

Objective 2: The economy and jobs (EJ)

The Plan will help business create jobs by:

- ✓ allocating land for business use.
- ✓ making sure that existing employment sites are kept for employment use wherever possible and appropriate.
- ✓ supporting new business premises in suitable locations.
- ✓ protecting the vitality of Much Wenlock town centre.
- ✓ supporting new mixed use developments, so that where appropriate, people can combine work and home life.
- ✓ encouraging appropriate and sustainable green tourism activities.

The economy and jobs: Our policies

Policy EJ1 Proposals for the development of employment uses on 0.72 hectares of land at Stretton Road (and shown as EMP1 on the Town Inset Map) will be supported subject to the following criteria:

- the proposal would not have significant harmful impacts on the surrounding landscape and the wider setting of the town;
- the proposal would not have any significant harmful impacts on the ecological setting of the site; and
- the proposals and their HGV traffic generation would not have an unacceptable traffic impact on the wider town and the capacity and operation of its highway network.

Policy EJ2 Proposals for the use of land or buildings on existing employment sites for uses other than employment purposes will not be permitted unless:

- it can be demonstrated that the on-going use of the premises or land for employment purposes is no longer viable on the basis of the criteria in Appendix 1 of the Plan; or
- the alternative proposal would provide demonstrable employment benefits to the local community and contribute to its long-term sustainability.

Policy EJ3 New business development on land already in commercial use will be supported subject to the following criteria:

- the scale and nature of the proposals would not have significant harmful impacts on the amenities of adjoining activities; and
- the scale and nature of the proposals would not have unacceptable conflicts with agriculture and other land-use activities; and
- the proposal would not have unacceptable impacts on the local road network.

- Policy EJ4** The provision of any new or additional retail floor-space in the retail core of Much Wenlock (High Street/Barrow Street) will be supported provided that it complements local provision and enhances the town's unique shopping offer and its role as a Key Centre. Additional provision outside the retail core will be supported if it complements the town centre retail offer, is compatible with the size and scale of the existing town centre, and does not have unacceptable impacts on the road network.
- Policy EJ5** The change of use of business premises from A1, A2, A3, A4, and A5 uses will not be permitted unless it can be demonstrated that the ongoing use of the premises for these purposes is no longer viable.
- Policy EJ6** Excepting those identified in Policy LL1, the use of former quarries for small-scale industrial use and/or recreational activity and public access alongside restoration will be supported, provided that the biodiversity of the site is protected and the scale of the proposal is appropriate to its setting and the tranquillity of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
- Policy EJ7** Proposals for recreational and tourism activities and facilities will be supported providing that the siting, design and scale of the development conserves the quality of the parish's built and natural environments, including its townscape and surrounding countryside.

Sustainability

These policies aim to contribute to sustainable development by:

-  Promoting a strong and sustainable economy throughout Shropshire.
-  Encouraging a high quality inward investment, and supporting existing businesses to expand and diversify.
-  Reducing the need of people and businesses to travel.
-  Protecting and enhancing the range and populations of species and the quality and extent of wildlife habitats.

The economy and jobs: Reasons for our policies

Much Wenlock has a relatively buoyant local economy with a long-established business base. Residents and businesses alike are keen to promote economic prosperity and encourage growth in local employment, particularly for young people. The Plan is designed to achieve this by helping existing employers to stay and grow, enabling the town to act as an employment centre for the outlying settlements and encouraging new businesses to invest and create a wide range of new jobs for local people.

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. Market Towns and Key Centres (Much Wenlock is identified as a Key Centre) are expected to take the majority of this new land. 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 aim 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.

Accordingly, site EMP1 has been allocated for employment uses and Shropshire Council have provided assurances that it will be brought forward for development within the next five years. A deliverability and viability assessment for the site is attached at Appendix 2. The site lies immediately adjacent to an arm of the Environmental Network and care will be needed to ensure that there are no adverse effects on the Network (including through lighting) and that landscaping should enhance the network where possible in line with CS17. Any development on greenfield parts of this site would be subject to an Ecological Assessment.

Development proposals on the EMP1 site will also need to be able to demonstrate that they do not have an unacceptable impact on HGV movements in the town. A transport assessment would be the most appropriate way of so doing

It should be noted, however, that the site was previously included in a land allocation for employment use in the Bridgnorth Local Plan in 2005, since when there has been little interest in its development. It appears, therefore, that some up-front public or private investment will be required to facilitate its use and Shropshire Council's statement of intent offers assurances that this will take place. Unless this investment is made, there will be a significantly increased risk of the Core Strategy policy failing to provide for local employment to balance housing allocations and avoid creating a commuting town.

Where an applicant is seeking to demonstrate that an existing employment site is not suitable for continued employment use, it is expected that a planning application will be accompanied by a detailed supporting statement that seeks to demonstrate that this is the case. (See Appendix 1 for guidance). In determining the application, the Town Council will come to a view as to whether the site is suitable for continued employment use taking into account the evidence supplied in the supporting statement. Where consideration is being given to alternative uses of employment land or premises, any such proposals must ensure that the proposed use does not conflict with the character of the surrounding area and other policies and proposals within the Plan, or any other material considerations.

In looking to encourage growth and reduce outward commuting the community is concerned to protect the parish from unsuitable development which will have an adverse impact on local residents, the road network and the environment. To this

end, our policies in the traffic management and accessibility section are relevant to securing growth which does not add unduly to the existing problems of heavy traffic.

The town has an unusually high level of self-employment and home-working which the Plan aims to encourage in line with Shropshire Council's Core Strategy CS13. Self-employment adds to the character and viability of the local economy and supports the community's aim to avoid the settlements in the parish becoming over-dependent on outward commuting.

Residents and business owners are strongly in favour of the re-use of brownfield sites and former quarries for employment use, but at the same time were concerned about the impact of HGV traffic on the road network and the loss of wildlife habitats. Our policies aim to strike a balance between these views by supporting small scale employment uses where appropriate and opposing redevelopment in quarries where the biodiversity is greatest. During the development of the Neighbourhood Plan planning permission has been granted for employment use at Lea Quarry for development which is expected to create between 13 and 23 jobs and there is further small-scale opportunity for employment uses at former quarries (See Policy EJ6).

Much Wenlock's town centre, with its wide range of independent shops, local market stallholders, bank, Post Office and petrol filling station is of great importance to the community, serving the needs of local residents, visitors and a wide rural hinterland. The Plan is designed to protect Much Wenlock's retail core and promote and support its viability. Any development which compromises the town centre and its range of provision will not be supported.

In line with NPPF 3 the Plan seeks to support sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments that benefit businesses in rural areas, communities and visitors, and which respect the character of the countryside. The parish has many resources to support sustainable tourism including the historic character of the town; its shops, attractions and facilities; and the opportunities for quiet recreation on Wenlock Edge. The Plan aims to encourage and support appropriate leisure and tourism activities and facilities, particularly green tourism. Noisy activities and sports which will impact on the peace and tranquillity of the parish are considered inappropriate for its rural setting.

Relevant Strategic Policies

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

NPPF 1: Building a strong, competitive economy

NPPF 2: Ensuring the vitality of town centres

NPPF 3: Supporting a prosperous rural economy

NPPF 4: Promoting sustainable transport

Shropshire Core Strategy

CS5: Countryside and Green Belt

CS13: Economic development, enterprise and employment

CS14: Managed Release of Employment Land

CS15: Town and rural centres

CS16: Tourism, culture and leisure

CS20: Strategic planning for minerals

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs)

LDF Implementation Plan and Local Investment Plan Much Wenlock and Surrounding Area Place Plan 2012 -2013