

# TIDBURY GREEN PARISH COUNCIL

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Dear Sir / Madam

## Solihull Local Plan Review Consultation – Tidbury Green Parish Councils Supporting Information

Tidbury Green Parish Council make the following points to support the response we have provided to Solihull Borough's recent Consultation Document "Reviewing the Plan for Solihull's Future". Our response must be read in conjunction with these points.

- 1) Why is the Meriden gap given special Green Belt status? How and when has the detailed case for this special status been set out? Please provide a copy. Is this the only gap in Solihull Borough which has been evaluated for special status, or are there others? If so please provide details. There is certainly no such special status being given to the Dickens Heath/Tidbury Green gap, now being, and to be eroded by the development at Cleobury Lane, and the forthcoming development at Tidbury Green Farm, or for the gap between Wythall and Tidbury Green, given the proposed development at Lowbrook Farm.
- 2) Paragraph 10.26 of the Strategic Housing Needs Study, August 2015 (SHNS) says that "For the planning authorities in the HMA (Housing Market Area), a key policy choice will remain the future role of the Green Belt, and particularly its role in checking the growth of the conurbation, as opposed to towns and villages in the wider Green Belt. Almost any SUE (Sustainable Urban Extension) option will result in the loss of Green Belt land. Therefore, if the primary function and purpose of the Green Belt is to check the growth of the conurbation, SUE proposals on the edges of the City and Black Country, including Solihull, should continue to be resisted. On this basis, SUE growth should be directed further afield, to the main settlements in the shire counties".

This part of Blythe Ward, which is on the edges of the conurbation, has had massive Green Belt development over a significant number of years. At the beginning was the development of Dickens Heath, which is now up to some 1800 dwellings with more proposed. At present there are 1288 proposed dwellings in the near vicinity (excluding Blythe Valley Park), as detailed in the attached “Lowbrook Farm appeal Ref 2192128 Tidbury Green PC Further Statement” and “Development sites within the vicinity of Tidbury Green” documents which were submitted to the Inspector of the Lowbrook Farm appeal on the 12<sup>th</sup> February 2015. In total therefore, some 3000 plus dwellings have been built, will be built or are proposed to be built. Thus this past development would have been made completely contrary to the present views of the SHNS set out above. We would like to know whether SMBC intend to review their policies going forward to adopt the views of the SHNS (see also paragraph 6).

- 3) All the local development referred to in paragraph 2 is or will be taking place with a pittance of investment in the local infrastructure, particularly the roads and public transport links. Roads in Tidbury Green are primarily narrow country lanes. Heavy traffic and increased local traffic have already churned up and ruined verges on Rumbush Lane, Cleobury Lane, Braggs Farm Lane and Wood Lane, posing a threat to passing vehicles. In addition, lorries and buses/coaches are crossing half way across the opposite carriageway in Lowbrook Lane in order to negotiate the bend near to the crossroads with Tilehouse Lane. These comments apply equally to the sharp bend at the Wythall station bridge. How soon will it be before some unfortunate driver or passenger is injured in a collision at one of these locations? These potential risks will become more acute with the developments already on plan, let alone those that may be proposed. What road upgrades are proposed to cope with the build up of traffic that will inevitably arise from further developments already planned in this area or any referred to in paragraph 4?
  
- 4) So far as public transport is concerned, there is no car park at Wythall station, and the car park at Whitlocks End station is presently overloaded. Are the railways saying they will be able to cope with a significant increase in volume at these rural stations? What new bus routes are being proposed along narrow country lanes to meet the increased demand? We believe that Whitlocks End station is being used substantially by commuters who do not live in the immediate vicinity but who travel from further afield. In its own way, it has become a “Park and Ride” destination. However, unlike such facilities at Stratford and Warwick, Whitlocks End is some distance from any motorway. The fact that the car park is full on the morning of most weekdays (see our “Tidbury Green PC Final Statement Appeal APP-Q4625-A-14-2220892 Letter to the Inspector of the Tidbury Green Farm enquiry attached) has led to calls for the car park to be extended. It is our view that additional parking at this station will only serve to reinforce the impression that this is a true “Park and Ride” facility, whereas it is devoid of the necessary highway infrastructure for ready

motorway access by significant volumes of traffic, without jamming up rural lanes. We also consider that this station should not be put forward as a reason to focus a nearby SUE for the reasons set out in paragraph 10.26 of the SHNS.

- 5) This brings us to the larger issue of sustainability. We argued that the Tidbury Green Farm development was applied for on a site that was not sustainable. Solihull Council deemed it to be so with little detailed supporting evidence. There was a similar debate on Lowbrook Farm. We believe that Solihull Council have not paid sufficient attention to sustainability and highway issues and what impact such significant developments will have on communities. Whenever Green Belt land is chosen for development, there should be documented the “very special circumstances” that apply and a detailed sustainability review carried out. We await your comments.
  
- 6) Paragraph 5.3 of the SHNS says that “We define a SUE as a development proposal which provides at least 500 new homes and a maximum of 5,000. The proposal must also be of a scale appropriate to the existing (nucleus) settlement.” On such a measure, the development at Tidbury Green Farm and the proposed development at Lowbrook Farm combined would clearly be beyond the scale appropriate to the existing settlement. We are of the opinion that any developments proposed which may involve more than one site should be accumulated with other nearby sites if those individual sites only fail to meet the SUE criteria by virtue only of the number of new homes on each site.
  
- 7) Paragraph 5.23 of the SHNS says that “Solihull has many active proposals for urban extensions. All are in the Green Belt, and the Council advises that, because of the geography of the district, most would erode settlement gaps and would have a severe impact on the already fragmented landscape. There is also a concern about the lack of secondary school capacity in that part of the Borough, with limited scope to extend the existing school because of a lack of land. This makes SUE proposals outside Solihull town difficult to accommodate”. We agree entirely with this view. The Parish Council are writing to Nick Page (Solihull MBC Chief Executive) requesting that, under the Freedom of Information Act, Solihull Borough reveal to us which particular secondary school is being referred to and what part of the Borough is referred to as “that part of the Borough”.
  
- 8) Paragraph 5.47 of the SHNS says that “Solihull has received proposals for urban extensions to accommodate around 3,000 new homes, all in the Green Belt and affected by other constraints. But unlike Bromsgrove and Redditch, these sites do not appear to have been comprehensively assessed to date and older evidence may need revisiting”. We agree with this view. What is Solihull Council’s timetable to assess and publically announce the results of this assessment?

9) We have noted that the analysis of sites in the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SLP 021) 2013 is incorrect as to the location of sites, in particular, the following sites should be recorded as located in The Parish of Tidbury Green rather than in Dickens Heath, as they are located within the boundaries of The Parish of Tidbury Green.

- 158 Land at Tilehouse Lane/Houndsfield Lane
- 226 32 Houndsfield Lane
- 227 Opposite 72 Houndsfield Lane
- 228 Rear of 162 Tilehouse Lane
- 229 Opposite 32 Houndsfield Lane
- 232&308 Land on the south side of Houndfield Lane (opposite no 26)

You may also wish to check whether item 159 - Land to the West of Dickens Heath has been correctly allocated.

We look forward to receiving your comments.

Yours Sincerely



C L Kirby  
Clerk to Tidbury Green Parish Council

**Enc**

- **Lowbrook Farm Appeal Ref 2192128 Tidbury Green PC Further Statement**
- **Development Sites within the vicinity of Tidbury Green (Map)**
- **Tidbury Green PC Final Statement - Appeal APP-Q4625-A-14-2220892 – Tidbury Green Farm**