

Telford & Wrekin Local Plan: Examination in Public

Initial Statement by Council - Matter 4: Economy & Community

1. Telford has a vast amount of vacant employment land, a legacy of the New Town Commission's desire to diversify the East Shropshire economy after the end of the coal mining era. Most of these sites have Section 7(1) New Towns Act consents which do not time expire. Our employment land allocations largely reflect these historic consents. It is inappropriate that this land in Telford be designated for housing or retail. By contrast, Newport has very limited potential supply.
2. Our plan seeks to exploit the existing stock of land in Telford and, in Newport, capitalise on new growth in the field of agricultural technology associated with Harper Adams University by promoting one employment allocation. This will help safeguard Newport's future as a market town. It is a preferred project for LEP Growth funding.
3. It is right that existing employment land adjacent to our allocations be identified as strategic employment areas (SEAs). Such land is "expected" to deliver B Use Class and ancillary uses. There is some flexibility in Policy EC1. There is already an Article 4 direction in place on most of these areas which prevents prior approval for housing.
4. We have agreed one minor modification to the boundaries of the South Newport SEA (Document G18) reflecting two implemented planning permissions for retail uses and a prior approval for housing but do not support a weakening of the principle for the Central Area SEA within the Telford Town Centre boundaries. This is because the NPPF directs major retail uses into the primary shopping area first.
5. Two submissions have been made seeking to broaden the range of uses to be encouraged in the rural area. Neither use is appropriate for a rural site.
6. We do not need to allocate land for convenience or comparison shopping. There are no objections to our approach to the planning for retail development in the borough. Audley Avenue Business Parks have written in (Document G18) to confirm that they now find the Council's planning for retail to be sound.
7. Our technical paper (Document B1b) provides a justification for our hierarchy of centres. We have reviewed our centres, boosted some up the hierarchy (Ironbridge and Lawley), removed others to avoid confusion (Admaston) and adjusted the boundaries of others reflecting recent changes in shopping patterns. We have demonstrated why we should protect our primary shopping areas from a proliferation of non-retail uses and our retail impact assessment thresholds having regard to the nature of the borough's retail stock. We welcome a discussion with the inspector and other parties on how our out of centre and edge of centre development policy will be applied.
8. We reject the representations that our Local Plan should make explicit reference to the Newport and Shrewsbury Canal as unjustified, ineffective and therefore inconsistent with the NPPF.