

Summary of the Assessment of Garden Village Proposals in Bridgnorth

1. Bridgnorth is located at the junction of the A458 and the A442 in the east of Shropshire and is within relatively easy commuting distance of Telford, Shrewsbury, Kidderminster, Wolverhampton and the Black Country.
2. The town straddles the River Severn and comprises of a Low Town to the east and High Town to the west, perched on cliffs 100ft above. The settlement is bounded by the West Midlands Green Belt to its east.
3. As the third largest town in Shropshire with a considerable array of services and facilities, Bridgnorth has been identified as a Principal Centre within the ongoing Local Plan Review and will contribute towards the strategic growth objectives in the east of the County by making provision for the needs of the town and its surrounding hinterland.
4. Within the 'Regulation 18' Preferred Sites Consultation a 'Garden Village' extension at Stanmore, to the east of the town within the West Midlands Green Belt was identified as the preferred allocation for meeting much of the housing and employment needs of the town during the Local Plan period.
5. However, since this consultation a further significant site promotion for a 'Garden Village' extension at Tasley to the south-west of the town has been received.
6. These two sites, alongside a series of other smaller site promotions, have been the subject of a detailed site assessment process, which forms part of the wider Sustainability Appraisal of the Local Plan, in order to identify the allocations proposed for inclusion within the Pre-Submission Draft of the Local Plan. This Sustainability Appraisal, including these site assessments, will be published to inform the Pre-Submission Consultation on the Local Plan.
7. In summary, the site assessment process undertaken includes consideration of such factors as Agricultural Land Quality; Flood Risk; Water Quality; Green Belt; Landscape and Visual Sensitivity; Ecology; Heritage; Highways; Public Protection; Physical Constraints; Planning History and any other Strategic Considerations.
8. With regard to the two significant 'Garden Village' site promotions received in Bridgnorth, these assessments have been informed by extensive supporting information provided on both sites by the site promoters and other parties and importantly discussions with specialist officers, including Highways, Ecology, Heritage and Public Protection.
9. Key considerations resulting from this site assessment are set out below:

Agricultural Land Quality

10. The agricultural land quality of the 'Garden Village' at Stanmore is primarily grade 2, but also includes small areas of grade 3. The agricultural land quality of the 'Garden Village' at Tasley is grade 3.
11. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) defines the best and most versatile agricultural land as that graded 1-3a. Applying the precautionary approach it is assumed all grade 3 land has the potential to be amongst the best and most versatile. It should be noted that there is very little land around Bridgnorth which is not grade 2 or 3.

Flood Risk

12. The land at the 'Garden Village' proposal at Stanmore is located within flood zone 1 (lowest risk from river flooding). It contains small areas within the 1 in 1,000 surface water flood risk but the remainder of the site is not within an identified flood risk zone. It is considered that the site is of sufficient size that following the use of sustainable drainage (SUDs) and attenuation ponds, development can avoid any areas with residual surface water flood risk.
13. The land at the 'Garden Village' proposal at Tasley is primarily located within flood zone 1 (lowest risk from river flooding). Areas along the sites western and southern boundary are located in flood zones 2 and/or 3 (higher risk from river flooding). It is considered that the site is of sufficient size that the development can avoid elements of the site in flood zones 2 and/or 3. The site also contains small areas within the 1 in 30, 1 in 100 and 1 in 1,000 surface water flood risk zones but the remainder of the site is not within an identified surface water flood risk zone. It is considered that the site is of sufficient size that following the use of SUDs and attenuation ponds, development can avoid any areas with residual surface water flood risk.

Water Quality

14. The land at the 'Garden Village' at Stanmore contains a small area within Source Protection Zone 3 to its eastern extent. The majority of this land would be for development beyond 2038 and, irrespective of this, it is considered that this issue could be managed through appropriate design and construction of development.
15. The land at the 'Garden Village' at Tasley is not located within a source protection zone.

Green Belt¹

16. The land at the 'Garden Village' at Stanmore is located within the Green Belt. The Green Belt Review undertaken for Shropshire indicates that this site is located within four Green Belt parcels, the release of which would have the following levels of harm to the Green Belt: moderate (a small sub-parcel of P54, The Hobbins area, P57 and P58); moderate high (P56 - the parcel closest to Bridgnorth); and high (majority of P54).
17. The land at the 'Garden Village' at Tasley is not located within the Green Belt.

Landscape and Visual Sensitivity²

18. The majority of the land at the 'Garden Village' at Stanmore is located within a landscape parcel which has medium landscape and visual sensitivity to housing and employment. A very small portion of the eastern extent of the site has medium-high landscape and visual sensitivity to housing and high landscape and visual sensitivity to employment.
19. The land at the 'Garden Village' at Tasley is primarily located within a landscape parcel assessed as having medium landscape and visual sensitivity to housing

¹ Green Belt parcels identified and assessed within the Green Belt Assessment and Review.

² Landscape parcels identified and assessed within the Landscape and Visual Sensitivity Study undertaken for Shropshire

and medium-high landscape and visual sensitivity to employment. A portion of the site extends beyond the area assessed.

Ecology

20. The land at the 'Garden Village' at Stanmore lies immediately adjacent to ancient woodland, which run along Hermitage Ridge to the west of the site between it and the existing form of Bridgnorth. This would need to be appropriately buffered and protected to avoid loss or deterioration as required by national policy.
21. It also includes areas within environmental networks and could contain protected species and priority habitats. It is considered that the site is of sufficient size that the design and layout of development could reflect these issues.
22. The land at the 'Garden Village' at Tasley is located within the Impact Risk Zone for four SSSI's. Discussions with Ecology Officers at Shropshire Council and initial discussions with Natural England indicate that risks can be managed through appropriate design, layout and construction of the development.
23. It also includes areas within environmental networks and could contain protected species and priority habitats. It is considered that the site is of sufficient size that the design and layout of development could reflect these issues.

Heritage

24. The land at the 'Garden Village' at Stanmore includes part of the designated area of the Scheduled Monument of The Hermitage, proximity to this asset will need to be taken into account. It also has other heritage interest and known archaeological potential. These issues will require due consideration.
25. The land at the 'Garden Village' at Tasley includes the Grade II Listed. The Leasowes and the former Farm House at The Leasowes. It also includes the non-designated historic farmsteads at Footbridge Farm, Hundred House Farm and Roundthorn Farm. Furthermore, due to the scale of the site it could have archaeological potential. These issues will require due consideration.

Highways - Vehicles

26. The land at the 'Garden Village' at Stanmore benefits from direct access onto an A road. Similarly, the 'Garden Village' at Tasley benefits from direct access onto an A road (with an additional access proposed off Ludlow Road).
27. Due to the scale of both developments, it is likely that both would have a significant impact on the surrounding highway network and mitigation measures would be required to manage this growth. Specifically, both sites would need to introduce traffic calming measures within the vicinity of the site and make all necessary improvements to the wider highway infrastructure. However, given the scale of the development proposed it is considered that these improvements are viable and achievable.

Highways - Pedestrians and Cyclists

28. Both sites are a similar distance from Bridgnorth centre.
29. Direct access onto an A road is a benefit for vehicles but can be a disadvantage when considering pedestrian and cycle access to the site. Promoting sustainable modes of travel is a key consideration. Furthermore, if a site cannot demonstrate

that some trips will be via sustainable modes, this will increase the dependency on vehicles and increase the impact on the surrounding network.

30. The land at the 'Garden Village' at Stanmore is separated from the built form of Bridgnorth by Hermitage Ridge. Necessary improvements to pedestrian and cycle facilities to create safe links between the site and the built form of Bridgnorth are essential in order to reduce the potential segregation between the existing settlement and the site. This would require careful consideration given the gradient and nature of roads and footpaths between Bridgnorth and the site.
31. The land at the 'Garden Village' at Tasley is separated from the built form of Bridgnorth by the A458. Necessary improvements to pedestrian and cycle facilities to create safe links between the site and the built form of Bridgnorth are essential in order to reduce the potential segregation between the existing settlement and the proposed development. This would require careful consideration to ensure that the infrastructure provided is safe and attractive to pedestrians and cyclists.
32. It should be noted that both sites offer the potential for enhanced public transport links into the town. It should also be noted that both site promotions are of a scale that a level of self-containment would be expected, through provision of a mixed-use development including a local centre, primary school, housing and employment. Whilst this self-containment can reduce the number of trips from the site into Bridgnorth, ultimately the reason for the development is to meet the needs of Bridgnorth and a site adjacent to its built form will benefit strongly from the ability to sustainably access the services and facilities available within the town.

Public Protection

33. The land at the 'Garden Village' at Stanmore is close to sources of road and commercial noise and potential future noise from other commercial uses on the employment land proposed within the site promotion itself. However, it is considered that this can be managed through design and layout of the development and use of green infrastructure buffering.
34. The land at the 'Garden Village' at Tasley contains the site of a current Planning Application for Poultry Units. It is understood that if the site is allocated then these Poultry Units (if consented) would not be implemented. It is also understood that the site is located over known foul water private drainage facilities to the Punch Bowl and other residential properties, but this could be appropriately managed if the site were developed.
35. The land at the 'Garden Village' at Tasley is also close to sources of current road and commercial noise and potential future noise and odour from the relocated livestock market (the adjacent employment allocation includes land specifically for the livestock market and associated landscaping), other commercial uses on the existing employment allocation and potential commercial uses on the employment land proposed within the site promotion itself. These issues would require careful and sensitive consideration; however, it is considered that this can be appropriately managed through appropriate design and layout and use of green infrastructure buffering.
36. The land at the 'Garden Village' at Tasley is in proximity to quarries at Morville and Bridgwalton. It is considered that through the use of appropriate buffers this proximity can be mitigated.

Other Strategic Considerations

37. The land at the 'Garden Village' at Stanmore benefits from proximity to the Stanmore Industrial Estate and offers the potential for the site to expand.
38. The land at the 'Garden Village' at Tasley provides an opportunity to establish a new employment site to the west of the town, this could provide balance as much of the employment is currently located to the east.

Conclusion

39. Having given careful consideration to these issues and all other available information, it is considered that the 'Garden Village' at Tasley represents the most appropriate location to include within the Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan as a proposed mixed-use allocation to meet the needs of Bridgnorth and its wider hinterland during the Plan Period. However, given that the total site size has capacity for considerable development, it is proposed that some of the site would be identified for development beyond the current Plan Period.
40. The main factors that have informed this decision are:
 - Landscape - According to the Landscape and Visual Sensitivity Assessment undertaken for Shropshire, the landscape and visual sensitivity of the parcels containing the majority of the two 'Garden Villages' are not dissimilar with regard to residential development. Whilst the parcel containing the 'Garden Village' at Tasley is identified as being more sensitive to employment development than the main parcel containing the 'Garden Village' at Stanmore, it is considered that landscape and visual impacts can be mitigated by site design and development type.
 - Ecology - Through appropriate construction, design and layout of development and incorporation of effective Green Infrastructure it is considered that the ecology assets on and in proximity of the land at the 'Garden Village' at Tasley can be safeguarded. Whilst this is also considered the case for the land at the 'Garden Village' at Stanmore, appropriate safeguarding of the ancient woodland along The Hermitage would exacerbate concerns regarding the ability to achieve effective pedestrian and cycle links into the town.
 - Heritage - The land at the 'Garden Village' at Tasley contains several heritage assets, including two Grade II listed buildings. A Heritage Assessment provided by the Promotors indicates that less than substantial harm would arise to the significance of these designated heritage assets as a result of the changes that would occur to their settings. Because Sections 66(i) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and the tests set out in Paragraphs 193, 194 and 196 of the Framework are therefore engaged, the Council is required to place great weight upon their conservation. However, whilst this requirement is acknowledged, it is considered that through appropriate design and layout of development and incorporation of effective Green Infrastructure, impacts on these assets can be minimised. Further, it is considered that the significant public benefits of meeting the housing needs of Bridgnorth and its hinterland would outweigh the harm that would be caused to the significance of the listed buildings. Whilst it is also considered that the land at the 'Garden Village' at Stanmore

could mitigate impact on heritage assets, this is considered more challenging particularly in relation to the Hermitage Scheduled Monument – a designated heritage asset of the highest significance, given the location of this asset.

- Highways - It is considered that the land at the 'Garden Village' proposal at Tasley provides more opportunities to make localised improvements to the surrounding network to ensure the new development is not segregated from the existing settlement of Bridgnorth, in particular there appears to be more opportunities for improvements to pedestrian and cycle facilities.
 - Public Protection - Whilst the land at the 'Garden Village' at Tasley is in proximity to roads, current and future employment (including the relocated livestock market) and quarries which are sources of noise, dust and odour it is considered that through appropriate design and layout of the development and use of effective green infrastructure this can be mitigated. It is acknowledged that the land at the 'Garden Village' at Stanmore is in proximity to less sources of noise and no obvious sources of dust or odour.
 - Green Belt - The land at the 'Garden Village' at Tasley is not located within the Green Belt, whilst the land at the 'Garden Village' at Stanmore is. Paragraph 137 of the NPPF states "Before concluding that exceptional circumstances exist to justify changes to Green Belt boundaries, the strategic policy-making authority should be able to demonstrate that it has examined fully all other reasonable options for meeting its identified need for development". It is considered that based on the current information provided and assessed by Council officers, the proposed 'Garden Village' at Tasley would represent sustainable development and is capable of meeting the growth needs of the Town and would offer wider benefits to the community. As such it is considered the Tasley proposal represents a reasonable option to meet the growth needs of Bridgnorth.
41. However, recognising the local importance and success of Stanmore Industrial Estate and the limited amount of land currently available for its expansion, it is also proposed that two elements of the 'Garden Village' site at Stanmore, totalling around 11.5ha (currently within the Green Belt) are removed from Green Belt and allocated specifically for employment uses to allow the expansion of Stanmore Industrial Estate are included within the Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan as proposed site allocations.
42. In summary, recommendations for proposed site allocations in Bridgnorth are as follows:
- Allocate the 'Garden Village' extension at Tasley for around 1,050 dwellings; 16ha of employment land; a new local centre (with an appropriate range of retail and community uses including a community centre, a primary school, and if required by the CCG a new medical centre); 20ha of Green Infrastructure and a 19ha linear park.
 - Identify land at the 'Garden Village' extension at Tasley beyond that proposed for allocation, as a future direction for growth beyond the current Local Plan period.
 - Allocate two areas of land (totalling around 11.5ha) that are currently within the Green Belt for employment uses, to allow for the expansion of the successful Stanmore Industrial Estate.

43. It is considered that these proposed site allocations would complement existing site allocations and windfall opportunities within the town and ensure that the development strategy for Bridgnorth is achieved. Crucially they would also facilitate the delivery of the housing and employment needed within the town.
44. The development of these proposed site allocations would be informed by approximate site provision figures and detailed site guidelines within the Local Plan. They would also need to comply with the policies within the Local Plan.
45. A key proposed site guideline relating to the Garden Village' extension at Tasley is the requirement to prepare a vision, design code and masterplan, which will be informed by consultation with the local community and would subsequently be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) by Shropshire Council. This SPD would represent a significant material planning consideration and would be completed before any Planning Application for development of the site.