



## KDBH Neighbourhood Forum

### Representations on Solihull Council's Submission Draft Local Plan: KN2 - Land South of Knowle (Arden Triangle) Concept Masterplan

## 1 Summary

To reflect the character of the area, future housing on the Arden Academy site should be no higher than medium density. In addition, and to effect a transition between built development and countryside, the housing along the southern and eastern sides of the site should be low density. Other modifications are needed to make the document succinct and to include or amplify details relating to the objective / aim of the development, phasing and delivery, household types, landscaping and highway matters.

## 2 Representations

### Landscape Assessment

The Landscape Assessment plan is lacking in a number of important respects:

- It does not show all the existing school sports pitches.
- It does not show the group of mature trees on the Arden Academy frontage to Station Rd.
- It does not identify the parkland character of the Lansdowne site. The Forum's landscape consultants identified Lansdowne as having its own specific landscape character constraints where any development should retain existing key landscape features and its parkland character.<sup>1</sup>
- It does not indicate the slope direction across the Lansdowne and Stripes Hill land parcels.
- It does not indicate the views out towards the canal from the centre of the site.
- Although shown on the Site Analysis plan, the landscape assessment does not show the semi-improved grassland.
- The opportunity to link existing habitats is shown, but no opportunities are indicated as regards structural landscaping.

It will be important for the development to have full regard to the constraints and opportunities offered by the site and for key features to be illustrated on the landscape appraisal plan. In this way, they can be taken into account in a successful design and layout. See **Mod 1**.

In terms of the text, the concept masterplan calls for an integrated drainage, landscape and ecological strategy to be developed for the site. However, there is no guidance on key landscape principles. Illustration of structural landscaping will be particularly important. As advised by the Forum's landscape consultants,<sup>2</sup> there is a need to establish a strong green framework for the new development. This would include a substantial screen buffer to the Warwick Road frontage. Such matters should be addressed in the text. See **Mod 7**.

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<sup>1</sup> Arden Triangle: Site Specific Landscape and Visual Appraisal Crestwood Environmental Ltd 2019

<sup>2</sup> Arden Triangle: Site Specific Landscape and Visual Appraisal Crestwood Environmental Ltd 2019



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#### Developer Proposals

The concept masterplan next addresses developer proposals and engagement, including earlier proposals by Capita and by the Building Design Group. These proposals have been superseded by the "SMBC Illustrative Concept Masterplan: KN2 Arden Triangle". However, inclusion of the earlier proposals throws into question the role and status of the Council's proposals. Additionally, the superfluous addition does not contribute to a succinct Plan.<sup>3</sup> The material on the pages headed "Developer Proposals and Engagement" and "BDG Illustrative Concept Masterplan" should be deleted. See **Mod 2**.

#### Objective / Aim

Para 242 of the draft Submission Plan identifies matters that will be included in concept masterplans. First is "A clear objective / aim for what is intended to be achieved in the overall development". In this regard, the fundamental aim of the South of Knowle allocation is to build a replacement for Arden Academy, a facility that could be used by the public.<sup>4</sup> This would be funded by new housing. However, this is not stated in the Plan.

Inclusion of the objective / aim is an important matter. As well as meeting a requirement of Para 242, it is part of the justification for the choice and allocation of this site. In addition, certain safeguards are necessary in meeting the objective / aim. As such, a statement of the objective / aim should be included at the start of the description of the Council's proposals. See **Mod 3**.

#### Phasing and Delivery

A second matter identified in Para 242 is the necessity for a clear phasing and delivery programme. This is absent from the current document. However, this is particularly important given the different land ownerships and the obvious difficulties of joint working in the past. In particular, it will be important to ensure that the development does not proceed in two halves, based around the northern area and the southern area. The Forum is determined to ensure that if such large-scale housing and loss of Green Belt is to take place, the educational and other infrastructure benefits are provided and the community is not left with only a large housing development starting in the south and working northwards. It will therefore be necessary for the delivery of housing to be related to satisfactory progress of delivery of the new schools. A suitable legal mechanism such as a Planning Obligation should be entered in to govern the rate of delivery of housing alongside construction of the education facilities.

A phasing and delivery diagram should be part of the concept masterplan. See **Mod 4**.

#### Household Types

Policy P4C of the Plan (Meeting Housing Needs - Market Housing) indicates that concept masterplans will include details of the likely required profile of household types. This is missing from the Arden Triangle concept masterplan. In including this information, attention should also be drawn to the Neighbourhood Plan provisions with regard to housing mix and affordable housing. See **Mod 5**.

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<sup>3</sup> NPPF Para 15

<sup>4</sup> Call for sites submission Parcel 153 'the catalyst underlying the Arden Triangle is the desire of Arden Academy governors to vacate the existing school and relocate to another site...'



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#### Density

In terms of density, for the area of the existing Arden Academy and its playing fields, the concept masterplan indicates high density housing at 40+ dph. This is higher than anywhere in the designated area, where the highest densities are around 38 dph, including mixed housing and flatted development.<sup>5</sup> Further, the area is not characterised by high density housing or by flats or mixed uses. In addition, it is not an area that is “highly accessible by public transport”.<sup>6</sup> Buses are hourly. The highest density on the Arden Academy site should be “medium”.

For the remainder of the site, the concept masterplan proposes medium density housing across the centre of the site with low density housing towards Grove Road. This is partially in line with the specialist studies carried out by the Forum's landscape consultants.<sup>7</sup> However, densities should reflect the character of the area. The Forum's landscape consultants have stressed the importance of a transition between built development and the countryside, not only in a north to south direction but also from west to east. The concept masterplan should therefore also show low density housing along the eastern side of the site. Such densities would be consistent with the densities shown on the BDG masterplan, prepared by the Council's in-house design team. **(See Mod 6)**

#### Highway Matters

The concept masterplan states that there will be one point of access onto Grove Road. However, two are shown on the diagram. Clarification is needed. More particularly, the concept masterplan should advise on the treatment of Grove Road and its junction with Warwick Road (where residents have raised safety concerns as a consequence of additional traffic accessing the new schools). Grove Road is a road of rural standard that is not suitable for large vehicles and high volumes of traffic. Advice should be included within the document. **(See Mod 8)**

### **3 Modifications**

Annotate the Landscape Assessment plan such that it shows all the school playing fields; the trees at the front of Arden Academy; the area of parkland character (Lansdowne site); contours across the site including towards Stripes Hill; the view from the centre of the site towards the canal; the extent of the semi-improved grassland; and structural landscaping opportunities. **(Mod 1)**

Delete the two pages of the concept masterplan that show “Developer Proposals and Engagement” and “BDG Illustrative Concept Masterplan”. **(Mod 2)**

Add a new paragraph at the start of the text on the page headed “SMBC Illustrative Concept Masterplan: KN2 Arden Triangle”: “The objective / aim of the proposals is to build a new through school funded by housing. The through school would comprise a community academy, available for use by the public, and a two-form entry primary school.” **(Mod 3)**

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<sup>5</sup> See KDBH Neighbourhood Plan, Appendix 1

<sup>6</sup> Draft Submission Plan Para 239

<sup>7</sup> Arden Triangle: Site Specific Landscape and Visual Appraisal Crestwood Environmental Ltd 2019



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Insert a clear phasing and delivery diagram. In addition, add: A planning obligation (or similar binding legal agreement) will be necessary to secure the objectives of the site. **(Mod 4)**

Include details of the likely required profile of household types. In addition, add: "Regard should also be paid to Policy H3 of the Knowle, Dorridge and Bentley Heath (KDBH) Neighbourhood Plan. In terms of affordable housing, Policy H2 of the Neighbourhood Plan will apply. Further, the Neighbourhood Plan (Page 39) indicates a strong preference for a higher percentage of shared ownership." **(Mod 5)**

Amend the first paragraph on the page headed "SMBC Illustrative Concept Masterplan: KN2 Arden Triangle" so that it reads: "The density of the housing (including mixed housing/flats) ranges from ~~30-40+~~ 30-40 dph, reducing towards Grove Road and Warwick Road." Make consequential changes to the concept plan. **(Mod 6)**

Include the following text in the third paragraph on the page headed "SMBC Illustrative Concept Masterplan: KN2 Arden Triangle": "An integrated drainage, landscape and ecological strategy should be developed for the site. This should feature a strong green framework for the development and include screen planting along the Warwick Road frontage. Public open space...". **(Mod 7)**

Clarify the position regarding access onto Grove Road (one access point or two). At the end of the fourth paragraph on the page headed "SMBC Illustrative Concept Masterplan: KN2 Arden Triangle", add the following text: "Sensitive improvement of Grove Road and its junction with Warwick Road will need to be considered." **(Mod 8)**