

BTC/LJ/2019

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## **Local Plan Review Consultation – Preferred Sites - Bridgnorth Town Council**

### **INTRODUCTION:**

Bridgnorth Town Council has agreed at a meeting the responses to the questionnaire that is available via the Shropshire Council web-site. In addition it felt that the questionnaire provided only an opportunity for a limited response and that some of the matters were best recorded and submitted by letter (to provide some context and some and potential priorities for associated infrastructure works)

### **SUBMISSION:**

The following is the agreed submission by resolution of Bridgnorth Town Council:

Bridgnorth Town Council has held a number of consultation workshops with residents and local businesses. Town Councillors have also discussed the proposals with electors. Some consistent themes emerge from this consultation:

- Bridgnorth is not considered to be an obvious place in which to locate significant development. It has strong environmental constraints due to the river and an undulating topography (as noted in the “Consultation on Preferred Sites”). It also has limited access to the motorway and trunk road network. There is some concern about development occurring on the Green Belt.
- The town is viewed as being “currently working, but at breaking point”. For example, the Town Centre is already at capacity, as are the car parks in the town. The road network to and from the town is adequate for current usage, but there are long delays at peak times. Pollution limits are already exceeded in Pound Street and are close to the limit in other locations, including the High Street and Underhill Street.
- An additional 1,500 homes (around 4,000 to 5,000 people) will overload the existing town in terms of roads, access to retail provision, education, leisure facilities, medical facilities, energy supply, water and waste treatment, broadband communications and other infrastructure. There is general agreement that if the proposed developments were to proceed, detailed planning must be completed for the necessary infrastructure; investment should be secured in advance and infrastructure should be completed prior to need.
- There is already a lot of commuting, both in and out of the town. The census data from 2011, included in the Bridgnorth market town profile, indicates a local workforce of 7321 of whom 4419 commuted in and locally resident workers of 7592 of whom 4690 commuted out. Additional housing and employment land may exacerbate this. Housing should meet local needs, including the provision of affordable housing, and not be designed to encourage commuting out of Bridgnorth to, for example, Telford and the West Midlands.
- There is considerable support for additional local business and more employment in the area.

- There is concern that the proposed 'Garden Village' may become an isolated community.

Having taken the above into account, Bridgnorth Town Council is supportive of a reasonable level of development around Bridgnorth. We support the need for businesses to be able to locate and grow in the area. Existing successful businesses need to be able to expand and the area is particularly short of modern office space to house service businesses.

We therefore support the proposed increase in the amount of employment land and agree that much of this increase should be located, as proposed, around the Stanmore Industrial Estate.

We also recognise the need for additional housing across the UK and, in particular, for appropriate and affordable housing in and around Bridgnorth. We agree, somewhat reluctantly, that one reasonable location for additional housing is in the area identified in the "Consultation for Preferred Sites". We do note that other alternatives exist to the West, North and South of the town, although these carry their own difficulties. If the proposals were to be adopted then we would wish to see the following concerns, which have been raised during our consultation exercise, to be addressed:

- The "Consultation on Preferred Sites" does not consider what additional infrastructure will be required. The necessary infrastructure, required to support both employment land and additional housing, must be planned for, funded and provided in advance of need. Much of the infrastructure required has been listed above. If this cannot be funded then the development should be scaled back accordingly.
- A very significant investment will be required in transport infrastructure including key link roads. We also note that Shropshire Council's public protection function have stated that development proposals should be subject to an air quality assessment in the light of transport related pollution issues in Bridgnorth. Some priorities relating to transport and air quality are listed in Appendix 1. We consider that this is best addressed through a "Bridgnorth Integrated Transport Package", along the lines of that adopted and funded for Shrewsbury.
- The possibility of the proposed 'Garden Village' becoming an isolated community should be minimised. Possible approaches include: locating housing on the Bridgnorth side of the development; providing a new, separate link to Low Town for pedestrians and cyclists; and a continuous bus service (possibly also supporting park and ride). Another option would be to locate some sports facilities (such as a new leisure centre and/or the Rugby Club) in the vicinity, along with good parking.
- The Stanmore Country Park should be retained, to provide part of the green space envisaged in the "Consultation for Preferred Sites" and to help mitigate the adverse effects of the proposed development on the environment.
- The busy A454 would run through the middle of the developed area and be hazardous to cross. An approach to handle this should be developed.

Finally, we consider that a comprehensive masterplan, along the lines of those approved for areas around Shrewsbury, must be prepared for the development in consultation with the local community and subject to a formal approval process before the development moves to the detailed planning stage.

## SUPPLEMENTARY COMMENT

**In addition to the comments above Bridgnorth Town Council were keen to identify a number of infrastructure related priorities required for the LPR to be acceptable/deliverable:**

Priorities for the road network and public transport to support development under the local plan proposals:

- Improving public transport and providing evening and weekend services to/from Wolverhampton, Telford, Shrewsbury and Stourbridge.
- Improving the road network to address capacity, commuter volumes and pollution:
  - Providing a direct road link between the A454 Green Lane and the A442 Bromley and restricting the flow of through traffic along Mill Street, Wolverhampton Road, Cann Hall Road and Hospital Street in Bridgnorth.
  - Building a link road from the A449 to Stourbridge Road.
  - Improved links to Wolverhampton, Shrewsbury and Telford (and the A54 and M6 North), and M5 South, including bypasses of, for example, Norton and Enville.
  - Improving access to Oldbury Wells school, preferably directly from the A458.
- Providing additional car parking, preferably close to the town centre, with improved access from the road network.
  - Possibilities might include: building a multi-storey car park at Smithfield, above Hollybush Road or at Inage Lane car park; a car park next to the SVR (possibly using land currently occupied by the builders' merchants and gym); or the site of the old Westgate council offices.
- There are various pinch points on the local road network where traffic can be congested at times and there is an air pollution issue (as noted by SC public protection in their comments on the site assessments). Further development around the Town has the potential to add to these problems and mitigation will be required. Areas with particular issues are the High Town centre (including Pound Street AQMA), roads leading to and from the historic Severn bridge, and the A442 through low town. Mitigation measures which should be considered are public transport improvements, Park and Ride, green transport infrastructure (EV charging points, cycle and walking routes), adjusting traffic flows (using mini-roundabouts, speed reductions and restricted periods for goods vehicles) and highway improvements to take through traffic (particularly goods vehicles) away from these areas.

Possible solutions for consideration and evaluation might include:

- Building an interchange from the bypass to the Highley and Chelmarsh roads, providing another route to and from Low Town and alleviating pressure on the old bridge and Pound Street.
- Building a new bridge across the Severn: a possible location might be from the A442 to the B4373, allowing traffic from Smithfield, Inage Lane and Broseley Road to bypass the town centre and access Telford Road and the 'green village'.
- Construction of a link road to the North of Bridgnorth, from the B4373 to the A458 bypass.
- Considering closing the High Street to through traffic, whilst retaining access for cars to short-stay parking in the High Street area. This would allow a better environment for pedestrians, making the High Street more attractive to shoppers. This would only be

possible once alternative through routes are implemented, as outlined in the last bullet point.

- Providing an electric bus (or tourist 'train') service from nearby parking and the SVR to the town centre and to and from the 'Green Village'.
- A few, key new / improved pedestrian and cycle routes, including a separate link (not alongside a road) to the 'Green Village'.
- Considering the application of new technology, including autonomous vehicles and EVs.

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for Bridgnorth Town Council