

Telford and Wrekin Local Plan

Opening Statement

I'd like to thank Inspectors' Worden and Carpenter for inviting the Council to make an opening statement to the hearings for the Telford and Wrekin Local Plan.

The Council's vision for Telford and Wrekin is to maintain its position as one of the most green and natural Boroughs in the country. Telford and Wrekin has 20 local nature reserves with a further 7 proposed, over 2,500 hectares of green network and almost 90% of households are within a 5-minute walk of an accessible green space.

We recognise that maintaining the greenness of our borough does not mean that we cannot meet our housing and employment needs. This plan sets out how we will deliver the housing we need, create employment opportunities, whilst preserving the natural environment.

The new Telford and Wrekin Local Plan will provide a strengthened policy framework to help protect and enhance the extensive existing green spaces that our residents enjoy on their doorstep. The growth of Telford will create extensive new areas of publicly accessible open space, creating new areas of ecological biodiversity for all residents to enjoy. This will continue the

legacy established by Telford Development Corporation of a forest community set into the landscape.

The plan will also help reinforce the Council's aspirations for a climate neutral Borough creating buildings that are energy efficient and increasingly powered by renewable energy. As part of the Council's wider vision for housing in the Borough, climate ready homes will lower utilities bills, something that will help all of our residents.

Continually improving the quality and affordability of new homes for our residents is a key ambition of the Council. The level of ambition is evidenced in the establishment of Nuplace and Telford & Wrekin Homes that has seen the completion of a portfolio of 673 homes to date. This has seen the transformation of the rental sector in the Borough and, increasingly, delivery of homes to meet a range of needs for more vulnerable residents. A prime example of this vision in its totality is the development of a genuinely mixed community at Donnington Wood Way with a total of 186 affordable homes composed of 20 retirement apartments, a 76-apartment extra care scheme and 90 affordable houses as well as 143 open market homes. This clearly demonstrates that affordable, multi-tenure, multi-generational developments can be delivered.

Telford has several large former new town estates., These are areas that need regeneration and revitalisation. The plan recognises the need for a positive policy framework that will help support estate renewal. This will be vital in supporting schemes such as the recently announced Pride in Place funding which will see £30m invested into the Woodside, Brookside, and Sutton Hill areas.

Through the local plan, the Council intends to address development sites that have stalled or lain undeveloped with no clear proposal for bringing them back into productive use. Many of these sites blight our communities, especially in town and district centres and can de-value investment and regeneration efforts if they are not tackled. The plan contains policy that will allow the Council to take positive action with these site owners.

Supporting local businesses and securing inward investment delivers job opportunities for our residents and strengthens the economy of Borough.

The Council has a strong track record of supporting new employment development through the innovative and groundbreaking Telford Land Deal, a partnership with Homes England that has seen 209,000sq m, of new employment floor space established, over 50ha of brownfield land put back into productive use, and over 2,400 jobs created. The Council's Invest

Telford team stands ready to help promote new employment land development opportunities in Telford and Newport.

The benefit of the plan-making system is the ability to secure new strategic infrastructure in a timely manner and deliver housing and employment development through a coordinated approach. In the absence of a plan being in place the Borough would be at risk of speculative development, which in turn would make the delivery of infrastructure, such as new schools, improved transport systems and parks and open spaces harder for the Council to deliver. The Council, through the previous local plan, has an excellent track record of securing infrastructure which has seen the redevelopment of local secondary and primary schools, the building of new primary schools and the expansion of existing secondaries, new and improved highway infrastructure and the building of medical facilities.

The growth of Telford through the new Sustainable Communities sites will see the delivery of five new primary schools and a new secondary school, capacity which would have been much harder to secure through piecemeal development. As well as schools these sites will deliver a range of onsite infrastructure including sports and recreational facilities, local centres, and open space for all residents to enjoy.

The Sustainable Communities sites will also help support improvements to the highway network. The Council has already committed to delivering £12m of network improvements in north Telford which will have the added benefit of supporting our existing communities as well as the new ones.

The Council has positively engaged with neighbouring Local Authorities, statutory bodies and a range of infrastructure providers including the NHS, utilities and other public services to seek their input into the plan and provide them with a clear vision for growth over the next 15 years. This time horizon provides these partners with an extended period for the development of new infrastructure in support of the plan.

The Borough's town and district centres are the beating hearts of our communities; over recent years all centres have faced significant challenges in responding to changing retail and working patterns. The Council has been at the forefront of meeting these challenges through initiatives such as 'Pride in Our High Streets' that has seen support for business starts ups and the growth of independent retail in our centres, through to significant investments in the key borough towns of Wellington and Oakengates.

Telford Town Centre has not been immune to these changing patterns and as such its role is being reshaped through the Station Quarter

development. This will see living, working and learning in the town centre for the first time, bringing a diversity of uses that will support retail and leisure provision within the core of the centre. On completion and occupation, it will help set the pattern for future potential growth in the centre and help revitalise an area that is now over 50 years old.

Finally, the Council and its partners have a strong track record of bringing forward significant developments at Lawley, Lightmoor, Ketley and Priorslee, supporting their delivery through planning, infrastructure delivery as well as, in the case of the Telford Land Deal, de-risking complex development sites. This experience and the retention of many in house services to support development means the Council is in the best possible position to deliver new homes and employment opportunities for our residents, businesses, and visitors.

The Council welcomes the positive and constructive feedback we have received from the public, stakeholders and developers. The Council understands that having a plan in place is the best way to set a strategy for the future of our Borough whilst protecting it against unwanted speculative development that, does not always serve the best interests of our residents, our businesses, or our environment.