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|  | **ECONOMY & INFRASTRUCTURE DIRECTORATE**  Planning Design and Engagement Service  Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council  Council House, Manor Square, Solihull  West Midlands, B91 3QB  Tel: 0121 704 6494  Email: psp@solihull.gov.uk  21st June 2021 |

Dear Sir / Madam

**South Warwickshire Local Plan Scoping Consultation Response**

SMBC welcomes the opportunity to respond to the first stage in the development of the South Warwickshire Local Plan. The authority will continue to engage in ongoing discussions with Warwick and Stratford District Councils to ensure duty to cooperate obligations are met as part of the plan making process. At this stage SMBC highlight in particular the strategic matters of housing, transport, economic activity and ongoing joint working on green infrastructure and biodiversity through the Habitat Biodiversity Audit and the Local Nature Partnership as areas of importance in terms of the duty to cooperate. Further matters may arise as work progresses on the Joint Local Plan and on neighbouring plans including through the Solihull Local Plan Review.

The approach to preparing the Local Plan as proposed in two parts starting with a strategic High level Part 1 Plan is sensible as it will allow the authorities to respond to current development pressures to meet the needs of the local authority areas, but also to allow flexibility to respond to the unmet needs of the Coventry and Warwickshire Housing Market Area and the Greater Birmingham Housing Market Area. SMBC is supportive of this approach in fulfilling duty to cooperate requirements relating to Stratford’s role in relation to the wider Birmingham housing market area.

It is noted that the Joint Local Plan is intended to direct development over a longer time period up to 2050 in line with proposed changes to national guidance on plan making. The proposed high level approach should provide sufficient flexibility to allow future plan documents to respond to future matters which arise over this time period.

The first stage scoping report sets out the minimum annual housing requirement to meet the needs of South Warwickshire up until 2050. It recognises the need to address neighbouring authorities plans, in particular the relevance of the emerging Birmingham City Local Plan. It recognises that addressing any shortfalls in the Coventry and Warwickshire and Birmingham and Black Country housing market areas will be a key challenge for the Local Plan. This reference is welcomed as a starting point for further duty to cooperate discussions.

Stratford is continuing work to prepare the Site Allocations DPD which SMBC has previously commented on. This accompanies the current Core Strategy which guides development up until 2031. SMBC welcomed the allocation of reserve sites to meet a proportion of the housing shortfall across the Greater Birmingham housing market area as part of this, indicating that this helps to addressing the cross-boundary issue and meets the Duty to Co-operate requirements. The Preferred Option provided for one-ninth of the agreed Birmingham shortfall at October 2020, and policies in the Core Strategy and the SAP indicated that the Core Strategy would be reviewed if the need was greater than provided for in the SAP. The South Warwickshire Local Plan will guide development beyond this and will supercede the existing Core Strategy. It is therefore important that the Joint Local Plan takes into account and is flexible to respond to the latest evidenced need of the wider housing market area in terms of any unmet need emerging from the Birmingham City Local Plan.

It is recognised that further detail on each policy area will be provided as work progresses on the policy framework in the Joint Local Plan. SMBC would however highlight the need to take account of significant transport and infrastructure projects within SMBC and neighbouring areas which could have implications for growth opportunities within the Joint Local Plan. These include the A45 / A46 junction improvements, the Balsall Common by Pass and the delivery of HS2 and the HS2 interchange station. Consideration should be given to how both the Chiltern and Stratford rail corridors work and any potential to make sustainable links to the West Coast Main line. As strategic transport matters with cross boundary implications SMBC would welcome as part of the duty to cooperate further detail on how these proposals have been acknowledged.

SMBC would also draw attention to the economic growth opportunities associated with the HS2 interchange station being progressed through the UK Central Growth Hub area within Solihull. These proposals are of wider regional and national significance and SMBC would welcome the opportunity to engage on these matters in respect of the Joint Local Plan.

It is noted that several of the options for growth identify potential areas for development close to the boundary of SMBC. A focus on infrastructure such as bus, train road links may also have implications beyond the South Warwickshire boundary, and opportunities for access via cross boundary cycle routes should be considered. It is acknowledged that further work is needed in terms of taking these options or any combination of growth options forward and SMBC would welcome the opportunity to engage with both local authorities on any cross boundary issues which may arise.

Opportunities for linking up, across boundaries, strategic green infrastructure should be considered to enable connectivity between habitats and areas of significance.

SMBC will continue to work with Stratford and Warwick District Councils to ensure the Joint Local Plan addresses the needs of the wider housing area and meets duty to cooperate requirements on the matters highlighted.

Yours sincerely

Mark Andrews

Head of Planning Design and Engagement Service

Economy & Infrastructure Directorate