

Appendix 2: Deliverability and Viability of Employment Land in relation to Core Strategy Policy CS14: Managed Release of Employment Land

Through its Core Strategy (CS14) Shropshire Council is required to identify 290 hectares of land for employment development across the whole of Shropshire from 2006 to 2026. In the East Spatial Zone, within which Much Wenlock falls, an employment target in a range of 30–40 hectares has been identified. This is expected to deliver sufficient employment development to proportionately support the proposed housing target (3,025 – 3,850 dwellings) for the Zone. Market Towns and Key Centres are expected to take the majority of this new land.

Much Wenlock is defined in the Core Strategy as a Key Centre which has a local economy firmly based on service industries due to its rural location and the tourism appeal of its heritage assets. The principal strategic objective for planning the local economy of Much Wenlock is to balance local employment opportunities with housing development to meet local need. The purpose of this strategy is to manage the significant inward development pressure on the town, to diversify and strengthen the local economy and to ensure Much Wenlock does not simply become a commuting settlement.

Much Wenlock has had a relatively low level of Class B employment development (0.25 hectares) from 1998 to 2008 reflecting the predominance of service industries in the town. Of this employment development, there has been one key development of 0.13 hectares off Stretton Road and currently there are no existing permissions for Class B employment development in the town. There is a perceived need for new employment land to meet the needs of local companies wishing to expand or for new companies wishing to move into the area. There is currently no serviced employment land available for this purpose.

The former Bridgnorth Local Plan allocated land for employment development off Stretton Road to support the local economy. This support was needed as employment in quarrying declined and to reduce the dependence in the town on out commuting for employment. This employment allocation has remained undeveloped throughout the last 4 years but is subject to drainage constraints and requires a flood risk assessment. Much Wenlock would appear to require some diversification of its service based economy and some assistance to facilitate development in suitable location(s) in the town.

In terms of viability, most of the employment sites in Shropshire have been provided by the public sector with subsidy as development costs are greater than serviced land values.

Whilst sites may be advertised developers/promoters cannot make them stack up. To date there has been no interest in the site at Stretton Rd which was advertised as employment land for sale by Wenlock Estates. Subsequently, the Business and Enterprise Service of Shropshire Council purchased the site with funds from the Economic Development Capital programme for use as a temporary overspill car park (for 2 years) to serve visitors generated from Wenlock's Olympic connections. This

was on the basis that the site had been allocated as an employment site and would be required in future.

Shropshire Council will market the site as it has had some interest as a development plot but failing interest will look to provide infrastructure however this is dependent upon for securing funds from the capital programme which is likely to be severely constrained. The Council would expect, however, to carry this out within the next 5 years.

Accordingly a 0.72ha site for employment (EMP 1) at Stretton Road has been allocated and is deemed deliverable and viable.

Prediction of future Employment Development

The prediction of future employment needs is firstly based on a simple formula for balancing the level of housing development across the whole Spatial Zone. However, the primary factors for distributing land for employment development are the capacity of settlements to accommodate employment uses, the availability of suitable land and the current or potential market demand for land for employment development.

In Much Wenlock, these factors would suggest that the current allocation of 0.72 hectares off Stretton Road may satisfy the needs of Much Wenlock, at least for the first 5 years of the Core Strategy, if the current constraints on the site are resolved. The key functions, layout and character of Much Wenlock town would also suggest that Stretton Road is a suitable location for Class B development to achieve the primary purpose of diversifying and strengthening the local economy.