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Shropshire Council - Examination of Shropshire Local Plan 2016-2038

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Mr E West,
Planning Policy and Strategy Manager
Shropshire Council
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1 August 2022

Dear Mr West,

Draft Shropshire Local Plan – Minerals and Waste Policies

Thank you for your responses to my initial questions on minerals and waste policies. You have explained that the Council has well in excess of the requisite 7 year landbank of sand and gravel, that saved allocations are to be brought forward and that windfall applications for extensions to existing quarries are expected. The Plan's provision for sand and gravel relies on 10.5mt from windfall development, however this figure has not been justified in the submitted evidence.

As I set out in my previous letter, reliance on windfall development to meet need is not in accordance with national policy. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires provision to be made in the form of specific sites, preferred areas and/or areas of search. The NPPF sets out the tests of soundness in paragraph 35. Plans must be positively prepared in terms of providing a strategy which, as a minimum, seeks to meet the area's objectively assessed needs.

I am concerned that there would be significant uncertainty in relying on windfall development to meet the identified need for sand and gravel and it is not clear why the quarries for which proposed extensions are anticipated have not been identified as specific sites in the Plan. The existing permitted reserves and the saved allocations would not be sufficient to meet the identified need or to maintain the landbank over the Plan period.

For these reasons there is a fundamental issue of soundness in terms of relying on windfall development to meet identified need. I am writing to advise you of this before finalising my main issues and questions to enable the Council to consider its next steps. Please would you therefore consider the identification of

specific sites, preferred areas or areas of search for inclusion in the Plan. The identification of such would require further public consultation.

I appreciate that this will involve significant extra work and that you will wish to consider the necessary timescale and programming. I trust that this letter is helpful in flagging this fundamental issue at an early stage and helping to guide the progress of the Plan through its examination. I would be grateful to receive your response indicating your intentions, via the Programme Officer, by 12 August 2022. Please let the Programme Officer know if you need extra time to respond. I am not inviting any comments from any representors at this stage.

Nick Palmer
INSPECTOR