Meriden Parish Council

The Pavilion
Meriden Sports Park
10 Main Road
Meriden
CV7 7SP

29 June 2026

Becky Matravers
Senior Development Officer - Major Projects
Economy and Infrastructure
Development and Regulatory Management
Solihull MBC
Council House
Manor Square
SOLIHULL
B91 3QB

Re: PL/2026/00900/PPOL (Consultation Closing Date 29 June 2026)
Outline planning application for residential development of up to 185 dwellings (Use Class C3), creation of associated vehicular and pedestrian/cycle access off Fillongley Road, Meriden, ecological enhancements, parking, landscaping, drainage features, open space and all other associated works/infrastructure, with all matters reserved except vehicular access off Fillongley Road, Meriden

Dear Ms. Matravers,

With regards to the above planning consultation for land south of Fillongley Road, Meriden, the Parish Council of Meriden strongly objects to this application. The Parish Council sets out its objections and concerns below.

Principle

The Meriden Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) was made on 17 June 2021. At the time of writing, the plan is still up-to-date and fully compliant with the current National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2024). The proposed allocation for housing development in Meriden within the NDP now has the benefit of planning permission (Ref. PL/2022/02282/PPFL) for 75 affordable homes (granted in October 2024). The NDP could not include a reserve site for housing due to the Green Belt designation around the village.

The proposed site falls outside the defined Village Boundary in the NDP and falls within open countryside. Policy H1.2 of the Meriden NDP states that development outside the Village Boundary will only be supported where it is within a Development Plan strategic housing allocation, is in accordance with Policy H2, or is otherwise consistent with national policy.

The proposed site is not a Strategic Housing allocation in the Local Plan or the Meriden NDP, and it is not a proposal for affordable housing.

The Parish Council would like to highlight that the development of 75 affordable homes on land off Maxstoke Lane, currently under construction, meets the future housing

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need for Meriden, and neither SMBC nor the applicant has demonstrated that the village of Meriden needs further housing, particularly on such a large scale.

Whilst Solihull Council cannot demonstrate a five-year housing land supply, the tilted balance is not engaged due to the Green Belt status of the application site, this being a footnote 7 constraint. The proposal is therefore contrary to national planning policy and therefore the principle of the development is unacceptable.

It is noted that a wider potential development site was included at this location in a response to an SMBC Call for Sites in 2025. At the time of writing, SMBC has not consulted on this site nor published any assessment on its suitability for development.

A single development of 185 dwellings adjacent to a village currently of approximately 900 dwellings is disproportionate and will impact the character and shared infrastructure. The development is not in keeping with the character of the area or of a scale commensurate with the size of the settlement.

Links:

- Meriden NDP
- Meriden NDP Appendices

Green Belt

The site lies within the West Midland Green Belt. Section 13 of the NPPF focuses on protecting Green Belt, outlining five core purposes in paragraph 143 to guide planning decisions. These include (a) checking sprawl - controlling the unrestricted expansion of built up areas (b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another (c) to assist in safe-guarding the countryside from encroachment (d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns and (e) to assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. Paragraph 153 of the NPPF states “When considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt, including harm to its openness.” The provision of up to 185 dwellings will clearly have significant and permanent detrimental harm on the openness of the Green Belt.

The proposal would be inappropriate development within the Green Belt. Whilst the provision of homes in an area where there is a housing supply shortfall will carry positive weight; this is not considered to be sufficient to meet the high threshold of ***very special circumstances***. Other than the provision of housing, the proposed development provides very little other benefits which meet a local need.

The provision of 75 affordable homes on the allocated site in Maxstoke Lane meets local need for affordable homes and beyond. The provision of allotments within the scheme carries limited weight because there is no need for additional allotments in the village. The proposed children’s play space is provided for the residents of the

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development and is not meeting a local deficit of play space, indeed the Parish Council has its own play space within the village.

This proposal conflicts with the West Midlands Spatial Development Strategy including:

- Principle 4 - Brownfield First
- Principle 5 - Enhancing the function of green spaces
    - the protection and enhancement of natural habitats and biodiversity.
    - enabling access to recreational land.
    - the protection and creation of land use that supports carbon sequestration.

The WMCA will be undertaking a Strategic Green Belt Review, so it is premature to allow this development before the outcome of this review is consulted on and published.

As a package of benefits, the proposal makes a very limited contribution to local needs, amenities and facilities, thereby reducing the weight to be afforded to the scheme. As a result, very special circumstances are clearly not met.

Grey Belt

The applicant submits that the proposal falls within the definition of Grey Belt because the proposed development would not result in sprawl of a large built-up area, would not result in neighbouring towns merging into one another and would not harm the setting and special character of historic towns and is therefore not inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

The Parish Council is, however, clear that this is not grey belt as the proposal would fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan, given the relationship of the application site to Meriden and Coventry, which is one of the more precious areas and gaps of undeveloped land in the district. The application site is substantial at 15ha and would result in a significant extension of the built form of village on the eastern side closing the gap between the village and Coventry and offering no protection to the existing Meriden Gap, which Solihull MBC had pledged to preserve in the withdrawn Local Plan.

(*NPPF P.155. The development of homes, commercial and other development in the Green Belt should also not be regarded as inappropriate where **all** the following apply:*

a) *The development would utilise grey belt land and would not fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan;*
c) The development would be in a sustainable location with particular reference to paragraphs 110 and 115 of this framework.

The criteria for assessing Grey Belt is whether it performs strongly against purpose a), b) and d) of Para 143.

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Identification of Grey Belt does not remove the land from Green Belt. If it is identified as Grey Belt, then an assessment of the development's appropriateness is made using P.155. If it fails that test, then it is inappropriate development in the Green Belt, and all the protections apply especially the requirement to demonstrate very special circumstances (see Gov guidance on Green Belt).

The PC are arguing NPPF P.155 a) to reject that it is Grey Belt instead of arguing that it performs strongly against purpose a) of NPPF P.143.

It should then be arguing that it is inappropriate development in Green Belt, regardless of its status (Grey Belt) because it fails to satisfy **all** the requirements of NPPF P.155.

The PC have not included in its Green Belt argument that it is in an unsustainable location. I think this is important in the Green Belt argument at this point even though it covers sustainability later in its submission),

The Green Belt at its narrowest point between the built-up areas of Coventry, Solihull and Birmingham has already been significantly reduced on both sides, by the allocation of land for development of HS2 and associated housing and other building at Arden Cross and the large mixed-use development at Pickford Green, Coventry.

Therefore, the remaining Green Belt around Meriden and the Meriden Gap should be afforded greater protection due to the cumulative erosion of the Meriden Gap from various developments rather than be sacrificed to non-existent special circumstances.

Solihull has a number of brownfield sites listed on its register and unused commercial buildings that remain empty and these should be considered for housing development, along with any sites used by HS2 for storage/access which are now empty, before Green Belt development is proposed.

Landscape Impact

Part of the application site falls within a designed Valued Landscape identified within the adopted Meriden NDP. The Illustrative Density Strategy suggests the density in this area will be up to 50 dwellings per hectare with building up to 2.5 stories in height. This area of high density within the Valued Landscape is also on the highest part of the application site. The visual effect of the proposed development has been significantly understated in the Landscape and Visual Appraisal, in particular, views across open farmland towards and from the historically important St. Laurence's Church would be detrimentally impacted.

Policy NE1 of the Meriden NDP references the view from St. Laurence Churchyard across the Meriden Gap to Fillongley Road (6.8.4) and the proposed development at land south of Fillongley Road would fundamentally harm the view, which the Parish Council strongly objects to. The views to and from St. Laurence Church across green fields is an historical view that has existed for centuries, and if lost could never be replaced, hence the landscape should be protected from development.

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Assuming the planning guidelines would require a high degree of sustainability; it is assumed that houses would be fitted with photovoltaic (PV) panels. To be effective these would be oriented towards the south, which would maximise the adverse visual impact of the development from nearby high points of view.

The applicant is proposing to retain the public footpaths through the eastern side of the application site; however, a large housing estate will have additional detrimental impact upon the visual landscape of the Heart of England Way and Coventry Way.

The Parish Council also notes the presence of a Grade 2 listed building in the immediate proximity of the application site (Cooperage Farm, Main Rd, Meriden – which also serves as a health retreat) and another listed building (Meriden House, Church Lane) which enjoys views across the open fields. The application negatively affects the setting of this listed building which is not constrained to a visual connection to the site but encompasses the historic, social and economic connection to the landscape setting between the site and relevant buildings. There are other designated heritage assets in the immediate proximity of the application site including Brailes Farm Cottage and outbuildings and Meriroyales Kennels and adjoining land.

There is therefore a clear connection between Valued Landscape and Heritage and the negative impact of this proposed development on the green belt and the openness of the countryside.

Valued Landscape and Tree Preservation Orders

Tree Preservation Orders - apart from affording legal protection to trees assessed to be of high value aesthetic and ecological value - help contribute to the valued landscape status of a site in planning terms. They serve as a key indicator that an area possesses defined aesthetic and ecological value that elevates it above ordinary countryside.

Following an assessment of the proposed site by SMBC a TPO order was made (01435) on 12 trees specified individually (mainly ancient English Oaks) and 5 groups of trees including Ash, Hawthorn, European Aspen etc.

The 'added value' of this TPO order is a material consideration which weighs in favour of the need to maintain this valued landscape from development.

Valued Landscape and Hedgehogs

The ecological report for Meriden Parish Council (page 28, fig.10) showing the species map identifies a large population of hedgehogs - these are protected by British Law under section 6 of the wildlife and countryside Act - and are a species of particular importance in England under the Natural Environment and Communities Act 2006. The presence of Hedgehogs in and around the site is a material planning consideration which weighs against the development.

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Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land (BMVAL)

The land surrounding Meriden has a long history of agricultural practices on fertile soils. While the loss of 15ha of BMVAL is not insurmountable in isolation, building on farmland diminishes a nation's capacity to feed itself. The cumulative diminishment is creating a massive reliance on food imports.

The NPPF prescribes that BMVAL must be protected from inappropriate or unsustainable development. There is a clear presumption against development on Grades 1–3a. Where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, areas of poorer quality land should be preferred to those of a higher quality. The application has failed to properly assess the implication of the loss of BMVAL and sequentially look at other areas which are of a poorer quality.

The land comprising the proposed development is mostly farmland and crops are frequently planted. Large areas of farmland lost to housing developments reduces the production of food or the utilisation of land for animal feed. The Campaign to Protect Rural England (The Countryside Charity CPRE) states “two million fewer people can be fed … vegetables homegrown in England as prime farmland lost to development, food security concerns increase, with 60% of England’s finest agricultural land at the highest risk of flooding from climate change, and nearly 300,000 homes have been built on prime farmland… despite more than enough previously developed brownfield land waiting for regeneration.” It is well documented that crops can reduce flooding and the Parish Council would urge Solihull Council to prevent the replacement of much needed farmland with a housing estate.

Flooding

There has been localised flash flooding around the watercourse which runs through or adjacent to the proposed site. There are often onsite presence of large areas of surface water and concerns exist that the run-off could impact neighbouring properties. Climate change is leading to higher frequencies of high intensity rainfall; therefore, such occurrences are more likely in future and any development of the area for housing risks exacerbating this risk.

The measures proposed to mitigate the flood risk cannot be assured by the developer for the future. The maintenance of rainwater retention features will be the responsibility of residents or management companies (assuming they are not adopted by the council). Additionally, residents may choose to defeat some resilience by converting soft landscaping to impermeable surfaces.

Highway Safety

The proposal provides a single point of vehicular access off Fillongley Road. No emergency vehicular access is provided contrary to the Solihull MBC Developers Design and Adoption Guide 2025 (see table on page 42) which requires development over 150 units to have an emergency access.

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The absence of a secondary vehicular access serving the development is exacerbated by the reliance on a single primary road through the development. Should this road become impassable for some reason, particularly at the junction with Fillongley Road, and another incident occurs elsewhere on the development, emergency vehicles will not be able to access the incident creating a serious and potentially life-threatening situation.

The proposed offsite highway works show a zebra crossing on Fillongley Road adjacent to the priority junction with Leys Lane. The proximity of this crossing to what will become an even busier junction appears to be completely inappropriate and a serious highway safety issue.

The Road Safety Audit (RSA) suggests the speed limit in the immediate vicinity of the new zebra crossing should be reduced to 20mph to make it safe. The crossing is on a straight stretch of road which is currently subject to a 30mph limit, but where recorded traffic speeds already currently exceed the 30mph limit (31.8mph eastbound and 33.7mph westbound), reducing the speed limit will not be self-regulating or enforceable. The safety of this crossing is therefore seriously questioned as is the conclusion of the RSA.

All additional traffic from the proposed development will almost certainly be on Fillongley Road and through Meriden Village centre, therefore, past the primary school. This can only be detrimental to the safety of vulnerable road users, especially children.

The applicant estimates **over 1000 additional vehicle movements each day** associated with the proposed development. This may be an underestimate if it has not accounted for the lack of public transport options and trade and delivery vehicle movements.

The westbound A45 has no proper slip-road to enter Meriden. Such traffic must make a dangerous left turn from the 60mph limit A45, using a slip often compromised by potholes or parked vehicles, onto a country lane (Shepherds Lane), before making an unsighted right turn onto Maxstoke Lane, then passing through the village centre before reaching Fillongley Road.

On no account must the applicant or Solihull MBC propose secondary access to the site from the narrow rural lanes of Eaves Green Lane or Walsh Lane, either now or for any future application on this or a wider site. These roads are entirely unsuitable for additional construction, emergency, or resident road vehicle use.

It is common local knowledge that a significant number of vehicles use Lodge Green Lane/Showell Lane and Walsh Lane as an access route to and from the A45, bypassing congestion in the Village Centre at peak times. It has been noted that this traffic has increased with the advent of speed control measures in the village.

In a recent appeal (allowed) against refusal for a change of use from Equine to Class C3 (App/Q4625/W/24/3338384 – Land Adjacent to Bradmoor, Eaves Green Lane, CV7 7JG),

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the Inspector at p.32 states that, '*There is evidence of a considerable number of road traffic accidents and near misses, on the roads local to the appeal site and there are clearly safety concerns relating to this stretch of road'.* The evidence he refers to was examined in an appeal against refusal for a Gypsy and Traveller site for eight pitches (APP/Q4625/A/10/2133561 (refused)) which this site formed part of.

The officers report (PL/2023/00983/PPFL) states; '*SMBC Highways have reviewed the application and advised that: The application site is considered to be located in an unsustainable location, with no local facilities/amenities (i.e. shops, bus stops) located within an acceptable walking distance from the application site. There are also no pedestrian facilities (i.e. footway) available along Eaves Green Lane within the vicinity of the application site. It is likely that the proposals would result in a car-dominated development and not encourage the use of sustainable forms of travel/transport. For the reasons set out above, the requirements of Policy P7 is not met, and the principle of the redevelopment of this site for residential purposes within the C3 Class of the Use Classes Order (1987) (as amended) does not meet the accessibility test in Policy P5'.*

The current site proposes 185 dwellings with two parking spaces per dwelling, resulting in a potential for 370 cars or more. The proposed development will inevitably be car dominant and not encourage the use of sustainable forms of travel/transport which strongly conflicts with SLP Policy P5 and P7. The proposed development will increase congestion at the village centre; hence it is reasonable to assert that this will increase traffic flow along Lodge Green Lane, Showell Lane and Walsh Lane where there is an evidenced and accepted safety risk.

Concerns regarding potential archaeological remains

It is known that nearby land in Meriden contains (a) bronze age settlement remains – Meriden quarry site (b) evidence of Romano British presence – Roman fort – Somers Rd (c) connections to the English Civil war and (d) Godiva Estate. The Council should therefore apply a precautionary principle of not allowing development on a site where remains could be at the application site (lying deeper underground and not being disturbed by agricultural practices)

Lack of an Effective Public Transport System

The proposed development site is approximately three miles from the nearest train station, increasing car dependency for residents that wish to travel by the rail network. An hourly bus service operates to Solihull where residents must firstly travel to change buses to reach the neighbouring village of Balsall Common where a large health centre, and many other health services are situated, along with the catchment secondary school (the secondary school that serves Meriden is located 5 miles from the village centre). Lack of a frequent bus service to the administrative area of Solihull MBC, and a range of shops, will increase the use of vehicles which in turn will not help Solihull MBC achieve its net zero targets. Conversely, a car dependent development will disadvantage families who do not have access to a vehicle and reduce connectivity, along with children's ability to access secondary school activities outside of the agreed transport to and from school provided by the LEA.

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This lack of public transport and accessible active travel options undermines much of the claimed benefit of affordable housing as these residents would typically have less access to private cars or ability to fund taxis – for work, education and leisure journeys.

Education

Meriden has one primary school and the number of pupils generated from the development would exceed capacity at the school. Additionally, the secondary school is located 5 miles away and also serves the community of Balsall Common, which itself is experiencing a major housing growth. Real concerns exist that capacity pressures at the secondary school will prevent access to Meriden children, prioritising Balsall Common children on distance, as seen with other secondary schools in South Solihull where children have a lack of nearby secondary schooling due to overcapacity.

Post-16 education at Solihull College or Solihull Sixth Form College can only be reached via an hourly bus service, demonstrating a lack of infrastructure in Meriden.

Health Care

Although Meriden has a G.P. surgery, residents are regularly referred to the larger medical practice at Balsall Common. As previously outlined, connectivity to Balsall Common is an issue for residents without access to a car as there is no direct bus route, and Meriden is three miles from the nearest train station. Difficulty in accessing health care is already a problem for Meriden residents without the proposal for a further 185 dwellings.

Biodiversity Loss on Site

Any reduction in open land at this location would dramatically reduce already narrow wildlife corridors both North/South and East/West, which the Wildlife Trust has identified as important in this part of the West Midlands. The Meriden Gap is very important in terms of species movement between the north and south of England. These corridors are already limited by major transport routes and further erosion of the countryside should be prevented. Meriden Parish Council Ecological Report.

There are wide ranges of wild fauna and flora present on this site. Any lack of diversity present may indicate a failure of landscape stewardship by current and previous landowners or tenants, rather than low potential. Many bird species including Buzzards and Red Kites are frequently seen in the proposed development site. The proposal to build 185 dwellings will have a detrimental impact to the biodiversity of this area of Meriden, even during construction, wildlife will be deterred from this site and surroundings, possibly never to return.

The Woodland Trust's Ancient Tree Inventory shows that there are veteran trees in the hedgerows and there are ancient hedgerows throughout the proposed development site; damage to these is likely to occur during the construction of 185 dwellings.

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Evidence provided to date by the applicant is incomplete in that some mature species were not identified and a statement about the absence of a watercourse seems incorrect. Further assessment of the current natural value and potential impact of any development needs to be fully explored.

It can be assumed that play areas and Public Open Spaces (POS) will be fenced off from open farmland, watercourses and open water features. This protection for residents would undoubtedly also act as barriers for wild fauna, interrupting foraging and migration routes and potentially causing injury.

All mature trees should be retained and protected. This protection must extend to the full distance to protect roots and the wider ecosystems around trees. Furthermore, consideration should be given to disruption of the symbiotic Mycorrhizal network if excavation is conducted between established trees or hedges.

The applicant has claimed a biodiversity net gain through the proposed development despite including removal of some trees and hedges. What evidence is being offered? Any proposal to offset natural capital impact by creating gains at other locations must be set aside.

Leisure Facilities

The applicant has included plans for a play area and open space, but this is likely to serve only the residents of the proposed development. Meriden Parish Council has large playing fields for sporting activities, a children's play area, a multi-use games area, tennis courts and exercise equipment. Meriden lacks indoor leisure or fitness facilities, and because of poor transport links to Solihull town centre or neighbouring villages, the facilities in these areas cannot be easily accessed. The reference to allocating funding from the proposed development to improve leisure facilities in Balsall Common are of no value to current or future residents of Meriden without vehicle access due to the lack of public transport or sustainable/active travel options from Meriden to Balsall Common.

Conclusion

The proposal is in open countryside outside the Village Boundary. The proposal would create significant visual impacts and reduction of the openness of the Green Belt which constitutes substantial harm that is not outweighed by very special circumstances. The limited benefits of the scheme (the provision of housing) are clearly not outweighed by the inappropriateness of the development, the adverse effect on highway safely, the likely increase to surface water onsite and potential flooding incidents, the loss of BMVAL and the visual and landscape impact is significant and is not outweighed by the provision of housing in an unsustainable location.

The Parish Council of Meriden would urge Solihull Council to reject the planning application at land south of Fillongley Road.

The Parish Council would be grateful if you could confirm receipt of its objection.

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Yours sincerely,

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