

Shropshire Council. Examination of Shropshire Local Plan 2016-2038

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Dear Mr West

Inspectors' further Initial Questions and response to Council's letter

Introduction and response to Council's questions

1. Thank you for your letter of 11 November 2021. We can confirm that a staged response to the questions raised in our previous letter on the dates you have set out are acceptable to us.
2. In terms of distinguishing between a main modification (MM) and an additional modification (AM), MMs tend to be about soundness points and are consulted upon. AMs are normally limited to changes such as typographical corrections and changes that do not go to the heart of soundness and are not likely to need consulting upon.
3. We are continuing with our work examining the plan. As a result, we have some further comments and questions for you to consider and respond to. As set out previously, raising these types of questions now, prior to the hearings stage of the examination, tends to save time overall.

Summary of representations

4. We have some concerns about the summary of representations (Schedule 1) which has been submitted. Firstly, we are unconvinced that the summaries cover the scope of all relevant points made by representors. This is particularly apparent in respect to proposed policies S1- S18, where it tends to be stated that 'reasoning for objections varied, but included such factors as...'. We are concerned that some key points may have been missed from the summary of representations.
5. Secondly, the document formatting has produced extensive tracts of unbroken text. Furthermore, whilst the key issues summarised tend to be numbered, the same cannot be said for the points raised in the Council's response in most instances. This all makes for difficult reading.
6. Consequently, to ensure the timely and inclusive progression of this examination, it will be necessary for the Council to review its consultation summary (schedule 1) and in particular pages 24- 44 in respect to all of these concerns.

Proposal's map

7. Can the Council please provide us with the 'Shropshire Council Local Plan 2016-2038 Policies Map' at a larger scale than the A3 version previously submitted. Ideally the plan should be printed at A1 size so that we can see the annotations on the map.

Housing land supply

8. We would be obliged if you would confirm whether or not the Council wishes to confirm the 5-year housing land supply position through the plan-making process.

'Saved' site allocations

9. It appears that the sites set out in appendix 2 of the submitted Plan (the Plan), with the status identified as 'saved', are ones that you intend to carry forward from your SAMDev plan. Carrying sites forward from an adopted plan to an emerging one is, in theory, acceptable and a common approach taken by Councils.
10. However, we do have concerns that these sites are included as a list in an appendix, rather than as specific allocations in the plan, in the same manner as the new allocations. The sites to be carried forward from the previous plan need to be set out as allocations in the plan, with development guidelines and details of the level of provision expected, in the same way as the new sites. This will enable them to

be properly examined and their contribution to meeting the identified needs alongside the proposed new sites fully considered. It will also enable developers to understand any specific development requirements pertaining to these sites. This issue will need to be remedied through MMs to the Plan.

11. Also, for the avoidance of doubt the housing sites being carried forward will need to be entered into the tables we sent you as annexes to our previous letter.
12. The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (SEA Regulations) requires that the environmental report (SA in this case) shall identify, describe and evaluate the likely significant effects on the environment of (a) implementing the plan or programme; and (b) reasonable alternatives, taking account of the objectives and the geographical scope of the plan or programme. Consequently, the environmental effects of implementing this Plan can only be properly assessed if all the sites are considered.
13. However, we can find no evidence that the 'saved' site allocations being carried forward from your SAMDev Plan have been subject to sustainability appraisal on a like for like basis as the new sites in the submitted plan, and other reasonable alternatives for each of the Place Plan Areas. If this work has been undertaken, can the Council please direct us to it. If has not been carried out, can you please explain why not, with reference to the SEA Regulations.
14. In addition, please direct us to where in the submitted evidence we can ascertain the rationale for the selection of some lesser performing housing sites over better performing sites within a given settlement. Please clarify whether sites selected requiring mitigation to improve their sustainability credentials have been re-appraised.
15. It appears that the Council's Local Plan Delivery and Viability Study – July 2020 (CD EV115.01) has also not had regard to the 'saved' sites. Can the Council please confirm whether this is the case and if not, why?
16. Furthermore, please confirm whether there are any other relevant evidence base documents that have not taken account of the 'saved' sites.

The Scale and Distribution of Development

17. We have noted that page 92 of the Sustainability Appraisal and Site Assessment Appraisal Report (SA) sets out the Council's intended approach, based on the outcomes of the SA. This is also set out in paragraph 3.52 of the Plan where it says that "The strategic approach

to the distribution of development which underpins this Local Plan is one of 'urban focus', whereby the majority of development is focused into the urban areas identified within Schedule SP2.1 of Policy SP2 of this Local Plan".

18. According to the SA an 'Urban Focused' distribution of development would see Shrewsbury taking around 30% of the housing development, Principal Centres around 24.5%, Key Centres around 18% and Rural Areas around 27.5% along with development at strategic sites such as Ironbridge Power Station and Clive Barracks, and potential new Garden Village settlements in strategic locations. In our last letter we asked that as part of a housing topic paper you set out details of the Council's spatial strategy and distribution and how it was arrived at. Can you also please confirm that the above is indeed the approach the Council has adopted in the Plan and, if so, where the evidence can be found to demonstrate that the spatial distribution has been followed when selecting all housing and employment sites for allocation, including those 'saved' sites.

Neighbourhood Planning

19. Paragraph 66 of the Framework requires that the local plan's strategic policies set out a housing requirement for each designated neighbourhood planning area and also that the neighbourhood area requirement figures reflect the strategy for the pattern and scale of development and any relevant allocations.
20. It is not clear to us that this has been done in Policy SP2. Furthermore, it is unclear if the individual Place Plans contain a specific requirement for each designated neighbourhood area. If there is no apportionment for a given neighbourhood area then this should be explicitly stated for the sake of clarity. It is also unclear whether any Neighbourhood Plans are intended to contain site allocations. Again, this should be made clear in the submitted plan.
21. Consequently, can the Council please confirm whether the Place Plan areas and apportionments reflect the designated neighbourhood area boundaries; and what apportionments (if any) have been made to each specific neighbourhood area.

Infrastructure

22. We note that through the consultation undertaken concerns have been raised about the future capacity of healthcare and Police infrastructure to support the planned housing growth, including representations from those providers. Please confirm whether the development

requirements arising from the total growth planned across the plan period in respect to these matters have been quantified and included within the viability assessment of the proposed housing site allocations and, if not, please explain the reasons for this. Please confirm whether any cross-boundary concerns regarding hospital capacity remain in dispute? Furthermore, please confirm how the Council's Strategic Infrastructure Implementation Plan has taken these matters into account.

Viability

23. In addition to concerns set out above relating to viability we have some additional questions. Firstly, did the Local Plan Delivery and Viability Study - July 2020 (CD EV115.01), assess the submitted Plan or an earlier version of it?
24. Secondly, we note paragraphs 12.77 to 12.99 express some concerns about the viability of certain types of development and also make some recommendations. What action has the Council taken as a result of these findings and recommendations?

Green Belt

25. Having looked further at the evidence in relation to the release of Green Belt land, it would be helpful if your Green Belt topic paper could also include a comprehensive list of all alterations made to the GB in the plan. This should include:
 - Land removed from GB to allocate for development proposed in the plan;
 - Land removed from GB to safeguard for potential development beyond the plan period;
 - Land added to GB to protect from development;
 - Land added or removed from GB to reflect physical changes, correct cartographical errors etc; and
 - Any other alterations to GB.

Minerals and Waste

26. We have read the helpful technical background papers on minerals and waste. In terms of aggregate minerals, it would be helpful if you could complete the following table, using the formulas in the right-hand column.

Reserves with planning permission	A
Annual demand forecast	B
Demand over plan period	$B \times \text{plan period} = C$
Landbank	$7 \times B = E$
Requirement over plan period (demand plus landbank)	$C + E = F$
Balance to be found in Plan	$F - A$

Conclusion

27. Please could you provide confirmation by Friday 10th December 2021 as to when you expect that a response to these further questions can be provided.
28. As set out in our previous letter, in responding to our questions it would be helpful if the Council could consider whether it might be necessary to advance any potential Main Modifications to the Plan in order to make it sound. Therefore, please draft any suggested changes to the relevant part of the Plan and maintain them in a schedule giving reasons for why they are proposed.
29. If you have any queries regarding any of the above matters, then we can be contacted via the Programme Office. A copy of this note and the Council's response should be placed on the examination website as soon as possible.

Louise Crosby and Carole Dillon
Examining Inspectors