SHROPSHIRE LOCAL PLAN EXAMINATION

Stage 2 Hearing Statement

Representor ID: B-A139 Representor: Harrow Estates

Matter: 26

All Employment Allocations (SHF018b &

SHF018d – Land east of Shifnal

Industrial Estate, Upton Lane, Shifnal)

Date: 20 September 2024



Matter 26 - All Employment Allocations (SHF018b & SHF018d – Land east of Shifnal Industrial Estate, Upton Lane, Shifnal)

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This examination Hearing Statement has been prepared by tor&co on behalf of Harrow Estates (Representor ID: B-A139) in respect of Matter 26 All Employment Allocations (SHF018b & SHF018d Land east of Shifnal Industrial Estate, Upton Lane, Shifnal), of the Shropshire Local Plan examination in public.
- 1.2 The comments made within this Statement respond directly to the questions set out in the Planning Inspectors Stage 2 Matters, Issues and Questions (ID40).
- 1.3 This Statement should be read in conjunction with the Harrow Estates Regulation 19 representations and Stage 1 Hearing Statements, and in the context of Harrow's land interests as set out in response to Matter 2. It is also supported by information from Stoford's: the 'Delivery Statement (June 2024)' submitted with the recent consultation on the Council's additional work; and 'Supplementary Update (September 2024)' attached to this Matter Statement. Both documents are also relevant for Matter 4.

2.0 Response to the Inspectors Questions

Question 1: What is the background to the site allocation? How was it identified and which options were considered?

- 2.1 In the draft Local Plan the preferred development strategy identifies that Shifnal will perform a significant role as a Key Centre. Therefore contributing towards the strategic growth objectives in the eastern part of the County. The Shropshire Employment Land Review also notes that it is expected that the market will continue to explore Shifnal as a preferred investment location in the M54 corridor.
- 2.2 The evidence base prepared to inform the draft Local Plan concluded that the town of Shifnal is a location that is particularly attractive to the employment market. This view was formed from both the Employment Land Review and the M54 Strategic Options Study, which note that based on available evidence Shifnal is an appropriate location for both local and strategic employment sites. The view is underscored by the recent and current demand for employment land, and lack of supply, in the area as set out in the evidence presented by Stoford, and further referenced below.
- 2.3 Further to this, to inform identification of the site or sites to accommodate the unmet employment land need from the Black Country, the Council undertook additional assessment work. Given that all but a small section of the eastern boundary of the County is located within the West Midlands Green Belt it wasn't unsurprising that the most appropriate site geographically is located within the Green Belt.
- 2.4 The Site identified is SHF018b & SHF018d (Land east of Shifnal Industrial Estate, Upton Lane, Shifnal), located on the edge of a sustainable, accessible settlement within the eastern area of the County, close to the border.

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- 2.5 The reasoning behind the identification of the Site is detailed between paragraphs 16.15 and 16.48 of the Updated Housing and Employment Topic Paper (GC45), as listed below, are considered sound and are strongly supported:
 - Role within the draft Shropshire Local Plan
 - Sustainability of the Settlement
 - Location
 - Connectivity
 - Scale of Development
 - Economic Growth Strategy
 - Proximity to Growth Sectors
 - Demand for Employment Sites
 - Opportunity to Support the Role of Shifnal
 - Supporting the Vision and Spatial Strategy of the Draft Local Plan
- 2.6 Given the Sites location within the Green Belt, consistent with the NPPF, all other reasonable alternatives were explored with appropriate and justifiable reasoning provided, as noted in the Updated Housing and Employment Land Topic Paper.
- 2.7 The approach taken by Shropshire Council as detailed in paragraphs 16.57 and 16.58 (GC45) is considered to be reasonable, justifiable and sound. In accordance with the NPPF, the strategy is an appropriate one, taking account of the reasonable alternatives and based on a proportionate evidence base.
- 2.8 It is not appropriate to comment on omission sites at this stage, or for such omission sites (considered within the Updated Additional Sustainability Appraisal as identified within paragraph 16.52 of the Updated Housing and Employment Topic Paper GC44) to be the subject of discussion. The benefits or otherwise of omission sites should not be promoted within either written or verbal representations to the Local Plan process. Indeed we understand that the Inspectors will not be discussing omission sites and will not allow parties to pursue points that they did not make at the Reg 19 stage in terms of site selection and allocation.

Question 2: What is the scale and type/mix of uses proposed?

- 2.9 Details relating to the delivery of the employment allocation are contained within the draft Local Plan, specifically within the Shifnal Place Plan Area at Schedule S15.1(ii). The scale of the allocation is identified as being 39ha with 15.6ha net developable area (50%) with no specific units sizes identified.
- 2.10 Moreover the draft Local Plan identifies the Site as a high quality campus style development primarily for Class B uses but with appropriate secondary employment uses and other ancillary uses.
- 2.11 Whilst the primary focus on Class B2 and B8 will ensure the strategic function of the proposed employment allocation, the further inclusion of Classes E(g)(i),(ii),(iii) will assist in the delivery of the policy objective of internalising the employment market within Shifnal.

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2.12 Harrow Estates therefore ask that Schedule S15.1(ii) be further modified to reflect increased flexibility in national policy and legislation relating to employment land uses, including to make provision for modern-day industries i.e. to include Class E(g)(i),(ii),(iii) uses to more closely reflect the provisions of strategic employment policy SP13. It is noted, as identified within the Statement of Common Ground between the two parties, that the Council do not disagree with this proposed modification.

Question 3: What is the basis for this and is it justified?

- 2.13 The Site can serve some of the employment needs of Shropshire, being located adjacent to the existing settlement of Shifnal; a settlement that is well positioned within the spatial strategy. The location of the allocation, being to the east of Shropshire, is also well connected to the Black Country.
- 2.14 The location of growth corridors and strategic accessibility routes, including key road and rail routes to the Black Country and through Shropshire, as well as the availability of a nearby resident labour force and supportive services and facilities, demonstrate that the allocation of this land at Shifnal can deliver significant benefits and provides for a sustainable pattern of development that no other alternative site can provide.
- 2.15 The specific employment uses on the Site and details of size and form of units are purposely not over specified within the draft Local Plan. This allows full flexibility to allow the Site to be responsive the both local and strategic employment demands.
- 2.16 The development of this Site, as per the policy requirements, will be in accordance with a masterplan and design code prepared in consultation with the public and Shropshire Council. The Site's layout and design will respond to any identified landscape, visual or any other potential effects and considerate allowing the inclusion of appropriate mitigation.

Question 4: What is the current planning status of the site in terms of planning applications, planning permissions and completions / construction?

- 2.17 Harrow Estates has control over the land which is subject to the employment allocation. Control over the land is achieved via a promotional agreement with the Ruckley Estate, as the landowner. Additionally, Harrow Estates and Ruckley Estate have signed a development agreement with Stoford, one of the UK's leading commercial development companies.
- 2.18 Stoford will deliver the site, their role as Development Partner includes development design and subsequent funding for the site wide infrastructure works. Stoford have been promoting and developing employment development schemes through the UK and have delivered new commercial floorspace for a number of occupiers across Telford, the Black Country and within the wider Staffordshire area.

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- 2.19 As noted in the Shifnal Delivery Statement which was submitted as part of the representations to the updated evidence consultation in June 2024, Stoford consider that "an outline planning application would be prepared to secure the principles of development along with details of access, and this would serve to offer confidence in terms of delivery timescales to occupiers with whom Stoford are having early conversations, occupiers have expressed interest in buildings between 30,000 and 250,000sqft."
- 2.20 Within the Shifnal Delivery Statement, Stoford also provide an indicative timetable for progression of an application, which is detailed in the response to Question 10 below.

Question 5: What are the benefits that the proposed development would bring?

- 2.21 The location and scale of the allocation enables a contribution towards meeting both elements of need: part to meet the needs of Shropshire (9 ha) and part to meet the unmet needs of the Black Country (30 ha). There is demand for employment provision at Shifnal; with access to rail, the strategic highway network and a local labour force within the town.
- 2.22 Further, there is significant advantage in co-locating such local and strategic employment provision, widening market demand, flexibility, and increasing development efficiencies to deliver modern day commercial facilities within a high quality development, including buildings, infrastructure and grounds.
- 2.23 The allocation represents a sound and deliverable strategy for employment growth at Shifnal, and within Shropshire more generally, which can balance the needs of the town and contribute towards realising the strategic economic objectives of the draft Local Plan. These objectives include assisting with meeting the Black Country's unmet employment needs.
- 2.24 Strategic development can have a local impact / benefit, whilst local developments combined can have a strategic benefit. Development of the site at Shifnal doesn't have to be mutually exclusive in terms of meeting either local employment or strategic (Black Country) employment needs.
- 2.25 Shifnal offers a source of local labour, and locating land adjacent to the settlement can assist in the provision of local sustainable and accessible job opportunities. Shifnal also provides a range of local services and facilities, which would help to service the commercial environment without the need to travel far, thus further enhancing the sustainability of Shifnal as a location for growth. In short, provision to meet both elements of employment needs can draw on the services provided in Shifnal and support its role as a Key Centre, supporting the clear overall vision and strategy of the plan.
- 2.26 The town is sustainable and together with the delivery of the Site and additional housing support for existing and provision of new associated services and infrastructure will further enhance the sustainability of Shifnal.

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2.27 The upgrading of the local electricity network to ensure adequate capacity to ensure power to the employment allocation will benefit the town of Shifnal as a whole. Whilst through the strengthened eastern boundary and its green infrastructure links through the site will also function as a permeable network and boundary facilitating pedestrian access for the site employees and the Shifnal community for amenity, leisure and recreation purposes. This will create a parkland character within and around the site to help bring the recreational opportunities of the Green Belt closer to the local community as an outcome of the proposed development.

Question 6: What are the potential adverse impacts of developing the site? How could they be mitigated?

- 2.28 Clearly there will be harm to the landscape and character of the site, as there would with any development on greenfield land. However, the impacts would be limited and localised, particularly with the provision of structural landscaping to soften the development edge and create a strong revised Green Belt boundary, as shown on the indicative masterplan for the site. This ability to deliver structural landscaping will also assist with the delivery of biodiversity net gain.
- 2.29 A masterplan-led approach is the most appropriate and effective method in achieving the sustainable development of the site and to effectively mitigate any harm to the Green Belt. This accords with the guidance contained within the Shropshire Council's revised Green Belt Release Exceptional Circumstance Statement.
- 2.30 A structural landscaping strategy and enhancement of the Green and Blue Infrastructure within the site, through enhancement of the existing eastern woodland belts and provision of new SUDs features towards the south-east of the Site will establish new defensible and permanent boundaries to the Green Belt. This will also aid in mitigating harm as a result of the sites release from the Green Belt.
 - Question 7: How is the site affected by flood risk? How has this been taken into account in allocating the site? How have the sequential and, if necessary, exception tests been applied?
- 2.31 The Site is not subject to flood risk, being located within Flood Zone 1, which has the lowest probability of flooding from rivers and the sea. Whilst only small areas are potentially subject to low and medium levels of surface water.
- 2.32 A Sustainable Urban Drainage System will be implemented on the Site, the details of which will be determined through the planning application stage, informed by technical assessment and investigation.
- 2.33 The policy wording and requirements establish an appropriate framework for the delivery of the allocation and sustainably manage drainage considerations. This includes provisions relating to the Source Protection Zone and the existing pumping station and the sensitivity around the north-west corner of the allocation.

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Question 8: What are the infrastructure requirements/costs and are there physical or other constraints to development? How would these be addressed?

Electricity Supply

2.34 There is a requirement to deliver upgrades to the local electricity network to ensure adequate capacity to ensure power to the employment allocation at Shifnal East. Mechanisms for the delivery of these upgrades should be determined through the master-planning / planning application process. Deliverability of these upgrades will also be of benefit of Shifnal.

Upton Lane Interventions

- 2.35 The primary access into the employment allocation will be via Stanton Road from the existing junction with Upton Lane. This sole entrance into the site and delivery of the allocation will exhibit enhancements to the highway and junction to ensure safe vehicular and HGV movements.
- 2.36 The provisions contained in relation to downgrades to Upton Lane viaduct are supported and this is reflected in the masterplan produced for the employment allocation. Details in the implementation and management of the downgrades will be achieved via the master-planning process. These downgrades will comprise part of a wider mobility and connectivity strategy for the employment allocation and its immediate context within Shifnal East.

Access

- 2.37 Generation of HGV movements from the Site will be directed away from Shifnal town centre, as outlined in the Transport Assessment, with all traffic manoeuvred eastwards on Stanton Road towards Junction 3 of the M54. This will be achieved via a routing agreement. The same assessment establishes that there is significant reserve capacity on the junctions along Stanton Road as well as Junction 3 of the M54, but this will be subject to further consultation with National Highways.
- 2.38 Indeed the West Midlands Strategic Employment Sites Study 2023/24, which has recently been published, identifies Junction 3 of the M54 as having a junction capacity of 100% (Table 11.3).
- 2.39 Initial investigative work has taken place in relation to the Stanton Road / Newport Road junction. This work has confirmed that improvements to the junction, or the creation of a roundabout, if necessary, can be accommodated, within the highway boundary. Notwithstanding the highway interventions required at the Upton Lane / Stanton Road junction, these can be achieved through a more detailed analysis at the master-planning stage.
- 2.40 The employment allocation at Shifnal East is appropriate in highways terms, safe and suitable access can be achieved and the development will not result in unacceptable impacts on the highway network.

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Green Belt Boundary and Enhancement

2.41 Sufficient land is available within the proposed allocation to provide structural landscaping to the eastern boundary to create a robust boundary to the Green Belt. This would be provided though the introduction of new planting to complement the existing hedges / trees, and small woodland, which form the existing boundary.

Question 9: Is the site realistically viable and deliverable?

- 2.42 Whilst the primary focus on Class B2 and B8 will ensure the strategic function of the proposed employment allocation, the further inclusion of Classes E(g)(i),(iii) will assist in the delivery of the policy objective of internalising the employment market within Shifnal.
- 2.43 The scale of allocation at 39ha provides opportunities for a range of units types and sizes to be accommodated within the Site. As noted in the Stoford Shifnal Delivery Statement the range of opportunity available provides more flexibility to respond to market signals and flexible plots sizes. These in turn can be sub divided should smaller plots be desired to meet local needs.
- 2.44 Based on Stoford's experience of delivering strategic employment land in addition to a range of premises within the Black Country (evidenced within the previously submitted Delivery Statement), has given Stoford the confidence to become a Development Partner for the Site.
- 2.45 Based on market knowledge, previous experience in relation to development costs and timeframes for delivery there is confidence that the Site is viable and deliverable. This position is further supported by the additional information provided by Stoford and appended to our Matter 4 Statement.
- 2.46 As an experienced developer, Stoford have considered the draft allocation and local highway network as part of early technical work with their design team. They consider that there are options for delivering necessary infrastructure which would serve the development and can be delivered early within the construction phases.

Question 10: What is the expected timescale and rate of development and is this realistic?

2.47 Whilst the site has yet to be formally marketed, Stoford have already received encouraging occupier interest for a variety of buildings and have highlighted an existing shortfall of employment land availability in the area, with existing employment sites / allocations already developed, occupied or reserved.

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- 2.48 Harrow Estates, with the assistance of Stoford are keen to progress with the site and have provided (June 2024) an indicative timeline, albeit it is dependent upon the adoption of the Local Plan:
 - January to March 2025: Inspectors report
 - Summer 2025: Local Plan adoption / Commence active marketing
 - Autumn 2025: Submission of planning application
 - End of 2025: Planning permission secured
 - June 2026: Secure infrastructure delivery
 - Autumn 2026: Commence development of floorspace
- 2.49 It remains the intention of Harrow Estates and Stoford to work positively and proactively with the Council, and submit a planning application once the current draft allocation has been formalised. The timeline presented above, and within the Stoford Delivery Statement is therefore flexible.
- 2.50 However, given the lack of available land for employment purposes, with limited a supply remaining to be progressed or without planning permission it may be likely that the above timetable is accelerated.

Question 11: Is the boundary of the site appropriate? Is there any justification for amending the boundary?

- 2.51 The indicative masterplan is considered to have demonstrated the potential for a deliverable layout. It indicates a comprehensive development with a central access point between the two parcels with a complementary verdant landscaping scheme. The approach taken to the indicative master-planning of the employment sites is strongly influenced by its landscaping response. The indicative layout has been guided by the specific characteristics and form of the site including its existing strong boundaries and/or ability to define boundaries clearly, as well as responding to the "campus-style" layout as required within the Draft Local Plan.
- 2.52 The site is defined by existing strong boundaries, with the railway line to the south, Stanton road to the north and existing field boundaries to the west and the majority of the east, including small areas of woodland. Where the proposed allocation boundary crosses an agricultural field this boundary will reintroduce an historic field line also being a continuation of the field boundary to the south, providing a clear, well defined and obvious line.
- 2.53 Sufficient land is available within the proposed allocation to provide structural landscaping to the eastern boundary to create a robust boundary to the Green Belt though the introduction of new planting to complement the existing hedges / trees, and small woodland, which form the existing boundary.

Question 12: Are the detailed policy requirements effective, justified and consistent with national policy?

2.54 In conclusion the justification and policy requirements are considered to be sound, justified and effective. They are consistent with national policy, including the July 2021 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

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- 2.55 Within her first Ministerial Statement, the Secretary of State reiterated that the Government's manifesto had been clear; and she stated "that sustained economic growth is the only route to improving the prosperity of our country and the living standards of working people."
- 2.56 The proposed allocation of SHF018b & SHF018d Land east of Shifnal Industrial Estate, Upton Lane, Shifnal clearly meets the requirements for economic growth through the provision of new investment and employment opportunities and the associated positive impacts that these bring.

Draft Shropshire Local Plan

Consultation Response
Shifnal Delivery Statement – Supplementary Update (September 2024)

Harrow Estates Produced by Stoford – Development Partner



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SHIFNAL EAST | S54, Shifnal, Shropshire

Harrow Estates | Supplementary Update SEPTEMBER 2024

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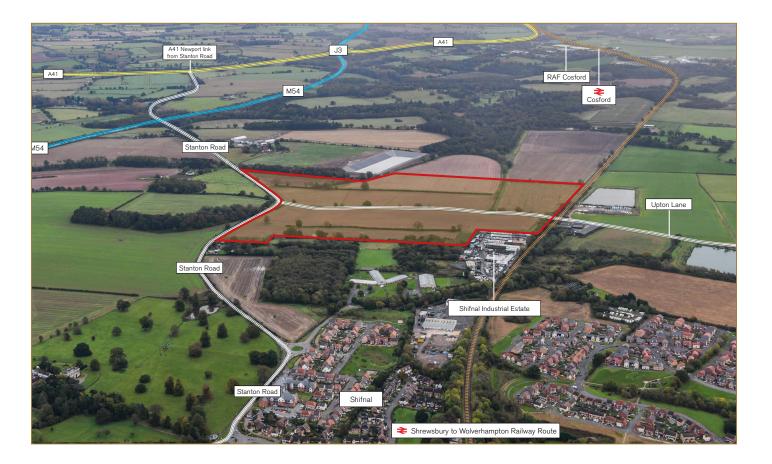
SEPTEMBER 2024

Introduction

This Supplementary Update has been prepared and should be read alongside the Delivery Statement (June 2024) that accompanied Harrow's consultation response to the additional material and was submitted in June 2024.

This Supplementary Update accompanies Harrow's Matters Statements that have been submitted for the upcoming Autumn Examination sessions.

Since the submission of the Delivery Statement, Main Modifications have been published by the Council. Within this Update, we comment on these in so far as how they relate to our opportunity to be Harrow's Development Partner and the delivery of the allocation at S54.



Planning Reform

The Inspectors have issued a Note, dated 19 August 2024, confirming that they will continue to examine the Local Plan against the July 2021 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). It will be for a future Local Plan review to consider the implications that might arise from a revised NPPF and Revised Standard Methodology for calculating housing numbers.

Alongside the Government's proposed changes to the NPPF that are currently the subject of public consultation, a Ministerial Statement was issued on 30 July 2024. This is capable of being a material consideration – (see Cala Homes 2011, EWCA Civ 639 Case no. C1/2011/0297).

Within her first Ministerial Statement, the Secretary of State reiterated that the Government's manifesto had been clear; and she stated;

'that sustained economic growth is the only route to improving the prosperity of our country and the living standards of working people.' [our underlining]

There can be no single sentence that can make the point clearer. Economic growth, and therefore the delivery of new employment, investment and jobs, is at the heart of securing prosperity for this country. Our proposals to deliver new employment floorspace at Shifnal are on equal footing with the Ministerial Statement. At this stage, there are no firm proposals for the nature of what type of employment development might be delivered on site. It is notable that within the Ministerial Statement that commercial development is seen positively.

"With respect to commercial development, the Government is determined to do more to support those sectors which will be the engine of the UK's economy in the years ahead. We will therefore change policy to make it easier to build growth-supporting infrastructure such as laboratories, gigafactories, data centres, electricity grid connections and the networks that support freight and logistics."

Stoford's recent developments within the Black Country - (the needs of which this site will also support) have delivered on these growth sectors with schemes at Pantheon Park; ERA Home Security, i54; and Moog, i54 Wolverhampton. There are opportunities for a variety of sectors to be delivered within the S54 site and this will be led by market/occupier interest at the time of a planning application being made.







SEPTEMBER 2024

Inspectors Matters, Issues & Questions

The following considerations are offered in respect of 'Matter 26 Employment Allocations' and the questions in so far as they relate to SHF108b and SHF108d, Land East of Shifnal Industrial Estate, Upton Lane, Shifnal. We also comment on the proposed modification MM109.

Background to the allocation

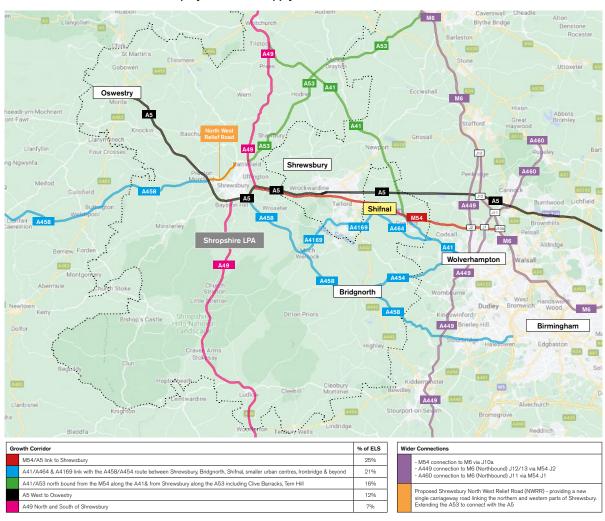
The Inspectors request details relating to the background to the site's allocation, how it was identified and what options were considered. The updated Housing and Employment Topic Paper, GC45 (paragraphs 16.10 to 16.13, and 16.49 onwards) set out the Council's response to this question. Stoford concur that the location of Shifnal, being to the east of the County, is ideally suited to accommodate the proposed contribution to the unmet employment need forecast to arise in the Black Country. This reference to the site location and the Black Country needs, now forms part of the policy text at pages 260-262 of the Local Plan (MM109) and is fully supported.

Shifnal is a Key Centre and identified as a focus for investment, employment and housing. Shifnal is a location that is well located in terms of accessibility to the Black Country, as the diagram here shows. In addition, Shifnal is noted within Examination Document GC45, as a locations that is sustainable and benefits from a range of services, facilities and infrastructure. The July 2021 NPPF notes that Plans should be prepared with the objective of contributing to the achievement of sustainable development and therefore allocating land to serve both local and Black Country needs here is appropriate.

The geographic proximity of Shifnal is particularly important in providing an appropriate location for the provision of a contribution in Shropshire to the unmet need forecast to arise from the Black

Country. The connectivity shown for both road and rail links on this diagram illustrates this point. Thus, the objectives of sustainable development are also supported as a result of the rail links and bus routes available (e.g. service number 891 between Wolverhampton and Shifnal).

Shifnal - Growth Corridors and Employment Land Supply (ELS)



Scale, Type and Mix of Proposed Uses

The scale of allocation at 39ha provides opportunities for a range of units to be accommodated within the site. Paragraph 16.32 and 16.33 of GC45 also concurs that larger sites are generally better able to meet the needs of those seeking employment land within the Black Country market. The range of opportunity available provides more flexibility to respond to market signals and flexible plots sizes. These in turn can be sub divided should smaller plots be desired to potentially meet local needs too.

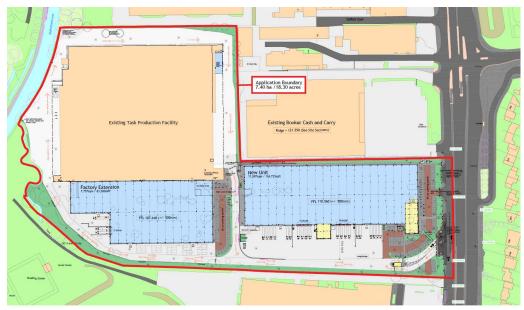


Sandvik | Halesowen | Completed Building

Examples of Site Layout & Design



Sandvik | Halesowen | Site Layout



Task | Wolverhampton | Site Layout



Task | Wolverhampton | CGI



West Midlands Ambulance Service | Oldbury | Site Layout



West Midlands Ambulance Service | Oldbury | CGI

Benefits Arising and Mitigation for Development Impacts



Location served by bus connections into Shifnal and Black Country



Shifnal Rail Station (with Black Country connections) located within cycling distance



Excellent strategic road connections with opportunities for off site improvements



Proximity to growth sector locations e.g. RAF Cosford, i54 and t54



Attractive market location



Scale of site can serve a range of future occupier needs



Green infrastructure to be integrated within the masterplan to mitigate for visual impacts



Opportunities for structural planting to strengthen site boundaries shared with the Green Belt



Opportunities for off site highways improvements to mitigate for development traffic

Infrastructure

The scale of allocation, at 39 hectares lends the development to highway improvements where Stanton Lane meets the A41. Technical work will be deployed to design improvements that serve a variety of travel modes and ensure the safe and effective operation of the development. As an experienced developer, Stoford have considered the draft allocation site and local highway network as part of early technical work with our design team and consider that there are options for delivering necessary infrastructure. This would be required to serve the development and thus can be delivered early within the construction phases.

Viability, Deliverability and Timescales

Stoford's experience of delivering strategic employment land and in addition, a range of premises within the Black Country (evidenced within our Delivery Statement, but including West Midlands Ambulance Service, Moog at i54, Sandvik at Halesowen, and locally in Telford for Portion Solutions) gives Stoford the confidence associated with market knowledge, development costs and timeframes for delivery. An indicative timeline is included within our Delivery Statement that presents a Plan led proposal that could commence development within 12-18 months of the Local Pan being adopted. It remains our intention to work positively with Harrow Estates and the Council, and submit a planning application once the current draft allocation has been formalised. The timeline presented within our Delivery Statement is therefore flexible.

SEPTEMBER 2024

Contact Us



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