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<u>Item/Paper</u>
10

SHROPSHIRE CORE STRATEGY: FINAL PLAN VERSION

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Summary

The purpose of this report is to present the draft Final Plan version of the Core Strategy document (attached as Appendix A) for approval by Council. Following approval it will be published on 15 February for a 6 week period for representations and then it will be subject to further consideration before submission with suggested changes to the Secretary of State in July 2010.

Recommendations

- A. That Council approves the draft Final Plan document for publication subject to minor amendments and editing.
- B. That authority is delegated to the Director of Development Services in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning and Transport to approve the Final Plan document prior to publication for consultation on 15 February 2010.

Report

Background

1. The Final Plan document is the third prescribed stage authorities have to undertake when developing a Core Strategy. The Core Strategy is the principal document in the Local Development Framework LDF that will guide future development in Shropshire over the next 15-20 years. The Core Strategy is a high level, strategic document that must be grounded in the Sustainable Community Strategy. It will set out a distinctive spatial vision and strategy for Shropshire to 2026.
2. The Council is required to prepare and maintain a 'Local Development Framework' (LDF). An LDF contains, in the form of a 'portfolio', the various documents that collectively will deliver the spatial vision and objectives for the area over the next 10 to 15 years (Development Plan Documents including

- (the Annual Monitoring Report), set out community engagement practices (Statement of Community Involvement) and deliver further guidance on certain topics (Supplementary Planning Documents). The LDF will seek to integrate and reflect proposals for physical development by the Council and its various partners.
3. The Core Strategy sets out the vision, objectives and approach to planning policy in Shropshire by closely aligning with the Sustainable Community Strategy as well as other strategies such as the Housing Strategy and the Local Transport Plan that influence the way land is used, managed and developed. We are working to a very challenging timetable to comply with the statutory process and produce a "sound" Core Strategy for adoption in March 2011.
 4. The Final Plan document is actually the fourth stage in the development of Shropshire's Core Strategy as we undertook an additional, non-statutory stage by publishing our "Preferred Options". In mid-2008 the Council consulted on the Key Issues for Shropshire in a series of Topic papers; at the second stage the aim of the Issues and Options paper was to further the debate about these headline planning issues and to suggest possible ways, or options, for dealing with them. The Policy Directions document consulted on the type of strategy and policies that previous responses, and the evidence the Council has put together, suggests is appropriate.
 5. The 'Final Plan' stage is the point at which representations about 'soundness' are made on what the Council considers to be its *final* version of the Core Strategy. The Final Plan will be published for a 6 week period beginning on 15 February in line with the timetable set out in the approved Local Development Scheme. Due to the extensive engagement at earlier stages the aim of this statutory stage, rather than draw out finely detailed objections, is to elicit representations on the 'soundness' of the Core Strategy. These should consider whether it is 'justified' i.e. founded on a robust and credible evidence base; it is 'effective' i.e. that it can be delivered; and it is consistent with national policy. This also helps to avoid late and unexpected representations emerging at the end of the process which might render the Core Strategy unsound and lead to delays in the delivery of a robust planning framework for the County.
 6. The informal LDF Member Group, recently set up, have met three times to consider the emerging draft Final Plan and associated documents. Members have endorsed the strategic approach in the document and numerous detailed changes have been made to the Final Plan reflecting their knowledge and experience.
 7. Cabinet also considered a number of issues that will be addressed in the final drafting of the published document. Foremost among these was how the housing policy CS11 relates to barn conversions in rural areas and the mechanism for achieving a contribution to affordable housing. A paper setting out revised proposals will be presented to Council. A further issue was about the approach to defining Hubs and Clusters. This is dealt with in paragraph 17. Other Issues concerning the clarity of wording and maps will be

addressed in the final version for publication. Hence, delegated authority is requested to enable final editing changes to be made.

8. Further member briefings can take place prior to publication. Publicity will be in line with the standards set out in the Interim Community Involvement Statement. Over three thousand individuals and organisations will receive notification of the publication of the Final Plan document. In order to maximise scope for involvement, advance notice will be given to communities and stakeholders of the forthcoming consultation.
9. There will be publicity in the local media including both newspapers, magazines and on radio. It will be available on the Shropshire Council website, as paper copies of the full document at libraries and Community Information Points across Shropshire. CD versions of the full set of documents will also be available.

Scope and Content of the document

10. The 20 policies in the Final Plan reflect the response from the stakeholders including residents, local and national organisations, government agencies, landowners, agents and developers to the previous consultations. It also takes account of the available evidence and in particular the findings of the Sustainability Appraisal process. A brief summary of the comments made on the Policy Directions document is attached as Appendix C.
11. The Core Strategy embodies an innovative approach to the strategy for development in Shropshire in order to deliver more sustainable places at all levels in both urban and rural communities. A sustainable place has the necessary social, economic and environmental infrastructure to meet the needs of its current population but is also resilient and adaptable to a range of economic, social and environmental challenges.
12. The Core Strategy recognises Shropshire's dispersed pattern of historic settlement, and that some places have more potential for sustainability than others. Consequently, to achieve sustainable places the Core Strategy:
 - Directs the majority of development to places that already have good infrastructure, services and facilities (in particular policies CS1, CS2, CS3); and
 - Redresses imbalances by ensuring that development in smaller settlements is targeted to community benefit, particularly meeting environmental, social and economic needs (in particular policies CS4, CS5); and
 - Ensures that all development is well designed, integrated with needs and helps deliver more sustainable places (in particular policies CS6, CS7, CS8 & CS9).
13. The strategy reflects the distinctively rural nature of Shropshire and the connection between the county town of Shrewsbury, the market towns, smaller settlements and the rural areas they serve. It is an approach that seeks to nurture, protect and develop the social and physical fabric of

communities, supporting new economic potential within their environmental setting.

14. The role for Shrewsbury reflects the Shrewsbury Vision, and the aspirations of the community in Shrewsbury to continue to thrive as a centre for employment and services, whilst maintaining its outstanding natural and built environment. The aspirations of the communities in the market towns and key centres is reflected in policy CS3, and carried forward through the market town revitalisation programme.
15. The Core Strategy will set the framework for close work with local communities to identify community hubs and community clusters in the Site Allocations and Development Management document. These will be rural settlements that have the potential to be stronger social, economic and environmentally sustainable communities. The approach will use a process pioneered in the South West known as the 'Devon Toolkit' to establish communities own views of the level of sustainability in their own settlements. It is a community-led, bottom-up approach that is responsive to communities' own priorities and recognises that sustainability is based on many factors, including the presence of employment, affordable housing, facilities and services, but also intangible assets such as social fabric. In community hubs and clusters, development that improves their sustainability will be welcomed, for example where it provides employment opportunities, affordable housing or services and facilities for local needs.
16. The approach recognises the need for Shropshire communities, particularly in rural areas to become more self-reliant and resilient when set against the wider context of energy prices and security of supply and adapting to climate change. Consequently the approach reinforces the role that Shropshire's market towns and other key centres have traditionally played, as accessible, sustainable centres for their rural catchments. The approach to rural areas supports local creativity in meeting such challenges.
17. A member expressed concern that not all Hubs would necessarily have defined development boundaries. The policy as proposed allows for development boundaries to be defined where appropriate. This would correctly be done through the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Development Plan Document, on which consultation is due to begin in Spring 2010.
18. Further chapters under the headings Sustainable Places, Communities, Economy, and Environment provide additional detail on the social, economic and environmental aspects of delivering sustainable places. How we intend to deliver Shropshire's spatial plan is set out in our LDF Implementation Plan, which combined with the Local Investment Plan for the Homes and Communities Agency "Single Conversation" we are calling Shropshire's "Regeneration Prospectus". This document has been approved by Cabinet on 6 January as the basis for further consultation and refinement.
19. A key objective is to ensure that planned development is delivered and that mechanisms are in place to ensure this happens; therefore, the means of delivering each policy is also set out and the Core Strategy Implementation

Plan outlines the key infrastructure requirements needed to support the development of sustainable places and the scale of growth outlined in the Core Strategy.

20. In order to prepare the Core Strategy, the policies have also been the subject of a Sustainability Appraisal. The Council set up and consulted on objectives against which to measure the sustainability of the various options and policy directions at previous stages. At this stage it is the policies themselves which have been subject to appraisal. The outcome of this work is set out in the Sustainability Appraisal Report (attached as appendix B).

Next Steps

21. On completion of this period the representations received will be considered as to whether any are so significant they warrant further changes to the Core Strategy. As this is the fourth stage in the process it is anticipated that significant policy changes will be unlikely. The Core Strategy and all other supporting material including the representations will be submitted to the Secretary of State in July 2010. At this point an independent Inspector will be appointed to undertake an Examination of the 'soundness' of the Core Strategy during autumn 2010. The Council will then include any changes as required by the Inspector and adopt the Core Strategy by March 2011.

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

Shropshire Core Strategy: Policy Directions – August 2009

Shropshire Core Strategy: Issues and Options - January 2009

Human Rights Act Appraisal

None arising from this report.

Environmental Appraisal

Environmental consequences are covered in the Sustainability Appraisal that is undertaken at all stages of the Core Strategy preparation process.

Risk Management Appraisal

There are no risk management issues arising directly.

Community / Consultations Appraisal

See report

Cabinet Member

Martin Taylor-Smith

Local Member

All

Appendices

Appendix A: Core Strategy Final Plan

Appendix B: Sustainability Appraisal

Appendix C: Analysis of responses to Policy Directions consultation

