

Matter 3: Development Strategy (Policies SP1 - SP15)

**Response on behalf of**

**Telereal Trillium**

**Representor ID: A0476**

### **MATTER 3**

#### **Introduction**

- 1) Harris Lamb Property Consultancy (HLPC) are instructed by Telereal Trillium to prepare a response to the Inspector's issues and questions in relation to Matter 3. Telereal are promoting land at Shrewsbury for residential development. Telereal's site is identified as suitable for residential development by the Council, but not included as a residential allocation, in favour of a larger windfall allowance.
- 2) At this stage our representations relate to Matter 3 and the questions raised by the Planning Inspector. We will set our representations in support of a residential allocation on Telereal's site in our Hearing Statement in response to the next of the Local Plan examination.

**Q1 *How do the strategic policies in the Local Plan accord with paragraphs 20 to 23 of the Framework?***

- 3) It is considered that the strategic policies in the Local Plan generally accord with the guidance in paragraphs 20 to 23 of the Framework. Specifically, they set out in overall strategy as advised by paragraph 20, the Plan Period runs to 2038 and assuming it is adopted this year or next would meet the minimum 15 year time period from adoption as advised by paragraph 22, whilst the Pre-submission draft includes draft allocations identified on a proposals map and therefore in accordance with paragraph 23.

**Q2 *Does Policy SP1 include criteria to assess development proposals against? Does it replicate other policies in the Local Plan? Is it necessary and effective?***

- 4) Policy SP1 in our view does not include criteria to assess development proposals against, thereby undermining its application for developmental management purposes. The content of the policy replicates other policies within the Plan and as such is not considered necessary or effective.

**Q3 *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?***

- 5) The Council undertook consultation on Issues and Strategic Options as part of the preparation of the Local Plan. The consultation identified four key strategic options including the housing requirement, strategic distribution of future growth, strategies for employment growth and delivering development in rural settlements. Following consultation on the Issues and Options a Preferred Option was identified and this was subject to sustainability appraisal. The supporting text at paragraph 3.22 of the Pre-

submission draft Local Plan confirms that “the strategic approach was to accommodate development in such a way that help makes more sustainable, balance, vibrant, resilient and self-reliant places in which to live and work”. The Plan goes on at paragraph 3.23 to state that “it represents a sustainable pattern of growth, directing the majority of new development towards the large settlements with the most extensive range of services, facilities and infrastructure to support new development”. Whilst the findings of the sustainability appraisal (SD006.01) highlight the reasons why the preferred strategy was chosen it is not explicit as to the other development options were discounted.

**Q4 *Should Policy SP2 define the scale of development expected in the various urban locations and rural settlements?***

- 6) Paragraph 60 of the Framework sets out the Government’s objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes. The housing requirement as set out in Policy SP2 states that ‘around’ 30,800 dwellings are to be delivered over the Plan Period. The use of the ‘around’ is unusual and we would typically expect that ‘minimum’ would be used instead. Whilst the choice of terminology is down to the Council it does not indicate a desire to significantly boost the supply of housing and could be inferred that delivering less than 30,800 houses would be acceptable, which is clearly contrary to National Planning Policy.
- 7) Whilst the Plan sets out the overall housing requirement, we agree that it would be of assistance if the Plan did define the scale of development expected in the various urban locations. Indeed, this would make it clearer what sites have been allocated to the urban and rural areas.

**Q5 *The spatial strategy in the Core Strategy has a rural focus, while the submitted Local Plan’s spatial strategy is urban focused. The latter holds a list of ‘saved sites’ in appendix 2 which the council intends to rely upon to meet the new spatial strategy and development requirements. Do the ‘saved sites’ accord with the spatial distribution of the submitted Local Plan? What will be the policy basis for these ‘saved sites’? Are you relying upon such an approach, is the Local Plan positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national policy?***

- 8) The saved sites that are included appear to be in a variety of locations being both urban rural. As such, it is not clear whether they accord with the spatial strategy as their inclusion in the Appendix appears to be on the basis that they have not been developed to date and as such, are still available to be developed in the new Plan. We do not consider this a sound approach on the basis that if the Council are seeking to rely on the sites as part of its supply then they should be included in the Plan as allocations rather than just as a list of possible sites in an appendix. Furthermore, if the sites are intended to form part of the supply and to be allocations then the Council should reassess all of the saved sites in order to determine their continued suitability for allocation.
- 9) Where existing allocations have not come forward, it is possible there are an issue with the delivery of the site that mean they should no longer be considered deliverable. In light of this, it would indicate that a review of the saved sites should have been undertaken in order to determine their continued suitability for allocation/development in the Development Plan. Reliance on such sites could, therefore, undermine the delivery of the housing requirement if sites included in the supply do not come forward as

expected. This would increase the risk of other sites coming forward, on a speculative basis, that were not included as allocations within the plan.

**Q6 *Is it appropriate to show 'saved sites' on the proposals map given they are not site allocations in the submitted Local Plan, bearing in mind Regulation 9 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012?***

- 10) No. Regulation 9 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 refers to policies of the adopted development plan. If the Council are seeking to rely on these to form part of its supply then they should be assessed for their continued suitability for allocation in the Plan. If they are not allocated in the Plan based on an up to date assessment of their suitability then they should not be shown on the Proposals Map or included in the supply figures.

**Q7 *What proportion of housing supply comes from 'saved sites'?***

- 11) The schedules in Appendix 5 of the Pre-submission draft Local Plan indicate that saved SAMDEV Plan allocations account for 3,557 dwellings of the total supply. Please see schedules A5(i) through to A5(ii). The proportion of housing supply that is intended to come from saved sites accounts for approximately 10% of the overall housing requirement.
- 12) This is a significant number of dwellings and emphasises the importance of these sites being re-examined now to ensure that they remain deliverable.

**Q8-9**

- 13) No comment.

**Q10 *Is Policy SP4 necessary as it rehearses National Planning Policy, contrary to the advice in PPG (Paragraph: 036, Reference ID: 61-036-20190723)?***

- 14) We do not consider that this policy is necessary as it seeks to replicate policy in the Framework. It is therefore unnecessary and should be deleted.

**Q11 *Are Policies SP5 and SP6 strategic policies or development management policies?***

- 15) We do not consider that Policies SP5 or SP6 are strategic policies and are more akin to development management type policies. As such they should be moved to the development management section of the Plan.

**Q12 *No comment.***

**Q13 *No comment.***

**Q14 *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?***

- 16) Whilst we are generally supportive of Policy SP7 in terms of its support for the redevelopment of previously developed sites and the flexibility it provides, we are not clear what 7.3 is trying to achieve. It appears to try and limit housing development that would otherwise comply with the policies in the development plan but would result in the residential guidelines for a settlement being exceeded. This is contrary to the objective to boost significantly the supply of housing as set out in the Framework. The guidelines for the settlements should be seen as a minimum target and if exceeded this would be a positive thing, rather than artificially limited.
- 17) 7.3 should be removed from the policy.

*Residential guidelines*

- 18) it is not entirely clear how the residential development guidelines for each of these settlements have been established. It would appear that having established what the overall requirement for the County is this then has been apportioned up across the different settlements having regard to their size and relative sustainability. Having established what the overall requirement is for each settlement an assessment has then been made as to the completions and/or commitments in that settlement, which are then deducted from the overall total resulting in a requirement for that settlement. It is not clear from the Plan or the evidence why a higher or lower figure has been proposed for a particular settlement, other than having regard to the past performance in delivery of housing in that settlement.
- 19) In changing from a rural to an urban focused strategy, it would be reasonable to expect that the amount of development aimed at the towns would be greater than that in the adopted strategy. However, this does not appear to be the case. One example would be Shrewsbury. In the adopted strategy, Shrewsbury, Minsterley and Pointesbury were targeted to deliver 8250-8800 dwellings against a housing requirement of 27,500 dwellings. By contrast, the combined guidelines for these settlement in the emerging plan is 8925 dwellings in the context of a larger housing requirement.

**Q15 No comment.**

**Q16 – 20 No comment.**

**Q21 Does the Local Plan strategy rely on windfall development and is the windfall allowance based on paragraph 71 of the Framework? Does the windfall allowance for housing need to be set out in the Local Plan?**

- 20) Yes, the Local Plan strategy does rely on windfall development as part of its strategy. Turning to Appendix 5 of the Pre-submission draft Local Plan the schedules in the appendix identify a windfall allowance for the individual settlements. The windfalls when totalled up account for 2,682 dwellings (just under 10% of the overall housing requirement). This is a significant amount when there are sites available with willing landowners/housebuilders to identify additional allocations and reduce the reliance on this less certain source of supply. It is not clear from the information provided why the Council have ignored deliverable sites in favour of a larger reliance on windfall sites.

- 21) One such site is Telereal's site in Shrewsbury - **SHR015 – Land at Whitehall, Monkmoor Road in Shrewsbury**. This site consists of a former office building, which is 4-5 storeys in height. There are also a couple of listed buildings that are not currently in use. The site is given a 'Good' rating in the Sustainability Appraisal and is identified a suitable housing site in the Site Assessment paper. The residential allocation of the site would not only secure more houses, but would also have the added benefits, of bringing the listed buildings back into active use and securing their future for the long term.
- 22) The main office building has previously been let to a few different public sector organisations (including the Department of Work and Pension, Shropshire Council, and the NHS) who have all had tenancies for part of the building. Over time and with the development of new facilities and the consolidation of services, these tenancies have been terminated. The last tenant, DWP's small-retained function (they terminated their tenancy for the majority of the space they occupied in 2008), are finalising their relation plans and are expected to relocate later this year. Telereals intention is to prepare and submit a planning application by the end of the summer/autumn this year. The grant of planning permission is expected in Q1 2023, by which time it is anticipated the building will be vacant. The site will then be marketed and sold with the benefit of planning permission.
- 23) Allowing for the sale of the site, the discharge of conditions, and the completion of the conversion works, it is anticipated that all the units would be completed and ready for occupation by Q1 2026. The site is considered deliverable in this context.
- 24) The allocation of sites such as SHR015 would reduce the reliance on windfall sites and provide greater certainty over the housing guideline being met.
- 25) In considering the evidence that the Council have presented to support their proposed windfall supply, it is worth highlighting that the adopted plan does not include the allocation of previously developed sites in towns like Shrewsbury, focusing on releasing sites previously outside the settlement boundary. This has skewed the amount of windfall sites that have been delivered and the windfall delivery would have been lower if sites had been allocated. Whether windfalls could realistically continue at this rate will depend on what sites within the towns remain available for residential development after a sustained period of developers picking off the best sites that are free from planning/technical constraints. If nothing else, this does create additional uncertainty over this source of supply, with the remaining sites more likely to have issues that would slow or prevent them from coming forward.
- 26) Ultimately, the decision here comes down to providing a greater level of certainty over meeting the housing requirement. It is our view that allocations provide more certainty and is a positive way for the Council to actively address the housing need identified. We can see no reason not to allocate sites now where there is a willing landowner and the Council have not identified any constraints. The requirement for more certainty going forward being perhaps more pertinent in this instance as Shropshire Council has struggled to maintain a 5-year supply of housing, teetering on the edge of a shortfall, even by their own assessment.

**Q23 Should the Local Plan include more small and medium size sites to provide greater choice, flexibility and certainty?**

- 27) Smaller and medium size sites would help with delivery as they typically are easier to develop and can be brought forward without needing significant supporting infrastructure to facilitate their development. The inclusion of a greater range of small and medium size sites could help supplement the proposed allocation and help deliver the housing supply, particularly in the early part of the Plan Period.

***Q24 How have settlement boundaries been decided and were they reviewed when preparing this Local Plan?***

- 28) No Comment.