

**SHREWSBURY TOWN COUNCIL
PLANNING COMMITTEE
7 JULY 2025**

Officer: Helen Ball Town Clerk

LOCAL PLAN

Purpose of Report

- (i) To receive an update from the Chairman and Town Clerk regarding discussions with Forward Planning Team about the development of a new Local Plan following the withdrawal of the Draft Local Plan from examination in public
- (ii) To consider the Town Council future involvement in the Local Plan process
- (iii) To ratify the Town Council position in relation to the consideration of planning applications in this interim period ahead of a new Local Plan being adopted
- (iv) To consider hosting a meeting with key stakeholders around the Local Plan and its implications for Shrewsbury

Background

Shropshire Council has recently reported on its intention to withdraw the Local Plan from its Examination in Public with the Planning Inspectorate, this following the Inspectorate's request for improvements on the robustness of the plan. The formal decision to withdraw the plan shall take place shortly and a programme of works will be approved to set the process of developing a new local plan.

With the above in mind the Chairman of the Planning Committee and the Town Clerk & Deputy Town Clerk met with Eddie West (Forward Planning Manager) to discuss:

- (i) Implications on the development control system without an up-to-date Local Plan and no 5-year land supply;
- (ii) The process of developing a new plan and the Town Council's involvement in that process

It was recognised that this was a challenging time. In July Shropshire Council's Full Council will approve the withdrawal of the plan, reiterate interim decision-making arrangements and set out the plan process going forward. There will be little weight that can be given to the withdrawn draft plan, but weight can still be given to the evidence base that was attached to that plan. Added to that there was a positive framework for site allocations in the draft plan that will be still used as material considerations.

Whilst the Planning Authority was seeing a number of speculative applications within the pre-application status, there had been a reduction in the build-out rate within the county.

Discussions took place on how the Town Council was best to approach any speculative applications in this process.

The Town Council had adopted the Shrewsbury Big Town Plan Vision and the development of the concept of the Shrewsbury Test. This had been taken forward by Shropshire Council to become the Shropshire Test in Development Management Principles. This Big Town Plan remained a key document for the consideration of planning applications within Shrewsbury.

The Big Town Plan Partnership had also been the lead driver to a Design Code for Shrewsbury. This would be presented to September's Cabinet as a Supplementary Planning Document as guidance to implement the wider policy plan. The Town Council would have the opportunity to consult of the draft SPD ahead of adoption some time in 2026.

Discussions also took place on the plan development and the fact that the Town Council has been informally involved in discussions around direction of travel for development and land allocation sites. Inevitably the increase in housing allocation numbers will mean that the Town will have to accept more development, therefore it was crucial for the Town Council to be involved.

In light of the Deputy Leader of Shropshire Council's letter to all Parish Councils seeking better relations and more involvement in the decision making, Councillor Dean sought a more formalised approach than previously; this was something that the Forward Planning manager was not against.

There were various actions for the Town Council to consider from this meeting:

- (i) To respond to the Deputy Leader's letter including a more formalised approach to being involved in the local plan process – **Letter has been considered by Full Council on 30th June**
- (ii) To make a formal request to the Forward Planning Team for greater involvement
- (iii) To convene a meeting of the whole Town Council to review the Town Council's visioning plan – **Meeting was convened on 16th June and Action Plan considered by Full Council on 30th June**
- (iv) To establish the Town Council's principles for considering planning applications
- (v) To discuss with the Big Town Plan Partnership how the Design Code could be expanded to be town wide
- (vi) To consider how the Town Council could engage stakeholders in some kind of planning forum

Appended to this report is a Policy Document setting out the Town Council's approach to considering applications in the current period of no local plan and no 5-year land supply. It aligns with both the Big Town Plan at local level, the development management principles at county level and the National Planning Policy Framework. Members are asked to approve this document as its key consideration document.

Members are also asked to approve the concept of requesting formal involvement in the planning process as well as beginning to establish a local stakeholder to inform its ongoing involvement in the plan process.

Shrewsbury Town Council – Interim Planning Principles Contextualised with the NPPF and Shrewsbury Big Town Plan

Shrewsbury Town Council recognises the need for a clear, locally relevant framework for assessing planning applications during a period of significant policy transition. The withdrawal of Shropshire Council’s draft Local Plan from examination, coupled with changes to national planning policy and housing requirements, has created a temporary policy vacuum that increases the risk of speculative development. Without an up-to-date Local Plan or a demonstrable five-year housing land supply, there is concern that inappropriate proposals may come forward which fail to reflect local needs or priorities.

To ensure continuity, transparency, and consistency in decision-making, Shrewsbury Town Council has adopted a set of Interim Planning Principles. These principles draw on the Development Management policies from the now-withdrawn draft Local Plan and are fully aligned with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the locally endorsed Shrewsbury Big Town Plan.

This approach ensures that the Council can continue to respond to planning applications with a clear, positive, and place-sensitive perspective—supporting sustainable development that protects Shrewsbury’s character, promotes its economy, and meets the evolving needs of its communities.

These principles will guide the Town Council’s comments and recommendations on planning applications until such time as a new Local Plan is adopted or additional formal policy guidance is in place.

1. Sustainable Development Focus

NPPF Alignment: Paras 7–11 (Presumption in favour of sustainable development)

Big Town Plan Alignment: Theme 3 – Rethinking Movement and Transport; Theme 4 – Celebrating Heritage and Environment

- Support development that meets economic, social and environmental objectives in balance.
- Ensure proposals minimise carbon emissions, protect biodiversity, and incorporate sustainable drainage (SuDS) and water efficiency measures.
- Prioritise brownfield land and well-connected locations, reducing car dependency and improving air quality.

2. Design Quality and Local Character

NPPF Alignment: Chapter 12 (Achieving well-designed places)

Big Town Plan Alignment: Theme 1 – Supporting and Creating Quality and Distinctive Places

- Require high-quality, contextual design that reinforces Shrewsbury’s distinctive character.

- Support proposals that enhance the public realm, especially through active frontages, permeability, and walkability.
- Resist poor-quality or generic development that fails to contribute positively to townscape.

3. Housing Mix and Affordability

NPPF Alignment: Chapter 5 (Delivering a sufficient supply of homes)

Big Town Plan Alignment: Theme 2 – Supporting Vitality, Life and a Mix of Uses

- Encourage a range of housing types to meet diverse community needs, including affordable, accessible, and adaptable homes.
- Promote balanced communities, avoiding overconcentration of one type or tenure.
- Support town centre and brownfield residential schemes that contribute to vitality.

4. Infrastructure and Connectivity

NPPF Alignment: Chapter 9 (Promoting sustainable transport); Chapter 8 (Healthy and safe communities)

Big Town Plan Alignment: Theme 3 – Rethinking Movement and Transport

- Support schemes that prioritise walking, cycling, and public transport over private car use.
- Ensure developments contribute proportionately to infrastructure needs (e.g. schools, health, utilities).
- Promote digital connectivity and modern infrastructure provision to support home working and business needs.

5. Economic Development and Employment

NPPF Alignment: Chapter 6 (Building a strong, competitive economy)

Big Town Plan Alignment: Theme 2 – Supporting Vitality, Life and a Mix of Uses

- Support economic diversification and local employment through flexible workspaces and creative industries.
- Encourage development that strengthens the town centre and supports a mixed-use economy.
- Support town centre regeneration, meanwhile uses, and active ground floor frontages.

6. Heritage and Conservation

NPPF Alignment: Chapter 16 (Conserving and enhancing the historic environment)

Big Town Plan Alignment: Theme 4 – Celebrating Heritage and Environment

- Protect and enhance Shrewsbury’s heritage assets, including listed buildings, conservation areas, and archaeological sites.
- Encourage sensitive reuse and retrofitting of historic buildings to secure their long-term future.
- Require high-quality design in historic contexts that respects setting, scale, and materials.

7. Community Engagement and Social Value

NPPF Alignment: Paras 92–97 (Promoting healthy and inclusive communities)

Big Town Plan Alignment: Cross-cutting theme – Engaging and Empowering Communities

- Encourage early engagement with residents and stakeholders, especially for major developments.
- Support proposals that create or enhance community infrastructure, such as parks, schools, and health services.
- Promote inclusive design and environments that support well-being and social interaction.

Summary

These principles ensure that, despite the absence of an adopted Local Plan, Shrewsbury Town Council can assess planning applications in a policy-led, locally sensitive and nationally compliant way. By referencing the NPPF and the Shrewsbury Big Town Plan, the Council can provide robust, place-specific justifications for its recommendations, even when speculative applications arise.