

# MUCH WENLOCK TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the extraordinary  
**TOWN COUNCIL MEETING**  
held remotely by video conference  
at 7 pm on Thursday, 20<sup>th</sup> August 2020

**Present:** Cllr. Herbert Harper, Cllr. Mary Hill (in the chair from minute 5), Cllr. Dafydd Jenkins, Cllr. Matthew Park, Cllr. Natalie Park, Cllr. Marcus Themans, Cllr. Daniel Thomas (in the chair until minute 4), Cllr. Allan Walter, Cllr. Duncan White, Cllr. Milner Whiteman OBE.

**Town Clerk:** Trudi Barrett

**In attendance:** Reverend Matthew Stafford, Shropshire Councillor David Turner and approximately 25 members of the public.

## 1. Chairman's welcome

The Mayor welcomed everybody to the meeting.

The Mayor was delighted to report that the Town Council had been awarded £5,000 following a successful bid for funding from Shropshire Council's Covid-19 regeneration fund of £20,000. The funding would be used for video marketing, improved signage and business coaching to support trade and business as well as helping to make Much Wenlock a better place to live and work. The bid was put together within 10 working days by Town Councillors, the Ward Councillor and two members of the public with relevant expertise and marked a great improvement in co-operation to improve the town.

The previous weekend Much Wenlock had marked Victory in Japan Day with a 1940's singer dressed in full uniform performing in the square. On Sunday there had been a moving service in the Church where the Mayor was able to lay a Poppy wreath for the Town Council, on behalf of all residents past and present.

The Mayor urged everyone to respond to the Shropshire Council Local Plan consultation individually. Responses could be submitted until the end of September.

## 2. Apologies

An apology was received from Cllr Holyoak who was away.

**This apology was ACCEPTED and AGREED as APPROVED absence.**

## 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.

Councillor Thomas made the following statement: "After extensive talks with Shropshire Council's legal team I have received advice about not chairing and, of course, not voting this evening.

As many of you will know my family are landowners and if the site under discussion this evening does not form part of the preferred sites in the Local Plan Review for any reason, then it follows that developers may be looking to identify alternatives. My family also rents two fields owned by the same landowner and there could be a perception of bias. As a consequence of these interests and the advice I've received, I intend to leave the meeting before the public session as the following items are all connected to the Local Plan."

## 4. Dispensations

None requested.

Councillor Daniel Thomas left the meeting and Councillor Mary Hill took the chair.

## 5. Shropshire Council report

Shropshire Councillor David Turner gave a verbal report.

He urged residents to respond to the Local Plan consultation, not just on proposals for Much Wenlock but also for other areas. He noted that he had received dozens of comments from residents regarding the preferred site in Much Wenlock, the majority of which were in rejection. Cllr Turner raised a number of questions regarding the proposed housing development and its impact on local infrastructure and services. He noted that a copy of the Draft Local Plan documentation should now be available in Much Wenlock library for viewing by members of the public.

Councillor Turner had been pleased to work with Councillors and others on the successful recent grant application to Shropshire Council, as referenced by the Mayor.

He would be holding his next advice surgery on Saturday, 22<sup>nd</sup> August at Much Wenlock Museum.

The next litter pick would be held on Friday, 28<sup>th</sup> August.

Councillor Harper noted that statements had been made asserting that the Draft Local Plan did not take notice of the Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Development Plan (MWNDP), yet there were 12 references to the MWNDP in S13 of the Draft Local Plan. Councillor Turner did not agree that this demonstrated that Shropshire Council had taken notice of the MWNDP.

Councillor Harper noted that substantial community benefits of a spend of £1m on flooding alleviation, a new roundabout and 24 affordable dwellings (20% of the total number) might be delivered by the proposed housing development. He referenced the petition recently received by the Town Council from residents of Hunters Gate demanding measures to remedy flooding. Councillor Harper questioned whether Councillor Turner saw these as community benefits and whether Shropshire Council would see this as a way of providing relief from flooding in Much Wenlock. Councillor Turner responded that he did not have the specialist knowledge to know whether £1m was sufficient to provide the flooding alleviation required, as there were no proposals in the public arena. Councillor Turner noted that the Government had recently allocated £5.2bn to be spent on flood alleviation by 2027 but he could not commit Shropshire Council or its officers to what it was likely to do over the coming five or 18 years.

Councillor Jenkins noted the many questions raised by Councillor Turner and suggested that some of those points be considered at a different time.

Councillor Turner was thanked for his report.

## 6. Public session

- a. Following introductory comments regarding the proposed housing allocation for the town and allocation for site MUW012, Mrs Lesley Durbin asked the following question:
  - i. The Town Council and the Planning & Environment Committee can legitimately withdraw their support for MUW012 as it does not comply with the stated policies of Much Wenlock Town Council which they adopted in the Neighbourhood Plan in April 2013; and remains the statutory policies for Much Wenlock until 2026. It is not in the gift of individual councillors to make decisions on behalf of themselves which go against the stated wishes of the local community put into the Neighbourhood Plan by majority votes in referendum, Councillors are denying 'the will of the people'. Why do both committees not withdraw their support to the Shropshire Council Local Plan Review in line with the Neighbourhood Plan?
 

Mrs Durbin provided figures for recent traffic movements at the Gaskell junction, as well as figures for traffic movements estimated to be generated by the proposed Ironbridge Power Station development and the development at MUW012, and then asked the following question:
  - ii. By what calculation does the Much Wenlock Planning & Environment Committee and the Much Wenlock Town Council see that this extra traffic congestion will benefit the residents of Much Wenlock?
- b. A representation was presented on behalf of Much Wenlock Civic Society regarding the proposed site allocation MUW012 VAR and increase in the overall number of dwellings from 150 to 200. The Civic Society asked the Town Council not to support the new site allocation and increase in the number of dwellings on the following grounds:
  - i. There should be no major development in the town until the effect of the proposed development at the Ironbridge Power Station is known.
  - ii. The number of houses could be proposed by the Local Plan Review but a review of the Neighbourhood Plan should be used to deliver them.
  - iii. An independent report should be made into all flooding, including a solution found for the existing Hunters Gate. Only then should any building on the adjacent land be considered.
  - iv. The consequences of increased pollution and traffic on health has not been assessed.
  - v. If a developer makes a large contribution to infrastructure, this will proportionately reduce any contribution to social rented and shared ownership properties, which the Neighbourhood Plan proposed should be the highest housing priority.
  - vi. If the Town Council endorses the proposal in the review, it will be endorsing the building of a large-scale development in a Rapid Response Flood Catchment Area.
  - vii. Haworth has admitted in recent documents that there is 'slight overcapacity' at the Gaskell corner at peak times, even before any additional development.

- c. The Chair read a statement from Arthur Hill, a member of the Flood Group, relating to flooding issues. Mr Hill stated that two catchment wide surveys had previously been carried out and that recommendations for attenuation pools at Stretton Road and the Sytche had been subsequently implemented at a cost of approximately £2.1m. However, no attenuation had been provided for Hunters Gate. A solution had been proposed by Mouchel and, more recently by McCloy, a leading expert in the field. The benefits of the scheme were outlined, including prevention of flooding at Farley and reduction in sewer output down to the Raven by up to 30%. The proposed scheme would benefit several areas of the town. Small developments would not address the existing flooding problems. The proposed development scheme for MUW012 would include provision of flooding attenuation, at the expense of the developer. Funding would not be found elsewhere. Mr Hill also stated that when the Neighbourhood Plan had been submitted for scrutiny to the public examiner, the recommendation for a low number of houses had been deleted. The current site MUW012 had been accepted as the recommended site, but with a higher housing allocation.
- d. Mr Chris Bowden spoke regarding flooding in the town. He noted that there was a fear of flooding in the town. There were several solutions, but these were very costly, and funding would be needed. The development scheme would provide funding although, at this time, it was not known exactly what would be included in the flooding alleviation scheme from the developers for resolving the problems. The proposals were unlikely to solve all flooding problems in the town, some of which would still need to be addressed separately.

If small blocks of 10 or 15 houses were built, these would connect to a system that couldn't cope. If the housing numbers specified in the Neighbourhood Plan were to be provided from small developments, there would be two active building sites in the town every year, each generating traffic within the town. One larger development on Bridgnorth Road would generate traffic from only one site, onto the Bridgnorth Road.

The proposals in the Local Plan provided an opportunity to solve some problems and bring benefits to the town. Mr Bowden noted that his house had flooded this year, for the first time in 50 years, because Callaughtons Ash had failed.

The Chair noted that in addition to those members of the public who had spoken, a number of people had contacted the Town Council directly. She named and thanked those people for their contributions.

The Chair rearranged the agenda to take agenda items in the order 7a, 7d, 7b, 7c.

## **7. Shropshire Council Local Plan Consultation**

- a. It was noted that further 'Regulation 18' consultation on the pre-submission draft of the Shropshire Local Plan, 2016 – 2038 would be undertaken between 3<sup>rd</sup> August and 30<sup>th</sup> September 2020.
- b. The Chair provided an overview of the main issues which had been raised locally:
- i. Flooding: with regard to the need for an independent report, two reports had been produced previously and this year an in-depth report had been prepared by McCloy. The findings would be made known in due course.
  - ii. Housing numbers: 200 was the residential development guideline in the Draft Local Plan for the period 2016 – 2038. This figure included 32 completions and 21 with prior approval, leaving an allocation of 120 plus 27 windfall sites; there were not 200 new houses to be built.
  - iii. Why site MUW012 and not MUW008?: in 2013, Mr Ashcroft, the independent examiner of the MWNDP wrote that the site in the Bridgnorth Road area was accepted "by all concerned" as the "optimum location for a housing allocation". When considering potential sites for development Shropshire Council conducted a rigorous study of the sites offered and found that MUW008 was not as suitable as Hunters Gate. Town Councillors considered the same sites and came to the same conclusion.
  - iv. Disregard of the MWNDP: Neighbourhood Plans were intended as development plans, not non-development plans.  
Councillor Harper referenced a document on Neighbourhood Planning in the House of Commons Library, no. 05838, dated 12<sup>th</sup> October 2018. He noted that in May 2014 the people of Much Wenlock had voted for 130 dwellings between 2013 and 2026, with no allocated site, as policy H3 in the draft MWNDP had been deleted by the independent examiner. It would be difficult to argue against the statement made by Mr Ashcroft referenced in 7biii. above.

- v. The need for social housing: the proposed development would bring forward 24 social housing units. Connexus was said to be working on another site in the town but the location was not known.
- vi. The impact of development at Ironbridge Power Station and Tasley: this would be considered later in the meeting.
- vi. Pressure on local services: nobody in the Town Council would disagree that this was a concern but, unfortunately, additional services were never provided before developments. It was known that Shropshire Council was in discussions with the schools to assess capacity and the secondary school had confirmed they could take an increased number of pupils.
- vii. Traffic issues: this was a national concern, with or without additional housing. A roundabout on Bridgnorth Road would slow traffic, a matter the Council had been trying to address for many years. It was understood that traffic from the proposed development would be directed onto Bridgnorth Road, not Barrow Street. The Gaskell corner was an ongoing problem.  
Councillor Whiteman commented that the only solution to the Gaskell corner was a bypass.  
Councillor Themans supported Councillor Whiteman's comments. He believed that the main problem would not be traffic from the proposed site, but traffic from Tasley and Buildwas. It did not appear that this had been considered in the Draft Local Plan and it was essential that the Council did not support the Local Plan without recognition of traffic problems from other developments.

Councillor Harper referred to the housing allocation for the town. He referenced the adopted Core Strategy of March 2011 for the period 2006-26, where the requirement for Much Wenlock as a district centre was stated as up to 500 homes. This represented a build rate of 25 per year. In the MWNDP the target of 130 dwellings in the urban part of the parish for 2013-26 equated to a build rate of 10 per year. In the Draft Local Plan Much Wenlock was identified as one of 11 key settlements. Development rates were outlined in Appendix 5 of the documentation and Much Wenlock was one of the lowest at 200, representing 9.09 dwellings per year.

Councillor Whiteman commented that the site had been identified and would be developed for housing, but the question was whether it would also deal with the flooding.

Councillor N Park thanked members of the public for messages she had received directly. She commented that Much Wenlock needed more family homes, not just now but for the next generation. She was concerned that residents of Hunters Gate had suffered as Persimmon had not put in adequate flooding measures. She questioned how long residents would be prepared to wait until the drainage could be resolved if the new development were not built. Shropshire Council did not have the funds to remedy the problems.

Councillor Hill noted that the main consideration for Much Wenlock was flooding. The situation had changed since the MWNDP was developed, with climate change and increased flooding events. The existing two attenuation ponds were helping but were not enough for the town, but funding for more would need to be found. The bulk of money in the Severn & Wye catchment area would go to flood alleviation along the rivers. Whether the proposed development went ahead or not, there would be continued flooding. Callaughtons Ash had resulted in further problems. If the Hunters Gate development went ahead, the stakeholders would need to work together closely to ensure an appropriate flood alleviation scheme was implemented and to trust the experts.

Councillor M Park listed the three issues most often raised with him since he had become a Councillor: flooding, affordable homes and traffic calming, particularly the speed at which vehicles entered the town. The Draft Local Plan offered a part solution to all three of these issues. Councillor Park noted the emails he had received from members of the public and encouraged everyone to submit comments to Shropshire Council.

Councillor Harper noted that the Draft Local Plan included flood prone areas in the county and that Much Wenlock was in the top 10. There was nothing to stop housing being developed in a Rapid Response Flood Catchment Area.

The Chair urged individual residents to submit their comments to Shropshire Council. The Town Council had to consider what was best for the town as a whole. Most residents seemed to have no problem with the number of houses proposed for the town but wanted affordable housing and the flooding to be resolved. The scheme proposed would provide 24 affordable homes. In addition, a large sum of Community Infrastructure Levy would be generated for the town, to be used for infrastructure projects. It was noted that £36,000 received from the Callaughtons Ash development had been spent on the Gaskell Recreation Ground for community benefit.

Councillor White expressed his concern that members of the public who had contacted him did not want a large development in the town. He understood that this might mean that the flooding would not be dealt with. He expressed his concern that there had been no consultation on the increased number of houses for the site.

Councillor Harper commented that Berrys, the agent, had held a consultation event at the Priory Hall when the proposed housing number for MUW012 had been increased, and that Shropshire Council would regard this as consultation. Councillor White disagreed, stating that, in his opinion, this had been an information session and no proper consultation had taken place.

The Chair remarked that the stark choice was that in order for the flooding problems to be addressed, the town would have to have the housing.

**It was PROPOSED by Councillor Milner Whiteman and SECONDED by Councillor Herbert Harper that Much Wenlock Town Council have no objection to the proposed housing allocation number in the revised Local Plan, Section 13, Much Wenlock Place Plan Area.**

**We welcome the importance which has been placed on flood alleviation both on and off the housing allocation site MUW012VAR (Hunters Gate 2 site, pages 224/5) and the statement that a roundabout will be provided from the A458 into the site.**

**The Town Council also notes and supports the many references to the Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan throughout the Shropshire Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan.**

A recorded vote was requested by Councillor White.

In favour: Councillors Harper, Hill, Jenkins, M Park, Walter and Whiteman

Against: Councillors N Park and White

Councillor Themans was no longer present at the meeting, due to technical difficulties.

**It was RESOLVED to approve the above response to S13. Much Wenlock Place Plan Area in the Shropshire Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan.**

- c. It was noted that the Town Council had already submitted objections to the outline planning application for the Ironbridge Power Station (19/05560/OUT) and the Proposed Quarry to the East of Much Wenlock Road in Buildwas (19/05509/MAW) and that decisions on both applications were awaited.
- d. It was **RESOLVED to defer consideration of the impact on Much Wenlock of proposals for other areas included in the Draft Local Plan to the next full Council meeting, due to pressure of time.**

**8. Date of next meeting**

Members noted that the next meeting was scheduled to take place on 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2020.

The Chair thanked all those who had attended the meeting.

The meeting closed at 8.55pm

Signed .....  
Town Mayor

Date .....