

Shropshire Council

Local Plan Review 2016 - 2036

Issues and Strategic Options

**Sustainability Appraisal
Summary**

January 2017

Contents

1. Introduction	2
2. Housing Requirement Options	2
Housing Requirement Option 1: 'Moderate Growth'	2
SA summary	2
Housing Requirement Option 2: 'Significant Growth'	3
SA summary	3
Housing Requirement Option 3: 'High Growth'	3
SA Summary	3
3. Strategic Distribution of Housing Options	4
Strategic Distribution Option A: 'Current Policy - Rural Rebalance'	4
SA Summary	4
Strategic Distribution Option B: 'Urban Focus'	5
SA Summary	5
Strategic Distribution Option C: 'Balanced Growth'	6
SA Summary	6
4. Strategic Options for Economic Growth and Employment	7
Economic Option 1: Significant Growth	7
SA summary	7
Economic Option 2: High Growth	7
SA summary	7
Economic Option 3: Productivity Growth	8
SA summary	8

Sustainability Appraisal Summary

1. Introduction

- 1.1. A Sustainability Appraisal (SA) is a systematic process that must be carried out during the preparation of a Local Plan. Its role is to promote sustainable development by assessing the extent to which the emerging plan, when judged against reasonable alternatives, will help to achieve relevant environmental, economic and social objectives¹.
- 1.2. This document collates the written summaries produced as part of the SA for the Shropshire Local Plan Review Issues and Strategic Options Consultation document. The full SA, including the scoring matrices on which the summaries are based, can be found in the Local Plan Review Sustainability Appraisal Report for Issues and Strategic Options. This is available on Shropshire Council's website.

2. Housing Requirement Options

Housing Requirement Option 1: 'Moderate Growth'
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This option represents a total housing requirement of around 26,250 dwellings over the plan period, which equates to 1,325 dwellings as an annual average.
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SA summary

- 2.1. It is likely that this level of growth will have a positive effect on the range of plants and animals and the quality and extent of wildlife habitats in Shropshire. It is also likely to reduce the need to travel by car, be more capable of being accommodated in areas of low flood risk, promote the efficient use of natural resources and conserve and enhance landscape character and local distinctiveness. A lower potential for harm to heritage assets and their settings may be offset by reduced opportunities to contribute to the better management of the historic environment.
- 2.2. There may be little or no net effect carbon dioxide emissions and the location of development, rather than the amount, is likely to have the most influence on protecting and improving soil quality, the conservation and enhancement of water resources and air quality and on reducing the risk of water and air pollution.
- 2.3. As this option proposes a lower level of growth than the current Local Plan, there are likely to be negative effects on Shropshire's economy and on opportunities to provide a sufficient amount of good quality housing to meet the needs of all sections of society. Also, since many services and facilities require a critical population mass, there may be a negative impact on the provision of, and access to some of these. Although overall physical activity levels may not change, opportunities to focus development in locations with good access to health facilities and to support existing, or provide new, leisure or cultural activities may be reduced in the medium to long term. Finally, this option is unlikely to encourage the use of sustainable means of transport or to offer many opportunities to adapt to, or mitigate the effects of climate change.

Housing Requirement Option 2: 'Significant Growth'

This option represents a total housing requirement of around 27,500 dwellings over the plan period, which equates to 1,375 dwellings as an annual average.

SA summary

- 2.4. It is likely that this number of houses can be accommodated in accessible locations, thus reducing the need of people to travel by car. However, as this option proposes a similar number of houses over the same length of time as the adopted Local Plan, it is likely that the current situation will be maintained for the following sustainability objectives: protecting and enhancing the range of plants and animals and the quality and extent of wildlife habitats in Shropshire; encouraging a strong and sustainable economy; providing a sufficient amount of good quality housing; encouraging the use of sustainable means of transport; reducing flood risk and improving flood management; reducing carbon dioxide emissions; adapting to and mitigating climate change; promoting the efficient use of natural resources; conserving and enhancing heritage features and their settings and conserving and enhancing landscape character and local distinctiveness.
- 2.5. Whilst physical activity levels may not change over the plan period, the provision of some leisure and cultural facilities may decline in the long term, since population levels may not be sufficient to maintain them. Similarly, the accessibility of some health related services and recreational facilities might be reduced.
- 2.6. The location of development, rather than the amount, is likely to have the most influence on protecting and improving soil quality, the conservation and enhancement of water resources and air quality and on reducing the risk of water and air pollution.

Housing Requirement Option 3: 'High Growth'

This option represents a total housing requirement of around 28,750 dwellings over the plan period, which equates to 1,437 dwellings as an annual average.

SA Summary

- 2.7. This higher level of growth offers significant opportunities to provide a sufficient amount of good quality housing to meet the needs of all sections of society. It is also likely to promote access to existing services such as schools or shops with the potential to increase provision of these significantly in the medium to long term.
- 2.8. The economy is likely to benefit from this option and there may be good opportunities for new leisure, recreational and cultural facilities. Economies of scale may also contribute to an increased provision of energy from renewable sources, whilst supporting reductions in energy consumption and promoting energy efficiency.
- 2.9. The scale of development in this option may require new transport infrastructure. If this is focussed on existing public transport hubs the use of sustainable means of transport may be encouraged. In addition, if this higher level of growth means that a smaller number of large sites are allocated this may enable the creation of relatively large areas of new habitats. Otherwise, such opportunities to mitigate and adapt to climate change will be more dependent on individual site location.

- 2.10. As larger amounts of greenfield land will need to be released, there may be a negative effect on the range of plants and animals and quality and extent of wildlife habitats. A master- planning approach to larger sites (if they are allocated, see above) may provide opportunities for biodiversity gains to offset such losses.
- 2.11. It is likely to be more difficult to focus this level of growth in accessible locations so it may not be possible to reduce the need of people to travel by car. However, new or existing public transport solutions may counter this (see above). It may also not be possible to locate all new development in areas of lowest flood risk but at the same time, larger scale growth creates more opportunities to improve flood management.
- 2.12. This level of housing will use more land than the other options and so opportunities to use previously developed land or existing buildings are likely to be more limited. Similarly, this option will use more primary aggregates. Higher levels of growth also have the potential to cause harm to heritage assets and their settings but equally, the associated increased economic benefits may offer opportunities to provide for the better management of the historic environment. This option is unlikely to maintain or improve existing landscape character and unless development is carefully located and designed, may have a negative effect on local distinctiveness.
- 2.13. The location of development, rather than the amount, is likely to have the most influence on protecting and improving soil quality, the conservation and enhancement of water resources and air quality and on reducing the risk of water and air pollution.

3. Strategic Distribution of Housing Options

Strategic Distribution Option A: 'Current Policy - Rural Rebalance'
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This option provides a continuation of the current Core Strategy Policy CS1. This option is most closely aligned with actual levels of housing delivery seen over the previous 10 years and represents the aspiration for 'rural rebalance' as advocated in the Core Strategy and SAMDev. Monitoring shows that the current policy framework is working effectively.
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SA Summary

- 3.1. This option is likely to ensure an appropriate and balanced supply of employment land and the higher percentage of housing delivered in the rural areas offers the greatest opportunity of all the options to reflect the requirements of all sections of society for housing in terms of location and affordability.
- 3.2. As this option proposes a similar number of houses over the same length of time as the adopted Local Plan, it is likely that the current situation will be maintained for the following sustainability objectives; protecting and enhancing the range of plants and animals and the quality and extent of wildlife habitats in Shropshire; promoting access to services for all sections of society; encouraging the use of sustainable means of transport; reducing the need of people to travel by car; supporting active and healthy communities; reducing carbon dioxide emissions; adapting to and mitigating climate change; promoting the efficient use of natural resources; conserving and enhancing heritage features and their settings and conserving and enhancing landscape character and local distinctiveness.
- 3.3. The effect on flood risk and opportunities to improve flood management will depend on the location of sites. Land allocated in the current Local Plan is not in areas of high flood risk so it may be possible to achieve a similar outcome with this option.

- 3.4. The location of allocated sites is likely to have the most influence on protecting and improving soil quality, the conservation and enhancement of water resources and air quality and on reducing the risk of water and air pollution.

Strategic Distribution Option B: 'Urban Focus'

This option provides a greater focus for growth around Shrewsbury and the market towns and key centres, with around 75% of growth to these areas. Whilst the rural area would continue to accommodate some growth, this would be at a level below current policy and past trends.

SA Summary

- 3.5. This option is likely to have significant benefits for the following sustainability objectives: protecting and enhancing the range of plants and animals and the quality and extent of wildlife habitats in Shropshire; encouraging a strong and sustainable economy; supporting active and healthy communities; protecting and improving soil quality; conserving and enhancing water quality; reducing carbon dioxide emissions and conserving and enhancing landscape character and local distinctiveness.
- 3.6. A greater emphasis on urban centres provides the best opportunity of the three options to exploit existing transport infrastructure and improve access to public transport in the medium to long term. The location of allocated sites will have the most effect the use of previously developed land or existing buildings but as these are more likely to be found in urban areas, there may be a positive effect.
- 3.7. There may be little or no effect on the accessibility of services and the impact on flood risk and opportunities to improve flood management will depend on the location of sites. A greater proportion of development in urban areas may provide opportunities to mitigate climate change through more extensive habitat creation measures but these may be balanced by reduced connectivity to existing ecological networks in the countryside.
- 3.8. Although the needs of priority households may be met by the provision of more housing in Shrewsbury and the market towns, this option provides the lowest level of housing in the rural area. As this is where the need for affordable housing is greatest there may be a negative effect on the objective of meeting the housing needs of all sections of society. Similarly, although the higher levels of urban growth are likely to promote the provision of public transport in these areas, there may be an increase in car use by rural dwellers if services and amenities decline outside Shrewsbury and the market towns. Higher levels of growth in urban areas may also lead to more harm or loss of heritage assets and their settings. However, this negative impact could be offset if sensitive site allocations and careful design provide opportunities for the better management of the historic environment.
- 3.9. The location of allocated sites will have the greatest influence on air quality e.g. development within or close to an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) is likely to have an adverse impact whilst development elsewhere is unlikely to alter the current situation. However, as all AQMAs are in urban areas this option is the most likely to have a negative impact.

Strategic Distribution Option C: 'Balanced Growth'

This option effectively provides a middle ground between Options A and B, balancing needs and opportunities across the urban and rural areas. Compared to current policy, this option would accommodate more growth in Shrewsbury and less in the rural areas, but would maintain a similar rate of growth in the market towns and key centres.

SA Summary

- 3.10. This option is likely to have a positive effect on the following sustainability objectives; protecting and enhancing the range of plants and animals and the quality and extent of wildlife habitats in Shropshire; encouraging a strong and sustainable economy; reducing the need of people to travel by car; supporting active and healthy communities; protecting and improving soil quality; conserving and enhancing water quality; reducing carbon dioxide emissions; promoting adaptation and mitigation to climate change and conserving and enhancing landscape character and local distinctiveness.
- 3.11. The slightly higher levels of housing in Shrewsbury may encourage the provision of new services and amenities. As growth levels are the same as current policy requirements in market towns, this option is likely to support the retention of existing services in these locations. However, there is uncertainty as to whether the lower levels of growth in the rural area will cause a loss of services in smaller settlements.
- 3.12. Relatively modest levels of growth in Shrewsbury and the market towns could offer opportunities for the better management of the historic environment. However, this will only be of benefit if existing heritage features and their settings are protected from loss and harm.
- 3.13. Although the overall level of growth in urban areas is higher than that provided for under current policies and so should provide opportunities to improve existing public transport infrastructure, this benefit may be balanced by a consequent reduction in provision in the rural area.
- 3.14. Since the need for affordable housing is greatest in the rural area and this option proposes a lower level of housing than current policy requirements, there may be a negative effect over the medium to long term on the provision of a sufficient amount of good quality housing to meet the needs of all sections of society.
- 3.15. The location of allocated sites is likely to have the most influence on conserving air quality and reducing the risk of air pollution, flood risk and opportunities to improve flood management and on opportunities to use previously developed land or to re-use existing buildings.

4. Strategic Options for Economic Growth and Employment

Economic Option 1: Significant Growth

This option continues the current strategic approach in the adopted Local Plan for the 20-year period from 2016 to 2036, maintaining the current level of aspiration and rolling forward the existing employment land requirement to 2036 to provide a comparable level of employment land to that in the current Plan and delivering a similar level of new jobs to 2036.

SA summary

- 4.1. This option is likely to provide an appropriate and balanced supply of employment land and support existing businesses in Shropshire.
- 4.2. There may be little or no effect on the following sustainability objectives: protecting and enhancing the range of plants and animals and the quality and extent of wildlife habitats in Shropshire; the provision of a sufficient amount of good quality housing; the accessibility of services; encouraging the use of sustainable means of transport; reducing the need to travel by car; supporting active and healthy communities; protecting and improving soil quality; conserving and enhancing water quality; reducing flood risk and improving flood management; reducing carbon dioxide emissions; adapting to and mitigating climate change; promoting the efficient use of natural resources; conserving and enhancing heritage features and their settings and conserving and enhancing landscape character and local distinctiveness.
- 4.3. The location of allocated sites is likely to have the most influence on conserving air quality and reducing the risk of air pollution.

Economic Option 2: High Growth

This option seeks to establish a revised strategic approach for the 20-year period from 2016 to 2036, to create a higher level of aspiration supported by an appropriate employment land requirement, providing a higher level of employment land supply and delivering a higher level of new jobs

SA summary

- 4.4. This option is likely to have a significant positive effect on Shropshire's economy. It is also likely to encourage the use of sustainable means of transport, reduce carbon emissions and promote adaptation and mitigation to climate change.
- 4.5. There is likely to be little or no change in the provision of both good quality housing to meet the needs of all sections of society and health, leisure and recreational facilities.
- 4.6. The increase in employment land may stimulate better broadband provision but this will depend on the nature of the businesses. The current provision of services such as schools, doctor's surgeries, parks and play areas is likely to stay the same.
- 4.7. A higher level of employment land is likely to have an adverse impact on the range of plants and animals and the extent and quality of wildlife habitats in Shropshire and depending on location, to increase the need to travel by car. More allocated land may make it more difficult to avoid areas of flood risk and opportunities to use previously developed land or re-use existing buildings are likely to be the most limited by this option. The greater geographical spread of employment land has the potential for the most adverse effect on the historic environment and is likely to cause the most impact

on landscape character and local distinctiveness. Similarly, as this option provides for flexible rural development there may be a negative impact on soil and water quality.

- 4.8. The location of allocated sites is likely to have the most influence on conserving air quality and reducing the risk of air pollution.

Economic Option 3: Productivity Growth

This option seeks to establish a new strategic approach for the 20-year period from 2016 to 2036, to capture the potential for new investment in Shropshire and to seek to influence the structure of the economy, the productivity of its sectors and the range, type and quality of new employment. This option would create a higher aspiration to provide more 'higher value' jobs whilst potentially setting a lower employment land requirement and a lower overall provision of new jobs.

SA summary

- 4.9. This option is likely to have a beneficial effect on the range of plants and animals in Shropshire and the quality and extent of wildlife habitats. A restructuring of Shropshire's economy may increase the provision and connectivity of broadband services. The lower requirement for employment land is likely to have the least impact of the three options on soil quality and an emphasis on higher quality jobs may lead to a reduction in energy consumption. The re-structuring of the economy may offer the most efficient use of natural resources and a greater concentration of less land across fewer settlements may cause the least harm to heritage assets and their settings and landscape character and local distinctiveness.
- 4.10. As pollution from rural areas has a greater effect on water quality in Shropshire than other issues, the focus on a smaller number of principal towns and less allocated land may lead to a positive effect on water quality and pollution risk.
- 4.11. A change in the employment offer towards higher value jobs will support the economy but there is uncertainty as to whether such significant changes will be achieved even in the long term. The targeting of employment land in those principal towns where investment demand is most likely to be expressed may lead to a reduction in the need travel to work by car. This greater focus on larger settlements may also make it easier to avoid areas of flood risk.
- 4.12. There is likely to be little or no change in the provision of both good quality housing to meet the needs of all sections of society and on health, leisure and recreational facilities. Likewise, opportunities to mitigate and adapt to climate change are likely to remain at the same level as present.
- 4.13. The location of any higher value jobs created through this option will have the greatest impact on the use of sustainable transport, as it will on the conservation and enhancement of air quality and on reducing the risk of air pollution.

ⁱ Planning Practice Guidance, DCLG: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/strategic-environmental-assessment-and-sustainability-appraisal>