

**Shropshire Local Plan Review  
Consultation on Strategic Sites**

**Consultation Period: 1<sup>st</sup> July 2019 to 9<sup>th</sup> September 2019.**

## Scope of the consultation

Topic of this consultation:	<p>This consultation document seeks views on preferred strategic sites and a further potential strategic site to inform the ongoing review of the Shropshire Local Plan. The document:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Identifies a series of preferred strategic sites, specifically:<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) Clive Barracks, Tern Hill;</li><li>b) Former Ironbridge Power Station; and</li><li>c) RAF Cosford</li></ol></li><li>2. Identifies a further potential strategic site at land north of Junction 3 of the M54, which is currently subject to consideration but is <b><u>not</u></b> currently a preferred strategic site.</li></ol>
Scope of this consultation:	We are seeking views of all parties with an interest in the preferred strategic sites and/or other potential strategic site, so that relevant views and evidence can be taken into account in deciding the best way forward.
Geography:	These proposals relate to the administrative area of Shropshire Council.
Impact assessment:	The Strategic Sites Consultation Document has been subject to Sustainability Appraisal; has been screened under The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010; and has been subject to an Equality and Social Inclusion Impact Assessment (ESIIA). The reports of these assessments are available on the Council's website.
Duration:	This consultation will run from: <b>1st July 2019 to 9th September 2019.</b>
After the consultation:	We plan to issue a summary of responses on the Council's website within three months of the closing date of the consultation.

### ***How to respond to this consultation***

The consultation will be undertaken in line with the standards set out in the Council's published Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) and national guidance.

Consultation documents will be made available on the Shropshire Council website, and paper copies will be provided at libraries and council offices in the main towns.

A significant number of organisations and individuals will be notified directly of the publication of the consultation documents by email in accordance with the SCI.

To respond to this consultation, please use the questionnaire available on the Shropshire Council website at:

[www.shropshire.gov.uk/local-plan-strategic-sites-consultation](http://www.shropshire.gov.uk/local-plan-strategic-sites-consultation)

*Once completed, this questionnaire can be submitted by:*

*Email to: [planningpolicy@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:planningpolicy@shropshire.gov.uk) or*

*Post to: Shropshire Council, Planning Policy & Strategy Team, Shirehall, Shrewsbury, SY2 6ND*

### ***Confidentiality and data protection***

Information provided in response to this consultation, including personal information, may be subject to publication or disclosure in accordance with the access to information legislation (primarily the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act 2018 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004).

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# 1. Introduction

## Strategic Sites

- 1.1 Strategic Sites are large sites of more than 25ha in size, which are not associated with meeting the growth needs of any particular settlement and contribute to achieving the aspirations of the Economic Growth Strategy for Shropshire.
- 1.2 Shropshire's Economic Growth Strategy 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 Economic Growth Strategy also identifies a number of strategic corridors and growth zones including the M54/A5 and A41 through Shropshire and identifies opportunities arising from the redevelopment of the Former Ironbridge Power Station.
- 1.3 This consultation document seeks views on preferred strategic sites and a further potential strategic site to inform the ongoing review of the Shropshire Local Plan.
- 1.4 These proposals are considered to provide strategic opportunities to deliver the objectives of Shropshire's Economic Growth Strategy, including the delivery of investment within strategic corridors, to increase the productivity and output of the local economy. They also have the potential to generate significant new investment in employment, thereby increasing the number but also the quality of jobs locally; provide additional housing, resulting in a positive opportunity to generate greater resilience in housing delivery through increased choice and competition; and contribute to improved infrastructure and local services.
- 1.5 The preferred strategic sites are:
  - Clive Barracks, Tern Hill;
  - Former Ironbridge Power Station; and
  - RAF Cosford.
- 1.6 Shropshire Council considers that there is sufficient evidence and justification for these proposals to be preferred for allocation as 'strategic sites'.
- 1.7 A further potential strategic site is land at Junction 3 of the M54. At this stage Shropshire Council considers that further evidence and justification is required to enable the site at Junction 3 of the M54 to be preferred for development. However, it is considered appropriate for the Council to consult on the site as a potential strategic site. If the site at land at Junction 3 of the M54 is proposed as a preferred 'strategic site' for development at the pre-submission draft stage of the plan preparation process, then this outcome will be subject to further consultation at that time.

## Why are we reviewing the Local Plan?

- 1.8 The Shropshire Local Plan currently comprises the Core Strategy (adopted 2011) and the Site Allocations and Management of Development (SAMDev) Plan (adopted 2015), together with the adopted Neighbourhood Plans for Much Wenlock and Shifnal. These documents set out proposals for the use of land and policies to guide future development in order to help to deliver sustainable growth in Shropshire for the period up to 2026.

- 1.9 Local Planning Authorities are required to keep under review any matters that may affect the development of its area. Shropshire Council has determined to undertake a Local Plan Review in order to: allow the consideration of updated information on development needs within the County; reflect changes to national policy and our local strategies; extend the Plan period to 2036; and provide a plan which will help to support growth and maintain local control over planning decisions during the period to 2036. Maintaining an up to date Local Plan will support local growth by generating certainty for investment in local development and infrastructure through a policy framework that establishes an up to date and objective assessment of development needs and supports sustainable development in Shropshire during the period to 2036.
- 1.10 The overall strategic approach of focusing growth in Shropshire's Strategic Centre; Principal Centres and Key Centres, whilst enabling some controlled development in rural areas to maintain local sustainability, remains the preferred development strategy. Many of the existing policies in the Core Strategy and SAMDev Plan do not need to be amended and will be carried forward as part of the new Plan. The review will therefore focus on key areas of change, including options for the level and distribution of new housing and strategies for employment growth during the period to 2036, together with any amended policies and new site allocations which are needed to demonstrate that these requirements can be delivered. The existing Core Strategy and SAMDev Plan will remain in force until any new Plan is adopted. This is anticipated to occur during 2021.
- 1.11 The product of the review will be a new Local Plan document which merges the Core Strategy & SAMDev Plans and contains both strategic policies and more applied policies which primarily inform planning decisions, together with existing (and unimplemented) sites and new site allocations.

## **Strategic Context**

- 1.12 Shropshire is a large, diverse but predominantly rural, inland County. However, Shropshire does not operate in isolation; it is influenced by cross boundary interactions with adjacent areas including Herefordshire, Worcestershire, the Borough of Telford and Wrekin, Staffordshire, the West Midlands conurbation, Cheshire and areas across the English-Welsh border. These include: cross border service provision such as shopping, health, education and leisure; transport links and commuting patterns; any inter-dependencies between housing markets and economic areas; and protection of the Green Belt and our landscape, historic and natural environments. These interactions are the subject of on-going discussions with neighbouring planning authorities under our 'Duty to Co-operate'. The spatial context for the Local Plan Review is described in detail in the Authority Monitoring Report (AMR) which is available on the Council's web pages. More detailed facts, figures and trends concerning the Shropshire context are also available on the Council's webpages at: <http://shropshire.gov.uk/facts-and-figures>

## **Progressing the Local Plan Review**

- 1.13 The Strategic Sites Consultation represents the fourth stage of consultation on the Local Plan Review.

1.14 Previous stages of consultation undertaken are as follows:

- Issues and Strategic Options Consultation, which covered the following strategic options:
  - Housing requirement;
  - Strategic distribution of future growth;
  - Strategies for employment growth; and
  - Delivering development in rural settlements.
- Preferred Scale and Distribution of Development Consultation, which set out:
  - The preferred scale of housing and employment development in Shropshire 2016-36;
  - The preferred distribution of this growth;
  - Identified preferred housing and employment growth guidelines for the strategic centre and each principal and key centre;
  - Confirmed the methodology which Shropshire Council proposes to adopt to identify a settlement hierarchy in Shropshire;
  - Lists the settlements which form part of this hierarchy;
  - Proposed draft policies for the management of development within proposed Community Hubs and Community Clusters; and
  - Identified other development requirements which may need to be addressed as part of the Local Plan Review.
- Preferred Sites Consultation, which:
  - Outlined a housing policy direction to improve the delivery of local housing needs;
  - Established development guidelines and development boundaries for Shrewsbury, the Principal and Key Centres and each proposed Community Hub; and
  - Set out the preferred sites to deliver the preferred scale and distribution of housing and employment growth during the period 2016 to 2036.

1.15 Consultation documents and summaries of consultation responses associated with these previous stages of consultation are available on the Shropshire Council website at: <https://shropshire.gov.uk/planning-policy/local-planning/local-plan-partial-review-2016-2036/>

## Supporting Assessments

1.16 The Strategic Sites consultation document has been subject to Sustainability Appraisal in line with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

1.17 It has also been screened under The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended) and a Strategic Sites: Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening Report.

1.18 An Equality and Social Inclusion Impact Assessment has also been undertaken.

1.19 Copies of these assessments are available on the Shropshire Council website, during this consultation period.

## Evidence Base

- 1.20 The Local Plan Review is informed by an extensive evidence base which is available via the Council's webpages at:  
<http://shropshire.gov.uk/planning-policy/local-plan/local-plan-partial-review-2016-2036/>

## Identification of Preferred Strategic Sites

- 1.21 Preferred strategic sites have been carefully assessed using a detailed assessment framework which has been applied consistently across the County.
- 1.22 This framework has used available evidence from a variety of sources to assess the suitability of each site. The guidelines which accompany each site identify known infrastructure issues and mitigation measures, although it is expected that these will be further refined before the new Local Plan is submitted for examination.
- 1.23 The site assessment process consisted of three key stages, these are:
- Stage 1: The Strategic Land Availability Assessment (SLAA). This consisted of a strategic screen and review of all sites.
- Stage 2: Detailed screen of potential 'strategic sites'. This screening exercise was informed by consideration of a site's location, availability, size, potential to contribute to achieving the Shropshire Economic Growth Strategy; and whether there were obvious physical, heritage or environmental constraints present, based on the strategic assessment undertaken within the SLAA.
- Stage 3: Detailed site review. This stage was informed by assessments undertaken by the Council's Highways; Heritage; Ecology; Trees; and Public Protection Officers; various studies, including a Landscape and Visual Sensitivity Study and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment; consideration of infrastructure requirements and opportunities; and other strategic considerations and professional judgement.

## Infrastructure Capacity assessments

- 1.24 The promoters of the preferred strategic sites have undertaken initial work to determine the capacity and impact of development proposals on infrastructure and the associated improvements to infrastructure to accommodate development proposals. These initial assessments have identified no fundamental infrastructure capacity constraints which cannot be addressed.
- 1.25 It is expected that more detailed infrastructure capacity assessments will be undertaken for these preferred strategic sites alongside the preparation of the Local Plan Review.
- 1.26 Infrastructure capacity assessments will also be undertaken in relation to the other potential strategic site.

## What Happens Next?

- 1.27 We will publish a summary of the responses to this Preferred Options consultation on our web pages. The comments we receive will be used to inform the further development of the Local Plan Review.

## 2. Preferred Strategic Sites

### Introduction

- 2.1 A series of preferred strategic sites have been identified across Shropshire. These sites have been subject to initial investigation and assessment by their promoters, resulting in the preparation of indicative masterplans.
- 2.2 This work is considered sufficient to allow Shropshire Council to determine in principle that these emerging proposals represent sustainable options for future development and that each site can contribute to meeting the development needs of Shropshire.
- 2.3 However, due to the size and complexity of development on these sites, lead-in times to development and likely build rates mean that in all likelihood only a proportion of the development proposed will contribute towards meeting the development needs of Shropshire up to 2036, the remainder will contribute to achieving the development needs of Shropshire in the longer term.

### Clive Barracks, Tern Hill

#### Overview

- 2.4 Clive Barracks, Tern Hill is a 72ha military site located on the A41 strategic growth corridor near Market Drayton.
- 2.5 The site is currently home to the 1<sup>st</sup> (Regular) Battalion of the Royal Irish Regiment. However, in March 2016 the Ministry of Defence (MOD) announced plans to relocate the regiment and dispose of the Barracks for redevelopment.
- 2.6 Since this announcement 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 and preparing an extensive evidence base, to inform the sites redevelopment.
- 2.7 Supporting assessments undertaken by the MOD and their consultants include:
  - Topographical Survey;
  - Highways Report;
  - Noise Assessment;
  - Flood Risk and Drainage Assessment;
  - Utilities Assessment;
  - Ecology Survey;
  - Landscape and Visual Impact Appraisal;
  - Heritage Assessment;
  - Geophysical Survey; and
  - Arboricultural Survey.
- 2.8 It is also understood initial discussions have occurred between the MOD and their consultants and utility providers, which indicate sufficient capacity to support site redevelopment (although reinforcement works will be required to the gas network).
- 2.9 This evidence and engagement have informed the preparation of an indicative masterplan by the MOD and their consultants. This indicative masterplan illustrates the mixed-use redevelopment of the site to provide local services and facilities; around 5.75ha of employment land; around 750 homes; and extensive green

infrastructure, as part of a new settlement. Continued engagement through the 'Task Force' will help to refine and finalise proposals for the site.

- 2.10 The MOD have recently confirmed that they now plan for the site to be vacated and disposal for redevelopment to commence by 2025.

### **Key Issues and Opportunities**

- 2.11 The table below summaries key issues/opportunities for Clive Barracks, Tern Hill:

<b>Key Issues and Opportunities: Clive Barracks, Tern Hill</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Redevelopment of a primarily brownfield site.</li><li>• Confirming specific mix of development on the site. There is an opportunity to provide high quality employment, housing, services and facilities and infrastructure (including integrated green infrastructure) as part of a new settlement.</li><li>• The need to ensure that redevelopment is comprehensive, and delivery of necessary infrastructure, the local centre, leisure and education facilities, housing and employment are linked (site phasing).</li><li>• Ensuring future occupiers have appropriate access to services and facilities.</li><li>• Ensuring sufficient infrastructure is provided.</li><li>• Relationship with nearby settlements, including the Principal Centre of Market Drayton.</li><li>• As a large strategic site, it is not anticipated that redevelopment will commence until at least 2026/27. With an approximate build rate of 50 dwellings per annum, redevelopment will likely occur over a 16 year period. This means around 450 dwellings are likely to be constructed during the Local Plan Review period to 2036 and the remainder in the period beyond.</li><li>• Land is required for the provision of a new primary school. This will enable Buntingsdale School and Stoke on Tern Primary School to merge on the site and ensure future residents have access to a primary school.</li><li>• Ensuring necessary works to the highway network are undertaken.</li><li>• Pedestrian and cycle connectivity through the site and in particular between the north-eastern and south-western portions of the site - through enhancement of an underpass of the A41.</li><li>• Discussions required with the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) regarding access to medical services from the site.</li><li>• Noise associated with the nearby airfield and roads.</li><li>• Potential contamination on the site.</li><li>• Continued engagement with utility providers and undertaking any necessary upgrades.</li><li>• Ensuring natural environment and heritage assets are given appropriate consideration, buffering and where appropriate integrated into the redevelopment.</li><li>• Community involvement and engagement especially through the Parish Councils and potential for community led projects as part of development.</li><li>• Undertaking and implementing results of all necessary supporting assessments.</li></ul>

### **Preferred Strategic Site**

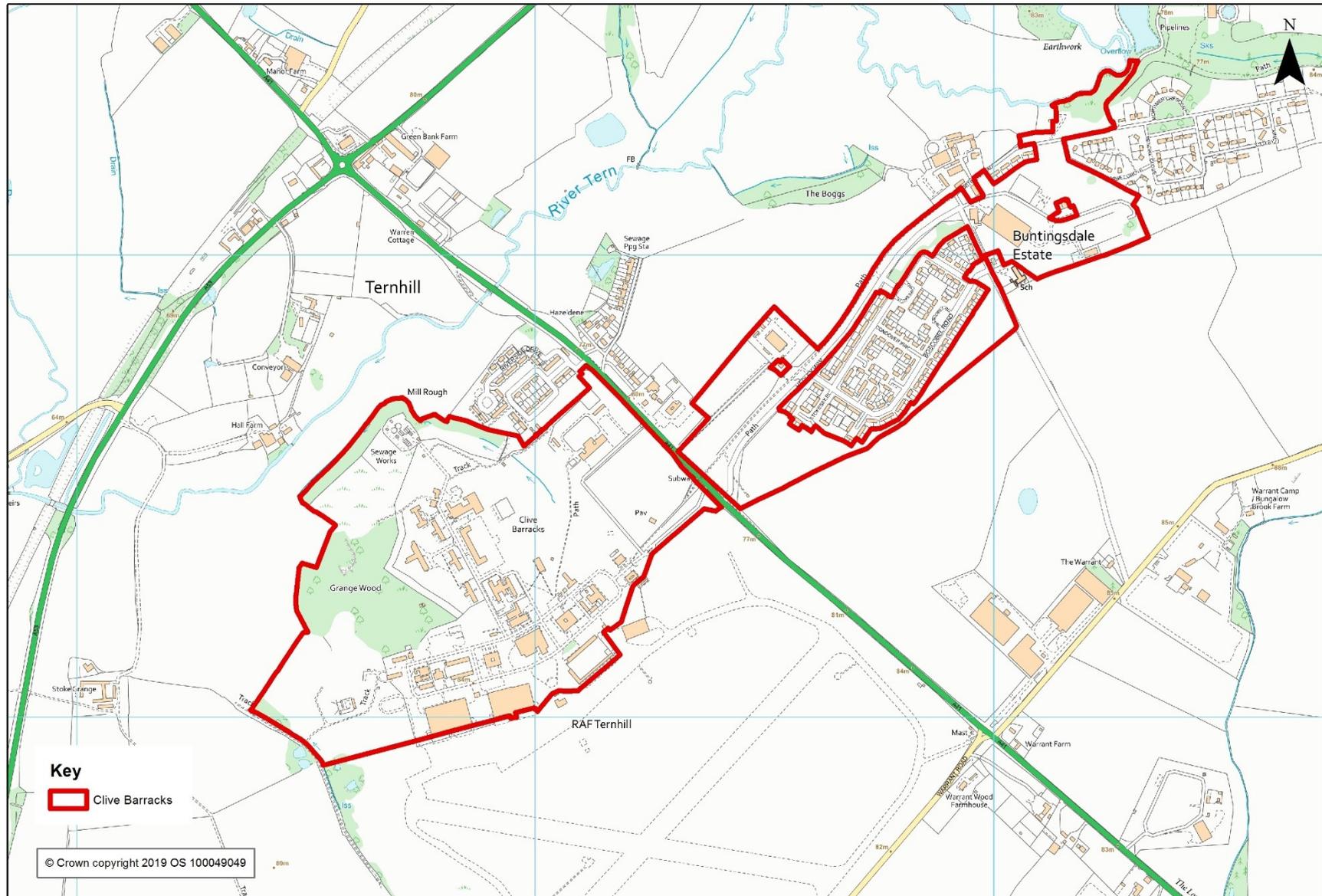
- 2.12 The Economic Growth Strategy for Shropshire identifies an objective to prioritise investment along strategic corridors and growth zones, including the A41 corridor. The Local Plan Review seeks to reflect this aspiration. The mixed-use redevelopment of Clive Barracks, Tern Hill will provide economic opportunities through the provision of local employment opportunities. It will also provide social and environmental opportunities resulting from the provision of additional new

homes, local services and facilities, extensive green infrastructure and provision of a modern purpose-built school to replace existing facilities.

- 2.13 As such, Shropshire Council considers that emerging proposals for the mixed-use redevelopment of Clive Barracks, Tern Hill represent a sustainable option for the future use of a large predominantly brownfield site. It is therefore considered appropriate to identify Clive Barracks, Tern Hill as a preferred strategic site, the redevelopment of which will contribute to meeting the development needs of Shropshire in the longer term.

## Site Plan

2.14 The plan below indicates the location and extent of the Clive Barracks, Tern Hill preferred strategic site:



## Initial Site Guidelines

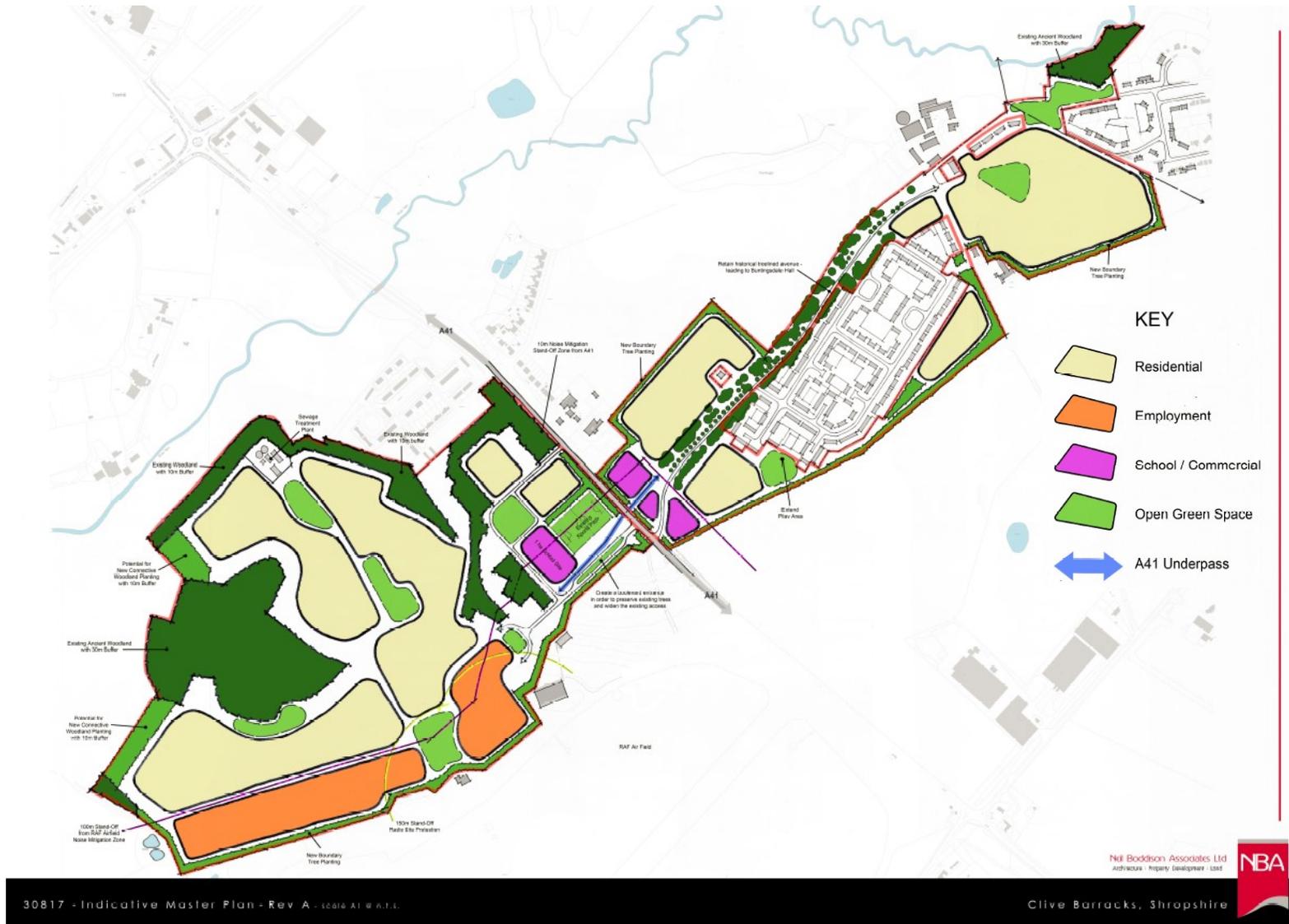
2.15 The table below summarises the initial site guidelines for the Clive Barracks, Tern Hill preferred strategic site:

Site Location	Approximate Site Area	Approximate Capacity
Clive Barracks, Tern Hill	72ha	The MOD and their consultants emerging proposals for the site would involve Mixed-use redevelopment of the site, to provide local services and facilities; around 5.75ha of employment land; around 750 homes; and extensive green infrastructure, as part of a new settlement. These proposals will be subject to consideration as the Local Plan Review progresses.

Site Guidelines:
<p>a. Housing provision on the site should be of an appropriate quantity, quality, design, mix and layout.</p> <p>b. Employment provision is an intrinsic element of the sites redevelopment. Employment provision should be of an appropriate quantity and quality and should occur alongside the provision of housing.</p> <p>c. The local centre will comprise of a range of commercial uses (likely to be a family pub plus convenience store and a small number of modest retail units) on land fronting the A41. The local centre ensures future occupiers of the site benefit from access to local facilities. As such its timely provision is an important consideration and should be directly linked to provision and occupation of housing on the site.</p> <p>d. Green infrastructure provision should be of an appropriate quantity and quality. Its location should seek to protect and enhance the environmental network.</p> <p>e. 1ha of land will be provided for a primary school. This will enable Buntingsdale School and Stoke on Tern Primary School to merge on the site.</p> <p>f. Any necessary improvements to access points and the A41/A53 Tern Hill roundabout should be undertaken. Furthermore, an air quality assessment of the impact of increased vehicular movements from this development on Tern Hill roundabout should be undertaken and its recommendations implemented.</p> <p>g. Appropriate pedestrian and cycle links provided through the site and, in particular, to the proposed primary school and local centre. This includes enhancement of an underpass of the A41, to ensure connectivity between the north-eastern and south-western portions of the site.</p> <p>h. Acoustic design and layout of the site and appropriate building materials (including where necessary appropriate glazing, ventilation and acoustic barriers) should mitigate any impact from noise associated with the nearby A41 and airfield.</p> <p>i. The site may contain contaminated land, which will need to be appropriately managed.</p> <p>j. The site contains an area of ancient woodland and may contain priority habitats, these will need to be retained and an appropriate buffer provided.</p> <p>k. Site design and layout should be informed by an Arboricultural Impact Assessment, with the intention of creating a sustainable juxtaposition of houses and trees.</p> <p>l. The site is in proximity of the River Tern and RAF Tern Hill Local Wildlife Sites, these will need to be appropriately buffered.</p> <p>m. Site design and layout should reflect and respect the sites heritage and heritage assets within the wider area.</p> <p>n. The site should incorporate sustainable drainage, informed by a sustainable drainage strategy. Development should exclude the small portions of the site located in Flood Zones 2 and/or 3 and the small portions of the site located within the 1 in 1,000 year surface flood risk zone.</p> <p>o. Any other relevant supporting studies should be undertaken and their recommendations implemented.</p>

## Indicative Masterplan

2.16 An indicative masterplan for the redevelopment of the site has been produced by the MOD and their consultants. These proposals will be subject to further consideration as the Local Plan Review progresses.



## Former Ironbridge Power Station

### Overview

- 2.17 The Former Ironbridge Power Station is a 140ha partly brownfield site comprising the former Power Stations and its associated uses; a former social club (redundant sports pitches, timber pavilion & golf course); borrow pits; Pulverised Fuel Ash (PFA) landfill waste tips; a rail siding, which was historically used to transport coal to the site; and agricultural land.
- 2.18 The site is located in east Shropshire, in close proximity to the village of Buildwas. The site is bounded by Buildwas Road and the River Seven to the north and east. To the west the site is bounded by Much Wenlock Road and agricultural land. The site's southern boundary runs contiguously with Bangham Woods, an ancient woodland and SSSI. The site is also located in close proximity to the Seven Gorge Conservation Area and Ironbridge World Heritage site.
- 2.19 Two power stations have been located on the site. The first, Ironbridge A, officially opened in 1932 and ceased operation in 1981. The second, Ironbridge B, began operation in 1969 and ceased operation in 2015.
- 2.20 Following the closure of the Ironbridge B power station a planning and development brief was prepared for the site in 2017 and it was subsequently purchased for redevelopment by the Harworth Group in 2018. The Harworth Group is a regeneration company specialising in large sites with complex issues. It is expected that the Harworth Group will commence demolition of the former power station buildings, including the cooling towers, later this year.
- 2.21 The Harworth Group have been working closely with Local Councils; the local community and other stakeholders, whilst also undertaking initial necessary assessments to inform redevelopment of the site.
- 2.22 Supporting assessments being produced by the Harworth Group to inform the redevelopment of the Former Ironbridge Power Station include:
- Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment;
  - Tree Survey;
  - Transport Assessment;
  - Travel Plan;
  - Air Quality Assessment;
  - Noise and Vibration Assessment;
  - Built Heritage Assessment;
  - Archaeological Assessment;
  - Extended Phase 1 Ecological Assessment and Phase 2 Habitat and Protected Species Surveys;
  - Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy; and
  - Ground Conditions and Land Contamination Assessment.
- 2.23 Discussions are also underway between the Harworth Group and utility providers to understand the works that will be required to support the redevelopment of the site.
- 2.24 The Harworth Group have also met with representatives of Ironbridge Medical Practice and discussions are underway with the both the Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin Clinical Commissioning Group (CCGs) in relation to GP capacity in the local area and how health needs of the increased population arising from the proposed redevelopment of the Former Ironbridge Power Station can be met. It is

anticipated that a new health facility will be provided as part of the site's redevelopment.

- 2.25 The Harworth Group's emerging proposals for the site would involve a mixed-use development, including around 1,000 dwellings; around 6ha of employment land; a retirement village; the provision of local services and facilities within a village centre; leisure facilities; a nursery and primary school; a park and ride; a railway station; and significant areas of green infrastructure (including allotments and sports pitches), as part of a new settlement. It should also be noted that the National Grid and Western Power Distribution substations and equipment are to be retained on the site.
- 2.26 The potential to re-open the railway line is being actively investigated, with the Harworth Group engaging with Network Rail and other interested groups. Emerging proposals include the identification of a central site for a railway station, this could potentially be used for a 'heritage' service; commuter rail service; and freight in relation to materials and mineral extraction in the early stages of redevelopment.
- 2.27 To illustrate these proposals, the Harworth Group have produced an illustrative masterplan for the site, which is provided below. These proposals and the illustrative masterplan will be subject to further engagement with stakeholders - including Shropshire Council and further comprehensive assessment.
- 2.28 Further information about the Harworth Groups proposals for the redevelopment of the Former Ironbridge Power Station, are available on the site promoter's website at: <https://ironbridgeregeneration.co.uk/>.

### **Key Issues and Opportunities**

- 2.29 The table below summaries key issues/opportunities for the Former Ironbridge Power Station:

<b>Key Issues and Opportunities: Former Ironbridge Power Station</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Redevelopment of a large area of brownfield land.</li><li>• Confirming specific mix of development on the site. There is an opportunity to provide high quality employment, housing, services and facilities and infrastructure (including integrated green infrastructure) as part of a new settlement.</li><li>• The need to ensure that redevelopment is comprehensive, and delivery of necessary infrastructure, the local centre, housing and employment are linked (site phasing).</li><li>• Ensuring future occupiers have appropriate access to services and facilities.</li><li>• Ensuring sufficient infrastructure is provided.</li><li>• Relationship with nearby settlements, including Buildwas, Ironbridge, Telford and the Key Centres of Much Wenlock and Broseley.</li><li>• As a large strategic site (much of which has previously been developed) with complex issues to be addressed, it is not anticipated that redevelopment will commence until at least 2022/23. However, the promoters consider that the development could be completed within the Local Plan Review period to 2036.</li><li>• Need to retain the National Grid and Western Power Distribution substations, particularly the land take, need for a stand-off, ensuring necessary access restrictions, implications for surrounding land uses and noise.</li><li>• Utilities infrastructure over and under the site.</li><li>• Minimising landscape and visual impact.</li><li>• Demolition, mineral working and decontamination of the site.</li><li>• Provision of a new nursery, primary school and community facilities/buildings.</li></ul>

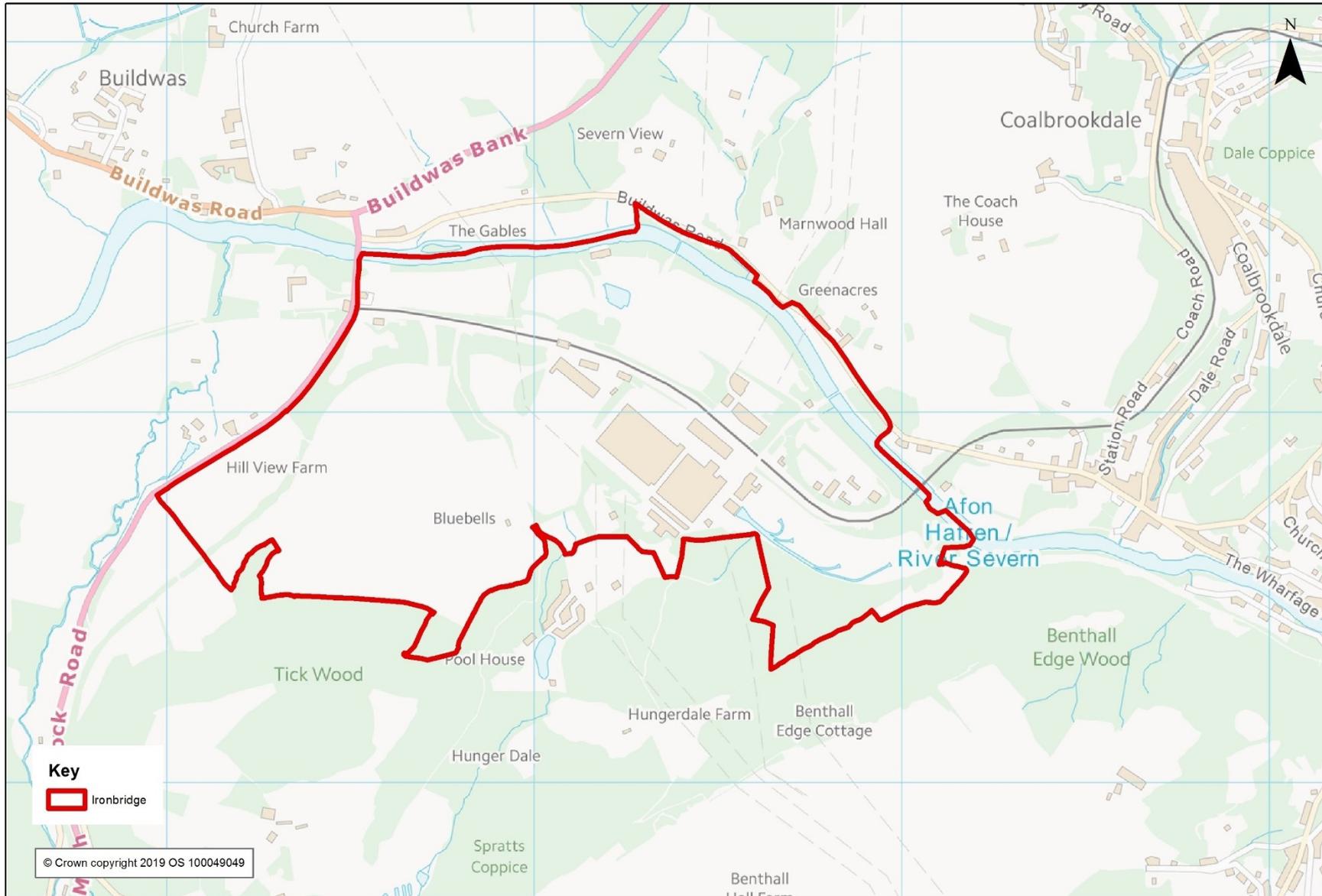
- Continued discussions with relevant CCGs regarding access to medical services. If needed, a medical centre should be provided.
- Ensuring appropriate accesses are provided and necessary works to the highway network undertaken.
- Opportunity to provide a railway station and re-use the existing rail link from the site.
- Enhancements to the leisure offer and supporting the visitor economy including linking to uses on the River.
- Pedestrian and cycle links through the site, particularly to key services and facilities.
- Provision of a park and ride facility.
- Ensuring natural environment and heritage assets are given appropriate consideration and where appropriate integrated into the redevelopment.
- Undertaking and implementing results of all necessary supporting assessments.

### ***Preferred Strategic Site***

2.30 The Economic Growth Strategy for Shropshire and the current Local Plan (Core Strategy) identified the opportunity to capitalise on the significant strategic opportunity arising from the redevelopment of the Former Ironbridge Power Station site. Shropshire Council considers that emerging proposals for the mixed-use redevelopment of the Former Ironbridge Power Station site present an opportunity to support the local economy, create jobs, provide housing and to sympathetically remediate the site and as such represent a sustainable option for its future use. It is therefore considered appropriate to identify the Former Ironbridge Power Station as a preferred strategic site, the redevelopment of which will contribute to meeting the development needs of Shropshire in the longer term.

### Site Plan

2.31 The plan below indicates the location and extent of the Former Ironbridge Power Station preferred strategic site:



## Initial Site Guidelines

2.32 The table below summarises the initial site guidelines for the Former Ironbridge Power Station preferred strategic site:

Site Location	Approximate Site Area	Approximate Capacity
<b>Former Ironbridge Power Station Site</b>	140ha	The Harworth Group's emerging proposals for the site would involve a mixed-use development, including around 1,000 dwellings; around 6ha of employment land; a retirement village; the provision of local services and facilities within a village centre; leisure facilities; a nursery and primary school; a park and ride; a railway station; and significant areas of green infrastructure (including allotments and sports pitches), as part of a new settlement. These proposals will be subject to consideration as the Local Plan Review progresses.

Site Guidelines:
<p>a. Housing provision on the site should be of an appropriate quantity, quality, design, mix and layout.</p> <p>b. Employment provision is an intrinsic element of the sites redevelopment. Employment provision should be of an appropriate quantity and quality and should occur alongside the provision of housing.</p> <p>c. The village centre ensures future occupiers of the site benefit from access to local facilities. As such its timely provision is an important consideration and should be directly linked to provision and occupation of housing on the site.</p> <p>d. Green infrastructure provision should be of an appropriate quantity and quality. Its location should seek to protect and enhance the environmental network.</p> <p>e. If considered needed by the relevant CCGs, the site should include provision of a medical centre.</p> <p>f. Community facilities and buildings are required, these should tap-in to the heritage of the site and could include a community hall, art gallery and heritage centre.</p> <p>g. If retained, current access points to the site may need to be upgraded to ghost island right turn and/or roundabout junctions as determined through appropriate modelling and engagement. Any additional access points should be appropriately designed and constructed.</p> <p>h. Appropriate pedestrian and cycle links need to be provided through the site and in particular to the proposed nursery, primary school and village centre.</p> <p>i. A comprehensive heritage assessment which addresses the site's relationship with designated heritage assets (including the Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage site, Buildwas Abbey Scheduled Monument, the Severn Gorge Conservation Area and two Grade II Listed Buildings) on and in proximity of the site will be required. This should guide the conservation and enhancement of these features including through high-quality design and layout.</p> <p>j. The Grade II listed Albert Edward railway bridge on the sites boundary and buildings and structures associated with the Ironbridge A interwar power station should be sympathetically retained, enhanced/maintained and adaptively reused.</p> <p>k. Acoustic design and layout of the site and appropriate building materials (including where necessary appropriate glazing, ventilation and acoustic barriers) should mitigate any impact from noise associated with the retained National Grid and Western Power Distribution substations and equipment and nearby roads.</p> <p>l. Design and layout should minimise landscape and visual impact, particularly associated with any development on greenfield elements of the site.</p> <p>m. The site contains contaminated land, which will need to be appropriately managed.</p>

- n. The site contains part and is in proximity to the remainder of: the Buildwas Sand Quarry SSSI, Local Wildlife Site and Local Geological Site and Tick Wood and Benthall Edge SSSI. It may also contain priority habitat. These will need to be retained and appropriate buffers provided.
- o. The site is also in proximity of the Buildwas River Section SSSI, three Ancient Woodland sites and other Local Wildlife Sites. An appropriate buffer to these sites will be required.
- p. The site supports a large population of Great Crested Newts; bat roosts and is likely home to other protected species. Appropriate assessment and provision on the site will be required for these species.
- q. Site design and layout should be informed by an Arboricultural Impact Assessment, with the intention of creating a sustainable juxtaposition between built development and trees. Where possible trees and woodland should be incorporated into areas of open space and planting should occur to connect to / expand adjoining wooded areas.
- r. Development should exclude the portions of the site located in Flood Zones 2 and/or 3 and the portions of the site located within the 1 in 1,000 year surface flood risk zone.
- s. Mineral extraction opportunities associated with the site should be investigated and where appropriate extraction works undertaken.
- t. The site should incorporate sustainable drainage, informed by a sustainable drainage strategy.
- u. Any other relevant supporting studies should be undertaken and their recommendations implemented.

### Indicative Masterplan

2.33 The latest illustrative masterplan prepared by The Harworth Group for the redevelopment of the Former Ironbridge Power Station site. These proposals will be subject to further consideration as the Local Plan Review progresses.



**IRONBRIDGE  
MASTERPLAN**

Approximately 1000 houses  
Retirement Village  
Primary and Nursery School  
Allotments  
Railway Station

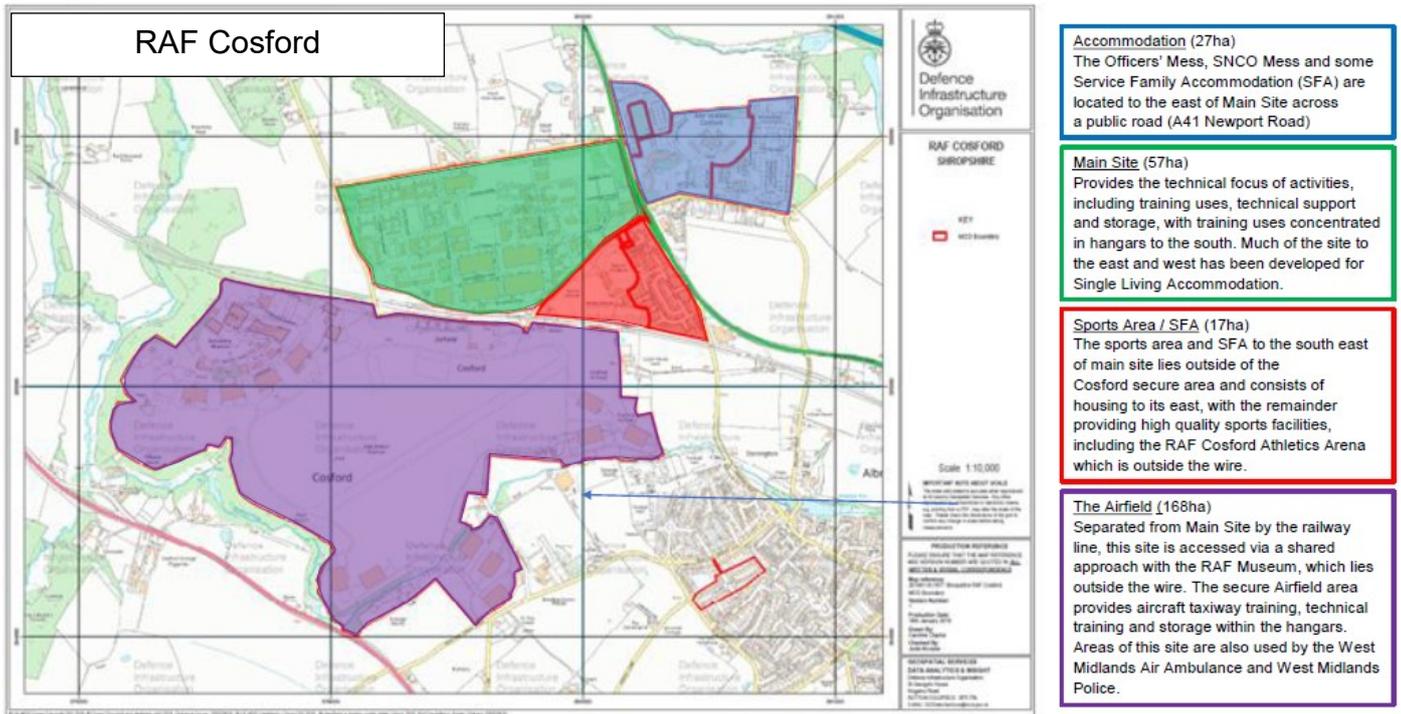
- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employment Zone : Approx. 6 Hectares</li> <li>• Village Centre : Approx. 3 Hectares</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leisure and Schools : Approx. 3 Hectares</li> <li>• Park and Ride : Approx. 1 Hectare</li> </ul> |
|---|---|

## RAF Cosford

### Overview

2.34 RAF Cosford is a military base and airfield located wholly in the Green Belt, to the north west of Albrighton. RAF Cosford opened in 1938 as a joint aircraft maintenance, storage and technical training unit and remains primarily a training unit to present day. The site also houses the renowned Cosford Air Museum and hosts the Cosford Air Show. Areas of the site are also used by the West Midlands Air Ambulance and West Midlands Police.

2.35 RAF Cosford consists of four broad areas, these are depicted on the Figure below:



2.36 RAF Cosford is currently a major part of the Defence College of Technical Training (DCTT). It is at the centre of the RAF's mission to deliver flexible, affordable, modern and effective technical training that meets the needs of the UK's Armed Forces now and into the future.

2.37 The MOD is undertaking a 'Defence Optimisation Programme' the aim of which is to create a smaller and significantly better estate that effectively supports our armed forces, and their role in protecting the security, independence and interests of the UK at home and abroad.

2.38 Due to its strategic location; existing built estate; the importance of the role it already plays in defence training; and the site's future potential, the disposal of RAF Cosford was discounted by the MOD at an early stage of this programme. As such, its future is more certain as it has been designated a 'receiver site' and will have an important role to play in the future optimisation of the MOD estate.

2.39 Cosford has since been referenced within the 'Better Defence Estate Strategy' as a centre of excellence for both UK and International Defence Training. The document also refers to the relocation of 4 School of Technical Training from MOD St Athan to RAF Cosford.

- 2.40 Furthermore, as part of its future strategy, the DCTT is reviewing capacity at RAF Cosford, linked to their aspiration to exploit opportunities for technical training consolidation. Whilst this work is ongoing, estimates from DCTT high-level strategic estate planning indicate that over the next 10+ years RAF Cosford would see in the region of an additional 1,500 people (staff and student population), although this could potentially increase further dependant on the outcome of the ongoing work.
- 2.41 In addition to the consideration of requirements arising from the DCTT:
- Work is currently underway by the MOD to capture and consolidate information on the feasibility of other potential non-DCTT moves to RAF Cosford.
  - Cosford Air Museum, located on the site, has outlined plans for a £40 million investment programme over 10 years to intensify and expand the museum site.
  - Plans to form a specialist aviation academy, called the Whittle Academy, at RAF Cosford have recently been announced by the Aviation Skills Partnership in collaboration with Midlands Engine, the RAF, Air Cadets and Telford College. This is a major initiative to address demand for trained entrants to the Aviation Industry across all jobs, roles and skills in accordance with the Government's Green Paper Aviation 2050: The Future of UK Aviation. It also further elevates the importance of this location for UK aviation and potentially creates hundreds of new jobs at the site.
- 2.42 These changes will have associated requirements for new facilities, including training facilities; technical accommodation and domestic accommodation. Although it should be noted that proposals for new development and intensification of the use of RAF Cosford are expected to be for military use or non-profit making uses rather than acting as a contribution to meeting Shropshire's future growth needs.
- 2.43 Whilst there is some potential for the re-use or redevelopment of existing buildings within the Main Site and there could also be some expansion on the accommodation area of the site (although this would in all likelihood need to be limited to domestic development given the current uses on this part of the site), it is likely that any significant expansion of RAF Cosford will also involve the development of land associated with the airfield and/or the re-location of the sports facilities.
- 2.44 RAF Cosford is wholly located within the Green Belt but is recognised as a major developed site within the Green Belt in the current Local Plan. However, if the proposed growth is to occur, there would be a need to remove some or all of the site from the Green Belt.
- 2.45 Government requires changes to the Green Belt to be made through the Local Plan process and for any proposed release of Green Belt to provide for the longer term, enduring well beyond the Plan period. It is expected that Green Belt boundaries should only be altered where justification and satisfactory evidence, known as 'exceptional circumstances' for doing so can be provided.
- 2.46 This includes consideration of the need to promote sustainable patterns of development, including planning for economic growth, housing need, health and wellbeing, accessibility, heritage and environmental factors.
- 2.47 To inform the ongoing Local Plan Review, a two-stage assessment of the Green Belt in Shropshire has been undertaken by specialist consultants and published by Shropshire Council.

2.48 The Green Belt Assessment (Part 1) considers the performance of Green Belt across Shropshire by dividing it into parcels of land and assessing each parcel (providing them a rating of no contribution; weak; moderate or strong) against the five nationally defined purposes that Green Belt serve, these are:

- a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

2.49 The Green Belt Review (Part 2) is focused on considering the potential harm to the Green Belt resulting from the release of parcels of land, areas of opportunity around identified settlements and strategic geographical locations, if they were identified to provide for development needs and support a sustainable pattern of future growth in the County to 2036 and beyond.

2.50 Within the Green Belt Assessment and Review (Part 1 and Part 2), RAF Cosford is considered as part of three parcels of land, specifically parcels P28, P30 and P40.

2.51 The Green Belt Assessment (Part 1) of the performance of these parcels against Green Belt purposes 1a, 1b, 2, 3, & 4 is summarised in the table below. Purpose 5 is identified as important across all parcels, but the study considers that assessment of performance of individual parcels against this purpose is not possible in a meaningful way:

<b>Parcel Reference</b>	<b>Purpose 1a</b>	<b>Purpose 1b</b>	<b>Purpose 2</b>	<b>Purpose 3</b>	<b>Purpose 4</b>
<b>P28</b>	No contribution	No contribution	Weak	Weak	No contribution
<b>P30</b>	No contribution	No contribution	Moderate	Moderate	No contribution
<b>P40</b>	No contribution	No contribution	Moderate	Weak	Weak

2.52 This Green Belt Review (Part 2) indicates the harm to the Green Belt resulting from the release of the parcels which contain elements of RAF Cosford, this can be summarised as follows:

- Main Site and Sports Area is low harm;
- Accommodation area is low-moderate harm; and
- Airfield is primarily low-moderate harm.

2.53 Within the Green Belt Review (Part 2) an opportunity area (Co-1b) containing the majority of RAF Cosford (excluding a small portion of the airfield) was also reviewed and identified as having low-moderate harm to the Green Belt if released.

2.54 Whilst it could be considered that low performing Green Belt may be a less sensitive release option it should be noted that the relatively poor performance of any land against Green Belt purposes, is not in itself, an 'exceptional circumstance' that would justify release of the land from the Green Belt. Conversely, better performing Green Belt may be appropriate for release where 'exceptional circumstances' are demonstrated.

## Key Issues and Opportunities

2.55 The table below summaries the key issues/opportunities for RAF Cosford:

<b>Key Issues and Opportunities: RAF Cosford and Cosford Air Museum</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The site is located within the Green Belt. Specifically, RAF Cosford is identified as a major developed site within the Green Belt in the current Local Plan.</li><li>• The site consists of significant areas of both brownfield and greenfield land.</li><li>• Ensuring high quality design and layout.</li><li>• Ensuring future occupiers have appropriate access to services and facilities.</li><li>• Ensuring sufficient infrastructure is provided.</li><li>• Discussions will be required with utility providers to determine any necessary infrastructure upgrades and timescales and process for these to be achieved.</li><li>• Relationship with nearby Albrighton.</li><li>• Preparation of an indicative masterplan for the site to ensure a strategic and comprehensive approach is taken to any redevelopment and further development of the site.</li><li>• Pedestrian and cycle links through the site, particularly linking the broad areas of the site.</li><li>• Opportunity to upgrade Cosford railway station facilities and parking.</li><li>• Necessary upgrades to highway services.</li><li>• Ensuring natural environment and heritage assets are given appropriate consideration and where appropriate integrated into the redevelopment.</li><li>• Development is expected to be for military use or non-profit making uses rather than acting as a contribution to meeting Shropshire's future growth needs.</li><li>• Opportunities for co-location of supply chain and complementary employment offers.</li><li>• Undertaking necessary supporting assessments and implementing their recommendations.</li></ul>

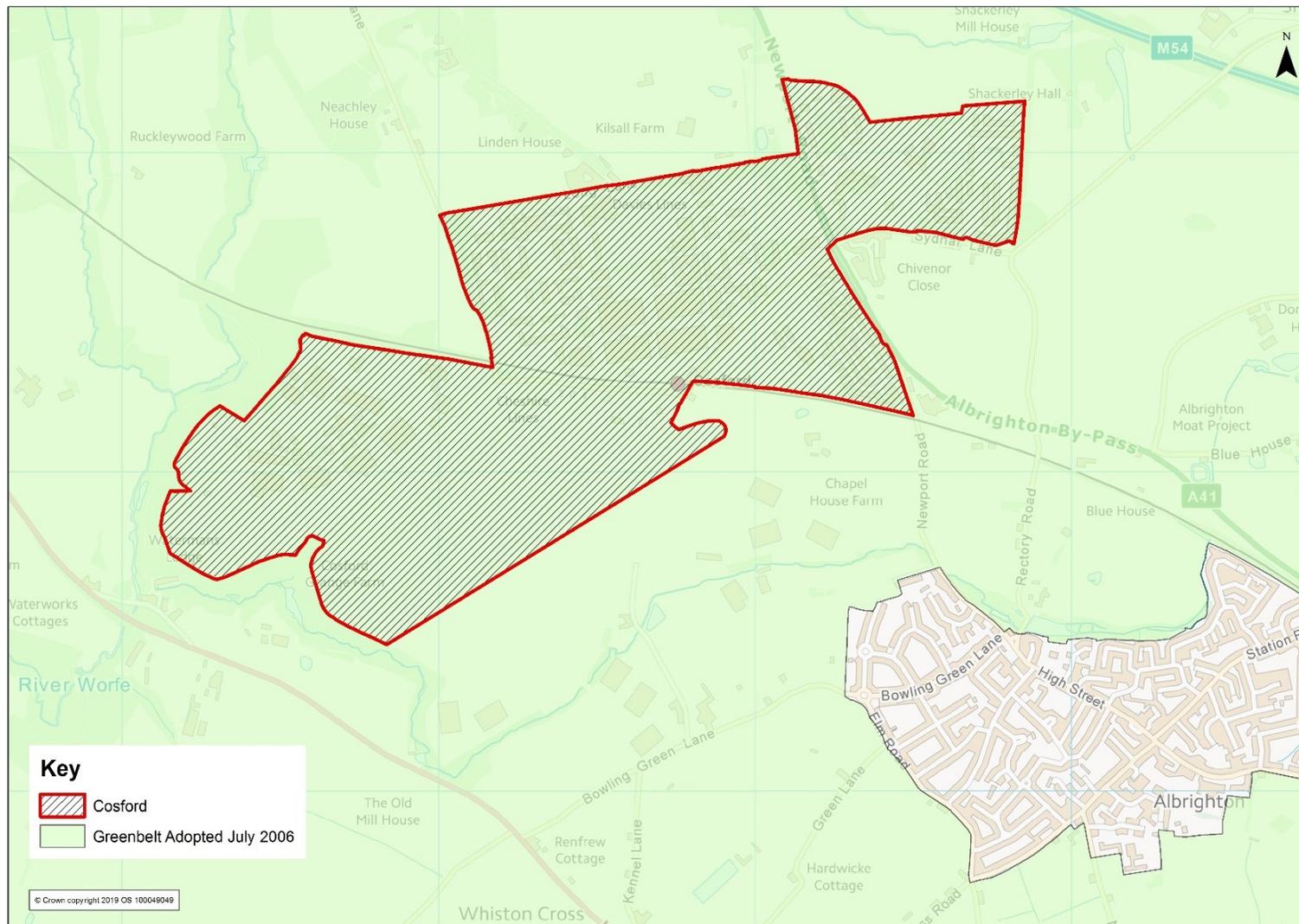
## Preferred Strategic Site

- 2.56 Shropshire Council considers that emerging proposals for the enhancement of RAF Cosford's role as a centre of excellence for both UK and International Defence Training; plans to form a specialist aviation academy; any opportunities to co-locate other MOD services; and plans for the expansion of the Cosford Air Museum are nationally significant and as such represent a significant strategic opportunity for Shropshire and the MOD. Proposals would also contribute toward achieving the aspirations of the Shropshire Economic Growth Strategy and increase the long-term sustainability of the site, ensuring its continued use as a MOD facility, offering increased employment and education opportunities and housing to meet the needs of personnel.
- 2.57 It is also apparent that there are no alternative locations to achieve these outcomes, given the extent of existing facilities on the site and the findings of the extensive 'Defence Optimisation Programme' undertaken by the MOD.
- 2.58 It should be noted that proposals for new development and intensification of the use of RAF Cosford are expected to be for military use or non-profit making uses rather than acting as a contribution to meeting Shropshire's future growth needs. However, the proposals do have the potential to offer wider benefits resulting from the co-location of supply chain and complementary employment offers over a much wider geography including a number of neighbouring Local Authorities.

- 2.59 As such it is considered appropriate to identify RAF Cosford as a preferred strategic site. It is also considered appropriate to propose to remove an element of the site from the Green Belt (the specific area is illustrated in the site plan below).
- 2.60 The area identified for release from the Green Belt reflects the main operational area (including ancillary uses such as accommodation and the museum) and land potentially needed for short/medium term development needs and to provide future operational flexibility including reflecting security requirements. This is in line with national guidance which seeks to ensure that changes to Green Belt boundaries endure for the longer term beyond the Plan period. Significantly, the extent of Green Belt release which is proposed maintains Green Belt within the important gap between RAF Cosford and the settlement of Albrighton.
- 2.61 The Council acknowledges that it will need to demonstrate robust 'exceptional circumstances' through the Local Plan Examination process in order for any land to be released from the Green Belt and for any planned development to happen.

## Site Plan

2.62 The following map depicts the location and extent of the area Shropshire Council is proposing for release from the Green Belt in order to support the identification of RAF Cosford as a preferred strategic site. Boundaries are defined by a combination of roads; natural features such as woodland belts and hedgerows; and the runway.



## Initial Site Guidelines

2.63 The table below summarises the initial site guidelines for the RAF Cosford preferred strategic site:

Site Location	Approximate Site Area	Approximate Capacity
RAF Cosford	203ha	<p>The 'Defence Optimisation Programme' has identified RAF Cosford as a 'receiver site'. As such it is considered by the MOD to have capacity for increased MOD and associated uses. Particularly:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhancement of RAF Cosford's role as a centre of excellence for UK and International Defence Training.</li> <li>• Plans for expansion of the Cosford Air Museum.</li> <li>• Opportunities to co-locate other MOD services.</li> <li>• Formation of the Whittle Academy by the Aviation Skills Partnership in collaboration with Telford College.</li> </ul> <p>Identification as a preferred strategic site and proposed removal of land from the Green Belt would facilitate these uses.</p> <p>These proposals will be subject to consideration as the Local Plan Review progresses.</p>

Site Guidelines:
<p>a. Existing services and facilities, including sports provision should be maintained or appropriate and proportional compensatory provision made.</p> <p>b. Extensive areas of green infrastructure, including areas of public open space should be integrated into any development proposals. Green infrastructure provision should seek to protect and enhance the environmental network (particularly in the south and west of the site).</p> <p>c. The site is likely home to protected species, including Great Crested Newts. Appropriate assessment and provision on the site will be required for any protected species present.</p> <p>d. The site may contain priority habitats, these will need to be retained and an appropriate buffer provided. Any mature trees and hedgerows present should also be retained on the site.</p> <p>e. Reflecting likelihood of increased movements to and from the site, improvements to the railway station and station car parking should be provided.</p> <p>f. Necessary improvements to existing access points should be undertaken and any additional access points should be appropriately designed and constructed.</p> <p>g. Appropriate pedestrian and cycle links need to be provided through the site and in particular between the main site and airfield.</p> <p>h. The site may contain contaminated land and is in proximity of sources of odour (sewage treatment works), which will need to be appropriately managed.</p> <p>i. The design, layout and materials of any development on the site should mitigate impact from noise associated with the airfield and railway line.</p> <p>j. The site should incorporate sustainable drainage, informed by a sustainable drainage strategy. Development should exclude the portions of the site located within the 1 in 1,000 year surface flood risk zone.</p> <p>k. The site contains the majority of the expansion period airfield; Grade II listed Fulton Building; and a range of other military buildings which are considered to be non-designated heritage assets. As such a heritage assessment will be required and its recommendations implemented. Site design and layout should be sympathetic to these assets and should contribute to better revealing and enhancing their significance.</p> <p>l. Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) will be required.</p> <p>m. Any other relevant supporting studies should be undertaken and their recommendations implemented.</p>

### 3. Other Potential Strategic Sites

#### Introduction

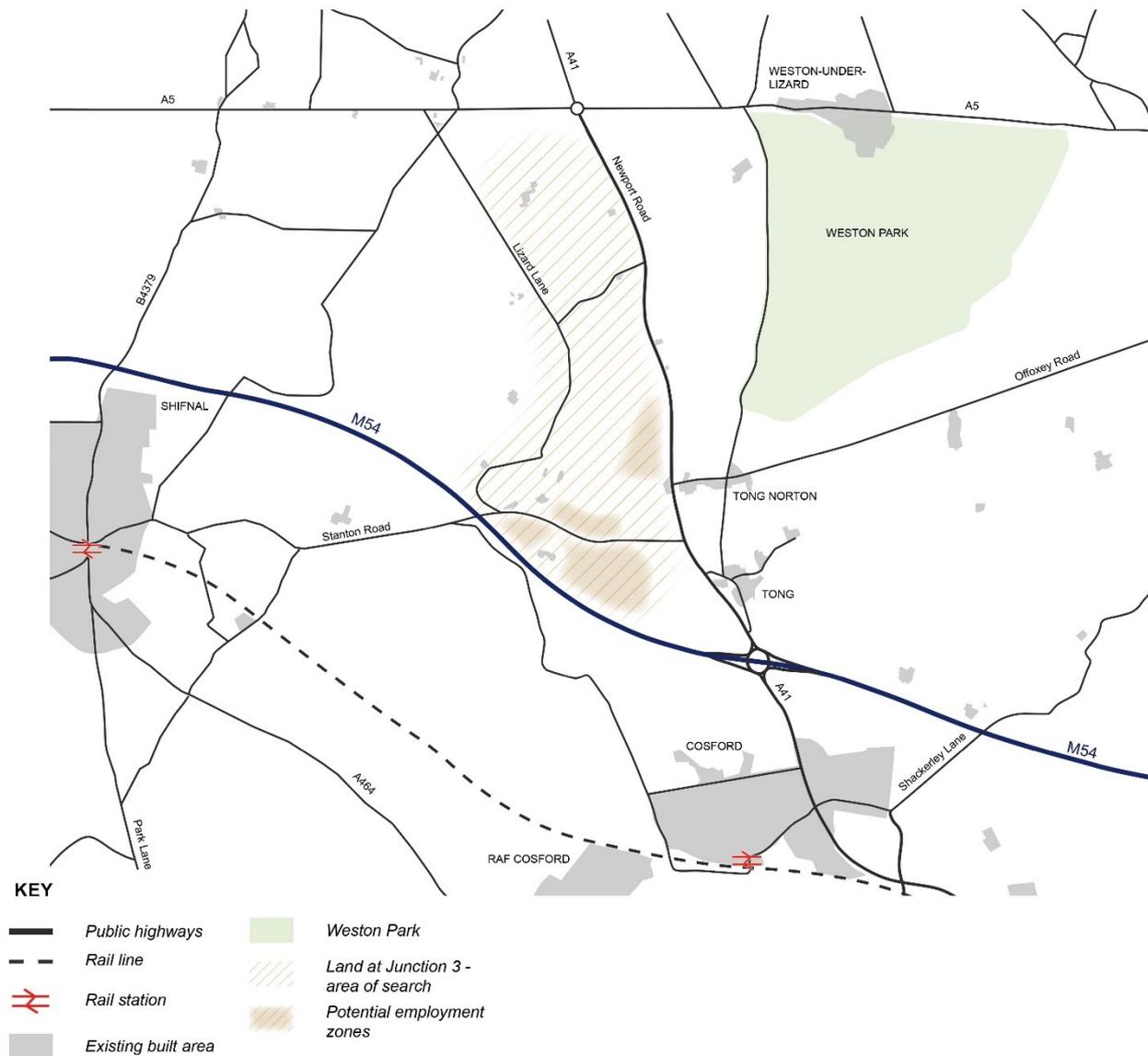
- 3.1 In addition to the three preferred strategic sites, a further potential strategic site has been identified: specifically land north of Junction 3 of the M54.
- 3.2 However, a range of further information is required to inform any decision about this proposal. In light of this, this site is **not** currently being identified as a preferred strategic site. Instead, this consultation document seeks comments on:
  - The potential benefits of the proposed development;
  - The issues and impacts which might be generated; and
  - Ways in which these might be mitigated or addressed.
- 3.3 Responses to this consultation, alongside the information gathered as part of the evidence base to inform the ongoing Local Plan Review will inform the decision as to whether or not this site will be identified as a preferred strategic site.
- 3.4 If land north of Junction 3 of the M54 is proposed as a preferred strategic site for development at the pre-submission draft Local Plan stage, then this outcome will be subject to consultation as part of the pre-submission consultation.

#### Land north of Junction 3 of the M54

- 3.5 The M54/A5 corridor is a key east-west road and rail transport corridor between Shropshire and the West Midlands. It is identified within the Economic Growth Strategy for Shropshire as a strategic corridor, in recognition of the economic opportunities associated with this transport infrastructure and its contribution to reinforcing Shropshire's close proximity to the West Midlands conurbation.
- 3.6 Furthermore, recent evidence commissioned by Shropshire Council suggests that the M54/A5 corridor, much of which is located within the Green Belt, 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 Economic Growth Strategy for Shropshire. As part of this work, the consultant has engaged with neighbouring Local Authorities and regional organisations including the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA).
- 3.7 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, the employment offers within neighbouring areas. As such, the key objective for such a site would be to deliver supply chain opportunities and growth for companies in key sectors identified within the Economic Growth Strategy for Shropshire (including but not limited to engineering, advanced manufacturing, aviation, innovative healthcare and environmental technologies) and in many ways complementary to proposals for RAF Cosford.
- 3.8 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 infrastructure in neighbouring areas. Importantly, the corridor contains and is close

to higher education and training institutions including key assets such as RAF Cosford, Wolverhampton University and Harper Adams University.

- 3.9 Land to the north of Junction 3 of the M54 was promoted for development on behalf of the landowners the Bradford Estate, in March 2017, in response to the Issues and Strategic Options consultation of the Local Plan Review.
- 3.10 The site promoters have since amended the scale and extent of proposals. The most recent proposals are focused on land to the north of Junction 3 of the M54 and west of the A41. These proposals are for the construction of a strategic employment site of around 50ha; accompanied by around 3,000 homes; and a local centre to provide services, facilities and infrastructure, as part of a planned settlement.
- 3.11 The site promoters have identified an 'area of search' informed by initial assessments of key constraints and opportunities. The map below depicts the 'area of search' identified by the site promoters.



- 3.12 As this location is within the Green Belt, there would be a need to demonstrate robust 'exceptional circumstances' through the Local Plan Examination process in order for the site to be removed from the Green Belt and for any planned development to occur.

3.13 Within the Green Belt Assessment and Review the area of search identified by the Site Promoters of land at Junction 3 of the M54 is considered as part of parcels P4, P8 and P25.

3.14 The Green Belt Assessment (Part 1) of the performance of these parcels against Green Belt purposes 1a, 1b, 2, 3, & 4 is summarised in the table below. Purpose 5 is identified as important across all parcels, but the study considers that assessment of performance of individual parcels is not possible in a meaningful way:

<b>Parcel Reference</b>	<b>Purpose 1a</b>	<b>Purpose 1b</b>	<b>Purpose 2</b>	<b>Purpose 3</b>	<b>Purpose 4</b>
<b>P4</b>	No contribution	No contribution	No contribution	Strong	Weak
<b>P8</b>	No contribution	No contribution	Weak	Strong	Weak
<b>P25</b>	No contribution	No contribution	Weak	Moderate	No contribution

3.15 This Green Belt Review (Part 2) indicates the harm to the Green Belt resulting from the release of the parcels which contain elements of the site at land north of Junction 3 of the M54, this can be summarised as follows:

- P4 is not specifically assessed, however there is likely to be high harm based on similarities to P8;
- P8 is high harm; and
- P25 is moderate-high harm.

3.16 Within the Green Belt Review (Part 2) a large opportunity area (J3-1) containing the majority of the site at land north of Junction 3 of the M54 and significant additional land was also reviewed and identified as having high harm to the Green Belt if released.

3.17 Whilst it could be considered that low performing Green Belt may be a less sensitive release option it should be noted that the relatively poor performance of any land against Green Belt purposes, is not in itself, an 'exceptional circumstance' that would justify release of the land from the Green Belt. Conversely, better performing Green Belt may be appropriate for release where 'exceptional circumstances' are demonstrated.

3.18 Based on the information currently available, it is not considered that the release of land north of Junction 3 of the M54 would be necessary to achieve the planned growth for Shropshire. However, national planning policy 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.

3.19 The latest evidence indicates that the Black Country cannot accommodate 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 of at least 22,000 homes in the Black Country. The options available to the Black Country to meet this need, including through Green Belt release within the Black Country and nearby Local Authorities are currently being investigated by the Black Country Authorities.

- 3.20 The characteristics of the M54 corridor highlighted above and its general proximity/accessibility to the Black Country, mean that, subject to the work being undertaken by the Black Country Authorities, there may be potential 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.
- 3.21 The initial assessments of key constraints and opportunities undertaken by the site promoters include:
- Preliminary Highways Review;
  - Preliminary Access Review in respect of the proposed Strategic Employment Area (SEA);
  - Preliminary Appraisal of Flood Risk, Surface Water Drainage and Water Resources;
  - Preliminary Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA);
  - Ecological Desk Study;
  - Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey;
  - Initial Heritage Assessment;
  - Initial Heritage Gazetteer;
  - Archaeological Appraisal;
  - Preliminary Landscape and Visual Appraisal and Capacity Study;
  - Ground Conditions Technical Note;
  - Utilities Constraints Briefing Note; and
  - Initial Sustainability and Energy Review.
- 3.22 The site promoters intend to further develop these assessments in order to determine initial design principles and inform preparation of an initial masterplan. The site promoters intend to provide information about their proposals on their website at: <https://j3shropshire.co.uk>
- 3.23 These assessments and proposals will be subject to consideration as the Local Plan Review progresses.
- 3.24 Investigation of infrastructure capacity, including: the infrastructure requirements directly associated with this development; the strategic infrastructure requirements within the wider corridor; and identification of funding options available to deliver necessary infrastructure improvements, is also being undertaken.
- 3.25 This information will allow Shropshire Council to undertake a comprehensive consideration of the opportunity, if it is required to meet Black Country needs.
- 3.26 Shropshire Council recognises that this proposal may represent a 'once in a generation' opportunity to meet cross-boundary needs, through delivery of nationally significant employment opportunities, high quality housing and a local centre to provide services, facilities and infrastructure as part of a planned new settlement within an important strategic corridor. However, given the likely scale of the proposal it is considered there are a number of significant issues which need further consideration ahead of the Council being able to prefer this land for development, such as:
- The strategic scale of these proposals and mix of employment, residential and other uses;
  - Concerns about impacts on existing infrastructure, communities and environmental assets;

- Justification for the release of Green Belt land – this is considered to be intrinsically linked with the assessment of the alternative options available to meet Black Country housing and employment needs; and
- Securing strategic infrastructure investment and cross boundary agreement with neighbouring authorities.

3.27 A range of further information is therefore required to inform any decision about this proposal and, in light of this, land north of Junction 3 of the M54 is **not** currently being identified as a preferred strategic site. Instead, the consultation document seeks comments on:

- The potential benefits of the proposed development;
- The issues and impacts which might be generated; and
- Ways in which these might be mitigated or addressed.

3.28 The further information required includes but is not limited to:

- Assessment of alternative options available to the Black Country for meeting the housing and employment needs arising in the Black Country;
- The outcome of the Black Country Green Belt review;
- Infrastructure capacity assessment to identify key impacts and investment requirements;
- Infrastructure funding;
- The views of neighbouring authorities, Government agencies and major infrastructure providers; and
- Further evidence to support the economic development context.

3.29 Shropshire Council is working with neighbouring authorities and stakeholders to obtain this information and carry out further work.