

**Shropshire Local Plan Review Examination**

**Stage 2: Matters, Issues and Questions**

**Matter 22: Shrewsbury Place Plan Area**

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**Hearing Statement on behalf of Mr J Lovegrove-Fielden**

**Wednesday 27 November 2024**

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**1.0 Introduction**

1.1 The ISSUE posed by the Inspectors in relation to Matter 22 is

*“Whether the proposed Place Plan Area and site allocations within it are justified, effective and consistent with national planning policy.”*

1.2 This Statement is prepared in order to set out the position of Mr Lovegrove-Fielden (the Representor) with regard to the proposals in the Draft Local Plan (Policy S.16.2) as far as they relate to development in Longden are concerned.

1.3 The Inspectors will recall that representations were made at the Regulation 19 stage of the Local Plan process and at the time of the Stage 1 Examination. Representations on the effect of Policies SP2, SP7, SP8 and SP10 have already been made at the Stage 2 Examination Hearing in relation to Matter 2, the proposed development strategy for the County.

**2.0 Policy S16.2: Bridgnorth Place Plan**

2.1 The main concern expressed earlier in this Hearing in relation to the proposed development strategy is that the proposal to designate Longden as a Community Hub is unsound, as the basis for that designation is a “points scoring” system which does not reflect accurately or flexibly the situation in any particular village and does not allow for changes in that situation within the Plan period. Longden just achieved the necessary points total to become a Community Hub because of a once-a-fortnight visit by a mobile library. Longden does not, now, have the appropriate number of points to meet the total necessary for designation as a Community Hub, because it has lost a number of services in the very recent past. This situation has developed since the Stage 1 Hearing, and there is no evidence to show that the additional dwellings

proposed by Shropshire Council for Longden will mean that the facilities lost will be resuscitated should all the dwellings be constructed. Thus, the village is now, already, less sustainable than it might have been two years ago, and if the lost facilities are not replaced but the development proposed in the Plan takes place, the village will become even more unsustainable. This is not what the Local Plan seeks to achieve or what the National Planning Policy Framework (paragraph 16) indicates that Plan-makers should be seeking to achieve.

- 2.2 Longden is a small village and has, over the life of the current development plan, shown itself willing to accept small scale developments, whilst having to fend off proposals for larger scale suburban estate-type residential developments on its periphery. The community has been largely successful in this approach, and see no reason to alter its current situation, which is one element in a Community Cluster along with a number of other smaller nearby villages.
- 2.3 Policy S.16.2.2 says that, within the identified Community Hubs, new residential development will be delivered through,
- a) any identified saved SAMDev sites,
  - b) any identified Local Plan residential allocations,
  - c) appropriate small-scale windfall developments within the settlement boundary.

In Longden there are no saved SAMDev sites, no new residential allocations, and as yet, no Neighbourhood Plan, and so all the proposed new development (50 dwellinghouses) will have to come from windfall sites. Mr Lovegrove-Fielden is not aware of any capacity study that has been undertaken by the Council that would assure that land is available within the proposed development boundary of the village to provide such a level of windfall development.

- 2.4 The designation of Longden as a Community Hub will also have an effect on the surrounding villages, that are, at present, elements of a Community Cluster with Longden. None of these settlements has been designated as a Community Cluster village in Policy S.16.3 of the Draft Local Plan and thus will not qualify for any new residential development as they will be regarded, as indicated in paragraph 5.240, as being situated in "countryside" where new development will be strictly controlled in accordance with Policy SP10 and national policies, and so another source of development sites will be removed from the Plan.

### **3.0 Conclusion**

- 3.1 Mr Lovegrove-Fielden, then, is concerned, quite apart from the issues he identified in the Hearing into Matter 2 on the 16 October, that the designation of Longden as a Community Hub will lead to pressure from developers to build on land immediately outside the development boundary proposed for the village in the Draft Local Plan, and that the land that was the subject of earlier development proposals which were supported by the Council's Officers but, happily, refused by the Council's decision-makers and also resisted on appeal, will become the subject of fresh proposals. This will be especially the case if it proves to be difficult to accommodate the level of housing proposed in the Draft Plan within the development boundary. Most of the sites proposed earlier were again put forward as being suitable for development, by the landowners, in the Council's SLAA exercise. They were rejected by the Council at

that stage in the process, but the Longden community is well aware that they could resurface. Such development would certainly adversely affect the visual character and setting of the settlement as they would undoubtedly be of a suburban nature and would unsettle the balance that exists in the existing community.

#### **4.0 Questions posed by the Inspectors**

4.1 Longden, although designated a Community Hub has no allocated sites. That means that all the dwellings allocated to the village (50) will have to come from windfall development. That is going to be difficult to achieve given the nature of the village and the very tight development boundary shown in the Draft Local Plan.

4.2 The Representor, then, is unable to make any comments in answer to the questions posed by the Inspectors. The 'site' to be discussed as far, as he is concerned, is the designated area of the village as a Community Hub which, he believes, is not justified, will not be an effective means of making the village more sustainable and is thus not in compliance with national policy.