

St Martins Parish Council

St Martins Village Hall, Overton Road, St Martins SY11 3AY

Kerry Trueman
Pendragon House
1 Bertram Drive
Wirral
CH47 0LG

05 August 2024

via email: programme.officer@shropshire.gov.uk

Re: Examination of Shropshire Local Plan - Stage 2

Dear Ms Trueman

On behalf of all Councillors of St Martins Parish Council, we thank you for providing the various documents associated with our Local Plan and I now formally write to you to give our views and response to the above matter, and specifically to:

Document ID40....Stage 2.

Then to Page 14 of that document, where it identifies 2 sites at our location:-
SMH031 – Land east of Moors Bank, St Martins
SMH038 – Former Ifton Heath Primary School, St Martins

I would note that the SMH038 development has already occurred, is virtually completed and yet, despite massive publicity, with just a small number of houses purchased. It surely brings into question whether our location is indeed suitable for any additional housing or simply mirrors the well-publicised fact of the decline in demand for new housing. Notwithstanding that lateral detail, it should be removed from the document as being no longer relevant.

Now to SMH031: The Parish Council unanimously opposes any development of that site, under the following reasons:

Our village (now acknowledged as the largest in Shropshire) has seen extensive expansion over the past decade and to such a level where our village population now exceeds the criterion for consideration to become registered as a provincial Town.

Despite that massive growth, our core infrastructure has not developed or improved to match the housing and population growth.

Key Points:

The public drainage system remains at what was installed 100 years ago. We endure continual flooding of roads and properties along our main thoroughfare called 'Overton Road'.

Furthermore, a recent village episode showed that there is complete confusion between Dwr-Cymru/Welsh Water and Shropshire Council as to "who is responsible" for some areas of basic water management, with both parties apportioning responsibility to the other, resulting in overall inaction and paralysis.

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It should also be noted that THE main flooding area on Overton Road is exactly located at the anticipated site entrance point which, despite representation to Dwr-Cymru/Welsh Water and Shropshire Council, is unresolved (my above comment refers).

Our local school has reached maximum capacity and does not have the physical land-space for further expansion. This problem is already identified in our Shropshire 'Place Plan' document under code ref 1183.

By this inability to grow, it is clearly in direct conflict with the latest government demands that “any expansion of housing should incorporate access to Schools”.

Its present maximum level of pupils negatively impacts on parental delivery and collection of children due to the lack of parking facilities and results in the Overton Road becoming gridlocked at pupil delivery and collection times, with cars parked along roadsides, grass verges and the sole school bus stop and which in itself causes major Health & Safety issues.

This will be further impacted as the only possible access and egress from the identified land will be virtually opposite the school gateway and will, inevitably, cause even more traffic chaos. This problem is already identified in our Shropshire 'Place Plan' document under code ref 1361.

Despite extensive discussions over many months with a variety of possible partners, there is NO medical facility within the village. Our nearest location is over the border into Wales at Chirk village. However, it is known and accepted that, on a pure financial basis, the Welsh Health Authority is quietly resisting providing access and services to patients from an address in England. This problem is also already identified in our Shropshire 'Place Plan' document under ref code 1184.

Furthermore, there is no appropriate public transport service to allow patients from St Martins to access treatment in Chirk, even if they can gain an appointment.

Whilst some medical service is achievable in our nearby town of Oswestry, most surgeries are at capacity and again, public transport is haphazard due to the decline in that service facility. One could argue for patients to use their own vehicles (contrary to published Shropshire policy) but that also causes a problem as there is simply not enough patient parking space at any of the Oswestry surgeries; these points will then be inevitably impacted by the anticipated growth in demand resulting from already agreed housing schemes within the town itself.

By this inability to provide medical provision, it is clearly in direct conflict with the latest government demands that “any expansion of housing should incorporate access to GP Surgeries”.

The main road into our village (B5070) from the A5 road at Gledrid Roundabout, is exactly the same dimensions as it was in the 1950's. It is a winding narrow thoroughfare and across an ancient single-vehicle bridge, where traffic pays little attention to the regulatory signage demanding 'give way one vehicle only' and resulting in 'near misses' on a minute-by-minute basis.

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As this is the main employment outlet road from and into the village, extra vehicular use will therefore simply compound the problem. Again, this problem is already identified in our Shropshire 'Place Plan' document under ref code 1179.

Sadly, there is NO childcare facility within the village and, to our knowledge, no intention for same to be considered, identified or provided.

Finally, despite our best efforts by working alongside our County Council, we find it impossible to provide enough recreational land space for the present population and therefore, any expansion will simply compound that failure in our provision of public amenities. Yet again, this problem is already identified in our Shropshire 'Place Plan' document under code ref 1182.

By this inability to provide this facility, it is clearly in direct conflict with the latest government demands that "any expansion of housing should incorporate increased access to Green Spaces".

You will see that these issues have been identified (for some time) and yet, SMH031 seems to be considered without reference to the existing problems. Indeed, such would be the enormous financial cost of overcoming the identified issues, balanced against the perilous financial position of Shropshire Council, it would seem both sensible and logical to agree that the demanded upgrade of infrastructure will NEVER occur and any new housing development will simply exacerbate the present crisis-to-crisis management battle we witness with increasing regularity.

Indeed, as identified within this response, it is patently clear that in the development of this site, it would be impossible to match the clear demands imposed from central Government when identifying possible areas of housing expansion.

It is acknowledged and accepted that there is a focus on providing extra housing across the UK and including the county of Shropshire; but site SMH031 should not be one of those locations.

We therefore give our absolute resistance and opposition to SMH031 and sincerely trust that the reviewing officers understand our critical points and that the identified land will now be wholeheartedly excluded from the Local Plan.

Yours sincerely

George Smith

George Smith MBE MSc
Chairman
St Martins Parish Council