

Draft Shropshire Local Plan, Examination in Public Part 2.

This submission is made by a former Shropshire Councillor for Much Wenlock - 2013-2021. I am making this submission on site allocation and capacity as I remain concerned that earlier submissions have not yet received the attention they justify. I am broadly supportive of the submissions advanced by the Much Wenlock Civic Society, Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan Refresh Group and that of Mr Howard Horsley who has summarised his expert study of the flood risks affecting Much Wenlock.

I continue to have the following concerns.

Anticipated scale of development

The documentation from Shropshire Council does not support the allocation of an additional site, MUW012VAR, to meet local need or county set targets for housing.

Appendix 5: "Residential Development Guidelines and Residential Supply" shows that the Key Centre of Much Wenlock has a Residential Development Guideline of 200. Residential Completions (2016/17, 2017/18 and 2018/19) total 32, Sites with Planning Permission or Prior Approval (as at 31st March 2019) total 21, there is a Local Plan Allocation of 120 and Windfall Allowance of 27. *[Shropshire Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan 2016 to 2038 - July 2020 - Page 328]*

Appendix 7: "Forecast of Delivery Timescales for Local Plan Allocations" shows that MUW012VAR "Land adjoining the Primary School and Hunters Gate, Much Wenlock" in the Much Wenlock Place Plan Area has a residential guideline of 120 with delivery over the short to medium term. *[Shropshire Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan 2016 to 2038 - July 2020 - Page 337]*

The impact of this development along with the Buildwas (Ironbridge Power Station) development (1,075) will be exacerbated by windfall development in Much Wenlock which is certain to exceed 27. Apart from the single plots, there are some small multi-unit developments with consent (e.g. Scoltocks Yard in Station Road, Foresters Court in Farley Road). More significantly, there are three sites within the development boundary namely Smithfield Works, "Builders Yard, New Road" and Bridge House.

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The Smithfield Works and Builders Yard sites are within very short and level reach with all Town's facilities. These brownfield sites would have the added advantage over greenfield sites inasmuch as, if developed the impermeable surfaces would be removed, at least in part, and SUDS features constructed. They currently have a tendency to shed every drop of rain falling on them, thus producing excess run-off down the A4169 in the direction of the A458.

The indicative aggregate capacity of these three sites is 46 plots. Importantly, the capacity would be considerably more if one or more of the sites was developed for "retirement living" providing single level dwelling over maybe three storeys. There is acknowledged unmet demand for this form of dwelling in a town where the age profile is above average.

Although the accommodation provided by park homes does not feature in the Local Plan Review, the impact of their proximity to Much Wenlock will be keenly felt. The freehold of "Presthope Grange", the former Presthope railway station caravan site, was sold by auction by Shropshire Council in 2011. On planning appeal it was concluded that the Shropshire Council had granted an Lawful Development Certificate "for use as a caravan site without restriction on the type of caravan or permanent occupation of said caravans." It is marketed as "this exquisite hillside development is only five minutes from the idyllic market town of Much Wenlock." The supermarket and doctors surgery and pharmacy are identified as key selling points. It is hard to know the ultimate capacity of the development but there are at least 70 people already resident there.

For the above reasons the allocation of the additional site MUW012VAR, a site capable of providing more dwellings than the 120 indicated, is clearly unnecessary to meet Shropshire's own target for housing completions. If it is included in the Plan the housing growth in the town and its immediate environs will by far exceed the 200 by 2038. 300 is a far closer estimate and the town is simply incapable of bearing growth of this magnitude as is detailed below.

Location of development

Others may have already indicated that the distance of the single large proposed site MUW012VAR is sufficient for many residents to either chose, or to find it necessary, to drive into the core shopping area for the regular amenities. There is little enough

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off-street parking (c. 120 spaces) in the town for nearby residents and visitors. The effective encouragement of Much Wenlock residents to drive to e.g. buy a pint of milk is incompatible with Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan policies and those of Shropshire Council and the NPPF.

The likelihood of an increase in local traffic will be augmented by increased volumes emanating from further planned development along the A458 from either or all of Tasley Garden Village, Tasley Gateway and Stanmore (Bridgnorth), Shrewsbury, Buildwas and the Telford & Wrekin draft proposals at Horsehay and Coalmoor.

I anticipate that Much Wenlock Town Council's submission to the Examination will pick up on the cumulative impact all of these developments will have on the narrow streets of Much Wenlock. Most significantly, of course, the impact on the five-ways junction of the A458, A4169, High Street and B4378, dominated by the Regency Grade II* listed Gaskell Arms Hotel

Water supply

On occasions, for instance June 2018, the water supply to properties in Much Wenlock and the surrounding area has failed for 24 hours or more. It is not unusual for those properties on higher ground in the town to suffer low water pressure to the extent that the use of washing machines and dishwashers is adversely affected. There is no evidence of plans to address this vital infrastructure shortfall before any further development takes place in the town.

<https://www.shropshirestar.com/news/local-hubs/bridgnorth/much-wenlock/2018/06/28/water-company-asks-for-public-help-after-three-days-of-problems/>

Water treatment capacity

The inadequacy of the combined sewer in Barrow Street and the water treatment plant is a tale of chronic failure and underinvestment. It is notable that the fall on the Barrow Street sewer is shallow, so additional volume is likely to increase the frequency of blockages with the consequent unpleasantness that involves. Much has been promised but nothing has been delivered apart from a scheme to restrict the outflow of nitrates. Meanwhile, properties alongside the Farley brook through which the outfall runs to the Severn complain of odours and effluent. This year, with low rainfall overall, there is a noticeable sludge in the watercourse. Fish, kingfishers and the heron along this waterway are now just a distant memory.

Summary

Stretching the development boundary of Much Wenlock still further to accommodate one large site is unsustainable. Developing good agricultural land half a mile away from the centre of the town, when there are smaller brownfield sites much closer capable of providing for proven local need, does not make good sense. Such a large site, extending the development boundary, is unlikely to provide homes suited to local needs and would promote a higher level of commuting. It is quite clear that the growth target of the town can be easily achieved without MUW012VAR and that its inclusion, and the consequent over-development and unsustainability would render the Plan unsound.