



<u>Committee and Date</u>

Cabinet 20 th March 2019

<u>Item</u>

<u>Public</u>

SHROPSHIRE LOCAL PLAN REVIEW STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT SITES

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1. Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the Council to continue work with site proposers and other stakeholders to develop positive proposals for development on strategic sites in Shropshire. These proposals provide strategic opportunities to deliver the objectives of Shropshire's Economic Growth Strategy to increase the productivity and output of the local economy. These proposals are across 3 identified strategic locations of the county that will generate new investment in employment, thereby increasing the number but also the quality of jobs locally together with additional housing, improved infrastructure and local services. The 3 strategic sites are: the former Ironbridge Power Station, Buildwas; Clive Barracks at Tern Hill; and land near Junction 3 of the M54.

2. Recommendations

- A. That Cabinet approves the principle of further engagement with the proposers, neighbouring authorities, local communities and other relevant stakeholders to develop positive redevelopment proposals of strategic sites at the former Ironbridge Power Station at Buildwas and Clive Barracks at Tern Hill. These will then be brought forward for Cabinet to consider as part of the Local Plan Review Preferred Strategic Sites consultation later in 2019;
- B. That Cabinet approves in principle the potential to explore the benefits to Shropshire of accepting a proportion of unmet development needs from the Black Country Authorities, and to engage further with the proposers of land near Junction 3 of the M54; neighbouring authorities; local communities; and other relevant stakeholders to develop positive proposals to meet these development needs and provide local employment opportunities. This will then be brought forward for Cabinet to consider as part of the Local Plan Review Preferred Strategic Sites consultation later in 2019.

REPORT

3. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

- 3.1 Shropshire's Economic Growth Strategy (SEGS) identifies the need for a 'step change' in Shropshire's economy to: reduce levels of out commuting; retain employment and skills locally; increase productivity; and address housing

affordability issues. The SEGS also identifies a number of strategic corridors and growth zones including the M54/A5 through Shropshire.

- 3.2 The current Local Plan Review is designed to help ensure that the Local Plan will remain the starting point and platform for planning decisions during the period to 2036. The Council's preferred sites to deliver Shropshire's housing requirements were published for public consultation in October 2018. However, whilst these requirements can mainly be met from sites within existing settlements, a small number of larger mixed-use strategic sites are also being promoted in the County. These potential new settlements present a positive opportunity to generate greater resilience in housing delivery in the County and also have the potential to help address cross boundary growth needs. Strategic sites also offer the ability to increase choice and competition in the housing market, in order to complement proposals within existing settlements and increase confidence of achieving housing need. In the case of the previously developed sites, redevelopment would also demonstrate a proactive approach to bringing forward brownfield land to meet development needs.
- 3.3 Shropshire has the potential to benefit significantly from these opportunities by securing large scale investment in strategic and local infrastructure to help mitigate the impact of growth on existing towns. However, the strategic scale of these proposals and concerns about impacts on existing infrastructure and environmental assets will raise important challenges for their allocation through the Local Plan process, and this highlights the overarching need for local communities to have a positive opportunity to have their say on the proposals.
- 3.4 The need to release Green Belt land, which will require the Council to present an 'exceptional circumstances' argument at the Local Plan Review examination, and the need to secure cross boundary agreement also represent specific risks in the context of development in the M54 corridor. The Council have published a Green Belt Review as part of the recent consultation on Preferred Sites for the Local Plan Review. The emerging Local Plan will assess this evidence alongside wider considerations, such as any positive impact on economic growth, to inform the release of Green-Belt land either for allocation within the emerging Plan period or safeguarding for development beyond 2036.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 Planned growth provides the best possible opportunity for Shropshire Council to harness growth potential by providing a stable platform for investors and developers. Growth also provides an opportunity to secure contributions to help maintain and improve local facilities, services and infrastructure. New growth simultaneously imposes an additional burden on local services and provides opportunities to secure investment to improve local facilities which are the responsibility of Shropshire Council and other public service providers.
- 4.2 The Local Plan Review is being managed by a small professional officer team and additional professional resources will be required to address the significant additional workload implications of the inclusion of strategic sites and any Green Belt land release which makes provision beyond the Plan Period as part of the Local Plan Review. This is being managed through the Place Directorate and options are currently being costed and explored.

5 Background

Former Ironbridge Power Station

- 5.1 The former Ironbridge power station occupies a 350 acre site south of the River Severn near Buildwas. The power station ceased operation in 2015. Harworth Group purchased the site from Uniper Plc in June 2018. Harworth is a regeneration company specialising in large sites with complex issues and have an excellent track record regenerating sites for new development like the former Power Station. Harworth will undertake the demolition of the former Power Station buildings including the cooling towers starting later this year. Harworth has been working closely with local councils, the local community and other stakeholders to understand the site and the surrounding area. This engagement will help Harworth to prepare a draft masterplan for a mixed-use scheme which would provide employment land and around 1000 homes, together with local services and facilities. Further information about development proposals and a timetable are available here: <https://ironbridgeregeneration.co.uk/the-emerging-proposal/>.
- 5.2 The redevelopment of the site presents an opportunity to support the local economy, create jobs, provide housing and to remediate the site sensitively. The opportunity to capitalise on this significant strategic opportunity has been identified within the Council's draft Economic Growth Strategy (2017-2021) and within the emerging partial review of the Local Plan. The delivery of this site is therefore an emerging strategic priority for Shropshire Council and Council officers are working closely with Harworth and colleagues from Telford & Wrekin Council to help identify and address key issues relevant to the site and the wider area.

Clive Barracks, Tern Hill

- 5.3 Clive Barracks is a 50 hectare military site on the A41 near Market Drayton which is currently home to the Royal Irish Regiment. MOD announced the intention to redevelop the site in March 2016, and have recently confirmed that they now plan to complete the vacation and disposal of the site by 2025. The MOD and its consultants have been working closely with local councils, the local community and other stakeholders as part of a 'Task Force' led by Owen Patterson MP since 2016.
- 5.4 This engagement will help MOD and its consultants to prepare a draft masterplan for a mixed-use scheme which would provide employment land and around 700 homes as part of a new settlement, together with local services and facilities as part of a masterplanned design. The site is located on the A41 strategic growth corridor and close to the Junction 15 of M6. The site therefore has potential to benefit from improved connectivity from the new HS2 Rail link and Crewe Hub Station.

M54 Corridor Junction 3

- 5.5 A proposal for a new town of up to 10,000 homes was put to Shropshire Council on behalf of the Bradford Estate in March 2017 as a response to consultation on Issues & Strategic Options for the Local Plan Review. The Estate has extensive land holdings north of Junction 3 on the M54 on both sides of the A41. It has since been suggested that these proposals could be amended to provide for the construction of a planned settlement west of the

A41, to provide a strategic employment site of around 50 hectares, accompanied by around 3,000 homes, and a local centre to provide services, facilities and infrastructure.

- 5.6 Recent work commissioned by Shropshire Council and which is being drafted by GVA consultants suggests that the M54/A5 corridor is a significant opportunity area and suggests there is considerable latent demand for serviced employment land to meet the needs of both occupiers for inward investment and local occupiers in the target sectors identified in the SEGS. As part of this work, GVA has engaged with neighbouring local authorities and regional organisations including the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA). It is envisaged that any strategic employment offer in the M54 corridor would be strongly related to the intensification of engineering training at RAF Cosford and would be complementary, rather than competing with, that of neighbouring areas. The key objective for such a site would be to deliver supply chain opportunities and growth for companies in key sectors (including but not limited to engineering, advanced manufacturing, innovative healthcare and environmental technologies) as identified in the SEGS.
- 5.7 As a strategic location, the M54 corridor benefits from its proximity to existing international businesses dominant in growth sectors such as advanced manufacturing and engineering. The corridor also benefits from good access to transport infrastructure and will benefit from planned investments in road and rail in neighbouring areas. The corridor is close to higher education and training institutions including key assets such as RAF Cosford which accommodates the RAF No.1 School of Technical Training. The recent national defence review has confirmed Cosford as a key Ministry of Defence asset. However, MOD consider that its potential to meet future operational defence requirements is restricted by its Green Belt location. To reflect this, MOD have asked Shropshire Council to release land in their ownership at Cosford from the Green Belt to provide for an intensification of their use of the site. It is very likely that such intensification will generate additional demand for employment land to support the relocation and growth of commercial companies in related sectors.
- 5.8 National planning guidance requires Shropshire Council to plan positively for growth by providing a strategy which, as a minimum, seeks to meet local development needs and to consider any unmet need from neighbouring areas and whether it is practical to meet some or all of this need, where this is considered appropriate and consistent with the principles of achieving sustainable development. The latest evidence indicates that the Black Country cannot accommodate all of its identified development needs within its urban area. The Black Country authorities estimate that there will be a shortfall of around 300ha of employment land, with a particular need for additional high quality, accessible sites capable of accommodating national investment requirements. Similarly, even by increasing densities and looking to other sources of urban land supply, the latest evidence also suggests that there will be a significant housing shortfall. An opportunity therefore may exist for Shropshire to agree to provide for some of this shortfall through the construction of a strategic employment site and housing as part of a new planned settlement at Junction 3 of the M54.
- 5.9 To deliver a balanced approach to development in Shropshire, the delivery of a strategic employment site in the M54 corridor would need to be accompanied

by some additional housing to ensure its deliverability and to limit the transport impact of additional journeys to work. The original proposal for 10,000 houses is not supported, but around 3,000 houses are still likely to be required. Careful attention would be needed to control the potential for adverse impacts on the existing communities particularly at the historic village of Tong, for example by restricting new development to the West of the A41 to help protect the setting of Tong village and nearby Weston Park. Further, detailed work will be required to identify the infrastructure investment which will be required to manage the impact of the proposed development on local transport and other infrastructure, mitigate environmental impacts, and to justify the release of land from the Green Belt.

- 5.10 In response to a direction from the Inspector for the SAMDev Plan (2015), the Local Plan Review also includes a Green Belt Review. The Review is expected to provide for development needs well beyond the current Plan period to 2036. This will help to ensure that future housing and employment land requirements and policies will meet Shropshire's future needs and capture the particular opportunities in the east of the County over an extended period. The characteristics of the M54 corridor highlighted above and its general proximity/accessibility to the Black Country, mean that the opportunity to address a shortfall in cross boundary development needs are more favourable than those in alternative locations. In these circumstances, Shropshire Council considers that there is a 'once in a generation' opportunity to generate investment which will deliver significant benefits to the Shropshire economy.
- 5.11 Whilst a new town of 10,000 homes is not supported, it is considered that the potential development of a strategic employment site and more modest levels of associated housing as part of a new planned settlement in the Green Belt near Cosford as described above represents a significant positive growth opportunity for Shropshire which could:
- i. Deliver significant additional employment growth for the local population and attract new residents and employees in an identified growth corridor. This would complement the future development of RAF Cosford and existing employment in adjacent authorities in target sectors identified in the SEGS and as a direct contribution to addressing cross boundary employment needs;
 - ii. Deliver a high quality new planned community including appropriate services, facilities and infrastructure in a location which is attractive to housing developers, which would help to maintain housing delivery rates in Shropshire and could help to address unmet housing needs from adjacent areas.

6 Next steps

- 6.1 Subject to Cabinet's approval, Council officers will work with neighbouring authorities; local communities; and other relevant stakeholders to develop positive proposals for Cabinet to consider later this year as part of the Local Plan Review's Preferred Strategic Sites consultation.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)

None

Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder)

Robert Macey, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing Development

Local Members

Edward Bird, Kevin Turley, Claire Wild, Karen Calder, Rob Gittins, Paul Wynn

Appendices

None