

# AGENDA ITEM



Committee and date

27th January 2026

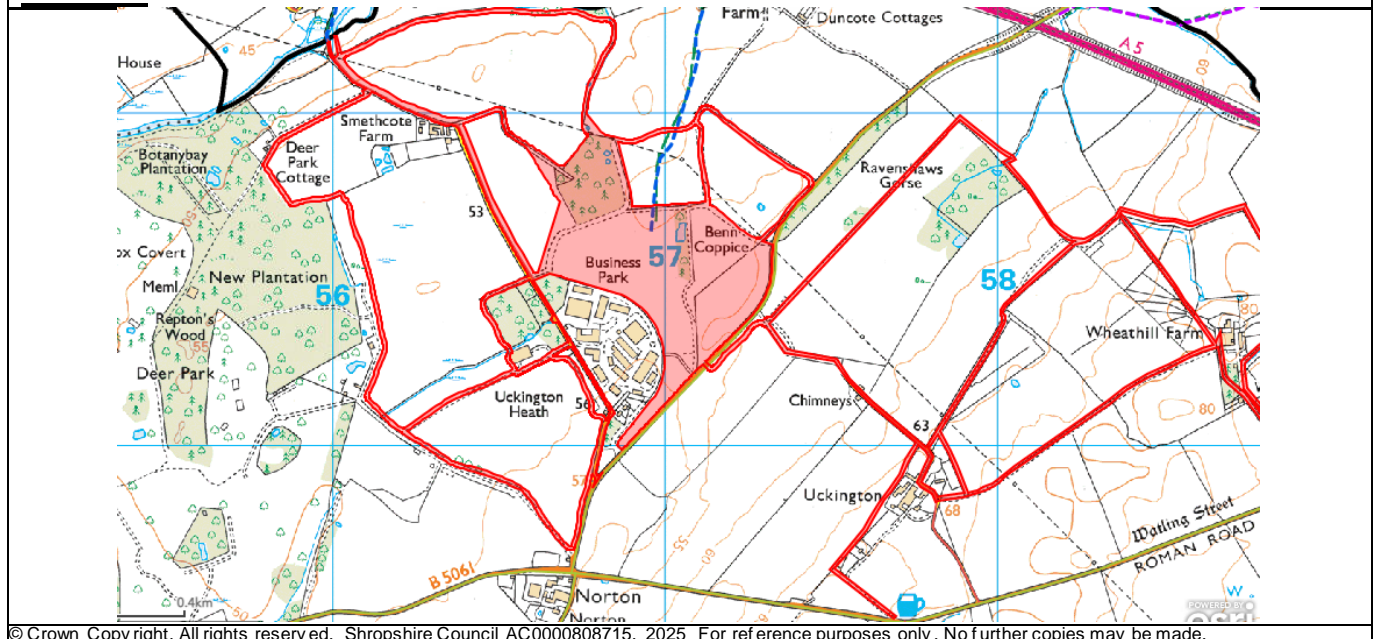
## Development Management Report

Responsible Officer: Tim Collard, Service Director - Legal and Governance

### Summary of Application

<b><u>Application Number:</u></b> 24/04831/FUL	<b><u>Parish:</u></b>	Atcham
<b><u>Proposal:</u></b> Outdoor hub building with visitor welcome area, cafe, food/beverage kiosks, kitchen, toilets, staff welfare facilities, bike hire/maintenance. Car park with electric vehicle charging, associated infrastructure, overflow parking. Interpretation and refurbishment of former WWII runway and aerodrome. New and restored site routes, 13km of trails, wildlife viewing and childrens play areas, cycle skills tracks. New green corridors, orchard/wildflower planting, wetland habitat. Foul water and sustainable drainage systems.		
<b><u>Site Address:</u></b> National Trust Attingham Park Atcham Shrewsbury Shropshire		
<b><u>Applicant:</u></b> Ms Helen Royall		
<b><u>Case Officer:</u></b> Lynn Parker	<b><u>email:</u></b> <a href="mailto:lynn.parker@shropshire.gov.uk">lynn.parker@shropshire.gov.uk</a>	

**Grid Ref:** 355005 - 309897



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**Recommendation:- Approval** with delegated powers to refine and set the text for the conditions set out in Appendix 2, and subject to the completion of a S106 Agreement to secure the provision of a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan and Biodiversity Gain Land Monitoring contribution (and S106 Monitoring fee).

## REPORT

### 1.0 THE PROPOSAL

1.1 This is a Full Planning Application on behalf of the National Trust (NT) for an Outdoor Hub development at the Attingham Park Estate, Atcham. The proposed development site (the 'Site') comprises leased agricultural land formed over a former World War II RAF airfield. The intention for the proposed development is to create a new distinct visitor attraction, different from the existing experience at Attingham Park, providing a new base from which to explore the wider Estate and accommodate ~350,000 visitors per year by 2035. The aim is to establish a landscape that appeals to individuals who are interested in visiting the countryside, but may feel apprehensive about leaving the control of an urban environment. As a 'gateway' to the countryside, the Outdoor Hub would offer a diverse range of attractions whilst celebrating and refurbishing heritage and World War II features present on site at a reduced scale within the expanse of the wider landscape. To provide visitors with a place to immerse themselves in the countryside and nature, and engage with it on their own terms, sustainable design principles and renewable energy solutions would be showcased, green corridors created, woodland and trees planted, habitats constructed and restored, and walking/cycling trails and outdoor play areas designed. The facility will centre around a core area containing a new Outdoor Hub building with associated parking.

1.2 The development proposal includes:

1.2.1 An Outdoor Hub building containing a café with up to 100 seating spaces, kitchen, a bike hire/maintenance facility, community space, viewing tower, visitor welcome area, toilets and staff welfare facilities. The position of the Hub building located centrally on a former runway has been selected to best celebrate the Site's history, to provide optimum views of the surrounding countryside, and relate well to the existing built environment directly to the south of the site. The Hub design is contemporary and fully accessible, drawing reference from prefab, functional and utilitarian former RAF Structures. The building layout is proposed as a group of single storey structures, apart from the viewing tower, arranged around a central courtyard. Materials are proposed which reflect both the contemporary style of the building and its countryside setting, with a timber frame, part timber cladding and elements of glazing. The proposed roofs would provide shelter and shade linking the various buildings without enclosing the central space.

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- 1.2.2 Car parking located to the south-east side of the Hub building comprising 440 surfaced parking spaces leading to an overflow area of approximately 350 spaces adjacent to the B4394. Electric vehicle charging points, blue badge parking (25 spaces) and a bus/coach drop-off layby are included. 50 cycle parking spaces would be accommodated close to the Hub building.
- 1.2.3 Interpretation and refurbishment of former WWII runway alignment, which remains visible as a stretch of compacted hardcore and gravel, with pathways and planting. To prevent the removal of tons of material from the site, the hardcore would be broken up in-situ to create pockets to receive a thin layer of low fertility topsoil. This would then be planted as a heathland style landscape including gorse, heather, bilberry and multi-stemmed trees to appear as if the runway has been reclaimed by nature.
- 1.2.4 Facilities across the Site including children's play and wildlife viewing areas, and stand-alone shelters. The aim is to provide features unique to the Site which are not present at Attingham Park and would provide structured and adventurous activity, and explorative play equipment such as a zip wire experience, timber tower play feature, agricultural play, activity trail, woodland adventure play and a barefoot experience, in addition to a primary equipped play area.
- 1.2.5 Cycle skills tracks. Dedicated cycling tracks are proposed to be integrated into the landscape of the site to offer safe and scenic routes for cyclists of different proficiency levels. These would be clearly marked and separated from pedestrian areas to ensure safety. Bicycle parking facilities would be located near to the Hub building café and at strategic locations around the site.
- 1.2.6 Approximately 13km of trails to be created with habitat creation and restoration. The walking and hiking trails would cater to different fitness levels and interests and designed to be accessible. Additional habitat creation is proposed such as woodland planting adjacent to existing woodland blocks to enhance biodiversity and improve wildlife and habitat connectivity. Ecologically valuable habitats at the site would be retained wherever possible, such as bluebells and badger setts within the woodlands. Trails would be located around valuable habitats to avoid damage and disturbance to them, however, to still allow access to nature.
- 1.2.7 The creation of an orchard, wildflower planting, a Village Green feature and green corridors. The Village Green would be located to the north side of the Outdoor Hub buildings and act as an open space to increase visitation to the Site through the provision and promotion of events and activities in an outdoor environment. Mown pathways through wildflower areas are intended for seasonal interest and can be changed yearly. Green corridors would be created to provide links between existing fragmented habitats, allowing wildlife to move freely across the site and to expand the habitat available for various species.

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- 1.2.8 The provision of sustainable drainage features including swales where appropriate to ensure adequate drainage is provided to the car parking and access road. A new wetland would additionally be formed at the eastern end of the former runway and planted with native aquatic species. A timber deck is indicated to protrude over the wetland to help immerse site users in nature.
- 1.2.9 Comprehensive wayfinding and signage would be implemented throughout the site to assist visitors in navigation. These would include welcome and directional signs, trail name signs, information and map boards in strategic locations.
- 1.2.10 The opportunity to link outside the site to the National Cycle Network connecting to Telford and Shrewsbury, or to the Wrekin and Haughmond Hill.
- 1.3 It is intended that the Site would be open to everyone 364 days a year with walkers, cyclists and horse riders having access 24 hours a day. However, the facilities, buildings and car park would have opening times restricted to between 8:00 and 19:00 in the summer, 8:00 to 17:00 in winter. Hours of operation for events would be determined as part of an Events Management Plan, however would generally be within the core operating hours of the Site. The operational aim is to sustainably spread visitors across the year with events used to attract people during quieter periods.
- 1.4 The principal vehicular access point is proposed off the B4394 via the Atcham Business Park road to the south-east side of the Site where the give-way priority junction with the B4394 would be retained. A junction bellmouth would be created for the Site off the business park access road approximately 90m from the junction, where a two-way road would take visitors into the Outdoor Hub car park. An existing speed hump on the business park access road would be relocated to south.
- 1.5 A comprehensive suite of supporting documents have been submitted at the outset and throughout the course of the application. These can be viewed within the online planning file and are listed under Section 11 of this Report.
- 2.0 SITE LOCATION/DESCRIPTION
- 2.1 The proposed ~27.5 hectare Site is located approximately 8km to the east of Shrewsbury Town Centre, and 5km from the A5 on its outskirts. It falls within the eastern extent of the NT Attingham Park Estate, although is not included in the EH Historic Park and Garden designation which contains the Grade I Listed main house. The Atcham Business Park is sited adjacent to the south-west side of the Site with a privately owned access road extending from its south-east side to the B4394. The business park was formed on land sold off by the Estate in the 1960s. Vehicular access into the Site is currently gained from the west via a gated agricultural track which runs north from the B4394 past dwellings at 'Rural Cottages' and the western side of the business park. The River Tern lies to the north and the B4394 along the eastern boundary of the Site. The various

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settlements in the vicinity include Atcham to the south-west from which the existing NT attraction is accessed, Uckington to the south-east, and Norton to the south where the B4394 meets the B5061 which extends between Shrewsbury and Wellington and is known at this point as the 'Norton Crossroads'.

- 2.2 The Site is currently underutilised agricultural land which has previously been in crop production, and which contains an existing informal network of paths. Historically it was heathland and opened as active airfield RAF Atcham in 1940 during WWII, operating as such until being de-commissioned in 1957 when it was released back into NT ownership. Following this the former airfield technical site became the business park. Scars of the runways are still visible across the land, with the west section of the east/west runway being the only hardstanding remains. Other heritage assets close by include Wroxeter Roman Town to the south of Norton, and multiple Listed Buildings, the closest of these to the Site being Grade II Listed Smethcote Farm to the north-west.

### 3.0 REASON FOR COMMITTEE DETERMINATION OF APPLICATION

- 3.1 Complex or Major applications which in the view of the Planning Services Manager in consultation with the Chairman or Vice Chairman should be determined by the relevant Planning Committee.

### 4.0 Community Representations

#### 4.1 Consultee Comments

As there are multiple responses from the majority of consultees, the most recent submissions have been reported below as these constitute material considerations.

- 4.1.1 SC Highways (LHA) (01/09/25) - No objection subject to a S278 Agreement for access, wayfinding strategy, and financial contribution of £40,000 towards the improvement of safety at Norton Crossroads.

Overall, there do not appear to be any areas where a fundamental highways objection on the grounds of highway safety or capacity could be raised. The local junction at Norton Crossroads has demonstrated a worsening safety record, however this appears to be a matter of highway surface quality that is due for remediation. Given the limited opportunities in this area, any development should contribute towards local lining and signing enhancements with a focus on the attraction that a site of this nature will result in. Conditions recommended for detailed access, construction management, car parking management, events management, a wayfinding strategy and a lining and signing scheme for Norton Crossroads.

The LHA comments are provided in full in Appendix 1.

- 4.1.2 Telford And Wrekin Council (10/02/25) - Ecology, Conservation and Drainage Team have no comments on the proposals.

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TWC Highways have identified two critical junctions/locations maintained by them likely to be impacted by the proposed development:

- B5061 Holyhead Road/Roman Road junction (adjacent to J7 M54). TWC request £35,387.24 towards an improvement scheme for this junction.
- Narrow bridge over the railway line on the B4394 at Walcot (~1km to the north east of the Site). TWC request that further road link analysis based on both a weekday and weekend, rather than just peak periods, to allow a full evaluation of the potential highway safety risk.

TWC additionally recommend further consideration of cycle trips and routes and associated signage.

4.1.3 Active Travel England (21/01/25) - On the basis of the information available, Active Travel England is content with the development proposed.

4.1.4 SC Drainage (23/06/25) - The proposed drainage strategy is acceptable in principle and the LLFA welcomes the use of swales to convey surface water. Pre-commencement conditions recommended in relation to a scheme of foul and surface water drainage, and finalisation of the drainage strategy.

4.1.5 SC Regulatory Services (23/01/25) - Concur with the recommendation of the Phase II Site Investigation Report. Pre-commencement condition recommended in relation to an assessment of the risks posed by any contamination.

Environmental Health (22/01/25) - No objection in principle to the application.

4.1.6 SC Waste Management (30/01/25) - No comments needed due to there being no new residential properties being built.

4.1.7 SC Ecology (16/07/25) - No objection.  
The habitat creation includes modified grassland, other neutral grassland, broadleaved woodland, various scrub, rural trees and ponds. Due to their size and technical difficulty, these proposed habitats are considered to be significant, therefore an estimated monitoring fee of £29,448.25 is required to be secured through a S106 Agreement.

As per the SC Green Infrastructure comments, green roofs are encouraged as habitats to be included in the proposal's design, although these features are not required to achieve the mandatory 10% BNG.

Conditions recommended in relation to:

- An Ecological Clerk of Works Report to the LPA demonstrating implementation of the bluebell, great crested newts, badgers and hedgehogs Reasonable Avoidance

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Measures Method Statement (RAMMS) on the outbuilding present at the site a set out in the submitted Protected Species Survey Report.

- A badger site walkover survey report supporting a mitigation strategy if required.
- A Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP).
- Provision of wildlife enhancements.
- Provision of an external lighting plan.

- 4.1.8 SC Landscape (09/06/25) - Following the enhancement of the landscape character study, added viewpoints, a revised viewpoint photograph and further annotation of the viewpoint photography, the LVA demonstrates good practice and is sufficiently compliant with GLVIA3 and related technical guidance documents to be relied upon to inform planning judgement.

The proposals are considered acceptable in landscape and visual terms. Pre-commencement conditions are recommended in respect of hard and soft landscaping schemes, and a landscape management and maintenance plan.

- 4.1.9 SC Trees (05/02/25) - The proposed loss of trees and sections of hedgerows will have limited impact on the visual amenity and arboreal nature of the location. It can be compensated by planting new trees, hedges and shrubs as part of a high quality landscaping scheme. Pre-commencement conditions recommended relating to tree protection and final landscaping details.

- 4.1.10 SC Green Infrastructure (07/07/25) - It is acceptable for the detail design of the play spaces to be dealt with through a condition. Previously provided comments regarding the play provision should be reflected in the future design development particularly regarding inclusivity and accessibility in support of the masterplan's intention for the development to be a gateway for a new audience. The play provision should differ from that provided within the main Attingham Park site.

Whilst the NT have advised that the inclusion of a green roof is unviable, this seems a missed opportunity.

- 4.1.11 Natural England (25/02/25) - No objection.  
Based on the plans submitted, Natural England considers that the proposed development will not have significant adverse impacts on designated sites including the Attingham Park Site of Special Scientific Interest.

- 4.1.12 SC Conservation (04/02/25) - Concur with the findings of the Heritage Impact Assessment and do not raise a heritage objection to the proposal. The building materials indicated in the visuals and drawings are noted and no particular issues are raised on building design, appearance and detailing.

- 4.1.13 SC Archaeology (05/02/25) - The site is considered to have high to very high archaeological potential. Officers agree with the potential for archaeological remains within the proposed development site (WWII runways), but consider they

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could be of up to national significance based on their possible contribution to the significance of a scheduled monument (Wroxeter Roman Town). A pre-commencement condition requiring a programme of archaeological work is recommended.

- 4.1.14 Historic England (31/01/25) - Have concerns regarding the application on heritage grounds. Recommend a closely targeted programme of pre-determination trial trenching across the mapped lines of the footpath and parish boundary shown in the 1<sup>st</sup> edition OS to test for survival and associated remains (Roman) and thereby also provide a better degree of assurance to the geophysical survey results overall.
- 4.1.15 British Horse Society (21/02/25) - Pleased to see that horse riders will be able to use certain tracks on the wider site. This will be very limited in the absence of provision for parking of horse boxes or trailers. Disappointed that more emphasis has not been placed on the needs of horse riders and no mention of carriage driving. The Outdoor Hub would be an excellent safe space for equestrian activities if parking were provided.
- 4.1.16 Shropshire Fire and Rescue (28/01/25) - Signpost the information contained within Shropshire Fire and Rescue Services Fire Safety Guidance for Commercial and Domestic Planning Applications.
- 4.1.17 Severn Trent Water - No comments received to date.
- 4.1.18 SC PROW - No comments received to date.
- 4.2 Public Comments
  - 4.2.1 Confirmation of site notice display was received on 18th January 2025. The proposal was advertised in the Shropshire Star as a Major Development and affecting a public right of way on 4th February 2025.
  - 4.2.2 37 public representations have been received including from three Parish Councils, the Local Member, and solicitors representing Hereford Storage Ltd and Royal Mail Group Ltd who operate from Atcham Business Park. The twenty-six majority comments are in favour of the idea of the proposed development, however object to the access location and the impact on the business park. There are seven letters of support and three neutral comments. All comments are available to view online and are summarised below:
  - 4.2.3 The Site is within the Wroxeter and Uppington Parish Council area, whilst the main house at Attingham Park falls under Atcham Parish Council. Leighton and Eaton Constantine Parish Council is neighbouring.
  - 4.2.4 Wroxeter and Uppington Parish Council (21-07-25) - Continues to object as the objections raised previously have not been addressed:

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- The response from Arup on behalf of the NT does not adequately deal with the traffic speed and volume issues or set out a timetable for further consultation with Parish Councils, local businesses and residents.
- The NTs lack of consultation and meaningful dialogue with the PC and residents is concerning given the impact the development of the Hub will have on local people.
- The PC are aware that Norton Crossroads is included in the SC high priority accident cluster group, and any development of the Outdoor Hub needs to consider road safety.
- In the event of Approval, a specific condition is requested to obtain financial support from the Applicant for a scheme to address the safety concerns at Norton Junction.

Wroxeter and Uppington Parish Council (03/03/25) - Broadly welcomes the proposal to develop an Outdoor Hub, but cannot support the application in its current form and therefore objects on the following grounds:

- The amount of traffic from the large numbers of visitors to Attingham Park already puts pressure on roads in the surrounding area worsening the congestion issues which already exist at junctions.
- Meetings have taken place between West Mercia Police, SC Highways, the Ward Councillor and the PC to discuss what needs to be done to make the junction at Norton crossroads safer including reducing the speed limit on the approach to the junction. However, if the volume of traffic is to increase, physical changes are needed at the junction to ensure that the traffic is controlled.
- Request that the application is Withdrawn to allow a significant level of consultation with local communities to address or at least moderate the issues the PC believe the development will create.

4.2.5 Atcham Parish Council (12/07/25) - Do not find that the concerns previously raised have been addressed in any meaningful way by the amendments and therefore stand by their original objections registered on 27/02/25.

Atcham Parish Council (27/02/25) - Supports the creation of the Outdoor Hub in principle believing it would bring many benefits to the wider community and to the preservation of the natural environment. However, objects on behalf of residents on the following grounds:

- The significant congestion problems in the centre of Atcham caused during peak visitor days to the main house site could reasonably be expected to worsen with the predicted visitor numbers to the Outdoor Hub. The vast majority of visits in cars will add to highway risks, congestion and pollution all affecting local residents. With existing concerns about visitor traffic unresolved, the PC feels it cannot support the access to the Outdoor Hub.

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- Parishioners are also concerned about the safety of Norton Crossroads which is already the site of regular vehicular near-misses.
- Concerns for the safety of pedestrians and cyclists attempting to access the new Outdoor Hub. Improving Sustrans routes and bus services remain theoretical.
- The PC wish to point out that there was no consultation with residents of Atcham Parish prior to this application being submitted.

4.2.6 Leighton and Eaton Constantine Parish Council (23/03/25) - Despite there being merit in the proposal, are unable to support the application in its present form. The basis of the objection is that the proposal demonstrates no consideration regarding the significant impact it would have on current road users, local residents, and prospective visitors to the site in terms of highway safety. Grave concerns around traffic volumes and speeds are shared by other parish councils in the area.

#### 4.2.7 Public Objections

##### Highway/Traffic Concerns:

- Potentially large increase in traffic through Atcham village, particularly at the dangerous 6-way junction.
- Increased danger to pedestrians crossing the road to and from the bus stop.
- Hereford Storage Ltd, as the owner of the proposed access from the development to the B4394 is not willing to allow use of over this road.
- There will be likely delays in accessing and leaving the business park and disruption to its operations, undermining its success.
- The entrance/exit to the proposed site is off a minor road, leading to difficult junctions and is not a safe and suitable means of access.
- There is a lack of raw survey data for daily traffic flows, making it difficult to assess the most suitable junction type.
- Increased vehicle movements are indicated without improvements to pedestrian and cycle infrastructure.
- No traffic management is proposed on the B4394 and Norton crossroads, known for serious accidents, where the risk would be increased.
- Potential increase in road casualties due to the development.
- Increased traffic along the B4380, a dangerous road.
- There is a need for traffic calming measures to reduce speeding vehicles.
- No safe route for cyclists from Shrewsbury or Telford to the site.
- Apprehension over night-time motorcyclists/cyclists using cycle tracks.
- Lack of adequate road safety measures funded by the National Trust.
- Increased traffic on the roads will require additional road maintenance.
- Potential hazards to tractor drivers and farmers from the additional traffic.

##### Business and Operational Concerns:

- Potential impact on existing businesses and their legal rights of access.

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- Apprehension over the mix of HGV movements and public visitor traffic resulting in potential congestion, parking and safety issues due to the shared access with the business park.
- The proposed development could significantly impact on business operations at Parcelforce and other businesses within the Atcham Business Park.
- Security for the existing businesses could be put at risk.

## Environmental and Community Impact:

- Concerns about the impact on wildlife and the environment.
- Lack of communication and consultation with local residents, the community, parish councils, Shropshire Councillor or tenants. No commitment to community engagement shown by the National Trust.
- Potential noise and environmental impact from events on the site.
- Concerns about the impact on the local community and their properties from additional visitor number and a potential increase in crime rates.
- The freedom and safety of local residents, their mental health and wellbeing could be impacted upon.

## Other Concerns:

- Impact on the historical bridleway.
- There is no pedestrian link into Attingham Park from the proposed Outdoor Hub.
- The term 'Outdoor Hub' is vague, and the nature, frequency and timing of events to be held is not clear.

### 4.2.8 Public Support

#### Broadening Opportunities:

- The application is supported for its potential to broaden opportunities for many more people to be active in the green and open spaces at Attingham.
- Plans to work collaboratively with local voluntary and community groups to ensure access for people who would not normally get these opportunities are welcomed.
- The initiative is seen as beneficial for those with long-term health conditions and mobility issues.

#### Outdoor Hub:

- The creation of a community hub at Attingham Park is fully supported as it offers a wonderful opportunity for people from all walks of life to enjoy the green space and take part in a variety of activities.
- The hub will make the park more accessible and affordable for families, providing a welcoming place for everyone to come together.

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- It will strengthen the connection between the park and the local community, creating a sense of belonging and shared space.
- The idea of creating an outdoor space that will bring families and friends together, especially with the inclusion of electric charging points, is supported.
- The utilisation of the outdoor space is seen as a fantastic initiative.
- The hub is viewed as a wonderful idea, especially for charities that support people in getting outdoors.
- The application is fully supported for providing much-needed outdoor recreational and educational spaces for the people of Shropshire.

Mental Health and Well-being:

- With mental health being at record low levels across the county, more access to green space and community projects that work in conjunction with nature should be encouraged and supported by all, including the local authority.
- Green space is beneficial for people's mental health if they can access it.

## 5.0 THE MAIN ISSUES

- Principle of development
- Siting, scale and design
- Visual impact and landscaping
- Impact on the natural environment.
- Impact on the historic environment
- Access and parking
- Drainage
- Other matters

## 6.0 OFFICER APPRAISAL

### 6.1 Principle of development

6.1.1 The NPPF constitutes guidance for local planning authorities as a material consideration to be given significant weight in determining applications. The NPPF sets out the presumption in favour of sustainable development which for decision-taking means approving proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay. Whilst the Council's lack of housing land supply results in the adopted Development Plan being out-of-date in relation to policies relevant to new housing proposals, policies relating to employment, tourism and leisure uses are considered to remain generally in conformity with the NPPF. Therefore, the adopted Development Plan is up to date for determination of the proposed NT Outdoor Hub development alongside the provisions of the NPPF.

6.1.2 Paragraph 88 of the NPPF requires that planning policies and decisions should enable the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed, beautiful buildings (a), and sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside (c). NPPF, paragraph 89 continues by advising that LPAs should recognise that such developments may need to be located outside

existing settlements where they are not well served by public transport. In these locations there should not be an unacceptable impact on local roads, the development should be sensitive to its surroundings and exploit opportunities to make the site more sustainable.

- 6.1.3 As the location for the proposed Outdoor Hub is outside any settlement boundary and located within countryside, LDF Core Strategy Policy CS5 is relevant. CS5 sets out that some forms of development in the countryside are permissible, provided they are on appropriate sites which maintain and enhance countryside vitality and character. Potentially acceptable development includes the retention and appropriate expansion of an existing established business unless relocation to a suitable site within a settlement would be more appropriate, and sustainable rural tourism, leisure and recreation proposals which require a countryside location in accordance with Policies CS16 and CS17. At paragraph 4.72, CS5, it is noted that the operation of this policy recognises the need to consider the scale and design of proposals, where development is most appropriately sited, environmental and other impacts. There will be a significant emphasis on achieving quality and sustainability of design, particularly locally appropriate design and use of materials. More generally, Policy CS13 plans positively to develop and diversify the Shropshire economy, supporting enterprise and seeking to deliver sustainable economic growth and prosperous communities.
- 6.1.4 Specifically LDF Core Strategy Policy CS16 and SAMDev Plan Policy MD11 relate to tourism, culture and leisure development. Through these policies, emphasis is placed on delivering high quality sustainable tourism, cultural and leisure development which enhances the vital role these sectors play for the local economy, benefits local communities and visitors and is sensitive to Shropshire's intrinsic natural and built environment qualities, including:
- Supporting new and extended tourism development, and cultural and leisure facilities, that are appropriate to their location, and enhance and protect the existing offer within Shropshire.
  - Promoting connections between visitors and Shropshire's natural, cultural and historic environment, including through active recreation, access to heritage trails and parkland.
  - Supporting development that promotes opportunities for accessing, understanding and engaging with Shropshire's landscape, cultural and historic assets including rights-of-way networks.
- 6.1.5 The existing established attraction at Attingham Park is one of the National Trust's most popular, for example 518,863 people visited between 2020 and 2021. With the attraction frequently at capacity, the NT have identified an expansion of the offer to appeal to a new type of visitor to the Estate, one that perhaps is not a NT member already and would not necessarily visit traditional NT properties. The Outdoor Hub is therefore proposed to provide an alternative experience at the Attingham Park Estate, one which would encourage visitor engagement with the

natural, cultural and historic environment there through active recreation. The Site has been carefully selected within the Estate as the best location to promote opportunities for accessing, understanding and engaging with the landscape as it contains both heritage and natural features that can be appropriately enhanced, plus has the scope for providing multiple types and levels of trails and outdoor play. Furthermore, the proposed development requires a countryside location where the intended use would complement the character and qualities of the Site's immediate surroundings. The principle of the proposed development is therefore in accordance with LDF Core Strategy Policies CS5, CS13 and CS16, SAMDev Plan Policy MD11 and Chapter 6 of the NPPF, all of which relate to building a strong, competitive economy.

- 6.1.5 Whilst the principle of the proposed development is acceptable, consideration must additionally be given in the application's determination to those policies which relate to design, drainage and highways, and to the natural and historic environment, to ensure that the Outdoor Hub visitor attraction would result in a sustainable form of development.
- 6.2 Siting, scale and design
  - 6.2.1 The proposed development would comply with the requirements of LDF Core Strategy Policy CS6 and SAMDev Policy MD2 in that it is designed to a high standard, makes the most effective use of land, would function well in its location and respects the character of the surrounding rural environment.
  - 6.2.2 The layout of the site has been formulated following consideration of multiple other options to avoid adverse effects on the landscape and to provide optimum and logical functioning. The Outdoor Hub building, service yard and the car park are shown positioned around the northern and north-eastern sides of the Attingham Business Park where they would be adjacent to the existing built environment rather than creating visually isolated buildings/hard landscaping. The service yard would be positioned between the Outdoor Hub building and the business park boundary where it would not be prominent nor detract from the other attractions at the Site. This proposed plan also allows enough space within the site for other activities to span out towards the countryside in a more interactive form without disconnection. The location of the Outdoor Hub building in the centre of the runway would grant views out from it, accentuated by its long east/west linear extent and alignment of architectural features to maximise views of the building itself. Furthermore, this positioning would provide an opportunity to celebrate the history of the runway through encouraging interaction with it and acknowledgement of it. The position of the existing woodland areas creates an enclosure to the primary recreational space with the Village Green in the centre directly adjacent to the north side of Outdoor Hub building to reduce disorientation. The distance of the Outdoor Hub building from the B4394 would minimise its visual impact on the wider environment and provide some tranquillity within the site.

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- 6.2.3 The design of the Outdoor Hub proposes a compact, but versatile group of interconnected buildings around a central courtyard, with features to provide architectural interest such as covered walkways, columns, external beams, louvred screening, areas of glazing and spaces for views outwards. Reference is directly drawn from prefab, functional and utilitarian former RAF structures, particularly in relation to the proposed viewing tower as its appearance is taken from existing photographs of the original at RAF Atcham. The proposed materials have been selected to reference the site's RAF history in combination with its rural location to include an aluminium standing seam roof, vertical timber cladding, specialist render, a concrete plinth, aluminium window/door frames and bronze cladding. The proposed form and materials of the Outdoor Hub building would respond positively to the function and appearance of the Estate by creating a unique and interesting structure that nevertheless respects the natural and historic character of the Site.
- 6.3 Visual impact and landscaping
- 6.3.1 A Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) has been submitted with the application and updated during the course of the application. This has been used to inform the layout of the Site and to eliminate or minimise adverse landscape and visual effects from the development as far as is practicable. Key views from the receptors identified in the Appraisal were considered and resulted in the following design features:
- Siting the Outdoor Hub building to retain visitor experience, particularly for visitors to Attingham Park's differing historic setting.
  - Use of muted and naturalistic colours for pathways and hard surfacing which better reflect existing tracks in the wider landscape.
  - Planting to break up areas of hard surfacing such as in the car park to soften the visual impact.
  - Bolstering existing woodland through additional planting to create a sense of enclosure for the Hub and car parking and to screen potential views of the buildings and hard landscaping from the surrounding landscape.
  - Ensuring that visitor experience for future users of the Site was also available through sight lines to important landmark features such as Haughmond Hill and The Wrekin.
- 6.3.2 For the proposed development, the balance of respect shown for the existing landscape whilst promoting connection with it reflects the objectives of Policy CS16 and the avoidance of harm to the natural environment set out in SAMDev Plan MD12. The proposed development would recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside by enhancing the natural and local environment in accordance with paragraph 187b) of the NPPF.
- 6.3.3 SC Landscape have confirmed that the proposals are considered acceptable in landscape and visual terms and can be satisfactorily managed by conditions requiring final details of hard and soft landscaping schemes, and a landscape management and maintenance plan.

## 6.4 Impact on the natural environment

6.4.1 As the aim of the proposed development is to provide a gateway to the countryside, significant work has been carried out to secure the Site's appeal in this respect and to provide a balance of accessibility and authenticity, without which, the attraction is unlikely to be successful. LDF Core Strategy Policy CS17 sets out the expectations for proposed development to achieve environmental networks. These expectations include that the visual, ecological, geological and recreational values and functions, the immediate surroundings, or the connecting corridors of Shropshire's natural environment are not adversely affected. The local distinctiveness of Shropshire's environment, including its landscapes and biodiversity should be contributed to.

6.4.2 The planting strategy for the site includes adding structure and seasonal interest, creating a high-quality countryside environment, enhancing existing ecology and contributing towards Biodiversity Net Gain in line with Policy CS17. Existing woodland would be improved by additional planting to enhance biodiversity and improved wildlife corridors, valuable habitats are indicated to be retained where possible and specific and diverse habitats would be enhanced and created to suite the existing landscape, for example the proposed heathland planting of the former runway.

6.4.3 The proposed development substantially surpasses the minimum BNG target achieving 19.86% in habitat units, 37.18% in hedgerow units, and 20.96% in watercourse units through the creation of modified grassland, other neutral grassland, broadleaved woodland, various scrub, native trees and ponds. The proposed habitats are considered to be 'significant' due to their size and technical difficulty and will require a S106 Agreement for monitoring purposes.

## 6.5 Impact on the historic environment

6.5.1 Under Section 16 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 there is a duty placed on Local Authorities in exercising their statutory duty to have regard to the desirability of preserving Listed Buildings or their settings or any features of special architectural or historic interest which they possess. At paragraph 210a) the NPPF advises that LPAs should take into account the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of Heritage Assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation.

6.5.2 The proposed development provides an opportunity to acknowledge the WWII and other historic uses of the Site which have been integrated into the design of the scheme. Whilst Historic England have expressed some concerns in relation to the potential for Roman remains, SC Conservation do not raise objection on heritage grounds, commenting that the building materials indicated in the visuals and drawings are noted and no particular issues are raised on building design, appearance and detailing. The Site is over 2km from the Georgian mansion at

Attingham Park and 0.6km from the Historic Park and Garden boundary with Atcham Business Park and mature Estate landscape lying in between.

- 6.5.2 SC Archaeology have identified that there is a high to very high archaeological potential at the Site, which could be of national significance based on the proximity of Wroxter Roman Town 1.7km to the south-west, and this reflects the concerns raised by Historic England. An Archaeological Impact Assessment has been submitted in support of the application which identifies a raised portion of ground within the existing woodland where the former Roman Road would have been located, discernible now through its raised profile above the woodland floor. This former Roman Road is proposed to be retained and resurfaced in places to encourage access to the woodland with interpretation and links to other Roman archaeology within the surrounding landscape signposted. The Assessment acknowledges some surveying limitations at the Site, however notes that any requirements for further archaeological mitigation could be safeguarded through an appropriately worded planning condition. SC Archaeology have concurred that a programme of archaeological work is recommended to manage the ground level heritage potential at the Site.
- 6.5.3 In this case, in line with SAMDev Plan Policy MD13, the proposed development would avoid harm or loss to Designated Heritage Assets in the vicinity, including their settings. In fact, the proposal includes sympathetically enhancing a former WWII RAF site making its historical importance more accessible to the public. Paragraph 210b) requires LPAs to take account of the positive contribution that conservation of Heritage Assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality, and the Outdoor Hub attraction would make such a positive contribution.
- 6.6 Access and parking
  - 6.6.1 Paragraph 116 of the NPPF states that development should only be refused on highway grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network, following mitigation, would be severe, taking into account all reasonable future scenarios.
  - 6.6.2 Substantial concern has been raised through public representation, from Parish Councils and from the Local Member in relation to the potential impact of the proposed development on local highway conditions and the functioning of Atcham Business Park.
  - 6.6.3 Concern is put forward over increased severity of collisions associated with inappropriate speed and junction visibility at the Site access/business park access/B4394 junction. The Applicant's transport consultants, Arup, have advised that the existing B394 junction with the business park meets design requirements for which safety is a key attribute. Whilst the risk of collisions may be raised due to the increase in traffic flows, this does not change the safety attributes of the junction design. The speed hump on the business park access would be relocated

and new turning movements into and out of the proposed Site set out. Arup believe that the new nature and use of the business access road in combination with the Outdoor Hub attraction would create a self-regulating low-speed environment through a change in driver behaviour and slowing vehicular speeds. A recommendation that appropriate forward visibility splays are provided clear of any obstructions such as hedgerows is accepted by Arup. A reduction in speed limit on the B4394 along with an extension to the 20mph zone on the business access is put forward if required.

- 6.6.4 In this matter, the LHA note that a junction has been established here and does operate for the business park and turning does occur. The incidence of collisions is not sufficient to give rise to a concern about the general movements occurring in this location, albeit that if an accident did occur here, it is accepted that it would involve high speeds. The suggested speed limit change is not supported, as an isolated short reduction in speed is unlikely to achieve a speed limit that is enforceable. In agreement with Arup, the LHA consider that the proposals both on the highway and adjacent would have an impact on the behaviour of traffic in this location.
- 6.6.5 A risk is identified for pedestrians being struck when using the proposed crossing on the B4394. Arup advise that the visibility at the crossing would meet design requirements subject to hedge trimming/realignment on the south side. Dropped kerbs and tactile paving would be provided at the crossing. Furthermore, as above, the additional activity due to the proposed development may create a different feel to the location resulting in a change in driver behaviour and slowing vehicular speeds.
- 6.5.6 The LHA comment that it is accepted that if pedestrians are not encouraged to cross here, the incident rate will be significantly lower. However, the proposals offer a comprehensive crossing in line with design standards for the measured traffic speeds. The safest outcome would be for no crossing to be introduced, nevertheless thought must be given to the design presented that could secure technical approval in accordance with the literature of highways design that allows such a facility and that the crossing would facilitate safer pedestrian access to the wider countryside.
- 6.5.6 Multiple concerns have been raised over the impact from the proposed development on Norton Crossroads (the B5061/B4394 junction). Arup have provided collision analysis for this junction, the B4394 junction with the business park access, and the B5061 Holyhead Road/Roman Road junction (see TWC Highways comments) using Department for Transport STATS19 collision data for the five-year period from 15 June 2020 to 15 June 2025. A total of 5 Personal Injury Collisions (PICs) involving 8 cars and 2 motorcycles were recorded in the time period resulting in 4 slight and 2 serious injuries. The accidents were caused by misjudging the oncoming vehicle, icy conditions, dazzling sunlight and overtaking. There were no collisions at the BB5061 Holyhead Road/Roman Road junction.

6.5.7 The LHA has access to the highway information portal, and a review of the Norton Crossroads junction does demonstrate that there are functional issues with the carriageway in this location and that the route incorporating this crossroads is identified for repair, including the factor of poor skid resistance. Regarding the junction as a crossroads, for which collision recordings make up a significant proportion generally, placing more movements through an existing crossroads does lead to the likelihood of the highest rate of collisions through number of movements. However, there is nothing preventing the increase in traffic through a crossroads, and the modelling work for the proposed development identifies that additional movements will not exceed operational capacity. The LHA have advised that a new roundabout would not address the operational concerns at this junction, as there is no obvious land available for even a normal size roundabout which would nevertheless be inappropriate here for the established speed limit. It is difficult to establish a link between the Norton Crossroads and the increase in movements from the proposed development that would necessitate a mitigation. The general impact of resolving the surfacing issue at this junction should be that the collision frequency returns to earlier levels and a financial contribution to renew and enhance the lining and signing at this junction would be of wider benefit.

6.5.8 In conclusion, the LHA consider that whilst retaining the highway in its extant arrangement with the existing levels of use is a known outcome that is acceptable, the highway design presented accords with design practices and is safe and suitable for its intentions.

The LHA comments are provided in full in Appendix 1.

6.5.9 Hereford Storage Ltd, as the owner of the Atcham Business Park access from the B4394 have declared an unwillingness to allow use over this road for the new access into the proposed Outdoor Hub attraction. Certificate B has been formally served on Hereford Storage Ltd as part of the planning application i.e. the requisite notice has been given to all owners of any part of the land to which the application relates. The grant of planning permission is not an instruction or requirement to develop; it simply confirms that the proposed development is acceptable in planning terms. If the Applicant is not the legal owner of the land, the development cannot be carried out unless the owner agrees and it is understood that the NT have been in dialogue with the owners in this respect. The planning system does not control land ownership or access rights, and the LPA would not be involved in private land disputes.

6.7 Drainage

6.7.1 No issues have been raised in relation to the proposed drainage strategy which is based upon sustainable drainage principles in accordance with LDF Core Strategy Policy CS18 requiring new development to be designed to be safe, taking into account the lifetime of the development, and the need to adapt to climate change.

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## 6.8 Other Matters

6.8.1 Green roofs - were considered during early design development but were ultimately not included in the final proposals for viability reasons. However, the overall landscape-led approach to the scheme has ensured that green infrastructure connections have been prioritised throughout.

6.8.2 Pedestrian link to Attingham Park - the lack of direct connectivity between the new Outdoor Hub and Attingham Park is intentional. The decision reflects a strategic management approach to visitor movement, allowing the NT to carefully manage numbers and avoid overburdening sensitive heritage and ecological features within the main park. This design principle helps safeguard the setting of the registered park and garden, while allowing the Outdoor Hub to offer a distinct, landscape-led experience.

6.8.3 Transport links from the wider area - although the masterplan cannot directly deliver improved public transport infrastructure outside of the site boundary, it does enhance site accessibility internally through improved pedestrian and cycle infrastructure. Discussions with Sustrans are ongoing, but the organisation is currently unable to promote an active travel route directly to the site. Nevertheless, new signage and information boards will promote routes to the wider area. Improvements to the crossing point on the B4394 will further support pedestrian access.

6.8.4 Inadequate consultation by the developer - consultation was undertaken with stakeholders and summarised within the Statement of Community Involvement (December 2024). The NT recognise concerns expressed by the Parish Councils and confirm that they are committed to continued community engagement as the project progresses.

## 7.0 CONCLUSION

7.1 Paragraph 85 of the NPPF requires that significant weight be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development. The approach taken should allow each area to build on its strengths, counter any weaknesses and address the challenges of the future. The proposed Outdoor Hub attraction would amount to the appropriate expansion of an existing established business to provide an alternative experience at the Attingham Park Estate, and one which would encourage visitor engagement with the natural, cultural and historic environment there through active recreation. The proposed development is supported by a well-designed Hub building and well-conceived layout which would balance maximising the potential offered by the Site's attributes with respect for the intrinsic value of the existing landscape.

7.2 The compliance of the proposed development is weighted significantly in favour of approval, where the minor issues raised, included highway safety where there is not an unacceptable impact, can be successfully mitigated and managed through

appropriate conditions. The proposed Outdoor Hub would fulfil the three overarching, interdependent objectives for achieving sustainable development, in short, that it would help to build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, it would result in a well-designed and safe place that would support social and cultural well-being, and it would make effective use of land to protect and enhance the natural built and historic environment.

7.3 The recommendation is therefore for Approval with delegated powers to refine and set the text for the conditions set out in Appendix 2, and subject to the completion of a S106 Agreement to secure the provision of a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan and Biodiversity Gain Land Monitoring contribution (and S106 Monitoring fee).

8.0 Artificial Intelligence (AI)

8.1 AI can be used to support our work and to create content by bringing together or summarising responses to consultation. The report writer remains responsible for ensuring that the content of the report is factually accurate and that the use of AI is responsible and lawful. All original documents remain unaltered on the planning register should you wish to view them in full.

9.0 Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

9.1 Risk Management

There are two principal risks associated with this recommendation as follows:

- As with any planning decision the applicant has a right of appeal if they disagree with the decision and/or the imposition of conditions. Costs can be awarded irrespective of the mechanism for hearing the appeal, i.e. written representations, hearing or inquiry.
- The decision may be challenged by way of a Judicial Review by a third party. The courts become involved when there is a misinterpretation or misapplication of policy or some breach of the rules of procedure or the principles of natural justice. However their role is to review the way the authorities reach decisions, rather than to make a decision on the planning issues themselves, although they will interfere where the decision is so unreasonable as to be irrational or perverse. Therefore they are concerned with the legality of the decision, not its planning merits. A challenge by way of Judicial Review must be made a) promptly and b) in any event not later than six weeks after the grounds to make the claim first arose.

Both of these risks need to be balanced against the risk of not proceeding to determine the application. In this scenario there is also a right of appeal against non-determination for application for which costs can also be awarded.

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## .2 Human Rights

Article 8 gives the right to respect for private and family life and First Protocol Article 1 allows for the peaceful enjoyment of possessions. These have to be balanced against the rights and freedoms of others and the orderly development of the County in the interests of the Community.

First Protocol Article 1 requires that the desires of landowners must be balanced against the impact on residents.

This legislation has been taken into account in arriving at the above recommendation.

## 9.3 Equalities

The concern of planning law is to regulate the use of land in the interests of the public at large, rather than those of any particular group. Equality will be one of a number of 'relevant considerations' that need to be weighed in Planning Committee members' minds under section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

## 10.0 Financial Implications

There are likely financial implications if the decision and / or imposition of conditions is challenged by a planning appeal or judicial review. The costs of defending any decision will be met by the authority and will vary dependent on the scale and nature of the proposal. Local financial considerations are capable of being taken into account when determining this planning application – insofar as they are material to the application. The weight given to this issue is a matter for the decision maker.

## 10. Background

### Relevant Planning Policies

Central Government Guidance:

National Planning Policy Framework

National Planning Practice Guidance

LDF Core Strategy Policies:

CS1 Strategic Approach

CS5 Countryside And Green Belt

CS6 Sustainable Design And Development Principles

CS13 Economic Development, Enterprise And Employment

CS16 Tourism, Culture And Leisure

CS17 Environmental Networks

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## CS18 Sustainable Water Management

Site Allocations & Management Of Development (SAMDev) Plan Policies:

MD1 Scale and Distribution of development

MD2 Sustainable Design

MD7b General Management Of Development In The Countryside

MD11 Tourism Facilities And Visitor Accommodation

MD12 Natural Environment

MD13 Historic Environment

### RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY:

None relevant to the proposed development site, however there is substantial planning history covering the Attingham Park Estate.

### 11. Additional Information

View details online: [24/04831/FUL](https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/24/04831/FUL)

#### List of Background Papers:

- Design and Access Statement (Arup, December 2024) Ref:AOH-ARP-ZZ-ZZ-RP-T-00006 Rev P01.
- Planning Statement (Arup, 9<sup>th</sup> December 2024) Ref: ARUP\_AOH\_PS V2.
- Landscape And Visual Appraisal (LVIA) (Arup, 7<sup>th</sup> March 2025) Ref: 292083-ARUP-ZZ-XX-RP-LD-0001 Rev P02.
- Drainage Assessment and Surface Water Drainage Design/Management (Arup, 11<sup>th</sup> October 2024) Ref: AOH-ARP-ZZ-ZZ-RP-CD-0001 Version 01.
- Flood Risk Assessment (Arup, 19<sup>th</sup> December 2024) Ref: AOH-ARP-ZZ-ZZ-RP-W-00001 Rev 01.
- Building Services Noise Assessment For Planning (Arup, 27 September 2024) Ref: AOH-ARP-ZZ-XX-RP-OA-00002 Rev P02.
- Ground Investigation Report (Arup, 7<sup>th</sup> August 2024) Ref: AOH-ARP-ZZ-ZZ-RP-G-00002 Rev P01.
- Transport Assessment (Arup, 24<sup>th</sup> September 2024) Ref: REP:001 Draft 01.
- Travel Plan Framework (Arup, 26<sup>th</sup> September 2024) Ref: REP/002 Draft 01.
- Technical Note: Response to Shropshire Council Highways Comments Ref: 292083-65 REP/004.
- Technical Note: Response to Atcham Business Park Briefing Note 1 Transport – Access Statement May 2025 prepared by Entran Ref: 292083-65 REP/003.
- Heritage Impact Assessment (Lanpro, November 2024) Ref: Rev V1.0.
- Archaeological Impact Assessment (Lanpro, November 2024) Ref: Rev V1.0.

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- Biodiversity Net Gain – Design Stage Report (Arup, 27<sup>th</sup> September 2024) Ref: AOH-ARP-ZZ-ZZ-DR-OE-00001 Rev P1.
- Attingham Park Outdoor Hub Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA) (Arup, 27<sup>th</sup> September 2024) Ref: AOH-ARP-ZZ-ZZ-RP-OE-00002 Rev Issue P01.
- Breeding Bird Survey Report: 2021 (Biome Consulting, 15<sup>th</sup> September 2021) Ref: Version 2.
- Reptile Survey Report: 2021 (Biome Consulting, 24<sup>th</sup> September 2021) Ref: Version 2.
- An Invertebrate Habitat Assessment of Land in the National Trust Attingham Estate at Atcham (Nigel Jones, July 2021).
- Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Tree Protection Plan (Boskytrees Arboricultural Consultancy, 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2024).
- Arboricultural Method Statement (Boskytrees Arboricultural Consultancy, 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2024)
- Traffic and Events Management Document (National Trust, September 2024) Ref: Version 1.
- Shropshire Sustainability Checklist & Waste Audit Statement (National Trust, 16<sup>th</sup> October 2024).
- Waste Management (National Trust).
- Agent Response Letter – Additional Information received 17th June 2025.
- Agent Response Letter - Supplement received 1st July 2025.

Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder) - Councillor David Walker

Local Member - Cllr Susan Coleman

## Appendices

APPENDIX 1 - LHA Comments (01/09/25)

APPENDIX 2 - Section 106 Provisions and List of Suggested Conditions

## APPENDIX 1 - LHA Comments (01/09/25)

25/04831/FUL

### Submissions Review:

- Response Technical Note to LHA.
- Response Technical Note to Entran.
- Event Management Plan.

### General Address:

This address is made before appraisal of the submissions and should be read to provide context and understanding to decision making in these matters.

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There are occasions when a private developer employs a transport consultant, and the public also employ a transport consultant, and differing views and conclusions are reached in relation to the same thing.

There is both strength and weakness in being able to logically come to two different positions on the same matter, particularly when that matter is predominantly being determined based on measured evidence and engineering design led principles.

However, there is typically a slight misunderstanding in matters of highway safety as to what is acceptable when considering a highways measure what would be the preferred option. In some instances, the preferred option may not be deliverable, and this is a common issue to highways authorities when seeking to implement schemes such as traffic calming or junction improvements.

The preferred option may be limited by land rights, costs or even outcomes of local consultation. Whilst an option may be preferred as it addresses the main issues best, that does not mean that alternatives are unacceptable. However, it must be recognised that any other option will mitigate differently, and, in that regard, there must be awareness.

For example, in a location where speed reduction is required the necessary and achievable speed reductions may differ. At any slower speeds it is correct to infer that the likelihood of harm associated with collisions reduces. But a highway has a character and a purpose. National Speed limits on Motorways are higher than trunk roads and there are notable differences including the potential for the presence of pedestrians and cyclists on trunk roads.

There must also be an understanding of what is already in place at a specific location. Any change to a highway, whether introducing a new access or change to traffic behaviour carries an element of risk. It is recognised that different junction types have different degrees of relative safety as evidenced across many reports including those produced by TRL.

There are instances where the role of the highway authority is not to establish the safest junction, or the highest capacity junction. There are other operational factors to consider about creation of new highway infrastructure and encouraging vulnerable users into certain locations.

A simpler form of junction is more cost effective and less of a maintenance burden to a local highway authority and so long as it operates safely and does not result in unreasonable delay there would be little justification to make such a junction safer or operate more efficiently.

Finally, there must be some differentiation between actual safety and repetitive safety. If a junction operates safely but say with an accident record of one collision per 5 years and that junction has 10,000 movements per day (1 accident per 18,250,000 movements), then if it can accommodate more movements and increased to 15,000 movements per day but still operates well within capacity and design parameters it is also the case that the collision rate can remain constant and there would now be 1 collision every 3.33 years.

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The more appropriate issue would therefore be whether the change to a junction was introducing a new harm or potential for a greater number of accidents due to a design issue and whether that potential would be unsafe or unacceptable in highways terms.

Review of Technical Note Response to Entran:

The junction of the B4394 and Atcham Business Park is extant. Noting the non-recognised sign that states 'Beware overtaking traffic from the left'. If there was no access in this location then there would simply be a long straight section of wide carriageway, subject to national speed limit.

Regardless of the non-recognised sign any person waiting at the give-way is liable to any traffic proceeding on the B4394 including if any traffic was overtaking. Whilst such a sign has been erected it is questionable that this reminder to the rules of the road is so necessary here opposed to any other junction of this arrangement.

If there was no junction here, there would be no turning. A junction has been established here and does operate for the business park. Turning does occur. The incidence of collisions is not sufficient to give rise to a concern about the general movements occurring in this location.

Turning to the Road Safety Audit it is important to address the findings and how they are presented. The independent nature of the RSA and respective CV's of the audit team are recognised though.

The phrasing of 'increased severity of collisions associated with inappropriate speeds' is not wholly agreed with on this occasion. Firstly 85th percentile speeds of 58.1mph on a carriageway subject to national speed limit (60mph) would not lead to an immediate concern relating to inappropriate speeds in terms of highways design.

There is also, in terms of vehicle collisions, no increased severity. The consideration for if an accident did occur here that it would be at high speeds close to or matching existing is accepted.

The RSA does not appear to give any consideration to the increases in movement or other alterations on the highway leading to different perception of this location by highway users.

I am not as inclined to think that the proposals both on highway and adjacent would have no impact on the behaviour of traffic or perception of increased turning in this location.

The Arup designer response has concluded similarly, and I am not supportive of a speed limit change, particularly in isolation on a carriageway system that is otherwise national speed limit in the area. An isolated short reduction in speed is unlikely to achieve a speed limit that is enforceable, but it can be considered as part of any design and post implementation monitoring.

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The risk of pedestrians being struck when crossing is also noted. It is accepted that if pedestrians are not encouraged to cross here the incident rate will be significantly lower.

The proposals offer a comprehensive design with dropped kerb and tactile paving with visibility for pedestrians commensurate to the measured traffic speeds. I am also satisfied that whilst not a DMRB road that the requirements of CD143 'Designing for walking, cycling and horse-riding' can be met by a design and secured as a requirement of a S278 agreement as a design standard.

Encouraging pedestrians to cross in this location, even in accordance with every permitted design standard will result in the creation of a route for pedestrians across high-speed traffic.

Looking back to my general address this is an example of whether it is appropriate to introduce a movement, with a design in accordance with best practice where there can be no doubt that if an incident was to occur the outcome would be severe.

It is inarguable that the most correct outcome would be to do nothing/entirely restrict pedestrians crossing in this location or otherwise create alternative facility i.e. bridge/subway.

However, thought must also be given to a design being presented, that could secure technical approval, in accordance with the literature of highways design that allows such facility and at no point instructs that such facility should not present itself on a highway.

The LHA must give thought to this and recognise that in making a recommendation that there is a decision maker present in terms of the Local Planning authority.

I can therefore advise that whilst retaining the highway in its extant arrangement with its existing levels of use is a known outcome that is acceptable and that whilst there are concerns about introducing new and additional movements in any location, that the design presented accords with design practices and is safe and suitable against its intentions.

Those intentions are different to the existing arrangement and introduce new conflicts for which a safe and suitable design has been presented at this planning stage which will be secured by S278 agreement and subject to technical approval.

Norton Crossroads:

The recent collision record at the Norton Crossroads is a concern. There is no immediately obvious reason why collisions in this location have peaked, resulting in three in 2025.

The LHA has access to the highway information portal and a review of this junction does demonstrate that there are functional issues with the carriageway in this location and that the route including this crossroads on the B5061 is identified for repair.

I would consider the poor skid resistance of the existing road surface to be a factor and one that is already identified for repair.

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With no other material change to the operation of this junction and no discernible pattern in collisions there is only one other matter relating to the junction and that is the crossroads like nature of the highway. For the purposes of this assessment I am satisfied to consider the junction as a crossroads, although there is a slight centreline difference between the side arms (approx. 11m)

In terms of Stats20 collision recording crossroads make up a significant proportion of collisions. For the most part the introduction of new crossroads is avoided whenever possible. Placing more movements through an existing crossroads does lead, based on the positions made in this response, to the likelihood of the highest rate of collisions per number of movements.

However, there is nothing preventing the increase in traffic through a crossroads and the modelling work identifies that additional movements will not exceed operational capacity.

There is expectation of the creation of a roundabout in this location to address operational concerns and statistically roundabouts are the safest form of junction that can be introduced. There is no capacity reason for the provision of a roundabout in this location.

There is also no obvious land available for the provision of a 30/32m ICD normal roundabout. The use of a compact roundabout being inappropriate for the established speed limit.

In that regard I am having difficulty in establishing a link between this crossroads and the increase in movements that would necessitate a mitigation.

The general impact of resolving the surfacing at this junction should be that the collision frequency returns to earlier levels that still needs to be noted but may not be an actionable highways issue. A financial contribution to renew and enhance the lining and signing at this junction would be of wider benefit and should be secured to the sum of £40,000.

## Conclusions:

Overall, there do not appear to be any areas where a fundamental highways objection on the grounds of highway safety or capacity could be raised.

A local junction has demonstrated a worsening safety record but this appears to a matter of highway surface quality that is due for remediation.

Given the limited development opportunities in this area any development should contribute towards local lining and signing enhancements with a focus on the attraction that a site of this nature will result in.

The highway authority would offer no objection subject to a S278 Agreement for: access, wayfinding Strategy and a contribution for lining and signing enhancements with first priority for Norton Crossroads - £40,000.

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Conditions for: access, construction management (temporary), car parking management (in perpetuity), events management (in perpetuity).

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## APPENDIX 2 - Section 106 Provisions and List of Suggested Conditions

### Section 106 Provisions

Biodiversity Net Gain - Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan and Biodiversity Gain Land Monitoring contribution.

### List of Suggested Conditions

#### *Standard conditions:*

Commencement timescale – 3 years.

Works in accordance with approved plans.

Details and samples of external materials.

Works to occur strictly in accordance with the submitted Ecology Method Statement.

#### *Conditions that require approval before the development commences:*

Scheme of foul and surface water drainage.

Final details in support of the Drainage Strategy.

Risk Assessment for contamination.

Final access details.

Construction Management Plan.

Construction Environmental Management Plan.

Detailed hard and soft landscaping.

Landscape Management and Maintenance Plan.

Tree Protection.

Tree Planting Scheme.

Written Scheme of Investigation - Archaeology.

#### *Conditions that require approval during the construction/prior to the occupation/first use of the development:*

Car Parking Management Plan.

Events Managements Plan.

Wayfinding Strategy for outside the Site.

Lining and signing scheme for Norton Crossroads.

Detail design of play spaces.

Tree planting implementation.

Ecological Clerk Works (ECW) Report on the Reasonable Avoidance Measures Method Statement (RAMMS) for the woodland.

Updated Badger Survey.

Wildlife enhancements – bird/bat boxes etc.

External Lighting Plan.

#### *Conditions that are relevant for the lifetime of the development*

Outside amplified music restriction.