

MUCH WENLOCK TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of an Extraordinary
TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
held at The Guildhall, Much Wenlock
7 pm on Thursday 17th January 2019

Present:

Cllr. A Davy, Cllr. Edgcumbe Venning (in the chair), Cllr. Herbert Harper, Cllr. Mary Hill, Cllr. Kate Southan, Cllr. Marcus Themans, Cllr. Daniel Thomas and Cllr. Milner Whiteman OBE.

Locum Town Clerk:

Trudi Barrett

In attendance:

25 members of the public.

1) Chairman's Welcome

The Chairman welcomed everyone and explained the purpose of the meeting.

2) Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from: Cllr. Allan Walter - family commitment, Cllr. Dafydd Jenkins - work and Cllr. Yvonne Holyoak – family illness.

3) Disclosure of pecuniary interests

Members were reminded that they are required to leave the room during the discussion and voting on matters in which they have a disclosable pecuniary interest, whether or not the interest is entered in the register of members' interests maintained by the Monitoring Officer.

None.

4) Dispensations

None requested.

5) Public Session

- a) Shropshire Councillor David Turner spoke about the Local Plan consultation on preferred sites. He considered the consultation gave the Town Council an opportunity to broaden their view of possible sites for development. He stated that the preferred site was located outside the current development boundary and that there were other sites within the boundary, including brownfield sites, which could accommodate 46 dwellings. If these were all developed, in addition to the proposals included in the Local Plan, there would be substantially above 80 houses. Councillor Turner stated that small developments, as well as large, would qualify for Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) payments and referenced an error in the minutes of the most recent meeting of the Planning & Environment Committee. Councillor Turner noted that the Town Council did not intend to comment on the proposals for Cressage but these would have an impact on amenities in Much Wenlock. He also noted that proposals for development at Buildwas power station, Tern Hill and Cosford were not included in the Local Plan and suggested that the Town Council press for deferral of proposals until more was known about the power station development.

Councillors replied that although small developments did qualify for CIL payments more would come forward from larger developments. Shropshire Council had not included development of the Buildwas Power Station site in the Local Plan as it would take at least three years to clear the site before any development could begin and the make-up of that development was uncertain.

Councillor Turner stated that the sum of CIL payable would be the same whether from several smaller or one large development. He maintained that comment could still be made on the Power Station development.

- b) A representative of the Civic Society made a statement on behalf of the organisation. The Civic Society had a strong commitment to community based planning and had been disappointed at the decision of the Town Council to disband the Neighbourhood Plan Joint Monitoring Committee. The Civic Society contended that there was no

urgent need for a single large housing site as the housing targets of the Neighbourhood Plan were currently being met and exceeded. The Society wanted developments to meet the needs and requirements of existing residents. 70% of the Civic Society members who responded to their recent survey opposed this single large development. Concern was expressed that Shropshire Council would not enforce appropriate flood control measures on the proposed site, given the failure of the scheme on the existing Hunters Gate site. The development of identified brownfield sites was another option. The Civic Society noted the need for owner occupier retirement properties in town.

In summary, the Civic Society urged the Town Council not to support an early extension of the town development boundary and to review alternative sites instead of supporting the proposal to build 80 houses on a single, flood-prone site.

Councillors responded that the preferred site off Hunters Gate had been identified in the Neighbourhood Plan for the development of 25 houses. The average national housing quota for one hectare of land was 32, so 25 dwellings on a three hectare site was not a realistic number and planning officers could not restrict development to that number. The brownfield sites identified by Shropshire Council were below the attenuation pond.

The speaker from the Civic Society maintained that land for open space and attenuation would also be required on the preferred site and the Neighbourhood Plan had specified that development on that site should take place 25 houses at a time. However, there were other sites in the town which could be developed first, including the brownfield sites which had been identified by Shropshire Council.

- c) A resident stated the case for development on a site he had put forward for consideration. This was not a Shropshire Council preferred site as it was outside the current development envelope. However, the land was adjacent to the attenuation pond which, in planning terms, was development. The speaker's land was also self-attenuating, containing two ponds. The other sites proposed were all subject to flooding, including the preferred site, which was 40% in the flood plain.

The speaker considered that Much Wenlock needed to grow to sustain the life of the town. The population in the country was growing and Much Wenlock needed to take its share. If the brownfield sites were used for housing, employment land would be lost. He encouraged people to be creative in their approach to development for the town, and not think it had to stay within the current envelope.

The speaker noted that Much Wenlock Town Council had little say in the development of the town as Shropshire Council frequently approved applications which the Town Council had recommended for refusal. He encouraged residents to make their representations directly to Shropshire Council.

The Mayor endorsed the speaker's encouragement to submit comments to Shropshire Council.

- d) A speaker made reference to the recent presentation by the housing group, Connexus, in which Connexus had suggested that another 20 houses could be built on the Callaughton Lane site. These had not been included in the Local Plan and, coupled with the proposed 80 houses on the preferred site, would have a significant impact on that end of the town.

Councillors had not previously known of the Connexus proposals, which would be for an exception site.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED AND RESOLVED to suspend Standing Orders to allow comments to be considered from members of the public who had not given prior written notice that they wished to speak.

- e) A resident raised concerns about flooding in the town, particularly in Hunters Gate. He informed the meeting of a system of piping that had been installed some years ago but that had not been used effectively. He believed that a significant sum of money had been put forward to either the County Council or Severn Trent to complete the system. Councillor Turner had undertaken to try to find out where these funds were being held.

Councillors noted that the Hunters Gate developer had not carried out the drainage work required but that measures were being taken to rectify the problems.

- f) A resident of Hunters Gate spoke about the flooding problems experienced on the estate and the inadequate work carried out by the developer. He was concerned that remedial drainage and traffic measures should be implemented before any further development. The current problems would only be exacerbated by further development.

- g) A member of the public made additional comments about the incomplete drainage system noted by the previous speaker, point e). He raised concerns about the impact on the residents of Farley, who had previously experienced far worse flooding problems than Much Wenlock. He also noted the relationship and timings of the Neighbourhood Plan, SamDev and the Local Plan.

The Mayor thanked residents for their contributions and noted that the Council had also received a number of letters and emails, which would be passed on to Shropshire Council.

6) Shropshire Local Plan Review 2016 – 2036 – Preferred Sites – Much Wenlock section

Councillors considered the Much Wenlock section of the Local Plan Review, Preferred Sites.

- a) Councillors noted the views of the Planning Committee. Committee members had considered the preferred housing development site for Much Wenlock, land adjoining the Primary School and Hunters Gate, reference MUW012. It was noted that Shropshire Council had to supply around 28,000 dwellings in the county before 2036. In Much Wenlock the preferred dwelling guideline was 150.

At the recent public meeting the Planning Policy & Strategy Manager at Shropshire Council had provided more up to date figures than those shown in the consultation document: 55 dwellings were already committed as at 1st April 2018 and an allowance had been made for 15 windfall sites, leaving only 80 dwellings to be allocated in the town.

The Committee had considered only the Hunters Gate site. 80 dwellings had been allocated to this site, 16 of which would be affordable. Shropshire Council had stated an indicative capacity of 114 dwellings for a site of this size. The development would include attenuation and green space. It would also give the best chance of resolving the current problems of flooding in Hunters Gate and would address speeding along Bridgnorth Road with the installation of a roundabout. All traffic should go out from the proposed site onto Bridgnorth Road, not through Hunter's Gate.

In summary, the Planning Committee supported the development at Hunters Gate.

Employment land had also been considered. It was noted that the town had lost some of its allocated employment land and more would need to be found. The committee supported the preferred employment land guideline of 2 hectares.

- b) Comments from Councillors were noted and are summarised as follows:
There were understandably concerns about the preferred housing site in terms of its size and flooding issues. However, the proposed allocation of 80 dwellings would cover the period until 2036. The existing flooding problems in Hunters Gate could be resolved as part of the proposed development and the introduction of a roundabout would be essential. The brownfield sites mentioned were designated as industrial sites or were unsuitable for development. The development of the Power Station would have a huge impact on Much Wenlock but was not for consideration at this time.

The preferred site would include affordable housing, something the town was keen to provide, although it was a pity there would not be more. Brownfield sites should be used for employment land, not housing. The allocation of 150 dwellings was a modest requirement and should be welcomed. It would be better to work with Shropshire Council on the preferred site rather than object to it.

It was noted that affordable housing would be unlikely to come forward with the development of small sites. The larger development would give opportunities for increased recreational ground and public open space as well as school and surgery provision. However, there should be safeguards with regard to the drainage scheme and an independent drainage engineer could ensure that the scheme was safe and fit for purpose.

The Neighbourhood Plan was not intended to restrict development and should not be seen as a barrier to development. It would continue to inform planning decisions.

- c) **It was PROPOSED, SECONDED AND RESOLVED to support the preferred housing site off Hunters Gate (MUW012) with the proviso that a roundabout be included in the scheme and the problem of flooding in Hunters Gate be dealt with. Vehicular access should be onto Bridgnorth Road. As outlined in paragraph 16.8 of the Shropshire Council consultation document, the following should be addressed:**

- Measures to effectively address flooding and waste water management issues in Much Wenlock. Due weight should be given to the fact that Much Wenlock is in a rapid response flooding area, in the highest category;
- The provision of premises to support the future delivery of secondary health care and other community services;
- Assessment of the need for additional primary and secondary school provision;
- Local and strategic highway improvements and traffic management;
- Provision of additional leisure, recreation and amenity facilities, with a particular focus in the south of the town.

d) It was **PROPOSED, SECONDED AND RESOLVED** to support the preferred employment land guideline of 2 hectares. However, the figure for commitments and allocations as at 31st March 2017 was believed to be incorrect as land previously allocated was no longer available. Shropshire Council should therefore carry out a full review of employment land in Much Wenlock and identify land for development.

The meeting closed at 8.25 pm.

Signed.....
Town Mayor

Date.....