

Parish Council of Balsall

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Wednesday 16th September 2015 at 7.30pm at The Westlake Room, Village Hall, Station Road, Balsall Common

Present

Cllr Will Heard (Chair), Cllr Judy Lea (Vice Chair) Cllr Richard Lloyd, Cllr Elizabeth Macdonald, Cllr Marie-Louise Marsden, Cllr Sheila Cooper, Cllr Mark Tattum, Cllr Lionel King and 3 members of the public to include Cllr David Bell, Keith Tindall (Chair, Residents Association),

Headings are those set out on the Agenda

1. Apologies

Received and accepted from Cllr Raymond Ritchie

2. Declarations of Interest

Pecuniary – None

Non-Pecuniary

Item 5- Cllr Mark Tattum, Cllr Sheila Cooper and Cllr Marie-Louise Marsden all declared a personal interest

Item 10 - Cllr Mark Tattum and Cllr Sheila Cooper declared an interest as members of Fair Flight Path Campaign

Item 9 - Cllr Richard Lloyd declared a personal interest as Chair of HHAG

3. To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting on 15th July 2015

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Parish Council Meeting on 15th July 2015 are approved and the Chair signed these as a correct record

4. Matters arising from the Minutes

4.1. Code of Conduct submitted to Monitoring officer and to website

4.2. Declarations of interest relating to matters in Appendix A and B received from Councillors sent to the monitoring officer and placed on website

4.3. Standing Orders amended and website updated

5. Dispensations under the Code of Conduct – To consider general dispensations to participate in discussion of matters only for the following members:-

5.1. **Cllr Mark Tattum** – Fair Flight Campaign – To allow a dispensation and for member to participate in all matters relating to the airport

5.2. **Cllr Sheila Cooper** – member HHAG and Fair Flight path Campaign – To allow dispensation and for member to participate in all matters relating to HS2 and the Airport

5.3. **Cllr Richard Lloyd** – Chair, HHAG - To allow dispensation and for member to participate on all matters relating to HS2

5.4. **Cllr Marie-Louise Marsden** – member of Balsall Common Festival Committee – To allow dispensation and for member to participate in all matters relating to Balsall Common Festival

General Dispensations to remain valid until the next election

A discussion took place regarding the dispensation requests. It was agreed that the dispensation would not allow for the individuals to have a right to vote on the matter but only provided a dispensation to take part as the individuals have the relevant expertise to comment on the subject matter.

RESOLVED – That the following members have declared interests in accordance with Balsall Parish Council Code of Conduct adopted on 15th July 2015 in the following matters:-

Cllr Mark Tattum – Member of the Fair Flight Campaign

Cllr Sheila Cooper –Member HHAG and Fair Flight path Campaign

Cllr Richard Lloyd – Chair, HHAG

Cllr Marie-Louise Marsden – Member of Balsall Common Festival

Dispensations are granted to the following members to take part in the matters set out below only but they shall NOT vote as the members have the relevant expertise in the specific matters. Dispensations shall remain valid until the next election:-

Cllr Mark Tattum and Cllr Sheila Cooper – Airport

Cllr Richard Lloyd and Cllr Sheila Cooper – HS2

Cllr Marie-Louise Marsden – Balsall Common Festival

6. **Public Forum**

A member of the public asked if the Parish Council were aware of the campaign to adopt a railway station. He requested the Parish Council's view.

The Parish Council advised that it was not aware of the campaign but in principle it was supportive of the idea. The Parish Council requested the member to provide information to the Parish Council and the matter will be placed on the agenda for consideration at the next meeting.

Keith Tindal asked if the Parish Council was aware of the Solihull Connect transport consultation. The Parish Council confirmed that councillors had attended a workshop and the view of the Parish Council had been communicated to SMBC

7. **Parking on Pavements and verges**

7.1. To consult with residents on the proposal to introduce a ban to parking on pavements and verges within the Parish

7.2. To set up a working group to establish the process and means of consultation and for the working group to report back to the Parish Council

Chair provided details of discussion with Dickens Heath Parish Council clerk regarding the scheme run by SMBC that has been very successful.

RESOLVED – That a Working Group is established to look at the process and means of consultation. Working Group to report back to the Parish Council once this has been done

RESOLVED – That membership to the Working Group shall be Cllr Wil Heard and Cllr Judy Lea

8. Willow Park

RESOLVED – To remove the picnic bench at Willow Park

RESOLVED - To expand the remit of the Willow Park Working Group to report on the matter of anti-social behaviour and recommendations for any CCTV

9. HS2

(Dispensation granted to Cllr Lloyd and Cllr Cooper to take part in the matter)

RESOLVED - To approve the Petition to oppose HS2 Hybrid Bill (Additional Provisions) submitted to House of Commons

RESOLVED - To agree the appointment of professionals to advise and assist in presentation before Select Committee

10. Airport

(Dispensation granted to Cllr Tattum and Cllr Cooper to take part in the matter only)

Report from Cllr Mark Tattum following communication with Civil Aviation Authority

Update of the Noise Monitoring carried out at location in Balsall Common provided by Cllr Mark Tattum. In conclusion there is a significant increase in noise frequency and decibel level.

RESOLVED - To approve an increase of the costs of hiring noise monitoring equipment in the sum of £300.00 to take account of VAT

RESOLVED – That the CAA and Airport are provided with results and factual data

11. Website – to receive an update from Cllr Raymond Ritchie

No report as Cllr Ritchie was absent

12. Rights of Way – To submit comments to Parish Council survey

Clerk to send response to questionnaire on behalf of Parish Council

13. Christmas Lights

Cllr Judy Lea provided an update and confirmation of date for switch on of Christmas lights – 27th November 2015 at 4.00pm, however the school choir and the Lions will be in the Centre by 3.30pm

RESOLVED - To approve the purchase of new lights for Christmas tree outside library

RESOLVED - To approve repairs and replacements of existing light fittings

14. Neighbourhood Development Plan

RESOLVED – The Parish Council shall enter into an agreement with Berkswell Parish Council for the management of the NDP Steering Committee in accordance with the draft form attached (minor revisions to be made and delegated power to the Clerk to make the revisions)

RESOLVED - The Terms of Reference of the NDP Steering Committee are approved

RESOLVED – The application for the Neighbourhood Area Designation is approved as attached

15. DEFRA request to obtain soil samples from land owned by Balsal Parish Council

RESOLVED – That the request by Defra to obtain samples for research into asbestos in soils at a location owned by the Parish Council is approved

16. Reports from Representatives & Committee members

16.1. Airport - No further report

16.2. Neighbourhood Development Plan Steering Committee – No further report

16.3. Planning Committee – No report

16.4. Finance Committee – No meeting

16.5. Residents Association – The police provided a report on enforcement – matter relating to parking on verges discussed and covered by agenda. Detail of resolution regarding Jubilee Centre provided

16.6. Lant Trust – no meeting

16.7. Balsall Common Village Hall – Cllr Judy Lea reported that the hall is running very well. Lions have painted the doors to the garage. The website had 428 hits in July and 450 in August so is a success.

16.8. Clerks Report – as attached

Accounts & Governance

17. Training – Update of training events booked by Councillors

Cllr Sheila Cooper and Clerk booked to attend Chairman Training on 19th September

18. Accounts

18.1. **PROPOSAL** - To approve list of Orders to be placed and Payments for Approval and Payments Made as attached

RESOLVED – That the list of orders placed, payments to be made are approved

19. **Date for next meeting** – The next Parish Council Meeting shall be the Parish Council meeting to be held on Wednesday 25th November 2015 at 7.30pm at the Westlake Room, Village Hall, Station Road, Balsall Common

There being no further business the Chair thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 21.42pm

Signed..... Dated.....

Cllr Will Heard

Chair

Balsall Parish Council

AGREEMENT DATED SEPTEMBER 2015

BETWEEN

BALSALL PARISH COUNCIL of 208 Station Road, Balsall Common CV7 7EE

AND

BERKSWELL PARISH COUNCIL of PO Box 6379 Coventry CV6 9LP

WHEREAS

1. Under the Localism Act 2011, Parish Councils may collaborate and produce a joint Neighbourhood Development Plan, it is hereby agreed that Balsall Parish Council and Berkswell Parish Council shall produce a Joint Neighbourhood Development Plan
2. Section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972 also recognises that the Parish Councils may collaborate and appoint joint committees
3. Balsall Parish Council and Berkswell Parish Council wish to record the arrangements that exist between them for producing a Joint Neighbourhood Development Plan and the appointment of a joint committee to create the Neighbourhood Development Plan
4. Balsall Parish Council and Berkswell Parish Council agree to the appointment of a joint committee hereinafter named Balsall & Berkswell Neighbourhood Development Plan Steering Committee (“ Committee”) that will be responsible for the creation of the Neighbourhood Development Plan that will be subject to statutory examination and referendum
5. The Committee shall operate in accordance with the Terms of Reference attached at Appendix 1

MANAGEMENT

6. The Clerk to Balsall Parish Council will provide the administrative services to the Committee. The Clerk shall receive support from the Clerk to Berkswell Parish Council in the event that Balsall Parish Clerk is unable to provide the service for any reason.
7. Where neither Clerk is available to carry out the role, the Committee shall appoint a member from the Committee to perform the role of the Clerk

SUBMISSION TO LOCAL AUTHORITY

8. The Neighbourhood Area designation application and any other associated applications to be submitted to the Local Authority shall be made by both Parish Councils jointly where possible. In the case that a joint application/submission is not possible, Balsall Parish Council shall submit the application/submission

CONTRACTS/AGREEMENTS WITH THIRD PARTIES

9. Any contract or agreement required to be entered into by the Committee for the creation of the Neighbourhood Development Plan shall be entered into by the Balsall Parish Council with the Clerk to Balsall Parish Council having delegated authority to enter into such contracts/agreements
10. Upon entering into any such agreement/contract, both Parish Councils will abide by the terms of any agreement
11. Berkswell Parish Council may request and view any agreement/contract entered into for the creation of the Neighbourhood Development Plan

GRANT FUNDING

12. Any applications for grant funding shall be submitted by Balsall Parish Council. Any grant monies shall be received by Balsall Parish Council and recorded separately in the cashbook
13. Any grant funding application shall be approved by the Committee prior to submission

FINANCE

14. Any costs incurred by the Committee shall be met by Balsall Parish Council and Berkswell Parish Council equally
15. Each Parish Council shall include a sum in its annual budget to meet the costs of the Committee
16. The Committee shall be subject to the Financial Regulations of Balsall Parish Council as attached at Appendix 2
17. Any costs incurred by the Committee shall be met in the first instance by Balsall Parish Council and will be paid following appropriate audit checks by the Clerk
18. The Committee may incur a cost up to £300 without reference to the Parish Councils, any expenditure above this sum must be approved by both Parish Councils prior to the expenditure being incurred
19. The expenditure shall be entered into the accounts under a separate heading and Berkswell Parish Council may request copies or view the originals of any documents and records relating to any expenditure incurred upon a request in writing allowing a reasonable time for Balsall Parish Council to comply
20. Balsall Parish Council shall provide an invoice to Berkswell Parish Council every 6 months in relation to Berkswell Parish Council's share of the liability for any costs incurred and upon receiving the invoice, this shall be paid no later than 21 days from the date of receipt of the invoice
21. A final account shall be produced by Balsall Parish Council on termination of the Committee and invoice raised
22. All accounts will be subject to internal and external Audit requirements

TERMINATION OF AGREEMENT

23. This agreement may be terminated by either Parish Council by a formal resolution and upon providing 2 months' notice in writing

24. In the event of termination, the cost liability of the Parish Councils shall remain in force and Balsall Parish Council shall submit a final account to Berkswell Parish Council

To be signed by Chair and Vice Chair of both Parish Councils

Balsall & Berkswell Neighbourhood Development Plan Steering Committee Terms of Reference

Background

The parish councils of Balsall and Berkswell are the qualifying bodies for the preparation of a joint Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) for the parishes of Balsall and Berkswell. The Parish Councils have agreed to establish separate project management arrangements to facilitate the delivery of the NDP function by establishing a Steering Group which will be an advisory Council Committee for both Councils.

Name

The name of the organisation shall be the Balsall & Berkswell Neighbourhood Development Plan Steering Committee.

Purpose of the Steering Committee

The purpose of the Steering Group shall be to support the parish councils to create a Neighbourhood Development Plan to include carrying out the following tasks:

- Investigate and identify support for the Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP).
- Identify sources of funding.
- Take responsibility for project planning, budgeting and monitoring expenditure on the plan and report back to the parish councils on these matters.
- Liaise with relevant authorities and organisations to make the NDP as effective as possible.
- Identify ways of involving the whole community and gather the views and opinions of as many groups and organisations in the community as possible.
- Determine the types of survey and information gathering to be used.
- Be responsible for the analysis of the surveys, the production and distribution of the final report.
- Identify priorities and timescale for local action in the Action Plan, including the lead organisations and potential sources of project funding.
- Regularly report back to the parish councils on progress, issues arising and outcomes from their work.

The main and additional tasks of the Steering Committee are listed in Annex A. The list is not exhaustive.

Role of the Steering Committee

The Steering Committee will sit as the Project Board for project management and decision making purposes and will lead the preparation of the Balsall & Berkswell Neighbourhood Development Plan.

During the plan development the Steering Committee will report back regularly on progress to the parish councils and receive their on-going endorsement via a parish council minute for all substantive issues and key steps.

The Parish Councils have granted delegated authority in exercise of all relevant plan-making functions. The Steering Committee will guide and agree the content of the Plan and all associated evidence and analysis up to Preferred Option Consultation Draft stage. The Steering Committee shall involve parishioners in the preparation of the NDP as fully as possible. The Steering Committee will submit a draft Neighbourhood Development Plan for approval by both Parish Councils who will submit it to Solihull MBC for independent examination.

The Steering Committee will be established for a time-limited period, to run until the NDP has been presented for independent examination. The Steering Committee will remain active until the independent examiners report is published and the plan is subject to public referendum.

Objective

The objective of the Steering Committee is to produce a sound NDP for the parishes of Balsall and Berkswell that defines the planning policy priorities identified by the community taking into account all representations made during the plan-making process and having regard to existing plans and evidence. The plan shall take full account of the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2012 and the Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council Local Plan.

Steering Committee Composition

The Steering Group shall consist of a minimum of 8 and no more than 10 members, consisting of:

- a minimum of 4 Parish Councillors (2 from each Parish Council)
- a minimum of 1 from Balsall Common Village Residents Association
- A minimum of one from the Berkswell Society
- a minimum of 2 parishioners representing a cross-section of the community.

The Chairman of the Steering Committee shall be the Balsall Common Residents Association member to provide an independent view across the Neighbourhood Area.

At its first meeting the Steering Committee will elect a Secretary, a Finance Officer, a Communications Officer, a Volunteer Officer. Wherever possible all other members of the Steering Committee should have a specific role to be agreed by the Steering Committee.

The quorum for a Steering Committee meeting shall be a minimum of 3 members comprising at least one Councillor and one parishioner.

Steering Committee and Working Group members are expected to work with mutual trust and respect and to combine expertise. Parishioners have open access to all meetings, and all meeting attendees are required to address all remarks through the chair, and to show courtesy respect and consideration towards all other attendees.

The functions of the Steering Committee shall not be delegated to a sub-committee although the Committee may establish Working Groups to deal with individual issues

Meetings

The Steering Committee shall attempt to meet monthly, or as may be required, for the lifetime of the project. Members of Working Groups may from time to time be asked to attend a meeting when their expertise is required to assist in key discussions. All meetings shall be open to the public and be subject to Balsall Parish Council Standing Orders subject to the matters set out below;

For Steering Committee meetings:

- give at least 3 days clear public notice of the meeting to the public and members using email or as otherwise agreed with individuals;
- have an agenda that details the matters to be discussed;
- the secretary shall keep a record of meetings and circulate minutes to Steering Committee members and the parish councils in a timely manner;
- dates, venues and agendas of meetings are made available to the public via Parish Council notice boards/websites;
- Minutes of meetings will be published on Parish Council web sites for public viewing.
- all meetings to be open to the public;
- members shall comply with the Balsall Parish Council's Standing Orders, Code of Conduct and abide by the Nolan principles at Annex B.
- Decisions will be taken by full consensus and not by voting, to maintain maximum community support. Where full consensus cannot be reached the issue involved will be referred to the two Parish Councils for a decision.

Working Groups

The Steering Committee may establish such working groups as it considers necessary to carry out the functions specified by the Steering Group. Working Groups will be formed to address themes identified through the consultation process.

Each Working Group shall agree a leader. There is no specific quorum for any of the Working Group meetings. Working Groups should meet as regularly as necessary in order to complete efficiently the work to be undertaken. Whilst in existence written reports shall be submitted at least one week before the monthly Steering Committee meetings. Working Groups will be active for as long as the need arises.

Membership

Membership of the Steering Committee or any of the Working Groups is open to any Balsall or Berkswell parishioner. It is on a voluntary basis. Any Group may decide that it would be beneficial to invite the participation, as a voluntary adviser, of any person who has relevant expertise but who is not a parishioner. This is unlikely to be refused but shall be agreed in advance with the Steering Committee.

Declarations of Interest

All members of the Steering Committee and Working Groups shall declare any personal interest that may be perceived as being relevant to any decisions or recommendations made by the group. This may include membership of any organisation, ownership or interest in land or a business or indeed any other matter likely to be relevant to the work undertaken by the Steering Committee or any Working Group. Such declarations will be recorded in writing.

Finance

The funding for the NDP will be met by the Parish Councils and the Councils will be responsible for managing expenditure in line with the Agreement between Balsall and Berkswell Parish Councils. In addition:

- The purchase of items necessary for the work of the NDP Steering Group will be managed in accordance with the Agreement between the two Councils.
- Minor items of expenditure paid for out of pocket by Councillors must be claimed back from their own Council in accordance with the expense claims process of the Council concerned. This could include postage, stationary, small printing costs but not travel costs.
- Members of the community who are involved as volunteers with any of the working groups may claim back any previously agreed expenditure during the process of producing the NDP; this could include postage, stationery, travel costs.

Termination of the Steering Committee

The Steering Committee may be terminated once the NDP has completed the Community Referendum stage of the NDP process or by the Parish Council on subsequent review if it is agreed that a useful and acceptable plan cannot be achieved.

Amendment of Terms of Reference

These Terms of Reference may be reviewed by the Parish Council during the life of the project following representations made by the Steering Group to the full Parish Council.

Revision 2 (3rd September 2015)

Annex A Steering Group Main Functions

Main Functions

The Steering Group will:

- provide a locally accountable and representative lead for plan making;
- develop a project plan and timetable with the NDP stages for the production of the NDP;
- agree the initial scope of the ND Plan prior to early public engagement;
- confirm, subject to consultation with the parish councils, the scope of the Plan following analysis of early and subsequent community engagement;
- work within the budget agreed with the parish councils;
- report back to and receive endorsement from the parish councils on the plan progress, issues arising, outcomes and any changes in the timetable or budget requirements on a regular basis;
- develop a project communication, consultation and engagement strategy;
- set up working groups to focus on particular themes that arise through the consultation process;
- identify ways of involving the whole community and gather the views and opinions of as many individuals, groups, organisations and businesses in the community as possible;
- determine the types of survey and information gathering to be used;
- co-ordinate the collation and analysis of the consultation feedback in accordance with the Data Protection Act
- approve all background and evidence based reports prior to publication;
- agree all consultation documents prior to publication;
- agree priorities using the findings from the consultation process and information from other sources;
- engage, through the parish councils, such professional support as is necessary to produce the plan;
- liaise with Solihull Council relevant officers and councillors to obtain advice and information about relevant matters and policies;
- agree, subject to ratification by the Parish Council, a final submission version of the Balsall-Berkswell Neighbourhood Development Plan; and
- actively support and promote the preparation of the Balsall-Berkswell Neighbourhood Development Plan throughout the duration of the project.

Additional tasks that the Steering Group may undertake include:

- act as a focal point for people living or working in the Neighbourhood Area;
- provide a forum for discussion and debate and raise awareness of the plan;
- establish the necessary skills required to produce the NDP;
- help to see more effective ways of getting things done;
- motivate the community to be involved throughout the plan;
- troubleshoot any conflicts raised and if unresolved refer them to the parish councils;
- maintain energy and enthusiasm to ensure that whatever needs to be done is accomplished.

Annex B Nolan Committee on Standards in Public Life

All members will adhere to the principles set out by the Nolan Committee on Standards in Public Life. Its seven principles are:

1. Selflessness - Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other benefits for themselves, their family or their friends.
2. Integrity – Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might seek to influence them in the performance of their official duties.
3. Objectivity – In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.
4. Accountability – Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.
5. Openness – Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.
6. Honesty – Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.
7. Leadership – Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

APPLICATION FOR DESIGNATION OF A NEIGHBOURHOOD AREA

Balsall and Berkswell Parishes Joint Neighbourhood Plan

	Balsall Parish Council	Berkswell Parish Council
Clerk	Ms Shafim Kauser	Mr Richard Wilson
Parish Office	First Floor 208 Station Road Balsall Common Coventry CV7 7EE	<i>Berkswell Parish Council</i> PO Box 6379 Coventry CV6 9LP
Telephone	01676 535679	
Mobile	07767 162423	07443 644896
Email	shafimk@btinternet.com	clerk@berkswellparishcouncil.org.uk
Website	www.balsallparishcouncil.org/	http://berkswell.org/council

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1. Introduction

The parishes of Balsall and Berkswell are the most easterly rural parishes in the Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council area. They cover an area of 39.7 sq km (Balsall parish 16.31 and Berkswell 23.4) and include the villages of Balsall Common and Berkswell and the settlements at Fen End, Temple Balsall and Carol Green. Other nearby settlements include Hampton in Arden to the west, Meriden to the north west, Coventry to the east and Kenilworth about 4 miles to the south. Solihull Town is about 8 miles to the South West.

The parishes are bounded by the Solihull parishes of Hampton-in-Arden (north west), Meriden (North) and Chadwick End to the west. To the south and east is the Warwickshire County boundary and to the east the Boundary with Coventry City Council. Following a Community Governance Review in 2013 the Balsall parish boundary was changed on 1 April 2014 with the west ward becoming a separate parish known as Chadwick End.

The population at the time of the 2011 census was 8,967 people in 3,750 households (2,364 in Balsall and 1,206 in Berkswell). Just over 24% of the population are aged 10 or under while 20% are over 65 with 55% of working age.

The parishes have good communications with:

- the A452 crosses through the parishes to provide the main road link to the M42/M6 motorway network, the airport, NEC, Birmingham Business park and Birmingham;
- the A452 also connects the parishes to Kenilworth and Leamington Spa and with its link to the A4177 to Warwick, the M40 and the south;
- the B4101 helps to connect the parishes to Coventry to the east, south to Knowle and Dorridge and the Chiltern rail network and west to Solihull Town Centre
- Berkswell station is located at the north eastern edge of Balsall Common village and is served by London Midland for connections west into Birmingham and the rest of the West Midlands and east to Coventry and on down to London.

2. Landscape Character

The Parishes are primarily rural and situated in the regionally important greenbelt known as the Meriden Gap that separates the Solihull/Birmingham conurbation from Coventry.

Outside of the settlements the parishes are made up of a mixture of arable and livestock farmland; a substantial part of which is the Berkswell Estate. There is significant land devoted to horse/pony pasture for recreational purposes. There are extensive sand and gravel workings to the north of the application site, forming part of the Meriden Quarry complex accessed from Cornets End Lane.

The Kenilworth Greenway runs from near Berkswell Station to the boundary with Warwickshire and is an important local amenity for horse riding, off road, cycling, jogging and walking. There are extensive public footpaths across both parishes with those near Balsall Common and Berkswell extensively used by locals and visitors from the surrounding

towns. Two long distance footpaths - the Heart of England Way and Coventry Way run through the parishes.

Much of the area was part of the ancient Forest of Arden. The area known as 'Arden' in modern planning guidance and policy documents refers to that part of Warwickshire and north Worcestershire that was anciently covered by the vast Forest of Arden. In existence before the Anglo-Saxon period and continuing into the Middle Ages, an area roughly corresponding to the north-western half of Warwickshire was then heavily forested. At the time of the Domesday Survey (1086) there were over 50 square miles of woodland and wood pasture, or some 35% of north-west Warwickshire, including Coventry and Birmingham.

Though the vast majority of this forest has long since gone, the memory has lingered on in place names like Hampton-in-Arden, Henley-in-Arden, Tanworth-in-Arden and Weston-in-Arden. Several remnants of ancient woodland still exist in this region for example Marlow's Wood, The Arden landscape we recognize today is essentially a man-made pastoral and arable landscape comprising fields with significant hedging including mature oak and ash trees with occasional woods. The Berkswell Estate has undertaken recent planting of new wooded areas.

3. Settlements

Balsall Common

Balsall Common is a large village and one of the larger rural settlements in Solihull Metropolitan Borough. It is situated 7 miles (11km) west of Coventry, 8.5 miles (13.7 km) east of Solihull and 14 miles (23km) to the southeast of Birmingham. The name "Balsall" comes from the Anglo Saxon word "Baelle" meaning corner (or angle) of land, and "Heale" meaning a sheltered place. The village is split between the civil parishes of Balsall and Berkswell. At the 2011 census it had a population of 7,039.

The village is mainly of recent origin; most of the houses and shops were built after the World War II. Previously, the village consisted of a couple of hamlets of about six to twelve houses each and a few scattered cottages. In the 1930s there began the development which linked these isolated buildings. The 'centre' of Balsall Common is at the intersection of the A452 Kenilworth Road and Station Road. It is along these two roads that the historical development of the village can be traced. Recent growth in Balsall Common includes developments such as, Kems Green, Riddings Hill and Dengate. To the south of Balsall Common in Windmill Lane are two attractive mobile home sites developed from temporary housing/evacuation sites following World War II. There have been numerous in-fill and small scale speculative developments such as Welsh Road in the last 2 decades. Today it is mainly recognised as a prosperous commuter village that is undergoing gradual suburbanisation.

Balsall Common village has a range of facilities including a library, medical centre, restaurants, a good range of shops, local businesses, 3 churches, 5 public houses and a British Legion Club. It has a number of publicly provided recreational facilities including

Lavender Hall Park, Willow Park Play Area, Oakley Play Area, a Village Hall and the Jubilee Youth and Community Centre. The village has various sports provision with a tennis and cricket club on The Lant grounds, the Hornets Football Club on its grounds has just built a clubhouse and the Berkswell and Balsall Rugby Football Club grounds are nearby at Honiley End. There are a range of voluntary and charitable organisations providing activities for all ages in the village.

Balsall Common has a secondary school – the Heart of England Academy and Sixth Form and the Balsall Common Primary School is the second largest in Solihull Borough. Both are seen as good schools and cater for children and young people from a wide area.

There are 2 bus services providing access to Solihull Town Centre and Coventry and eligible residents have access to the "ring and ride" service. Berkswell train station, at the northern edge of the village provides connections to Birmingham and Coventry and beyond and has a free car park which is usually over subscribed.

The Balsall Common Village Plan, published in 2009, identified key issues and services and set out a future vision for the village. The new Localism Act now provides an opportunity to build on the Village Plan, extending coverage to include the whole of both parishes working with the local community and Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council officers in developing a Neighbourhood Plan.

Berkswell Village

Berkswell village dates from Saxon times and was the site for the original Manor house. It still retains a full village character with a primary school, pub, the Parish Church, village hall and village shop. It no longer has any public transport links and its connecting road to the facilities in Balsall Common is problematical for walking due to the lack of a footpath although a few robust souls do undertake the walk.

The village has a business park renowned for the quality of its buildings which are converted from farm/equestrian buildings and is the "HQ" for the Berkswell Estate which is a very significant landowner providing agricultural employment through its several farms.

Berkswell Village is situated in a conservation area, which was expanded in 2012 to include surrounding farmland which gives the village its context. The Conservation Area now includes the historic Ram Hall and the landscape surrounding Berkswell Hall.

Temple Balsall

Temple Balsall is a small hamlet in Balsall parish on the B4101 to Knowle and is a designated Conservation Area. The Balsall parish cemetery is located here.

The Manor of Balsall, part of the Forest of Arden, was donated to the Knights Templar in the 12th century and it is from this that Temple Balsall gets its name. The Templars' Preceptory is now known as the Old Hall. In the 14th century their property was transferred to the

Knights of St John (the Hospitallers) whose church, dedicated to St Mary the Virgin, still remains and is the mother church to that in Balsall Common.

Temple Balsall has royal associations with the Manor being given to Katherine Parr and later to Robert Dudley. It was his daughter Lady Katherine Leveson, who left a legacy in her will for the erection of 'an hospitale or almshouse'. The work she endowed continues to this day as the Lady Katherine Housing and Care, the Lady Katherine Leveson Church of England Primary School and the Parish Church of St Mary the Virgin.

4. Objective

The development of a joint Neighbourhood Plan for Balsall and Berkswell parishes is being facilitated by both Parish Councils with help from volunteers across the community. The Parish Councils believe that this is a real opportunity for the community to have some ownership on future planning policy for the parishes. Through the creation of the Plan, local people will have the opportunity to help shape future policies for land use and the scale of development and what it should look like.

The Neighbourhood Plan will cover the whole of Balsall and Berkswell parishes and, subject to passing the formal tests, a local referendum and assessment; it will become part of the local planning framework. Its policies will apply until 2030.

5. Process

Balsall Parish Council and Berkswell Parish Councils agreed at their meetings in July 2015 to support the preparation and submission of a Neighbourhood Plan in accordance with the Localism Act 2011. The plan process is to be managed by a joint council Steering Committee with Terms of Reference agreed by both parish councils. It will have representatives from both Parish Councils plus representatives of the residents, businesses and community groups. Solihull Council officers and Councillors will also be invited to meetings. As a sub-committee of the councils it will operate by consensus making recommendations to the two councils for decisions.

In July 2015 a Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group comprising members of the Parish Councils, the Balsall Common Village Residents Association, the Berkswell Society, residents and business was established as a precursor to the formal establishment of the Joint Council Committee to undertake preliminary work. With the formal acceptance of the Terms of Reference the Steering Group became transformed into the Joint Steering Committee. A prime role of the Steering Committee will be to engage with the community and ensure that the views of the community are central to the Neighbourhood Development Plan.

The Steering Committee will meet regularly, meetings will be open to the public and their agendas and minutes together with other useful information will be made available on a dedicated website and via the normal Parish Council communications mechanisms.

6. Community Engagement

The Steering Group, as part of its preparatory work, commenced obtaining community views and support at the combined Balsall Parish Annual Assembly and Balsall Common Village Residents Association AGM in May 2015. There has also been some survey work of car parking in Balsall Common centre over the summer of 2015 and residents views sought at the Balsall Common Festival in September 2015. This preparatory work was designed to identify themes for further more detailed consultation.

Theme identification will also draw upon the findings of the 2009 Balsall Common Village Plan; the key themes identified in it were:

- the need to provide affordable homes for both low cost sale and rent for families, older and young people;
- the need to publicise planning guidelines and planning applications;
- the need to promote village shops and restaurants;
- the need to facilitate expansion of education and leisure facilities, particularly for young people;
- the need to promote Neighbourhood Watch schemes and publicise better security in homes.

To fulfil its commitment to openness, transparency and community involvement, the Steering Committee will undertake both formal and informal surveys of residents, community organisations and businesses in the parishes to gather local views on the needs of the community and their aspirations for development. The results of these will inform the proposed meetings and events by which the community will help draft the content of the Plan.

7. Funding

Funding will be provided by the two Parish Councils equally and financial arrangements are the subject of a formal agreement between the two Parishes. Further grant support may be requested from the Department of Communities and Local Government.

8. Outcome

The intention is that the Neighbourhood Plan will be substantially drafted by end 2016 subject to resources and detailed project planning.

Solihull MBC will consider whether the Neighbourhood Plan for Balsall and Berkswell Parishes conforms to its adopted strategic policies and, in agreement with the Parish Councils, will subject it to a local referendum and

Subject to a successful referendum, Solihull MBC will have a legal duty to 'make' the Neighbourhood Plan for Balsall and Berkswell Parishes and bring it into force.

9. Application

The following are included with Balsall and Berkswell's application for designation as a neighbourhood area:

- i. A map which identifies the area to which the area application relates.
- ii. A statement explaining why this area is considered appropriate to be designated as a neighbourhood area (see 2 below).
- iii. A statement that the body making the area application is a relevant body for the purposes of 61G of the 1990 Town and Country Planning Act (see 3 below).