



Report

# Telford & Wrekin Local Plan Examination

Matter Three Hearing Statement

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**For and on behalf of GVA Grimley Limited**

### 3. Matter 3: Development Strategy

- 3.1 Does the Local Plan plan positively for the development and infrastructure required in the area, in line with the presumption in favour of sustainable development set out in the Framework?**
- 3.1.1 The HCA's land forms a significant element of the supply of land for development and its associated infrastructure proposed in the Local Plan. In order to demonstrate that the Local Plan plans positively in respect of the HCA's land it is necessary to provide some context to its contribution. In particular it is appropriate to consider Telford's status as a "new town" and the delivery mechanism agreed between the HCA and Telford & Wrekin Council ('The Council'). The following paragraphs provide additional information on this.
- 3.1.2 Development in Telford was originally overseen by the New Town Commission. The current local planning authority was subsequently set up after the commission was disbanded. At that time, the majority of the publicly owned land in and around the town was transferred from the New Town Commission to the Government's National Regeneration Agency, English Partnerships (EP). EP subsequently became the HCA.
- 3.1.3 The HCA still owns significant amounts of land in and around the urban area of Telford and has delivered thousands of new homes on it. In accordance with the Government's Localism agenda, the HCA now has a remit to make some of its assets available to Local Authorities. With this opportunity comes the responsibility for delivering regeneration and growth. In Telford this process is to be achieved through the "Telford Land Deal".
- 3.1.4 The delivery of the Telford Land Deal is a partnership between The Council and HCA and is governed by a board comprising of representatives from both organisations (two from each) together with private sector representatives (two individuals). The HCA's sites proposed for allocation in the emerging Local Plan will be brought forward for development through the land deal. The process is accompanied by a robust funding mechanism which will ensure that the Council and HCA has the necessary resources to deliver development at the appropriate time in the Development Plan period. The mechanism allows the recycling of increases in land value (uplift) that occur as a result of its development activities. This uplift in value is then re-invested into the development of other sites. There is also a "pump priming" mechanism in place to give the financial resources needed to deliver the first sites and to maintain the process.
- 3.1.5 The Council and the HCA have jointly prepared a three year rolling investment programme, set out in the Investment and Disposal Plan that forms part of the Telford Land Deal arrangements, and which is to be updated on an on-going basis. This includes the provision of

investment to deliver the infrastructure required for sites. This includes each of the allocations that are on HCA's land. Reference to this funding programme is included in the table attached at **Appendix 1**.

- 3.1.6 The HCA considers this a positive and well-planned approach to the delivery of infrastructure requirements for all of the proposed allocations on HCA land in the Borough. Indeed, more traditional means of funding from development, such as through S106 or CIL payments, is less structured and more reliant on the timescales for bringing forward land for development by a range of different landowners and developers.
- 3.1.7 Details of infrastructure requirements for specific sites are included in the comprehensive representations submitted previously. Infrastructure requirements for the HCA's smaller sites are generally relatively modest. This is because these sites can be accessed easily from the existing highway network and do not need significant investment to satisfactorily deliver foul and storm sewers, power and other services and utilities.
- 3.1.8 In respect of the HCA's larger sites, (including land at the Hem and land off A442 Queensway in Shawbirch), the representations submitted in 2015 provide detailed technical information on the infrastructure required for their delivery. The cost of delivering the infrastructure has been assessed robustly and provisions to facilitate this are included in the Telford Land Deal.
- 3.1.9 In summary, the provision of development and infrastructure on the HCA's land is assured through the Telford Land Deal delivery mechanism. There is therefore less reliance on alternative means of funding development such as, for example, CIL payments, pooled S.106 contributions, or investment / development funding from central Government or the European Union. We therefore conclude that the Local Plan includes very positive provisions in respect of the delivery of development and infrastructure on the HCA's land.

**3.2 Is the Local Plan's settlement hierarchy and proposed distribution of development, particularly between the urban and rural areas, sufficiently justified? With reference to paragraph 28 of the Framework, is adequate provision made for development in rural settlements?**

- 3.2.1 The HCA consider that the proposed settlement hierarchy and distribution of development is the most appropriate and sustainable strategy to deliver development. The allocation of the majority of new development within Telford's urban area is supported, as this is where services and infrastructure are concentrated. Whilst paragraph 28 of the Framework is acknowledged, the lack of infrastructure in rural areas in the Borough restricts the potential for sustainable development in these areas. Therefore, the approach taken by the Council is considered in accordance with the Framework's presumption in favour of sustainable development.

**3.3 Are (1) the prioritisation of previously developed sites within Telford and Newport (policies SP1, SP2 and SP4), (2) the focus on the development of publicly-owned land and (3) the approach to best and most versatile agricultural land (policies SP1-SP3) sufficiently justified and in line with national policy in the Framework?**

3.3.1 The question seeks to establish whether three elements of the Council's overall strategy for the delivery of development are a) justified sufficiently and b) in accordance with the provisions of the NPPF. The three elements are considered against the two tests in turn as follows.

**Prioritisation of Previously-Developed Sites Within Telford and Newport**

3.3.2 Some of the HCA's sites have been developed previously as a result of mining and other industrial activity. Previous guidance from central Government placed great emphasis on the use of previously-developed "brownfield" land for development in preference to undeveloped "greenfield" land. Current guidance focuses its emphasis firmly on delivery and is less specific about the type of land that should be brought forward for development. However, it does not discourage the use of brownfield land, providing that the test of deliverability is satisfied.

3.3.3 The HCA's owns numerous previously developed sites in the urban area of Telford. This ownership is a legacy of Telford's status as a new town. The sites that are proposed for allocation in the plan comply with the NPPF and planning guidance requirements in respect of sustainability. They are within the urban area and are close to extensive existing transportation and service infrastructure. The sustainability credentials of these sites are identified in the 2015 representations and are summarised in the table attached at **Appendix 1**.

3.3.4 Furthermore, all of the HCA's previously developed sites are demonstrably suitable for development, as summarised in the table attached at **Appendix 1**. Accordingly, the only other matter to consider in respect of NPPF and planning guidance is whether the sites are deliverable.

3.3.5 The Telford land deal provides a robust delivery mechanism for the HCA's sites. Funding is in place to bring the sites forward. This funding includes the capital cost of making planning applications and other associated technical work. It also includes funding for delivery of all infrastructure required to deliver new homes on the sites.

3.3.6 We conclude that the prioritisation of the HCAs previously-developed sites is justified by the Council's proposed strategy and by comprehensive and robust supporting information. The proposals also comply fully with the NPPF as they would deliver housing and employment growth in accordance with its provisions.

3.3.7 Notwithstanding the above, there are also a number of HCA sites that are not previously developed (i.e. “greenfield”) and are allocated for housing and employment development in the Local Plan. These offer natural extensions to the existing settlement of Telford to accommodate planned levels of growth in the Borough and offer the ability to deliver a level of development that is unlikely to be satisfactorily accommodated on previously developed sites. These are not contradictory to the principles established in the NPPF as outlined in paragraph 3.3.2 above.

#### **Focus on the development of Publicly Owned Land**

3.3.8 The NPPF and its associated guidance do not refer to the ownership of land when considering appropriate locations for the delivery of growth. Furthermore, the Council’s strategy for the delivery of new growth does not include any policy or presumption in favour of development on public land.

3.3.9 The Council’s strategy is based on principles established in the NPPF, including the requirement to focus development in sustainable locations. The allocation of previously-developed, publicly owned land, in the emerging local plan is a direct consequence of Telford’s history as a “new town”. In simple terms, land was assembled in order to deliver the new town. Much of that land was subsequently developed and its ownership transferred to the various relevant parties, including private homeowners.

3.3.10 Nevertheless, a significant amount of land in Telford, that is in the most suitable and sustainable locations for development, remains in public ownership. It is entirely appropriate and in accordance with the NPPF to deliver new development on these areas.

3.3.11 The Telford land deal provides a robust mechanism through which development will be brought forward on the HCA’s land.

3.3.12 The delivery of development on public land does not carry any increased risk when compared to proposals for development on land in private ownership. On the contrary, the Telford land deal provides a robust delivery mechanism for the HCA’s sites. Funding is in place to bring the sites forward. This funding includes the capital cost of making planning applications and other associated technical work. It also includes funding for delivery of all infrastructure required to deliver new homes and employment development on the sites. There is therefore much less reliance on other sources of funding, for example pooled S.106 contributions, Government development grants or private finance.

3.3.13 We conclude that there can be no objection in principle to the focus of development on publically owned land on the grounds of incompatibility with the NPPF because the NPPF is silent on this matter. The proposed allocations comply fully with the NPPF and its associated guidance in respect of all other planning related considerations. Furthermore, the allocation

of the HCA's land is justified by the robust strategy proposed in the Local Plan and by the robust supporting evidence which demonstrates that the proposals accord with this strategy.

### **The Approach to Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land**

3.3.14 None of the HCA's land proposed for development is in the "best and most versatile" agricultural and use classification. Accordingly, the HCA makes no comment on this issue.

3.4 The HCA make no comment in relation to Q3.4 to Q3.6.

## Appendix 1 - HCA Housing Site Allocations Commentary

Local Plan Housing Allocation reference	Site Name	Size (ha)	Indicative Yield	Commentary - Suitability & Sustainability	Timescales for Delivery	Telford Land Deal Budget	Summary
H4	Plot D, Pool Hill Road, Dawley	2.249	40	The site previously had outline planning permission for residential use granted in 2008. At that time, Officers concluded the site could be adequately drained and accessed. The site is sustainably located within 400m of a bus route and 1km of amenities within Dawley. HCA committed to releasing site at earliest opportunity. (Paragraph 4.4 of Sep 2015 representations)	There are no significant constraints that would delay delivery on the site. It is expected that development will begin on the site within the first five years of the plan period.	Funding is allocated specifically in relation to the following: utilities; transport; ground contamination; planning application fee; consultancy; marketing; flood risk; and ecology.	<b>Available</b> - the site is in the ownership of the HCA and included in the Telford Land Deal, signifying commitment to bring forward the site for development. <b>Suitable</b> - demonstrated by previous consent and sustainable location. <b>Achievable</b> - development on the site will be facilitated by funding through the Telford Land Deal.
H10	Land at, The Hem	37.743	300	Topographical constraint due to steep sided section of land running through the site surrounding the stream running n/s - a crossing will be required to connect northern portion to southern. Partially within FZ3 - excluded from developable area. Site is also constrained by woodland corridors. Close to A442 - part of several main bus routes - there are also pedestrian and cycle routes along main road. Potential noise constraint (A442 and freight rail line) would require mitigation. Technical work established suitable access available from roundabout on Halesfield 1. Good access to adjacent employment sites. (Paragraph 4.11-4.30 of Sep 2015 representations)	Delivery of development on the site is expected in the middle to later phases of the plan period, due to design and infrastructure work required and once tenants have vacated the site.	Funding is allocated specifically in relation to the following: utilities; transport; geo; planning application fee; consultancy; marketing; flood risk; and ecology.	<b>Available</b> - currently occupied on a short-term tenancy basis, but in the ownership of the HCA (and included in the Telford Land Deal) who are committed to bringing site forward. <b>Suitable</b> - in a sustainable and accessible location. <b>Achievable</b> - mechanisms within the Telford Land Deal to fund necessary infrastructure including the stream crossing.
H11	Land at Holyhead Road, St Georges	1.202	40	Located within central Telford - sustainable location. On main vehicular route from north into town centre. Good access to shops, services, amenities, employment and transport in town centre. Gateway location. No major constraints identified. (Paragraph 4.31- 4.34 of Sep 2015 representations)	As there are no major constraints that have been identified on the site, it is expected that development will begin on the site within the first five years of the plan period.	Funding is allocated specifically in relation to transport; planning application fee; consultancy fee; marketing fee; and ecology.	<b>Available</b> - in the ownership of the HCA (and included in the Telford Land Deal) who are committed to bringing site forward. <b>Suitable</b> - sustainable location close to the town centre. <b>Achievable</b> - no major constraints to development, and will be facilitated through the Telford Land Deal.
H12	Land North of Priorslee Roundabout	3.255	70	Located within central Telford - sustainable location. On main vehicular route from north into town centre. Good access to shops, services, amenities, employment and transport in town centre. Gateway location. No major constraints identified. (Paragraph 4.31-4.34 of Sep 2015 representations)	As there are no major constraints that have been identified on the site, it is expected that development will begin on the site within the first five years of the plan period.	Funding is allocated specifically in relation to transport; geo; ground contamination; planning application fee; consultancy fee; marketing fee; flood risk and drainage; and ecology.	<b>Available</b> - in the ownership of the HCA (and included in the Telford Land Deal) who are committed to bringing site forward. <b>Suitable</b> - sustainable location close to the town centre. <b>Achievable</b> - no major constraints to development, and will be facilitated through the Telford Land Deal.



H14	Blessed Robert Johnson, Whitchurch Drive	2.261	50	Site includes mature trees and is potentially of ecological value. Sustainable location - close to existing facilities, bus, cycle and pedestrian routes. Suitable access agreed with highway authority. (Paragraph 4.35 of Sep 2015 representations)	As there are no major constraints that have been identified on the site, it is expected that development will begin on the site within the first five years of the plan period.	Funding is allocated specifically in relation to the following: utilities; transport; geo; planning application fee; consultancy; marketing; and ecology.	<b>Available</b> - in the ownership of the HCA (and included in the Telford Land Deal) who are committed to bringing site forward. <b>Suitable</b> - sustainable location close to existing facilities <b>Achievable</b> - no major constraints to development, and will be facilitated through the Telford Land Deal.
H15	Land Off Majestic Way	2.553	40	Sustainable location - close to amenities, public transport, walking and cycling routes. Area of mature trees on western side of site. In an established residential area. (Paragraph 4.36-4.39 of Sep 2015 representations)	No significant constraints which would prevent development coming forward in the short term. Dwellings could be constructed in early phase of plan period.	Funding is allocated specifically in relation to the following: transport; geo; ground contamination; planning application fee; consultancy; marketing; flood risk; and ecology.	<b>Available</b> - in the ownership of the HCA (and included in the Telford Land Deal) who are committed to bringing site forward. <b>Suitable</b> - sustainable location close to existing facilities <b>Achievable</b> - no major constraints to development, and will be facilitated through the Telford Land Deal.
H16	Old Park 2, Park Lane	6.571	70	Site is within the town centre - very sustainable location. Walking/cycling distance of full range of amenities, shops, employment, and transport. Site has important design role as gateway location on edge of town centre. Mine shafts and shallow mine workings constrain site - will impact design, layout, potential yield. Land to south also available (Old Park 1) - Council intends to grant an LDO and supports residential development proposal. (Paragraph 4.40-4.42 of Sep 2015 representations)	Subject to achieving a design solution that overcomes mine shaft and mine workings that constrain the site, it is expected that development will begin on the site within the first five years of the plan period.	Funding is allocated specifically in relation to the following: transport; geo; ground contamination; planning application fee; consultancy; marketing; flood risk; and ecology.	<b>Available</b> - the site is in the ownership of the HCA and included in the Telford Land Deal, signifying commitment to bring forward the site for development. <b>Suitable</b> - sustainable location within the town centre. <b>Achievable</b> - development on the site will be facilitated by funding through the Telford Land Deal.
H17	Lawley West	13.82	250	Logical extension to Lawley Village scheme, close to public transport facilities which already serve village. Wide range of facilities and amenities present in village centre. Part of site may be affected by open cast mining, however technical solutions are available. Extent of allocation chosen to avoid mature trees/vegetation, protecting interconnected woodland spaces. (Paragraph 4.43-4.47 of Sep 2015 representations)	Delivery of development on the site is expected to come forward in the short to medium term.	Funding is allocated specifically in relation to the following: utilities; transport; and marketing.	<b>Available</b> - the site is in the ownership of the HCA and included in the Telford Land Deal, demonstrating commitment to bringing forward the site for development. <b>Suitable</b> - sustainably located next to the existing development at Lawley Village. <b>Achievable</b> - development on the site will be facilitated by funding through the Telford Land Deal.