



**Ambulance Service Headquarters**

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Our Ref: ACM/CC/MM/KAF

10 May 2022

Councillor Nat Green  
Chair of Shrewsbury Town Council's Planning Committee  
Shrewsbury Town Council  
Riggs Hall  
The Library  
Castle Gates  
Shrewsbury  
SY1 2AS

Dear Councillor Green

**Re: West Midlands Ambulance Station, Mercian Close, Shrewsbury, SYU3 9EA**

Thank you for your letter dated 21 February. Firstly, may I apologise for the lengthy delay in responding to your letter formally. One of my officers has been looking into this matter in some detail which required review of information archived following a retirement internally.

We recognise and have heard the comments of local residents in the immediate area around our Mercian Close operational hub. Indeed, our local operational management team have held several meetings so that we could fully understand their concerns but equally provide some background information about the number of vehicle movements and the like. We take such meetings extremely seriously as we are keen to be good neighbours at all of our sites.

As a result of listening to these views we updated our Estates Strategy in January this year, part of which outlined our proposal to replace the Shrewsbury operational site as a key priority for the organisations estate planning.

The Operational Hub in Shrewsbury is essential to the effective operation of the Ambulance Service for not just the town of Shrewsbury but for the whole of Shropshire in the public interest. In the years since the Hub was established our workload has increased considerably. Today, we also operate with very long hospital handover delays, which I am sure you are aware of, which has put huge additional pressure on our staff. One of the challenges that the delays cause is the constant level of outstanding calls waiting for response.

In previous years, our crews would often have been able to drive away from a hub before getting a 999 call, but now, due to the delays, every time a crew comes on shift and / or they finish a meal break they are immediately having to respond to an outstanding call. This is not due to any change in the use of the hub at Longden Road, it is due to the pressures on the Ambulance Service as a whole.

While the vehicle numbers have remained largely the same, in fact there has been a small fall in vehicle movements along Longden Road, we do accept that there has been a small increase in the number travelling on blue lights, though the number is not that large.

Nonetheless, the hub at Longden Road retains the same original function and character, which is to prepare, clean and maintain the ambulances ready for the start of each operational shift.

The reason I mention that vehicle movements have actually reduced is because we now take fewer than 50% of patients to hospital. What this means is that once away from the hub, our crews are increasingly out and about in the community responding, only returning to the Hub for a meal break or at the end of their shift. The vast majority of crews respond either from one of the two hospitals in the County or from outside a residential property after discharging the patient on scene.

Be assured that safety of the community and public is a key concern and our Senior Operations Manager at the Hub has held meetings with local residents to discuss the situation. We have worked with our staff to highlight the issues you raise and to date, there has not been an incident involving an ambulance outside the two schools on Longden Road. We are grateful for the part that the schools and parents play in educating the children about the dangers of the road.

In fact, we have not had a collision with a pedestrian anywhere in the West Midlands for over three years, during which time we have answered more than 4 million calls. On that one occasion, the police determined that the ambulance crew were not at fault. It is also worth noting that our Dudley Hub is exactly opposite a very large school and there has not been an incident there in the 16 years since the Trust was formed.

Earlier this year, we gave our support to the campaign to install a 20mph speed limit on the road and we have also backed resident's requests to restrict the number of cars that park along the road at school drop off / pick up times.

As I mentioned earlier, our Estates Strategy specifically mentions the intention to find a better location for our Shrewsbury Hub. We would welcome the opportunity to work with the Town Council as well as Shropshire Council to find the best location for this new site. While this project will take several years to complete, we will liaise with NHS England's finance team to ensure the new facility can be implemented at the earliest opportunity. Given the knowledge of you and your fellow councillors, along with your officials, it would be very helpful if representatives from WMAS could meet with colleagues at Shrewsbury Town Council to understand the opportunities and developments taking place in Shrewsbury, in-order to inform the work we are taking forward for the replacement of Longden Road at the earliest opportunity.

In the meantime, we will continue to reinforce with the crews the importance of being good neighbours to the community, balancing that against the need to get to patients as quickly as possible whilst maintaining the highest standards of safety for all who use the highway and pedestrian routes.

We will also continue to work with local NHS partners to ensure hospital handover delays are minimised as this will reduce the number of crews responding from the Hub.

Be assured that West Midlands Ambulance Service has understood the issues you have described, and we would welcome working closely with council colleagues to implement the changes. Thank you for taking the time to raise this matter with me directly and be assured that the Board of Directors will be briefed fully and will monitor progress.

Yours sincerely,

*A. C. Marsh*

**Professor Anthony Marsh**  
**Chief Executive Officer**

CC: Councillor Lezley Picton, Leader of Shropshire Council  
Tracy Darke, Assistant Director, Economy and Place, Shropshire Council ✓  
Craig Cooke, Operational Support Services Director, WMAS