

The Planning Application was considered at Planning Committee on the 23rd November 2017 and deferred for further consideration in the context of Members request for further information in relation to;

- The background to the trigger point for the requirement of the London Road access;
- The timing of the development of the open space and Riverside Park; and
- Further detail in relation to footpath and cycleway connectivity from the site to existing development and facilities in the wider area.

Taking these in turn, the following information is provided to assist;

London Road Access Trigger

The Site Allocations and Management of Development (SAMDev) Plan forms part of the Council's adopted Development Plan. It allocates the application site for housing development. The Plan was Submitted to the Secretary of State for Examination on the 1st August 2014, an Independent Inspector appointed and Examination Hearings took place between 11th November and 18th December 2014.

The Inspectors Report to the SAMDev Examination was published in November 2015. The Inspector specifically considered the terms of the allocation of this land at Weir Hill and stated as follows **"261.Housing allocation site SHREW027 (Land at Weir Hill Farm / Robertsons House, Preston Street and adjoining Land off London Road) is expected to generate 550 – 600 dwellings. Vehicular access is to be restricted by way of the number of dwellings that can be accessed off Preston Street (a maximum of 150 dwellings) and London Road (approximately 400-450) with no direct route for traffic being permitted. Access off Preston Street is subject to highway improvements to Preston Street and the Column roundabout. Some detailed assessments have now been carried out by the Transport Consultants acting for the site promoters. The work has been progressed in consultation with the local highway authority and the Highways England. The work indicates that a through link between Preston Street and London Road could provide a greater benefit to the highway network with greater flexibility on the amount of dwellings to be served off Preston Street.**

262.The suggested removal of the restriction to the access off Preston Street is not supported by many local residents. However, for a Local Plan to be sound, policies must be justified. In this instance, there is no substantive evidence to support such a restriction in highway safety terms at this stage. Amended wording, as suggested by the Council, would enable greater flexibility offering an opportunity for a detailed highway assessment to be submitted to demonstrate the suitability or otherwise of Preston Street to accommodate an access serving more than 150 dwellings and whether a through route is feasible without compromising highway safety or the living conditions of existing and future residents. This would ensure the policy is flexible and positively worded so that it does not impose policy burdens that are not justified and may threaten the delivery of a site. Accordingly a main modification specifying an approximate figure of 150 dwellings to be served off Preston Street, unless justified through a detailed, site specific transport assessment is appropriate and necessary (MM186)."

“Insert text to development guidelines to S16.1 site SHREW027 to read:

“Co-ordinated development of two linked sites with new footpaths/cycleways and bus route through the development ~~but not with any connecting traffic route designed to control~~ vehicular speeds and flows rather than being a direct route for traffic between London Road and Preston Street, maintaining existing public rights of way and improving public access to the River Severn through the site, and providing new riverside public green space and a well landscaped edge to the developed area:

(a) Land at Weir Hill Farm/Robertsford House, Preston Street – ~~a maximum of approximately~~ 150 houses to be accessed off Preston Street, unless justified through a detailed, site specific transport assessment, subject to highway improvements to Preston Street and the Column roundabout, new open space to Preston Street and a landscape buffer to Sunfield Park;” (Text removed from the original SAMDev shown and additional text added is underlined)

The Inspectors Report on the SAMDev stated that “This report concludes that the Shropshire Site Allocations and Management of Development Plan provides an appropriate basis for the planning of the County, providing a number of modifications are made to the plan.” Without the Main Modifications to the Plan it is reasonable to conclude that the SAMDev Plan would not have been found sound and would have been rejected. The SAMDev Plan was adopted as part of the Council’s Development Plan on the 17th December 2015.

Key from the above is that;

- The issue of the number of dwellings to be served from Preston Street and the issue of a through route between London Road and Preston Street were both known to the Inspector and considered. He was well aware this was an issue of concern to local residents
- There was “no evidence” to support the 150 restriction to the number of dwellings to be served from Preston Street
- To impose a restriction without flexibility would not have been sound or justified, both key tests in assessing the SAMDev Plan at the Examination
- The changes to the Plan were specifically necessary and appropriate in order to provide the appropriate flexibility in the 150 dwelling trigger and ensure it is set by reference to a proper and detailed Transport Assessment at the time of a future planning application

The planning application here was submitted to the Council in April 2017. It was accompanied by a Transport Assessment, dated March 2017. In the preparation of the Transport Assessment, both Shropshire Council and Highways England were contacted in order to agree the scope and requirements for the Assessment as is good practice and all relevant correspondence is provided in the Assessment. The Transport Assessment sets out a detailed methodology of how it was prepared and evaluates a range of highway factors relating to the development and its effect on the surrounding highway network and in particular the impact the development will have on surrounding junctions. Automated and

Manual Traffic Counts were undertaken in June 2015 in both AM and PM peaks. The Transport Assessment includes especially;

- A detailed assessment of the existing highway network in order to highlight the current accessibility to the site;
- An investigation into the location and condition of pedestrian and cycle routes close to the site in order to demonstrate accessibility to the site via sustainable modes;
- An investigation into the existing public transport routes and their proximity to the site;
- The availability of local facilities;
- Consideration of the likely impact of the development upon the surrounding highway network including future factored flows to 2026 in line with best practice. This impact included an analysis of impacted junctions as agreed with Shropshire Council including A5 Emstrey Roundabout; A5/A49 Roundabout; A5/A5112 Roundabout; Column Roundabout; Reabrook Roundabout; Crowmere Road Roundabout; Telford Way Roundabout; Heathgates Roundabout; Portland Crescent/Belvidere Road Priority Junction; Belvidere Road/Crowmere Road Priority Junction.
- Consideration of the likely impact of the development on the Strategic Road Network (SRN), particularly the Bayston, Emstrey and Preston Boats junctions of the A5, the impact being assessed through VISSIM modelling of the network as agreed with Highways England;
- Consideration of access to the development site, via the construction of newly formed priority controlled junctions onto Preston Street and London Road respectively, and;
- A study of personal injury accidents, within a 5 year period, to assess the safety of the local highway network, and potential impact the development may have, if any.

The Transport Assessment provides the most detailed up to date evidence based assessment and justification for the level of development which can be accessed from Preston Street in advance of the completion of the link to London Road being open to all traffic, and indeed, argues that the entire development could be served from Preston Street without severe impacts to the surrounding highway network. The Planning Application was submitted with a proposal that occupations would be restricted to no more than 365 dwellings until the delivery of the London Road access. This was later amended by the applicants to a reduced figure of 250 dwellings, as a direct response to feedback received through the application process and is the subject of a proposed planning condition to give the local authority the ability to manage housing delivery in accordance with the principles of the application and the adopted SAMDev. Detailed arrangements for the control of construction traffic are set out in the report and refer to the submission of an updated Construction Environmental Management Plan which will be agreed in consultation with local Members.

Open Space Delivery;

The green space within the development will be set out to an agreed specification and design which is subject to conditions and obligations within the s106. Its delivery will be phased in accordance with the principles of the planning application and the s106, which will set out arrangements for the phased delivery of the open spaces, which on completion, will be accessible to all in perpetuity; both new and existing residents in the area alike. It will also be subject to a required management regime which will either be undertaken by

the Town Council (subject to commuted sum arrangements) or by a Management Company but at all times to an agreed regime controlled by Shropshire Council which again is set out in the s106.

The requirement for the public open space only arises from the occupation of the proposed houses so it would only be reasonable in planning terms to seek provision of the open space as the development is built over time. It is worth noting that the open space is spread appropriately throughout the development and therefore it would be impossible to construct all the open space from the outset as much of the open space wouldn't have any development context if constructed in advance and in isolation. The Phase 1 application area will deliver all its required public open space as will the Phase 2 area deliver all of its required open space when completed. Both phases of the application are distinct, defined in the application plans and can, independently, provide areas of high quality open space that can be enjoyed by local residents and the wider area for years to come.

Any obligation to provide the public open space in planning terms should be reasonable and relevant to the principles of the application to meet appropriate planning tests. It is normal practice and widely recognised to set out appropriate trigger points for the delivery of the open space in the s106 and the current draft s106 includes arrangements such that all the open space for Phase 1 of the development will be completed by the occupation of 325 homes which is in advance of the total number of properties that are proposed within that phase.

The report explains that in overall terms and by phase that the open space areas provided exceed the amount of open space required in policy terms for a development of this size and nature. The above ensures that the open space, to the agreed specification, will be delivered proportionately to the delivery of the proposed housing in line with the proper planning tests and is relative to the principles of the planning application whilst also generally consistent with the approach taken on other sites in Shropshire and elsewhere.

Local Services and Facilities;

The site's accessibility to local services and facilities is a relevant planning consideration but it has to be had in mind that the principle of the development of the site and its suitability for housing is already set out in the adopted SAMDev which allows for the development of up to 600 new homes in this location. Shrewsbury is of course the main Town within Shropshire and the SAMDev provides for a commensurate level of development in the Town in recognition of its relative sustainability and range of services and provisions. This site, different to the larger Urban Extension sites in the Core Strategy, is allocated solely for housing and there is no requirement in the SAMDev for the site to provide other mixed uses, shops or services recognising that there are local services and facilities already available in the immediate area.

Not all facilities need to be immediately available to the development and some services and facilities may be nearer than others which is not unreasonable or out of keeping for most new developments.

A footpath link to the adjacent Shrewsbury College of Arts and Culture, (SCAT), has been discussed that could be provided up to the common boundary of the development and SCAT, which, may be possible as part of the Phase 2 application in due course.

The Submitted Design and Access Statement and Transport Assessment both review the site's proximity to local services and facilities including distances and calculated walking and cycling times. By way of some examples the following is taken from the Transport Assessment;

	Approx. Distance (m)	Approx. Journey Time (minutes)*	
		Walking	Cycling
Prestfelde Preparatory School	920	11	4
Shropshire Council Offices	1050	13	4
St Giles C of E Primary School	1100	13	5
'The Shire Fryer' Café	1150	14	5
Convenience Shop/Newsagents	1150	14	5
Belvidere Medical Practice	1170	14	5
Sainsbury's Supermarket	1230	15	5
'The White Horse' Public House	1250	15	5
'The Peacock' Public House	1250	15	5
Shrewsbury Fish Bar	1390	17	6
'The Old Bell' Public House	1400	17	6
London Road Sports Centre	1650	20	7
Pharmacy	1650	20	7
Shrewsbury College of Arts and Technology	1650	20	7
Shrewsbury Business Park	1750	21	7
Abbey Foregate Post Office	1750	21	7
The Dun Cow' Restaurant	1800	21	8
Home Bargains	1830	22	8
The Belvidere School	1870	22	8
Belvidere Indian Restaurant	1870	22	8
Crowmoor Primary School	1920	23	8

Mereside C of E Primary School	2020	24	8
Shrewsbury Cricket Club	2040	24	9
Shrewsbury Rail Station	3290	39	14

The attached Plan, (Fig 02/01: Local Context), from the Design and Access Statement illustrates the approximate location of principal facilities. Generally, it would be unreasonable to argue in the context of the Council's SAMDev and development strategy that this site on the edge of the main Town of Shrewsbury is anything other a highly sustainable location for new housing in accessibility terms

These, of course, need to be considered alongside the proposals that will be provided within the development which include new areas of equipped children's play space, high quality areas of public open space that will perform a range of functions to include footpath and cycleways that will benefit a range of user groups; and of course, the riverside park that will offer an opportunity for the community to enjoy greater public access and riverside walks and areas of bio diversity along with elements of informal play, which is in accordance with the SAMDev.

The potential for other offsite improvements by way of enhanced formal sports facilities that can be secured through the Community Infrastructure Levy payable as a result of the development should also not go unrecognised.