



## SOULTON ROAD WEM COMMUNITY-LED HOUSING PROJECT STEERING GROUP

### Project Review

10 May 2013

*(text in blue are extracts from emails)*

#### 1. Housing Need

- a. An analyse of the waiting list for Wem Town and Parish as at 5 February showed:

- Existing Homepoint tenant – 23%
- Private tenant – 35%
- Living with family and friends – 16%
- Homepoint Partner tenant – 14%
- Other – 5.5%
- NFA – 6.5%

There is the potential that if a family was currently living locally with family/friends it would not necessarily lead to an increase in traffic or use of local services.

- b. Potential of a hidden demand for Wem Rural Parish due to difference of affordable homes available in the area: Wem Rural 28 and Wem Town 321
- c. Since 2009 only 5 properties in Wem Rural have come up for re-letting (3x1 bed and 2 x3 bed) with last 3 properties having the most 'bids' 30, 29 and 54 bids respectively. These would not have had any 'local' priority and would have been allocated on housing need priority (priority, gold, silver and bronze and length of time).
- d. As at 5 February 46 people with a Wem Rural or Wem Town address had expressed a preference to live in Wem Rural.
- e. Analysis of total lettings in Wem Urban and Wem Rural between 2009 – March 2013:  
82 Available properties in Wem Urban – all let to Wem Urban residents.  
Average bid 37.4  
High bids in the following areas  
    Lowe Hill Gardens/Road > 100 bids  
    Barnard Street > 50 plus bids (4 properties)  
    Orchard Way > 80 plus bids (5 properties)  
    Kynaston Drive > 70's (3 properties)  
    Cordwall Park – 2 properties attracting 100 and 57 bids  
Wem Rural – 3 properties in Quina Brook attracting an average of 71 bids
- f. Update from Shropshire Council 16 April 2013:  
13 Households on the waiting list  
In terms of priority banding 2 x gold/9 silver/2 bronze (gold being in greatest need)  
The list comprises a broad range of ages and not just restricted to the younger age group

#### Bedroom requirements

- 1 x 4 bed
- 3 x 3 bed
- 2 x 2 bed
- 7 x 1 bed

28 of Wem Urban Parish households who are registered on Homepoint and who have expressed a preference for Wem Rural. There is no way of knowing from the information available whether these households could satisfy the local connection criteria.

## 2. Community concerns

- a. Site potential (quality of 'green field' site)
  - Severnside have confirmed that a Ground Investigation Report has been carried out on the site and recommendations have been made in regards to construction. A considerable amount of the site was found to be 'made-up ground' (ie brick and rubble) with a layer of top soil.

- b. Potential traffic issues: volume and speed along Soulton Road

- Email response from Shropshire Council dated 25 February

Any proposed development would be subject to a formal planning application. As part of the application, the applicant will need to demonstrate that the development would not have a significant effect on the surrounding Highway Network and is located within a sustainable location, to encourage sustainable modes of transport such as walking and cycling.

As discussed, when considering the suitability of the site, as Highway Authority we would take into consideration that Soulton Road is a 'B' classification road, and is one of the main routes into Wem Town Centre, therefore it is unlikely that we would consider that an additional 22 dwellings would have a 'significant' impact on the surrounding highways network within the vicinity of the site. In addition to the above, whilst I acknowledge that any additional dwellings on Soulton Road will increase the number of vehicle movements within the vicinity of the site, it is anticipated that the majority of vehicles will turn left out of the site as they will be travelling towards the A49, towards Whitchurch, Shrewsbury, Market Drayton and Telford, avoiding Wem Town Centre and any associated queuing at the Level crossing.

It is considered that the development is located within walking and cycling distance from Wem Town Centre and local amenities such as the local Primary and Secondary School. A footway link between the development site and Wem Town Centre is provided on the northern side of the carriageway between Ash Grove and Church Lane and along the southern section of the carriageway between Church Lane and Wem Town Centre.

The proposed development site is located within close proximity to the existing 30mph speed limit, In order to reduce vehicle speeds on the approach to the development I had discussed the feasibility of extending the existing 30mph speed limit or creating a 40mph buffer zone with Traffic Engineer, David Gradwell. When I discussed the matter with David he recommended that the existing 30mph remains

at its current location in order to maintain the impact of approaching a built up area.

However, as you will be aware, vehicle speeds within the vicinity of the site have previously been identified as an area for concern and Saulton Road is currently a Speed Visor site that is rotated between other locations. Therefore, it is recommended that further consideration is given to approaching the developer about the feasibility of them providing a contribution towards the installation of a permanent Vehicle Activated Sign to reduce vehicle speeds within the vicinity of the site.

In view of the above, I can confirm that Shropshire Council as Highway Authority would not have an objection in principle to a residential development at the proposed location, based on the information supplied to date. I trust you have found the above useful, however please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any queries.

c. Access to town / local facilities

- See above email response from Shropshire Council dated 25 February

d. Dangers from train level crossing and congestion along Aston Street and Aston Road. The following question was asked of Shropshire Council "Would you be able to check whether the problem of the 'congestion' along Aston Street has ever been raised formally with you or colleagues by residents, Town Council or community groups?"

- Email response from Shropshire Council dated 7 March

I am not aware of any specific issues that have been raised regarding congestion on Aston Street. Obviously, this whole area becomes congested for a certain time period when the level crossing is in operation, and concerns have been raised that the new road marking layout on the Station Road approach to the level crossing as part of Network Rail's improvement works has made the situation worse. This layout was implemented for safety reasons and is currently being monitored / reviewed.

As far as possible solutions to the congestion problems at Wem level crossing, I feel there is little that can be done to improve the situation other than maybe the construction of some form of inner relief road. I know there has been previous talk of a possible route running parallel with the railway line that could link in with the B5063/B5476 junction by the railway bridge/existing Hawks site. However, I am not aware of anything currently being in the pipeline to progress such a scheme in the future.

e. Water and Sewerage concerns

- Sewer Capacity Assessment dated 26 February 2012 and email from STW dated 20 March.

Regarding drainage for this development I wrote to Shropshire Homes last September through our developer enquiry process. Regarding impact on the sewerage network I recommended modelling to determine if any necessary upgrading works would be necessary as a result of the development. The modelling was recently completed and determined that no off-site improvements are necessary. The foul flow will be very small to the Saulton Road pumping station and the developer will be utilising rainwater harvesting and an attenuation ~~pond~~ tank to

restrict surface water flows to a very small amount. This will discharge to a separate surface water system.

- STW water pipe upgrade to extend past Wem Industrial Estate and email from STW dated 11 March

As per our telephone conversation earlier, these comments relate to clean water only –

I can confirm that we received an initial enquiry in September, 2012 to connect 22 new dwellings to our clean water network, the outcome of the evaluation that we carried out is that there is sufficient capacity in the existing network for the new dwellings to connect. We are currently in the process of upgrading the water main along Soulton Rd which will safeguard future service levels.

We will review the supply arrangements again when the developer submits an official application to connect to the water mains, if there is any need to reinforce the clean water network at this stage then this will be done as part of the application process.

f. Surface Water drainage – *What engineering solution has Severnside designed to deal with this? 'Flooding' experienced in neighbouring fields.*

g. Potential School capacity issues

- Information on family size and age of children from the waiting list is not accessible. Based on Shropshire Council's standard provision of 18 places per 100 additional houses an additional 4 places would be required.
- Additional information received see attached Shropshire Council email dated 8 March – summarised as follows:

Wem Rural – School Catchment Areas

School Place Allocation – Key Points

- The Local Authority is legally obliged to provide a place for every school age child – the network of schools enables the Council to discharge this duty.
- Ideally places should be available in the locality of pupils' addresses or within reasonable travel times
- Some schools will be more popular than others, or will have a higher ratio of children in their locality. Added to this is legislation that allows parents to make an application for any school of their preference (provided they get them there)
- Three things that regulate this:-
  - School admission policy (guided by national admissions code)
  - Physical capacity of the school
  - Catchment areas come into play when a school is oversubscribed
- Under normal circumstances, schools shouldn't take out of area children, as these children will already have a place allocated to them, but they are legally obliged to offer a space if there is space.

Schools in Wem

There is an expectation that where a school has a significant number of out of area children there would be a probability that eventually the local need would eventually displace them and return to providing places for local children. This doesn't mean that those children on the school register would be displaced just that it is likely that the trend would change i.e. allocation to local children.

October School Census 2012 – St.Peter's Primary – 10.5% of children on the register were from outside the catchment, however, the school lost 18% of its catchment

children to other schools. Therefore, if its catchment children (18%) wished to register at the school then there could be capacity problems. However, it was noted that there is some physical flexibility with the school which would enable the LA to meet its legal obligation.

It was noted that the overall LDF allocation of new housing for Wem may cause the LA pressures in the future at primary level, but they would plan to meet this need and do not see it as unmanageable.

Thomas Adams School – only loses 3% of its catchment children to other schools thus demonstrating that it caters for the Community. There is over capacity in that it is able to accommodate 30% from out of the area. It would take many more houses than even the whole of the plan period quota to cause capacity issues at this school.

- Currently there is only one year at St Peter's Primary School which has spare capacity.
- h. Wem Medical Centre capacity issues
- Contact has been made with the Centre. Planning Permission has been granted to extend the Surgery but the project is on hold due to the hiatus in funding from the PCT. The Centre already restricts services offered due to lack of space. The Whitchurch Road development will be completed and occupied in the near future so the Centre will be busier by completion of this project. An extra 80 ish patients is not considered to alter things too much. The Medical Centre would cope but not as well as they might like
- i. On-going Tenant behaviour management
- To be covered by Lettings Plan Agreement. Existing plans relating to Tasley Close Bridgnorth and Oak Street Highley have been supplied by Shropshire Council and reviewed as a guide. Subsequently it has been advised that this document will not be appropriate for this new site.
- j. Views have been expressed that 'Empty Homes' should be used prior to building new homes
- Shropshire Council's Council Tax Dept has confirmed that there are 20 homes classed as 'empty' on their records in Wem Rural Parish. These are privately owned properties.
  - Email response dated 28 March from Shropshire Council (Private Sector Housing team) regarding informal or formal actions taken on any empty properties in the Parish since 2007.

I am not really sure on the boundaries of Wem Rural Parish but looking at the surrounding area to Wem itself there are none that I know of that have required any intervention by us. I have had contact with an owner of a property in Lee, if that is within the area and that property is intended to be sold, it is just taking some time. Aside from that property there are no others which we have had reported to us.

- k. To investigate noise levels from Industrial Estate and in particular Kingpin.  
Response re noise:

In response to your concerns relating to noise I have the following information which I hope clarifies our stance and the process that we use when looking at noise impact on residential properties being built in close proximity to an existing noise source. When an application is received applying to place residential properties

next to an existing noise source it is common for a noise assessment to be requested from the developer. We would generally ask for an assessment to be carried out in line with BS 4142, a well established noise assessment which is appropriate in these circumstances.

The assessment will provide details of background noise and expected noise at the outside of residential properties being introduced. If noise is found to be a problem as a result of the assessment we would require the developer to state how noise can be mitigated in order to bring levels down to a suitable level. This may include providing a barrier (e.g. an acoustic fence or bund), additional glazing (e.g. minimum glazing standard to produce a suitable reduction in noise to the inside of a property or the addition of secondary glazing) and orientation of the buildings (to take living areas away from the noise source or reducing number/area of windows facing the noise source). There may be other methods also considered depending on site specific factors. As a result of proposed measures a developer may be able to demonstrate that noise has been suitably mitigated and therefore the development is suitable or we may have discussions in order to make further improvements.

In the case of refused planning application 09/03770/FUL no information or assessment was provided to state what the noise environment was and how noise could be mitigated to protect future residents of the dwellings. Therefore refusal was recommended. In the situation you are looking at if an application came in I would be looking for a suitable noise assessment to be included in order to allow the development to be considered. If noise was found to be an issue requiring attention I would expect the developer to have proposed mitigation measures for consideration. If neither are submitted I would comment to ask for these to be provided. Only then could a decision to suggest refusal of the development, or part of the development, be made. All in all it is for the developer to provide information on how noise will affect the development and how it can be mitigated if this is required.

As a result I would be minded to say that residents are right to note that noise needs to be considered. The developer will need to demonstrate how noise can be mitigated where required. I note that there are already residential properties in the area and therefore it is likely that further development may be possible however without specifics I cannot say more.

#### Response re Kingpin

I have seen the previous response and will therefore concentrate on the fire issues. We have carried out a number of visits and share intelligence with the Environment Agency and since the service of the notice Kingpin have been largely compliant. Certainly over the last 12 months we have seen an improvement in the conditions at the site and we will continue to monitor. Assuming the site was on mains water and drainage the other issue that would need to be considered would be potential land contamination. I have had a quick look at our data which suggests that the site is on or in close proximity to former military land and in the first instance we would request a desk review of any potential land contamination issues. If you would like any further information or if you would like me to attend a meeting to discuss this or the noise issues please let me know.

- I. Request further information on traffic volumes:

- The tipping point of the volume of traffic along the Saulton Road/Level Crossing which would preclude further development on the east side of Wem.

It would be difficult to establish the level of development that would be unacceptable from a highways perspective and would be the 'tipping point'. We would look at each development on a site by site basis. Prior to determining whether an application is acceptable, we would normally ask that a Design and Access Statement, Transport Statement or full Transport Assessment was undertaken, depending on the scale of the development. This would provide information with regard to the likely impact on the surrounding highway network and whether there would be any significant delay at junctions. It would be for Shropshire Council to make an assessment about whether the information provided is accurate and if any mitigating works are required to alleviate any problems that may arise from any development. I am not aware of any studies that have been undertaken to establish if there is any significant delay at the Level Crossing in Wem compared to similar crossings, however as previously discussed it is not anticipated that an additional 22 dwellings would have a significant impact on the surrounding road network, but this will be determined in the event a planning application is submitted.

- The method used to justify why traffic will turn left not right into Wem.

It is always difficult to determine the exact number and type of trips a development will generate. In theory the development is close enough to Wem Town Centre to walk or cycle to the local shops and schools. If the proposed development is social housing, then car ownership is generally lower than average and therefore they are more likely to use more sustainable means of transport especially if they are travelling short distances. It is therefore likely that residents turning right out of the development will walk rather than use the car. It is acknowledged however that some residents will turn right out of the development.

Working on that assumption, residents that are travelling to other towns such as Whitchurch and Market Drayton are more likely to use a car because of the distance and lack of public transport links. Hence the assumption that the majority of vehicles will turn left. This assumption may be incorrect, however the level of trips generated by a residential development of this scale are unlikely to have a significant impact on the highway network in view of the classification of the road and existing flows.

- Justification of the use of Vehicle Activated Signs.

Please find attached a copy of a Traffic Advisory Leaflet published by the Department for Transport, some of the equipment in the photos are slightly dated but it provides a bit of background information. Shropshire Council do not have a preferred manufacturer for Vehicle Activated Repeater signs but we have recently sourced some signs from Simmon Signs, please refer to the link below for further information;

[http://www.simmonsigns.co.uk/product\\_POST-IS-Speed-Watch\\_56.html](http://www.simmonsigns.co.uk/product_POST-IS-Speed-Watch_56.html)

If you remain concerned with regard to the type of sign to be provided, then in the event this planning permission is granted, then the steering group can have an input in the type of sign installed.

- Site visit with Highways Officers:

Discussion took place with Officers. An email and attachments of an email to an Ash Grove resident was passed over to the Officers. Concerns were raised regarding the traffic along Soulton Road and included the number of trips per day emanating from the proposed site, spacing between existing junctions and the proposed junction and speeding.

- m. To investigate causes of flooding behind Ash Grove.

As mentioned on the phone earlier this morning, all planning applications shall come via our drainage team during the planning application stage. I have been assured by our drainage engineer that the development shall be assessed to ensure the most relevant drainage systems and will have to comply with all surface water management plans before having permission granted.

It will be in our interest to ensure that all existing areas do not incur any additional flooding or enhance flood issues already occurring at the site.

Our mapping system suggests that there are little issues regarding surface water.

May I also mention that Shropshire Council do not have any records of there being any issues regarding flooding in this area.

I'd say there is very little which is of concern in this area from our system, this doesn't mean to say there are no issues, some people may not have reported them. If residents do appear to have some issues which they are concerned of and would like to make us aware of them then please have them contact me and I will be happy to discuss it with them.

- n. Confirmation the capacity of the attenuation tank and that it can cope with a level of rain water similar to last 12 months/winter.

*Response outstanding*

- o. The current level of pupils at St Peters exceeds capacity. To request what action is Shropshire Council taking.

The data we hold on the school's capacity, which includes a definitive DfE net capacity form signed by the head, suggests there may be some limited scope to cope with the current over-capacity and the head teacher does manage this effectively. Our regular pupil number forecast, a copy of which the school possesses, suggests a stable number on roll without the effects of housing.

However, we are aware that, like most of the other market towns in the county, Wem is likely to have a relatively sizeable allocation of new housing in the plan period to 2026. As a result of this, and a degree of existing housing permissions in the town, our 'enhanced' forecast suggests the need to discuss with the school quite soon the consequent pressure that this might put on the available places at the school.

Meanwhile, with regard solely to the proposed development you mention, our forecasting methodology suggests that 23 houses would normally only produce about 3 primary-age children. The nature of the housing type may increase this yield, however, I would still not expect it to have a significant effect on the capacity and organisation at the school. The situation will be closely monitored, and this should allow us to make appropriate, timely provision where necessary.

### **3. Previous attempt of affordable homes development in area**

There was an Exception Site application submitted by Severnside Housing in December 2009 at Land adj Carwynan, Church Lane, Wem. It was refused due to inadequate information being submitted with the application to demonstrate the impact of noise generated by the neighbouring Engineering Works upon the residential amenities of future occupiers of the proposed dwellings.  
Planning Application Ref: 09/03770/FUL

#### **4. Site design/location**

- a. Site layout – Steering Group’s comments taken into account regarding a Play area and bungalows. Proposed dwellings: 3 bungalows and 20 houses  
Scheme Mix:  
11 x 2 bed 4 person houses (2 Shared Ownership, 9 Affordable Rent)  
9 x 3 bed 5 person houses (2 Shared Ownership, 9 Affordable Rent)  
3 x 2 bed 3 person bungalows (all for Affordable Rent)  
Proposed play area of 402m<sup>2</sup> (approximately 4325 sq ft)
- b. Design of properties – Steering Group comments taken into account. Colours for bricks and tiles would be considered later in the project.
- c. Eco friendly methods / materials – to follow in due course
- d. Moving of play area to site of E13 to be reviewed  
*Response outstanding*
- e. Clarification of the Planning Officer’s decision behind agreement of exception site.  
*The site is attached to existing housing, which although is separated from the development boundary of Wem on this side of Sulton Road is opposite the development boundary on the opposite side of the road. As such it could be argued that the site is adjoining the settlement as required by policy. I consider it would be difficult to argue that this site was isolated or sporadic given the adjoining, existing, housing. However consideration also needs to be given to whether the development would adversely affect the landscape, local historic or rural character.*

#### **5. Planning Application update**

Once site layout had been agreed Severnside Housing will be in a position to submit an application to Shropshire Council  
Planning Application submitted 26 April 2013

#### **6. Promotion of development to residents of Wem Rural and neighbouring Parishes**

- a. Update Flyer circulated to neighbouring properties an Aston and Barkers Green week ending 22 March 2013
- b. Drop-in Event planned at Wem Cricket Club Tuesday 9 April 2013.

#### **7. Details of the Cascade within the S106 Agreement**

- a. Non-exception sites and Local Authority stock transfer properties give no priority to ‘local’ families.
- b. Clarification of Cascade process for S106s with local connection is being sought.  
Meeting arranged for 3 April – *recommendations to follow*
- c. Preference for the Cascade to be:  
Wem Rural residents – 10 weeks  
Wem Town residents – 10 weeks

Other neighbouring Parishes residents – 6 weeks

## **8. Lettings Agreement**

To review a copy of the Tenancy Agreement in lieu of Lettings Plan.  
Copy received 15 April 2013

## **9. Play Area**

Email received from Shropshire Council

The policy guidance for open space provision within housing developments is 30m<sup>2</sup> per bed space. E.g. if the average of the 23 houses is 3 bed space this would = 2070m<sup>2</sup>

You should look at the proximity of other play area as we set a standard of 10mins walk for children to reach a play area.

Re play equipment this varies for age groups and is not easy to cost

The officer for the Wem area will be able to give you advice on management and on-going maintenance

### **a. Open area or equipped**

Community Recreation Team has advised that based on the information available at this time the play area would be best targeted at the younger children. Teenagers would more than likely to prefer to cycle/walk to the Recreation Ground. If equipped, current advice is to avoid the 'springy chicken' type of equipment and choose rocks and boulders (climbing).

### **b. Management and on-going maintenance**

Shropshire Council can be contracted to carry out fortnightly/quarterly inspections at £12 per visit (current rate of charges). Annual ROSPA inspection is £50 again through Shropshire Council.

## **10. Stewardship- to discuss options**

## **11. Empty Homes Review**

Having considered the points raised about Empty Homes I consider a Review is of merit but outside the scope of this CLH Project. I would strongly recommend that the comments are passed to the Wem Economic Forum which is best placed to take a Review forward and also include homes in Wem Town. C Warner