



CONSULTATION ON PREFERRED SITES FOR THE SHROPSHIRE LOCAL PLAN REVIEW

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1. Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval for a consultation document which identifies the preferred housing and employment sites to deliver the Council's preferred level and distribution of development across Shropshire during the period to 2036. The consultation document also sets out draft development guidelines and development boundaries for each of the named settlements which form part of Shropshire's settlement hierarchy, including those proposed to be identified as 'Community Hubs'. Draft policies to help deliver housing solutions which more closely match our local housing needs are also set out in the consultation, but the review of other detailed development management policies will not take place until a later stage.

2. Recommendations

- A. That Cabinet approves the draft consultation document on preferred sites (attached) for consultation subject to minor amendments and editing.
- B. That authority is delegated to the Director of Place in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing Development to confirm the final version of the documents and to publish these for public consultation.

REPORT

3. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

- 3.1 National planning policy and regulations requires the Council to maintain an up to date Development Plan to help deliver the identified development needs of the County. The Local Plan Review will provide an up to date and deliverable Plan for Shropshire and will help to maintain local control over planning decisions by ensuring that the adopted policies and proposals will be the primary consideration for decisions about development in Shropshire. Maintaining an up to date Local Plan will further support local growth by generating certainty for investment in local development and infrastructure through a policy framework that supports sustainable development in communities across the County, during the period to 2036.

- 3.2 An updated 'Project Plan' (called the Local Development Scheme) which describes the timetable for the Local Plan documents that are to be prepared over the next 3-year period was approved by Cabinet on 2 May 2018. The current consultation forms part of the 'targeted engagement on Preferred Options between October 2018 and April 2019'. However, there remain significant risks that could impact upon delivery of the Local Plan Review and these are described in the risk assessment in Appendix 2 of the LDS document: <https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/media/9709/approved-lds-2018-03-5-18.pdf>
- 3.3 The Local Plan Review consultation documents have been the subject of both a Sustainability Appraisal and a Habitats Regulation Assessment and copies of these assessments will be made available together with other relevant supporting evidence on the Council's planning policy web pages during the consultation period.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 Maintaining an up to date Local Plan provides Shropshire Council with the best possible opportunity to harness growth potential by providing a stable platform for investors and developers. Growth also provides an opportunity to secure contributions to help maintain and improve local facilities, services and infrastructure. New growth simultaneously imposes an additional burden on local services and provides opportunities to secure investment to improve local facilities which are the responsibility of Shropshire Council and other public service providers.
- 4.2 Financial implications may potentially arise from any slippage in the Local Plan Review timetable, leading to delays in Local Plan production with subsequent impacts on development management decision making, housing land supply and delivery, and infrastructure funding. Potential changes to national policy suggest that the government may apply sanctions in the form of reduced New Homes Bonus when an authority fails to meet its Plan preparation milestones.

5. Background

- 5.1 This is the third significant stage for public and stakeholder involvement in the partial review of the Local Plan. The main objective at this stage is to obtain feedback concerning our preferred sites to deliver the preferred scale and distribution of future housing and employment growth across the settlement hierarchy which was published in October 2017. In most cases, a majority of respondents supported the preferred approach published at that time. The consultation also provides an opportunity to start to test potential policy measures which we propose to introduce to address the growing mismatch between housing needs and the housing options available locally.

6. Identification of Preferred Sites

- 6.1. Around 2000 sites have been identified by the Council for potential allocation including responses to a 'call for sites' in January 2017. These sites have been carefully screened and assessed using a detailed assessment methodology which has been applied consistently across the county. This methodology has used available evidence and specialist advice from a both

council officers and consultant studies to assess the suitability of each site. A summary of the assessment methodology will be available on the Council's web pages during the consultation.

- 6.2. The consultation document identifies around 70 preferred sites across 56 separate settlements including Shrewsbury, the Principal and Key market towns and each proposed Community Hub in order to deliver the preferred scale and distribution of housing and employment growth during the period to 2036. The consultation also identifies development guidelines and development boundaries for these settlements. The guidelines which accompany each site identify known infrastructure issues and mitigation measures, although it is expected that these will be further refined before the new Local Plan is submitted for examination.

7. Policy Direction on Housing

- 7.1 Ensuring the availability of an appropriate quantity and type of housing to meet local needs is a recognised national and local priority. The availability of appropriate housing is a potential constraint on economic growth in Shropshire and actions and interventions to address this are an important contribution to the delivery of the Council's adopted Economic Growth Strategy.
- 7.2 Whilst Shropshire Council has adopted a positive and pro-active approach to delivering housing growth through the adopted Core Strategy and SAMDev plans, this has not always in practice delivered housing which helps to meet local needs. In qualitative terms, there has been a tendency for the type of housing to reflect the greatest marketability, which is for larger, detached properties. However, Shropshire is acknowledged as having a low-wage economy and such housing is therefore often beyond the means of local employees and existing residents. This issue presents a significant risk to economic growth since there is a clear and growing mismatch between housing needs and the housing options available locally.
- 7.3 In February 2018, the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing Development established a politically balanced Housing Member Advisory Group to provide him with informal advice regarding qualitative issues such as the type and affordability of housing. This group has helped to identify and shape a range of pro-active interventions which Shropshire Council could adopt to more closely manage qualitative aspects of housing alongside ensuring that a sufficient quantity of housing is delivered to meet local needs. The policy direction which is outlined in the 'Preferred Sites' consultation provides an opportunity to test local opinion about one potential approach to tackling these issues.

8. Green Belt Review

- 8.1. Consistent with the recommendations of the SAMDev Planning Inspector in 2015, Shropshire Council has commissioned an independent review of the Shropshire Green Belt. The first stage of the review resulted in the preparation of a Green Belt Assessment which appraises the current performance of the Shropshire Green Belt against the aims and purposes set out in national policy. The second stage has involved preparation of a

detailed Green Belt Review which supplements the findings of the initial Green Belt Assessment and examines the potential for areas to be removed or added to the Green Belt, either to recognise the urbanised character of the land, to provide land for future development and to safeguard land to satisfy future needs where this can be justified against potential alternatives. The outcome of this work has helped inform the identification of land for both development during the new plan period to 2036 and for long term safeguarding for development for future plan periods beyond 2036.

9. Gypsy & Traveller Sites

- 9.1. As well as making provision for traditional 'bricks and mortar' dwellings, national planning policy places a requirement on local authorities to provide for permanent and transit site accommodation needs for gypsies and travellers their area over the Plan period.
- 9.2. Some general provision has been made in recent years through the expansion of existing Council sites and through private sites brought forward through the planning application process. However, there remains a requirement for a permanent site for Travelling Showpeople; site(s) for transit provision; and potentially the need for more general provision.
- 9.3. The search for appropriate sites for transit and Travelling Showpeople is ongoing, however in order to seek to provide a range of deliverable options for all types of sites a specific call for gypsy and traveller sites will included as part of the forthcoming consultation.

10. Next steps

- 8.1 Continuing member involvement will be important in accordance with the Local Member Protocol and this will help to support the work of the Local Plan Member Group which continues to meet regularly and has helped to shape the current consultation documents.
- 8.2 The consultation will be undertaken in line with the standards set out in the Council's published Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) and national guidance. Consultation documents will be made available on the Shropshire Council web-site, and paper copies will be provided at libraries and council offices in the main towns. A significant number of organisations and individuals will continue to be notified directly of the publication of the consultation documents in accordance with the SCI. Electronic responses are encouraged to reduce printing and distribution costs and to reduce the time spent collating and analysing paper responses. Officers expect to continue to engage directly with individual parish and town councils during the consultation period to help them to explore the implications of the proposed approach in their local context.
- 8.3 The consultation responses will be used to inform the next stages of the Local Plan review with a further targeted consultation on strategic sites planned during Spring 2019. This will be followed by formal consultation on a full 'Pre-Submission' version of the revised Local Plan in late autumn 2019, after which the Council expects to formally submit the Local Plan, together with any formal objections, for examination by the Planning Inspectorate in December 2019.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)

- Sustainability Appraisal (SA)
- Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)
- Equality and Social Inclusion Impact Assessment (ESIIA)
- Local Plan Review Consultation Statement

These documents will be made available from: <http://shropshire.gov.uk/planning-policy/local-plan/local-plan-partial-review-2016-2036/> during the consultation period.

Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder)

Robert Macey, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing Development

Local Members

All

Appendices

- Consultation on the Preferred Sites for the partial review of the Shropshire Local Plan 2016-2036;