Clive Parish Council part B representation, for Regulation-19 pre-submission draft Local Plan

Q4: SP2 Strategic approach: Unsound

Paragraph 3.24 of Strategic Policy SP2 refers to the importance of ensuring the long-term sustainability of rural communities through appropriate levels of development within rural areas, and describes Community Hubs as "significant rural service centres". In the 2017 stage of the Local Plan process Shropshire Council chose to adopt a consistent methodology of assessing settlements and for identifying Community Hubs, set out in the Hierarchy of Settlements document. The Hierarchy of Settlements (most recently updated in August 2020) supports the Local Plan Review and in particular Policies SP2, SP8 and settlement policy S17 (the latter two will be dealt with in separate representations), by setting out the methodology and conclusions for identifying different types of settlements in Shropshire. The purpose of the evidence of the Hierarchy of Settlement is to inform policy with an assessment of specific and consistent criteria about Shropshire's settlements and their sustainability and ability to support additional housing.

However, the application of Policy SP2 in the identification of Community Hubs is not based on up to date, accurate, or appropriate evidence. Furthermore, the manner in which Shropshire Council has handled changes to local amenities and services throughout the Local Plan Review process has not been consistent across all settlements. Its deferral of matters relating specifically to the settlement designation of Clive (Wem Place Plan area) also means the Plan is not effective.

Clive Parish Council objections on grounds of soundness

Clive Parish Council's objections and subsequent modification request focus predominantly on Shropshire Council's decision to include two amenities (Clive Village Store and Clive Hall bowling green) in Clive's Hierarchy of Settlements assessment score, despite the fact that these two facilities no longer exist. Without these two amenities, Clive does not meet the criteria for Community Hub designation, and therefore Clive's inclusion as a Community Hub in Schedule SP2.2 is not based on accurate evidence and is not justified. Combined with the Council's deferral of matters relating to Clive settlement, this means the Plan is not effective, and therefore it is unsound.

Evidence supporting our representation

We will be including the following evidence (in chronological order) which will be referred to at various points in our representation:

1. Wrekin Housing Trust letter to Bowling Club, and email to Clive Parish Council (24.05.2018)
Letter dated 24th May 2018 from Wrekin Housing Trust to the Clive Bowling Club (and email notifying Parish Council), in which they give the Bowling Club 4 weeks' notice to vacate Clive Hall grounds and remove all bowling green associated buildings, as the new owners required vacant possession and private usage of the land.

2. Clive Parish meeting minutes, attended by Eddie West, Shropshire Council (03.01.2019)
During this public meeting Eddie West repeatedly emphasised and assured the community that the Hierarchy of Settlements methodology would be applied consistently to all settlements across the county, that points would be removed if amenities were lost, and that if Clive dropped below the 48

point threshold it would no longer be classed as a Community Hub and would revert to Open Countryside.

3. Councillor correspondence with Shropshire Council re. Hierarchy of Settlements evidence base (Jan 2019)

Originally there were no points allocated to Clive for Outdoor Sports Facilities (pg. 35-36, Hierarchy of Settlements 2017). Once the Parish Council realised that the Clive Hall bowling green had been erroneously added in the 2018 version of the Hierarchy of Settlements document the then Parish Council Chairman Cllr Kate Bentham immediately raised this with Shropshire Council.

4. Clive Parish Council response to Local Plan, Preferred Sites consultation (Feb 2019)

Our formal response to Preferred Sites stage of the consultation makes clear that the Hierarchy of Settlements evidence base was incorrect for Clive, as the bowling green no longer existed, and that Clive's score should be adjusted from 54 to 51.

5. Clive Hall site layout plan, planning application, 19/02885/FUL (July 2019)

In their own planning application drawings and plans, the new owners of Clive Hall refer to the former bowling green plot as lawn.

6. Email correspondence with Eddie West, re. changing provision of amenities and Clive points score (Oct 2019)

In this email chain Eddie West re-confirms that if both the Post Office and Village Shop were to close, "this would reduce the 'score' for the village to 43. […] this would lead SC to the decision to remove Clive from being a Community Hub in the emerging Local Plan Review in March 2020." He also mentions that if these amenities were to re-open before submitting the plan for inspection, "we would then have the opportunity to re-introduce the village as a Community Hub as a '**minor amendment'** and for this to be submitted to the Secretary of State for examination."

7. Email from Eddie West, confirming Clive points score (21.11.2019)

Email from Shropshire Council's Eddie West, in which he accepts that the outdoor sports facility (Clive Hall bowling green) is to be removed from Clive's assessment score: "[….] I would continue to consider therefore the village scores 51 points, given I have accepted the parish council's view that the outdoor play facility which had scored three points, is to be removed."

8. Email correspondence to Shropshire Council regarding village shop closure and settlement status (Sept-Nov 2020)

The Parish Council immediately informed Shropshire Council of the forthcoming shop closure and repeatedly asked for confirmation that the loss of 4 points for the shop would take Clive below the threshold for Community Hub designation.

9. Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy (Oct 2020)

Shropshire Council argues that the Clive Hall bowling green is still included in the Open Space Needs Assessment (OSNA, 2017), and that we need to show it is surplus to requirements. The OSNA has however been superseded by the Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy (PPOSS), formally adopted by Shropshire Council in Nov 2020, which does not include a bowling green at Clive Hall.

10. Clive Parish Council question to cabinet and Shropshire Council response

Our question to the cabinet meeting on 07.12.2020 (pg. 3-5) challenged the use of inaccurate and out of date information on non-existent amenities to justify Clive's designation as a Community Hub, and raised concerns about the inconsistent application of the Hierarchy of Settlements methodology.

11. Email correspondence with Shropshire Council re. Clive's settlement status (Dec 2020-Jan 2021)

Emails to Eddie West following the cabinet meeting on 07.12.2020 setting out detailed arguments for removing the no-longer-existent village shop and bowling green as amenities under Clive's Hierarchy of Settlements assessment score.

12. 21/00049/LBC and 21/00048/FUL, Planning applications for conversion of shop into residential annex

The owner of the former shop building (who also owns and resides in the adjoining property, Crows Cottage) has now submitted planning applications to convert the former shop building into a residential annex.

13. Supporting statements for planning applications 21/00049/LBC and 21/00048/FUL.

Supporting statements from the both former owner (Oct 2009 – Oct 2019), and the most recent tenant (Oct 2019 – Oct 2020) regarding the longstanding unviability of the Village Stores business. The previous owner confirms the shop was on the market for 5 years with little interest from potential buyers due to low profits, and Halls also confirms that despite marketing the business from June 2019 there was very little interest in taking it on.

Inaccurate and out of date evidence regarding Clive settlement (Wem Place Plan area)

With regard to inaccurate evidence, according to Shropshire Council, the current scoring for the settlement of Clive (Wem Place Plan area) includes the following amenities, for a total score of 54 points:

Public transport link:	5 points
Regular service offered during peak travel time:	5 points
Nursery/pre-school:	4 points
Primary school:	4 points
NHS/GP surgery:	4 points
Chemist/Pharmacist:	3 points
Convenience store*:	**4 points**
Post Office:	4 points
Place of worship:	3 points
Community Hall:	4 points
Library:	3 points
Outdoor sports facility*:	**3 points**
Amenity Green Space:	3 points
Superfast broadband:	5 points

However, the above scoring is not based on correct, appropriate, up to date evidence, and is therefore not justified or sound. It does not take into account the fact that the convenience store (Clive Village Stores), closed on 16th October 2020, and that the outdoor sports facility, the Clive Hall bowling green, has been under private ownership, the bowling pavilion and other associated buildings have been removed, and the site is completely inaccessible to the general public since the new owners took possession of Clive Hall in the summer of 2018 **(Evidence 1. Wrekin Housing Trust letter to Bowling Club, and email to Clive Parish Council (24.05.2018)**. The owners of Clive Hall also refer to the former bowling green land as lawn within their own planning applications **(Evidence 5. Clive Hall site layout plan, planning application, 19/02885/FUL (July 2019)).**

Taking into account these changes in amenities and services, 7 points should have been deducted and the correct assessment score for Clive should be **47 points**. As this falls below the threshold for Community Hub designation (48 points), Clive does not meet the intended definition of a Community Hub and overall settlement hierarchy needed to maintain overall sustainability, and therefore the inclusion of Clive as a Community Hub (Schedule SP2.2) cannot be considered to be justified.

Inconsistent handling of changes in services and amenities

Furthermore, the Parish Council is very concerned that the Hierarchy of Settlements methodology has not been applied consistently throughout the whole of Shropshire, specifically with respect to handling changes in amenities and services and subsequent reassessment of other proposed Community Hubs. For example, the Parish Council in Myddle (Wem Place Plan area) was able to simply notify Shropshire Council of the closure of the village convenience store in 2018, and the relevant points were subsequently deducted from Myddle's Hierarchy of Settlements assessments score. As Myddle then fell below the threshold for Community Hub designation, the settlement was removed from the list of Community Hubs in the draft Local Plan. Similarly, the assessment score for Westbury settlement (Shrewsbury Place Plan area) was reviewed and points deducted following the closure of the Post Office in the summer of 2020. Westbury also then fell below the 48-point threshold and as it no longer met the criteria for Community Hub designation it is not included as a Community Hub in the Regulation-9 Pre-Submission draft of the Local Plan.

However, Shropshire Council's consistent approach has not been applied to Clive settlement, despite:
a) Shropshire Council being notified that the Clive Hall bowling green facility no longer existed **(Evidence 3. Councillor correspondence with Shropshire Council re. Hierarchy of Settlements evidence base (Jan 2019)** and **Evidence 4. Clive Parish Council response to Local Plan, Preferred Sites consultation (Feb 2019)**,
b) Shropshire Council acknowledging in November 2019 that the 3 points for the Clive Hall bowling green were to be removed from Clive's Hierarchy of Settlements score **(Evidence 7. Email from Eddie West, confirming Clive points score (21.11.2019)**
c) Shropshire Council being immediately notified by the Parish Council (26.09.2020) of the imminent closure of the village shop, and the Parish Council confirming the closure on 16.10.2020 **(Evidence 8: Email correspondence to Shropshire Council regarding village shop closure and settlement status (Sept-Nov 2020)**

Despite the email from Eddie West on 21.11.2019, Shropshire Council did not remove the points for the Clive Hall bowling green, and the Parish Council were only made aware of this fact indirectly (a phone call on 01.12.2020 with our County Cllr Simon Jones), after the close of the Regulation-18 consultation. Up until this point the Parish Council had been working on the basis of a total points score for Clive settlement of 51 points (as per Eddie West's email on 21.11.2019).

The Parish Council has gone to great lengths over the last 3 years to ensure Clive's assessment score was properly adjusted to reflect the most up to date changes in provision of amenities and services, via meetings, phone calls, and repeated correspondence with Shropshire Council Officers, in our formal responses to the Preferred Sites consultation **(Evidence 4. Clive Parish Council response to Local Plan, Preferred Sites consultation (Feb 2019)**, and to the Regulation-18 stage (Oct 2020) of the Local Plan Review process, and via a question at the Shropshire Council cabinet meeting on 07.12.2020 (after we became aware of Shropshire Council's failure/refusal to remove the bowling green from Clive's Hierarchy of Settlements score). We understand that residents, including the owner of the former shop building, have also shared their concerns about the inaccuracies in relation to Clive's designation as a Community Hub.

Through these various channels of communication the Parish Council has highlighted the loss of amenities and inaccuracies of Clive's assessment score, and has repeatedly asked Shropshire Council to confirm that Clive's Hierarchy of Settlement's score would be corrected, and to confirm that Clive would no longer be designated as a Community Hub. As Shropshire Council chose to progress the Regulation-19: Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan in December without addressing the incorrect Hierarchy of Settlements score for Clive (in spite of evidence provided by the Parish Council and the owner of the shop building) and instead deferred this matter, Clive Parish Council is now forced to request a major modification to the Plan, on the grounds of it not being effective or justified, and therefore the Plan is unsound.

Shropshire Council's formal response to our question at the cabinet meeting on 7.12.2020 was that it would be "premature" to change Clive's services and amenities settlement assessment, and that further evidence would be required before it could be reviewed, namely a change of use planning application for the shop **(Evidence 10. Clive Parish Council question to cabinet and Shropshire Council response).** Shropshire Council is also justifying their decision to retain the Clive Hall bowling green as an outdoor sports facility under Clive's Hierarchy of Settlement's amenities and service score, because it is included in the Open Spaces Needs Assessment (2017), and have told the Parish Council that it will need to be tested against current or emerging Local Plan policy to show the Clive Hall bowling green is surplus to requirements. This is despite the fact that Shropshire Council is fully aware that the Clive bowling club was told to vacate Clive Hall bowling green in May 2018, **(Evidence 1. Wrekin Housing Trust letter to Bowling Club (24.05.2018),** and has been using Preston Brockhurst bowling green for over 2 years.

Whilst the timing of the Clive Village Store closure is more recent than the loss of amenities in Westbury and Myddle, both those Parish Councils have confirmed that, aside from simple correspondence, no additional evidence was required for their respective Hierarchy of Settlement assessment scores to be corrected and for Shropshire Council to agree to remove both Myddle and Westbury from the list of Community Hubs within the Local Plan. If Shropshire Council had applied the same methodology consistently to Clive's circumstances, then the matter of Clive's designation as a Community Hub would have been resolved long before the current Regulation-19: Pre-Submission draft Local Plan consultation.

The Parish Council has also repeatedly expressed its intention to engage the community regarding whether Clive should become a Community Cluster or remain as Open Countryside, **(Evidence 8. Email correspondence to Shropshire Council regarding village shop closure and settlement status (Sept-Nov 2020).** It has also expressed the feeling that remaining as Open Countryside is not necessarily the right thing for the village, and was open to exploring the benefits of opting in as a Community Cluster. If Shropshire Council had treated Clive the same as Myddle and Westbury, and removed it as a Community Hub earlier in the process, then the Parish Council could easily have consulted the community and potentially agreed to put Clive forward as a Community Cluster, in time for it to have been incorporated in the Regulation-19 pre-submission draft Local Plan.

As it stands now, assuming the Planning Inspector agrees with the evidence we have provided and removes Clive as a Community Hub, then it would automatically default to Open Countryside, and the **only** route for Clive to become a Community Cluster in future is the lengthy and expensive Neighbourhood Plan process.

As the matter of Clive's settlement designation has been repeatedly and unnecessarily deferred then the Plan cannot be considered effective or sound, and the inconsistent application of the Hierarchy of Settlements methodology with regard to Clive also raises serious questions over the soundness of the Local Plan.

Additional evidence to support the removal of Clive Village Store and Clive Hall bowling green from Clive's Hierarchy of Settlements score

Clive Village Stores

Despite the disparity of Clive's treatment, in order to meet Shropshire Council's requirement for additional evidence, the owner of the Clive Village Stores building (7a High Street) has written to Shropshire Council on a number of occasions since the first announcement of the shop closure in Sept 2020. This correspondence has set out the reasoning behind the closure, namely the longstanding unviability of the business (rather than a temporary closure as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic), their firm intention not to re-let the building as a shop, and more recently their intention to convert the building into a residential annex. Despite this correspondence, Shropshire Council continued to defer

rather than resolve the matter regarding the points for the shop, therefore the Local Plan cannot be considered effective and is therefore unsound.

Since the cabinet meeting on 07.12.2020, planning applications have now been submitted to Shropshire Council to convert the shop building **(Evidence 12. 21/00049/LBC and 21/00048/FUL, Planning applications for conversion of shop into residential annex)**. Both the previous shop owner and the most recent tenant have provided supporting statements regarding the longstanding unviability of the business. Despite the business being marketed from 2014 to 2019, there was very little interest in taking it on due to low profits (**Evidence 13. Supporting statements for planning applications 21/00049/LBC and 21/00048/FUL).** The Parish Council has also emphasised the unviability of the shop business in its correspondence with Shropshire Council regarding the shop closure **(Evidence 8.** – Specifically email dated 22.10.2020 - **Email correspondence to Shropshire Council regarding village shop closure and settlement status (Sept-Nov 2020**). However, as Shropshire Council has continued to defer these matters, and as the Regulation-19: Pre-Submission draft Local Plan has not taken into account this evidence, it cannot be considered effective or justified.

Clive Hall bowling green

With regard to the Clive Hall bowling green, Shropshire Council's justification relies on its inclusion within the Open Space Needs Assessment (2017) which pre-dates the change of ownership of Clive Hall and the subsequent loss of the bowling green facility (2018). Furthermore, the Open Space Needs Assessment (OSNA) itself uses out of date data from 2009, and was a desktop assessment which did not involve any site visits to assess facilities (para. 3.1.2, pg. 13 OSNA) due to "financial constraints". In addition to this, the data included in the OSNA on outdoor sports facilities has now been superseded by Shropshire Council's more recently adopted Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy (Oct 2020), which, although it includes other local facilities in the Wem area such as Hadnall, Preston Brockhurst, and Shawbury bowling greens, it **does not include** the Clive Hall bowling green **(Evidence 9.** pgs. 29-31, **Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy (Oct 2020))**. Shropshire Council is therefore relying on considerably out of date, inaccurate, and inappropriate evidence, and therefore the Plan is not justified or sound.

Furthermore, when looking at the PPOSS in more detail, the key recommendations for the Wem area (pg. 25, PPOSS, Oct 2020) do not mention any shortfall in bowling provision, and in the executive summary the Headline Findings (pg. 3, Executive Summary, PPOSS, Oct 2020) show there is and will be "adequate provision" for bowls, both now and until 2038. Under the Sport-by-sport recommendations, the first recommendation for bowls is to "Retain the existing quantity of greens", with no recommendation to increase this figure (pg.7, Executive Summary, PPOSS, Oct 2020). As the Clive Hall bowling green is not included in either the main PPOSS document or Executive Summary, by extension, this shows that there is no demand for this specific facility, as the PPOSS demonstrates that there is already adequate provision for bowling facilities without Clive Hall. Therefore the most up to date evidence shows there is no justification for including the Clive Hall bowling green in Clive's Hierarchy of Settlements services and amenities points score. As the Regulation-19: Pre-Submission draft Local Plan has not taken into account the most up to date, accurate, and appropriate evidence then it cannot be considered justified or sound.

Q5: Modification required:

Clive settlement should be removed from Schedule SP2.2, Community Hubs as the evidence provided shows that Clive settlement clearly does not possess the services and amenities required to meet the definition of a significant rural service centre, as defined by the Hierarchy of Settlements evidence base, and therefore does not qualify for a Community Hub designation.

Q6. If your representation is seeking a modification to the Regulation 19: Pre-Submission Draft of the Shropshire Local Plan, do you consider it necessary to participate in examination hearing session(s)?

YES

Q7. If you wish to participate in the hearing session(s), please outline why you consider this to be necessary:

Clive Parish Council is the local authority elected to represent the local community, and has been very closely involved in the detailed discussions relating to the Local Plan Review since the beginning of this process. We strongly believe we should be given the opportunity to participate in the hearing sessions during the examination to ensure a fair and balanced discussion of Clive's status within the Local Plan.