



Representor unique Part A Ref *	A0129
Matter	3
Relevant questions nos	1, 3, 4, 11, 12, 14, 15 and 24

SHROPSHIRE LOCAL PLAN EXAMINATION

Stage 1 Hearing Statement



Shropshire Local Plan Examination - Stage 1 Matters, Issues and Questions

Matter 3 Development Strategy (Policies SP1 – SP15)

**Issue Whether the Development Strategy is justified, effective and
consistent with national policy.**

Cerda Planning are retained and instructed by Gleeson Land Limited to prepare and submit Hearing Statements in connection with land at Betley Lane East, Bayston Hill (Council site reference BAY040) (hereafter referred to as the 'site'). The site is located to the immediate west of the A49 Hereford Road, from which access would be taken and has been promoted through the draft Local Plan for residential development. Representations have been submitted to both the Regulation 18 and 19 Local Plan consultations. This written statement has been prepared to address some of the questions raised by the Inspectors related to Matter 3.

This representation relates specifically to questions 1, 3, 4, 11, 12, 14, 15 and 24 which are set out in *italics* prior to our response

Questions

1. How do the strategic policies in the Local Plan accord with paragraphs 20-23 of the Framework?

Considering the requirement of paragraph 20, specifically related to the need to provide a strategy for the pattern and scale (amongst others) of housing. It is our opinion that the proposed strategy does not make sufficient provision for housing in the right places based on a sound strategy for the distribution of homes. The more sustainable Community Hubs (including Bayston Hill) should be playing a more significant role in the spatial strategy.



Whilst noted below within our response clearly the Local Plan as set out does not meet the requirements of NPPF paragraph 21. Policies including SP5 (High-Quality Design) SP6 (Health and Wellbeing) and parts of SP11 (Green Belt and Safeguarded Land) contain detailed matters which relate more to the management of development proposals in detail i.e. Development Management policies which should be provided elsewhere in the plan so as to not confuse the requirement and explicitly strategic nature of the Strategic Policies section of the Local Plan.

3. What is the basis for the overall spatial strategy and broad distribution of growth set out in Policy SP2? What options were considered and why was this chosen?

Our previous representations generally support this policy – based on an ‘Urban focussed’ distribution of development. Whilst the strategy concentrates development on Shrewsbury, the Principal Centres and Key Centres the strategy acknowledges the need for growth within Shropshire’s smaller sustainable settlements including the Community Hubs. This is necessary in order to support these communities and sustain their services which is supported.

There is a clear need to ensure enough housing is allocated in the right locations, in order to avoid future unplanned housing, in often less sustainable locations which cannot take advantage of public transport, services etc. Consideration of the strategy dovetails with our response to question 4 below and the Local Plan needs to ensure that there is an appropriate scale of development for each area of Shropshire based on their individual characteristics.

4. Should Policy SP2 define the scale of development expected in the various urban locations and rural settlements?

Whilst there is a ‘high level’ percentage apportionment for development within Shropshire as set out in the 2022 Housing Topic Paper (GC4i) there is a distinct lack of tangible justification for how the distribution of development has been apportioned



within the Rural Areas and in particular the appropriate scale of development within the Community Hubs. This requires further consideration and subsequent correction.

Whilst the proposed development strategy seeks to set out levels of development for rural areas based upon their sustainability credentials it is unclear that this exercise has been undertaken, as there is no clear justification for the levels proposed for each of the Community Hubs or Community Clusters.

A more robust evidence base should have been utilised in order to appropriately apportion growth within these rural areas. The appropriate levels of growth for each of the Rural Areas appears to have been developed solely through consideration of individual housing allocations (and commitments) – not through an assessment of the appropriate level of growth for each of these areas taking account of the social, environmental and economic needs of an area or that area's capacity for growth.

It is our view that Bayston Hill as one of the one of the highest scoring (ranked joint second out of 40) Community Hubs within the Settlement Function Assessment (as set out in the Hierarchy of Settlements Assessment (EV060)) should have been apportioned a much higher level of growth than currently proposed.

The response provided by the Council in GC4 notes that the Council considered that identifying specific percentages of the proposed housing requirement to be delivered was too rigid and would not provide sufficient flexibility to positively respond to circumstances where appropriate opportunities for sustainable development arise. Rather than being flexible, reliance specifically in terms of Bayston Hill on the explicit allocation of sites serves the polar opposite purpose. It is a rigid tool, which does not provide the flexibility to deliver alternative sites through the plan. This rigidity is compounded by the lack of an appropriate assessment of settlement boundaries and the restrictive policies within the plan for development outside of settlement boundaries.



11. The Framework at paragraph 28 advises that 'non-strategic policies should be used by local planning authorities and communities to set out more detailed policies for specific areas, neighbourhoods, or types of development. This can include...the provision of infrastructure and community facilities at a local level...establishing design principles...' Are Policies SP5 and SP6 strategic policies or development management policies?

It is clear from the wording of Policies SP5 and SP6 that they are intended to provide a tool to determine the suitability or otherwise of specific development proposals (even including the requirements for householder extensions). A number of the criteria under 3 (a-n) would be more appropriately included within a specific non-strategic Development Management policy(ies) which should be provided elsewhere in the plan so as to not confuse the requirement and explicitly strategic nature of this section of the Local Plan.

12. What is the status of the West Midlands Design Charter and does Policy SP5 align with its principles? Is there any scope for tension between Policy SP5 and Policy DP24? Is Policy SP5 justified, effective and consistent with national policy?

The West Midlands Design Charter, launched in January 2020 was developed by the West Midlands Combined Authority, in partnership with the region's local councils. The charter seeks to encourage developers to produce unique and innovative proposals that are grounded in a sound understanding of the local context. It is a material consideration, given its use has been 'endorsed' by the Councils Cabinet.

However, it is considered unsuitable to base part of a Local Plan policy on a document with limited weight and one which is likely to change and evolve over the life of the plan.

In addition, part 5 of the policy relating to the refusal of developments considered to be of poor design, whilst being consistent with national policy does little more than repeat paragraph 134 of the NPPF. In accordance with paragraph 16 this part of the



policy should not be included as it unnecessarily duplicates a policy contained within the NPPF.

In order to avoid any tension between Policies SP5 and DP24 the opportunity exists to cross reference the requirements of each policy within the policy itself.

14. Is Policy SP7 positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national policy? How have the residential guidelines been derived? Do these policies duplicate parts of other policies?

This approach is supported and it gives some assurance that the blanket allocation of specific number of dwellings is not set in stone and that the Council will take a more pragmatic approach to support sustainable development. This also demonstrates a degree of flexibility with the Plan in accordance with the NPPF.

However, this flexibility in delivery remains primarily only relevant to larger settlements, where development opportunities are more likely to become available within the settlement boundaries. No flexibility is provided for sustainable development elsewhere. As an example, no long term growth is planned for Bayston Hill (the proposed allocations are identified as both being delivered in the short or medium term – see Appendix 7 to the Local Plan). To be considered a positively prepared policy and Local Plan it is considered that as a 'Good Site' (See Site Assessment Scoring) the site should be considered for allocation if the Plan is to genuinely provide for long term housing growth necessary.

15. Is the Community Hub and Community Cluster approach to development set out in Policies SP8 and SP9 justified and effective and consistent with national planning policy? Do these policies duplicate parts of other policies?

There is a substantial cross over with the requirements of Policies SP7 and SP8. Policy SP7 is generally supported as Community Hubs are considered to be significant rural service centres and an appropriate focus for much of the development within the rural area. Specifically, Bayston Hill.



However, the policy does not provide for any flexibility or circumstances where development outside of the defined settlement boundaries is considered acceptable. Given the lack of long term planned housing for Bayston Hill specifically, it is considered appropriate for the Council to commit to the inclusion of reserve sites within the Local Plan that should be identified to meet local housing requirements in the event that the Government's standard methodology is once again amended, or delivery of allocated sites are stalled. This would allow the Local Plan to be flexible, to deal with rapid change and to avoid delays and resourcing associated with a partial or wholesale plan review.

This could be provided for within a 'baked in' review mechanism or a policy within the Local Plan requiring the commencement of a separate Site Allocation document to include a series of reserve sites and to be read in conjunction with the Local Plan including adherence to the development strategy.

24. How have the settlement boundaries been decided and were they reviewed when preparing this Local Plan

There is a conspicuous lack of assessment in respect of the settlement boundaries set within the Local Plan. It appears that these boundaries have not been reviewed since before the SAMDev Plan 2006-2026, and rather they have merely been added to by virtue of including proposed allocations.

Consideration of alterations and/or extensions to the defined settlement boundaries should be undertaken in support of the Local Plan. Such an assessment should be based on the spatial and landscape characteristics of each settlement in order to ensure that a necessary review of the boundaries grasps the opportunity to shape settlements identifying areas of land that could come forward for development that could address weaknesses in settlement character and visual/spatial qualities of an area.

In particular a review of settlement boundaries, specifically for Bayston Hill would provide the opportunity to substantially improve important gateways into the village.



This includes creating an enhanced gateway/entrance to the village when approaching from the south and allow a gradual transition within the landscape from open countryside to the edge of the village. This could be achieved through an extension to the settlement boundary to include the site and furthermore remove a local substandard junction off the A49 to and from Condover village. The details of which are included within the Transport Technical Note submitted in support of our Regulation 19 representations.