



# The Knowle Society

*Established to maintain the character of the Village*

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28 September 2011

A Brereton  
Director for Places  
PO Box 19  
Council House  
Solihull  
B91 9QT

Dear Ms Brereton

## **LDF: Emerging Core Strategy Consultation**

These are the further views of The Knowle Society on the 'Emerging Core Strategy Consultation' document published by SMBC in September 2010 following the Council's response to the consultation published in March 2011 and the "Shaping Solihull's Future Together Conference" in July 2011. We will be consulting our members once the next revision of the strategy is published and will provide further feedback at that time.

We stand by all the comments we made in our initial submission, but reserve further comments until we see the final draft of the LDF submission to the Secretary of State. However, at this stage we wish to make the following further comments.

### **POLICY 4 (Provision of Land for Housing)**

We recognise the need for the provision of land for additional housing within the Borough and that some of this will need to be taken from the long-term housing sites identified in the UDP. However, we reiterate our serious concern that too much of the provision has been allocated to the Knowle/Dorridge area:-

*The distribution of the suggested housing sites in the Rural Area is not acceptable. Discounting the 150 dwellings for Dickens Heath (a nominated area for continuing development in any event) 340 of the remaining 390 are in or neighbouring Knowle. While we recognise that all three of these sites were designated as long-term housing*

*sites in the 2006 UDP, so were another nine, all of which have been discounted on grounds that do not seem to be that different from the sites that have been suggested.*

At the July conference there was a general consensus that the policy of just promoting the larger housing sites was not the best approach to meeting the need of the rural community, especially the smaller villages. It was accepted that allocation of sites for modest numbers of houses in and around these smaller villages would reinvigorate them, improve their sustainability and help to reduce the impact on the larger villages. Without wishing to identify specific smaller villages, examples are Barston, Berkswell and Chadwick End. Consideration should also be given to the opportunities for **small** numbers of houses alongside existing hamlets.

If this policy were followed it would be possible to remove one or possibly two of the currently listed sites in the Knowle area from the current allocation. We recognise that it will probably not be possible to eliminate all three sites and still meet the housing need. However, even the development of two sites would place severe increased pressure on the infrastructure of Knowle and its neighbours. In particular we identify schooling, medical services, the road network and village centre car parking as major concerns due to the increase in population that additional housing would bring. It must also be remembered that significant commercial development is being applied for, which would also add significantly to the overload of the infrastructure. Assessment of the impact of any proposed release of land on local infrastructures (in all areas) should be part of the Core Strategy to ensure development does not go ahead before mitigation of its adverse effects.

Of the three sites previously nominated we see the one at Four Ashes Road (Site 11) as having the least direct impact on Knowle and therefore being the most acceptable to our community. It is also reasonably close to a primary school and basic shopping facilities. While it is not very well served by public transport it does have access to a through road from Solihull and to the Stratford Road.

The site off Hampton Road (Site 13) is seen as the more sustainable of the other two, as it is close to the centre of Knowle and within easy walking distance of shopping and other facilities. It is close to a primary school and, being between existing housing and the football and cricket grounds, could be seen as completing the extension of the village in that direction.

The Grove Road/Middlefield site (Site 12) is the least sustainable in our view. Access is difficult, the internal roads are not suitable for extended use, it is some distance away from any public transport and any facilities, so these factors would encourage car use. Of the three potential sites this is seen as the least suitable for development.

In summary we would not support use of all three sites and do not see that the need to develop more than one has been demonstrated. We see the site at Four Ashes Road being the least unacceptable, followed by the Hampton Road site. Whichever site(s) are given the go-ahead it is important that any development is deferred to the end of the period, to allow the significant infrastructure issues to be satisfied before the development starts.

Whichever site(s) is/are eventually allocated there are specific infrastructure factors that should be addressed before planning permission is granted, including:-

- a) the demonstration of adequate provision of existing mains services to/from each site;
- b) the extent and method of delivery of the affordable element which we would wish to see include a 'local occupier' restriction, i.e. available only to those with a close connection to Knowle;
- c) the designs of the dwellings (including the 'Affordable' ones) should meet the highest standards in the 'New Housing in Context, Supplementary Planning Guidance' and the 'Building for Life' standards;
- d) they should be designed to the highest feasible level under the Code for Sustainable Homes, with at least some in each development as exemplars of the highest possible level;
- e) the limitation of the total number of dwellings being developed at any one time to accord with the ability of the wider infrastructure to accept that number of new dwellings; and
- f) the determination of whether or not the built infrastructure and provision of existing services is adequate for the development and if not, the development to include such provision to overcome their inadequacy, e.g.
  - (i) improvements to built infrastructure including the road network and village centre car parking provision, perhaps through use of a Community Infrastructure Levy contribution; and
  - (ii) expansion of existing services including education, health and leisure activities, including open space provision;

whilst noting these examples are indicative, not definitive,

Finally on this Policy, we would strongly resist any proposal to remove land from the Green Belt to provide reserved long term housing sites.

#### POLICY 11 (Provision for Open Space, Children's Play, Sport and Recreation)

In addition to the points raised in our previous submission it is vital that Local Green Spaces are designated, in accordance with the Draft NPPF and neighbourhood plans. The more housing that is built in and around our urban areas, the more important such spaces are in the protection of Solihull as 'Urbs in Rure'. We will submit a list of spaces in Knowle which we request should be so designated.

We trust this submission will assist in the further development of the Core Strategy.

Yours sincerely

LT Jones

Leighton Jones  
Chairman, Knowle Society Planning Committee  
For and on behalf of The Knowle Society