

Much Wenlock Town Council

Planning & Environment Committee Meeting

5th September 2023

Supporting Papers

10/23

MUCH WENLOCK TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of a **Planning & Environment Committee meeting**
held at 7.00 pm on Tuesday, 1st August 2023 at the Guildhall, Much Wenlock

Present: Councillors William Benbow (from minute 8b), David Fenwick (in the chair), Wilfred Grainger, Daniel Thomas, Chris Tyler, Linda West.

In attendance: Trudi Barrett – Town Clerk, Mr P Hanafin – member of the Transport Working Group

1. Apologies

Councillor William Benbow for late arrival.

2. 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.

3. Dispensations

None requested.

4. Public Session

There had been no requests to speak.

5. Minutes

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Planning & Environment Committee meeting held on 6th June 2023 be **APPROVED** and signed as a true record.

6. Planning Applications

Members considered a response to the following planning applications:

23/02336/FUL Bourton Hall Farmhouse, Bourton, Much Wenlock	The installation of solar panels on the stable block. It was RESOLVED no objection.
23/03091/TCA 5 King Street, Much Wenlock	Remove one trunk and reduce height by 30% of 1no Bay within Much Wenlock Conservation Area. It was RESOLVED no objection.
23/02982/FUL 5A King Street, Much Wenlock	Alterations to the principal elevation, erection of single storey infill rear extension and internal alterations. It was RESOLVED no objection.

7. Planning Decisions

It was **RESOLVED** to note the following planning decisions:

23/00920/FUL 12 Victoria Road, Much Wenlock	Relocation of existing stone retaining wall to form new parking provision. Decision: Grant Permission
23/02599/TCA Bourton Estate, Bourton, Much Wenlock	To remove 2no. Ash (T1-2), 1no. Sycamore (T3) and 1no. group of Ash and Sycamore (G1) within Bourton Conservation Area. Decision: No objection

8. Draft Shropshire Local Plan Review 2016 - 2038

- a. Members noted that Shropshire Council had responded to the Planning Inspectors questions posed in ID28. The documentation stated that Stage 2 of the Examination would commence in November, with further presentation to Shropshire Council Cabinet in April, for acceptance around June 2024. It was noted that the Town Council and associates would need to undertake considerable work to prepare for Stage 2, although there might be some slippage in the timetable from November to January.

Councillor William Benbow joined the meeting.

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- b. Members received correspondence from the Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan Refresh Group regarding designation of an Eastern Belt Strategic Corridor along the A458/A4169 in the Local Plan. They noted the concerns about increased traffic through Much Wenlock arising from housing and commercial development, both within the town and elsewhere. The Town Council had already raised concerns about the Eastern Belt Strategic Corridor with Shropshire Council, both in the Regulation 18 consultation and again in the submission for Stage 1 of the Local Plan Examination. Members noted that the Town Council's objections to housing developments at the Ironbridge Power Station and Tasley had resulted in allocations of £350,000 and £192,000 respectively from the developers for traffic management measures at the Gaskell corner.

There was some uncertainty among Councillors about whether a 'strategic corridor' would simply act as a conduit for people travelling to and from work or was intended to promote development along the route.

Members considered the need for employment land in the town and the fact that much of the 0.72 hectares on Stretton Road allocated in the Neighbourhood Plan had been used for the attenuation pond. It would therefore be necessary to find an alternative site, and this matter should be raised at Stage 2 of the Examination of the draft Local Plan.

It was RESOLVED to respond to the correspondence from the Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan Refresh Group with the information outlined above and to provide assurances that Councillors were very much aware of the concerns raised.

9. Neighbourhood Plan

- a. Members noted that the DLUHC had extended the full support programme for Neighbourhood Planners into 2023/24 and that funding applications for grants and technical support packages for Neighbourhood Plans were now open via Locality.
- b. Members considered the grant application process. **It was RESOLVED to apply for both the standard and technical support grants to fund the Council's review of the Neighbourhood Plan.**

10. Flooding Issues

- a. The report from the Strategic Flood Working Group was made under 10b.
- b. Members received a report on the meeting with Shropshire Council's Drainage and Flood Risk Manager regarding flooding and the town culvert held on 12th July. The primary purpose of the meeting had been to consider the introduction of grates at the top of the High Street to channel flood water into the culvert more quickly. A plan is to be prepared.
- The meeting had been positive, but Councillors wished to continue to press for a 'best case' flood alleviation plan that could be used for funding applications to central government or other relevant bodies. Currently, progress was stymied by the lack of available funds. Councillors were critical of the minimal support from the Environment Agency, despite Much Wenlock's designation as a rapid response catchment area in the highest category. Funding obtained for flood alleviation by Shropshire Council from the Department for Transport would need to be shared with several other towns.

It was RESOLVED to write expressing the Council's concerns about flood alleviation to Lezley Picton, Leader of Shropshire Council, with a copy to Philip Dunne MP, the Environment Agency and Shropshire Councillor Dan Thomas.

As Chair of the Council's Strategic Flood Group, Councillor Benbow offered to draft the letter and to maintain contact with Shropshire Council's Drainage & Flood Risk Manager in relation to ongoing matters.

- c. There were no other flooding issues arising.

11. Transport and Highways Matters

- a. There was no separate report from the Transport Working Group.
- b. Members considered the detailed response from WSP regarding the Gaskell corner feasibility study and noted initial comments from members of the Transport Working Group.
- Members reiterated the importance of safety for pedestrians crossing Smithfield Road and the implications for traffic management measures.
- The study had shown that the numbers of vehicles regularly rat-running through St Mary's Lane and King Street were relatively low: for St Mary's Lane, four in the morning and six in the afternoon; for King Street, six in the morning and 14 in the afternoon.
- Councillors considered it would be beneficial to undertake a trial of the preferred scheme for the junction before implementation, if practicable.

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It was **RESOLVED** that Shropshire Councillor Dan Thomas should contact the relevant officer in Shropshire Council's highways department to request their views on the WSP report. The Transport Working Group would prepare a detailed response to the WSP comments for consideration at the next Planning & Environment Committee meeting.

Mr Hanafin was thanked for attending and left the meeting.

12. Climate Change and Ecological/Nature Emergencies

- a. Members considered information obtained from the Restoring Shropshire's Verges Project and the Climate and Carbon Project Officer at Shropshire Council regarding roadside verge management and suggested actions. It was noted that the current contract with Kier would end on 31st March 2025.

It was RESOLVED to write to Shropshire Council to request that a policy, proposal and contract be devised to manage roadside verges better and in a more wildlife friendly way.

- b. Councillors noted measures taken by the Council to improve biodiversity in the town, which included tree planting, managing the old cemetery to enhance biodiversity, the installation of swift boxes, a wildflower area on the Gaskell Recreation Ground and progress towards the designation of Windmill Hill as a Local Nature Reserve.

It was RESOLVED to include enhancement of biodiversity in the forthcoming review of the Neighbourhood Plan in order to make most impact and develop relevant policies.

The consultation process would help to identify what local people wished to see and would inform what could be done moving forward.

- c. Members noted information from 'Save our Shropshire' regarding carbon literacy training. Councillor Grainger agreed to check his availability on the training dates. Information on grant funding available from the organisation would be passed to the Gaskell Management Committee.

13. Consultation*

14. Street Lighting*

15. Street Naming *

16. Footpath Issues

- a. Footpath off the Bull Ring: Members noted that measurements for a new gate had been submitted to Shropshire Council's Rights of Way department along with a request for 10m of stone surfacing for the path.
- b. There was nothing to report on discussions regarding the Atterley footpath.

17. Footpath/Bridleway Creation Orders*

18. Footpath Diversion Orders*

19. Road Closures*

Members noted the following road closures:

- a. Location: A4169 from Homer junction to start Much Wenlock Road
Date/Time: 6th August 2023 / all the time
Purpose: Openreach – replace frame and cover in carriageway
Agency: Openreach
- b. Location: Barrow Street, Much Wenlock
Date/Time: 20th August 2023 / all the time
Purpose: Laying a new gas service to 40 Barrow Street 7m from the main
Agency: Cadent
- c. Location: Back Lane, Much Wenlock
Date/Time: 6th October 2023 / all the time
Purpose: Replace frame and cover in carriageway
Agency: Openreach

20. Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs)*

21. Stopping Up Orders*

22. Speed Limit Orders*

23. Prohibition Orders*

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24. Date of next meeting

It was **NOTED** that the next meeting would be held on Tuesday, 5th September 2023 at 7pm at the Guildhall, Much Wenlock.

PUBLIC BODIES (ADMISSION TO MEETINGS) ACT 1960

Pursuant to Section 1(2) of the above Act and due to the confidential nature of the following business to be transacted it was **RESOLVED** that the public and press should not be present.

25. Consultants for Neighbourhood Plan Review

Members considered a report from the remote meetings held with three shortlisted consultants.

On the basis of costings provided and clarity of approach, it was RESOLVED to appoint Alison Eardley to support the review of the Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan.

The Clerk was instructed to notify the consultants accordingly and move forward with Alison Eardley.

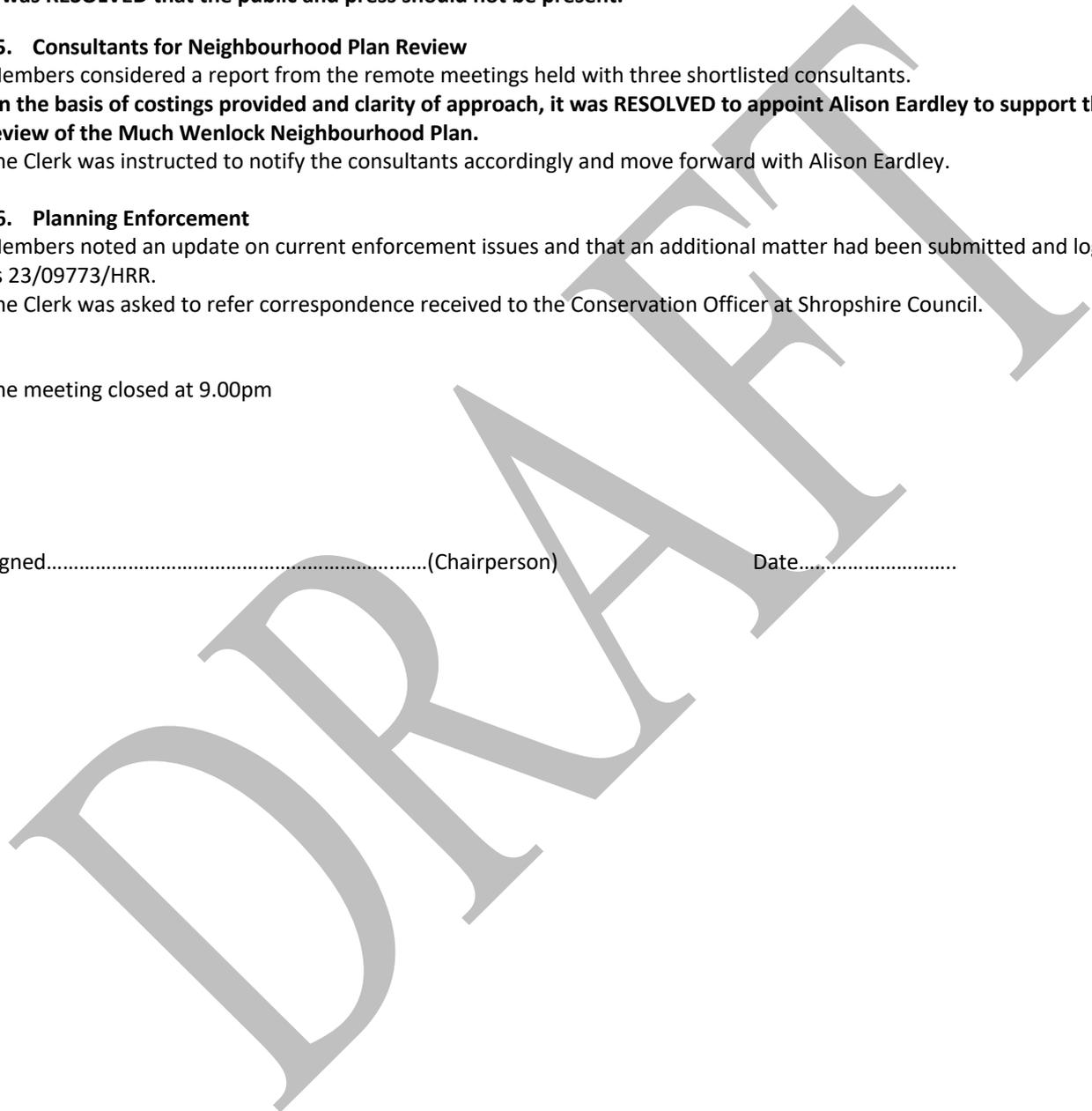
26. Planning Enforcement

Members noted an update on current enforcement issues and that an additional matter had been submitted and logged as 23/09773/HRR.

The Clerk was asked to refer correspondence received to the Conservation Officer at Shropshire Council.

The meeting closed at 9.00pm

Signed.....(Chairperson) Date.....



From: Lesley Durbin

Date: Tuesday, 22 August 2023

To: Town Clerk <townclerk@muchwenlock-tc.gov.uk>, <david.fenwick@muchwenlock-tc.gov.uk>

Subject: FW: SP14 Strategic Corridor Much Wenlock Local Plan

Dear Trudi and Mr Mayor

Please see for your information and, if you be so kind the information of all MWTC Planning Committee Members, the response received from Lezley Picton to my letter on behalf of the MWNP Refresh Group. I would like to draw your attention to the phrase 'just a recognition of existing routes, both road and rail, rather than being a formal designation' which of course is disingenuous because it is a formal LP policy with a number SP14 and as such will encourage development of employment and housing along the A4169 and the A458 from Bridgnorth to Shrewsbury. The second part which deserves attention is the final paragraph where Lezley confirms that our own reviewed MW Neighbourhood Plan will do much to offset the pressing problems of how the corridors affect the Gaskell Corner and the potential of further severe flooding. Provided, of course the outcome the Review establishes.

We sense that there is some encouragement for dialogue with Lezley and hope that the MWTC will continue to talk with both us and SC. We will also be pursuing this issue and others at Stage 2 of the Local Plan.

Kind regards

Lesley Durbin on behalf of the MWNP Refresh Group.

From: Lezley Picton <Lezley.Picton@shropshire.gov.uk>

Sent: Monday, August 21 2023

To: Lesley Durbin

Cc: Dan Morris <Dan.Morris@shropshire.gov.uk>; Chris Schofield <Chris.Schofield@shropshire.gov.uk>

Subject: SP14 Strategic Corridor Much Wenlock Local Plan

Dear Lesley

Thank you for your letter of 27 July. I fully support the aspiration of the Neighbourhood Plan Refresh Group to review the current Neighbourhood Plan for Much Wenlock. I also acknowledge that you and other residents from Much Wenlock have raised objections to Shropshire's revised Local Plan which is currently subject to Examination.

I've spoken with your Local Councillor Dan Thomas, who has made me aware of these issues before and I know shares your concerns.

With regards the content and application of the Strategic Corridors policy, having discussed with the Planning Policy team, it is necessary for me to point out some clarifications to your analysis. The key purpose of this policy is to support the potential for major employment development for the benefit of the Shropshire economy. Within this context it is appropriate for the policy to recognise the location of the strategic corridors, including the Eastern Belt (M54/A5, A41/A464 and A4169/A458/A454), although I must point out this is just a recognition of existing routes, both road and rail, rather than being a formal designation.

In addition, the policy is quite clear that any new windfall major employment opportunities in a strategic corridor should be subject to a sequential approach, which prioritises in the first instance proposed allocated employment sites, of which there are no new proposals in Much Wenlock in the draft Local Plan. Where there is consideration to sites adjacent to key centres, such as Much Wenlock, the preference is for brownfield land before consideration is given to new greenfield sites

in exceptional circumstances. It is also important to note the draft policy specifically acknowledges the policies and strategies of adopted Neighbourhood Plans as part of the consideration of suitability for development proposals in strategic corridors.

I acknowledge your concerns about the prospect of inappropriate development, and clearly share your desire to avoid disproportionate and potentially damaging development, and I believe the policies of the draft Local Plan provide a sufficient policy framework to take decisions which fully recognise the character and scale of settlements. I believe the Neighbourhood Plan refresh has the opportunity to complement this, and I would support the continued constructive discussions between yourselves and the Planning Policy team in progressing your Plan refresh.

Kind regards.

Lezley Picton
Leader
Shropshire Council

From: Lesley Durbin

Sent: 27 July 2023

To: Lezley Picton <Lezley.Picton@shropshire.gov.uk>; Dan Morris <Dan.Morris@shropshire.gov.uk>; Dan Thomas <Dan.Thomas@shropshire.gov.uk>

Subject: SP14 Strategic Corridor Much Wenlock Local Plan

Dear Lezley

We spoke at your, much appreciated, surgery in Much Wenlock a couple of weeks ago. Subsequently the Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan Refresh Group (a community action group) which are working in tandem with the Much Wenlock Town Council on our responses to the Local Plan at the examination stage, agreed that I should write to you on behalf of our group setting out our legitimate concerns over the proposed Eastern Belt corridor which will link the 1000 houses at Tasley and the 1000 houses at Ironbridge through Much Wenlock on an onward journey to the Black Country. After only a moments consideration it becomes obvious that this proposal is ill thought out and totally unnecessary, as our letter sets out in detail, but can have long reaching effects into the future for Much Wenlock. It can be removed at the stroke of a pen and so it should be. It is plain the officers who included this stretch of road in the Eastern belt corridor have never been here or travelled at times of heavy traffic. Anyway, enough said in this accompanying email, we hope very much that you and your colleagues will take time to read the letter and give it some much need attention. It will also be winging its way to you on snail mail.

Kind regards

Lesley Durbin on behalf of the Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan Refresh Group.

From: Christopher Knight <baldwinsgate.aud@gmail.com>

Date: Monday, 21 August 2023 at 22:40

To: <undisclosed-recipients;>

Subject: FAO the Councillors: Help Requested - National effort to protect Neighbourhood Development Plans

Dear Councillor,

I'm writing to you because I believe your Parish or Town has either made, or is in the process of making, a Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP). We wish to make you aware of a recent planning inspector's decision (see attached) to allow a housing development in Staffordshire that is in direct contravention of our "made" NDP (Chapel and Hill Chorlton, Maer and Aston, and Whitmore NDP). In his decision document, the inspector effectively nullified the NDP and we feel he erroneously applied the law with regards to the weight that the NDP carries in the planning process.

We suspect the decision will have national ramifications because if left to stand, it has set a precedent and will be quoted in all future planning applications and appeal hearings where an NDP is a factor. In effect, this constitutes an assault on local planning and we feel that the only way to remedy the situation is with a national, coordinated response from those areas that have a vested interest in their NDPs being respected. We are concerned that if not addressed, the NDPs that many have spent a lot of time and effort on will become effectively irrelevant when put to the test.

I would like to draw your attention to the attached letter that the residents of Baldwins Gate sent to our MP, Sir William Cash. The letter sets out the reasons for our opposition to the appeal decision, and in it we ask him to intervene by bringing the matter to the attention of the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. We humbly ask that you as a Council or Neighbourhood Group consider writing to your own MP, and with some haste, to request that the matter be brought to the Secretary of State on behalf of their constituents and your own NDP. Our hope is to build some form of national pressure to respect the NDPs.

Please feel free to either use our letter as a basis, or to indeed just forward it to your own MP expressing your concern about the arguments made within it and how they will affect local constituents. It would be helpful if you can specifically request that the MP contacts the Secretary of State to ask for intervention in the matter.

Clearly we have a bias in this case, and our aim is to see the appeal decision overturned. However, this really is of greater importance and we believe it is a bit of a watershed moment. The fact that a precedent has now been set that will allow planning inspectors to effectively ignore NDPs leaves us all vulnerable to uninhibited development which will be uncontrollable at a local level.

Finally, I would appreciate it if you would let me know if you intend to write to your MP (and who your MP is), so I can keep track of how much support we are building.

Many thanks,

Chris Knight (on behalf of the signatories to the attached letter)

Trudi Barrett
Town Clerk
Much Wenlock Town Council
Corn Exchange
62 High Street
Much Wenlock
TF13 6AE

28th August 2023

Dear Town Clerk

This letter is intended to be constructive and is aimed at improving the appearance of the town for the benefit of both visitors and residents.

I am aware that there is a regular litter picking programme on the first Friday of each month which is an excellent way of keeping the town tidy. My wife and I are regular litter pickers during our daily dog walks.

However, there are many verges and planting areas which, while free of litter, are mown infrequently and are a haven for weeds, making those areas look scruffy and untidy. Visitors to the town are likely to park in the St Mary's Lane or Bowling Green Lane car parks where there are numerous areas of poorly maintained planting and weeds and it is these areas which visitors see when they arrive: not a good first impression. See attached photographs.

If these visitors then progress to the town's historic locations they will find other areas which are poorly looked after such as the Pound, the verges along Victoria Road, the George and Mutton Shuts, the planting area immediately behind the Guildhall and the area around the Priory Hall. Since visitors take photographs and post them on social media this has a far wider consequence.

I appreciate that there are several responsible parties and in many cases I am not aware of where the responsibility starts and ends. The potential parties in question are local residents, Much Wenlock Town Council, Wenlock Estates, Shropshire County Council and perhaps others as well. I understand that a man is employed one day per week to keep the Church Green mown and tidy: this letter is by no means a criticism of the job he does, but he is faced with an uphill task.

However, if all the responsible agencies did their bit and if a 'self-help' group was formed along similar lines to the volunteer first Friday litter pickers then I am sure that the appearance of this lovely town could be improved and it might encourage local residents to play their part by keeping their immediate area tidy, as many already do.

Yours sincerely

Resident name