

ID 10

SHROPSHIRE LOCAL PLAN EXAMINATION

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| Representor unique Part A Ref * | A0682 |
| Matter | 3 |
| Relevant questions nos | 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 11, 16, 19, 21, 24 |
| | |

Stage 1 Hearing Statement

Matter 3 Hearing Statement: Development Strategy (Policies SP1 – SP15)

Miller Homes (A0682)

1.1 This Hearing Statement is submitted on behalf of Miller Homes (Miller).

Context: South West Shifnal

1.2 Miller’s representations are made in relation to c.65ha of land it is promoting at “South West Shifnal” as identified on the site location plan at **Appendix 1**.

1.3 Policy SP11 will release this land from the Green Belt and safeguard it for future development needs.

1.4 South West Shifnal comprises three of the named parcels in Schedule S15.1(iii), as identified within Figure 1.1:

- “Land between A464 (south) and Park Lane” (9.6ha) (*pink*);
- “Land between Park Lane and A4169 at Lodge Hill” (46.1ha) (*purple*); and
- “Land between A4169 and the western railway line” (12.8ha) (*blue*).

Figure 1.1: Policy SP11 Safeguarded Land Parcels



- 1.5 At Regulation 19 stage, South West Shifnal was promoted by Miller (A0682) and Wallace Land Investments (A0147). Both parties promoted their land interests separately, although a coordinated approach was adopted in terms of a comprehensive masterplan¹ to reflect the safeguarded designation. Miller acquired the Wallace Land Investments business in May 2021, so South West Shifnal is now being promoted in its entirety by Miller. This demonstrates the deliverability of the land as a whole, which is supported by a national house builder.
- 1.6 Miller strongly supports the designation of South West Shifnal under SP11 as safeguarded land.
- 1.7 The Draft Local Plan acknowledges that South West Shifnal will eventually comprise a “...strategic housing extension capable of creating a new community...” and explicitly lists benefits and infrastructure improvements (Paragraphs 5.215 and 5.216).
- 1.8 No other safeguarded site has been similarly identified in the Draft Local Plan which properly reflects its credentials as a sustainable site which can deliver strategic benefits for Shifnal, as recognised in Paragraph 5.217 of the Draft Local Plan.
- 1.9 Miller contends that the Local Plan should include a policy mechanism (either within SP11 or a new policy) to permit immediate delivery and development of safeguarded land during the plan period in the event that issues arise with housing delivery following adoption including shortfalls in deliverable housing land supply, a failure to meet the Housing Delivery Test or where it becomes clear that the housing requirement cannot be met. This is explained in our Hearing Statements for Matters 6 and 8.
- 1.10 Miller also consider that land at South West Shifnal be allocated in the Local Plan for residential-led development during the plan period; this case will be presented during Stage 2 of the Examination.
- 1.11 Miller’s responses to Matter 3 Questions 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 11, 16, 19, 21 and 24 are set out below.

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?

- 1.12 Policy SP2 ‘Strategic Approach’ is set out in 7 key points and we respond to points 1, 2 3 and 5 in turn below.

Point 1 – Vision for Shropshire

- 1.13 Miller supports the Council’s ambitions that Shropshire will flourish over the Plan period. However, Miller contend that this approach has not been followed when directing growth to settlements and that Shifnal should be afforded a greater level of growth to align with the Evidence Base. The opportunity for additional growth at Shifnal was not progressed through the strategy, despite strong evidence to support this.

¹ Joint Development Framework Document (DFD)

- 1.14 Shifnal is categorised as a “Key Centre” that is to be a ‘focus for investment’ along the ‘M54/A5 Strategic Corridor,’ which runs through Shropshire with links to Wolverhampton². This link allowed some 7% of the town’s employed residents to work in the city as of the last reported Census in 2011, with nearly a fifth (18%) working somewhere in Greater Birmingham or the Black Country³. It also allowed the town to draw labour from these areas in order to service some local jobs, which have since rapidly grown in number with the Council itself having described Shifnal as ‘a key location for employment growth in Shropshire’ over the last nine years, seeing the creation of 50-60 jobs per annum and resultantly growing its employment base by nearly a quarter⁴ (23%). This has coincided with, and indeed potentially been supported by, improvements to public transport options⁵.
- 1.15 The stated intention to make Shifnal a focus for further investment appears likely to result in this job creation being sustained or even accelerated over the course of the plan period, enabled for example by the proposed allocation of some 41 hectares of employment land⁶. This will continue to generate a need for housing from those wishing to live close to their workplace.
- 1.16 In this context, it is concerning that the Draft Plan allows for the development of only 484 more homes in the town from 2021 until the end of the plan period in 2038, when discounting completions to date from the 2016-based target of 1,500 homes set through Policy S15⁷. This equates to only 28 dwellings per annum, an extremely low target when recognised that the town has annually delivered over seven times as many new homes on average over the past five years⁸ (203dpa; 2016-21). It has also typically delivered nearly four times as many homes, some 101 dwellings per annum, over the longer-term back to 2006⁹.

² Page 254 of the Regulation 19 Pre-Submission Draft of the Shropshire Local Plan, Policy S15.1

³ See Table 4.2 of our “Update to the Technical Review of Sustainable Growth Plans for Shifnal,” September 2020

⁴ Shifnal Market Town Profile, Spring 2021 (EV073.14)

⁵ See Paragraphs 5.14 to 5.17 of our “Update to the Technical Review of Sustainable Growth Plans for Shifnal”, September 2020

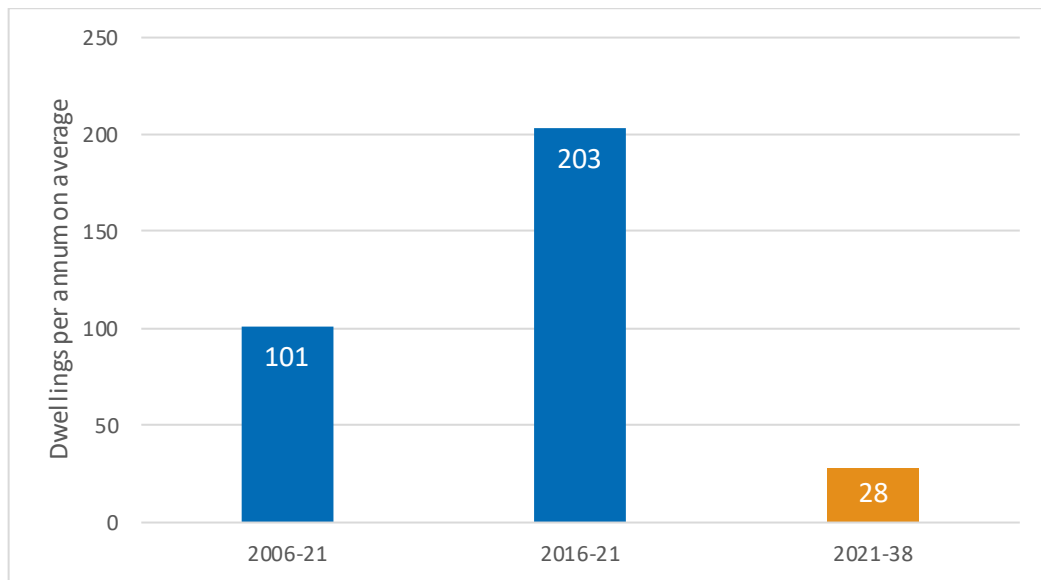
⁶ Policy S15

⁷ Five Year Housing Land Supply Statement, February 2022 (GC4j) Table 12

⁸ *Ibid*

⁹ Table 12 of Annex 1 of the slightly different Five Year Housing Land Supply Statement published on the [Council’s website](#), similarly dated February 2022 but different from the version included in the Examination Library which does not contain an equivalent figure for the period back to 2006

Figure 1.1: Historic and Implied Future Rate of Housing Delivery in Shifnal



Source: Turley analysis of Council monitoring

- 1.17 It is highly questionable whether the housing needs of Shifnal residents, both now and in the future, would be met – as the Draft Local Plan implicitly assumes – if delivery is allowed to fall by some 86% from its recent rate, and by nearly a quarter (72%) from its long-term rate. This is without even accounting for the Council’s belief that the remaining supply could be exhausted as soon as 2025¹⁰ nor for the consequences of the Black Country being unable to meet its own housing needs, with the Council having accepted that this will place particular pressure on areas like Shifnal, along the M54 corridor, which currently have the strongest links with the Black Country.
- 1.18 The Council is therefore strongly encouraged to revisit the spatial strategy to allow for a higher level of growth in Shifnal, which appears set to keep creating a substantial number of new jobs – resultantly needing more new homes to sustainably keep pace with rising demand – and will be most exposed to the consequences of the Black Country being unable to meet its future housing needs in full.
- 1.19 Shifnal is well-connected to its wider economic area and is a location that exhibits demand for further residential development, with this expressly recognised within the Draft Local Plan. The strategic economic importance of the M54 corridor and the strong link between Shifnal and the Black Country is highlighted within the Draft Local Plan, and throughout the Evidence Base, thus identifying that this site is uniquely well placed to accommodate additional growth, in addition to (and not exclusive to) proposed contributions to unmet needs arising within the Black Country.
- 1.20 Further, as set out in our Matter 8 Hearing Statement (Questions 1 – 4), additional growth at Shifnal, such as at South West Shifnal, would provide a valuable opportunity to make significant contributions to the package of infrastructure improvements

¹⁰ Paragraph 5.204 of the Regulation 19 Pre-Submission Draft of the Shropshire Local Plan

identified for the town– thereby aligning with the second part of Policy SP2 point one “new development will be supported by necessary infrastructure...”.

Point 2 – Housing Requirement

- 1.21 The Draft Local Plan identifies the delivery of around 30,800 homes over the plan period which incorporates 1,500 dwellings to support the housing needs of the emerging Black Country Plan. The NPPF and PPG strongly support the position taken by authorities such as Shropshire to identify a housing requirement which is higher than that implied as a ‘minimum’ level through the standard method.
- 1.22 However, as set out in the Statement of Common Ground between Shropshire and the Association of Black Country Authorities (ABCA) (EV041), whilst ABCA support the contribution of 1,500 dwellings to meet the shortfall, further contributions will be required during the plan period. ABCA have requested a mechanism be put in place to enable a review of the overall contribution to the shortfall – we discuss this in our Matters 6 and 8 Hearing Statements.

Point 3 – Delivery of affordable housing

- 1.23 Policy SP2 confirms the intention to provide for around 7,700 affordable homes during the plan period (350dpa). The Council’s Evidence Base confirms the full need is considerably higher, calculating an estimated need to provide 17,578 (799 dpa) affordable homes over the plan period. The last published Annual Monitoring Report (base date 31 March 2020) confirms that in the last seven years the highest annual level achieved has been 441 (2016/17) with the average in the last seven years being only 244 affordable dpa.
- 1.24 Evidently planning for a level of housing growth above the current proposed requirement would further support the delivery of additional affordable housing and mitigate a risk that the aspired boost in provision is not achieved.

Point 5 – Distribution of growth: Urban Focus

- 1.25 Miller support the overall distribution of growth which is based upon “Urban Focus”. However, it is considered that Shifnal should be afforded a much higher level of growth than is currently identified in order to deliver this Development Strategy.
- 1.26 The Council has prepared evidence to identify a sustainable settlement hierarchy including 2017 and 2020 versions of the “Hierarchy of Settlements” document (EV060).
- 1.27 Shifnal scores 97 points out of a maximum possible score of 116, and therefore comprises one of the most sustainable settlements in relation to social infrastructure provision, as well; as being proximate and accessible to the Black Country, Telford and RAF Cosford.
- 1.28 The 2020 SA (SD006.01) affirms that Shifnal is a sustainable settlement and that a level of development in line with that proposed within the Draft Local Plan would mean that:

“This level of growth will strongly contribute to the evidenced housing need for Shropshire in the Plan period. It is likely to provide a variety of locations and a good

level of affordable houses in Shifnal, thereby helping meet the needs of priority households. Existing businesses are likely to be maintained and supported and opportunities to create more or higher value jobs provided. The level of existing public transport infrastructure in Shifnal is likely to be maintained or increased and there may be provide opportunities to co-ordinate new development with future provision. Shifnal is an accessible location and this level of growth is likely to minimise the need for additional car-based transport whilst focussing development where there is good existing access to health, leisure, recreational and cultural activities. The provision of, and access to, services such as schools, doctor's surgeries and shops is likely to be maintained or enhanced. Similarly, opportunities to increase the provision or connectivity of services such as broadband or renewable energy are likely to increase in the medium to long term”(SD006.01 page 112).

- 1.29 This approach is supported in the Statement of Common Ground between Shropshire and ABCA (EV041) at Paragraph 7.11 (second bullet point).

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

- 1.30 Yes. Defining the percentage scale and distribution of the development within points 5 and 6 of Policy SP2 will provide greater clarity as to the level of growth directed to the settlements.
- 1.31 It is maintained that the amount of growth allocated to Shifnal, during the remainder of the Plan period, should first be increased.

5: The spatial strategy in the Core Strategy has a rural focus, while the submitted Local Plan's spatial strategy is urban focussed. 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'? By relying upon such an approach, is the Local Plan positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national policy?

- 1.32 Appendix 2 of the Draft Local Plan provides a schedule of all SAMDev sites and clarifies whether they are to be saved or deleted; there are 94 saved sites in total. However, no evidence is provided to demonstrate their deliverability nor is information provided setting out the total number of dwellings to be delivered for each site. It is therefore difficult to respond to the question definitively, but such saved sites cannot simply be endorsed “on the nod”; their likely deliverability must be properly considered otherwise the plan cannot properly be found sound.
- 1.33 It is considered that those sites listed in Appendix 2 of the Draft Local Plan should also be included within Appendix 7 of the Draft Local Plan. This would enable the assumed trajectories to be evidenced and tested robustly. Not to do so would be a failure to scrutinise part of the planned supply.

6: 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?

1.34 Yes, solely on the provision that the saved sites become a formal allocations within the Draft Local Plan. This approach has been taken elsewhere, such as the submitted Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council Local Plan Review which is currently in Examination.

7: What proportion of housing supply comes from the ‘saved sites’?

1.35 Our response to this Question is combined with our response to Question 8.

8: What proportion of the ‘saved sites’ have an extant planning permission and what is their level of contribution to the housing supply?

1.36 The Council’s Evidence Base¹¹ does not include a supply figure from ‘saved sites’ with a breakdown of what sites make the overall supply¹². Whilst some data is provided across several documents, detailed analysis has to be undertaken to piece together the total supply. The Council should provide this information in clear format to enable a robust review of the overall supply position.

1.37 Miller have undertaken a review of the data available and note that the Council suggest 2,639¹³ homes will come forward from 2021/22 to 2037/38 on saved SAMDev sites. This equates to circa 10% of the remaining requirement. The Housing Topic Paper (GC4i) sets out that the overall supply between 2016 – 2038 includes 8,769 completions between 2016/2017 – 2020/2021. However, no further details are provided as to how much of this figure is made up of saved SAMDev sites. It is therefore not currently possible to determine what percentage of the total emerging requirement¹⁴ is from saved allocations.

1.38 With regards to saved sites with extant planning permissions, the lead in time assumptions are considered to be overly ambitious and not robust, for example:

- Site ref. ‘BRID001, BRID020a & BRID020b’ - hybrid application pending (550 dwellings) submitted November 2021 trajectory forecasts delivery of 20 units 2023/24 (next year).
- Site ref. ‘CRAV003 & CRAV009’ (235 homes) no application at all to date yet development expected to commence 2024/25.
- Site ref. OSW004(117 homes) no application delivery assumed to start 2024/25.

¹¹ The Draft Local Plan Supply Statement (the ‘Supply Statement’) ref. *GC4j Five Year Supply Statement 2021 - Draft Shropshire Local Plan - EV048.07*, and the Housing Topic Paper ref. *GC4i Topic Paper - Housing*

¹² Adding the total saved sites listed in the Supply Statement makes 2,639 homes, whilst the Topic Paper (Figures 18 and 19 together) sum to 2,600 homes from saved sites.

¹³ Draft Shropshire Local Plan - EV048.07, and the Housing Topic Paper ref. *GC4i Topic Paper - Housing*

¹⁴ 30,800

- 1.39 The Council's evidence¹⁵ suggests 10 - 27 months is an appropriate period of time between 'Preparing and Application' to 'Build First Dwelling' this allows 2 - 3 months for determination. This does not reflect the time needed in many cases to determine planning applications.
- 1.40 Overall, considerable caution should be applied to assumed delivery of saved sites, not least because the justification and Evidence Base behind these allocations relates to a previous plan and is not before the Inspectors at this Examination. Given saved allocations make up more than 10% of the future supply, the Evidence Base underpinning the availability and deliverability of these sites needs to be updated and presented to justify the continued reliance on delivery from these sources. This is clearly relevant as many of these sites have not come forward to date despite being existing allocations.

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?

- 1.41 Policies SP5 and SP6 should be development management policies rather than strategic policies.
- 1.42 In response to SP6 point 2 and the reference to appropriate internal and external space standards, it is not clear what these standards would be and any policy seeking to incorporate Nationally Described Space Standards (NDSS) should only be undertaken in accordance with the NPPF (Paragraph 130 and Footnote 49).

16: Is the approach to development in the countryside, set out in Policy SP10, justified and effective and consistent with national planning policy? Should it be more flexible and less restrictive? Is the policy overly long and complicated and does some of it duplicate other policies? Would this policy be more effective as several shorter, targeted development management policies?

- 1.43 Policy SP10 "Managing Development in the Countryside" and S15.1 "Development Strategy Shifnal Town" will strictly control new housing development outside Development Boundaries, so development of safeguarded land would be at odds with these policies even if it were deemed necessary to deliver it during the plan period, especially if a policy mechanism were to be introduced which allowed the delivery of safeguarded land in specific circumstances, as we have requested. As such, SP10 should state that an exception to this strict control will be where there is a demonstrable need to deliver safeguarded land.

19: Is Policy SP14 justified effective and consistent with national policy? Should the corridors be marked on a map or plan? Is this policy consistent with other policies in the Local Plan? Is

¹⁵ Table 5 of the Supply Statement sets out a summary of the Council's assumptions on 'Standard' Lead-in Times in Shropshire

it the purpose of this policy to allow for significant growth in addition to that allocated in the Local Plan, including development in the Green Belt?

- 1.44 Miller support the purpose of this policy to enable Shropshire to respond positively to demand from new businesses attracted into the District as inward investment and note that the Council recognise that such inward investment needs to be supported by the delivery of new housing. The Policy is consistent with Policy SP2 and supporting text outlining the vision for the Plan, including a Paragraph 3.28.
- 1.45 Shifnal's inclusion in 'Strategic Corridor A: Eastern Belt M54/A5, A41/A464 and A4169/A458/A454' is noted, specifically the connection with significant employment opportunities at RAF Cosford and the Former Ironbridge Power Station.
- 1.46 As set out in our response to Question 3, Miller's site at South West Shifnal which is identified as safeguarded land, is a suitable location for a sustainable residential-led development that can assist with accommodating the sustainable growth of Shifnal as part of a Strategic Corridor. The site is in a sustainable location for residential development, immediately adjacent to a vibrant and highly sustainable settlement where demand clearly exists for further sustainable housing development and in close proximity to existing community facilities and services, which are easily accessible by non-car modes.
- 1.47 Given the strategic nature of the 'Strategic Corridors' it is considered that they should be included on the proposals map for the Draft Local Plan, to assist in the delivery of Policy SP14.

21: 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?

- 1.48 At present 16% of the minimum requirement is proposed to be made up from unidentified windfall sites. The Council is reliant on windfalls to meet a significant proportion of their minimum requirement. The trajectory includes 299dpa from the fourth year (2024/25) to 2037/38; a total of 4,186 homes. There needs to be compelling evidence¹⁶ that windfalls will provide a reliable source of supply, but this evidence is not available.
- 1.49 The residual¹⁷ housing requirement for each settlement is to be made up through windfall allowance¹⁸. In many areas significant numbers of dwellings are anticipated to come forward through windfall development rather than through identified allocations.
- 1.50 Instead of identifying where homes should be delivered based upon evidence to ensure a plan-led approach, a residual quantum is being identified and historic windfall delivery relied upon as a solution. This does not represent a positively prepared, plan-led approach .

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

- 1.51 Please refer to our responses to Questions 14 and 16 above.

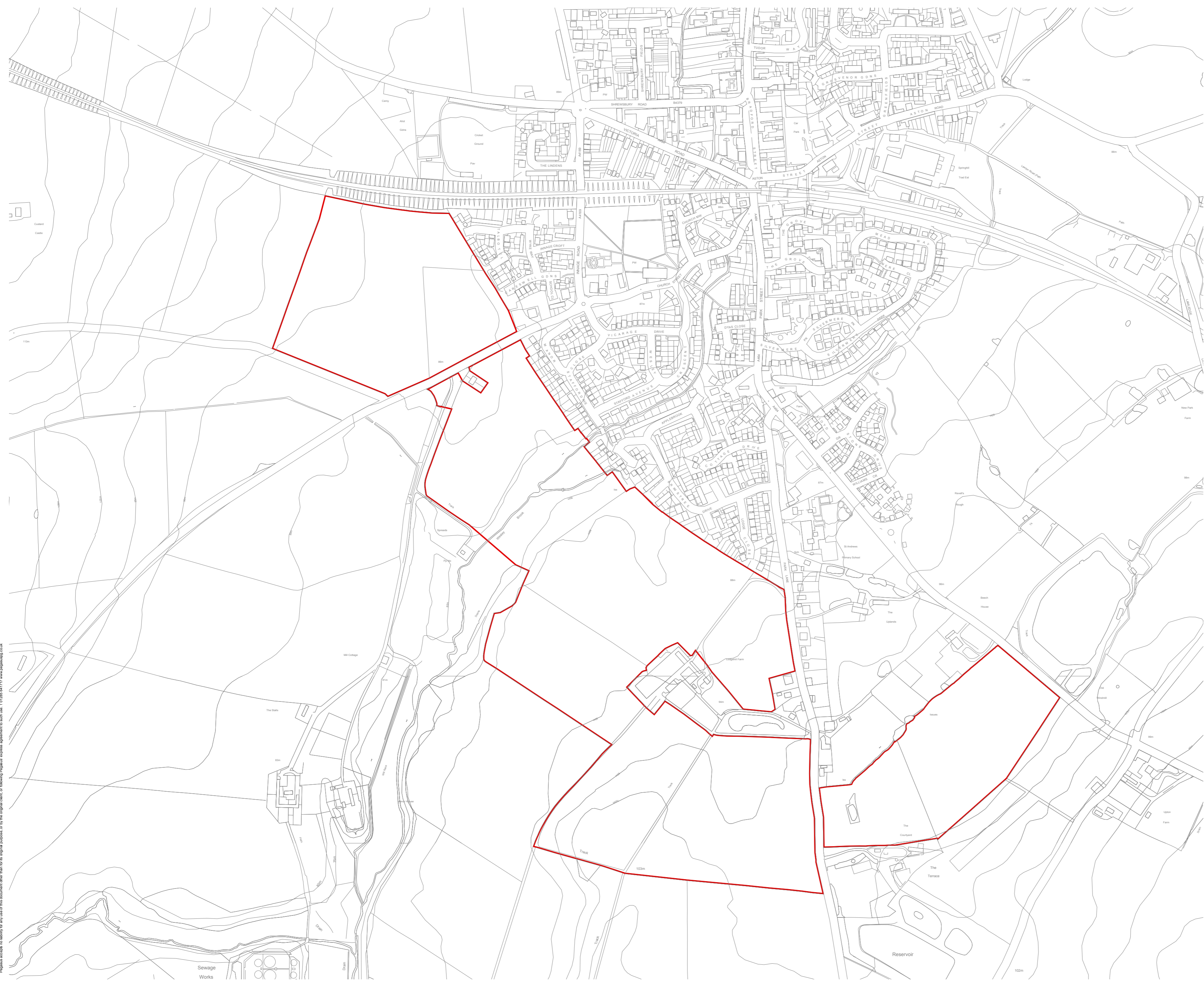
¹⁶ NPPF Paragraph 71

¹⁷ Once permissions and new and emerging allocated sites are accounted for

¹⁸ Appendix 5 of the Draft Local Plan SD002 - Draft Shropshire Local Plan

Appendix 1: Site Location Plan

KEY
Total Site Boundary
64.5 ha / 159.4 acres



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