

The Housing Group focuses on housing development in our communities. Our role is to identify where and how we can most effectively influence future local developments, working within national planning requirements and the strategic goals set out in Solihull’s Local Plan.

1. What sort of things can a Neighbourhood Plan cover for housing?

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|----------------------------|--|
| ✓ Scale of new development | ✓ Affordable housing |
| ✓ New home type and size | ✓ Retirement housing provision |
| ✓ Housing mix | ✓ Infill |
| ✓ Housing density | ✓ Bringing derelict property back into use |

So, for example, as a community we may wish to consider policies that:

- define where, and what type of development should happen in our Area
- set design standards, eg. how buildings should look, or the construction materials to be used
- preserve the unique visual character of our villages and surrounding area
- restrict certain types of development and change of use, eg. to avoid too much of one type of use
- protect important buildings and historic assets.

2. What does Solihull’s Local Plan say about housing for our neighbourhood?

The Local Plan includes 3 development sites in our Area: Four Ashes, Hampton Road and Middlefield. Most are already underway.



Consultation for the Middlefield development covers the last of the planned sites for our Area.

However, more housing will almost certainly be needed

Solihull Council is now working with neighbouring councils to review and finalise new housing numbers for the borough.

Currently there is no up-to-date housing “target” for our Area.

So, there is uncertainty and a risk that: if the Council cannot show it has enough development sites coming forward, there is likely to be intense pressure from developers to build more housing.

Solihull’s Local Plan also:

- includes some guidance on the make-up of any new developments e.g. 40% affordable housing - but it does not specify the type of housing in any more detail
- offers some guidance on new housing design - but we could consider more detailed local design policies for our neighbourhood area.

3. What can't be covered by a Neighbourhood Plan?

The Neighbourhood Plan as a whole cannot...

- conflict with the strategic policies in Solihull Council's Local Plan;
- be used to *prevent* development already included in the Local Plan



So we cannot reduce the housing numbers already specified in the Solihull Plan - always remembering, however, that Middlefield is the last of the currently planned developments

The urgent need is to have the Neighbourhood Plan in place in time for it to apply to future developments

Our aim going forward is to minimise, and better manage, the scale of any future housing development, while ensuring that these meet our aspirations in terms of mix, tenure and design.

4. How are we responding to local opinion on needs and priorities?

The (limited) local feedback received so far has raised a number of priority areas and issues:



- replacement of houses with flats;
- infill and windfall developments;
- a need for affordable housing;
- allocating sufficient household parking provision on new housing developments;
- protecting Green Belt land.

We really do need much more feedback from across the community, including your views on:



- the number, location and type of developments you think would be most appropriate
- what you consider to be the main housing issues, for example:
 - is there a need for smaller or larger accommodation, that cannot be met locally?
 - is more affordable housing needed and, if so, what sort: social rent or shared equity?
 - should lower cost homes (market or affordable) be for people with a proven local connection?
 - is better design needed?
 - should there be more or less car parking included in new housing developments?

5. What stage are we at, and what's happening now?

Our first step is to:

- assess the existing range of housing in our neighbourhood
- identify any shortages or issues raised by local people
- assess the type and number of properties that may be required, and where they could be located



To do this, we have planned and started activities to:

- listen to residents' views
- analyse Council housing-related data, eg. no. of brownfield developments; housing need assessments for our area; forecast population growth, etc
- review sites previously offered for development
- talk to local estate agents and developers
- liaise with other Focus Groups about related aspects, eg. school capacity

This gives us the necessary 'evidence base' to:

- 1) Create an accurate picture of what housing we currently have
- 2) Understand how existing housing meets our needs and/or wishes and where any shortfalls lie
- 3) Identify potential opportunities and constraints on new housing

6. What do you need from members of the community (ie. from ME!)

Please help us gather the data we need by:

- contributing to a household survey we are designing so as to obtain as wide a set of views as possible
- making your views heard at various organised events and at meetings we will be attending with local clubs, schools, church groups, playgroups etc.



We will be doing this over the next few months to give us a solid evidence base, from which we can then start to think about drafting housing options and policies.

Success depends on us being able to prove that the facts and figures used to support our Plan are drawn from a representative sample of the local population – and therefore cannot be ignored.

WE CANNOT DO THIS WITHOUT YOU.

7. Want to know more?

The Housing Focus Group meets monthly. If you would like to get involved or to know more, please contact Steve Lyle on 01564 778978 or steve.lyle@btinternet.com.