or land is proposed, the new use, and any associated use of land surrounding the building, should not conflict with, nor have a materially greater impact on, the openness of the Green Belt and the purposes of including land in it, and the form, bulk and general design of the buildings shall be in keeping with their surroundings.”*

Policy B6: Conversions of Former Agricultural Buildings in the Open Countryside

- 1. Where planning permission is required, the re-use or conversion of former agricultural buildings for small scale business uses or residential uses will be supported where proposals are sensitive to the existing character, form and any special designation of the rural landscape and buildings are of permanent and substantial construction.**

- 2. Where appropriate materials such as red brick, wooden cladding, roof tiles and glass should be used, and designs should aim to retain the scale and form of the original building(s) as well as any traditional detailing.**
- 3. Conversions should be limited to the footprint, scale and height of the existing building. Any proposed extensions or new buildings associated with the development should not result in disproportionate additions or extend the curtilage of the building into open countryside.**
- 4. Access should be suitable or if necessary made suitable and adequate for proposed increases in traffic associated with new uses bearing in mind the local road network.**
- 5. Boundary treatments should reflect existing field boundaries in the wider rural area such as hedges and post and rail fencing. Suburban style close-boarded fencing and high brick walls are not appropriate and should be avoided. Consideration could be given to the use of ha-ha ditches. Appropriate screening should be provided to help conceal parking areas and vehicles, bin storage areas and other ancillary domestic structures or buildings.**

9. Accessibility and Infrastructure



Berkswell Station

- 9.1 Berkswell Parish has good access to the motorway network via J6 of the M42, which is 5 miles away. The rail station on the west coast mainline is located to the east of Balsall Common within Berkswell Parish and provides services to Birmingham, Coventry and London. However, trains are generally limited to 2 per hour in each direction with an asymmetric frequency with generally a 20 minute or 40-minute gap rather than a regular half hourly service.
- 9.2 The Solihull Connected Transport Strategy 2016¹⁸ shows that 70% of residents of the rural east of the Borough make their trips by car compared to a Borough average of 50%.

Car Parking

- 9.3 The car park at the station is usually full and has insufficient capacity to meet present demand. Total car parking available in the station car park is 93 cars including 5 disabled bays. The lack of capacity leads to Hallmeadow Road being used for parking by rail users of Berkswell Station on a daily basis.
- 9.4 In addition to earlier surveys carried out in 2017, a parking survey of Hall Meadow car park was undertaken by members of the NDP Steering Group in January 2018¹⁹. This provided the following results.

Date	Day of Week	Numbers of parked cars	Notes
9 th January	Tuesday	42	
10 th January	Wednesday	47	In the afternoon, resident reported 57 cars
11 th January	Thursday	41	
15 th January	Monday	37	
16 th January	Tuesday	44	
17 th January	Wednesday	31	
18 th January	Thursday	31	

¹⁸ <http://www.solihull.gov.uk/solihullconnected>

¹⁹ See NDP Website – Evidence Base

19 th January	Friday	29	
22 nd January	Monday	42	Resident noted 4 parked cars on Station Road opposite the Brickmakers Arms in addition to the Hallmeadow Road parking
23 rd January	Tuesday	47	
24 th January	Wednesday	43	
26 th January	Friday	31	

- 9.5 The surveys showed that parked car numbers have increased since the February 2017 survey. Daily parking on Hallmeadow Road during the official survey was 29 to 47 cars with a peak on Tuesdays to Thursdays. Outside of the survey 57 cars were recorded. Parking for the station now also takes place in nearby Station Road on a bend in the road opposite the Brickmakers Arms. Car parking is often inconsiderate and includes parking on grass verges and / or potentially dangerous parking on the roundabout junction or on the bend on Station Road.
- 9.6 In the consultation on the Issues and Options, 91% of Berkswell Parish respondents supported improved parking at the Station. 72% agreed that the NDP should allocate land for additional parking. (94% and 88% respectively for other respondents). A suggestion was made for multi storey car parking at the station. Parking, traffic and travel related issues continued to form a high proportion of comments submitted in the responses to the First Draft Plan.
- 9.7 The current station car park is immediately adjacent to the West Coast Main Line (MCML) and is partially bordered on the west side by commercial premises and a narrow strip of land in flood zone 3 flood plain. There are no residential buildings in the immediate area.
- 9.8 An extension to the existing car park could possibly be achieved through the provision of land within a proposed strategic site allocation and this would require land to be released from Green Belt through the LPR.
- 9.9 The proposed route for HS2 will have a high elevation near to the current car park as it crosses over the west coast mainline and Truggist Lane. It is possible that additional car parking space could be found between the WCML and the HS2 line. At this stage however, the feasibility of a car park extension in that location has not been tested. West Midlands Trains advised at the rail consultation group meeting held on 28th September 2017 in the Mailbox in Birmingham, that Berkswell Station was not scheduled for car park expansion under their new franchise agreement.
- 9.10 Although there is insufficient evidence to support a specific site allocation for a new station car park in the NDP, Policy B7 would provide a supportive planning policy to encourage the development of a new or extended car park to enhance rail passenger facilities at Berkswell station.

Policy B7: Improving Car Parking Facilities at Berkswell Station

Development proposals which provide additional public car parking and secure, safe and convenient cycle parking at Berkswell Station will be supported provided these do not fall within Flood Zone 3. Such proposals could include development of a two storey car park building and / or an extension to the current car park to the west of the West Coast Main Line to increase capacity for rail passengers.

Landscaping schemes should incorporate appropriate landscaping and tree planting to provide adequate screening, shade and enhancements to the public realm.

9.11 Residents in Berkswell are highly reliant on private car use. In terms of car ownership, 2011 Census²⁰ information indicates that:

- Berkswell has 40% more cars per household than the SMBC average (1.88 cars per household compared to 1.34 cars in the borough)
- Berkswell has more houses with 3 or more cars than the SMBC average (17.8% for Berkswell and 9.9% for SMBC average)
- 64.2% of households in Berkswell Parish have at least 2 cars.

9.12 Accommodating the parking needs of local households is a significant issue – especially where parking within the curtilage of houses is limited and where households have more than 1 car. There is also a need to accommodate visitor parking. Lack of off-street car parking provision in new developments encourages car parking on pavements which impacts on safety and accessibility for pedestrians, those visually impaired, and users of wheelchairs, pushchairs and mobility scooters. This is potentially discriminatory on the basis of age and disability and contrary to the duty on public authorities to prevent such discrimination, under the Equality Act 2010.



Pavement blocked to prams and disabled Scooters



Overhang blocking pavement

9.13 Parking on the road is inconsistent with charging of electric vehicles and it is Government policy that no new cars will be powered by petrol/diesel in 2040 - a mere 7 years after the end of the plan period. 84% of residents saw this parking provision issue as a priority for a planning policy. This was the 3rd highest scoring priority for residents.

9.14 Berkswell has very limited employment opportunities locally and is poorly provided with effective public transport with only a twice hourly train service to central Birmingham and central Coventry and poor/non-existent bus service to the major employment locations of Solihull, Warwick University/Canley, Kenilworth/Leamington Spa, the Jaguar plant at Honiley and the industrial/business parks in Coventry giving the much higher than the Solihull

²⁰ See <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/localarea>

average car usage rates quoted in the current draft of the NDP. In Berkswell 70% of residents make their daily journeys by car compared to 50% for the Borough (See Solihull Connected Transport Strategy).

- 9.15 Policy B8 therefore seeks to encourage sufficient car parking and cycle storage in new developments to help ensure existing problems are not exacerbated in the area if and when new housing development takes place.

Policy B8: Car Parking and Cycle Storage

Development proposals must have appropriate regard for the higher levels of car ownership evident within the Berkswell Neighbourhood Area. Whilst suitable parking provision must be integral to the design of schemes, the number of off-street parking spaces for residents and visitors should be justified and provided on the basis of an evidenced assessment of:

- a. the accessibility of the development;**
- b. the type, mix and use of development;**
- c. the availability of and opportunities for public transport;**
- d. local car ownership levels; and**
- e. the need to ensure an adequate provision of spaces for charging plug-in and other ultra-low emission vehicles.**

As far as is practical, the guidance provided within the Manual for Streets²¹ and Secured by Design²² should inform the location and design of vehicle and cycle parking provision.

Improving Accessibility for All

- 9.16 Car journeys put pressure on the local road network of winding rural lanes. The parish council would like to see more investment in safer routes to encourage increased walking, cycling and mobility scooters. Improving opportunities for walking, cycling and mobility scooters in Berkswell Parish would also assist with supporting healthy lifestyles initiatives and promoting well-being in line with Local Plan Policy P18.
- 9.17 A cycle path was incorporated into the design of Hallmeadow Road with the southern end close to the Station. This is currently little used because it is an isolated and short feature that does not connect to the shops or much else. The distance from the Riddings Hill estate (off Hallmeadow Road) is well within a comfortable walking distance for residents using the station.
- 9.18 The public footpath across Barrett's Farm is used by many in the Kelsey Lane/Catchem's Corner areas to reach the shops and is used by some commuters in the summer to access the station.
- 9.19 The extensive network of footpaths within the parish, particularly those on Barrett's Farm and the Greenway (to the east of Balsall Common), are used extensively for recreational walking, including dog walking, running and cycling. As such they make a significant contribution to

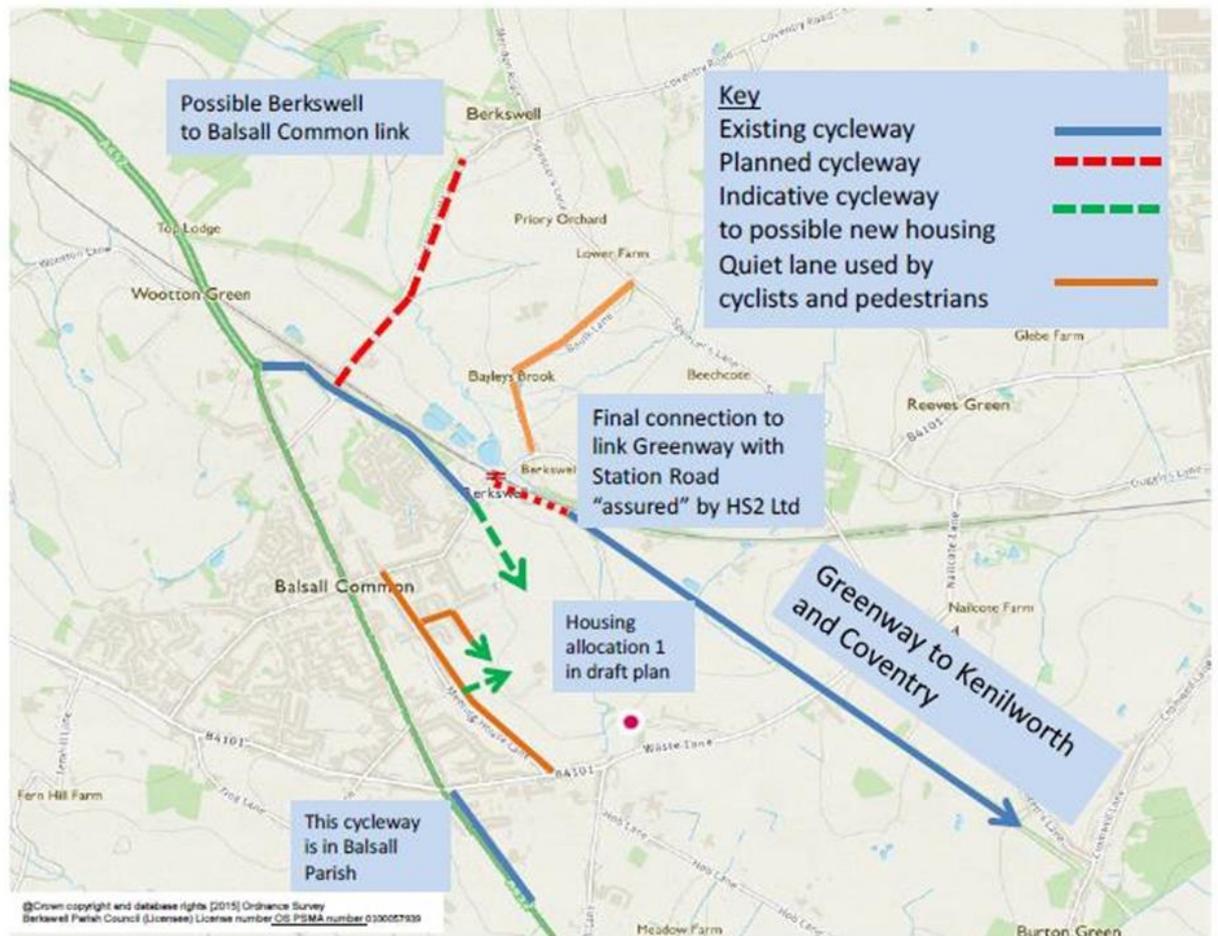
²¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/manual-for-streets>

²² <https://www.securedbydesign.com/>

health policy objectives in the Local Plan in an area without formal publicly provided sports facilities.

- 9.20 The Millennium Way, Heart of England Way long distance footpaths also run through the parish as does the shorter 40-mile circular Coventry Way. These provide enjoyment and exercise for people from a wide geographical area.
- 9.21 Improving accessibility for Berkswell village is an objective of the NDP. The village is located about 2 miles from the wide range of services and facilities at Balsall Common, but the lack of public transport connectivity and the absence of a safe pavement/cycle route mean that most residents use a car for even simple journeys.
- 9.22 A new bridge over the west coast mainline associated with HS2 at the north of Hallmeadow Road will have a footpath and safer cycling options. This brings the possibility of connecting Berkswell village to Balsall Common through an extension of the new footpath/cycleway into Berkswell village and using the existing cycleway on Hallmeadow Road. Such an extension would benefit those who use mobility scooters as well as cyclists and pedestrians.
- 9.23 Planning of cycle and walking routes into the draft housing allocation 1 Barrett's Farm could connect with the Hallmeadow Road cycle route (perhaps extended to Berkswell village) providing a much-improved cycle network for local journeys and recreation.
- 9.24 The NDP Steering Group has identified the following as "safe" walking and cycle routes in Berkswell parish and developers will be encouraged to provide linkages to this network to reduce residents' reliance on the private car.

Map 6 Proposed Safe Walking and Cycle Routes, Berkswell Parish



Policy B9: Improving Accessibility for All

1. Development proposals should where applicable include linkages to existing footpaths and cycle routes (as identified on Map 6) in order to improve connectivity between existing networks and enhance the attractiveness of walking and cycling in and around the area. All existing public rights of way should be retained within development schemes wherever possible.
2. Where new (or diverted) non-vehicular routes are proposed, paths should avoid the use of estate roads wherever possible, and preference will be given to routes through landscaped areas or open spaces away from vehicular traffic.
3. Designs should maximise safe accessibility for all non-vehicle users. Path widths should be suitable for safe use by users of mobility scooters, wheelchairs and pushchairs.
4. All new and existing pedestrian and cycle routes within the built-up area should be well lit to encourage confident use and reduce anti-social behaviour. Routes should not be enclosed on both sides by high fences, walls or hedging which can lead to narrow, unattractive corridors with limited overlooking.

Traffic Calming in Berkswell Village

- 9.25 Berkswell Parish Council has commissioned a study into traffic calming measures for Berkswell village. This has been the subject of a separate consultation process to enable the consultants to develop costed proposals and options. Further information about the project is provided in the Annex.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

- 9.26 In April 2010 new regulations were introduced that allows local authorities to set up a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). CIL is a tariff charged on development, at a locally set rate, to fund infrastructure needs arising from new development in the Borough. This can include transport schemes, flood defences, schools, health and social care facilities, parks and green spaces and cultural and sports facilities.
- 9.27 The CIL charging rates are included within a Charging Schedule, and can vary with type of development, location within the Borough, and size of the development. The rates are based on viability testing, and an identified need for infrastructure. For each new liable development, CIL is calculated according to the floorspace of the development and the rates within an adopted Charging Schedule. If a parish has a made NDP then the parish council is entitled to 25% of CIL. Without an NDP parish councils are entitled to 15% of CIL generated. Following the examination and approval at full council, Solihull MBC commenced charging CIL on 4th July 2016.
- 9.28 Berkswell is in the rural area where CIL rates are £150 per sq m for residential development (other rates apply for other types of development). If the proposed strategic sites come forward through the LPR then the CIL could lead to significant investment in the parish (and neighbouring Balsall Parish).
- 9.29 It is the responsibility of other organisations (particularly SMBC) to ensure that new development is accompanied by necessary major infrastructure such as schools, utilities and roads. However, there are other aspects of infrastructure that a Berkswell Parish NDP could seek to provide.
- 9.30 Balsall Common currently falls between two parish councils and Berkswell Parish Council will work together with Balsall Parish Council to identify infrastructure needs and secure improvements where appropriate. Comments from the issues and options relating to proposed improvements in local infrastructure are provided in [the Annex](#).

10. Business

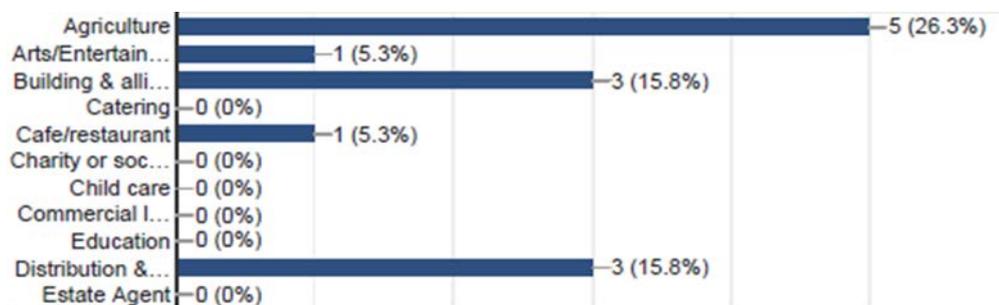


The Business and Industrial park at Home Farm on the edge of Berkswell Village

Businesses in the Rural Area

- 10.1 There is a wide range of businesses operating across Berkswell Parish, providing employment and contributing to local economy. These include businesses at Bradnocks Marsh, along the A452, Back Lane, area near Station and farms. The NDP Steering Group undertook a local business survey in Autumn 2017 to understand better the types and locations of existing businesses, and their plans for the future including any needs for expansion. There were 19 responses to the survey and the distribution of business types in Berkswell Parish is shown in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3 Types of Local Businesses in Berkswell



- 10.2 Local Plan Policy P17 Countryside and Green Belt sets out that: *“In addition to the national policy, the following provisions shall apply to development in the Borough’s Green Belt: ... The reasonable expansion of established businesses into the Green Belt will be allowed where the proposal would make a significant contribution to the local economy or employment, providing that appropriate mitigation can be secured.”*
- 10.3 The majority of local residents travel to work outside of the parish, mainly by car according to the Solihull Connected Transport Strategy 2016. However, there is anecdotal evidence that there might be significant working from home by small business owners, the self-employed, and also by employees of larger companies. The responses to the Issues and Options consultation showed that 23.5% of respondents from Berkswell worked from home, and it is

likely that this figure will continue to grow provided there is suitable investment in communications technologies such as broadband and mobile telephone networks.

- 10.4 The responses to the Issues and Options consultation showed that there was general support for a policy or policies in the NDP to support local economic development; in the residents' questionnaire, 76.8% of respondents supported such a policy. However, residents also expressed concerns about such matters as impacts from traffic, the need for improved communications technologies, and the preference for support for local small business development rather than, for example, storage and distribution. Support for promoting live / work units in new developments was more evenly split with 50.6% of respondents supporting the inclusion of such a policy in the NDP. The responses to the First Draft Plan included many further comments suggesting there was a need to support local businesses and economic growth.
- 10.5 In terms of the business survey, just over a quarter (26.3%) of respondents commented that their current premises were not suitable for their current needs and 64.3% suggested that current premises were not suitable for their likely needs in 5 years' time. The reasons given for this included the need to provide more space to grow or diversify the business accommodation and the need for office / training facilities locally, which could perhaps be provided through a community / commercial hub. In answer to the question about whether the NDP should support provision for the creation of a business centre providing low cost, flexible workspaces, meeting rooms and managed services, just over half (52.6%) were strongly in favour or in favour. There was also a higher level of support for a policy to support working from home than the residents' survey; 63.2% of business respondents supported such a policy.
- 10.6 Policy B10 seeks to support appropriate local business development.

Policy B10: Supporting Local Businesses

- 1. Development proposals for small scale business and live / work units, meeting facilities to support small scale local businesses and proposals linked to diversification of the rural economy will be supported where:**
 - a. Development is appropriate to Berkswell Parish's rural location in the Green Belt, the local landscape character and surrounding land uses in terms of design, scale and materials; and**
 - b. Proposals incorporate appropriate suitable mitigation measures to minimise any adverse impacts on the local road network, and adequate car, other motor vehicle and cycle parking is provided on site for employees and visitors.**
- 2. Where proposals are for the re-use or conversion of former agricultural buildings, workshops or previously used brownfield sites they should demonstrate appropriate regard for Policy B6.**

- 3. Proposals for homeworking which require planning consent will be supported where they re-use or bring back into use an existing building, or part of an existing building, and where such development would not have an adverse impact on residential amenity, village or landscape and historic character.**
- 4. Where extensions to residential properties are proposed they should be subservient to the main building.**

Balsall Common Shopping Centre

- 10.7 Part of Balsall Common shopping centre falls within the Berkswell Parish NDP boundary with 6 of the 32 the shopping units within Berkswell Parish. The Balsall Common shopping centre has a wide range of shops and services and the centre appears to be economically viable for business. The parish council wishes to support its ongoing viability.
- 10.8 New development within Balsall Common will potentially provide an enhanced local customer base which should help to enhance the vitality and viability of the existing local centre.
- 10.9 It is proposed that Balsall Parish Council lead on the development of policies covering the shopping centre itself and this will not feature as a part of the Berkswell Parish NDP. However, the Issues and Options consultation included questions seeking residents' views on the issues facing the centre to inform any future policy development. A follow up survey of six formers at the Heart of England School focused on infrastructure and the Balsall Common Shopping centre arising from suggestions from respondents to the Issue and Options survey.
- 10.10 The responses indicated that a majority (78.3%) of respondents wanted to see a policy focusing retail development on the current Balsall Common centre although 74.5% would prefer to see policy development work related to the centre led by Balsall Parish Council through their own NDP. A number of issues were raised which could be considered as part of the planning framework for the centre. These included parking, access, poor design of public space, lack of public seating and lack of space for local market and the need for a good mix of retail and food outlets.
- 10.11 Berkswell Parish Council has shared its survey information with Balsall Parish Council and will work closely with Balsall Parish Council to coordinate a joint approach which addresses common themes in the two NDPs.

11. Review

- 11.1 The Qualifying Body will monitor the impact of the Plan and undertake a review of the Plan no later than 3 years after the adoption of the new Local Plan.

Annex - Non Planning Content

1 - Berkswell Village Traffic Calming Project

Background

Berkswell village has for a number of years been subject to significant traffic congestion at certain times due in part to high numbers of people visiting the village for recreational purposes; attending the church for standard services and extraordinary events such as weddings and funerals but mainly due to parents bringing their children to the school. The overwhelming majority of children attending the school are driven in mainly from Balsall Common, adjacent areas of Coventry some from Meriden and, of course, rural areas of Berkswell Parish. This serves to put pressure on village parking, road capacity and particularly pedestrian safety: parents and children have no safe road crossing points and have to walk in the carriageway as the village is poorly served by pavements. In addition, the village also suffers from vehicles being driven at excessive speed both during school start and finish times and generally.

The Project

A community led project under the auspices of the parish council but with financial help from the Berkswell Charities and Berkswell Society was initiated in 2016. Arup were commissioned to work with a steering group covering the main stakeholders to develop proposal for a way forward. The key priorities were seen as

1. To meaningfully reduce speed of traffic passing through the village
2. To meaningfully improve (or the feeling of) pedestrian safety for residents and other users of village amenity
3. To improve parking and enhance visual amenity as a result of achieving points 1 & 2

Significant consultation was undertaken as 3 events held by the steering group. Arup produced comprehensive proposals for consultation.

Current Status

A public consultation based on layout drawing produced by SMBC Highways Department and the parish council's consultants "ARUP" was conducted at the 4 NDP drop in sessions. 152 forms were completed and submitted. 118 of these from Berkswell Parish residents, 28 from Balsall parish plus 6 from Coventry/Burton Green. Berkswell School takes pupils not only from the civil Berkswell Parish but also the historical ecclesiastical parish parts of which are now in Coventry/Burton Green and Balsall Parish. The very active church in Berkswell (St John Baptist) serves a wide range of worshippers across a similar area. Residents' and visitors' preferences and priorities have been fully considered and the resultant proposals agreed with SMBC Highways Department.

The key elements of the scheme will be

1. The provision of a footpath behind the car park on Meriden Road to improve the safety for visitors to the village. This will result in a narrowing of the Meriden Road to the legal minimum which in itself will help moderate speeding.

2. The provision of a table top at the cross roads in the centre of the village as a traffic calming measure.
3. The provision of a zebra crossing on the Meriden Road close to the entrance to the footpath across the spinney to the school.
4. Build outs at the four entrances to the village designed to slow traffic as it enters the village by giving priority to vehicles leaving the village
5. A footpath on Lavender Hall Lane from the last house near the Severn Trent sewage plant to the village green.

The detail design of the above proposals to meet highways and conservation officers' requirements. The layout of elements 1 to 4 is as shown on SMBC drawing – Option 1 February 2018.

Financing

It is envisaged that the overall scheme will be financed mainly from non-parish council sources including charitable trusts and the HS2 community fund perhaps with a contribution from the parish council for those elements which benefit the wider parish.

2 – Improving Local Infrastructure

Further work will be required on the viability and prioritisation of various infrastructure suggestions in conjunction with Balsall PC after adoption of the NDP.

1. Principles for spending the community infrastructure levy

On the 8th December 2016 Berkswell Parish Council approved the following motion

“In making judgments concerning the spending of Community Infrastructure Levy, Berkswell Parish Council will be guided by the following principles:

- A.** CIL Payments arising from the proposed Solihull Plan housing extension to Balsall Common will be spent to provide facilities/infrastructure for Balsall Common particularly to address the following issues:
 - a. To provide infrastructure/facilities to mitigate or compensate for the impact of the development on existing residents near the new homes
 - b. To provide infrastructure/facilities for the new homes
 - c. To provide infrastructure/facilities for all residents of Balsall Common particularly where existing facilities become stretched by the new housing
 - d. Berkswell Parish Council will work with the NDP Steering Committee, which reflects all sectors of the community, to identify options and priorities as part of the Neighbourhood Planning Process. This principle is already set as a purpose of the NDP Steering Committee.
- B.** CIL payments arising for other development in Berkswell Parish
 - a. CIL payments from this source will be used to provide infrastructure/facilities for residents anywhere in the Parish based on an assessment of need and cost/benefit”

2. Infrastructure suggestions

The following suggestions were made by residents and have been grouped by theme enhancing Balsall Common:

Summary of respondents' suggestions	NDP Steering Group Comments
<p>1. Improve Balsall Common centre holistically and not just parking</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trees • Statues/fountains • Areas to sit outside • Village green • Street market • Make it a go to destination not just somewhere you have to shop • Pavement cafes • Charging points for cars • Improve Balsall Common centre parking both quantity and layout 	<p>Residents' suggestions when combined seem to propose creating an improved sense of place for the centre of Balsall Common to make it a place to visit in its own right rather than merely a quick shopping top up area. This is consistent with the proposed Vision of Berkswell Parish being a pleasant and safe place to live and bring up families</p>
<p>The following two subjects call for a combined community centre fulfilling several needs</p>	
<p>2. Sports facilities suggestions</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gym • Swimming pool • All weather sports e.g. football and hockey • Public sports facilities including tennis • Adult outdoor gym/trim track/petanque • Extend current Lant facilities into Barrett's Farm to utilise current built facilities • Use Heart of England as a hub for the village 	<p>We presume using Heart of England as a hub means create shared Heart of England School and community facilities. There were a lot of suggestions in this area, communal hall and public open space which are listed in 3.</p>
<p>3. Communal halls/facilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cyber café where 6th formers can work. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi-purpose hall covering Sports, community centre, arts, business meeting rooms 	<p>We presume by outside facilities the respondent means sports facilities listed elsewhere.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modernise current Balsall Common village hall • Outside Facilities • Use Heart of England as a hub for the village 	<p>We presume using Heart of England as a hub means create shared Heart of England School and community facilities</p>
<p>4. Public space on new housing allocations</p>	
<p>4.1 Play areas for children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play areas for children in the south of Balsall Common • Fishing lake for children to replace existing ponds (on Barrett’s Farm) and/or use flood plain area <p>4.2 Communal site for village events</p> <p>4.3 Wild areas of public space and natural green space for</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ecological reasons • Children to have dens/camps • Picnic areas • Ponds for children to fish <p>4.4 Investigate facility needs for teenagers</p> <p>4.5 Dog walking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Replace footpaths to be lost through SMBC local plan housing allocations that are currently used for dog walking • Off lead dog walking • 2 to 4 miles in length <p>4.6 Provide a network of cycle tracks within the new developments</p>	<p>These suggestions fit within the Vision of Berkswell Parish being a pleasant and safe place to live and bring up families. In particular they point to an environment which enables children/young people to develop by providing relatively safe but stimulating/challenging outside environments for play. The suggestions also fit with the strong wish expressed by residents to protect the landscape character and the community benefits it provides.</p>
<p>5. Enhancing the rural areas</p>	
<p>5.1 Traffic calming in Berkswell village</p>	<p>There is a parish council project that is developing proposals on this issue which SMBC Highways Department has requested be included within the NDP. It would be hard to justify CIL arising from Balsall Common housing development, contributing to this project except for specific provisions for Balsall Common residents in terms of parking for the school/church. If private/HS2/other funding</p>

	<p>was available to meet a significant proportion of the cost that would improve the cost/benefit balance of this infrastructure enhancement for all parish residents. All proposals will be carefully considered with SMBC.</p>
<p>5.2 Cycle tracks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a network of cycle tracks • Link the greenway to Station Road in Balsall Common 	<p>The provision of cycle tracks in the rural areas provides both improved connectivity without the use of cars and also recreational/health improvement opportunities. HS2 Ltd has provided an assurance to SMBC that their project will provide a link from Station Road to the greenway as a legacy facility.</p> <p>76% of Berkswell respondents and 68% of other respondents supported the provision of a Balsall Common/Berkswell village link. Such a link, combined with a traffic calmed Berkswell village, would provide recreational benefit to Balsall Common residents and would link Riddings Hill estate school pupils with the Berkswell primary school. It would be hard to justify CIL arising from Balsall Common housing development, meeting the full cost. If private/HS2 funding was available to meet a significant proportion of the cost that would improve the cost/benefit balance of this infrastructure enhancement for all parish residents.</p>
<p>5.3 Provide a cycle/pedestrian connection between Balsall Common and Berkswell village</p>	<p>This will require funding from grant making bodies such as Sustrans.</p>
<p>5.4 Pavement enhancement/introduction suggestions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting House Lane • Four Oaks to Berkswell village • Balsall Common to Carol Green (Truggist Lane) • Tanners Lane 	<p>A survey of residents of Meeting House Lane during April 2016 indicated that residents were strongly opposed to a pavement on what they consider to be a rural lane. There is a continuous footpath from Four Oaks to Berkswell village (swopping sides of the road at 2 points). However, in one area towards Four Oaks it has become eroded with no kerb after road resurfacing. Suggestions for footpaths on Tanners and Truggist Lane could be seen as suburbanisation of the rural areas and contrary to the expressed wish of 97% of respondents to the survey supporting a policy to protect the rural landscape character.</p>

3 – Suggestions made for the spending CIL by stakeholders excluding residents

West Midlands Police advised in their Regulation 14 consultation response that the growth in development anticipated across the Berkswell NP area and in the adjacent Balsall Parish Council area up to 2033 will inevitably place pressure on existing physical, community, social and green infrastructure.

Therefore there is a need to support new and existing development by timely infrastructure provision, such as Police infrastructure necessary to maintain and improve safety and security, so that vibrant and sustainable communities can be created and maintained.



Berkswell Parish Council