

## Policy PS36 Sharpness New Settlement

### Responses to Inspectors Questions

1. Does the proposed allocation meet the vision, spatial strategy and strategic objectives set out in the Plan?

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Yes. The Sharpness new settlement is an integral component of the of the Local Plans vision and has been an early foundation that has helped develop and underpin the spatial and strategic objectives of the Plan.

*Does the Policy ensure that these objectives will be met?*

Yes. Strategic Site Allocation Policy PS36 sets out 25 criteria which the Council believes will help secure the sustainable credentials of this new settlement.

2. Does the evidence adequately demonstrate that the proposal will accord with the sustainable ethos of garden communities?

Yes. A Garden City is defined by the TCPA as a holistically planned new settlement which enhances the natural environment and offers high-quality affordable housing and locally accessible work in beautiful, healthy and sociable communities.

Part of the integral design of Sharpness has been for it to embrace the ethos of the garden communities. The following principles of a Garden City set out by the TCPA are considered to be in conformity with the ethos of the proposal.

- Integrated and Sustainable Transport
- Good Design
- Green Infrastructure
- Employment Opportunities
- Smart and Sustainable Living
- Community Engagement
- Healthy New Town Principles

3. Is the policy aim, of providing a new self-contained garden community settlement, viable and realistic?

- *Has this been robustly demonstrated?*
- *Is the development, as envisaged in the Plan, likely to be achieved during the plan period?*

Yes.

A viability report provided to the Examination concludes that the site can be successfully delivered.

Additionally, wider consideration of the proposed Phase 2 of PS36, which would follow to provide significant additional housing for the next plan period, will further ensure viability.

The developer has provided a phasing plan for the development, demonstrating that the development can be provided in the plan period.

It is therefore evident that the delivery of a self-contained garden community at Sharpness is viable and realistic and robustly demonstrated in evidence.

4. In relation to infrastructure:

- a. Does the policy clearly identify what infrastructure is necessary to support the delivery of the allocation? Will it be delivered at the right time and in the right place? How will this be achieved?
- b. Has the impact of the new settlement on the surrounding road network, including nearby motorway junctions, been adequately assessed? Can any impacts be mitigated and if so, how and when? Is this feasible? Is the policy sufficiently positively worded in this regard, for example with reference to M5 junction 14.
- c. The policy refers to a new railway station being delivered on the Sharpness branch line as part of the development.
  - i. What is the status of this project and is the delivery of the site allocation dependent on this coming forward?
  - ii. What level and frequency of rail service is proposed and is this supported by Network Rail and relevant service providers?
  - iii. Has funding been identified to support the delivery of this scheme?
  - iv. What are the proposed timescales for its delivery and would it be in time to support the new settlement?
- d. Is the proposed new rail link (on the Bristol-Birmingham mainline) and express coach services deliverable and viable and have funding sources been identified for these schemes? What is the timetable for delivery for these projects and will they be delivered in time to support the allocation? The policy refers to the coach link being required at an early stage in the development, is this viable? Have discussions taken place with the relevant infrastructure providers taken place (such as Network Rail) and do they support the projects? Has funding been identified? Has capacity been identified on the Bristol-Birmingham mainline to accommodate additional passenger traffic?
- e. The Sustainable Transport Strategy (STS) lists a number of interventions for the site that will need to be incorporated into its design and layout and be delivered at an early stage. For instance, it identifies that sustainable transport movements should be prioritised over vehicle movements by providing high-quality and accessible cycling and walking routes, which connect to Quedgeley West Business Park and local community facilities on Green Lane. Are these requirements and the timing of their delivery sufficiently clear from the wording of the policy? Will sufficient suitable and available sustainable transport links connect the site with the surrounding area?

*Does the policy clearly identify what infrastructure is necessary to support the delivery of the allocation? Will it be delivered at the right time and in the right place? How will this be achieved?*

Yes. The list of infrastructure required is comprehensive and is the product of considerable technical assessment work. The evidence document Sharpness Vale – Highway Capacity Assessment provides an analysis of the possible effects on the local highway network.

The public transport provision set out in the policy is shown to be deliverable by the development, and hence this provides a realistic proposition for a non-car dominated new settlement.

The policy identifies that technology will be used in tandem with the physical infrastructure.

The phasing of infrastructure delivery will be a matter for a future consideration via a planning application. However, the evidence provided by the site promoter considers the way that infrastructure will be provided over time.

The business case and financial modelling undertaken in respect of the delivery of train and coach services sets out the anticipated patronage arising over time, showing how services would be initiated and then increased over time as demand grows. There is a commitment to the early subsidy of these services by the site promoter; the initial provision of a coach service to Gloucester, gives way to the initiation of the train service over time, when the infrastructure for this has been delivered and there is an initial demand that the train can rely upon.

Furthermore, the type and nature of the services proposed lends itself to a flexible approach quite deliberately; the size of vehicle, times and hours of operation can all be adjusted over time to respond as cost effectively as possible to demand arising.

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Yes. The evidence available at this stage is in two contexts:

- The Council has developed an area-wide traffic model and appraisals of the proposed Local Plan as a whole.
- The site Promoters have undertaken a more detailed series of assessments of the potential impacts of the scheme on the local transport network. The Sharpness Vale - Highway Capacity Assessment document identifies highway impact mitigation requirements.

The work that has been undertaken shows that the new settlement can be accommodated on the transport network without detrimental residual effects.

National Highways has indicated support of strategic objectives contained in the Draft Local Plan.

The specific situation with regard to M5 J14 will potentially be impacted by development from a range of locations. The strategic modelling that has been undertaken suggests that there may be a residual impact of traffic at this location which may result in the Sharpness scheme, along with others, having to make a proportionate contribution to the improvement of this junction.

*The policy refers to a new railway station being delivered on the Sharpness branch line as part of the development.*

- *What is the status of this project and is the delivery of the site allocation dependent on this coming forward?*
- *What level and frequency of rail service is proposed and is this supported by Network Rail and relevant service providers?*
- *Has funding been identified to support the delivery of this scheme?*
- *What are the proposed timescales for its delivery, and would it be in time to support the new settlement?*

The status of the re-instatement of the train service is that it remains a proposal as part of the Sharpness Vale proposals. The viability evidence submitted by the site promoters confirms that the capital cost of the scheme can be funded by the development.

The delivery of the PS36 allocation is not considered to be dependent on the delivery of the train service.

The operational costs of the railway will depend on whether usage of the service is sufficient to create a farebox that can allow it to continue to operate in addition to plans for MaaS subscriptions as well.

The delivery of the station is within the control of the site promoters and the Council, as the scheme would, if necessary, be fully funded by the development. As such it can be delivered alongside the development. The proposals are that the train service would be available, details of which are provided within accompanying technical reports. However, prior to this being delivered, the transport strategy for the development allows for coach services to operate to Gloucester from an early occupation level at Sharpness.

The initial service has been tested against the latest available timetable and has been shown to be deliverable without impact on other services. Network Rail (NR) have approved this study and its conclusions.

The timing of the development and train service delivery are, essentially, inextricably linked.

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Details of the rail connection and station are set out in the previous question.

The delivery of passenger rail services to the existing branch line, has been planned in discussion with key stakeholders; NR and the Vale of Berkeley Railway Trust (VoBR). Dialogue with NR and the timetable study undertaken, included in the Sharpness Branch Line – Outline Business Case, Restore Your Railway document, showed that services to Sharpness Vale could be accommodated on the busy main line without disrupting existing or planned future services. The updated timetable study is included in the Sharpness Vale - Transport Report in Response to Questions Raised by GCC. NR confirmed that the timetable study undertaken for the Sharpness Branch line passenger service is appropriate for the current development stage and is both sound and valid. On-going dialogue with the VoBR has resulted in an SoCG, that sets out how the two parties will work together.

The next stage of development of the passenger rail proposals, contingent on the Local Plan being confirmed, would be to enter NR's asset protection (ASPRO) process, which would be a formal engagement with the planning, design and ultimately the implementation of the scheme.

A detailed cost model and forecast of potential patronage for the coach services has been developed, allowing for services to commence from the 50<sup>th</sup> occupation. Income is derived from the farebox, from the service and management charges for the development and from an element of the subscriptions to the MaaS service.

This flexible and supported approach means that the reliability of the service for end-users is increased.

*The Sustainable Transport Strategy (STS) lists a number of interventions for the site that will need to be incorporated into its design and layout and be delivered at an early stage. For instance, it identifies that sustainable transport movements should be prioritised over vehicle movements by providing high-quality and accessible cycling and walking routes. Are these requirements and the timing of their delivery sufficiently clear from the wording of the policy? Will sufficient suitable and available sustainable transport links connect the site with the surrounding area?*

Yes these requirements and timing of their delivery are sufficiently clear from the working of the policy. The internal movement system of the site prioritises active mobility routes supplemented by road based public transport routes which are designed to converge at a strategic mobility hub located at the planned Sharpness Rail Station on the Sharpness Branch Line. The Strategic Mobility Hub will provide the interface between road-based forms of public transport servicing the functional transport area and connecting with longer journey express coach services as well as providing connections to the planned passenger rail services. The sustainable transport options at Sharpness will consist of local mobility hubs located within the development that provide access to shared micromobility options which in turn link to the strategic mobility hub at the new rail station.

5. Has the effect of the development on the existing Sharpness Wastewater Treatment Works been adequately assessed? Will capacity improvement be required and if so, how will this be delivered and funded?

Yes. Any upgrades to existing Waste Recycling Centres (WRC) will be funded by the incumbent water company.

Technical reports indicate that the existing WRC has current available headroom for the predicted foul flows within the catchment.

6. The text accompanying the policy acknowledges the site is near to areas subject to flooding and that the disposal of surface water flooding will need careful consideration to ensure that neither the development or adjoining areas are at risk of flooding or exacerbating existing areas of flooding. How will this be achieved?

Work undertaken has included designing a conceptual surface water management strategy confirming that there is sufficient space for water within the masterplan.

A formal surface water drainage strategy will help to manage overland runoff/surface water flooding, causing no detrimental impact in surface water flood risk to the development or offsite. Furthermore, the SuDS features will be integrated throughout the development as part of the green infrastructure strategy.

7. Does the policy sufficiently ensure that the risk to existing flood risk management assets (due to climate change, rising sea levels and natural deterioration) will be addressed?

No, however, extensive hydraulic modelling work has been undertaken regarding the on-site watercourses, with full consideration of potential future impacts of climate change on rising sea levels.

All built development is located outside of the tidal and fluvial extreme event floodplains (apart from the proposed battery facility site). There will be no loss of floodplain as a result of the development proposals.

There is an existing EA flood defence earth embankment along the bank of the Severn. The development of the site will not have any detrimental impact on the existing flood defences.

8. The Policy refers to the development having ultrafast broadband to homes and businesses with top average speeds of 1Gbps. As this requirement would be delivered by a third party (Open Reach) and would be outside the control of the developers, is it justified and effective?

‘Virgin Media/O2’ has confirmed that they can offer Gigabit connectivity for the whole site with top speeds of 1Gbps. As part of 21<sup>st</sup> century living, it is considered that this criterion is justified and effective.

9. Has the potential of canal towpath degradation due to increased usage by future occupants of the development been considered? How would this issue be mitigated and addressed if necessary?

Mitigation measures have been put in place to lessen the degradation of this path. Survey work will be ongoing to ensure any change of baseline conditions.

10. The text accompanying the policy lists a number of mitigation measures required due to the proximity of the site to the Severn Estuary SAC/SPA/Ramsar site. Taking account of these measures, will there be an effect on the developable area of the site that could impact on site densities or overall quantum of development?

There is no reason to suggest that the mitigations required will impact upon the delivery of housing in sufficient quantum and at appropriate densities.

11. Has full consideration been given to the impact of the proposal on other factors including the loss of agricultural land and local landscape and is this clearly set out in the evidence base supporting the Plan?

Yes. The site was surveyed in 2021 and concluded that the loss of the highest graded land is minimal and the loss of Grades 3a and 3b land, would be the same scenario for any proposed development in a similar landscape as these are the most prevalent land grades present.

Full technical reports concerning issues relating to local landscape have been produced and form part of the evidence base which supports the plan.

The indicative masterplan has evolved from several years of technical work following a landscape led approach.

12. Are the indicative site areas, appropriate uses, net developable areas, minimum densities and indicative site capacities justified and effective?

Yes.

The homes are proposed at an average density of approximately 37 to 40 dwellings per hectare. This density is appropriate for this site's location, making effective use of the land whilst also providing a range of housing types.

The provision of educational premises is important to the site/surrounding local communities, the amount has been advised by GCC.

The proposed community facilities are located in positions encouraging journeys to be made by means other than the private car.

Policy Compliant Open Space is proposed to ensure the proposed developable areas and densities are correct. The GI network will comprise approximately 50% of the entire site area allowing for Biodiversity Net Gain of at least 10%.

13. How has the amount of employment land been determined and is this sufficient to ensure the site limits the need to travel and is self-sustaining? Are there job growth estimates and are these realistic?

Yes.

By utilising data held with the ONS and SDC's Employment Land Review, it is evident that the proposed provision of jobs will provide for ample opportunity for people to work and live in the new settlement. The employment provision can therefore be considered to be self-contained from an employment perspective.

The Transport Technical Note provides further information regarding this issue.

In addition, there is potential for the settlement's population to support adjacent employment opportunities.



14. How will phasing be used to ensure that employment land and local services and facilities, such as schools, are developed and completed in parallel with housing land completions?

Developer contributions will be secured by S106 or CIL. Conditions will indicate trigger points for the delivery of non-residential uses in parallel with housing completions.

Policy PS36 secures the phasing arrangement.

15. Is the site boundary as shown on the policies map accurate?

No, the policies map currently shows a previous redline provided to SDC in September 2019. Updates to the redline have been sent since but the policies map has not been updated.

16. General site layout / masterplanning questions:

a. Will the site be delivered in accordance with active design policies?

Yes, the underpinning design principles for the development puts walking and cycling at the top of the movement hierarchy.

b. How will landscaping and layout address any visual impacts from the site's development?

The layout will evolve through a landscape led approach. Please see the accompanying supporting landscape and design based technical documents for further details.

c. A comprehensive green infrastructure network is referred to in the text accompanying the policy. How will the policy ensure that this is designed and delivered as part of any future development proposal? How will this infrastructure be funded?

Workshops with relevant stakeholders will aid the determination of the key principles of GI and open space typology. 'Design Code Principles' will form part of the outline application. Additional GI will also be delivered within the areas developed at reserved matters and subject to an approved Neighbourhood Design Code.

d. Design codes are referred to in order to ensure development is zero carbon and responds to the local context, specifically landscape and heritage elements. How and when will these design codes be brought forward? What will their status be?

The Design Codes will be split into two main planning stages, the first stage will be an overarching 'Neighbourhood Character Design Guide' - submitted with the Outline Planning Application. The second stage will be a series of Design Codes that relate to separate neighbourhoods, following the outline approval and guiding future Reserved Matters

Applications. These Design Codes will be tied to the planning approval via a planning condition that will require them to be agreed before any Reserved Matters Application is determined.

17. Is the policy approach to the application of local standards for sports provision justified and effective? Should the policy define the required local provision depending on the size of development?

Yes. The local standards set out in policy DHC7 are based on size per 1000 population and therefore the provision will be dependent upon the size of the development.

18. Will the HSE consultation on minimum distance for ammonium nitrate storage at Sharpness Docks impact upon the allocation?

No.

The HSE establishes a Consultation Distance - a "radius" from the centre of the major accident facility, beyond which it is considered that there is **no significant impact** regarding Public Safety. Other than a small area of proposed GI and POS, the Sharpness Vale development is outside the HSE Consultation Distance. Environmental damage caused by storage of AN at Sharpness Docks can therefore be considered to be a remote risk.

19. The text accompanying the policy refers to community engagement and stewardship as being key to delivering a new community in line with garden city principles. How will this be achieved?

The Sharpness promoters have embarked on dialogue with local communities and other stakeholders to establish a broad section of local views on the development and how it should be shaped.

The promoters will create a Stakeholder Reference Group (SRG) to encourage engagement amongst stakeholders from across the existing communities. The SRG will inform a Developers Handbook and future planning applications.

The Group will have an established membership and regular meetings, the chairmanship will be given to an independent professional.

20. Are there any barriers to the site coming forward as anticipated by the housing trajectory? Are delivery assumptions realistic?

*Are there any barriers to the site coming forward?*

No.

A number of technical studies have been prepared by the site promoter. These are detailed in the SoCG between the promoter and the Council. This initial work enabled the identification of a number of potential constraints and designations for consideration and also provided the necessary solutions.

The technical reports produced by the stakeholders and specialist consultants, have confirmed that the developable areas shown on the indicative masterplan have clearly been tested in respect of planning considerations.

*Are the delivery assumptions realistic?*

Yes. The site promoter is an experienced provider in delivering sustainable communities.

The land required for the allocation is within the control of Sharpness Development LLP, who hold option agreements on the land required.

There are no major constraints to development, as reaffirmed by the raft of technical work and stakeholder engagement that has been undertaken.

A timetable has been released for the delivery of the first dwellings for occupation.

Evidence provided considers the way that infrastructure will be provided over time. This is identified by the phasing plans attached to the aforementioned SoCG.