

# Catherine-de-Barnes Residents' Association



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## **Submission to the Solihull Local Plan Enquiry**

This submission is submitted on behalf of Hampton in Arden Parish Council and the Committee of Catherine de Barnes Residents Association both whom object to Policies HA2 and SO1 being included in the Local Plan on the basis that the decision to do so is unsound.

### **Matters 6band 6c**

Firstly, I wish to query the status of Concept Master Plans vis a vis the Local Plan. Most site policies refer to the plans but they themselves are not included within the document. In September 2020 in the document Solihull Local Plan Site Allocations – Masterplans they were entitled SMBC Illustrative Concept Masterplan. Most if not all site masterplans use that word in their title. The Plan site policies incorporate the phrase: “Development of the site should be consistent to the principles as shown in the concept masterplans .....”

Are the plans part of the policy or are they just guides as to how the site might be developed? The suggestion is they should be treated as guides only. The Parish Council has a concern that its involvement in pre application discussions with potential developers could be inhibited by the fact that the site layout could be interpreted as being ‘cast in stone’. Experience to date has shown that pre-application meetings with developers has worked well and the Parish Council would not wish to see anything in the Plan that prevented or restricted the scope of early discussions on any potential development. I am sure other Parish and Town Councils would feel the same. Confirmation that concept masterplans are for illustrative purposes only would be welcomed.

We challenge the reference to the site being adjacent to Solihull Town Centre as indicated on the Site Analysis document in the Concept Masterplan as it is misleading. The site is, we feel. closer to Catherine de Barnes centre.

### **Matter 6b-Site HA2 (3.33 hectares/8.5 acres)**

I refer to the previous plan of 2013, and the SHLAA assessment undertaken for that Plan. The conclusion whether to bring the site forward for development then is equally as valid today. None of the circumstances and facilities in the village have changed since 2012, no new schools or doctors’ surgeries have been built in the area and SMBC’s conclusion not to bring the site forward for residential development then, on the grounds it was “*not suitable for family housing*” is as valid today as it was then.

Paragraph 629 page 181 of the Plan states “given the range of services, it is considered that development options are restricted to what would be limited and proportionate extensions to the settlement. “Referring to the section Proposed Approach (para.637 page182) also makes reference to the size of future development in the villages by saying” other than a limited a proportionate expansion of the village no other largescale development is considered appropriate “Is a proposed development of 95 dwellings deemed to be appropriate when it represents an increase in excess of 25% dwelling in the village?

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## **Matter 6c -Site S01 (43ha/88acres)**

It is unsustainable in terms of access. There is no access on to Hampton Lane or Field Lane (a narrow lane with passing places, and one access on to Lugtrout Lane in a position we believe to be unsafe, as it is close to a narrow T junction, part of which incorporates a very tight bend. The second access is onto Damson Parkway opposite a hospital entrance. At this time, we have no detail what any infrastructure if any are planned hence, we make the following comments.

In the absence of being able to find a Traffic Assessment for the site we comment as follows. Damson Parkway is the main link between the A45 and Solihull. During peak times traffic tails back from the Bypass junction down the Parkway close to where the new access will be constructed. Because of this, traffic uses Lugtrout Lane, a narrow rural lane with weight limit restrictions, as a rat run to Hampton Lane heading for Meriden, Coventry, Kenilworth and when the new junction 5a is completed we believe it will be using the lane to access the M42. The lane gets extremely busy during the weekends with traffic toing and froing to the sports grounds situated on the lane -the aim being to avoid the congestion at the junction Solihull Bypass/ Yew Tree Lane. With a potential 700 houses on this site, we foresee much of that traffic will also use this route. The roads in Catherine de Barnes won't cope well with this extra volume of traffic. The Parish Council are already in discussion with SMBC Highways concerning traffic calming measures throughout the village to alleviate traffic issues within it.

It is noted but not accepted that the site has been classified as an urban extension. This development represents and significant incursion into the Green Belt crossing a well-established defensible boundary of Damson Parkway. The site is surrounded on three sides with ribbon residential development established many years ago.

Prior to its birth as Site16/SO1 the site comprised numerous component parcels originally considered back in 2012, but which have now been combined into the site that is currently being considered. When these parcels were originally considered the decision reached at the time, was that development should **not** be forthcoming. The following extracts are taken from a couple of the parcel sites in the SHLAA 2012 which quite comprehensively explain the reasons for that decision.

We are of the opinion the conclusions reached by SMBC in 2012, are as valid today as they were then, and have highlighted phrases in italics which are particularly relevant to this site.

Ref SHLAA Site Assessments, September 2012 Page 523 Site 197 Extract below:

**Consider Further for Housing** No. Good accessibility to local services and facilities. Site is within the green belt, but its development would have a minimal impact on the openness of the green belt because it is surrounded by development. Surrounding roads would form a defensible green belt boundary. However, part of the site in noise exposure category C should not be considered for Solihull

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development unless there are no suitable alternatives. Local wildlife site is a soft constraint, but loss should be avoided if there are better alternatives

**Potential impacts** within the Meriden Gap and contributes to the purposes of the green belt, safeguarding the countryside from encroachment and helping prevent coalescence between settlements. Poorly related to existing development. Would impact on the functions and openness of the green belt and create an indefensible green belt boundary, setting a precedent for the development of surrounding land. Landscape, Conservation, Increased traffic flow.

Ref SHLAA Site Assessments, September 2012 Page 510 Site165 extract below:

**Consider Further for Allocation** No. Good accessibility to local services and facilities. Release of the site would have a significant impact of green belt functions and openness and would set a precedent for further green belt land release from surrounding sites.

**Potential impacts** within the Meriden Gap and contributes to the purposes of the green belt, safeguarding the countryside from encroachment and helping prevent coalescence between settlements. Poorly related to existing development. *Would erode the narrow green belt gap between Solihull and Catherine-de-Barnes, impacting on the functions and openness of the green belt and create an indefensible green belt boundary, setting a precedent for the development of surrounding land.* Would be highly visible. Landscape, Conservation, Increased traffic flow.

The current SHLAA assessments seem to be in a different format than those in 2012, and do not cover the same criteria /scenarios and don't offer conclusion as did those in 2012. This site was being considered in one form or another in various concept plans and the potential size has increased from 600 to 650 and now stands at 700. In 2018 the NEC prepared a masterplan which included a proposal for 2240 dwelling on a brownfield site within the NEC area. We were a little surprised that following the announcement of the NEC's intention to release land for these dwellings that SMBC retained site SO1, a site which is highly contentious and conflicting with at least 2 possibly 3 purposes of the Green Belt. The site also fails to meet the objectives of Challenge E in this Plan Namely to *Maintain the Green Belt and improve the network of green infrastructure in Solihull, to prevent unrestricted expansion of the major urban area, to safeguard the key gaps between settlements such as the Meriden Gap and the countryside, and to Ensure that the countryside is managed so as to deliver a range of benefits including the growing of food and energy products, create an attractive rural setting and improved public access and recreational opportunities.*

The subject of coalescence is worth further consideration. This site, as an urban extension of the urban area of Solihull reduces the distance between the urban area of Solihull and the settlement of Catherine de Barnes. Should this site be allowed to proceed there will be only 1 field separating Solihull urban from the Village. Earlier this year SMBC refused planning permission for a Motorway Service Area at the new M42 junction 5a currently under construction. It was refused on the grounds of

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inappropriate development in the Green Belt and sited the reduction in distance the development would cause between the settlements of Catherine de Banes and Hampton in Arden. This distance is not dissimilar to the distance between Catherine de Barnes and Solihull if SO1 stayed in the Local Plan.

The site in its initial designation site 16 had the northern boundary as Lugtrout Lane. This has since been increased and the boundary has moved further north up to the Grand Union Canal. Land north of Lugtrout Lane has been the subject of many planning applications over the years but 2 in 2020 are worth mentioning, particularly as they arose during the Planning process. They are PL/2020/01908(339 Lugtrout Lane) and PI/2020/01821 (351 Lugtrout Lane). Both sought residential development on Green Belt sites – both were refused permission on the grounds of inappropriate development in the Green Belt—based on these refusals, it seems totally contradictory for SMBC to wish, now to allow land north of Lugtrout Lane to be included in the Plan -what exceptional circumstances have been advanced to support this land north of Lugtrout Lane being included in the site.

We do not consider that sufficient exceptional circumstances exist to support the inclusion of Policy SO1 in the Draft Local Plan. Outlined below are the reasons: -

- The surrounding road infrastructure is insufficient to cope with the anticipated traffic volumes.
- The site is within the Meriden Gap and unique Arden Landscape and contributes to the purposes of the Green Belt in preserving the openness of the landscape and safeguarding from encroachment of the urban areas.
- It increases the coalescence between Solihull and the settlement of Catherine de Barnes – and fails to meet objective referred to in Challenge E. of the Draft Plan
- By crossing the previous defensive boundary of Damson Parkway, it sets the precedent for future development and erosion of the Green Belt further, which was recognised in the 2021SHLAA assessment
- Recent planning applications within the period that the Plan was being prepared have been refused on the grounds of inappropriate development.
- The site is destined to support 700 dwellings – the area around Catherine de Barnes currently includes approximately 400 properties. This development represents a potential 140% increase in local housing.
- The site negatively impacts on the Heritage Assets namely Field Farm and 239 Lugtrout Lane. (Lugtrout Farm).
- The site is poorly served by public transport. Currently only one bus route passes along Damson Parkway (Diamond A1 circular) with the last stop being 18.26 weekdays and 18.16 Saturdays with no service. on Sunday or Bank Holidays
- Finally, Para 430 of the Plan and Policy P17 item 6 says: *-The settlements of Catherine de Barnes, Hampton in Arden, Hockley Heath, and Meriden are inset from the Green Belt. Whilst Green Belt policies do not apply within these settlements, the Council will*

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*take into account their rural setting and special character in considering development proposals.* - and assert that including Policy SO1 into the Plan contradicts this statement and Policy.

- We would like to understand what points has been taken into account when incorporating this Policy int the Plan.
- Inclusion of the Policy SO1 in the plan is in contradiction to Para .11(page 5) of the Plan which states". *Two thirds of the Borough is located in the Green Belt, and this includes the strategically important Meriden Gap that separates Solihull and the Birmingham conurbation from the city of Coventry. This plan seeks to protect this important feature that makes Solihull special whilst accommodating, in a managed way, the growth that is needed.*

We request after giving due consideration to the above we request that Policy SO1 be removed from the Plan.

Our request for the site being excluded in its current form, revolve around the sustainability of it in terms of size, location, and impact on the surrounding area. We would, however, be able to support a site of more moderate proportions-( as indicated on the enclosed drawing marked SO1A on the attached drawing) with Lugtrout Lane as its northern boundary and no exit on to Lugtrout Lane thereby significantly reducing the impact on local environment and facilities.

***For and on behalf of Hampton in Arden Parish Council and Catherine de Barnes Residents Association***

***Cllr. David Cuthbert (Catherine de Barnes Ward- Hampton in Arden Parish Council) and Chair Catherine de Barnes Residents Association***

***15 October 2021***