

Mr Malcolm Price
Shropshire Council, Portfolio Holder for Planning, Housing and Commissioning
Shirehall, Abbey Foregate
Shrewsbury SY2 6ND

12 March 2014

Re: SAMDev proposed site OSW004 (off Whittington Road, Oswestry)

Dear Mr Price

I refer to Shropshire Council's decision to include OSW004 by Old Oswestry Hillfort in the SAMDev draft plan due for final consultation.

- As you are aware, this site through consultation has attracted overwhelming opposition locally, nationally and internationally: from English Heritage, Oswestry Town Council, Selattyn and Gobowen Parish Council; from countless heritage and environmental experts and organisations (RESCUE/The British Archaeological Trust, The Prehistoric Society, Council for the Protection of Rural England, The Society of Antiquaries of London among them); and from over 8,000 objectors via petition.
- As you are aware, the government's NPPF, Shropshire's Adopted Core Strategy and English Heritage guidance require planners to protect heritage assets and their setting, especially those of national importance, against harmful development.
- As you are aware, expert reports submitted to you show that housing on OSW004 would have **major** visual and landscape impacts and would substantially harm the hillfort's setting and historic landscape. This is objective evidence based on tried and tested methodology published by the Landscape Institute, and used as standard in Environmental Impact Assessments.
- As you are aware, you have based your assessment of heritage impact on a report from the site promoter that concludes impacts would be **minor** – a report that experts have criticised in parts as being flawed and non-compliant with NPPF and which you admit to not having checked for compliance risk.
- As you are aware, the need to meet Shropshire's 5 year housing target was stated as your main defence for retaining OSW004, but your own documentation states that 'SAMDev sites with significant unresolved issues' are not to be included in this target.
- As you are aware, once accepted as part of SAMDev, the presumption in favour of sustainable development will be established prior to the production of any detailed studies of impacts on the heritage asset and its setting, as required by NPPF. This makes the decision to include OSW004 in SAMDev premature.
- As you are aware, there is no community mandate for OSW004 and this issue is not just of local but national interest. Both will carry great weight at public inquiry at great risk to the Council financially and to its reputation.

Given that the Council has a legal responsibility to protect one of the nation's pre-eminent scheduled monuments, and to give due weight to public opinion within consultation on local decision-making, there is no defensible case to keep this remaining unresolved site in SAMDev.

I urge you to remove OSW004 from the SAMDev plan, and ask for acknowledgement of this letter.

Yours sincerely

Neil Phillips