

Hearing Statement for the Shropshire Council Local Plan Examination

Matter 4 – Employment Land Need, Requirement and Supply (policy SP2) – see MMs 001 -004

Statement on Behalf Bridgnorth Aluminium ref B-A310

ID 10

SHROPSHIRE LOCAL PLAN EXAMINATION

Representor Unique Part A Ref:	B-A310
Matter	4
Relevant Question No.s	1, 2 & 3

Stage II - Hearing Statement

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. Our client, Bridgnorth Aluminium, operates a large industrial site at Bridgnorth. The business has operated in the town since the 1950s and is a major employer in its own right as well as supporting a substantial number of jobs locally and indirectly across the County, within the wider region in supply chain, maintenance and associated businesses. The business undertakes casting, rolling and finishing operations at the site and produces over 100,000 tonnes of flat rolled aluminium products per annum and is considering expanding that capacity in the coming years to cover additional opportunities.
- 1.2. More than 90% of the products are exported to various customers in Europe, US, India and other global regions. Bridgnorth Aluminium is for certain products like lithographic coils for the printing industries one of the top market leaders. The business is serving into other key global markets like EV market, packaging sector, automotive, building and construction and other industries with further growing potential.
- 1.3. The business also undertakes R&D operations from the site. Bridgnorth Aluminium is committed to its operation in the town, from which it draws a highly experienced workforce, including specialist and engineering roles. The business has approximately 350 employees at the site in addition to other roles supported as part of the supply chain both in Bridgnorth and elsewhere within the County. Indeed, the business is constantly considering opportunities to diversify and expand its operations in order to secure its future and grow within the town and be an economic driver for the wider county.
- 1.4. The site is located to the south-east of Bridgnorth, to the east of the River Severn. Bounded to the west and north by the urban form of the town and to the south and east by the Green Belt.

2. Matter 4 – Employment Land Need, Requirement and Supply (policy SP2) – see MMs 001 -004

Question 1

Is the updated approach to the employment land requirement and supply set out in the Council’s Updated Housing and Employment Topic Paper – April 2024 (GC45) of minimum of 320 ha of employment land over the plan period of 2016 to 2038, justified, positively prepared and consistent with national policy?

- 2.1. As set out in our earlier representations and in response to Housing and Employment Topic Paper (GC45), Bridgnorth Aluminium has a number of concerns relating to the provision of employment land in the current iteration of the Plan.
- 2.2. As a well established major employer in the County and with plans to expand, it is concerning that no apparent consideration has been made of opportunities of Bridgnorth Aluminium to expand. The nature of a manufacturing requires land to be available adjacent to existing operations to avoid excessive handling of product and materials and excessive highways movements. Operators such as Bridgnorth Aluminium also rely on a highly skilled specialised workforce and associated, often co-located supply chain businesses, in this case located in and around Bridgnorth.
- 2.3. At present there is no allocation or safeguarded land adjacent to Bridgnorth Aluminium’s site onto which the business can expand.
- 2.4. The land allocated for employment development in the plan appears to focus on new employment sites onto which businesses could migrate to. While this offers an opportunity for operators which may operate from generic premises, there is limited opportunity for major industrial operators, such as Bridgnorth Aluminium, could relocate.
- 2.5. In addition, as highlighted elsewhere, the allotment of sites in Shifnall for employment land demand arising from the Black Country will undoubtedly increase competition for employment land in other areas, such as Bridgnorth.
- 2.6. As such, the lack of consideration of major employers and their ability to expand and the general lack of employment land opportunities across the County suggest that the Plan is not justified and cannot be considered to be positively prepared.

Question 2

What provision is made within the Plan to fulfil the identified unmet employment needs of the Black Country, and will the Plan’s approach be effective in addressing this sustainably within the plan period, in accordance with national policy?

- 2.7. The Council proposes allocating SHF018b & SHF018d – Land east of Shifnal Industrial Estate, Upton Lane specifically to meet the unmet employment needs arising from the Black Country [GC45 2.30] as required by the Inspectors in ID28.
- 2.8. Whilst using sites SHF018b and SHF018d to meet Black Country unmet need meets the request of the Inspectors, the failure to provide additional allocations or provide safeguarded land elsewhere in the County to meet the need of existing or new businesses arising in Shropshire will result in increased competition and inevitably for some businesses, such as Bridgnorth Aluminium, having insufficient land on which to develop and grow.

Question 3

Should the employment land requirement be also expressed in terms of the number of jobs expected to be provided?

- 2.9. This is for the Council to answer however it is suggested that a clear policy identifying the number of jobs to be supportive would aid clarity and assist in the monitoring of the efficacy of individual policies and allocations and the plan as whole.



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