

SHREWSBURY EXPRESSION OF INTEREST FOR INCLUSION IN THE MINI-HOLLAND PROGRAMME

SUBMITTED BY SHROPSHIRE COUNCIL

ON BEHALF OF THE SHREWSBURY BIG TOWN PLAN PARTNERSHIP

This Expression of Interest is led by the Shrewsbury Big Town Plan (BTP) a partnership of [Shropshire Council](#) (SC), [Shrewsbury Town Council](#) (STC) and Shrewsbury Business Improvement District (BID). Over the last five years all three parties have worked under a defined partnership agreement to develop the [Shrewsbury Big Town Plan](#) (BTP) a vision outlining the key aspirations of the town. Our Masterplan for delivering that vision, published this year has embedded within it the drive for a well-connected town, delivering on residents' desire to prioritise walking and cycling around town over motor vehicles.

This direction has been ever more important to the town over the last 18 months as the active travel agenda has been key during the COVID pandemic. The BTP Partnership has led on the COVID Recovery for the town, including initiating various Emergency Traffic Regulation Orders to restrict vehicular access and increasing capabilities for walking and cycling. So successful have these trials been that there is a public, business and political appetite to develop more radical change to address traffic congestion and the associated climate impacts (both STC & SC have declared Climate Emergencies).

Active Travel was a deciding factor in the May Local Government Elections and this theme is very present in the direction of both tiers of Local Government.

Political Will

Political appetite for change began over a year ago as the town began to recover from the first Lockdown

- May 2020 SC approves various ETROs to restrict traffic on major routes in the town centre
- Sept 2020 SC supports PM's Gear Change announcements and ensure that all cycling infrastructure built in Shropshire conforms to the standards laid out in LTN 1/20
- April 2021 BTP approves a budget to commission a Movement Strategy for the town
- June 2021 STC seeks the support of SC to submit a Mini-Holland EOI
- June 2021 SC approves two trial LN's for Shrewsbury – a first for the county
- July 2021 BID Board supports the submission of a Mini-Holland EOI
- July 2021 SC Cabinet agrees to submit a Mini-Holland EOI to be led by STC. Leader Lezley Picton will sign. SC Cabinet paves the way for High Street Pedestrianisation & Town Centre LTZ

Public Will

In the development of BTP, the engagement of the public has been crucially important

- 5000 comments left either in the Vision Exhibition Pop Up Shop or online
- 1150 Hours committed to attending the week long [BTP Festival](#) in February 2021
- 3670 comments left on the [Commonplace Map](#) to support COVID Measures
- 2359 Comments left on the [BTP Masterplan Consultation](#)
- 1505 Comments about developing High-street closure measures during and after COVID

COVID – Legacy for Change

The collaborative work on COVID Recovery allowed the Partnership to experiment with road closures creating walking and cycling priority streets which during times of normality may have been resisted. The public liked what

they saw and have demanded this safe environment now lockdown measures have lifted. These trials have also helped understand traffic displacement and the need for bold ambitions plans to create a modal shift in travel habits.

What does Mini-Holland mean for Shrewsbury?

We have critically appraised our town to understand the key issues around creating a Mini-Holland in Shrewsbury

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shrewsbury is an attractive historic town located on the River Severn • The town is relatively flat • Many journeys are under 2km • All parts of Shrewsbury are within 15 minutes by bike • There are natural environment constraints on car usage (such as the River Severn) with less inherent constraints on cycle usage • There is an appetite to increase cycling to schools, showcased by #ActiveTravelWeek and a petition (from the Meole Brace community) to SC to address traffic concerns, particularly around schools, through the delivery of more cycle infrastructure and Liveable Neighbourhood concepts • Committed partners & Stakeholders • Proven track record of delivering cycling initiatives – Shrewsbury was a one of 18 Cycle Demonstration Towns in 2008 • Political will across tiers of Local Government & Political Parties • Increase in Cycle related Companies setting up (Rickshaw, E-Bike Hire, Cycle Delivery) • Shropshire Cycle Hub Charity established charge with improving access to healthy sustainable transport • Public appetite for mode shift to walking & cycling 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town Centre access is difficult, impeded by a long one-way system • Increasing car culture • Aging population • Busy external and internal ring-roads • No priority given to cycling • Inappropriate speed limits on some roads and excess speed issues • Air quality issues • Rat-running through the road network • Flooding – last two years has seen the town centre cut off to vehicles • Poor connectivity between initiatives • Limited cycle network. Piecemeal and disjointed cycle lanes in many areas
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased environmental awareness through Climate Emergency Declaration and subsequent publicity • COVID has forced public to explore their communities more • Shrewsbury is a High Growth area in the Local Plan • Attractive leisure cycling opportunities • Flooding incidents created a need for more resilient forms of transport • Active Travel Manager at SC appointed • LCWIPs commissioned • SC commitment to LTN 1/20 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuing to do more of the same • Poor investment potential • Attitudes to cycling – not safe, not cool, not practical, too old, not fit • Shropshire Council is currently under-resourced for delivering Active Travel schemes, but has strong political will since the 2021 Local Elections. Mini-Holland designation for Shrewsbury would move Shropshire as a whole forwards at an accelerated rate

Objectives

We want to:

- Create a culture of cycling walking and cycling making Shrewsbury widely recognised as a place where both are commonplace or everyday journeys and the preferred mode of travel.
- Reduce the number of short car journeys in the town by offering safe, faster, and more convenient alternatives through improved infrastructure.
- Ensure young people have excellent facilities to cycle to school.
- Increase the number of adults cycling and walking.
- Raise awareness of employers in Shrewsbury of the benefits of their employees walking and cycling.
- Enhance walking and cycling infrastructure including renewal of existing infrastructure, extending the network, filling in gaps, to provide a Coherent; Direct; Safe; Comfortable and Attractive network, along with improving maintenance and increasing cycle parking.
- Tackling both perceived and real barriers to cycling through travel behaviour change programmes such as Cycle buddy programmes, Training, Publicity, Community projects, Widen Priory/Meole Schools' project across the town.
- Make the town centre and key linkages into the town centre much more walking and cycling friendly.
- Enhance the National Cycle Network.
- Improve walking & cycling connectivity.



SHREWSBURY BIG TOWN PLAN

Why should you choose Shrewsbury?

- We already have a committed and engaged partnership with proven record on joint delivery.
- Masterplan (recognised by national experts in the field) for the Town which includes Active Travel.
- Considerable Public buy in.
- Political buy-in across both tiers of local government and across all parties.
- Experience from Experimental Orders on reducing traffic and use of cars in the town.
- Shrewsbury is a test-bed for other historic market towns and provides greater opportunities for creating a National Toolkit or Implementing a Mini-Holland and cascading experience to not only the County of Shropshire but to other Parish Councils through the National Association of Local Councils and the BID Network to other BIDS.
- Appointed Active Travel Managers at both the Local Authority and the NHS Trust so greater potential for engagement across a wider public sector.
- COVID has provided huge opportunities to do things different and the bounce back in footfall is showing great rewards; this with poor infrastructure. How much higher would walking & cycling be if the infrastructure was better planned and delivered.