

Draft 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 Draft 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 that allow for space, privacy, visual amenity and ecological sustainability.

Landscape Character and the Rural Area Objectives

3. To ensure development incorporates high quality green landscaping schemes to integrate the new built environment with the rural and the existing built environment.
4. To retain wildlife habitat within the developed, to be developed, and rural areas of the parish.
5. 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

6. To promote improved and safe accessibility to public transport links including walking, cycling, horse riding, and public rights of way.
7. To improve vehicular traffic flows throughout the parish.
8. To provide adequate space for off-road parking in residential areas and for businesses.
9. To support improved community spaces such as meeting halls and public open space for purposes of enjoyment for Balsall Common.

10. To encourage the development of infrastructure for facilitating health, wellbeing, leisure and the community for all residents.

Business Objectives

11. 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.

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

Draft Policy B1: New Housing – General Principles

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

- 1. Brownfield sites will be supported in preference to green field sites and should come forward before green field sites are released.**
- 2. Layouts and Accessibility**
 - 2.1. Where practical, developers should incorporate the following principles into the layout of schemes:**
 - 2.2. Layouts should include small clusters of mixed scale dwellings (up to 20) to facilitate social cohesion and community security;**
 - 2.3. Larger developments should be broken into character areas of about 250 properties (such as at Riddings Hill which is considered to demonstrate good practice);**
 - 2.4. Closes and cul-de-sacs are preferred to limit vehicular through routes;**
 - 2.5. Vehicle access to new development should be from main roads;**
 - 2.6. New roads should include grass verges as well as pavements and highway designs should discourage parking on pavements and verges;**
 - 2.7. Ease of use and access for pedestrians and cyclists should be maximised through provision of accessible non-vehicular routes linking to the safe routes identified in Section 10 and to local facilities such as shops, Berkswell rail station, schools, community facilities and health centres;**
 - 2.8. Suitable provision of communal green spaces should include children's play areas close to areas of existing family housing, and nearby houses should be orientated to provide overlooking; and**
 - 2.9. Quality open space should be placed between existing homes and new development in Balsall Common to retain the green suburban character of Balsall Common and to support community integration through joint use by existing and new occupiers.**
- 3. Landscaping and Drainage**

Landscaping schemes should aim to incorporate the following wherever possible:

- 3.1. Mature trees and hedgerows should be retained as significant natural environment**

features which contribute towards local landscape character and biodiversity;

- 3.2. Existing water courses, field ponds and areas of wet marshy grasslands should be retained and naturalised to support local wildlife and enhance biodiversity;
- 3.3. 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 hierarchy wherever possible. Hard-standing surface areas should be permeable wherever practical; and
- 3.4. Narrow hedgerows or tree lines should be provided within development sites as landscaped buffer zones 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:

- 4.1. Building heights should be restricted to 2 ½ stories, including rooms in the roof space;
- 4.2. Provision of basements for storage or parking is encouraged to maximise efficient use of land;
- 4.3. External electric charging points should be provided to allow charging on driveways;
- 4.4. 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 grouped together to create design compatibility; and
- 4.5. Garden areas should include space for secure storage and recycling bins.

5. Housing Mix

- 5.1. A suitable mix of housing should be provided in line with needs identified in the most up to date Strategic Housing Market Assessment. Housing mix 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 (3 to 4 bedrooms) for families.
- 5.2. 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.
- 5.3. Schemes that include opportunities for self-build projects will be supported.

6. Natural Environment

- 6.1. Development should aim to protect and enhance local biodiversity in line with Policy B3. Where possible new buildings should incorporate wildlife friendly features such as bird boxes and swift bricks and layouts should support open spaces for wildlife areas

and corridors.

Where developers consider that any of the above criteria are not practical or deliverable, suitable evidence should be provided to demonstrate that a different approach is required.

Draft Policy B2: Rural Exception Local Needs Housing in Berkswell Village

Small-scale affordable housing development (of 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.

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.

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.

Where possible, development for local needs housing should take place on previously developed (brownfield) land and / or be located on small infill sites within the existing built up area of the village.

Draft Policy B3: Protecting Local Landscape and Built Character

Landscape Character

1. The location, design and layout of new housing development should respect local character as set out in the Solihull Borough Landscape Character Assessment.
2. Development should retain any features of local heritage interest such as ridge and furrow, and local landscape features and wildlife habitats such as ancient woodlands, mature trees and hedgerows, semi natural grassland, field ponds and river wetlands.

3. All developments should mitigate the impact from the loss of countryside, wildlife and the natural environment. For larger sites (10 houses or with an area of 1 hectare or more) the developer will be required to produce an evidence-based mitigation plan covering the wildlife, mature hedges, mature trees, streams, ponds. This should include the retention of existing important features and the inclusion of new features such as bird boxes, wild life areas, ponds and woodlands.
4. Schemes should aim to integrate the natural environment into the layout and form of new development through the provision of gardens, and provide quality public open space at a standard of 2.86 hectares per 1000 inhabitants in line with Solihull Green Spaces Strategy¹.

Built Character

1. Designs should respond positively to the distinctive local and historic character of individual settlements and character areas of the parish.
2. The use of traditional materials used locally is encouraged such as traditional red brick and render for elevations and tiled roofs as are innovative systems to generate solar electricity designed to supplement solar panels.
3. Scale, massing, density and layout should relate to the surrounding built form.
4. Innovative design and materials to achieve enhanced environmental performance are encouraged.

Heritage Assets

1. 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 between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.
 2. Great weight will be given to the conservation of the parish's heritage assets. Any harm to the significance of a designated or non-designated heritage asset must be justified. Proposals will be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal; whether it has been 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.
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3. 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.
4. 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.

Draft Policy B4: Local Green Spaces

The following are designated as Local Green Spaces:

1. The recreation ground on Meeting House Lane, next to the Catholic Church, Balsall Common
2. The football ground on Lavender Hall Lane, Balsall Common

These are shown on Maps 4a and 4b.



Map 4a



Map 4b

Draft Policy B5: Berkswell Conservation Area

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.

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.

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:

1. Should be modest in scale, no more than two storeys in height with pitched roofs and either detached or grouped in small terraces.
2. 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.
3. Should use rooflines consistent with neighbouring buildings.
4. 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.
5. 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, usually traditional ones such as local brick perhaps in innovative ways where appropriate.

Extensions

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

1. The scale, height and form are subordinate in scale to the existing building and the character of the street scene is protected.
2. Materials are compatible with the materials of the original building or distinctive in a fully justifiable manner.
3. Traditional boundary treatments are retained.

Conversions

Proposals for conversions will be supported where buildings are capable of conversion without substantial or complete rebuilding, and where proposals do not detract from the character of the original building, the character and appearance of the conservation area, or the special interest or setting of any relevant listed building. Careful thought is required about the treatment of external areas in terms of enclosure, lighting, garden structures and the like.

Views and Open Spaces

1. 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.

2. The important open spaces at the churchyard, the well and village green should be maintained for their strong contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

Draft Policy B6: Conversions of Former Agricultural Buildings

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 and form of the rural landscape and buildings are of permanent and substantial construction.

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.

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.

Existing access arrangements should be used. Access should be suitable and adequate for proposed increases in traffic associated with new uses bearing in mind the local road network. Landscaping should be provided to screen parking areas.

Draft 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. 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.

Draft Policy B8: Car Parking and Cycle Storage

Developers of new housing schemes will be required to undertake an evaluation of the number of car/van parking spaces and cycle storage needed, taking account of the following:

- 1. Size of property;**
- 2. Proximity to local facilities and public transport provision;**
- 3. The average number of cars per household currently in the parish;**
- 4. The location of employment and the likely travel to work method;**
- 5. The width of roads that would permit effective on street parking without the need for residents to park on pavements or verges; and**
- 6. Suitable provision for visitors' cars parking and space for delivery drivers.**

Where possible, off street car parking provision in new housing schemes should be provided at a minimum standard of 2 parking spaces per household for household of 1-2 bedrooms, and thereafter 1 additional car parking space per additional bedroom.

All housing schemes should include high quality cycle parking and storage facilities.

Draft Policy B9: Improving Accessibility for All

Development proposals should 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.

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.

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.

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.

Draft Policy B10: Supporting Local Businesses

Development proposals for small scale business and live / work units, conference rooms and training facilities and proposals linked to diversification of the rural economy will be supported where:

- 1. 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**
- 2. 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.**
- 3. Proposals include the re-use or conversion of existing former agricultural buildings, workshops or previously used brownfield sites or the development of sensitively designed new buildings within the curtilage of existing farm holdings (subject to Policy B6).**

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.

Where extensions to residential properties are proposed they should be subservient to the main building.