

APPENDIX C:

SHROPSHIRE CORE STRATEGY DRAFT FINAL PLAN

FEBRUARY 2010

CONSULTATION STATEMENT

CONTENTS

	Page number
1. Introduction	
• Purpose of report	3
• Local Government Re-organisation in Shropshire	3
• Interim Community Involvement Statement	4
• Who has been consulted?	4
2. Core Strategy Preparation Stages	
• Introduction	5
• Links with the Shropshire Partnership	5
• Pre-Production Stage	6
• Pre-Submission Stages	6
3. Consultation Methods and Responses	
• Topic Based Discussion Papers	8
• Issues and Options	10
• Policy Directions	17
• Other Engagement	23
Appendix 1: Indicative List of Consultees	27

1. INTRODUCTION

Purpose of report

- 1.1 This consultation statement shows how Shropshire Council has engaged with key stakeholders and the public in the preparation of the Shropshire Core Strategy. In doing so, the statement provides information on how the council has met the requirements under Regulation 25 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004, as amended in 2008.
- 1.2 The pre-submission 'regulation 25' period of Core Strategy preparation has been one of continuous engagement with communities and stakeholders. This has been interspersed with periods of set consultation at key stages. Throughout this process, the Council has ensured a close co-ordination between the parallel consultation stages of the Core Strategy and the Shropshire Partnership's emerging Sustainable Community Strategy.
- 1.3 Within the Regulation 25 stage of Core Strategy production, the specific consultation stages have been:
 - Issues and Options – January 2009;
 - Policy Directions – August 2009
- 1.4 Prior to the Regulation 25 stage, and as an additional part of the Council's efforts to engage constructively from an early stage, a range of 'Topic Based Discussion Papers' were prepared and consulted on in July 2008.
- 1.5 This report outlines the following key information:
 - Who was consulted at each stage;
 - When consultation and other engagement happened;
 - The consultation methods used;
 - The key issues arising from each of these stages

Local Government Re-organisation in Shropshire

- 1.6 The need for a County wide Core Strategy was prompted by local government re-organisation in April 2009, which saw the formation of the unitary Shropshire Council. However, work towards the Shropshire wide Core Strategy began in early 2008 in anticipation of the re-organisation. At this point, work on individual Local Development Frameworks (LDFs) by each of Shropshire's former District, Borough and County Councils ceased and resources redirected to work on the County wide LDF. However, consultation responses submitted to earlier LDF consultations conducted by the former councils were also

taken into account when identifying issues for the new Shropshire wide Core Strategy.

Interim Community Involvement Statement

- 1.7 The Interim Community Involvement Statement (ICIS) was prepared and consulted on during summer 2008 in order to consolidate the existing information contained in each former council's Statements of Community Involvement (SCI). The ICIS was agreed by the Implementation Executive¹ in September 2008 and has been used as a framework for establishing **who** the Council would seek to involve in the production of new planning policy documents; **when** this involvement would happen; and, **what** methods would be used to encourage wider community involvement.

Who has been consulted?

- 1.8 In the transition to Shropshire Council, a database of consultees was compiled using the existing local plan consultation databases from each former local authority. This database has been used as the basis for engagement at each of the three main consultation stages. This database contains over 3,700 and is continuously being updated. The list of organisations and individuals and can be broadly broken down into the following categories:
- **Specific Consultation Bodies;**
 - **General Consultation Bodies**
 - **Other Consultation Bodies**
- 1.9 For an indicative list of the types of organisation under each of these headings see Appendix 1.
- 1.10 In recognising the overall importance and likely level of interest in the Core Strategy, at both 'Issues and Options' and 'Policy Direction' stages of plan preparation all those organisations on the LDF consultee database were formally consulted through direct mail.

¹ The Implementation Executive (IE) consisted of 29 Councillors drawn from all six former Shropshire District / Borough / County councils. It was responsible for making decisions about the transition to the new unitary Shropshire Council.

2. CORE STRATEGY PREPARATION STAGES

Introduction

- 2.1 The Core Strategy is the principal document of Shropshire’s Local Development Framework (LDF), and as such sets the priorities for development in the county up to 2026. When adopted, it will include an overall spatial vision along with the strategic elements of the planning framework for Shropshire. In doing this, the Core Strategy will also act as a key delivery mechanism for the aspirations and priorities of Shropshire’s Sustainable Community Strategy.
- 2.2 A key principle of the planning system is for Local Authorities to engage proactively with communities and stakeholders when preparing planning documents. As the Core Strategy will set the agenda for further LDF documents, it is of great importance that as many people as possible have had the opportunity to express their views in a constructive and appropriate manner and from an early stage in the process.
- 2.3 Whilst some aspects of consultation are required by planning regulations, guidance advises Local Authorities to go beyond this and include a range of proactive engagement methods tailored to the type of document under development, the stage in the preparation process, and the type of stakeholders being targeted. In taking these issues into account, the preparation of the Core Strategy has been broadly based around the following consultation stages:

Table 2.1: *Core Strategy consultation / representation stages*

Preparation Stage	Core Strategy Consultation Documents
Pre-production	- LDF Topic Papers (July 08);
Pre-submission engagement (Regulation 25)	- Issues and Options Report (Jan 09); - Policy Directions Report (Aug 09)
Pre-submission consultation / representation (Regulation 27)	- Final Plan (Feb 2010);

Links with the Shropshire Partnership

- 2.4 There has been a concerted attempt to utilise and build upon the close links between the spatial planning process and the work of the Shropshire Partnership, who act as the county’s Local Strategic Partnership. A key aspect of developing this close working relationship has been the co-ordination of consultation processes between the

preparation of the Core Strategy and the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS).

- 2.5 This co-ordinated effort has been realised through the use of specific consultation events and ongoing discussion between the Shropshire Partnership and the Planning Policy team. In particular, the consultation at the 'Policy Directions' stage of the Core Strategy in August 2009 was closely aligned with the Shropshire Partnership's consultation on the draft SCS. In doing so, combined resources between departments were utilised to deliver greater efficiencies, and ensured engagement with wider audiences than might otherwise have been the case for separate documents. More detailed information on this is outlined in section 3.

Pre-production stage

LDF Topic Based Discussion Papers – July 2008

- 2.6 In Summer 2008, a series of topic based discussion papers were prepared and consulted on. Whilst not formally part of the Regulation 25 stage, this represented an important early step in the identification of key issues for the Core Strategy. These papers dealt with a variety of themes, with each paper outlining key existing pieces of evidence and offering an initial assessment of headline issues. Whilst this was a non-statutory stage in the process it was felt important that key stakeholders were given the opportunity to express their initial views on the type of issues the Core Strategy needed to tackle.
- 2.7 In total eight separate topic papers were prepared covering the following themes:
- Housing;
 - Economy;
 - Environmental Resource Management;
 - Transport and Accessibility;
 - Climate Change;
 - Infrastructure and Implementation;
 - Monitoring;
 - Spatial Overview

Pre-Submission Stages

Core Strategy 'Issues and Options' (Regulation 25) – January 2009

- 2.8 The 'Issues and Options' stage was the first main stage of consultation for the Core Strategy under Regulation 25. The key purpose of the 'Issues and Options' document was to ask the public's view on the draft spatial vision; a draft set of strategic objectives; the key issues identified; and the alternative options proposed to implement the spatial

strategy. In presenting the issues, the document identified 16 key 'choices', each of which carried a range of realistic options.

Core Strategy 'Policy Directions' (Regulation 25) – August 2009

- 2.9 The key purpose of the document was to allow stakeholders and communities a further opportunity to respond to the emerging Core Strategy. Whilst the document did not include draft policies, it did provide important information on the broad policy areas the Council intended to develop further, and provided a summary of consultation responses made at the 'Issues and Options' stage.

Next Steps

- 2.10 The 'Final Plan' for the Core Strategy has been prepared by Shropshire Council and will be subject to representations on the 'soundness' of the Core Strategy for a period of six weeks beginning in February 2010. This will satisfy Regulation 27 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004, as amended in 2008.
- 2.11 The Council will then consider these responses and make any necessary minor changes to the 'Final Plan' before submitting it to the Secretary of State in summer 2010 for independent examination. It is anticipated that the Core Strategy will be adopted in March 2011.

3. CONSULTATION METHODS AND RESPONSES

- 3.1 This section outlines the engagement methods used at each stage of consultation; the number and type of responses received; and an outline of headline issues emerging from the comments. In doing so, each stage is covered separately, although several consultation methods were used for more than one stage.

Pre-Production Stage

Topic Based Discussion Papers – July 2008

Consultation Process

- 3.2 This pre-production stage was non-statutory and targeted primarily at specific consultation bodies and a selected group of consultees thought to have an interest in the issues under discussion. The production of the topic papers met an obligation in the council's agreed Interim Community Involvement Statement. The consultation lasted for six weeks between **21 July and 1 September 2008** and incorporated the following:
- Letters sent to all specific consultation bodies and selected consultees;
 - Specific letters sent to all Parish / Town Councils stating there would be flexibility over the deadline for comments in cases where Parish / Town meetings did not coincide with the set consultation dates;
 - Paper copies sent to stakeholders on request;
 - Documents placed on the interim 'One Council for Shropshire' website;
 - Joint Standing Conference between the Shropshire Partnership and Shropshire Council (details below)
- 3.3 Whilst the nature of the consultation meant the council targeted specific stakeholders instead of taking a blanket approach to engagement, each document was available to download from the interim Shropshire Council website for the duration of the consultation.
- 3.4 In total 72 organisations and individuals responded, with several making comments on more than one topic paper. Comments were well spread across all the papers, with the 'Housing' and 'Spatial Overview' themes having the most responses.

Shropshire Partnership's Standing Conference: 8th July 2008 at Shrewsbury Town Football Club

- 3.5 The Shropshire Partnership holds three Standing Conference events each year, allowing members the opportunity to hear about and discuss relevant issues. This event was the first formal joint event between the Shropshire Partnership and Shropshire Council's planning policy department. Using the tag line '*changing the face of Shropshire: your chance to influence planning development and land use in Shropshire*', the event focussed on the topic papers, with planning policy officers presenting and facilitating debate.
- 3.6 This event was well received by the Shropshire Partnership members and was an invaluable opportunity to demonstrate the close links between the strategic vision and priorities of the SCS and the delivery aspect of the LDF.

Summary of Responses and Main Issues Raised

- 3.7 The following table provides a summary of the headline issues identified through the Topic Paper consultation.

- There is a need to address the sustainability of rural communities. Maintaining and developing sustainable communities, and retaining and enhancing local services, is crucial;
- There is a need to reflect the importance of the vitality of rural areas. An element of growth is needed to retain vitality. Rural regeneration and diversification is key to this;
- The settlement hierarchy is an important issue that needs to be addressed. As a general view respondents thought that development should be primarily focused on Shrewsbury; then market towns at a secondary level with smaller towns and larger villages acting as local service centres on a third level;
- Shrewsbury should have the majority of growth but a balance needs to be struck between the role of Shrewsbury and the other areas of Shropshire;
- The scale and distribution of new housing development was seen as a key issue. There were mixed views on this, with some promoting the need to be flexible for possible higher growth levels and supporting the 5/15 year supply levels, whilst others felt the RSS figures were too high.
- There was some division of opinion about the degree of focus on urban and rural areas for future housing growth, with some advocating Shrewsbury Growth Point status, whilst others pointed to the need to develop more growth in villages;
- The importance of affordable housing for local needs was highlighted, including specialist housing and housing for the ageing population and for key workers;
- There is a need to provide a portfolio of employment land offering a

range and choice of suitable and deliverable sites to meet the differing needs of businesses & modern employment requirements.

- A functioning countryside is essential for the economic well-being & landscape management of the County. The Core Strategy should encourage a greater mix of well designed, including suitably scaled economic development in rural areas;
- Market towns seen as playing a crucial role in providing a network of centres and providing a distinctive offer, but rural centres are also important; however concerns expressed over increasing homogenisation of retailing and cloning of town centres.
- Core Strategy needs to recognise the wider health and well-being benefits of open space and green infrastructure as an element of design for the creation of sustainable communities;
- Standards for sustainable design should contribute to managing issues such as crime, health, surface water drainage and vernacular style including local building materials;
- Recognition needs to be made of Parish and town plans in identifying local infrastructure requirements and delivering aspects of the LDF;
- Market towns should be the focus for transport initiatives, and that whilst there should also be recognition of the need to improve public transport in rural areas, the significance of the car in rural areas must not be forgotten;
- There needs to be a viable and suitable percentage requirement for on-site renewable energy of at least 10%, along with the need to explore the potential for energy efficiency measures;
- Recognise the need to both mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change

Pre-submission Consultation Stages

- 3.8 Under regulation 25 of the Planning Act 2008 it is required that Local Planning Authorities conduct a continuous engagement with stakeholders throughout the pre-submission stage of document production. To support this engagement process for the Core Strategy, two specific consultation exercises were carried out; the 'Issues and Options' in January 2009 and 'Policy Directions' in August 2009.

Issues and Options Stage – January 2009

Consultation Process

- 3.9 The Core Strategy Issues and Options was the first main consultation stage of the pre-submission period. It included the following documents:
- Issues and Options Report;
 - Sustainability Appraisal Report;
 - Executive Summary
- 3.10 Public consultation on these documents lasted for 6 weeks between **26 January and 9 March 2009**. In terms of scale and geographic reach this consultation was one of the largest planning policy consultations to have taken place in Shropshire, and was the first occasion where responses to the document also fed into the preparation of the review of the Sustainable Community Strategy.
- 3.11 In order to provide a framework for the engagement process a consultation plan was prepared based upon the council's Interim Community Involvement Statement (see paragraph 1.6). This allowed an overview of the different techniques and methods to be used in targeting different groups, including the hard to reach.
- 3.12 The Issues and Options document was accompanied by a customised response form encouraging the public and other stakeholders to make clear preferences between the alternative options being proposed, whilst continuing to allow new options to come forward for consideration. A copy of the response form is included in this report as Appendix 3.
- 3.13 In summary the consultation included the following methods:
- Direct Mail and Leaflets
- 3.14 Everyone on the LDF consultee database was sent advance notice of the consultation. This provided information on the dates of the consultation; where to find a copy of the document; and how to respond. A summary leaflet accompanied the letter providing information on wider aspects of the LDF process.
- Shropshire Council Website / E-mail
- 3.15 A dedicated Core Strategy webpage was developed within the Planning Policy section of the Shropshire Council website. The webpage included all relevant consultation documents as downloadable PDFs, and included a Word version of the response form to enable people to respond via e-mail more easily.
- Press Releases / Newspaper articles / Radio
- 3.16 Press releases were issued in advance of the consultation and throughout the consultation period to alert people to local events. Following this several local newspapers carried articles about the consultation including the Shropshire Star, Bridgnorth Journal and the North Shropshire Chronicle. Additionally, the document gained radio

coverage, including a peak time question and answer session with the council's Head of Strategy on BBC Radio Shropshire.

- Shropshire Partnership Standing Conference, 3 February 2009
- 3.17 Following up the success of the Standing Conference in July 2008 (see paragraphs 2.11-2.13) a second event was jointly co-ordinated by the Shropshire Partnership and the council's planning policy service to promote the Issues and Options document. The event also provided an early opportunity for the Core Strategy process to reflect a series of 'visioning' exercises carried out by the Shropshire Partnership as part of the early preparation of the SCC. Appendix 5 provides a summary of the discussion and feedback from this event.
- Local community meetings
- 3.18 Sixteen community meetings were held between 26 January and 2 March in the following locations:
- Cleobury Mortimer – 26 Jan, Market Hall
 - Shrewsbury – 27Jan, Shirehall
 - Ellesmere – 28 Jan, Lakelands School
 - Bishops Castle – 29 Jan, Community College
 - Minsterley – 2 Feb, Parish Hall
 - Bridgnorth – 2 Feb, Castle Hall
 - Oswestry – 4 Feb, Oswestry Council Chamber
 - Market Drayton – 4 Feb, Grove School
 - Whitchurch – 10 Feb, Market Hall
 - Albrighton – 11 Feb, Red House Village Hall
 - Buildwas – 12 Feb, Village Hall
 - Church Stretton – 12 Feb, Community College
 - Ludlow – 23 Feb, Bishop Mascall Centre
 - Wem – 24 Feb, North Shropshire Council Chamber
 - Craven Arms – 25 Feb, Discovery Centre
 - Shrewsbury – 2 March, Theatre Severn
- 3.19 As the list shows, meetings were held in each of Shropshire's larger market towns and in a good geographical spread around smaller market towns. Each meeting was held between 7 and 9pm and followed a similar format with planning officers giving a standard presentation followed by an open question and answer session. Each meeting was chaired by a local councillor.

3.20 A summary booklet of the issues raised at each meeting was compiled following the consultation and used to feed into the development of further stages of the Core Strategy, and is available on request.

- Themed stakeholder workshops

3.21 Three workshops were held focussing on the distinct policy areas of the Core Strategy, namely:

- *Environment*: 23 February - Shropshire Wildlife Trust offices
- *Housing*: 24 February – Council Chamber, Shropshire Council
- *Economy*: 10 March - Council Chamber, Shropshire Council

3.22 For each event, specific bodies thought to have an interest in these areas were invited to attend, enabling a debate on strategic issues. All three events were chaired by a relevant councillor. The Housing event was also used to publicise the findings of the Shropshire Housing Land Availability Assessment and emerging Interim Guidance on Affordable Housing.

- Local Joint Committees (LJCs)

3.23 A series of Local Joint Committees (LJCs) were established in Shropshire in the run-up to the new unitary Council in April 2009. These bodies are legally constituted, decision-making committees comprising local Shropshire councillors together with representatives from each of the town and parish councils within the area. Initially eleven LJCs were established acting as 'pilot areas', with a total of twenty eight set up following April 2009. They have been identified in the Interim Community Involvement Statement as an important means to inform and engage local communities about planning issues. The following seven pilot areas included the Core Strategy on their agenda, with planning officers attending each to present and answer questions:

- Craven Arms LJC: 13 January;
- Wem and Wem Rural LJC: 21 January;
- St Oswald & Ryton XI Towns LJC: 28 January
- Ludlow LJC: 4 February;
- Oswestry LJC: 9 March;
- Rea Valley LJC: 17 March
- Broseley and Barrow LJC: 26 March

- Other Publicity and Events

3.24 Wherever possible, planning officers attended meetings of relevant public and voluntary groups in order to publicise the Core Strategy consultation. This enhanced links with Shropshire Partnership members and contributed to engaging some of Shropshire's

traditionally 'hard to reach' groups. Planning officers attending meetings of the following organisations:

- Environment Delivery Group (LSP Southern Area Partnership)
- Shropshire Association of Local Councils (SALC)
 - Shrewsbury Area Committee:
 - Bridgnorth Area Committee: 24 February 2009
- The Shropshire Hills Area Partnership
- The Shropshire Speaking Out Group and Youth Parliament: 24 January 2009
- South Shropshire's Farmer's Den Group: 5 February 2009

3.25 Whilst responses were encouraged by the 9 March as the official end of the consultation, it was acknowledged that responses after this date would continue to be accepted. This was especially useful in encouraging responses from Parish and Town Councils where Planning meeting fell outside the official consultation dates.

3.26 As well as formal written responses to the consultation, views expressed at each of the meetings / roadshows / events have also been taken into account in the preparation of further stages of the Core Strategy.

Summary of Responses and Main Issues Raised

3.27 The following table breakdowns the number of consultation responses received by type of organisation.

Table 3.1: Issues and Options - Breakdown of consultation responses by organisation type

Type of Organisation	Number of Responses	Percentage (%) of overall total
Parish and Town Councils / Elected Representatives	40	9.5
Agents and Developers	72	17
Government Organisations	18	4
Local Interest Groups	49	11.5
Utility Companies	9	2
Individuals	163	39

Estates / Landowners	70	17
Total	421	100

- 3.28 The majority of responses received related to the 16 'choices' and the draft spatial vision and strategic objectives. Most respondents used the standard response form to indicate under each 'choice' which option they either 'liked a lot'; 'liked'; 'disliked'; or 'disliked a lot'. In doing so, responses could be translated into a quantitative, as well as qualitative analysis.
- 3.29 One of the key aspects of the Issues and Options paper was a discussion on the overall distribution of development around the County. This key choice was called the 'Strategic Approach' and included five distinct options, ranging from a concentrated approach on Shrewsbury (Growth Point Plus), through to a more dispersed approach highlighting the need to develop sustainable rural communities (Rural Rebalance). It was felt especially important to receive comments on this crucial issue, and the response form was tailored to encouraging responses.
- 3.30 The following table provides a list of the headline key issues arising from comments on the Issues and Options document. A full summary of the comments received, including a breakdown of the percentages of support given to individual options, is available on the Shropshire Council website (www.shropshire.gov.uk/planning.nsf) and available on request.

Headline comments on the Strategic Approach:

- *Option A (Growth Point Plus):* Concentrating development on Shrewsbury would be detrimental to other settlements in Shropshire, and could harm the nature of the town (10% of respondents liked this option a lot);
- *Option B (Transport Corridors):* Focussing development on transport corridors would go against the principals of reducing car usage, and would need infrastructure improvements to make it work (25% of respondents liked this option a lot);
- *Option C (Market Towns):* Market towns play an important economic and social role in Shropshire, but lack of consensus over the benefits of concentrating development in a small number of towns (34% of respondents liked this option a lot);
- *Option D (Current Trends):* Approach is too restrictive, leading to unsustainable and dispersed development (19% respondents liked this option a lot);
- *Option E (Rural Rebalance):* Dispersed organic growth of rural settlements provides a positive view on development, particularly emphasising the social and economic balance of rural areas, but need to ensure environmental issues are also considered (44% respondents liked this option a lot)

Other key issues / preferences arising by key 'choice' area:

- *Development in the Countryside:* In supporting a rural rebalance approach, many respondents felt a more permissive approach to development in the countryside would be beneficial;
- *Shrewsbury's Direction for Growth and Sub Regional Role:* Recognition that in Shrewsbury, additional greenfield development would be required alongside priority brownfield land; the areas of land to the South and West of Shrewsbury were generally favoured as sustainable options for extending the town; Whilst many felt retail and office development within the river loop was preferable, there was recognition of the potential need for a wider dispersal of development in edge and out of centre locations;
- *Oswestry's Strategic Direction for Growth:* Recognised that greenfield land will be required for future housing and employment needs, and that the south east extension is the most sustainable and realistic option;
- *Employment Land Provision:* The majority view was employment targets have been set too low and the Core Strategy should test the possibility of higher targets in the longer term;
- *Affordable Housing Target / Thresholds & Percentages:* Following RSS targets for affordable housing considered the most favoured option. In developing thresholds and percentages there should be clear recognition of commercial viability;
- *Gypsy and Travellers:* The majority of responses felt expanding existing site provision is preferable to finding additional sites, although this view was less clear when consulting the gypsy and traveller communities directly;
- *Sustainable Development and Design Principles:* A consistent regional and county-wide approach to design and sustainability principles is preferred;
- *Environmental Networks:* Targeting the delivery of environmental improvements by opportunity was preferred, but recognition that "quick wins" could also prove beneficial in the short term.
- *Waste Infrastructure:* Clear preference for a combined approach, utilising existing facilities and developing new facilities based upon proximity to the main urban areas;
- *Strategic Planning for Minerals:* Preference for an approach utilising existing sites and developing new sites, reflecting proximity to the market. Targeted opportunities for environmental improvements to sites also given good support.
- *Renewable Energy Schemes:* Fairly even split in support for an overall positive approach to renewable energy schemes under 5MW, and the development of a 'twin-track' approach highlighting a more cautious approach in some areas of the county;
- *Ironbridge Power Station Site:* Overwhelming support for options that retain the site for power generation alongside other uses, the most popular being for wildlife, tourism and recreation.

Policy Directions Report – August 2009

Consultation Process

- 3.31 The Policy Directions report was the second major consultation in the Core Strategy's preparation, and included the following documents:
- Policy Directions main report;
 - Policy Directions executive summary
- 3.32 The Policy Directions document was consulted on for eight weeks between **10 August and 2 October 2009**. An updated set of Sustainability Appraisal was included within the main report, and the document was again accompanied by a customised response form.
- 3.33 The longer consultation time frame was recognition that the early part of the period fell within traditional holiday season. As an additional measure to ensure wide and effective engagement, particularly at the local level, an advance letter was sent to Shropshire's Parish and Town Councils to alert them to the impending consultation.
- 3.34 As with the Issues and Options document, a consultation plan was prepared based upon the Interim Community Involvement Statement, and opportunities were taken to co-ordinate consultation arrangements with the Shropshire Partnership, particularly with their consultation into the draft Sustainable Community Strategy between 1 July and 30 September.
- 3.35 In summary the consultation included the following methods / events:
- Direct Mail
- 3.36 Everyone on the LDF consultee database was sent a letter alerting them to the consultation in advance of the start date. An advanced letter was also sent to all Parish and Town Councils.
- Shropshire Council website / E-mail
- 3.37 The dedicated Core Strategy webpage was updated to include all relevant information on the consultation, including the opportunity to download all relevant consultation documents; guidance on how to respond; and information on consultation events. E-mail (planning.policy@shropshire.gov.uk) continued to be used as a preferred means of reply.
- Electronic Consultation Software
- 3.38 Additional to e-mail, this consultation was the first to use a dedicated planning electronic consultation software. The Uniform system, developed by the IDOX group, allowed people the opportunity to log on

using an individual username, and respond directly to individual sections of the Core Strategy electronically.

- Press Releases / Newspaper articles / Radio

3.39 Press releases were issued in advance of the consultation and at stages throughout the consultation period to alert people to local events, principally the local community meetings (see below). Once again, several newspapers carried stories on the Core Strategy including: the Oswestry Advertiser; the Shropshire Star; the Shrewsbury Chronicle; and, the Whitchurch Herald.

- Local Community meetings

3.40 Once again, local community meetings were seen as a key method in directly engaging the public. Seven meetings were held between the 1 and 14 September in the following locations:

- Shrewsbury: 1 September: Shirehall Council Chamber
- Whitchurch: 8 September: Civic Centre
- Ludlow: 8 September: Football Club
- Bridgnorth: 9 September: Council Chamber, Bridgnorth
- Oswestry: 9 September: Council Chamber
- Shrewsbury: 10 September: The Gateway
- Market Drayton: 14 September: Grove School

3.41 Each meeting was held between 7 and 9pm and followed a similar format, with planning officers presenting the key aspects of the policy Directions document, followed up by a question and answer session. Each session was chaired by a local Shropshire Council councillor, and all comments and issues raised were recorded.

3.42 Attendances at the community meetings were generally good, and were particularly high at Whitchurch and Oswestry. Representatives from local community and pressure groups, the general public, councillors and the development industry attended.

- Themed Stakeholder workshops

3.43 Three workshops were held focussing on the distinct policy areas of the Core Strategy, namely:

- *Economy*: 21 September, Guildhall Council Chamber, Shrewsbury
- *Housing*: 22 September, Guildhall Council Chamber, Shrewsbury
- *Environment*: 30 September, Guildhall Council Chamber, Shrewsbury

3.44 As with the Issues and Options consultation, these specialist events proved particularly useful, attracted healthy numbers of contributors and enabling a focussed debate on key strategic issues. Each event was chaired by a relevant local councillor and included a presentation by planning officers followed by break out workshops.

- Local Joint Committees (LJCs):

3.45 All 28 LJCs were contacted during August to request the Core Strategy be placed on meeting agendas. The following meetings carried the item, with officers attending to present and answer questions:

- Whitchurch and Press: 9 September
- Broseley and Barrow LJC: 21 September;
- Bishop Castle, Chirbury & Worthen and Clun LJC: 28 September
- Ellesmere LJC: 30 September;
- Loton and Tern LJC: 1 October
- Shifnal and Sheriffhales LJC: 6 October
- Albrighton LJC: 8 October

- Shropshire Council Roadshows:

3.46 In utilising wider council consultation and engagement activity, planning officers actively contributed to a series of full day roadshows arranged by the council's communications team. The purpose of the events was to inform the public about the type of services the Council delivers, and to respond to feedback from 'the man on the street'. Planning policy and Shropshire Partnership officers attended each roadshow to publicise the respective Core Strategy and Sustainable Community Strategy consultations. The roadshows were held in the following locations:

- Shifnal, 14 Sept;
- Bridgnorth, 15 Sept;
- Oswestry, 16 Sept;
- Wem, 17 Sept;
- Shrewsbury, 18 Sept;
- Ludlow, 21 Sept;
- Church Stretton, 22 Sept;
- Market Drayton, 23 Sept;
- Whitchurch, 24 Sept;
- Shrewsbury, 25 Sept

3.47 Each roadshow allowed the public to speak directly to officers about planning matters, and whilst the issues raised didn't always relate directly to the Core Strategy, the events were seen as useful in promoting genuine face to face engagement, and showing the links between council services.

- Local Strategic Partnership Area Partnership Meetings

3.48 All three of the Shropshire Partnership's Area Partnership Committees were approached and asked to include the Core Strategy on their upcoming meeting agendas. Planning officers attended the following two meetings to discuss the Core Strategy specifically:

- Southern Area Economy and lifelong Learning Delivery Forum, 22 September
- Central Area Economy and Transport Forum, 14 October

- Shropshire Association of Local Councils (SALC):

3.49 All five SALC committee areas were approached and asked to include the Core Strategy on their upcoming meeting agendas.

- Other publicity and Events

3.50 In addition to the community meetings and Local Joint Committee meetings, planning officers also attended the following Parish / Town / Community meetings on request to discuss the Core Strategy:

- Shrewsbury Town Council: planning committee, 6 October
- Shrewsbury Town Council: full council, 22 October
- Oswestry Town Council: full council, 5 October
- Condover Parish Council: planning committee, 3 September
- Llanyblodwel Parish Council: full council, 17 September
- Prees community meeting, 24 September (on request by Prees Parish Council and local resident association)
- Much Wenlock Town Council, 1 October
- Bucknell Parish Plan Group, 24 November

Summary of Responses and Main Issues Raised

3.51 The following table breakdowns the number of consultation responses received by type of organisation.

Table 3.2: Policy Directions - Breakdown of consultation responses by organisation type

Type of Organisation	Number of Responses	Percentage (%) of overall total
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Shropshire Core Strategy: Draft Final Plan – January 2010
Consultation Statement

Parish and Town Councils / Elected Representatives	43	14
Agents and Developers	55	18
Government Organisations	19	6
Local Interest Groups	41	13
Utility Companies	9	3
Individuals	140	45
Other	1	1
Total	308	100

3.52 The following provides a summary of the headline issues raised during the Policy Direction consultation. A full summary of responses to the 'Policy Directions' consultation, along with information on how the Council has taken these comments into account, is available on request.

Headline issues/comments from the Policy Directions consultation:

- Clear support for the Spatial Vision's emphasis upon delivering sustainable communities through recognition of the complementary roles of Shrewsbury, the market towns and rural areas;
- Significant support shown for the approach taken within the strategic objectives, although the term 'sustainable communities' and the roles of Shrewsbury and the market towns should be made more clear;
- Clear recognition that a focussed approach to development on Shrewsbury, the market towns and key centres offers a sustainable solution, although some concern that criteria for inclusion within the settlement hierarchy needs to be defined further;
- Significant support shown for the document's emphasis on enhancing the sustainability of Shropshire's rural areas and their hinterlands, with concern expressed that some rural villages are under threat from stagnation without such an approach;
- Whilst there is generally broad support from the principles of the policy toward the countryside, some viewed the level of detail as overly restrictive and would benefit from a more flexible approach which responded to local needs;
- Other comments feel that development in the countryside should be more strictly controlled in order to protect the environment and the principles of green belt;
- There is a need to recognise the merits of small scale economic development and diversification of traditional rural uses, particularly in

providing support for isolated villages;

- Significant concern to the approach taken on replacement dwellings and preferred use of conversions, with criticism that it is inflexible and a misinterpretation of national planning guidance;
- Need for provision of efficient infrastructure to support economic viability of rural businesses, particularly in terms of ICT and transport;
- Community benefits should be defined by local communities to ensure settlements achieve their own priorities;
- Broad recognition that all development, including small and medium sized developments, have a role in contributing to the necessary infrastructure, although the level of contribution should relate to the scale of development and be viable and appropriate;
- Recognition that the Core Strategy needs to identify what infrastructure is required in order to give more certainty to prospective developments;
- More explanation is needed on how the local centres have been identified;
- 61 settlements were suggested as potential Community Hubs by members of the local community, landowners and developers;
- 39 settlements were suggested as being potentially part of a Community Cluster by members of the local community, landowners and developers;
- Concern that the criteria for the identification of Community Hubs and Clusters needs to be set out in more detail;
- Some concern that the scale of potential development contributions would render some types of development unviable;
- Housing levels should be of a level to satisfy the RSS targets and the Strategic Housing market Assessment;
- Concern expressed over the identification of the five spatial zones and the proposed scale and distribution within them;
- Contrasting opinions expressed over the level of proposed housing development for Shrewsbury;
- Broad agreement over the 60% target for development of brownfield land;
- Policies need to consider the funding mechanisms and infrastructure requirements to support the delivery of targets;
- General consensus for the proposed approach to the hierarchy of centres and the associated distribution of services and facilities;
- Support for the principle of 'town centre first' development when considering retail development;
- There should not be a 'broad brush' approach taken to the identification of levels of service requirements for smaller market towns and rural centres;
- The promotion of sustainable tourism, along with its infrastructure requirements should be reflected in policy for all areas of Shropshire, particularly through highlighting the county's main assets and in continuing

to promote the appropriate diversification of uses in rural areas;

- General support for the approach to Gypsy and Traveller provision. Recognition of the need to ensure a flexible approach to the assessment of the expansion of existing sites and/or to the delivery of new sites;
- General support for the approach to environmental networks, but recognition that the approach needs to be explained and developed further in eventual policy.
- General support for the approach to design and local distinctiveness, particularly the application of a consistent approach across the county. The use of the Regional Sustainability Checklist as the key assessment tool is suggested.
- General support for the criteria based approach to renewable energy provision, although some views expressed about the need to identify higher targets and the need to promote small scale and decentralised energy.
- A mix of uses would be welcomed at the Ironbridge Power Station site, including an element of power generation
- The majority of respondents support the proposed approaches to Waste management and mineral provision.

Other Engagement

3.53 Throughout the Core Strategy's preparation there have been various engagement activities outside the set consultation periods. These have enabled an ongoing dialogue with key bodies and organisations, including government agencies and cross boundary discussions with other local authorities.

Cross Boundary Engagement

3.54 Early in the Core Strategy's preparation, each adjoining authority's planning policy departments were contacted to invite them to participate in ongoing cross-boundary discussions, and where necessary meet to discuss relevant issues. This correspondence has led to the following face-to-face meetings:

- South Staffordshire District Council – 26 November 2008
- Wyre Forest District Council – 17 December 2008
- Telford and Wrekin Borough Council – 23 February; 23 September 2009; 8 October; 18 November
- Worcestershire County Council – 21 January 2009
- Malvern Hills District Council – 21 January 2009
- Herefordshire Council – 18 June, 24 November 2009
- Chester & Cheshire West and Cheshire East Councils – 8 December 2009

3.55 Where there haven't been face-to-face meetings Shropshire Council has endeavoured to engage with authorities via other forms of communications to extract relevant cross boundary planning issues. The following provides a summary of the headline issues to emerge from the cross boundary discussions are:

Headline cross boundary issues identified through consultation:

- Accessibility to services in rural areas is an issue for parishes across the Shropshire / Telford boundary;
- The use of the Ironbridge Power Station site;
- Electricity supply and distribution;
- Highways issues along the M54/A5 for Shrewsbury and Telford;
- Protecting and enhancing the Ironbridge World Heritage Site;
- Developing environmental networks across boundaries;
- Joint working on evidence base for minerals with Telford;
- The management of Shropshire's and Telford's waste;
- Regional study suggests that travel patterns between north-east Shropshire, north Staffordshire and south Cheshire are not significant;
- Strategic linkages and constraints along the A456 transport corridor;
- Wider impact of the I54 development in Staffordshire;
- Potential impacts from the re-use of Wolverhampton Business Airport;
- West Housing Market Assessment (Shropshire and Herefordshire);
- Need for co-ordination of approach to implementation of Rural Regeneration Zone initiatives;
- Implications of the Wales Spatial Plan;
- Flood risk and landscape character;
- Avoiding duplication of evidence, particularly on the Habitat Regulation Assessment process

Sustainability Appraisal

3.56 The preparation of the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) runs parallel to the preparation of Development Plan Documents, and is the key mechanism for ensuring social, economic and environmental issues are built into the plan making process. In meeting the requirements of the European Directive on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), there are distinct consultation stages to its preparation.

- Scoping Report

- 3.57 The first key stage was the preparation of a Scoping Report in July 2008. The SA Scoping Report was consulted on at the same time as the Topic Paper Discussion Documents (see Paragraph 3.2) between **21 July and 1 September 2008**. This provided headline baseline information and developed sustainability criteria with which to assess the emerging Core Strategy; the Sustainability Appraisal Framework.
- 3.58 The range of stakeholders directly consulted mirrored that of the Topic Papers, and included the SEA bodies of Environment Agency, Natural England and English Heritage. As with the Topic Papers, copies of the Scoping Report were sent out on request and were kept on display in Shropshire's libraries and council offices. In total, six responses were received on the SA Scoping Report, including from Natural England and English Heritage. The comments received were largely used to update baseline evidence and revise the Sustainability Appraisal Framework.
- Issues and Options Sustainability Appraisal
- 3.59 A full Sustainability Appraisal Report was prepared and consulted on alongside the Core Strategy 'Issues and Options' report between **26 January and 9 March 2009**. The document's key purpose was to assess each alternative option against the revised SA Framework. Whilst a separate technical appendix was prepared and made available on request, the 'Issues and Options' document included detailed summaries of the SA conclusions. Everyone on the LDF consultee database was consulted on the SA Report, including all the SEA bodies.
- 3.60 Whilst several comments on the 'Issues and Options' paper made reference to the sustainability appraisal, only three distinct responses were made on the SA Report itself. These comments largely focussed on: the assumptions made in assessing sustainability; challenges to some of the appraisal scores; and information on the implementation of relevant environmental legislation. These comments fed into the continuing development of the SA. Following this, in May 2009 an independent assessment of the Sustainability Appraisal was carried focusing on the findings of the report and, where appropriate, challenging the 'scoring' of options.
- Policy Directions Sustainability Appraisal
- 3.61 The Policy Direction stage of the Core Strategy did not include a separate sustainability appraisal report. However, an SA summary update was included for each direction to highlight why a particular policy direction was favoured. Comments on this SA update were therefore invited as part of the wider consultation on Policy Directions.

Habitat Regulation Assessment

- 3.62 The Habitat Regulation Assessment (HRA) process underpins the preparation of LDF documents, including the Core Strategy. Its key role is to assess the potential impact of the plan on designated European sites within and outside the plan area.
- 3.63 Although linked to the preparation of the Core Strategy and the Sustainability Appraisal, the HRA is a separate process and has included a distinct consultation on a HRA Screening Report between **27 March and 8 May 2009**. Over 150 stakeholders were directly contacted about the consultation, including the SEA bodies, Parish and Town Councils and other local groups thought to have an interest in the Assessment.
- 3.64 Two organisations responded to the consultation; Natural England and the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW). The comments received related largely to the identification of relevant European Sites outside Shropshire's boundary and to the identification and interpretation of site objectives. These comments have been used to feed into the preparation of the final HRA (to be consulted on alongside the Core Strategy Final Plan). The process of HRA preparation has been aided by close working and engagement between the Council's Planning Policy and Natural Environment teams, and Natural England.

Councillor Engagement

- 3.65 Throughout the plan preparation process elected councillors have played an important an active role, particularly in support of the ongoing consultation process. In the transitional arrangements to the new Shropshire Council, a cross party sub-committee was established specifically to discuss and recommend decisions on important LDF issues. In the preparation of the Core Strategy's 'Final Plan', a similar cross party member committee has been used to allow early and effective engagement with elected representatives. Councillors have also actively supported the organisation and running of the local consultation meetings, and have also played an active role at the Shropshire Partnership Standing Conferences.
- 3.66 Specific events have also been arranged by officers to engage directly with councillors on planning issues. These events have been used to distil general information on planning policy and LDF issues, and have also provided opportunities for councillors to learn more about the Core Strategy in order to support their key role representing local communities. Whilst not being part of the Core Strategy engagement process, these events have proved particularly useful in engaging with elected representatives and it is anticipated this will make future LDF engagement more effective and efficient.

APPENDIX 1: INDICATIVE TYPES OF CONSULTEES

Specific Consultation Bodies:

- West Midlands Regional Assembly;
- The Coal Authority;
- The Environment Agency;
- English Heritage;
- Natural England;
- Shropshire's Parish and Town Councils;
- Neighbouring Parish and Town Councils;
- Adjoining Local Authorities;
- West Mercia Constabulary;
- Advantage West Midlands (the Regional Development Agency);
- Shropshire Primary Care Trust;
- The Highways Agency;
- The Coal Authority;
- Severn Trent Water;

General Consultation Bodies:

- Voluntary and charitable organisations;
- Ethnic or national groups;
- Religious groups;
- Representatives of disabled people;
- Local business representatives;
- Health organisations other than PCT;
- Local action / interest groups;
- Registered social landlords and housing associations;
- Individuals;
- Consultants and agents;

Other Consultation Bodies

- 1 This level of consultee is predominantly made up of specialist organisations and interest groups. Out of the 3,700 bodies currently on the LDF consultee database, a significant proportion would fall into this category as 'other consultation bodies'. In planning consultations Local Authorities should take a decision on which of these bodies they are to consult directly taking into account the nature and type of document under preparation.
- 2 Given the significance of the Core Strategy as both the lead document for the Shropshire LDF and as the first major planning document to be prepared under the new Shropshire Council, the view has been taken to consult all consultation bodies on the database throughout the Regulation 25 stage of production.