

SHROPSHIRE LOCAL PLAN EXAMINATION

Stage 1 Hearing Statement

Representor unique Part A Ref *	A0088 MW Refresh Group A0028 MWTC A0469 MW Civic Society A0471 Sue O'Dowd
Matter	7
Relevant questions nos.	Policy S20 4a

Policy S20 Question 4a

Have the infrastructure requirements of the proposed strategic settlement been adequately identified and costed? Including the requirements for:

- a) *road improvements*

Policy DP25 of the Draft Shropshire Local Plan states:

1. *New development should only take place where there is sufficient existing infrastructure capacity available. Where a new development would lead to a shortfall in infrastructure provision, the development will be required to fund necessary improvements through a suitable developer contribution, unless the identified shortfall is being addressed by other means.*

1. In the case of the Strategic Settlement SP20, the developer's perfectly correct approach was to calculate the impact of their new development traffic on a series of junctions affected by the proposals. Using appropriate computer modelling of the junctions, the developer was able to measure the impact of their proposals in terms of extra junction delays and queues, and then propose improvement schemes to mitigate that impact. This is a normal, standard procedure that is described in the Transport Assessment documents for the SP20 planning application.

2. In the case of SP20, however, there is one major exception to this standard process. The developer has not adequately identified or costed the highway improvements at the

Gaskell Corner junction in Much Wenlock that will accommodate the additional traffic from the SP20 development.

3. Further to this, the developer has implemented an inappropriate computer-modelling system to measure the impact of their traffic. This modelling baseline forecasts a completely inaccurate, underestimated level of queuing at the junction in the year 2036. But even with these errors, when the S20 development traffic is added the queues double and the average delay increases from 45 seconds to 105 seconds. Bearing in mind that the 45 seconds is a considerable underestimate, the development traffic will generate delays of far greater than 105 seconds.

4. In a further omission, the developer was not instructed by Shropshire Council (the Highway Authority) to include, as future background traffic, the trips using the Gaskell Arms junction from the proposed Tasley (Bridgnorth) and Cressage residential developments. Both of these sites will generate traffic that will use the junction during peak periods.

5. The developer claimed that their (inaccurate) assessment demonstrated that their traffic would have an insignificant impact on the Gaskell Corner junction and, consequently decided that no further improvements or work was necessary.

6. When pressed on this point by Much Wenlock Town Council, the developer produced two small drawings of schemes at the junction using the principle of signalised pedestrian crossings to halt traffic. There was no technical evidence, computer-based or otherwise, to support these schemes. Encouragingly, Shropshire Council rejected both schemes, providing ten technical points describing the inadequacy of the schemes and explaining their refusal.

7. Following this, however, rather than demand that the developer should identify and cost adequate infrastructure at the Gaskell Corner, Shropshire Council accepted a wholly insufficient financial donation of £250,000 for an improvement scheme that has not even been identified, either realistically or even conceptually. There is nothing. What *is* known is that to improve the Gaskell Corner junction sufficiently to accommodate the S20 traffic will cost considerably more than £250,000.

8. All of this evidence was provided by Much Wenlock Town Council for Officers and Members of Shropshire Council. It was ignored by the Officers. However, the Planning Committee Members rejected the proposals twice, citing the impact in Much Wenlock at the Gaskell Corner on both occasions.

9. A combination of a still wholly inadequate increased contribution of £350,000, plus unexplained and unusual administrative processes (including the refusal to write-up and post the Refusal Notice), led to S20 being narrowly approved by the planning committee at the third attempt on 20th September 2021. This was for an increased scheme for 1075 houses.

10. The outcome of this lack of proper infrastructure on the people of Much Wenlock is quite clear. The obvious impact will be increased delays and queuing at the Gaskell Corner junction, along with the accompanying increase in poor air quality on this well-used route to school alongside residential properties. Slightly less obvious, but a clear impact as far as the people of Much Wenlock are concerned, will be the increase in traffic rat-running through the town to avoid the doubling of delays at the Gaskell Corner. This rat-running already takes place under certain conditions at the Gaskell Corner and failing to improve the junction will undoubtedly increase the number of vehicles prepared to divert along the narrow streets of this attractive medieval town.

11. The **Much Wenlock and Area Place Plan** states:

*There is scope for transformational development through the redevelopment of the Ironbridge Power Station site. This is a 350-acre brownfield site with potential to deliver up to 1,000 dwellings and 20ha of employment land. This is the largest single redevelopment site in the whole of Shropshire, **and it will require significant enabling infrastructure.***

12. The Shropshire Council **draft Local Transport Plan 2011-2026** identifies the following *Key Issues* under the heading at 2.7. *Economy and Congestion.*

- *‘Balancing the need for good connectivity and parking opportunities to meet business needs, **with the need to manage traffic growth to prevent further congestion and the negative impacts on Shropshire’s high quality environment asset.***
- *Tackling existing **congestion ‘hotspots’**, particularly in and around Shrewsbury.’*

Much Wenlock and the Gaskell Corner is a very well-known congestion ‘hotspot’.

13. Other *Key Issues* from the draft *Local Transport Plan 2011-2026* are also worth noting.

At 2.8. *Environment:*

- *‘Reducing the impact of traffic, roads and our management and maintenance practices on Shropshire’s valuable landscape, townscape, heritage and biodiversity assets.*
- *Reducing the air and noise pollution from vehicles with a particular focus on pollution that can damage human health.’*

From the draft LTP, Policy E4:

‘We will aim to tackle and prevent congestion and delays through the application of a hierarchy of measures

1. *1st - Reducing demand through encouraging non-travel alternatives, car sharing and use of sustainable modes*
2. *2nd - Network Management to managing the network more effectively*
3. *3rd - **Targeted capacity improvements at junctions***
4. *4th - Road widening*
5. *5th - New road links or bypasses’*

14. We believe that all the evidence suggests that, with respect to strategic settlement S20, NONE of the above policies has been implemented or even considered and therefore the answer to the question, *‘Have the infrastructure requirements of the proposed strategic settlement been adequately identified and costed? Including the requirements for: a) road improvements’* is an emphatic ‘no!’