

Telford and Wrekin Local Plan

Examination in Public

15th – 24th November 2016

Representations on behalf of Mrs M Fowler (Comment ID PUB253 and PUB255)

Comments in relation to Inspector's Matters, Issues and Questions Paper

Matter 6.3 - Examination Session 24 November 2016

1. Briefly, and to explain the background to this submission, Mrs Fowler's family owns land at Hodgebower, Ironbridge. The site lies within the Ironbridge Gorge Conservation Area and the World Heritage site. The land has been in the family for 100 years or more, and for a long period of time the frontage element of the site was used as a coal yard, with the family operating a coal delivery service throughout what is now Telford, and the surrounding rural area.
2. In 2012 planning permission was granted for the construction of a single dwellinghouse on the area of land that had been in use as a coalyard. This was an odd shaped plot, but the Council would only consider a dwelling that sat squarely on the plot facing the highway. Whilst this did not suit the plot, nor was it in keeping with the layout and positioning of adjacent properties, the family accepted the planning consent.
3. To the rear of the plot is a large paddock. This paddock can only be accessed via the development plot, and cannot readily be seen from nearby vantage points. There is no access to the land for the general public and it has no amenity value. If the permitted dwelling is constructed there will be even less possibility for the land to make any contribution to the amenity of the locality or for the general public, as it will not be visible from Hodgebower.
4. This land was shown in the Wrekin Local Plan as being within the green network, and that designation has now been carried forward into the various drafts of the Submission Version Telford and Wrekin Local Plan.
5. So, against this background, and in relation to Matter 6.3 of the Inspector's Matters, Issues and Questions Paper, the following comments are made.

6. Mrs Fowler has objected to the inclusion of the land within the Green Network designation, at various stages of the development of the Telford and Wrekin Local Plan, as the site at Hodgebower did not appear to satisfy the criteria set out as the reasons for green network designation. The family believed, at one point, that they might have achieved the removal of the designation.
7. Mrs Fowler's site remains as part of the green network in the Submission Version of the Local Plan.
8. The land that is the subject of the submission is not developable on a large scale basis, as the only access to the site is via Hodgebower and via the plot which has the benefit of planning permission. Hodgebower has inadequate width and junction alignment (which cannot be improved) to serve as a means of access to further development. Mrs Fowler had in mind that a better form of development could be achieved if a dwelling could be constructed on the land that is now shown as Green Network, in substitution for the dwelling that has been permitted on the frontage plot. This would allow the land to be properly maintained, and the frontage plot could be landscaped in order that the amenities of the locality, and in particular the immediately adjoining residences, could be improved.
9. Mrs Fowler was encouraged when it was learned that an area of land to the north of her family's land that surrounds the Beeches (former residential home) and is believed to be owned by the Council, was to be allocated (Housing Site H5) for housing development. That land is an extension to Mrs Fowler's family's site, of similar natural characteristics, but can be quite easily seen for the public highway.
10. As the representation submitted on behalf of Mrs Fowler at Publication Version stage pointed out, the idea expressed in the Framework (para's 76, 77 and 109) that there may well be areas of land in an urban area that should be prevented from being developed, should be on the basis of their particular importance. It is difficult for the general public to understand how one area of land can be considered of particular importance and should be maintained free from development, when a nearby area, with apparently the same characteristics but of rather greater public significance is considered suitable for development. The differences are not apparent, and do not appear to be justified in the Submission Local Plan.
11. It does not appear to Mrs Fowler's family that the tests suggested in the Framework are being appropriately applied, and that greater benefit in terms of visual appearance, maintenance, ecology and biodiversity could be achieved through the development of the land. Green Network designation is used by the Council as a very significant negative development control tool, aimed at preventing development rather than furthering biodiversity and improving the appearance and amenity of the area. Mrs Fowler does not believe this was the aim of the Framework, and the Local Plan is therefore not supporting sustainable development.

27 October 2016