



Shropshire Council
Legal and Democratic Services
Shirehall
Abbey Foregate
Shrewsbury
SY2 6ND

Date: Tuesday, 4 June 2019

**Committee:
Cabinet**

Date: Wednesday, 12 June 2019

Time: 11.00 am

Venue: Shrewsbury Room, Shirehall, Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury, Shropshire, SY2 6ND

You are requested to attend the above meeting.
The Agenda is attached

Claire Porter
Head of Legal and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer)

Members of Cabinet

Peter Nutting (Leader)
Steve Charmley (Deputy Leader)
Gwilym Butler
Dean Carroll
Lee Chapman
Steve Davenport
Robert Macey
David Minnery
Lezley Picton
Ed Potter

Your Committee Officer is:

Amanda Holyoak Senior Democratic Services Officer

Tel: 01743 257714

Email: amanda.holyoak@shropshire.gov.uk

AGENDA

1 Apologies for Absence

2 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

Members are reminded that they must not participate in the discussion or voting on any matter in which they have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest and should leave the room prior to the commencement of the debate.

3 Minutes (Pages 1 - 4)

To approve as a correct record and sign the minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 22 May 2019, attached.

4 Scrutiny Items

5 Member Question Time

To receive any questions of which members of the Council have given due notice, the deadline for notification for this meeting is 5.00 pm on Friday 7 June 2019.

6 Public Question Time

To receive any questions or petitions from members of the public, notice of which has been given in accordance with Procedure Rule 14. Deadline for notification is no later than 24 hours prior to the commencement of the meeting.

7 Shropshire Council Supported Bus Services - Budget 2019/20 (Pages 5 - 30)

Lead Member – Councillor S Davenport – Portfolio Holder for Highways and Car Parking

Report of Director of Place attached

Contact: Mark Barrow, 01743 258916

8 Shropshire Hills AONB Management Plan 2019-24 and Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership Terms of Reference (Pages 31 - 120)

Lead Member – Councillor Lezley Picton, Portfolio Holder Culture, Leisure, Waste and Communications

Report of Director of Place attached

Contact: Mark Barrow, Director of Place, 01743 258916

9 Shropshire Local Plan Review: Consultation on Preferred Strategic Development Sites (Pages 121 - 184)

Lead Member - Robert Macey, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Strategic Planning

Report of Director of Place, attached

Contact: Mark Barrow, tel 01743 258916

10 Exclusion of the Press and Public

To resolve that, in accordance with the provisions of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 and Paragraph 10.4 (3) of the Council's Access to Information Rules, the public and press be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items

11 London Road Shrewsbury Self Build (Pages 185 - 208)

Lead Member – Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Assets, Economic Growth and Regeneration

Report of Director of Place

Contact: Mark Barrow, tel 0174 258916

12 Lease of Property at Tilstock, Whitchurch for Temporary Accommodation Purposes

Lead Member – Councillor Robert Macey, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Strategic Planning

Report of Director of Adult Service

Contact: Andy Begley, 01743 258981

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Committee and Date

Cabinet

12 June 2019

CABINET

**Minutes of the meeting held on 22 May 2019
In the Shrewsbury Room
11.00 am – 11.33 am**

Responsible Officer: Amanda Holyoak
Email: amanda.holyoak@shropshire.gov.uk Tel: 01743 257714

Present

Councillor Peter Nutting (Chairman)
Councillors Steve Charmley (Deputy Leader), Gwilym Butler, Dean Carroll, Lee Chapman,
Robert Macey, David Minnery, Lezley Picton and Ed Potter

31 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillor S Davenport.

32 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

None were declared.

33 Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 1 May 2019 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Leader.

34 Scrutiny Items

There were no scrutiny items.

35 Public Question Time

It was agreed to receive the public question related to the Shropshire Hills Federation at the time this item was considered on the agenda.

36 Member Question Time

There were no questions from Members.

37 Financial Outturn 2018/19

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Corporate Support presented the report of the Director of Finance, Governance and Assurance providing details of the revenue and capital outturn position for Shropshire Council for 2018/19. He thanked the Director of Finance, Governance and Assurance and his team, Cabinet colleagues and all officers

who had pulled together and worked very hard over the last 12 months to achieve a better than break even position.

In responding to questions from Group Leaders, the Chief Executive said it was important to understand that reserves were increasing year on year and that areas of overspend were in children's and adults demand-based services where the Council was needed to step in and assist. The volatility of the budget had been managed in year by taking other measures.

RESOLVED:

- A To note that the outturn for the revenue budget for 2018/19 is a controllable underspend of £0.167m. This represents 0.03% of the original gross budget of £561.950m.
- B To note that the level of the General Fund balance after adjusting for the outturn underspend and insurance position stands at £15.537m, which is above the anticipated level assessed in February 2019
- C To note that the Outturn for the Housing Revenue Account for 2018/19 is an underspend of £3.859m and the level of the Housing Revenue Account reserve stands at £9.813m (2017/18 £8.225m).
- D To note the increase in the level of Earmarked Reserves and Provisions (excluding delegated school balances) of £4.986m in 2018/19 and the reasons for this.
- E To note that the level of school balances stand at £4.178m (2017/18 £5.381m).
- F To approve net budget variations of £0.848m to the 2018/19 capital programme, detailed in Appendix 5 / Table 11 and the re-profiled 2018/19 capital budget of £60.703m.
- G To approve the re-profiled capital budgets of £69.243m for 2019/20, including slippage of £15.728m from 2018/19, £22.181m for 2020/21 and £16.001m for 2021/22 as detailed in Appendix 5 / Table 15.
- H To accept the outturn expenditure set out in Appendix 5 of £50.975m, representing 76% of the revised capital budget for 2018/19.
- I To approve retaining a balance of capital receipts set aside of £20.515m as at 31st March 2019 to generate a one-off Minimum Revenue Provision saving of £0.621m in 2019/20.

38 Discretionary School and College Transport

The Portfolio Holder for Children's Services presented the report of the Director of Children's Services on Discretionary School and College Transport. He explained how the responses to the consultation, discussion at Scrutiny Committee, and input from individual members had helped form the recommendations.

RESOLVED:

To note the feedback received from the various consultees and stakeholders, detailed in Appendix

A of the report and to approve the amended recommendations as follows:-

- A To set the lower rate of the contribution to £280 per student, whilst maintaining the upper limit of the Post 16 mainstream scheme at its current £875 pa.
- B To expand the contribution scheme to include SEND Post 16 students at the contribution rates, ensuring a consistent approach across all Post 16 transport, whilst also reflecting practice in a number of other councils.
- C To continue to support nursery SEND transport assistance, incorporating nursery school SEND transport within the Council’s contribution scheme for discretionary travel as laid out in the amended recommendation above.
- D That any changes come into effect from 1 September 2019 and will only be applicable to new applicants. As with previous practice, the removal of provision will be on a phased basis, protecting all those pupils and students entitled within the existing schemes.

39 Consultation on Prescribed Alterations - Shropshire Hills Federation

The Leader invited member of the public, Rebecca Burrell, to ask her question regarding the recognition of work put into the proposals by communities of the Shropshire Hills Federation and about children’s education. A full copy of the question and answer provided by the Portfolio Holder for Children’s Services is attached to the signed minutes. Councillor Heather Kidd, Local Member, also spoke, referring to a previous campaign to save Stiperstones School and praised the approach which had allowed the local community to work together and find a sustainable solution and enable children to continue to access a very good education.

The Portfolio Holder for Children’s Services presented the report of the Director of Children’s Services and said that the Federation had led in finding a way to achieve the best outcomes for children.

RESOLVED:

- A to note the outcomes from the statutory consultation undertaken by the Shropshire Hills Federation
- B to agree to the prescribed alteration to transfer education provision from Stiperstones CE Primary to Norbury Primary from January 2020, with the option for parents to elect for their children to be educated at the Federation’s other site at Chirbury CE Primary.

Signed (Chairman)

Date:



<u>Committee and Date</u>
Cabinet
12 June 2019

<u>Item</u>
Public

Shropshire Council Supported Bus Services - Budget 2019/20

Responsible Officer Mark Barrow

e-mail: mark.barrow@shropshire.gov.uk Tel: 01743 258916

1. Summary

In the context of the overall financial context, Shropshire Council faces complex and challenging decisions in the short and medium term as financial pressures increase on the budget for the provision of subsidised local bus services and Shrewsbury Park & Ride. The Council's financial strategy for 2019/2020 includes a budget reduction of £405,000 in public transport and £50,000 for Shrewsbury Park & Ride which will have an impact on the bus services provided by the Council.

Many of the people who use public transport in Shropshire are reliant upon these services to undertake their daily lives, a lack of transport especially in rural areas is known to contribute to social exclusion and this can particularly impact on the elderly, those with a disability, the young or families who are on low incomes, this has been clearly highlighted in the consultation responses received.

The Council currently allocate £1,809,955 per annum supporting non-commercially viable bus routes and £258,456 per annum on the Shrewsbury Park & Ride service. It should be noted that due to demographic pressures 'Concessionary Fares' are increasing year on year which creates additional ongoing increased pressure on the Councils Public Transport Budget. Given that concessionary travel is a national scheme determined by Government, this is effectively uncontrollable expenditure that the Council has to fund from within its own local budgets. The cost of Concessionary Travel for 2018/19 amounted to £3,498,570. In broad terms concessionary travel accounts for 80% of all bus use in Shropshire. This is an annually increasing cost pressure on the Council.

Subsequent to the budget decision, the Council undertook a six-week consultation regarding the 2019/20 budget proposals to reduce the Council's expenditure on the Local Bus services it subsidises and the Shrewsbury Park & Ride Service, which commenced on 25 March 2019 and ended on 6 May 2019.

The consultation document was circulated to various stakeholders including Town & Parish Councils, schools and colleges, voluntary and community sectors, transport operators, the Shropshire Bus User Group and Shrewsbury Business Improvement District. The consultation and community response has been well documented in the media, social media and representations made with councillors in their local areas.

In the majority of cases the proposals within the consultation on local bus services represented a reduced timetable on each of the services the Council supports, details of the impact on individual services is shown in the table within the consultation letter marked Appendix A.

Since the development of the original budget proposals further work is developing in producing a Rural and Community Strategy and in the area of climate change and carbon reduction. These strategies will help shape and influence future transport policy.

The purpose of this report is to summarise the feedback received from the various consultees and stakeholders and to approve amended recommendations as laid out in 2.1 and 2.2 below.

Thus this report seeks not to reduce or remove services as consulted (£405,000) but where the consultation feedback has highlighted genuine efficiencies or cost pressures those will be focused upon. Thus the full savings reduction of £405,000 will not be achieved.

2. Recommendations

2.1 Local Bus Services

- i. To not implement the reduction or removal of services as consulted, but where the consultation feedback has highlighted genuine efficiencies or cost pressures those will be focussed upon.
- ii. To amend the Council's 2019/20 budget and reduce the planned reduction in the public transport budget from £405,000 to £180,000.

2.2 Shrewsbury Park & Ride

- i. To approve the proposal as consulted upon on Shrewsbury Park & Ride fare increase from £1.60 to £2.00 return.
- ii. To remove the Shrewsbury Park & Ride group ticket option, which currently allows up to 5 passengers to travel for the price of £2.50 (return).
- iii. To remove the discretionary discount for concessionary fares on Shrewsbury Park & Ride, that allows passengers on presentation of their concessionary card to travel for a 50% discount.
- iv. To agree the proposed changes to Park & Ride become effective from 1 September 2019

2.3 Future Public Transport Services

- i. To commence a review of the current operation and future opportunities for, improved public transport services across Shropshire, including reviewing concessionary travel and the opportunities for bus franchising.

REPORT

3. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

- 3.1 The ESIIA related to the amended recommendations as detailed in Section 2 has been completed and attached marked Appendix B.
- 3.2 The ESIIA has identified that there is potential of a medium negative impact on two of the characteristics and low negative impact on the remaining.

4. Background

4.1 Public Transport – Local Bus Services financially supported by the Council

Bus services outside London were deregulated in 1986. In essence the provision of bus services is a free market, meaning that anyone (subject to minimum safety and operating standards) can operate bus services. Bus operators are free to run whatever services they like and determine the fares they will charge and the vehicles they will use. This can result in an uncoordinated network with a confusing array of ticketing options for customers. Naturally commercial bus operators focus on the most profitable routes, with the Council having to pay bus operators to run journeys on routes that are not commercially viable but which are considered 'socially or economically' necessary. It is estimated that circa 80% of bus journeys within Shropshire relate to concessionary travel and consequently bus operators focus on those routes and the maximisation of their income and profits.

The Council also works with a number of community transport organisations across the County to provide essential services most often in more rural and remote areas. Within Shropshire, the amount of commercially registered bus services compared to the amount supported by the Council is very different to what you would encounter in denser urban areas, which by their very nature are more attractive for bus operators to provide commercial bus services. Subsequently the Council has to commit proportionally greater levels of subsidy to fill those larger commercial viability gaps and there is no specific allowance or additional funding from Government that allows for this.

The majority of these routes are key interurban services that link the market towns within Shropshire and enable onward travel to other areas of the County and the wider Marches and West Midland Region. These interurban services by their very nature will also support the economic growth of our market towns and Council recognises the importance related to supporting these services where a commercially sustainable alternative is not in place and within the constraints of our overall budget position.

Whilst it is recognised that many of these subsidised routes provide access to essential services, amenities, education and employment, the public consultation has been meaningful and has helped develop that understanding even further. Consequently, the ESIIA has been updated following the consultation, a further ESIIA would be undertaken for any future Local Bus Service routes.

To explore alternative ways of reducing the public transport budget through efficiencies, in partnership with operators and stakeholders, subject to:

- a. Ensuring that any service changes will ameliorate impact on the travelling public, especially where limited or no alternative travel options are available.
- b. Any subsequent changes would be introduced with effect from January 2020 and subject to a consultation on any individual services affected.
- c. A recognition that efficiencies and reductions will impact on some services where consultation has revealed little or no discernible impact.

A table of services that the Council currently subsidises can be found within **Appendix A**.

4.2 Shrewsbury Park & Ride

Shrewsbury Park & Ride is operated from three sites located in Harlescott to the north of the town, Oxon to the west and Meole Brace in the south. The service is provided as part of a wider parking strategy for Shrewsbury and is key in reducing demand for parking within the town centre, whilst at the same time having a positive impact on reducing congestion and promoting sustainable travel.

The current service frequency is every 20 minutes (reduced from a 12 minute frequency in November 2015) to and from Shrewsbury Town Centre, Monday to Saturday and is currently contracted to Arriva Midlands North Limited. The service carried a total of 617,000 passenger trips in 2018/19 with the current standard fare at £1.60 for a return. Patronage on the service has decreased year on year which can be attributed to a number of factors. Concessionary travel passes currently can be used on the service to obtain a 50% discount on presentation of a valid concessionary travel pass, which is applied at the Council's discretion.

The Council recognises the important contribution park and ride can play in supporting the Shrewsbury Town Centre economy, reducing congestion and helping improve access to key services and leisure/culture opportunities. As part of the 'Big Town Plan' initiative early work is underway to look at how park and ride can be further developed and improved and these findings will come forward to a future meeting of Cabinet.

4, 3 Future Mobility Strategy

Officers are currently examining options, including best practice in other areas of the Country to develop a transport vision and strategy for Shropshire that encapsulates all forms of transport, including public transport and Park & Ride. This work will have a countywide focus, but also complement the specific emerging proposals within the Shrewsbury Big Town Plan, Future High Streets Fund submissions and new housing and employment proposals within the Local Plan Review. This strategy will need to be co-created with a number of key partners and stakeholders to ensure that any revised network reflects passenger and economic needs within Shropshire.

In addition to already stated priorities of the Council this strategy will also take cognisance of the emerging Rural and Communities Strategy and Climate Emergency resolution of Full Council.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 In the 2018/19 financial year the Council expenditure on Public Transport was £1,809,955 with £258,456 attributed to the Shrewsbury Park & Ride service.

- 5.2 In addition to the costs detailed within 5.1 above the Council also incurred expenditure of £3,498,570 (18/19) in the reimbursement of concessionary fares as part of its mandatory duties.
- 5.3 The Councils financial strategy for 2019/20 includes a budget reduction of £405,000 in public transport and £50,000 for Shrewsbury Park & Ride

5.4 **Net Financial Impact to the Council of revised recommendations**

This report seeks not to reduce or remove services as consulted (£405,000) but where the consultation feedback has highlighted genuine efficiencies or cost pressures those will be focussed upon. Thus the full savings reduction of £405,000 will not be achieved.

- i. The revised recommendations within Section 2 of this report commit to exploring alternative ways of reducing the public transport budget through efficiencies and will realise an estimated £180,000 savings within the 2019/20 financial year.
- ii. Therefore £225,000 of the £405,000 budget reduction within the financial strategy will be unmet and will be subject to revised proposals.
- iii. The implementation of the proposed fare increase on Park & Ride, the removal of the group ticket and the concessionary fare discount will realise £50,000 of savings during 2019/20.

6 **The consultation and how feedback was generated**

The Council undertook a six-week consultation regarding proposals to reduce expenditure on the Local Bus services it subsidises and the Shrewsbury Park & Ride Service. The consultation commenced on 25 March 2019 and ended on 6 May 2019. A total of 955 responses were received, the majority received via e-mail, and a number by formal letter.

6.1 The consultation document was circulated to various stakeholders including Councillors, MP's, Town & Parish Councils, schools and colleges, voluntary and community sectors, transport operators, Shropshire Bus User Group and Shrewsbury Business Improvement District.

6.2 Bus Users Shropshire submitted their concerns from a network perspective and they commented that they are extremely concerned about the impact of the budget reductions. Their main concerns centred on the following services:

- 553 Shrewsbury to Bishops Castle
- 436 Shrewsbury Much Wenlock to Bridgnorth
- 576 Shrewsbury to Oswestry
- 511 Shrewsbury Wem to Whitchurch
- 297 Bridgnorth to Kidderminster

They highlighted that buses provide a vital service and play a very important role in reducing traffic congestion and pollution, supporting local businesses and tackling the increasing problems of loneliness and isolation.

6.3 Arriva Midlands North responded to the consultation and felt that there would be additional revenue benefit to the Council if Shrewsbury Park & Ride fares were increased to something approaching commercial levels. They also fully support the discount for concessions on the Park & Ride ending.

6.4 Shrewsbury Business Improvement district (BID) have also submitted a response to the consultation with their key concerns being that in increasing the standard fare, removing the concessionary pass discount and removing the group ticket it would effectively incentivise people to drive into the town centre or even put them off visiting completely, which could have a wider economic impact.

6.5 The majority of responses were concerned about any impact on the key core/interurban routes which operate between the market towns and Shrewsbury, enabling passengers to access essential services, such as health, education and employment. Any reductions to these key interurban routes would impact on all of the key themes raised by the respondents. In summary these services all promote employment, economic growth, reduce social isolation, and provide links to education and access to essential services and health so any reduction could have detrimental impact.

Table A – Consultation Reponses by Bus Service

Related Transport Service Route	Number of Responses
511	171
General	158
Shrewsbury Park and Ride	156
553	140
436	119
576	67
297	53
544	34
701	30
540	16
64	15
23	13
8	11
113	10
114	9
19	8
101	7
115	7
116	5
26	4
18	3
401	3
404	3
37	3
12	2
25	2
400	

2	2
205	2
301	2
21	1
70	1
3	1
11	1
27	1
164	1
302	1
435	1
501	1

6.7 The responses received were varied and detailed, with a number of key themes highlighted, which are shown in the table below. It should also be noted that a respondent may have raised more than one concern.

Table B – Key Themes

Area of Concern	Number of Responses Raising Concern
Social Isolation/Health	626
Environmental	243
Economic Impact	185
Work	137
Education	116
Other	76
Information	30
Business	20

6.8 Officers have collated the comments received from respondents under the themes of Business, Economic Impact, Education, Environmental, Social Isolation/Health and Employment and these are detailed below.

Reponses regarding **Business:**

- Concerns that tourism in market towns could be impacted with fewer options for tourists to visit county towns, which could have a financial impact on local businesses.
- Many towns are already poorly served by bus services and these proposals will simply lead to a further decline in visitor numbers. Town & Parish Councils should be working together with tourism services to attract tourists to the town through advertising public transport better so it is more widely used.
- Some businesses rely on bus services both in a workforce and customer context.
- Reduced bus services will affect rural users who travel to market towns for shopping thus effecting local businesses.

Responses regarding **Economic Impacts:**

- The main focus of concerns relate to the proposed increased fares on Shrewsbury P&R, which respondents believe will lead to reduced footfall on the service with a knock on effect on the economic activity in Shrewsbury Town Centre.
- Reducing concessions for pensioners is considered a significant impact for some financially and concessions are a major incentive for them to travel into the town centre.
- Similar range of impact on other town centres if services are removed or reduced, with less footfall – less income generation for town/village centres and a potential decline in local businesses.
- Some agreement in a raising of the general ticket fee and an increase in group ticket pricings.
- Increased fares and a removal of the concessionary fare discount on Park and Ride will encourage more town centre traffic and more congestion.

Responses regarding **Education:**

- Students rely on many of these services to access education and many rural students will find it more challenging to attend classes.
- Student timetables vary for further education, reduced services will make travel a lot harder.
- Some parents don't drive and use buses to take children to school.
- A lot of younger people have no access to cars so rely on the buses to access their educational centre – rural isolation.

Responses regarding **Environmental:**

- Less buses will bring more cars to the roads, knock on effects from congestion, accidents, lower air quality due to more air pollution.
- Counterproductive to going greener – encouraging car use

Responses regarding **Social Isolation/Health:**

- Isolating rural communities from other transport connections to larger towns with more services – many believe this is the case for people living in small isolated villages
- Concerns from many elderly people who no longer drive so rely on the buses for shopping/hospital appointments, how will they get to these?
- Reducing independence of elderly to travel
- How will students attend their local education centre if they live rurally and rely on that bus service?
- Elderly, non-drivers, and students were highlighted as the most impacted.
- A large number of these are in relation to Bridgnorth, Bishops Castle and Broseley bus services.
- Reduced opportunities to engage in society: can affect mental health, knock on effects on other services e.g. Social Care.

Responses regarding **Employment:**

- A number raised concerns about people travelling to work in Shrewsbury.
- How will these workers get home at a reasonable time if they do shift work?
- Potential restrictions on employment opportunities

7. Conclusion

This report seeks not to reduce or remove services as consulted (£405,000) but where the consultation feedback has highlighted genuine efficiencies or cost pressures those will be focused upon. Thus the full savings reduction of £405,000 will not be achieved.

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

Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder)

Councillor Steve Davenport

Local Member

All

Appendices

Appendix A - Consultation Letter and List of Current Services
Appendix B - ESIIA

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25 March 2019
Public Transport Consultation
AE

Dear Sir or Madam

Reduction of Local Bus Service Subsidies - Financial Year 2019\20

Shropshire Council has today (Monday 25 March 2019) launched a six-week consultation into proposed reductions to its public transport budget, which would see a reduction in the number and frequency of bus services subsidised by the Council.

The Council's financial strategy for 2019/20 includes a budget reduction of £405,000 in public transport and £50,000 for Shrewsbury Park & Ride. To achieve these reductions a number of initiatives will have to be implemented and this consultation asks for views about these proposed changes.

The details of these proposals are provided below;

Public Transport - Those services financially supported by the Council.

To help identify the £405k budget reduction we requested that all our bus operators providing Local Bus Services on behalf of the Council, provide details of the level of service that they could provide on each of these services with a reduction in funding.

In the majority of cases this will represent a reduced timetable on each of the services the Council supports, details of how this will impact individual services is shown in the table at the bottom of this letter.

Shrewsbury Park & Ride

To achieve the budget reduction of £50k set out in the Council's 2019/20 financial strategy, we are proposing to undertake the following;

- a) To remove the concessionary fare discount that allows passengers on presentation of their concessionary card to travel for a 50% discount, this discount is currently provided at the Council's discretion.
- b) To increase the return fare for the service from its current level of £1.60 to £2.00.
- c) To remove the Group ticket from Park & Ride which allows for up to 5 passengers to travel for the price of £2.50.

The consultation runs from 25 March to 6 May 2019 and can be found at:

www.shropshire.gov.uk

Any responses to this consultation should be emailed to passtrans@shropshire.gov.uk or in writing to:

Public Transport Consultation

Passenger Transport Services

Shropshire Council

Shirehall

Abbey Foregate

Shrewsbury

SY2 6ND

All responses to the consultation will be included in a report that will be considered by Shropshire Council's Cabinet on Wednesday 22 May 2019.

Yours faithfully

Passenger Transport Commissioning Group
Shropshire Council

Service Number	Route Description	Days of Operation	Operator	Proposed Service Reduction
553	Plox Green to Bishops Castle	Mon - Sat	Minsterley Motors	Reduction from 5 Journeys per day to 2
101	Bridgnorth Town service	Mon - Sat	Arriva Midlands North	Reduction in frequency to hourly from 30 minutes
113, 114,	Telford - Bridgnorth	Mon - Fri	Arriva Midlands North	Currently a two hourly frequency Monday to Friday, little scope for amendment.
115, 116	Telford - Bridgnorth	Saturdays Only	Arriva Midlands North	Withdraw service, which provides the Saturday journeys for the above (113/114)
436	Shrewsbury to Bridgnorth	Mon - Sat	Arriva Midlands North	Reduction from a 1 to 2 hourly service Peak Journey in the morning will operate to Shrewsbury & not Bridgnorth
208	Ellesmere Town Service	Tue & Fri	Lakeside Coaches Ltd	Removal of the last journey of the day and one late morning Journey
738, 740	Ludlow - Knighton	Mon - Sat	Arriva Midlands North	One bus service with an already limited 2 hourly timetable, little scope for amendment.
301	Market Drayton Town Service	Mon - Sat	Bennetts Travel	Revised timetable – Service to commence at 0900 rather than 0700, operating at a 30 minute frequency, compared to the current 20 minutes.
297	Bridgnorth – Kidderminster	Mon - Sat	Arriva Midlands North	Remove Saturday journeys - Currently a 2 hourly service with little scope for further amendment.
54	Trefonen – Oswestry	Sch	Arriva Midlands North	2 School journeys only transporting entitled pupils, little scope for amendment.
400, 402, 403, 404	Oswestry Town Services	Mon - Sat	Arriva Midlands North	Revised timetable with an hourly frequency across all Oswestry Town services.
405	Oswestry Town Service	Sch	Arriva Midlands North	Withdraw service - Currently one journey am and one journey pm, transporting non-entitled pupils to school.
449	Oswestry – Welshampton	Mon - Fri	Arriva Midlands North	Limited timetable already exists which is subsidised by Shropshire Council - little scope for amendment
576	Oswestry to Shrewsbury	Mon - Sat	Arriva Midlands North	Reduction from a 1 to 2 hourly service Peak Journey in the morning will operate to Shrewsbury only.
71A	Oswestry – Llynclys	Mon - Sat	Tanat Valley Coaches	Limited timetable - no scope for amendment at this stage
2,3, 12	Shrewsbury Town Services	Mon - Sat	Arriva Midlands North	Revised Journey frequency
21	Shrewsbury Town Services	Mon - Sat	Arriva Midlands North	Revised Journey frequency
23	Shrewsbury Town Services	Mon - Sat	Arriva Midlands North	Curtailment of service 23 at Belvidere, Monkmoor to be served by route 1
26	Shrewsbury Town Centre to Meole Village	Mon to Sat	Arriva Midlands North	Reduction in frequency to hourly from every 30 minutes.
8	Telford, Broseley to Bridgnorth	Mon to Sat	Arriva Midlands North	Removal of evening Journeys (1810 from Telford, 1915 from Bridgnorth & 2000 from Telford).

18	Telford, Ironbridge, Broseley to Much Wenlock	Mon to Sat	Arriva Midlands North	Currently a 2 hourly service with 7 journeys throughout the day, little scope for amendment.
37	Meole School - Weeping Cross	Sch	Tanat Valley Coaches	Withdraw service, currently one journey (pm) for non-entitled school children. Am journey not subsidised by the Council
19	Telford – Ironbridge - Shrewsbury	Mon - Sat	Arriva Midlands North	Reduction from a 1 to 2 hourly service Peak Journey in the morning will operate to Shrewsbury and the respective peak journey return in the evening.
501	Ellesmere to Shrewsbury	Mon - Sat	Lakeside Coaches Ltd	Reduction in subsidy agreed with operator, no change to timetable.
540	Cardington - Shrewsbury via Acton Burnell	M-F sch days, Sat	Boultons of Shropshire	Withdraw Saturday Service.
524	Rodington - Shrewsbury	Mon - Fri	Arriva Midlands North	Removal of 0659 & 0720 journey due to low passenger usage.
544,/546	Lyth Hill, Pulverbatch	Mon - Sat	Arriva Midlands North	Withdraw 544 service from Lyth Hill to Shrewsbury, very low passenger usage.
64	Shrewsbury - Market Drayton	Mon - Sat	Arriva Midlands North	Removal of 18:20 Journey from Shrewsbury to Market Drayton and the 19:12 journey from Market Drayton to Shrewsbury
558	Shrewsbury - Montgomery	Mon - Sat	Tanat Valley Coaches	Reduction in subsidy agreed with operator, no change to timetable.
745	Clun Valley	Mon, Tue & Sat	Shrewsbury Dial a Ride	Withdraw Saturday journeys.
201	Wem Town Service	Mon, Tue, Thur & Sat	Lakeside Coaches Ltd	Removal of 1145 & 1400 Journeys on Tuesday or Saturday
205	Whitchurch Town Service	Mon - Sat	Lakeside Coaches Ltd	Removal of 4 Journeys per day, 0749, 1149, 1349 & 1749.
208	Ellesmere town Service	Tues & Fri	Lakeside Coaches Ltd	Removal of late morning journey & last journey at 2pm
511	Shrewsbury - Wem - Whitchurch	Mon - Sat	Arriva Midlands North	Reduction from a 1 to 2 hourly service Peak Journey in the morning will operate to Shrewsbury & not Whitchurch
74	Llanfyllin to Shrewsbury	Mon - Sat	Tanat Valley Coaches	Contracted by Powys - not included in proposals
79	Llangynog to Oswestry	Mon - Sat	Tanat Valley Coaches	Contracted by Powys - not included in proposals
701	Ludlow Town Service	Mon - Sat	Minsterley Motors	Reduce journey frequency from 30 minutes to 45 minutes.
292	Ludlow, Cleobury Mortimer to Kidderminster	Mon to Sat	R&B Travel	Contracted by Worcestershire Council – not included in proposals

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Shropshire Council Equality and Social Inclusion Impact Assessment (ESIIA)

Part One Screening Record

A. Summary Sheet on Accountability and Actions

Name of proposed service change

Please use this box for the full formal name of the proposed service change, whether it is a policy, a procedure, a function, a project, an update of a strategy, etc. The term "service change" is used in this form as shorthand for whatever form the changes may take.

Proposed reductions to Local Bus Service Provision and Park and Ride Shrewsbury

Name of lead officer carrying out the screening

Kelly Kovacs, Specialist Travel Team Manager

Decision, review and monitoring

Decision	Yes	No
Part One ESIIA Only?	x	
Proceed to Part Two Full Report?		X

If completion of a Part One assessment is an appropriate and proportionate action at this stage, please use the boxes below and sign off as indicated. If a Part Two report is required, please move on to separate full report stage.

Actions to mitigate negative impact or enhance positive impact of the service change in terms of equality and social inclusion considerations

The consultation into the proposed reductions in local bus provision set out to gain as many views as possible from as wide ranging an audience as possible.

At present, and with particular regard to the consultation feedback, the impact in equality terms is identified as medium negative for Social Inclusion and for Age, with particular attention around rural isolation.

This correlates with the initial service area view ahead of the consultation that the likely impact for people in the groupings covering rural isolation and covering age would be medium negative.

Older people are generally more reliant on public transport to access essential services and facilities than those of working age. Older people also tend to require greater access to health services. This can be particularly problematic in remote rural areas such as Shropshire where there may be limited or no public transport coverage. These issues can be further compounded by a lack of awareness in availability of transport schemes, such as community transport and dial-a-ride schemes. Older people can also encounter physical barriers, such as trip hazards from uneven surfaces, crossing busy roads, and difficulties boarding and alighting buses and using steps at railway station. In this regard, there are also potential medium negative impacts for people with disabilities as well.

Young people are also often reliant on public transport to access education, employment, and training opportunities, as well as for social and leisure activities.

To mitigate the risks identified the amended proposals that Shropshire Council are making ensure that services are not removed but reduced where there is an alternative available.

To do this we propose to explore alternative ways of reducing the public transport budget through efficiencies, in partnership with operators and stakeholders.

- Ensuring that any changes have minimal impact on the travelling public, especially where limited or no alternative travel options are available.
- Any subsequent changes would be introduced with effect from January 2020 and subject to a consultation on any individual services affected.

Actions to review and monitor the impact of the service change in terms of equality and social inclusion considerations

Links will need to be drawn with other Council policy including the Local Transport Plan and the Economic Growth Strategy. This will help to mitigate against the risk that any decisions are seen to be made on financial grounds alone.

Additionally, any further consultation will seek to include questions around age and any disability, and location of respondents, in order to help to assess need in relation to people in these groupings.

The second action would be to continue to liaise with and share approaches towards passenger transport and school and college transport with other local authorities, particularly those with whom the Council shares commonalities in terms of geographical size and sparsity of the population, and similar challenges in regards of costs for service delivery to be balanced with environmental and social inclusion considerations.

A further action that could assist in reviewing and monitoring the impact of the service change would be the development and implementation of a communications plan, for the Council and the service area, involving timely press releases fronted by the portfolio holder, and shared with all Shropshire Council councillors and town and parish councils, and the voluntary and community sector.

Associated ESIIAs

Please use this section to note any associated ESIIAs and timelines. For example, this may be the second screening ESIIA carried out at the end of a period of consultation: it will be helpful for the public to be able to refer to the initial ESIIA. This will also serve to demonstrate ongoing approaches to continuous engagement with Protected Characteristic groupings.

It will be helpful to the public to show how a proposed service change fits into the policy approach of a service area, eg the Highways service area has carried out related ESIIAs into winter service policy planning and risk-based approaches to highways safety inspections.

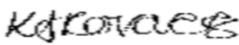
Nursery and Post 16 Discretionary Transport

Actions to mitigate negative impact, enhance positive impact, and review and monitor overall impacts in terms of any other considerations

Any reduction in numbers of vehicles on the road could be said to contribute towards lowering emissions and therefore improving air quality. Against this would need to be set the wider societal implications for communities, particularly in rural areas, that are no longer as physically able to access public transport as they were before the reductions in service. From a societal angle, a mitigating action could be continued efforts with health and social care providers and with Government departments and agencies to look at technological solutions such as telecare that may be provided within people's homes or neighbourhoods, obviating or reducing the need to travel for this purpose. This links with the Government's Grand Challenges around Mobility and around an Ageing Society

From an economic growth perspective, there will be a saving to the Council, but there may be negative impacts if people are no longer able to travel to other locations from their neighbourhoods for a variety of reasons including access to health and social care, educational, employment, and leisure and shopping opportunities. Against this may potentially be set the efforts being made to encourage people into making use of such opportunities in Shrewsbury, as part of the Big Town Plan policies, and other larger market towns, with focus upon continued public transport provision to these places.

Scrutiny at Part One screening stage

People involved	Signatures	Date
Lead officer carrying out the screening		17 th May 2019
Any internal support*		
Any external support** Lois Dale, Rurality and Equalities Specialist		17 th May 2019

**This refers to other officers within the service area*

***This refers either to support external to the service but within the Council, eg from the Rurality and Equalities Specialist, or support external to the Council, eg from a peer authority*

Sign off at Part One screening stage

Name	Signatures	Date
Lead officer's name		
Accountable officer's name* James Willocks, Transport Commissioning Group Manager		17 th May 2019

**This may either be the Head of Service or the lead officer*

B. Detailed Screening Assessment

Aims of the service change and description

The Council's financial strategy for 2019/20 includes a budget reduction of £405,000 in public transport and £50,000 for Shrewsbury Park & Ride. Shropshire Council launched a six-week consultation into proposed reductions to its public transport budget, which would see a reduction in the number and frequency of bus services subsidised by the Council.

Many of the people who use public transport in Shropshire are reliant upon local bus services to be able to get out and live their daily lives. Lack of transport especially in rural areas contributes to social exclusion. This is particularly true of people who are elderly, young or people who are on low incomes. Transport is crucial to life opportunities and poor links can compound isolation and loneliness. People of all ages must have the means to travel to services, jobs, and for social purposes

We are aware that rural communities may experience difficulties in accessing health and support services with poor transport links and sectoral recruitment issues creating barriers to access, as well as contributing to isolation. Young people from rural areas may experience difficulties travelling to Further Education colleges or sixth forms, curtailing their opportunities

Shropshire Council requested that all our bus operators providing Local Bus Services on behalf of the Council, provide details of the level of service that they could provide on each of these services with a reduction in funding.

Following the consultation, the following has been proposed:

- a) A reduction in the frequency of services

For Shrewsbury Park and Ride the following has been proposed:

- b) To remove the concessionary fare discount that allows passengers on presentation of their concessionary card to travel for a 50% discount, this discount is currently provided at the Councils discretion.
- c) To increase the return fare for the service from its current level of £1.60 to £2.00.
- d) To remove the Group ticket from Park & Ride which allows for up to 5 passengers to travel for the price of £2.50.

Intended audiences and target groups for the service change

The intended audience and target groups/stakeholders were:

- The whole community
- All elected members
- Bus Users Shropshire
- Shrewsbury BID
- Transport Operators
- Licensed Taxi providers

- Marches LEP
- West Midlands Combined Authority
- Voluntary and Community Sector
- Town and Parish Councils
- Local Members of Parliament

This list is not intended to be exhaustive

Evidence used for screening of the service change

The Council has undertaken a six-week consultation about the proposals within the report during March, April and May 2019 with various stakeholders including elected members, Town & Parish Councils, schools and colleges, voluntary and community sectors, Transport operators and Bus User Group, representing a large proportion of people who currently use public transport and help to promote bus services within the county.

Specific consultation and engagement with intended audiences and target groups for the service change

The Council received a total of 955 responses to the consultation with the majority received through e-mail, however, a sizeable proportion of respondents did forward their thoughts to the Council via letter.

We did receive responses specifically from protected characteristics groupings, including the elderly, disabled and the young.

With regards to rural isolation we were able to identify that we received a large number from the Bridgnorth and Bishops Castle areas, 124 and 101 respectively.

38 responses were received from Town and Parish Councils.

Initial assessment for each group

Please rate the impact that you perceive the service change is likely to have on a group, through inserting a tick in the relevant column. Please add any extra notes that you think might be helpful for readers.

Protected Characteristic groups and other groups in Shropshire	High negative impact <i>Part Two ESIIA required</i>	High positive impact <i>Part One ESIIA required</i>	Medium positive or negative impact <i>Part One ESIIA required</i>	Low positive or negative impact <i>Part One ESIIA required</i>
Age (please include children, young people, people of working age, older people. Some people may belong to more than one group eg child for whom there are safeguarding concerns eg older person with disability)			Medium Negative	
Disability (please include: mental health conditions and syndromes including autism; physical disabilities or impairments; learning disabilities; Multiple Sclerosis; cancer; HIV)			Medium Negative	

Gender re-assignment (please include associated aspects: safety, caring responsibility, potential for bullying and harassment)				Low negative
Marriage and Civil Partnership (please include associated aspects: caring responsibility, potential for bullying and harassment)				Low negative
Pregnancy & Maternity (please include associated aspects: safety, caring responsibility, potential for bullying and harassment)				Low negative
Race (please include: ethnicity, nationality, culture, language, gypsy, traveller)				Low negative
Religion and belief (please include: Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Non conformists; Rastafarianism; Sikhism, Shinto, Taoism, Zoroastrianism, and any others)				Low negative
Sex (please include associated aspects: safety, caring responsibility, potential for bullying and harassment)				Low negative
Sexual Orientation (please include associated aspects: safety; caring responsibility; potential for bullying and harassment)				Low negative
Other: Social Inclusion (please include families and friends with caring responsibilities; people with health inequalities; households in poverty; refugees and asylum seekers; rural communities; people for whom there are safeguarding concerns; people you consider to be vulnerable)			Medium Negative	

Identification of likely impact of the service change in terms of other considerations

The consultation highlighted that buses provide a vital service and play a very important role in reducing traffic congestion, the numbers of vehicles on our roads and pollution, supporting local businesses and tackling the increasing problems of loneliness and isolation.

Guidance Notes

1. Corporate and Service Area Policy and Practice on Equality and Social inclusion

This involves taking an equality and social inclusion approach in planning changes to services, policies or procedures, including those that may be required by Government.

The decisions that you make when you are planning a service change need to be recorded, to demonstrate that you have thought about the possible equality impacts on communities and to show openness and transparency in your decision making processes.

This is where Equality and Social Inclusion Impact Assessments (ESIAs) come in. Where you carry out an ESIA in your service area, this provides an opportunity to show:

- What evidence you have drawn upon to help you to recommend a strategy or policy or a course of action to Cabinet;
- What target groups and audiences you have worked with to date;
- What actions you will take in order to mitigate any likely negative impact upon a group or groupings, and enhance any positive effects for a group or groupings; and
- What actions you are planning to review the impact of your planned service change.

The formal template is there not only to help the service area but also to act as a stand alone for a member of the public to read.

The approach helps to identify whether or not any new or significant changes to services, including policies, procedures, functions or projects, may have an adverse impact on a particular group of people, and whether the human rights of individuals may be affected.

This assessment encompasses consideration of social inclusion. This is so that we are thinking as carefully and completely as possible about all Shropshire groups and communities, including people in rural areas and people we may describe as vulnerable, for example due to low income or to safeguarding concerns, as well as people in what are described as the nine 'protected characteristics' of groups of people in our population, eg Age. We demonstrate equal treatment to people who are in these groups and to people who are not, through having what is termed 'due regard' to their needs and views when developing and implementing policy and strategy and when commissioning, procuring, arranging or delivering services.

When you are not carrying out an ESIA, you still need to demonstrate that you have considered equality in your decision-making processes. It is up to you what format you choose.-You could use a checklist, an explanatory note, or a document setting out our expectations of standards of behaviour, for contractors to read and sign. It may well not be something that is in the public domain like an ESIA, but you should still be ready for it to be made available.

Both the approaches sit with a manager, and the manager has to make the call, and record the decision made on behalf of the Council. Help and guidance is also available via the Commissioning Support Team, either for data, or for policy advice from the Rurality and Equalities Specialist. Here are some examples to get you thinking.

Carry out an ESIA:

- If you are building or reconfiguring a building;
- If you are planning to reduce or remove a service;
- If you are consulting on a policy or a strategy;

- If you are bringing in a change to a process or procedure that involves other stakeholders and the wider community as well as particular groupings

For example, there may be a planned change to a leisure facility. This gives you the chance to look at things like flexible changing room provision, which will maximise positive impacts for everyone. A specific grouping that would benefit would be people undergoing gender reassignment

Carry out an equality and social inclusion approach:

- If you are setting out how you expect a contractor to behave with regard to equality, where you are commissioning a service or product from them;
- If you are setting out the standards of behaviour we expect from people who work with vulnerable groupings, such as taxi drivers that we license;
- If you are planning consultation and engagement activity, where we need to collect equality data in ways that will be proportionate and non-intrusive as well as meaningful for the purposes of the consultation itself;
- If you are looking at services provided by others that help the community, where we need to demonstrate a community leadership approach

For example, you may be involved in commissioning a production to tour schools or appear at a local venue, whether a community hall or somewhere like Theatre Severn. The production company should be made aware of our equality policies and our expectation that they will seek to avoid promotion of potentially negative stereotypes. Specific groupings that could be affected include: Disability, Race, Religion and Belief, and Sexual Orientation. There is positive impact to be gained from positive portrayals and use of appropriate and respectful language in regard to these groupings in particular.

2. Legal Context

It is a legal requirement for local authorities to assess the equality and human rights impact of changes proposed or made to services. It is up to us as an authority to decide what form our equality impact assessment may take. Carrying out ESIIAs helps us as a public authority to ensure that, as far as possible, we are taking actions to meet the general equality duty placed on us by the Equality Act 2010, and to thus demonstrate that the three equality aims are integral to our decision making processes. These are: eliminating discrimination, harassment and victimisation; advancing equality of opportunity; and fostering good relations.

Service areas would ordinarily carry out a screening assessment, or Part One equality impact assessment. This enables energies to be focussed on review and monitoring and ongoing evidence collection about the positive or negative impacts of a service change upon groupings in the community, and for any adjustments to be considered and made accordingly.

If the screening indicates that there are likely to be significant negative impacts for groupings within the community, the service area would need to carry out a full report, or Part Two assessment. This will enable more evidence to be collected that will help the service area to

reach an informed opinion. Please contact the equality policy lead within the Council for more advice and guidance in this regard, as per details below.

For further information on the use of ESIIAs: please contact your head of service or contact Mrs Lois Dale, Rurality and Equalities Specialist and Council policy support on equality, via telephone 01743 258528, or email lois.dale@shropshire.gov.uk.

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Committee and Date

Cabinet
Wednesday, 12th June 2019
11.00 am

Item

Public

Shropshire Hills AONB Management Plan 2019-24 and Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership Terms of Reference

Responsible Officer Mark Barrow

e-mail: Mark.Barrow@shropshire.gov.uk Tel: 01743 258919

1. Summary

- 1.1 The Shropshire Hills AONB Management Plan 2019-2024 sets out the priorities for conserving and enhancing the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty for the next five years. The AONB is a statutory designation to conserve and enhance natural beauty covering 23% of Shropshire and has been in place since 1958.
- 1.2 The Management Plan is a statutory requirement and is produced jointly with Telford & Wrekin Council through the AONB Partnership – a Joint Advisory Committee. The Plan has been developed in partnership with a range of stakeholders and was made available for public consultation from November 2018 to January 2019. Formal approval is by the two local authorities.
- 1.3 The Vision of the Management Plan is:

The natural beauty of the Shropshire Hills landscape is conserved, enhanced and helped to adapt - by sympathetic land management, by co-ordinated action and by sustainable communities; and is valued for its richness of geology, wildlife and heritage, and its contribution to prosperity and wellbeing.

- 1.4 At the same time, but not directly connected to the Management Plan, the Terms of Reference of the AONB Partnership (Joint Advisory Committee) have been updated and slightly revised, and these also require formal approval by the two Councils.
- 1.5 A formal request to Defra to create an independent Conservation Board for the AONB (supported by the Council Cabinet on 19th October 2016) has been shelved by Defra while a national review of designated landscapes is conducted. The Review Panel, led by Julian Glover, is due to report in the autumn of 2019, and its recommendations may affect whether the Conservation Board proposal for the Shropshire Hills is likely to progress. In the meantime, the current structure continues, of a Joint Advisory Committee (the AONB Partnership) and the AONB Partnership staff team hosted by Shropshire Council.

- 1.6 Appendix 2 details the proposed revised Terms of Reference for the AONB Partnership (Joint Advisory Committee). These have been developed by the Partnership in consultation with the two Councils' Legal teams.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that Cabinet approve the Shropshire Hills AONB Management Plan 2019-24, and the revised Terms of Reference for the AONB Partnership.

REPORT

3. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

- 3.1 AONB Management Plan. Preparation of the Management Plan by the large and inclusive AONB Partnership group is the established national methodology, and national guidance has been followed. The team members leading the work have been responsible for previous Management Plan reviews.
- 3.2 The statutory timescale for completion of the review of the Plan is by 31st March 2019. Defra have been sent the completed Plan as endorsed by the AONB Partnership and informed that final approval by the Councils is imminent, and have congratulated us on the new Plan.
- 3.3 Natural England have given support to the draft Plan in their 'formal observations':

"Natural England considers that the plan meets the statutory requirement that the constituent local authorities for the Shropshire Hills AONB and wider project area have, acting jointly, produced a plan that formulates their policy for their AONB and for the carrying out of their functions in relation to it.

We consider that the Plan has broadly followed the guidance contained in CA23 and CA221 and the updated advice from the National Association for AONBs (prepared by Steve Preston Associates, 2017) and therefore presents a comprehensive strategy for the management of the AONB.

In conclusion, Natural England recognises that the production of this final draft represents the culmination of many months of intensive work on the part of Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership and particularly the Shropshire Hills AONB staff unit. We congratulate you on this huge effort."

Emma Johnson, Area Manager West Midlands Natural England

- 3.4 In the Plan preparation, three workshops were held with the AONB Partnership, and Management Plan topics were also discussed at working groups such as the Clun Catchment Partnership, Wrekin Forest Partnership and Shropshire Hills Destination Partnership. Partnership members felt that:
- Protection of the landscape and biodiversity needs to be better in practice.

- The planning system needs to take more account of the AONB.
 - We must help people to see the AONB as an asset rather than a barrier to economic growth.
 - Sustainability should influence all areas – land management, tourism, communities.
- 3.5 A public on-line survey was carried out during April and May 2018. With over 200 responses, the survey revealed a high degree of support for the primary purpose to ‘conserve and enhance’ the AONB. The most valued characteristics of the Shropshire Hills were dramatic views and wide panoramas, opportunities to walk and explore, wildlife and relatively natural areas, peace and quiet and a chance to unwind. Top concerns were the loss/neglect of habitats and wildlife, inappropriate new built development, losing the Shropshire Hills’ distinctive character, the quality of water and condition of rivers.
- 3.6 The Sustainability Appraisal of the Management Plan conducted in parallel with the Plan review meets the legal requirements for Strategic Environmental Assessment. A conclusion of the Sustainability Appraisal is that the high quality of the AONB’s environment is a huge economic asset which, if sensitively used and not damaged by inappropriate development, can deliver great long-term economic benefits. In the need however to take a long-term view and protect this asset, there is a risk of the designation being perceived as hampering economic progress. This may be overcome by demonstrating the positive economic effects of the environment and of looking after it.
- 3.7 In the public consultation relatively few responses were received, partly since all key delivery partners are involved in the Plan preparation through the AONB Partnership. A specific meeting was held with representatives of the National Farmers Union to discuss their comments.
- 3.8 As well as underpinning the area’s economy, the high-quality landscape of the AONB is vitally important to the health and wellbeing of both Shropshire residents and visitors. The AONB designation and activity linked to it brings huge benefits to the people of Shropshire.
- 3.9 There is a perception among a good number of partners that Shropshire Council does not take the AONB seriously enough or regard it as positively as an asset to the county as it should. The AONB Partnership seeks a process of awareness raising and greater engagement with various parts of the Council over the delivery period of this Management Plan to help address this. The national Glover Review is likely to recommend changes to strengthen the status of AONBs and their organisations, which should help to reinforce a higher profile locally.
- 3.10 AONB Partnership Terms of Reference. The process of updating the AONB Partnership Terms of Reference was led by the Partnership’s Chair and its sub-group the Management Board (now Strategy & Performance Committee). Several consultations were held with the Legal teams of both Shropshire Council and Telford & Wrekin Council, and drafts were seen and endorsed by the whole Partnership.

- 3.13 The Terms of Reference were last approved by the two Councils in 2010, when the Partnership also acted as the LEADER Local Action Group. Updates to the Terms of Reference endorsed by the AONB Partnership in October 2014 and November 2015 did not reach the stage of formal approval by the Councils.
- 3.14 The changes made this time are mainly minor amendments to wording. Small substantive changes include:
- The maximum number of seats on the Partnership is proposed to be reduced from 45 to 36. Reductions would be made by means of currently vacant seats and through the membership review due in the autumn of 2019. An inclusive group is valuable, but this has to be balanced with manageability, and the current size is believed to be the largest of any AONB Joint Advisory Committee in the country.
 - The Management Board has been re-named the Strategy & Performance Committee and now has separate Terms of Reference. As a sub-committee of the Partnership, its Terms of Reference are approved by the Partnership itself.
- 3.15 The Equality and Social Inclusion Impact Assessment (ESIIA) initial screening and assessment follow up is shown in appendix 1.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 The Management Plan is a plan for the Shropshire Hills area and not for any one organisation. It sets out aspirations for projects and delivery activities but does not make any binding financial commitments.
- 4.2 Section 85 of the Countryside & Rights of Way Act places a legal duty on all public bodies to 'have regard to the purposes of AONB designation' in carrying out their functions. The Management Plan is therefore relevant to a wide variety of Council services including planning, countryside and environment, highways, economic development, public protection, education and community. National policy is that AONBs should be distinguished from other areas and higher standards should be applied in relation to maintaining landscape quality. This may sometimes result in higher costs, but it is not possible to quantify these.
- 4.3 One of Shropshire Council's main direct commitments to implementing the Management Plan is through providing match funding for Defra core funding for the AONB Partnership team. Continuity of local authority funding is vital to the team's activities, and the gearing of Council funds with other sources is exceptional. Shropshire Council's contribution is among the lowest local authority contributions in the country for the size of the AONB.
- 4.4 The Council provides administrative support for the AONB Partnership Joint Advisory Committee meetings through the Democratic Services team, but there are no financial implications through this from the changes to the Terms of Reference.

5. Background

- 5.1 This is the fourth statutory Management Plan for the AONB since the requirement to produce a plan was enacted by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.
- 5.2 The character and quality of the Shropshire Hills landscape are of high importance but under increasing pressure. The condition of some of the special qualities of the AONB is declining. Conservation activity through many schemes and projects is not enough to prevent some declines in wildlife. Not enough progress is being made with some water quality and catchment management targets. Farming, especially in the uplands, is at an important crossroads as we head towards new UK policy and funding regimes. Economic forces are increasing development pressure and reducing resources for positive management of the landscape, leading to more deterioration of valuable features by neglect.
- 5.3 The Plan sets out policies of the local authorities, and proposed actions for a wider variety of partners, under three main aims:
- Land management supporting natural beauty and landscape
 - Planning for a sustainable economy and communities
 - People enjoying and caring about the landscape
- 5.4 The Plan will help deliver many of the priorities of Defra's 25 Environment Plan - clean air and water, thriving plants and wildlife, reduced risk from flooding and drought, using natural resources more sustainably and efficiently, enhanced beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment.

6. Additional Information

- 6.1 Some of the Management Plan's top priority actions include:
- Working with Defra and other partners to ensure new Environmental Land Management Systems deliver AONB priorities.
 - Establishing a large programme of planting of trees outside woodlands, partly to offset losses from Ash dieback disease.
 - Developing the 'Stepping Stones' project into a long-term delivery initiative for the Long Mynd – Stiperstones area.
 - Developing Landscape Guidance and Design Guidance for planning.
 - Developing a youth engagement project incorporating the John Muir Award, Young Rangers and traineeships.
 - Supporting activities which will contribute to a low-carbon Shropshire Hills area, compatible with the AONB's special qualities.
- 6.2 The Management Plan Actions will be monitored and reviewed by the AONB Partnership and progress reported publicly. The condition of the AONB landscape will be monitored through a set of headline indicators, and a new set of performance indicators for activity of the AONB Partnership team are currently being developed nationally.

7. Timescales

- 7.1 The Management Plan will be published in June 2019 following approval by both Councils and will run until 2024. It will be reviewed after five years.

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

Shropshire Hills AONB Management Plan 2019-24 (available at <http://www.shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk/a-special-place/management-plan/>)

Appendix 2 Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership Terms of Reference

Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder)

Cllr Lezley Picton

Local Members

Cllr Lee Chapman
Cllr Andy Boddington
Cllr Jonny Keeley
Cllr Robert Tindall
Cllr Roger Evans
Cllr Richard Huffer
Cllr Nigel Hartin
Cllr Madge Shingleton
Cllr David Evans
Cllr Claire Wild
Cllr Gwilym Butler
Cllr Nick Hignett
Cllr Dan Morris
Cllr Cecilia Motley
Cllr Heather Kidd
Cllr David Turner

Appendices

Appendix 1 Equality and Social Inclusion Impact Assessment (ESIIA) initial screening and assessment

Appendix 2 Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership Terms of Reference

Appendix 3 Final Draft Management Plan, March 19

Appendix 1

**Shropshire Council Equality and Social Inclusion Impact Assessment (ESIIA)
Part One Screening Record**

A. Summary Sheet on Accountability and Actions

Name of proposed service change

Please use this box for the full formal name of the proposed service change, whether it is a policy, a procedure, a function, a project, an update of a strategy, etc. The term "service change" is used in this form as shorthand for whatever form the changes may take.

Shropshire Hills AONB Management Plan 2019-24
and Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership Terms of Reference

Name of lead officer carrying out the screening

Phil Holden, AONB Partnership Manager

Decision, review and monitoring

Decision	Yes	No
Part One ESIIA Only?	✓	
Proceed to Part Two Full Report?		✓

If completion of a Part One assessment is an appropriate and proportionate action at this stage, please use the boxes below and sign off as indicated. If a Part Two report is required, please move on to separate full report stage.

Actions to mitigate negative impact or enhance positive impact of the service change in terms of equality and social inclusion considerations

The AONB Management Plan is likely to have a positive effect on all groups in society. Evidence shows that a high-quality environment and sense of belonging is very beneficial to wellbeing. The Management Plan supports a sustainable development approach and sets out to help tackle issues of sustainability which affect people's lives.

In particular, the Management Plan includes a specific action in relation to young people, which should result in a positive impact for this grouping as well as for the grouping of social inclusion.

- Developing a youth engagement project incorporating the John Muir Award, Young Rangers and traineeships.

Positive impact is also anticipated for people with disabilities, in terms of physical access, and in terms of mental health and wellbeing. Feedback from the public indicated that the most valued characteristics of the Shropshire Hills included opportunities to walk and explore, peace and quiet and a chance to unwind. Physical access considerations could usefully be looked at alongside other Council efforts e.g. through the Great Outdoors Strategy. While there are few Council-owned sites in the AONB, rights of way and open

access land are key means of people accessing the AONB for enjoyment.

The opportunity is also there, through review of the membership, for efforts to be made to ensure that people on the Partnership are themselves as representative of the population of Shropshire as may be possible, and to encourage those who may be under represented such as young people.

Actions to review and monitor the impact of the service change in terms of equality and social inclusion considerations

Progress with Management Plan activity will be monitored through reporting at the meetings of the AONB Partnership, and the Management Plan Actions will be updated and progress reported widely on a regular basis. This is in addition to continued monitoring of indicators of landscape condition and trends.

The condition of the AONB landscape will be monitored through a set of headline indicators, and a revised set of performance indicators for activity of the AONB Partnership team are currently being developed nationally.

Such indicators will need to take due account of potential negative or positive impacts for people in Protected Characteristic groupings. Given that there is a specific action around young people, this age grouping will need to be focussed upon through specific consultation as well as efforts to ensure ongoing engagement with all groupings in pursuit of achievement of the actions set out in the Plan.

The Cabinet report notes that the maximum number of seats on the Partnership is proposed to be reduced from 45 to 36, and that reductions would be made by means of currently vacant seats and through the membership review due in the autumn of 2019. As has also been noted, an inclusive group is valuable, in terms of coverage across organisations.

The opportunity is also presented, through the membership review, for membership to be actively encouraged from people in Protected Characteristic groupings who may be under-represented at present, as well as balancing this with an overall membership size that is proportional to local need. Comparisons may usefully also be made to good practice in this regard within other AONB Joint Advisory Committees in the country.

The national Glover Review of AONBs is likely to recommend changes to strengthen the status of AONBs and their organisations, which should help to reinforce a higher profile locally and which may also contain recommendations that will assist in encouraging positive impacts in terms of equality and social inclusion considerations.

Associated ESIIAs

Reference has been made to the screening ESIIAs carried out in development of Shropshire's Great Outdoors Strategy, reported to Cabinet in September 2018, as well as to ESIIAs in relation to the various stages of the ongoing Local Plan Partial Review and the Council's Economic Growth Strategy.

Actions to mitigate negative impact, enhance positive impact, and review and monitor overall impacts in terms of any other considerations

The Vision of the Management Plan is:

“The natural beauty of the Shropshire Hills landscape is conserved, enhanced and helped to adapt - by sympathetic land management, by co-ordinated action and by sustainable communities; and is valued for its richness of geology, wildlife and heritage, and its contribution to prosperity and wellbeing.”

As such, the AONB Management Plan very much sets out to encourage and ensure positive impacts for the natural environment and associated positive impacts for all communities in terms of health and wellbeing.

The Sustainability Appraisal of the Management Plan, conducted in parallel with the Plan review, meets the legal requirements for Strategic Environmental Assessment. A conclusion of the Sustainability Appraisal is that the high quality of the AONB’s environment is a huge economic asset which, if sensitively used and not damaged by inappropriate development, can deliver great long-term economic benefits. In the need however to take a long-term view and protect this asset, there is a risk of the designation being perceived as hampering economic progress. This may be overcome by demonstrating the positive economic effects of the environment and of looking after it.

While the activities of many Council departments support the purposes of the AONB, One of Shropshire Council’s main direct commitments to implementing the Management Plan is through providing match funding for Defra core funding for the AONB Partnership team. Continuity of local authority funding is vital to the team’s activities, and the gearing of Council funds with other sources is exceptional. Shropshire Council’s contribution is among the lowest local authority contributions in the country for the size of the AONB.

Scrutiny at Part One screening stage

People involved	Signatures	Date
Lead officer carrying out the screening Phil Holden, AONB Partnership Manager	Phil Holden	18 th April 2019
Any internal support*		
Any external support** Mrs Lois Dale, Rurality and Equalities Specialist	Lois Dale	10 th May 2019

**This refers to other officers within the service area*

***This refers either to support external to the service but within the Council, eg from the Rurality and Equalities Specialist, or support external to the Council, eg from a peer authority*

Sign off at Part One screening stage

Name	Signatures	Date
<i>Lead officer's name</i>	Phil Holden	13 th May 2019
<i>Accountable officer's name*</i>		

**This may either be the Head of Service or the lead officer*

B. Detailed Screening Assessment

Aims of the service change and description
<p>The Shropshire Hills AONB Management Plan 2019-2024 sets out the priorities for conserving and enhancing the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty for the next five years. The AONB is a statutory designation to conserve and enhance natural beauty covering 23% of Shropshire and has been in place since 1958.</p> <p>The Management Plan is a statutory requirement and is produced jointly with Telford & Wrekin Council through the AONB Partnership – a Joint Advisory Committee. The Plan has been developed in partnership with a range of stakeholders and was made available for public consultation from November 2018 to January 2019. Formal approval is by the two local authorities.</p> <p>At the same time, but not directly connected to the Management Plan, the Terms of Reference of the AONB Partnership (Joint Advisory Committee) have been updated and slightly revised, and these also require formal approval by the two Councils.</p> <p>A formal request to Defra to create an independent Conservation Board for the AONB (supported by the Council Cabinet on 19th October 2016) has been shelved by Defra while a national review of designated landscapes is conducted. The Review Panel, led by Julian Glover, is due to report in the autumn of 2019, and its recommendations may affect whether the Conservation Board proposal for the Shropshire Hills is likely to progress. In the meantime the current structure continues, of a Joint Advisory Committee (the AONB Partnership) and the AONB Partnership staff team hosted by Shropshire Council.</p> <p>The Management Plan is a plan for the Shropshire Hills area and not for any one organisation. It sets out policies which have some legal weight, and aspirations for projects and delivery activities but does not make any binding commitments. It is intended to influence a wide range of stakeholders, including but not limited to the local authorities.</p>

Intended audiences and target groups for the service change
<p>The Shropshire Hills AONB is a nationally recognised asset, so stakeholders include the public nationally, visitors from all parts including abroad, as well obviously as Shropshire residents and especially those who live and work in the AONB.</p> <p>A wide variety of organisations have an interest in the AONB, and many of these are represented on the AONB Partnership.</p>

The Plan is relevant to a range of departments across the two local authorities – including planning, countryside and environment, highways, economic development, public protection, education and community.

Regional and national stakeholders include the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership, the Marches Nature Partnership, the Rural Services Network, other AONB Partnerships and Defra and its agencies, i.e. the Environment Agency, the Forestry Commission and Natural England.

Evidence used for screening of the service change

The review resulting in this new Management Plan has followed national guidance and been influenced by policy directions and by community consultations and experience at a local level.

A detailed progress update on actions in the previous 2014-19 Management Plan was published by the AONB Partnership on 1st November 2016.

Work on ‘State of the AONB’ has included analysing data for a set of key environmental indicators, which are set out in the Management Plan

The team members leading the work have been responsible for previous Management Plan reviews.

Defra have been sent the completed Plan as endorsed by the AONB Partnership and informed that final approval by the Councils is imminent.

Natural England have given support to the draft Plan in their ‘formal observations’:

“Natural England considers that the plan meets the statutory requirement that the constituent local authorities for the Shropshire Hills AONB and wider project area have, acting jointly, produced a plan that formulates their policy for their AONB and for the carrying out of their functions in relation to it.

We consider that the Plan has broadly followed the guidance contained in CA23 and CA221 and the updated advice from the National Association for AONBs (prepared by Steve Preston Associates, 2017) and therefore presents a comprehensive strategy for the management of the AONB.

In conclusion, Natural England recognises that the production of this final draft represents the culmination of many months of intensive work on the part of Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership and particularly the Shropshire Hills AONB staff unit. We congratulate you on this huge effort.”

Specific consultation and engagement with intended audiences and target groups for the service change

Three workshops have been held with the AONB Partnership:

13th June 2017: Issues and aspirations, in the context of EU Exit,

14th November 2017: Brief presentations by ten partner organisations on the issues they felt were most pressing for the new Plan,

6th March 2018 focussed on delivery priorities, i.e. what needs to be done.

Management Plan topics have also been discussed at working groups such as the Clun Catchment Partnership, Wrekin Forest Partnership and Shropshire Hills Destination Partnership.

A public on-line survey was carried out during April and May 2018. With over 200 responses, the survey revealed a high degree of support for the primary purpose to 'conserve and enhance' the AONB. Most valued characteristics of the Shropshire Hills were dramatic views and wide panoramas, opportunities to walk and explore, wildlife and relatively natural areas, peace and quiet and a chance to unwind. Top concerns were the loss/neglect of habitats and wildlife, inappropriate new built development, losing the Shropshire Hills distinctive character, water quality and condition of rivers. The age profile of respondents to the survey under-represents youth – 0.5% of respondents were under 18 and 3.5% aged 18-29. This reinforces the need and aspiration which has been identified by the Partnership to use new methods to improve youth engagement. Feedback was not sought using Protected Characteristic groupings, so the views from these perspectives are not known, and this would ideally be included in further engagement and consultation activity. 75% of respondents were from SY postcodes reflecting a predominantly local interest, although a proportion from further afield highlighting that the AONB is of national importance.

Three topic groups met in October 2018 to discuss a draft of this Plan, and the draft Plan was taken to the AONB Partnership on 23rd October. A public consultation ran between November 2018 and January 2019 and resulted in a few meetings with key stakeholders.

Changes arising from the public consultation were considered by the AONB Partnership and the Plan then submitted for 'formal observations' by Natural England, before formal approval by the two Councils in the spring of 2019.

Initial assessment for each group

Please rate the impact that you perceive the service change is likely to have on a group, through inserting a tick in the relevant column. Please add any extra notes that you think might be helpful for readers.

Protected Characteristic groups and other groups in Shropshire	High negative impact <i>Part Two ESIIA required</i>	High positive impact <i>Part One ESIIA required</i>	Medium positive or negative impact <i>Part One ESIIA required</i>	Low positive or negative impact <i>Part One ESIIA required</i>
Age (please include children, young people, people of working age, older people. Some people may belong to more than one group eg child for whom there are safeguarding concerns eg older person with disability)			✓+	
Disability (please include: mental health conditions and syndromes including autism; physical disabilities or			✓+	

impairments; learning disabilities; Multiple Sclerosis; cancer; HIV)				
Gender re-assignment (please include associated aspects: safety, caring responsibility, potential for bullying and harassment)				✓+
Marriage and Civil Partnership (please include associated aspects: caring responsibility, potential for bullying and harassment)				✓+
Pregnancy & Maternity (please include associated aspects: safety, caring responsibility, potential for bullying and harassment)				✓+
Race (please include: ethnicity, nationality, culture, language, gypsy, traveller)				✓+
Religion and belief (please include: Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Non conformists; Rastafarianism; Sikhism, Shinto, Taoism, Zoroastrianism, and any others)				✓+
Sex (please include associated aspects: safety, caring responsibility, potential for bullying and harassment)				✓+
Sexual Orientation (please include associated aspects: safety; caring responsibility; potential for bullying and harassment)				✓+
Other: Social Inclusion (please include families and friends with caring responsibilities; people with health inequalities; households in poverty; refugees and asylum seekers; rural communities; people for whom there are safeguarding concerns; people you consider to be vulnerable)			✓+	

Identification of likely impact of the service change in terms of other considerations

The character and quality of the Shropshire Hills landscape are of high importance but under increasing pressure. The condition of some of the special qualities of the AONB is declining. Conservation activity through many schemes and projects is not enough to prevent some declines in wildlife. Not enough progress is being made with some water quality and catchment management targets. Farming, especially in the uplands, is at an important crossroads as we head towards new UK policy and funding regimes. Economic forces are increasing development pressure and reducing resources for positive management of the landscape, leading to more deterioration of valuable features by neglect.

The Plan sets out policies of the local authorities, and proposed actions for a wider variety of partners, under three main aims accordingly:

- Land management supporting natural beauty and landscape
- Planning for a sustainable economy and communities
- People enjoying and caring about the landscape

From a national angle, the policy intention is that the Plan will help deliver many of the priorities of Defra's 25 Year Environment Plan and associated Clean Growth Strategy: clean air and water, thriving plants and wildlife, reduced risk from flooding and drought, using natural resources more sustainably and efficiently, enhanced beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment.

Appendix 2

Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership

Terms of Reference

(Amended 4th March 2019)



1. Introduction

1.1 The Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership is the body responsible for coordinating the management of the Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

1.2 The Partnership has the formal status of a 'Joint Advisory Committee' under Section 102(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 to the two local authorities of Shropshire Council and Telford & Wrekin Council ("the Councils").

1.3 The purposes of the national AONB designation are as follows:

- The primary purpose of designation is to conserve and enhance natural beauty.

Natural beauty goes well beyond scenic and aesthetic value. The natural beauty of an AONB is to do with the relationship between people and place. It encompasses everything – 'natural and human' – that makes an area distinctive. It includes the area's geology and landform, its climate and soils, its wildlife and ecology. It includes the rich history of human settlement and land use over the centuries, its archaeology and buildings, its cultural associations, and the people who live in it, past and present.

[AONB Management Plan Specimen text, NAAONB 2018]

- In pursuing the primary purpose of designation, account should be taken of the needs of agriculture, forestry, and other rural industries and of the economic and social needs of local communities. Particular regard should be paid to promoting sustainable forms of social and economic development that in themselves, conserve and enhance the environment.
- Recreation is not an objective of designation, but the demand for recreation should be met so far as this is consistent with the conservation of natural beauty and the needs of agriculture, forestry and other uses.

(Countryside Agency, 2001)

1.4 Local authorities have a legal obligation under the Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000 to prepare and review a Management Plan for the AONB, and to 'act jointly' in doing this. The AONB Partnership is the body formed principally to fulfil this requirement and includes a substantially wider membership in order to engage a range of relevant interests and expertise in the management of the area.

2. Roles and Responsibilities of the AONB Partnership

- 2.1 The Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership plays three main roles regarding the AONB:
- To promote the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty, character and landscape of the Shropshire Hills AONB as a local, regional and national asset.
 - To promote compatible social, environmental, economic development and the wellbeing of constituent communities.
 - In pursuit of these ends, to prepare, monitor and review the statutory Management Plan for the AONB and to coordinate its implementation.
- 2.2 In order to perform the above roles and responsibilities the Partnership will lead the review of the statutory Management Plan for the AONB every five years. This Plan will be formally approved by each individual local authority and will, as required in the CRoW Act 2000, 'formulate their policy for the management of the area and for the carrying out of their functions in relation to it'.
- 2.3 In addition, the Partnership will co-ordinate and facilitate the implementation of the Management Plan, and will monitor progress in achieving its objectives, policies and actions.
- 2.4 The Partnership will champion the interests of and vision for, the Shropshire Hills AONB, as contained in the statutory Management Plan, and promote a coherent and strong identity for the area.
- 2.5 The Partnership will add value to the role of local authorities as planning authorities for the AONB, especially by contributing to the development of planning policy and guidance, and by providing comments on significant development proposals and planning applications. Detailed roles and procedures for the AONB Partnership's involvement in planning are set out in a formal Planning Protocol with the local authorities.
- 2.6 The Partnership will seek to secure resources required for effective management of the AONB, including external funds to assist in delivering management activities and projects.
- 2.7 The Partnership will ensure that public bodies fulfil their duty under S85 of the CRoW Act to have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB in the exercise and performance of their functions.
- 2.8 The Partnership will monitor the condition of the AONB and progress with Management Plan implementation and will publish an annual review of progress and make recommendations to local authorities as appropriate.
- 2.9 The Partnership will periodically review its governance arrangements to ensure that they remain fit for purpose.

3. Membership

3.1 Membership of the Partnership will consist of a maximum of 36 people comprising the following:

- Four elected Members appointed by Shropshire Council (representatives should be relevant portfolio holders or local division members);
- One elected member appointed by Telford and Wrekin Council (the representative should be a local ward member);
- Up to 6 elected members of parish or town councils within or partly within the AONB;
- Up to 4 representatives of other statutory bodies;
- Up to 15 representatives appointed by non-statutory or voluntary organisations;
- Up to 6 individual members.

All of the above will have full voting rights.

APPROVAL OF TERMS OF REFERENCE

Signed

Date

Position

on behalf of SHROPSHIRE COUNCIL

Signed

Date

Position

on behalf of TELFORD AND WREKIN COUNCIL

Appendix 1 to Terms of Reference - Procedures of the Partnership

1. All parties recognise that the Partnership is likely to be most effective if its recommendations can be reached by consensus rather than by confrontation but, if it is necessary to regulate any debate, then the Chair shall have the power to order that the Council Procedure Rules set out in Part 4 of the Constitution of Shropshire Council shall apply. Consensus will be taken as the majority of the members present and the Chair will have the casting vote where needed.
2. The Partnership may establish sub-committees and may delegate any of its powers and functions to sub-committees. Only Partnership members and officers of the Councils may be appointed to be members of sub-committees but officer members will not have any power to vote. Only the Partnership can appoint members of any sub-committee.
3. The Partnership may participate in other groups as it deems appropriate.

Frequency of Meetings

4. The Partnership will normally meet three times per year. A site-based meeting or tour will normally be held annually. The Chair of the Partnership may call additional meetings or cancel pre-arranged meetings if it is felt that there is either urgent business which needs to be discussed or there is insufficient business to justify a meeting being held.

Chair and Vice Chairs

5. The Partnership will elect its own Chair on a biennial basis, or as necessary. The Chair will be a non-local authority member. The Chair will not serve for more than three consecutive terms (i.e. six years maximum). Both Vice Chair posts will be elected biennially by the Partnership, or as necessary. One Vice Chair post will be an elected member of Shropshire Council and the other Vice Chair post will be open to any Partnership member. Nominations will be invited in advance of the meeting at which the elections take place.
6. In the event of the Chair or Vice Chairs not being present at a meeting of the Partnership, a chair for the meeting will be elected by the Partnership members present.
7. The expectations of Chair and Vice Chair roles are set out in Role Descriptions and Person Specifications, which will be reviewed as necessary by the Partnership.

Local Authority Officers

8. Local authority officers attending Partnership meetings do not have the right to vote on issues being decided by the Partnership.

Declaration of interests

9. Members of the Partnership and any of its sub-groups shall declare an interest in a meeting where a matter to be discussed may affect:
 - their own wellbeing or financial position, or
 - the wellbeing or financial position of a family member or close associate, or

- the financial position of an employer/business of the member, their family member or close associate, or
- the financial position of a charitable body, association or other group with which they are closely associated

and shall leave the meeting room whilst that matter is being debated and voted upon.

10. Councillor Members of the Partnership shall, when acting as a member of the Partnership, comply with the code of conduct of their local authority.
11. Non-Councillor Members of the Partnership shall, when acting as a member of the Partnership, comply with the code of conduct of Shropshire Council.

Membership, Applications & Nominations

12. The Partnership will operate an application process for the individual member seats and Parish/Town Council seats, and where necessary for non-statutory or voluntary organisations. The process will be transparent and non-discriminatory.

13. Appointment of applicants to seats will be made by the full Partnership, based on the following criteria:

Individual and Parish/Town Council members

- Resident in the AONB or a nearby town or in the surrounding countryside;
- Proven commitment to AONB purposes and relevant areas of interest;
- Ability to make a valuable contribution to the Partnership.

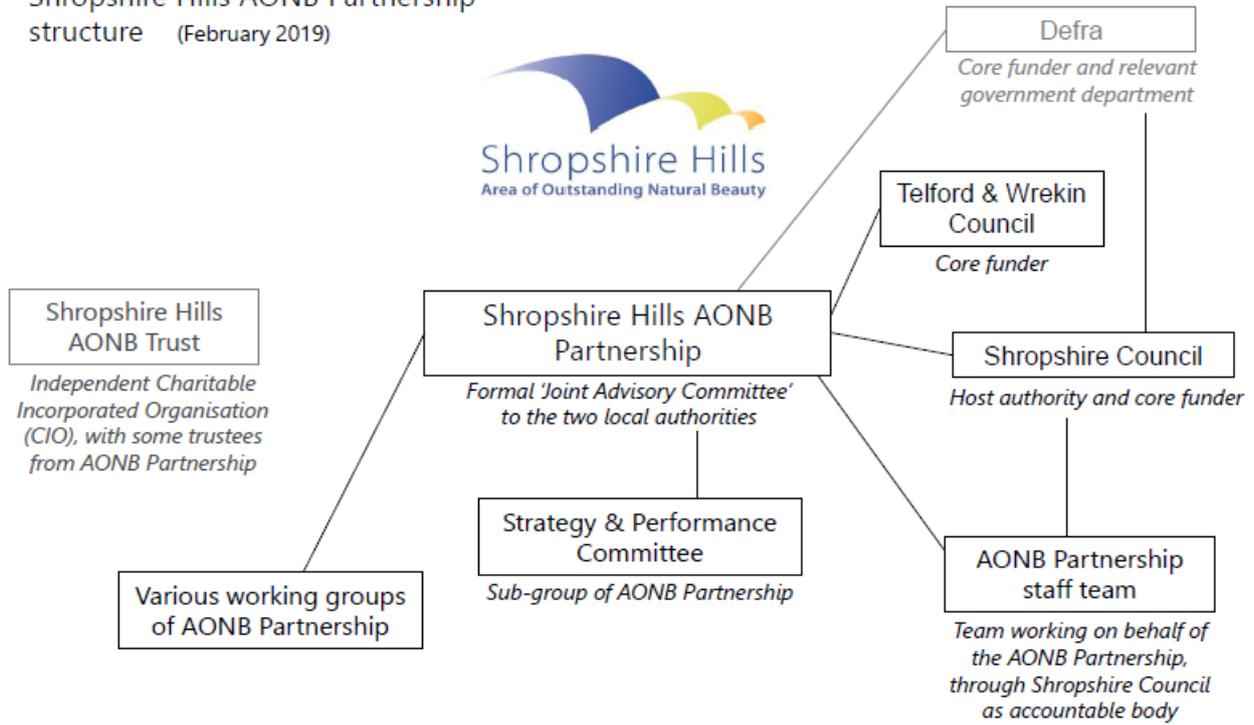
Non-statutory and voluntary bodies

- Support for AONB purposes and a clear synergy with the remit of the AONB;
- A significant material or operational interest within the AONB;
- Representative with ability to make a valuable contribution to the Partnership.

14. Statutory and non-statutory bodies on the Partnership will appoint a named representative to attend as their member, and may identify a named 'deputy' who will also receive papers and may attend meetings in place of the representative without prior arrangement. A representative other than the named member or deputy may attend a meeting in their place by agreement with the Chair.
15. The Partnership will undertake a biennial review of its membership.
16. In the event of conduct or alleged conduct of a member which is not consistent with the Partnership's Terms of Reference, every effort will be made to resolve the issue by informal negotiation. The Partnership may however resolve to withdraw membership, or, in the case of an organisation member, resolve to ask the organisation to provide a different representative.

Appendix 2 to Terms of Reference

Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership structure (February 2019)



Shropshire Hills AONB Management Plan 2019-24

Final draft for formal approval 30th March 2019

Photo: Claire Carter

Contents (click on titles below to jump to that section)

Vision and Forewords	2
Executive Summary	3
Introduction	4
Legal Framework	4
The Shropshire Hills AONB and its management	4
What and who is the Management Plan for?	5
Explanation of some key terms and concepts	5
The NAAONB and the AONB Family	6
Glover Review of designated landscapes	7
International context	7
Geographical context of the AONB	7
Process for preparing the Management Plan	8
Statement of significance and special qualities	10
Summary of condition of the AONB and trends	13
Summary of achievements in Plan period 2014-19	14
Key Issues	16
Policy Framework	16
Land management supporting landscape and natural beauty	17
Summary of landscape issues and priorities in the Shropshire Hills	18
Natural capital and ecosystem services in the Shropshire Hills	19
Landscape character	20
Biodiversity and natural environment	20
Soils	21
Air quality	21
Water and catchment management	21
Woodlands and trees	23
Historic Environment	24
Helping farming to support natural beauty	25
New Environmental Land Management Schemes	25
Integrated area projects	26
Policy - Land management supporting landscape & natural beauty	27
Actions - Land management supporting landscape & natural beauty	28
Planning for a sustainable economy and communities	29
Planning and AONBs – national policy and context	30

Local authorities' Local Plans	32
Protecting and enhancing the AONB and its special qualities	32
Landscape	34
Heritage	35
Housing	37
Agricultural development	39
Roads	40
Renewable energy	41
Visitor Economy	42
Sustainable communities	43
Actions - Planning for a sustainable economy and communities	43
People enjoying and caring about the landscape	44
Recreation, health and wellbeing	45
Understanding and learning	46
Active volunteering	46
Contributing	46
Access and activity providers	46
Sustainable tourism	47
Communications	47
Policy - People enjoying and caring about the landscape	48
Actions - People enjoying and caring about the landscape	49

The AONB boundary and Zone of Influence	50
Local priorities for areas of the AONB	51
Long Mynd – Stiperstones	51
Clun Forest & Valley	53
Clee Hills	54
Stretton Valley, Wenlock Edge & Dales	56
Wrekin Forest	57
Implementation and monitoring	59
References	61
Abbreviations	64
Appendix 1 Headline Indicators	65
Appendix 2 Outline priority outcomes for New Environmental Land Management schemes in the Shropshire Hills AONB	66
Appendix 3 Considering the AONB's special qualities for planning applications	68

Vision

The Vision for the Shropshire Hills AONB Management Plan 2019-24 remains the same as in the previous Plan:

The natural beauty of the Shropshire Hills landscape is conserved, enhanced and helped to adapt - by sympathetic land management, by co-ordinated action and by sustainable communities; and is valued for its richness of geology, wildlife and heritage, and its contribution to prosperity and wellbeing.

Forewords

I am fortunate that England's Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are part of my Ministerial responsibilities. Whether it be rolling hills, sweeping coastline or a tranquil village, spending time in an AONB can stir the heart and lift the spirit. This is a pivotal moment for all AONBs. The Government has set its ambition in the 25 Year Environment Plan which states clearly the importance of rural beauty as part of our green future, while AONBs retain the highest status of protection for landscape through national planning policy. Leaving the EU brings with it an opportunity to develop a better system for supporting our farmers and land managers, who play such a vital role as stewards of the landscape. And the Review of National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty led by Julian Glover - the first of its kind for generations - will make recommendations to make sure our designated landscapes can flourish in the years ahead.

In my visits to AONBs around the country, I have been struck by the passion of many people - farmers, volunteers, and hard-working staff - for the beautiful places they live and work. In this spirit I am delighted to welcome publication of this Statutory Management Plan for the Shropshire Hills AONB. It is significant that this plan will be delivered in partnership by those who value the Shropshire Hills. I would like to thank all those involved in preparation of this document, and wish you the best of success in bringing it to fruition.

Lord Gardiner, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Looking back over the five years of the last Management Plan, it is very satisfying to see how much has been achieved within the Shropshire Hills AONB. Some of the highlights have been the Stiperstones and Corndon Hill Country Landscape Partnership Scheme, improved water environment and biodiversity, many school children have achieved John Muir awards, and we have been re-awarded the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in the Shropshire Hills. We are involved in a major national project 'Our Common Cause' which is looking at ways to support the centuries-old heritage of upland commons and make them more relevant to 21st Century life. The Shropshire Hills AONB Trust has been formed as a charity to increase the funding for projects and activities within the AONB, and awards many grants to local groups through the Conservation Fund.

Whilst much has been achieved, there is much to do in the next five years – we need to do much more on the water environment and biodiversity, there are some very real recreational pressures affecting parts of our area. Farmers are going to have to adapt their farming practices in the light of Brexit in particular, so that they can operate profitably and at the same time look after our wonderful landscape.

Everything that needs doing to improve the environment, landscape and natural beauty of the area cannot be done by the extremely dedicated and hard-working AONB team alone – we rely on the actions of all our partners, other local and national organisations and the many hundreds of individuals who give their time voluntarily and who all work tirelessly.



This Plan has evolved from discussions and meetings with a wide cross-section of the public, the partners and other organisations and it is a plan for your area – an area that we all love and enjoy. We have tried very hard to make it shorter and more readable but also making it more practical and usable in terms of the guidance included within it. Statutory responsibility for preparing the Plan rests with Shropshire Council and Telford & Wrekin Council, and with their continued support and involvement we very much look forward to working with you to achieve the objectives set out here over the next five years and beyond.

James Williamson, AONB Partnership Chair

Executive Summary

Special places matter to us. They give us a sense of belonging and peace. The Shropshire Hills have evolved through the interaction of people and nature over a long time to produce a character and quality which we value.

The landscape contributes greatly to the economy and to our health and culture. Food production needs soils and water, while our hills and woods help to manage flood risk. Nature and beautiful landscapes are good for our mental wellbeing and quality of life, provide a sense of identity, and attract business investment. To do this, they need actively looking after.

'Natural beauty' includes the influence of people. Nature provides the bones and the processes of our landscape, which is shaped by farmers and land managers, and enjoyed by many. Safeguarding the positive interaction between people and nature is vital to protecting and sustaining the AONB and its value.



The Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty was designated in 1958

recognising the national value of its landscape.

The AONB covers a quarter of Shropshire, including the Long Mynd, Stiperstones, The Wrekin and Wenlock Edge, as well as the Clee Hills and Clun Forest. The landscape is rich in wildlife and heritage, along with scenic quality and views, tranquillity, culture and opportunities for enjoyment.

The primary purpose of AONB designation is to conserve and enhance natural beauty. AONBs have protection in planning policy, and the statutory Management Plan for the AONB is reviewed every five years. This Plan is about the future of our special place and is based on local partnership and consensus. It seeks to apply local solutions to local challenges that also respect the national and international importance of the AONB. The Plan seeks to guide and inspire action to meet the purposes of designation. The Plan is prepared by the Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership on behalf of Shropshire Council and Telford & Wrekin Council.

The character and quality of the Shropshire Hills landscape are of high importance but under increasing pressure. The condition of some of the special qualities of the AONB is declining. Conservation activity through many schemes and projects is not enough to prevent some declines in wildlife. Not enough progress is being made with some water quality and catchment management targets. Farming, especially in the uplands, is at an important crossroads as we head towards new UK policy and funding regimes [1]. Economic forces are increasing development pressure and reducing resources for positive management, leading to more deterioration of valuable features by neglect.

The Plan sets out policies of the local authorities, and proposed actions for a wider variety of partners, under three main aims:

- Land management supporting natural beauty and landscape
- Planning for a sustainable economy and communities
- People enjoying and caring about the landscape

The Plan will help deliver many of the priorities of Defra's 25 Environment Plan [2] - clean air and water, thriving plants and wildlife, reduced risk from flooding and drought, using natural resources more sustainably and efficiently, enhanced beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment.

Some of the Plan's top priority actions include:

- Working with Defra and other partners to ensure new Environmental Land Management Schemes deliver AONB priorities.
- Establishing a large programme of planting of trees outside woodlands, partly to offset losses from Ash dieback disease.
- Developing the Stepping Stones project into a long-term delivery initiative for the Long Mynd – Stiperstones area.
- Developing Landscape guidance and Design guidance for planning.
- Developing a youth engagement project incorporating the John Muir Award, Young Rangers and traineeships.
- Supporting activities which will contribute to a low carbon Shropshire Hills area, compatible with the AONB's special qualities.



Introduction

Legal framework

The primary purpose of AONB designation is to conserve and enhance natural beauty.

The 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act [3] first established the AONB designation and this statutory purpose. The Act provided AONBs with protection under planning law against inappropriate development and gave local authorities powers to take action in support of the purpose.

Countryside Commission guidance [4] defined secondary purposes for AONBs:

In pursuing the primary purpose of designation, account should be taken of the needs of agriculture, forestry, and other rural industries and of the economic and social needs of local communities. Particular regard should be paid to promoting sustainable forms of social and economic development that in themselves, conserve and enhance the environment.

Recreation is not an objective of designation, but the demand for recreation should be met so far as this is consistent with the conservation of natural beauty and the needs of agriculture, forestry and other uses.

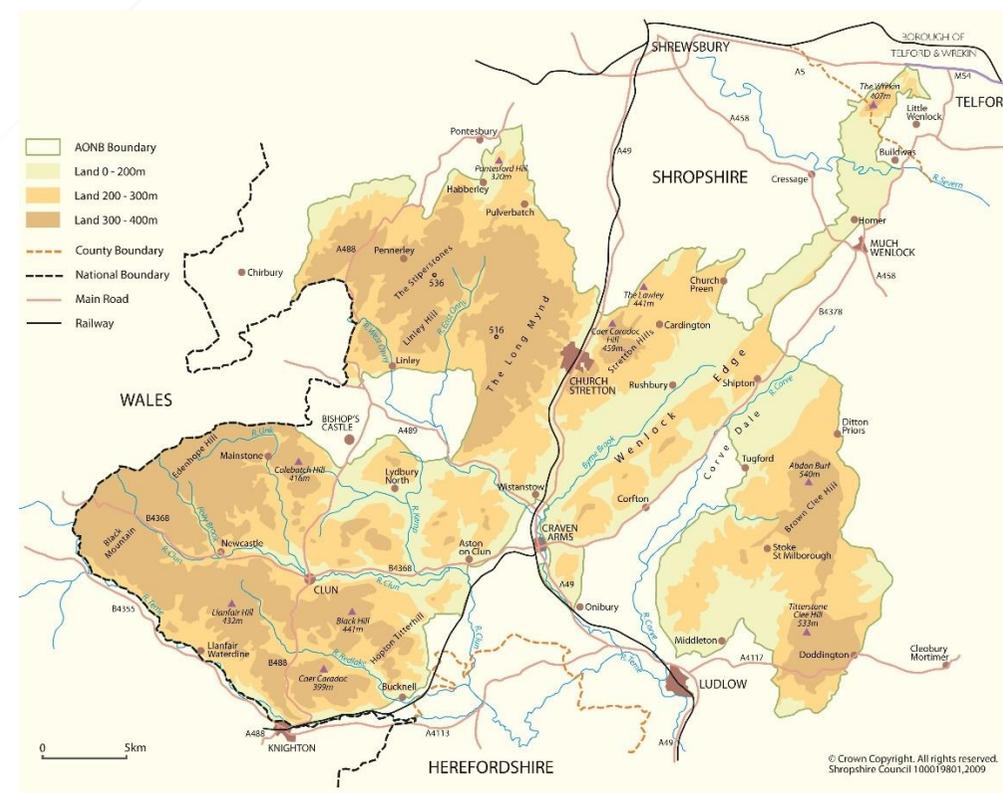
The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 [5] added:

- a statutory duty to prepare a Management Plan 'which formulates their policy for the management of their area of outstanding natural beauty and for the carrying out of their functions in relation to it', and to review the Plan every five years. Where an AONB involves more than one local authority they are required 'act jointly'.
- a statutory duty in Section 85 on all 'relevant authorities' to 'have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty' of AONBs when coming to any decisions or carrying out activities relating to or affecting land within these areas. This includes all public bodies and statutory undertakers (e.g. certain utility companies).

The Shropshire Hills AONB and its management

The Shropshire Hills are beautiful rolling upland landscape lying along the Welsh border but only an hour from Birmingham. Best known for the Long Mynd, Stiperstones, The Wrekin and Wenlock Edge, the AONB also includes the Clee Hills and Clun Forest. With a diverse geology giving rise to craggy ridges, moorland plateaux and wooded scarps, the landscape of hills, farmland, woods, rivers and villages is rich in wildlife and heritage, along with scenic quality and views, tranquillity, culture and opportunities for enjoyment. The Shropshire Hills AONB was designated in 1958 and covers 804km² (23% of Shropshire).

The 46 AONBs in the UK are living, working landscapes that are unique and irreplaceable national assets. Over two thirds of England's population live within half an hour's drive of an AONB, and around 150 million people visit English AONBs every year, spending in excess of £2bn [6]. Together with National Parks, AONBs represent our most outstanding landscapes, and contribute some £20bn every year to the national economy [7].



The Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership is an advisory body formed by Shropshire Council and Telford & Wrekin Council to fulfil their legal duties for the AONB. The Partnership group itself of 41 members from a wide range of interests is supported by a small staff team funded by Defra, the local authorities and project funders. The AONB Partnership leads the preparation of this Management Plan, but it is a Plan for the area, and many organisations and individuals play a part in the Plan's delivery. For more information on the AONB Partnership, see the Implementation section and www.shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk.

What is the Management Plan for?

The AONB Management Plan is a place-based plan derived through local partnership and consensus. It seeks to define the approach to conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB through the application of local solutions to local challenges that also respect the national and international importance of the AONB. The Plan seeks to guide and inspire action to meet the AONB purposes. It brings together partners to agree directions and targets, promotes collaboration and helps to prioritise resources.

Who is the Plan for?

The AONB Management Plan is a plan for the area and not for any one organisation. It can help guide activities that might affect the AONB by:

- AONB Partnership organisations – these organisations will have a key role in delivering and championing the Management Plan
- Relevant authorities – all bodies that have a duty to have regard to the purpose of the AONB.
- Landowners and managers – those who own and manage land in the AONB have a vital role to play. The Plan aims to guide, support and attract resources for sensitive management of the AONB.
- Local communities and visitors – all of us who live and work in the AONB and enjoy it can play an active role in caring for the AONB.

Explanation of some key terms and concepts

Natural beauty goes well beyond scenic or aesthetic value. The natural beauty of an AONB is to do with the relationship between people and place. It encompasses everything - 'natural' and human - that makes an area distinctive. It includes the area's geology and landform, its climate and soils, its wildlife and ecology. It includes the rich history of human settlement and land use over the centuries, its archaeology and buildings, its cultural associations, and the people who live in it, past and present. [8] [9] [10] [11]

Landscape

The European Landscape Convention [12] defines landscape as 'An area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and human factors'. This view sees people at the heart of all landscapes, each of which has its own distinctive character and meaning.



The Convention defines three principles of landscape action as follows:

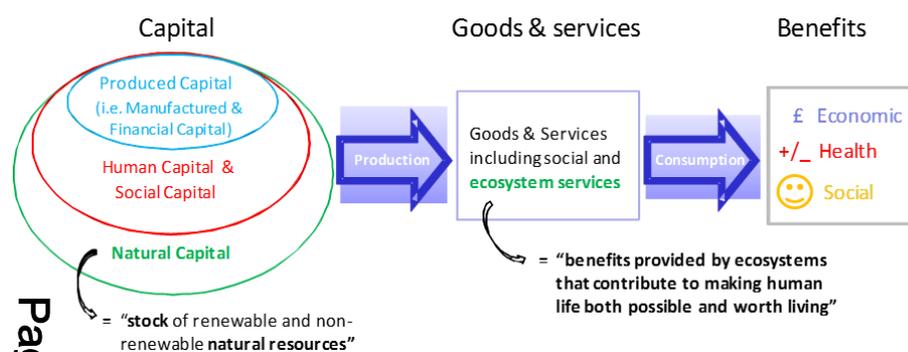
Protect: action to conserve and maintain the significant characteristic features of a landscape, justified by their natural or cultural value;

Manage: action to ensure the sustainable development and ongoing upkeep of a landscape, guiding changes arising from social, economic or environmental necessity;

Plan: strong forward-looking action to enhance, restore or create landscape.

Natural capital and ecosystem services

Natural capital is the stock of natural assets that provide free goods and services, often called ecosystem services, that benefit wider society as a whole. Natural capital stock includes renewable and non-renewable natural resources e.g. geology, minerals, soils, water, air, plants, animals, habitats, ecosystems [13]. Some ecosystem services are well known e.g. food, fibre and fuel provision and cultural services supporting wellbeing through recreation. Others less obvious include regulation of climate and water quality.



Page 57

Ecosystem approach

The ecosystem approach recognises that [14]:

- Natural systems are complex and dynamic, and their healthy functioning should not be taken for granted.
- People benefit from services provided by the natural environment. These services underpin social and economic wellbeing and have a value – both monetary and non-monetary.
- Those that benefit from these services and those who are involved in managing them should play a central role in making decisions about them.



The NAAONB and the AONB Family

The National Association for AONBs [15] is a charity that provides a strong collective voice for the UK's 46 AONBs. It seeks to:

- promote the conservation and enhancement of AONBs,
- advance the education, understanding and appreciation by the public of AONBs, and
- promote the efficiency and effectiveness of those promoting or representing AONBs, other protected areas and those areas for which designation might be pursued.

It does this by taking a collaborative and partnership-based approach to working with its members and other organisations at a national level to achieve shared goals. For more information see www.landscapesforlife.org.uk.

The AONB Family is involved in the planning and management of around 8,000 square miles of outstanding and cherished landscapes in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Membership includes most of the AONB partnerships, as well as some of those local authorities with statutory responsibility for AONBs, together with a number of voluntary bodies, businesses and individuals with an interest in the future of AONBs. The vision of the NAAONB is that the natural beauty of AONBs is valued and secure. The Association's mission is to support and develop a network of ambitious AONB partnerships with a strong collective voice.

The following high level objectives have been adopted as the common national purpose of the national family of AONBs:

- Conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage of the UK's Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, ensuring they can meet the challenges of the future,
- Support the economic and social wellbeing of local communities in ways which contribute to the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty,
- Promote public understanding and enjoyment of the nature and culture of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and encourage people to take action for their conservation,
- Value, sustain, and promote the benefits that the UK's Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty provide for society, including clean air and water, food, carbon storage and other services vital to the nation's health and wellbeing.

Glover Review of designated landscapes

The Glover Review over 2018-2019 is the most significant review of designated landscapes in England in many years, and is seeking to find ways to help them deliver more. There is a widespread view that the status and protection AONBs seem to have in national and local policy is not matched by the reality of many decisions on the ground [16]. This is seen nationally as well as in the Shropshire Hills, and input to the Glover review will emphasise the need to strengthen the status and influence of AONBs in reality.

The Glover Review will report shortly after the finalising of this Management Plan, and may well result in changes which will affect delivery of the Plan.

One discussion the Review has sparked is whether the Shropshire Hills should become a National Park, and the AONB Partnership is looking at the arguments around this to inform a debate.



Geographical context of the AONB

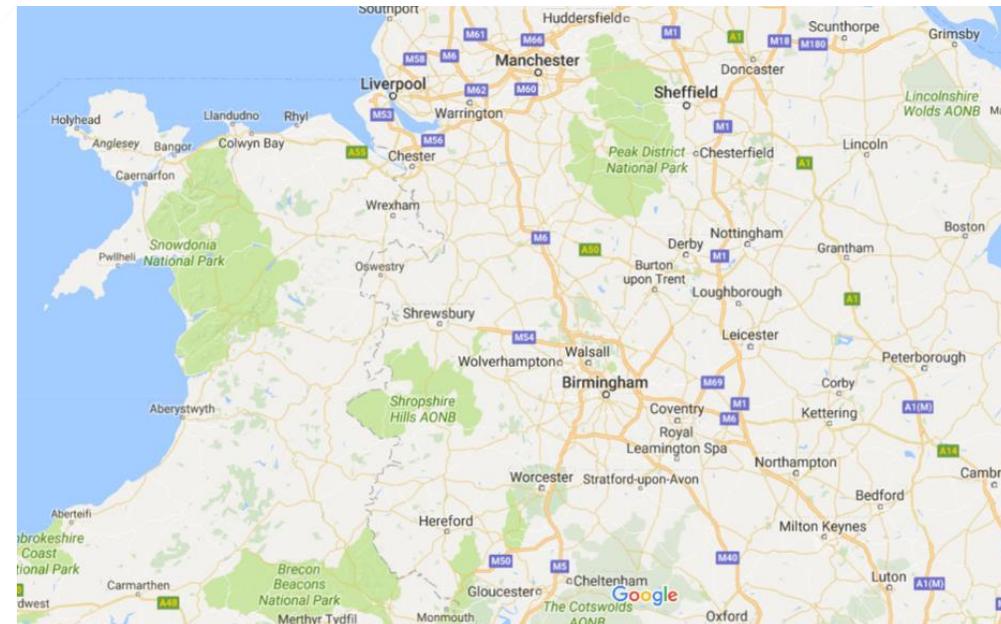
The Shropshire Hills AONB makes up most of the uplands of Shropshire, and its most sparsely populated areas. However, about 19,000 people live within the AONB, and many more live close by. There is a big contrast between the relatively remote areas in the west parts of the AONB, and the eastern edges which lie close to Wolverhampton and the West Midlands conurbation. The Shropshire Hills is the largest AONB in the Midlands area, and some distance from the nearest National Parks. It is therefore important as an accessible, high quality landscape for a wide catchment area including a large population.

Its position in the country means that the Shropshire Hills combine landscapes and wildlife characteristic of both upland and lowland, and northern and southern Britain, in an unusual blend.

International context

AONBs are recognised by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) as 'Category V Protected Landscapes, [17] defined as: 'A *protected area where the interaction of people and nature over time has produced an area of distinct character with significant ecological, biological, cultural and scenic value: and where safeguarding the integrity of this interaction is vital to protecting and sustaining the area and its associated nature conservation and other values.*' [18] They are recognised therefore as cultural landscapes, in distinction to other categories of natural or near-natural areas. They have also come to be recognised as leaders in area-based sustainable development [19] [20], pioneering integrated countryside management based on voluntary partnerships engaging and working with local communities to secure common goals.

A recent study of areas similar to AONBs across 22 countries stated [21] that "*Large scale protected areas... which are based on the principle of integration of people and nature, are becoming increasingly important in the global debate on sustainability.*"

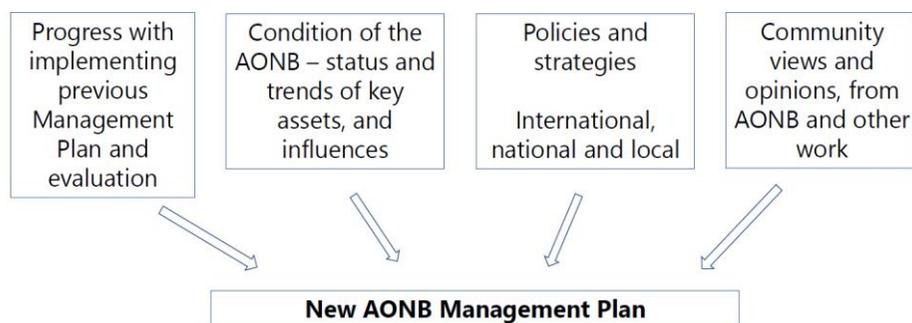


Map data © 2017 Google

Process for preparing the Management Plan

The review resulting in this new Management Plan has followed national guidance and been influenced by policy directions and by community consultations and experience at a local level.

Inputs into the Plan Review



A detailed progress update on actions in the previous 2014-19 Management Plan was published by the AONB Partnership on 1st November 2016 [22].

Five workshops have been held with the AONB Partnership:

13th June 2017: Issues and aspirations, in the context of EU Exit,

14th November 2017: Brief presentations by ten partner organisations on the issues they felt were most pressing for the new Plan,

6th March 2018 focussed on delivery priorities, i.e. what needs to be done.

Management Plan topics have also been discussed at working groups such as the Clun Catchment Partnership, Wrekin Forest Partnership and Shropshire Hills Destination Partnership.

Partnership members felt that:

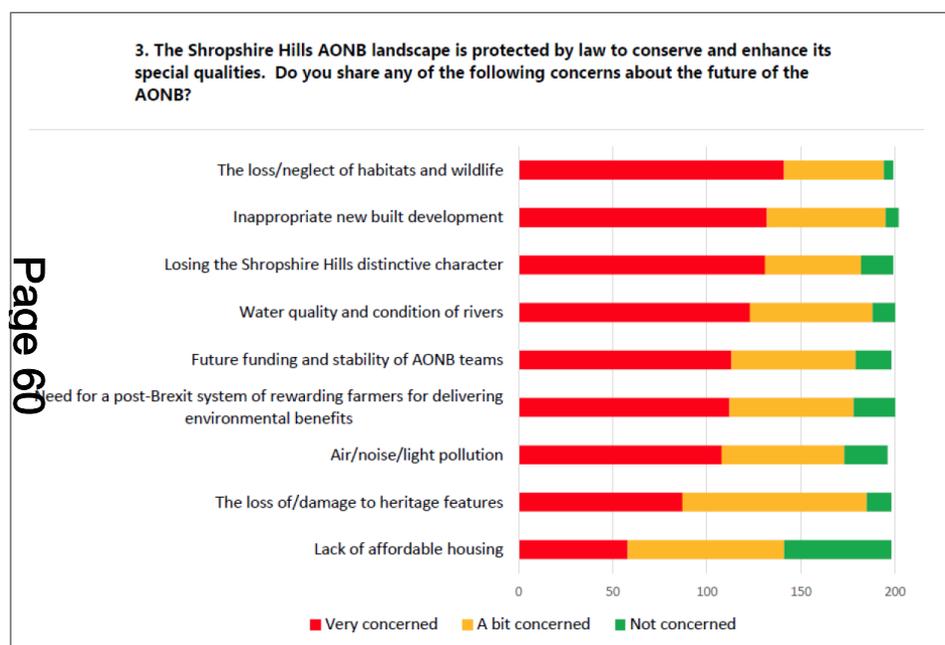
- Protection of the landscape and biodiversity needs to be better in practice.
- The planning system needs to take more account of the AONB.
- We must help people to see the AONB as an asset rather than a barrier to economic growth.
- Sustainability should influence all areas – land management, tourism, communities.

A Shropshire Hills Uplands Forum was held in February 2017, attended by 82 people, including many farmers and landowners, plus public agencies, community representatives, environmental NGOs, recreation and business interests from around the Shropshire Hills [23]. The purpose was to gather a range of stakeholders to share views and work together to develop ideas on future policy and funding for upland land management. The focus was on the public benefits the Shropshire Hills uplands provide to society, and how these could be supported and enhanced in the future. Some key actions were identified as being needed:

- Support a range of public benefits from the uplands
- Encourage new land management support schemes to have locally relevant delivery within a national framework
- Build common ground between conservation bodies, farmers and the wider community - understand the needs of all users and managers of the land to work together for common goals
- Gain public support for public benefits the uplands provide, and the need for public funding
- Support the links between livestock production, land management, rural economy and communities, and address affordable housing, viable business opportunities and planning issues.



A public on-line survey was carried out during April and May 2018. With over 200 responses, the survey revealed a high degree of support for the primary purpose to 'conserve and enhance' the AONB. Most valued characteristics of the Shropshire Hills were dramatic views and wide panoramas, opportunities to walk and explore, wildlife and relatively natural areas, peace and quiet and a chance to unwind. Top concerns were the loss/neglect of habitats and wildlife, inappropriate new built development, losing the Shropshire Hills distinctive character, water quality and condition of rivers, future funding and stability of AONB teams, need for a post-Brexit system of rewarding farmers for delivering environmental benefits, air/noise/light pollution, the loss of/damage to heritage features, and lack of affordable housing.



Work on 'State of the AONB' has included analysing data for a set of key indicators, which are shown at Appendix 1, and described in the Condition of the AONB section.

During the period of the Plan review, the Shropshire Hills Sustainable Tourism Strategy [24] has been prepared and approved by the Shropshire Hills Destination Partnership. The discussions and consultation around this Strategy have been very valuable in support of the Management Plan.

Sustainability Appraisal

The process of Sustainability Appraisal of the Management Plan runs in parallel with the plan review and meets the legal requirements for Strategic Environmental Assessment. The process is based on Natural England's guidance and the practice of local authorities on sustainability appraisal for Local Development Frameworks.

The Scoping Report was published in February 2018 [25], and includes a review of current policies and strategies affecting the Plan.

The full Sustainability Appraisal report will be published alongside the draft Management Plan.

An expected conclusion of the Sustainability Appraisal is that the high quality of the AONB's environment is a huge economic asset which, if sensitively used and not damaged by inappropriate development, can deliver great long term economic benefits. In the need however to take a long-term view and protect this asset, there is a risk of the designation being perceived as hampering economic progress. This may be overcome by demonstrating the positive economic effects of the environment and of looking after it.

Consultation and approval process

Three topic groups met in October 2018 to discuss a draft of this Plan, and the draft Plan was taken to the AONB Partnership on 23rd October. A public consultation ran between November 2018 and January 2019 and resulted in a few meetings with key stakeholders.



Changes arising from the public consultation were considered by the AONB Partnership and the Plan then submitted for 'formal observations' by Natural England, before formal approval by the two Councils in the spring of 2019.

Statement of Significance and Special Qualities

Different people have their own opinions on what is special about the Shropshire Hills, and no definition is absolute. The purpose of this brief outline is to help determine how best to manage these qualities within the remit of the AONB. This requires describing aspects which are subjective, hard to define and often difficult adequately to put into words. Such qualities are nevertheless greatly valued by people and may be threatened, making it important to consider them in a structured way. The qualities identified relate to each other and overlap, and should not be looked at in isolation.

Diversity and Contrast

With a variety of geology unequalled in any area of comparable size in Britain, the Shropshire Hills have no single dominant feature or landform. The area's landscape character is one of variety and of transition – between the lowland plains of the English Midlands and the uplands of Wales, and between north and south of Britain. This is reflected in both ecology and human activity.

The key components of the Shropshire Hills landscape are the hills, farmed countryside, woodlands, rivers and river valleys.

Hills

The rocky Stiperstones, the dissected plateau of the Long Mynd, the craggy volcanic Stretton Hills and Wrekin, the harsh quarried landscape of the Clee Hills, the



Photo: Jordan Mansfield

wooded scarp of Wenlock Edge, and the rolling enclosed hills of the Clun Forest all have their own distinctive character. The hills define the identity of the area and are the backbone of our landscape. They contain commons, heath, moorland and rough grasslands, and are home to a variety of upland birds including curlew, red grouse and merlin.

Farmed Countryside

The patchwork of fields bounded by hedges results from generations of farming. Pasture grazed by livestock is the largest land use, but arable cultivation is also significant, mainly on lower ground. Hedgerow and field trees, including many veteran trees, give the landscape a maturity. Remnants of valuable grassland and hay meadow habitats survive.



Woodlands

The area has higher than the national average cover of ancient and semi-natural woodland. Upland oakwoods are found mostly on steeper slopes and are important for birds, bryophytes and lichens, while mixed ash-elm-oak woods such as on the limestone of Wenlock Edge have a rich ground flora. There are also larger predominantly conifer plantations, many small farm woodlands, scattered valuable areas of wet woodland, parkland, wood pasture, and small, often remnant orchards.

Rivers and River Valleys

The Rivers Clun, Teme and Onny, along with many smaller rivers and streams, are relatively clean and natural in form, and of high quality. Many are lined with alder, and home to important species like the dipper, white-clawed crayfish and otter. The critically endangered freshwater pearl mussel is found in the River Clun just outside the AONB. Valleys vary from the steep-sided batches and dingles of the Long Mynd and Stiperstones, to larger expanses with some flood meadows, and the broad dales such as Corve Dale and Ape Dale which divide up the area. The AONB makes up the majority of the headwaters of the Teme catchment, and a short stretch of the River Severn within the AONB divides the Wrekin from Wenlock Edge. There are few large water bodies but many ponds, marshes and flushes.



Other special qualities are found in different ways across the whole area, including geology, wildlife, heritage, environmental and scenic quality, tranquillity, culture and opportunities for enjoyment.

Geology

The Shropshire Hills have great geological variety, with bedrock dating from the Precambrian almost continuously through to the Permian, and the influence of different rock types and structures on the landscape are clearly visible. There is a widespread mantle of more recent Quaternary deposits and along with



landforms on the lower ground, these reflect the complex geological history of the last Ice Age. The AONB is important in the history of geological science – Murchison’s study of the Silurian (including the Wenlock limestone) and its fossils being notable. The Ercall quarry has a well-recognised example of the sudden transition from metamorphosed and barren rocks to sediments containing the earliest known hard-shelled fossils from the Cambrian period.

Wildlife

The valuable habitats of the AONB, especially heathland, grassland, woodland and rivers are linked to a long history of relatively sympathetic land management. The Shropshire Hills have an unusual mix of both upland and lowland wildlife, such as red grouse and dormouse. The AONB is very significant in the region for upland species such as merlin, snipe, whinchat, dipper, emperor moth, small pearl-bordered fritillary and grayling butterflies and holds some nationally threatened species such as



curlew and wood white butterfly. It is also significant for species of western oakwoods such as pied flycatcher, wood warbler, redstart and tree pipit, and a stronghold for formerly more widespread species like skylark, black poplar and great-crested newt.



Heritage

Many ancient features survive in a landscape which has seen less change than many parts of the country. Defences such as Offa’s Dyke, Iron Age hillforts such as at Caer Caradoc and Bury Ditches and medieval castles and fortified houses such as Clun and Stokesay, tell of centuries of turbulent Marches history. The



Shropshire Hills has the greatest concentration of medieval castle earthworks anywhere in Britain. Much of the field and settlement pattern is very ancient with tiny lanes, villages and scattered hamlets and farms. There are also estates, parkland, planted settlements and abandoned medieval villages, along with areas of

later, more regular Parliamentary enclosure. Stone and timber-framed buildings in a variety of styles reflect the diversity of local materials available, and there is a rich variety of churches and churchyards. The Clee Hills and Stiperstones in particular have seen periods of thriving industry such as lead mining and stone quarrying, often with haphazard ‘squatter’ settlement.



Scenic and environmental quality

Panoramic views extend from, across and into the AONB, which abounds in both wide open spaces and intimate corners. There are contrasts from relatively wild hills and valleys to softer, settled landscapes, as well as between varying seasonal colours of heather, grass, bracken and broadleaved trees. The high quality of the built environment of towns, villages and rural settlement complements



and blends with the countryside. Clean air and water are accompanied by other valuable ecological functions including food and fibre growing, and water run-off control.



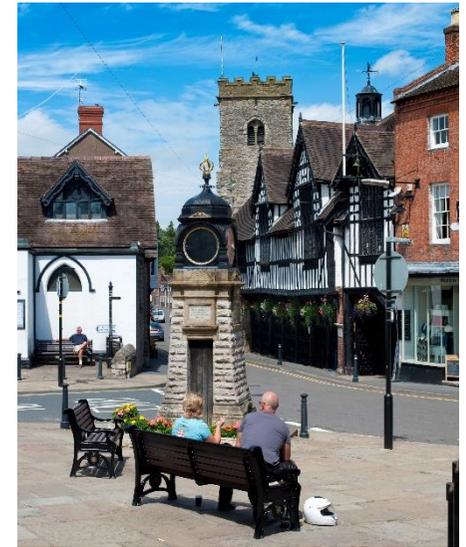
Tranquillity

Off the beaten track and remote in the context of this part of England, the Shropshire Hills are a haven of tranquillity – peace and quiet, dark skies and unspoilt views. Relatively low levels of noise and development are coupled with modest visitor numbers to create an unspoilt quality that is greatly valued.



Culture and Opportunities for Enjoyment

The Shropshire Hills span a wide spectrum of cultural settings. These range from the urban fringes of Telford and Ironbridge, through the rural setting of market towns just outside the AONB such as Ludlow, Craven Arms and Much Wenlock, to some of the most sparsely populated areas in England along the Welsh border. Church Stretton has a unique location in the heart of the hills and a strong Edwardian character. The Shropshire Hills have been a cultural inspiration for writers such as A E Housman, Mary Webb and Malcolm Saville. Opportunities for enjoyment and wellbeing are open to both locals and visitors for walks and outdoor activities respecting the area’s qualities. The AONB has some of the best rights of way networks in Shropshire, along with most of its open access land, plus a wide variety of sites, features and promoted routes.



2. What ONE thing do you most value about the Shropshire Hills?

Wild Valley Access Environment Dramatic Wilderness Hills
 Church Stretton Wildlife Freedom
 Peace and Quiet Heritage Walking
 Unspoiled Beauty Solitude Landscape Fact
 Natural Open Views Unspoilt Development Space Rural
 Place Tranquility

(Words used most often are shown larger)

(from public survey, June 2018)

Condition of the AONB and trends

Summary

The character and quality of the Shropshire Hills landscape continue to be of high importance. This character and quality are under increasing pressure, and the condition of some of the special qualities of the AONB is declining. Improvements resulting from much conservation activity, e.g. on Sites of Special Scientific Interest and through agri-environment schemes, are accompanied by some declines in biodiversity and failure to make meaningful progress with certain water quality and catchment management issues. Farming, especially in the uplands, is at an important crossroads as policy and funding regimes are changing significantly. Economic forces are increasing development pressure and reducing resources for positive management, leading to more deterioration of valuable features by neglect.

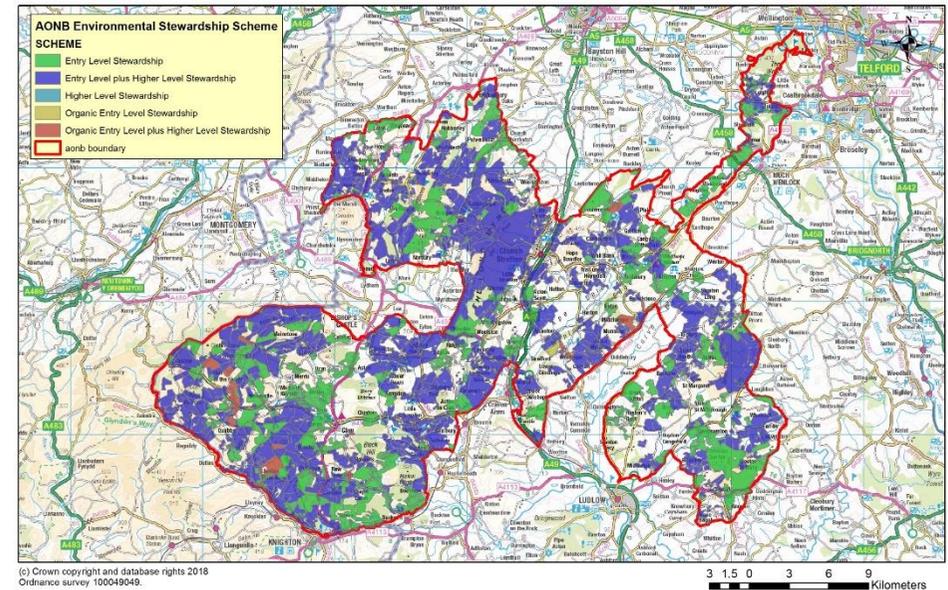
Policy

and considerable conservation activity continue to maintain the quality of the AONB's landscape and its features relatively well in a national context. Targeted gains in some areas are however offset by declines elsewhere, and the potential of the area to deliver even greater public benefits through ecosystem services is hampered by these trends.

Condition of key conservation sites (including biological SSSIs and Scheduled Ancient Monuments) has improved, due to targeted work by the agencies (Natural England and Historic England). However, valuable sites of lesser status (e.g. county wildlife sites) appear to be declining in condition [26].



Patterns in farming are continuing to polarise – with both smaller and larger holdings increasing in number, while middle-sized family farms are becoming less numerous [27]. Uncertainty over farming policy and funding is affecting farm business decisions and environmental activity. Uptake in the AONB of agri-environment schemes overall remains high, with over 75% of farmed land being in a scheme of some kind.



The uptake by land area of woodland grants is only half as high (38% of all woodland). Both agri-environment and woodland grants are showing slight increases in uptake since 2013, after having been declining. Levels of new woodland planting are however at a long-term low [28].

The health of the water environment is a real concern, with only 15% of river length classified as of 'Good Ecological Status', and no sections of river SSSI in either 'favourable' or 'recovering' condition [29]. This is despite considerable activity and investment, without which the situation would be worse, but indicating the deep-rooted nature of the issues. The Clun Catchment is one of a number of sites nationally included in a high profile current Judicial Review case about condition of the Special Area of Conservation (SAC). Siltation and raised nutrient levels in streams and rivers are a problem for some important species. These usually arise from diffuse sources and are associated with loss of valuable soils from both arable land and pasture (e.g. where land is poached or tracks are eroded). Aerial Nitrogen deposition is also harming important wildlife habitats.



Biodiversity shows a mixed picture, with continuing declines in flowering plants and invertebrates, especially outside designated conservation sites, and also some mammals such as hedgehogs. Concerted work on certain priority bird species (e.g. curlew, lapwing) has helped to stabilise declines, but numbers of some species are still critically low [30].



Much conservation work is carried out by organisations and individuals, but other land holdings are being worked harder, with a gradual loss of features and environmental quality. Building more effective and resilient ecological networks across the landscape is proving to be very challenging and progress is slow. The declines in wildlife also shift the baseline of people's perception of 'normal'.

Development pressure on the AONB has increased over the last 5-10 years [31]. Changes in policy have led to a significant increase in building of single houses and small groups. More worryingly, every single known case of proposed 'major development' in the AONB since 2012 (11 cases) has been recommended by

planning officers for approval. Not all of these developments have eventually gone ahead, but large poultry units, solar farms and large housing developments have all been contentious. Some developments also drive wider land use changes beyond the planning system. The large number of relatively minor development applications in the AONB have the potential cumulatively to affect its character. Current guidance is not really adequate on how these can be designed to assimilate them best into the landscape.



Recreational use of the countryside is increasing [32]. This is good for public engagement, and for the most part has little negative impact, but greater pressure is being felt on some key sites of conservation sensitivity, and further targeted effort is needed to manage this. The reductions in public sector spending are showing in visitor facilities, from rights of way maintenance to public toilets and visitor information.

Summary of achievements in the period of the last Management Plan 2014-19

- The Stiperstones & Corndon Hill Country Landscape Partnership Scheme [33] funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund ran from 2013 to 2018, and:
 - Improved management of 55ha of land including 20ha of hay meadows
 - Completed habitat restoration across six key sites
 - Engaged 324 primary age children and 299 from secondary schools
 - Awarded £60,000 awarded in 43 small grants
 - Involved 491 volunteers, contributing over £150,000 worth of effort
 - Invested £665,000 in 144 local companies, contractors and organisations
 - Completed 206 volunteer practical tasks, survey and fieldwork days
 - Ran 12-month traineeships for four local young people
 - Ran 129 public events involving at least 3,450 people
 - Improved management at eight built heritage sites
 - Delivered 47 traditional rural skills courses to 390 people
 - Trained 24 people in maintenance of traditional buildings
 - Interpreted ten heritage sites, and improved access to 11 sites
 - Developed eight new walking and cycling routes, including an all-ability trail at the Bog.
- Partnership project working in the Clun catchment has included the SITA & Natural England funded Freshwater Pearl Mussel project, the River Clun Recovery project [34] (funded by WREN and others) and the Environment Agency's 'Unmuddying the Waters' project.



- After a successful pilot focused on the Long Mynd, HLF funding has been secured for the national 'Our Common Cause' upland commons project, led by the Foundation for Common Land, which is now in the two year development phase [35].
- The Stepping Stones project focused on improving habitat networks in the Long Mynd and Stiperstones area has received high level support and some funding from the National Trust, for development as a long-term initiative.



- Community Wildlife Groups have continued to develop and new ones have been supported by the Landscape Partnership Scheme.
- Establishment of the Shropshire Hills AONB Trust in 2016 [36], and a successful programme of grants through the AONB Conservation Fund.

- Undergrounding of electricity cables, including at Clee Hill common.
- The Wrekin Forest Plan was renewed and the Wrekin Forest was defined as a 'Strategic Landscape' in Telford & Wrekin's Local Plan [37].
- Slow the Flow projects have been implemented in the Corve Dale and elsewhere.
- Development of Shropshire Hills Tourism, the Destination Partnership, the Sustainable Tourism Strategy and renewal of the European Charter [38].
- Continuation and improvement of the Shropshire Hills Shuttles [39].
- The Shropshire Hills Discovery Centre has made a successful transition to a social enterprise, Grow Cook Learn [40].



- Improvement of walking and cycling promotion, especially through launch of Shropshire's Great Outdoors website [41].
- Bishop's Castle Town Hall is now a community run Visitor Information Centre and multi-purpose community facility.
- Significant delivery of the John Muir Award with schools [42].



- Young Rangers schemes operated in the Stiperstones and Clee Hills areas, and young people took part in the international Young Ranger camp in 2017.
- 10 Walking for Health programmes in and around the AONB are involving 59 volunteers and 219 walkers [43].

- Community road verge projects are under way at Norbury and Edgton.
- Raised profile through celebration of the 60th anniversary of the AONB in 2018



The AONB Partnership has over a five year period:

- Brought in over £4.3 million of funding directly for the area
- Supported over 150 projects and many businesses with grants and advice
- Led valuable project work on river catchments, heritage, woodlands, meadows and uplands, as well as sustainable tourism and access
- Led around 270 events with more than 7,500 attendances.
- Led over 100 sessions with 33 different schools, with over 3,500 attendances and 224 John Muir Awards achieved.

KEY ISSUES

The following have been identified as the key issues for the new 2019–24 Plan:

- **The future of farming - new UK policy and funding for land management and the Shropshire Hills response**
- **How to achieve more, bigger, better and joined up wildlife habitats and resilient ecosystems**
- **Pressure for economic development and growth, and risks of loss of sustainability**
- **Better care for the historic environment, enhancing its potential to benefit society**
- **The need to gain support for public benefits from the landscape**
- **The changing public sector and increasing need to harness volunteer effort and funds**
- **Need to raise awareness of the AONB and of work to look after it**
- **Need for a stronger structure and robust governance for the AONB Organisation, and stable delivery for the AONB team**



POLICY FRAMEWORK

This main part of the Management Plan is presented in three sections, written as high level aims for the Plan:

- **Land management supporting natural beauty and landscape**
- **Planning for a sustainable economy and communities**
- **People enjoying and caring about the landscape**

Policies are defined where there is a particular need for clarity of position and to influence others. These are based on those in the previous Management Plan, but have been reorganised and updated, with some additions. Since the Management Plan is formally approved by the local authorities, these are policies of Shropshire Council and Telford & Wrekin Council, not merely those of the AONB Partnership. Policies related to planning are intended to complement and support formal planning policies in existing Plans, and are cross referenced. Some, however, relate to topics on which the local authorities do not have decision-making powers, and in these cases they are put forward to guide the decisions of others and responses to consultations.

Climate change is an overriding issue which affects all aspects of the Plan. The effects of climate change are increasingly being felt, with generally milder wetter winters and hotter drier summers but also an increase in variability and extreme weather events. The Management Plan supports activity to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through improving energy efficiency, appropriate forms of renewable energy, reducing car use, making better use of public transport and purchasing locally produced food and services. These are not likely to have any conflicting impacts on the AONB landscape. Other measures such as large scale renewable energy generation need to be balanced with landscape protection. Lowering carbon emissions must be integrated with other environmental challenges including water, sustainable food production, biodiversity, etc. Climate change adaptation is also a key driver for conservation, for management of land and for infrastructure [44]. Work needs to continue to increase resilience to changing conditions, which will put greater pressure on land use e.g. for more food production, but a long-term view is needed, to maintain the functioning ecosystems on which we depend.

Land management supporting landscape and natural beauty

Page 68



Photo: Philip King

Land management supporting landscape and natural beauty

Landscape is not static and the AONB designation does not seek to prevent change or turn back the clock. Change is inevitable, but can be beneficial or harmful, and the Management Plan seeks to influence the directions of change. The continuation of farming in ways that are sensitive and sympathetic to the landscape is vital to conserving the qualities that are valued in the AONB. However the balance is not optimal – habitats are fragmented, much of our biodiversity is in decline, and the water environment is far from ideal. Working with the natural characteristics and processes of the area offers a more holistic and sustainable model. We need our farming to be good for people and nature – providing a supply of good food, respecting and protecting the environment and natural resources, and providing a fair income.

Farming and land management remains key to the economy of the Shropshire Hills, employing more than a quarter of its residents, and providing a higher proportion of the jobs actually within the AONB [27]. Pasture-fed livestock is the main activity, with arable and dairying especially in the lower lying fringes of the area. Food production will remain an important objective in the AONB, but many other public benefits from land management also need to influence how this is carried out. The long-term capacity to continue producing food depends on looking after natural capital (such as soils, clean water and pollinators) as well as social capital (e.g. by promoting farm support networks, encouraging succession, and retaining and developing skills).

EU Exit brings opportunities in the development of new domestic agricultural policy and funding arrangements which could serve our countryside better. There are also uncertainties, such as regarding trade deals, especially for the sheep sector. Upland farming, with a higher dependence on income from government schemes, will be particularly affected by new schemes. This is all overlain on longer-term structural changes, such as the change in pattern of holding size and tenure, the increasing age of farmers and lack of succession.

Desired outcome: Effective land management is conserving and enhancing the special qualities of the AONB while sustaining livelihoods. Rural land managers are successfully adapting to national policy changes and implementing sustainable land management practices which reinforce the distinctive landscapes and natural capital assets of the Shropshire Hills.

Summary of landscape issues and priorities in the Shropshire Hills

Landscape feature	Threats	Opportunities	Priorities for action
Hills and common land	Marginality of upland farming, recreation pressure in places, climate change	New UK policies and funding schemes	Grazing to maintain open habitats in good condition, enhancing wetlands and woods
Farm woodlands and trees	Lack of management, Ash dieback and other diseases	Local demand for woodfuel	Advice and support for woodland management, significant new planting
Forests	Volatility of timber prices, larch disease	New UK policies and funding schemes	High standards of management for landscape, wildlife, water protection
Meadows, grasslands, road verges & old quarries	Small size, pressure to intensify use or neglect	New networks, e.g. Marches Meadows Group	Support and advice, funding, new projects
Enclosed pasture farmland	Uncertain drivers for livestock farming, diffuse pollution, soil compaction and loss	New UK policies and funding schemes	Sustainable stocking models, high standards of management, watercourse buffer strips, more tree planting
Arable farmland	Diffuse pollution, soil degradation and loss	New UK policies and funding schemes	Field margins, high standards of management, more tree planting
Rivers and streams	Diffuse pollution, poor water quality, siltation, non-native species	Funding for priority catchments	Watercourse buffer strips, sustainable drainage solutions
Archaeological features	Scrub and bracken, damage from pressure of livestock and visitors	Partner support for a new project	Advice, support volunteer activity
Historic buildings	Lack of funds, inappropriate works	Greater awareness	Advice
Footpaths and access routes	Lack of funding for maintenance, damage from extreme weather	Visitor giving and appeals	Support volunteer activity
Towns and villages	Loss of character from inappropriate development	Community led plans	Design guidance for housing

Natural capital and ecosystem services in the Shropshire Hills

Natural capital and ecosystem services have not been quantified specifically for the Shropshire Hills. However, a 2016 study for the Marches (Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin and Herefordshire) [45] calculated an estimate Natural Capital value of £14.8 billion and the annual flow of ecosystem services was valued at £358.1 million (underestimates due to partial data). The capitalised baseline value of those ecosystem services assessed for Shropshire was as follows:

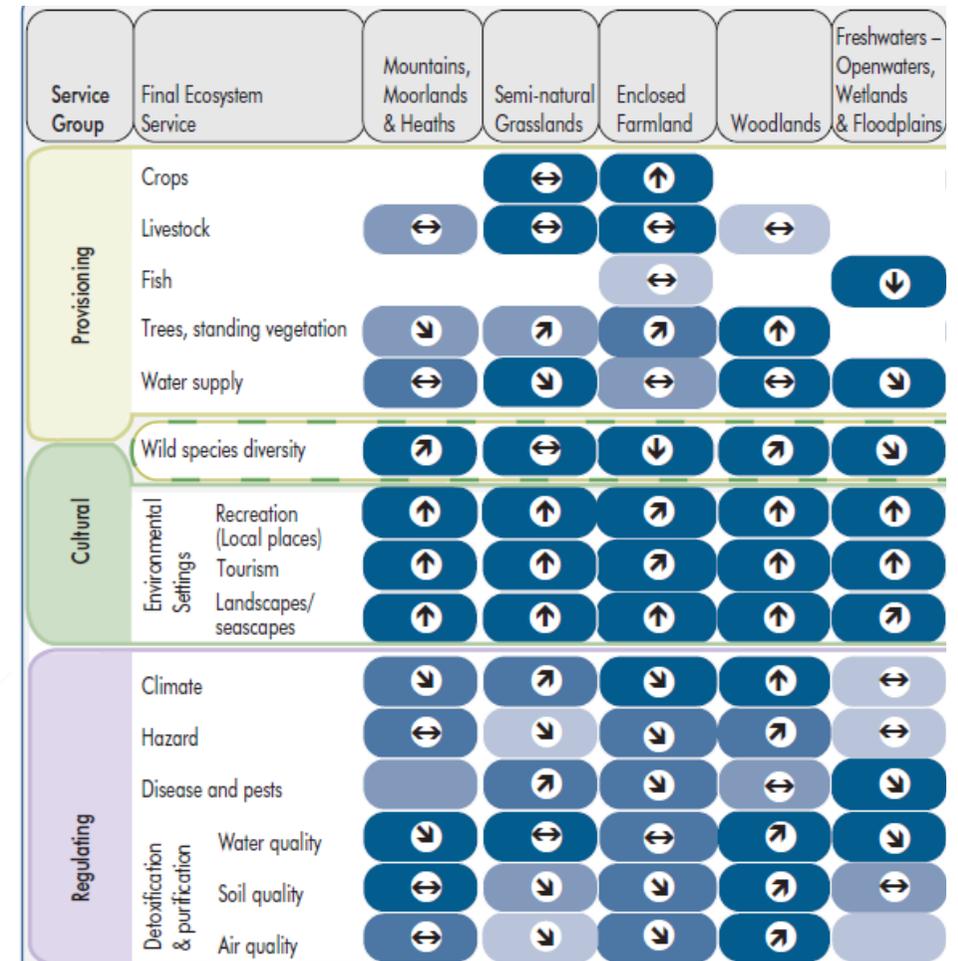
	Ecosystem service	Shropshire value (central est.)
Provisioning services	Food products	Not assessed
	Wild Food	£34m
	Non-food products	£42m
	Water supply	Data unavailable
Cultural services	Wild species diversity	£647m
	Recreation & aesthetic	£544m
	Health	£1,536m
	Productivity	£237m
Regulating services	Flood regulation	£915m
	Water quality regulation	£25m
	TOTAL	£3,981m

N.B. Capitalised value represents present value of ecosystem services provided over a time period of 25 years. The values are based on assessment of 171,878ha of higher quality habitat – figures for the whole county would be much larger. Many ecosystem services or elements of them could not be valued e.g. because of lacking evidence, therefore the figures understate the total value.

Natural capital specific to the AONB includes:

- Diverse geology including minerals and soils (including stored carbon)
- Farmed land - grazing and arable
- Woodlands providing timber and storing carbon
- Extensive upper catchment areas, especially of the Teme, providing natural flood management and supporting water supply and river base flow
- Rivers and streams, and clean air
- Biodiversity, including important habitats and species
- Rich cultural-historic landscape
- A beautiful and accessible place for recreation, relaxation and learning.

In the AONB the water environment gives the most cause for concern, and this is seen also in the table opposite of national trends in ecosystem services.



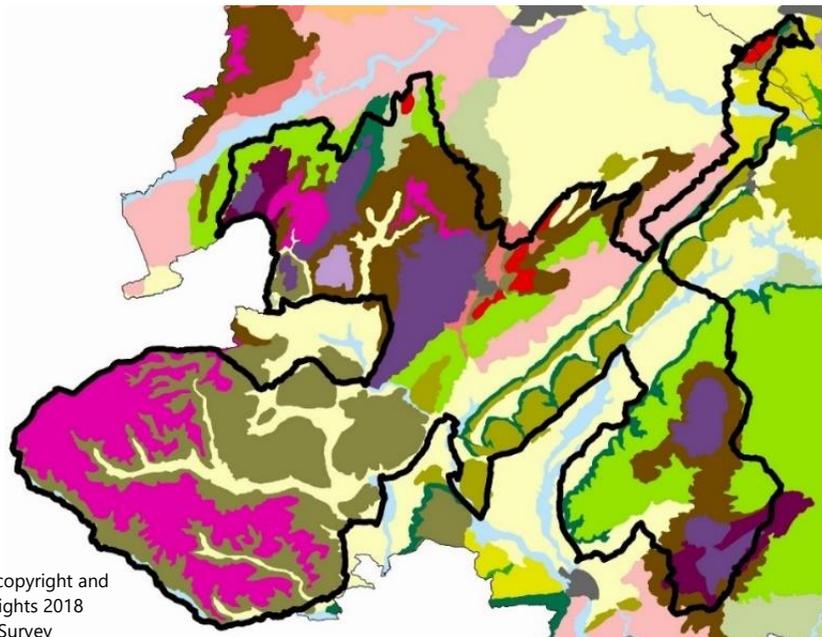
<p>Importance of Broad Habitat for delivering the ecosystem service</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ High ■ Medium - High ■ Medium - Low ■ Low 	<p>Direction of change in the flow of the service</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↑ Improving ↗ Some improvement ↔ Improvement and/or deterioration in different locations ↓ Some deterioration ↘ Deterioration 	<p>Relative Importance of Broad Habitats in Delivering Ecosystem Services and Overall Direction of Change in Service Flow Since 1990 in England [46]</p>
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Landscape character

Understanding what makes each landscape special helps to conserve and enhance their distinct character and sense of place whilst enabling them to adapt and support the needs of people and communities. The AONB contains 17 of the county's 27 landscape types [47]:

Grouping	Landscape Types	Found in the AONB at
Upland landscape types	High Open Moorland	Long Mynd, Stiperstones, Clee Hills
	High Enclosed Plateau	Clun Forest, Shelve
	Volcanic Hills and Slopes	Stretton Hills, The Wrekin
	Upland Smallholdings	around Clee Hill and Stapeley Hill
	Upstanding Enclosed Commons	Norbury Hill
Intermediate landscape types	Pasture Hills	Upper Onny, Clee Hills
	Principal Wooded Hills	Wenlock Edge, fringe of Clee plateau, Eastridge
	Wooded Hills and Farmlands	Clun & Teme catchments
	Wooded Hills and Estatelands	SE dip slope of Wenlock Edge
	Timbered Plateau Farmlands	Clee plateau, fringes of Stretton & Rea valleys
Lowland landscape types	Principal Timbered Farmlands	Haberley area
	Wooded Estatelands	Leighton, Sheinton, Buildwas
	Estate Farmlands	Corve Dale, Ape Dale
	Settled Pastoral Farmlands	Stretton Valley
	Principal Settled Farmlands	Ape Dale, Longnor
	Riverside Meadows	Teme, Clun, Onny and Corve
	Urban	Church Stretton

Page 71



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Ordnance Survey

Biodiversity and natural environment

The UK government has a legal commitment to reverse declines in biodiversity, and the Biodiversity 2020 Strategy [48] set out themes of a more integrated and large-scale approach, putting people at the heart of conserving biodiversity, reducing environmental pressures and improving our knowledge.

The Shropshire Hills AONB contains a high concentration of the county's priority habitats, and the strength of habitat networks is relatively high compared to some areas, though much reduced from the past. Based on Natural England's most recent inventory data, there are 147km² of priority habitats in the Shropshire Hills AONB, making up 18.4% of its area. Upland heathlands and grasslands are some of the largest areas of high quality habitat. Small meadows and grasslands are often without protection and especially vulnerable. Woodlands are slow to change and rather less vulnerable, but there is great potential both to improve their management and to expand tree cover through new woodland creation. Hedgerows are a vital element in the landscape, and good quality hedges can be excellent ecological corridors.

Desired outcomes:

- A resilient network of 'bigger, better and more joined up' habitats [49].
- No net losses of priority habitat, and better habitats in favourable or recovering condition.
- Halt and reverse declines in key wildlife species.
- More people engaged with biodiversity and taking positive action. [48]

The Shropshire Biodiversity Partnership has identified priority areas for landscape scale conservation. The Long Mynd – Stiperstones – Stretton Hills area has the strongest and largest habitat networks of any part of the AONB, and the Stepping Stones project is working in this area. In the Clun catchment, the water environment is a key consideration, and work throughout the catchment on a variety of habitats will benefit the rivers. The Clee Hills are the other significant area of upland in the AONB, but as yet there is no structure or project promoting landscape-scale action. Wenlock Edge is one of the longest continuous woodlands in England, linking to the woods of the Wrekin and the Severn valley. It is also highly valuable for geology and for limestone grassland.

Achieving a 'Nature Recovery Network' [2] [50] across the landscape depends in part on changes in land use on privately owned land. The resources currently available through existing mechanisms such as agri-environment schemes are not adequate to meet the aspirations, and progress has been relatively slow.

Soils

There has been significant activity by farmers through various projects related to soil health and conservation, which should be developed further. Catchment Sensitive Farming [51] has supported this, and other changes in agricultural practice have also had positive impacts. Vulnerability to erosion depends on soil type, slope, aspect and land use, and digital mapping is now a valuable tool.

Loamy and clayey soils with impeded drainage often supporting pasture are easily compacted when wet, and are prone to capping and slaking, increasing the risks of erosion, especially on steeper slopes. When wet, these soils are easily poached by livestock and compacted by machinery, and the risks of diffuse pollution and flooding are increased. More freely draining, loamy soils typically in arable cultivation are at risk of erosion on slopes where exposed or compacted. The sources of erosion should be tackled, along with slowing pathways and protecting watercourse receptors.

Desired outcomes:

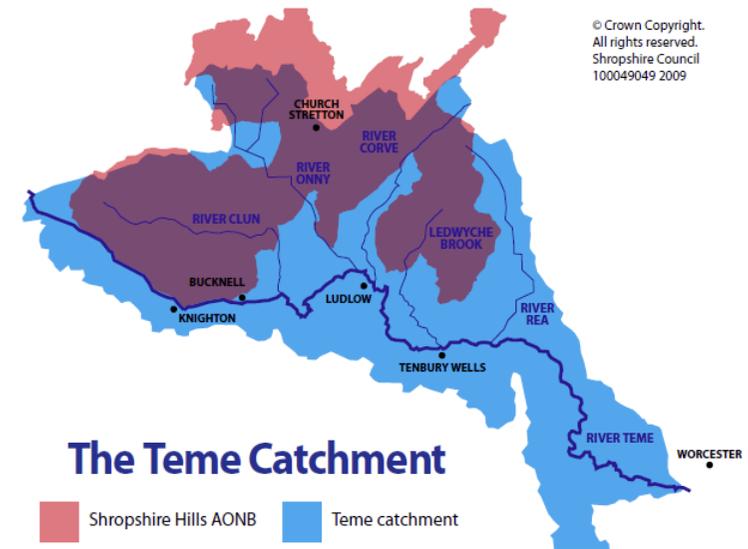
Minimise erosion and loss of soils. Maintain and enhance soil health, including organic, carbon and nutrient content.

Water Quality

Air in the AONB is relatively clean regarding human health. However, ammonia and aerial nitrogen deposition are significantly affecting habitats. Shropshire Council has issued guidance [52] on assessing the impact of ammonia and nitrogen on designated sites and natural assets from livestock units. This is because very high background levels of ammonia are found, with examples of sites already at c200% to 600% of their Critical Levels or Loads (i.e. levels above which species will be lost and habitats damaged). Also, recent case law has called into question how sources of pollution are considered 'in-combination'.

Water and catchment management

The AONB forms the majority of the headwaters of the Teme catchment, running into the Severn, as shown opposite. People well outside Shropshire are therefore affected by how land is managed for flood risk and water quality. Catchment management is an integrated approach with drivers including water quality legislation, the poor condition of river SSSIs and the need to reduce flood risk. The Catchment Sensitive Farming Initiative has worked in the AONB for many years. A particular focus for project work in Clun catchment is a site of European importance (SAC) for the freshwater pearl mussel and the need to improve water quality, riparian habitat quality, and reduce sedimentation.



There is still much misunderstanding about flooding, and some attempts to reduce flooding by removing obstacles and speeding up flow simply exacerbate flooding downstream. Natural Flood Management projects are putting in place measures high in the catchment to 'slow the flow'. Water can be held on taller vegetation e.g. heath, scrub and trees, in or on the ground in soils and wetland pools, on floodplains and actually within stream and river channels.

Improved management of nutrient inputs can reduce costs as well as benefit the environment. Manure Management Plans should be accompanied by assessment of soil nutrient status to inform manure spreading and other inputs.

Desired outcomes:

Greater water retention in the catchments to reduce flooding and prevent rivers drying up in periods of low rainfall.

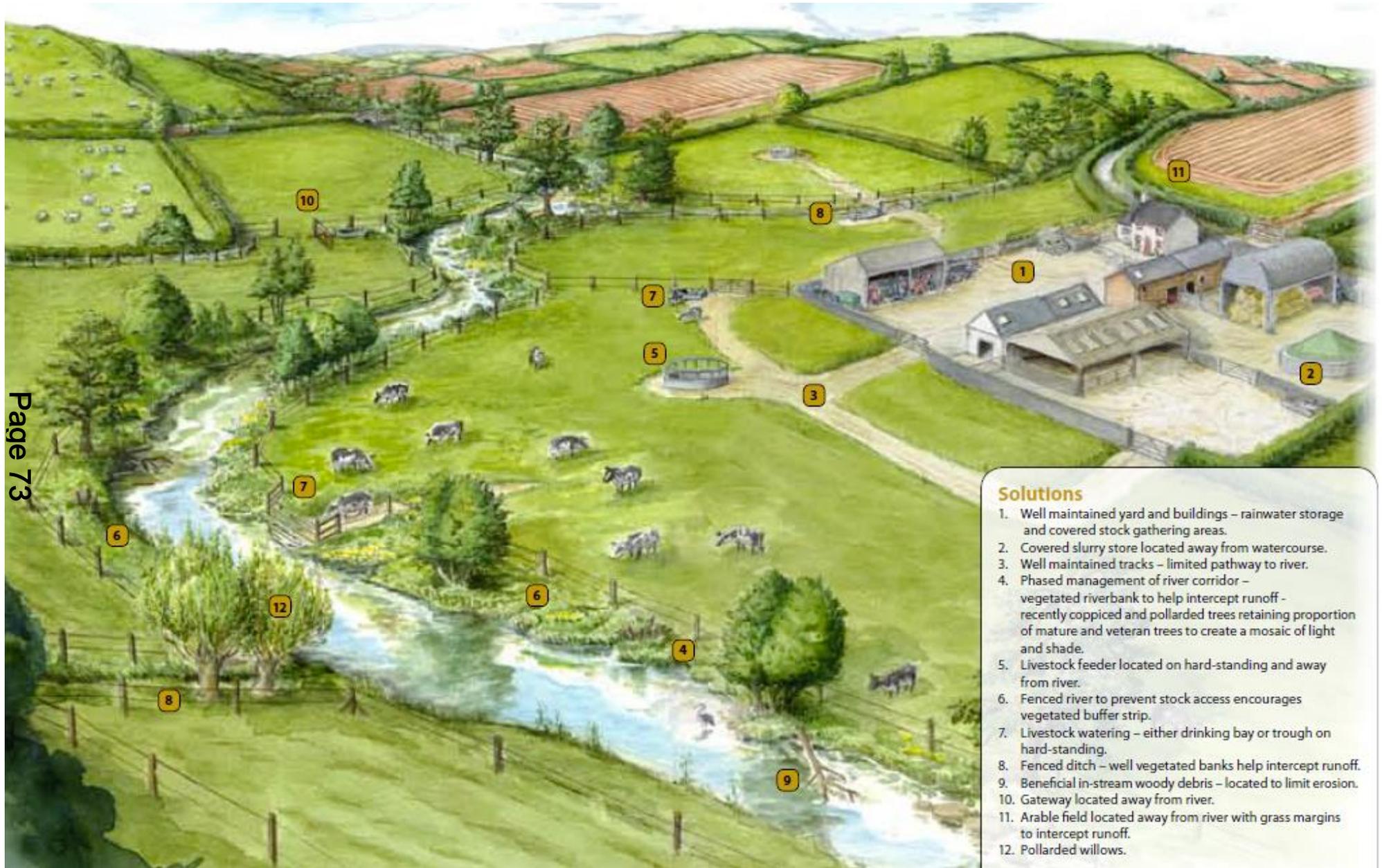
Reduced amounts of nutrient and silt in rivers.

Good habitat structure for biodiversity in rivers and along their banks.

Rivers free of artificial obstructions limiting the natural range of fish.

The unusually hot summer of 2018 has highlighted issues of drought and fire risk which may be encountered more frequently in the future. Wildfires are thankfully relatively uncommon in the area, but moorland areas are at risk. Drought has affected forage output for farmers and put pressure on wildlife habitats. Improved water storage capacity will help build resilience. [53]

Water Friendly Farming guidance (extract from the AONB Partnership's Teme Rivers Water Friendly Farming Good Practice Guide) [54]



Solutions

1. Well maintained yard and buildings – rainwater storage and covered stock gathering areas.
2. Covered slurry store located away from watercourse.
3. Well maintained tracks – limited pathway to river.
4. Phased management of river corridor – vegetated riverbank to help intercept runoff - recently coppiced and pollarded trees retaining proportion of mature and veteran trees to create a mosaic of light and shade.
5. Livestock feeder located on hard-standing and away from river.
6. Fenced river to prevent stock access encourages vegetated buffer strip.
7. Livestock watering – either drinking bay or trough on hard-standing.
8. Fenced ditch – well vegetated banks help intercept runoff.
9. Beneficial in-stream woody debris – located to limit erosion.
10. Gateway located away from river.
11. Arable field located away from river with grass margins to intercept runoff.
12. Pollarded willows.

Woodlands and Trees

Woodland covers 14% of the AONB, slightly above the national average. Over a third of this is ancient woodland, made up of 1,478ha of ancient semi-natural woodland and 2,689ha of Plantation on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS). Trees outside woodlands, individually or in small groups, are also very important in the landscape – from small, scrubby trees softening upland gullies, to majestic mature and veteran trees in fields and hedgerows.



Woodland and trees deliver a huge range of benefits – protecting soils, supporting wildlife and providing shade and shelter for stock, absorbing CO₂, slowing water flow to prevent flooding, supporting crop pollinators, as well as providing beauty and inspiration to people. Trees can also be harvested sustainably to provide timber and other products.

Our existing ancient woodlands and veteran trees are a natural treasure trove and often of great cultural significance. These best features need to be protected and carefully managed. Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS) retain aspects of the unique ancient woodland ecosystem and should be progressively restored to secure their unique characteristics, and move towards semi-natural cover. Commercial forest plantations should be managed to high environmental standards and sensitivity to the landscape, and can still be important for recreation, wildlife and water protection. Forest Design Plans are an important mechanism for discussion about management of the Public Forest Estate. There are many small woodlands on farms in the AONB which may not be of the best quality, but most can deliver more benefits for production, landscape and wildlife with some management, particularly when extended and linked throughout the landscape. Management of deer and grey squirrels is important to protect woodlands in some parts of the AONB.

More trees, of the right kinds in the right places, will enhance almost all of our landscape types, adding to their character and improving their ecological health. Because trees can also enhance hill land, rivers and farmland, increasing tree cover is possibly the single action with the most potential to increase the health of our landscape. Planting trees and farming can be complementary (e.g.

through agro-forestry and wood pasture) and need not be seen as competing land uses. The greatest ecological benefits will be derived from planting native species. Protection from browsing animals will usually be needed.

Our trees are under threat however - Ash Dieback or Chalara (caused by *Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*) is now found throughout the AONB, though its effects are only gradually becoming visible. We are likely to lose a large proportion of our ash trees over coming decades, as already seen in parts of eastern England. In the lime-rich areas such as around Wenlock Edge, this will have a significant landscape impact. Our response to managing diseases will also make a difference – while safety must be maintained, excessive felling could exacerbate the impacts and reduce the potential for resistant strains to survive and spread. Along with *Phytophthora* in Alders and Acute Oak Decline, tree diseases will result in degradation of our landscape, unless action is taken [55].

Desired outcomes:

All ancient woodland sites are in a UK Forestry Standard [56] management plan which is based on condition assessment and long-term resilience. Landowners are enabled to actively manage towards their objectives and ancient woods are managed to optimise biodiversity and to be sustainable.

Other existing woodlands are managed for a range of benefits and are resilient with a diverse species mix of trees.

Increase in woodland and tree cover, and widespread planting of new trees to offset losses from tree diseases. Tree and woodland are more integrated with farming and valued for their agricultural benefits.

Ancient trees are recorded and have appropriate management plans to retain their landscape and biodiversity benefits.

Where new trees should be planted:

- In field corners and hedgerows where individual trees and small groups of trees will enhance the landscape
- Along watercourses and in upland dingles, and where planting will buffer, extend or link woods, especially ancient woodland
- On land of lower agricultural value and no archaeological interest
- On land which is not valuable open habitat, e.g. species-rich grasslands, meadows, heathlands or wetlands, except in character with mosaic habitats
- To offset losses where any mature trees may have to be removed

Historic environment

The historic environment covers a wide range of heritage assets including buildings and features with statutory protection and those which are locally valued, and also the historic character of the wider landscape and settlements. The character of the landscape more generally, such as the small fields around squatter settlements and different enclosure patterns, has important cultural influences. The physical remains of people interacting with places over time also include features which are currently unrecorded or unknown.

The historic environment is a finite resource and is continuing to decline and be lost due to development, changes in land management and a lack of understanding and management. This is particularly true of the wider historic landscape and the less visible and undesignated sites which have no protection. Conserving heritage features involves understanding their significance and seeking to manage change to them [57]. There is a need to understand and promote the connectivity of historic sites and their settings as part of the wider landscape in order to effectively conserve and manage historic landscape character [58]. Historic and natural aspects of the environment are closely inter-related – for example hedgerows, veteran trees, parkland and ancient woodland.

In 2017, 14 of the Scheduled Ancient Monuments in the AONB were classified as 'At Risk', and 78 as 'Vulnerable'. Scrub and tree growth was the top vulnerability, followed by stock erosion [59].

Projects such as 'Helping Hillforts and Earthwork Castles' within the Landscape Partnership Scheme [60] have shown the potential to engage volunteers to help in the care of monuments. Partners are working to scale up and continue this approach across the AONB.

Offa's Dyke is the largest and most important single heritage feature in the AONB, with 17.5km in 14 fourteen sections protected as Scheduled Monument, comprising 19% of the total Scheduled length of Offa's Dyke. The Dyke is separated into condition sections and of the 26 of these in the AONB, not one is in favourable condition, and only 11% are improving [61]. A lack of active management, or 'benign neglect' accounts for the main threat types for the Dyke within the AONB – including erosion by livestock and growth of various sorts of vegetation.

A new Offa's Dyke Conservation Management Plan is being developed, led jointly by Historic England and Cadw (the Welsh government heritage agency).

Scrub and bracken growth is a major factor in poor condition of archaeological features, plus in a smaller number of cases damage by livestock or occasionally people. The significance of Offa's Dyke is heightened by its being an extensive, linear monument, where the pressures are disproportionate because of its scale. The scale of it also means the Dyke provides significant benefits to the local and wider communities.



Traditional skills are an important factor in maintenance of heritage. Acton Scott Historic Working Farm remains a valuable training centre, and courses were provided through the Stiperstones & Corndon Landscape Partnership Scheme, such as in care and maintenance of pre-1919 buildings.

Desired outcomes:

All Scheduled sites are in favourable condition and management.

A reduced number of sites are 'At Risk' and 'Vulnerable'.

Heritage is better understood and more people are actively involved in its care. The historic environment contributes to people's sense of place and belonging and to the economy.

Historic buildings are in sustainable and appropriate use where possible.

Helping farming to support natural beauty

Changes to agriculture policy bring opportunities for farming and conservation to align better over coming years. This will require dialogue and recognition of different interests, and this Plan aims to contribute to that process.

The uplands deliver especially high public benefits [62] and are also the place where farming and rural businesses are often the most marginal. The Shropshire Hills are recognised as of national importance for biodiversity and sense of place, and of regional importance for food production [63]. There is a particular need for land managers in the uplands to be supported financially for a range of public benefits in addition to food production, and gradually to shift perceptions of what the 'products' are. These need to include more aspects of natural capital such as landscape, wildlife, carbon storage, water, soil etc, which have previously been mostly 'by-products' of production-focused farming.

Farmers will want to evolve and modernise their businesses. If approached in the right way, the high quality environment of the AONB is an asset which can benefit farming rather than being a constraint. Sustainable modernisation using new methods and technology can be linked with environmental practices, such as in the 'Integrated Farm Management' model of LEAF (Linking Environment and Farming) [64]. There may be potential to do more to differentiate products with high environmental credentials (e.g. grass-fed beef), including through accessing local markets. Cutting costs through reductions in farm waste and energy will have multiple benefits. New schemes supporting productivity need to be compatible with environmental aims and schemes. More intensive and large-scale farm enterprises can have significant impacts on the landscape and natural environment. Exit from the EU may prompt more of these, but will also mean that farming increasingly needs to maintain public sympathy.

Farmers themselves will identify things on which support is needed – including succession and opportunities for new entrants, farmer clusters and networks, and specialist technical knowledge. Various projects using Farmers Dens (drop-in advice clinics), talks and farm visits have been successful. Regulation also has a role to play. Some targeted enforcement in the most significant cases can go a long way to creating a wide incentive for compliance. This can be welcomed by other farmers, who may see someone flouting rules as 'getting away with it', or giving the industry a bad name.

New Environmental Land Management Schemes

At the time of writing this Plan, preparations for EU Exit, government agriculture policy and plans for a new Environmental Land Management System are all developing fairly rapidly. The principle of public money for public goods has been established, and various tests and trials will be carried out. AONB Partnerships are likely to play an increased role, and the National Association and AONB Family will continue engaging actively with Defra on this [65]. New schemes will be one of the most important mechanisms to conserve and enhance natural beauty. The high previous uptake of agri-environment schemes in the Shropshire Hills, and experience with the Stewardship Facilitation Fund, are a good foundation on which to build. More recently, uptake has been coming down due to lower attractiveness and complexity of the newer schemes, as well as uncertainty about the future. The area however has great potential to demonstrate and meet the objectives of emerging government policy on land management.

The following principles should underpin new schemes:

- Sustainable land management
- Conserving and enhancing natural capital, ensuring flows of ecosystem services are maintained and protected
- Mitigating the impact of climate change
- Locally devised targeting statements should link clearly to AONB Management Plan objectives
- Whole farm plans should seek to integrate business planning with environment and conservation planning
- Integrating delivery at the local level for simpler, cheaper, more effective schemes
- Co-ordination measures to minimise cross-border issues with Wales, which may result in different arrangements for different parts of the same farm.

An agricultural transition period up to 2024 has been defined, so the period of this Management Plan will be when these schemes are developed. Detailed commentary on how new schemes may work is likely to be quickly overtaken, but the current Management Plan has a role to play in clarifying some of the priority outcomes for the Shropshire Hills which new schemes might deliver (see outline priority outcomes in Appendix 2).



Integrated area projects

In addition to government schemes, area-focused projects have been very successful in the Shropshire Hills and other places. Engaging with people is fundamental to the success of these projects [66]. Two in particular will be significant in delivering aims of this Plan over the next five years:

The Stepping Stones project [67] is a long-term initiative focussed on the Long Mynd - Stiperstones area, led by the National Trust with partners. Its aims are:

1. **Better nature reserves:** providing greater resilience for the 'core areas'
2. **Bigger nature reserves:** buffering and enlarging habitats for greater resilience
3. **Joined up habitats:** creating and enhancing corridors and 'stepping stones' to help species move and adapt, and ensure natural processes function effectively
4. **Vibrant wildlife:** reversing declines to recover special wildlife species
5. **People looking after the land:** conserving the landscape through land use
6. **People being inspired:** supporting people's enjoyment, understanding and participation, contributing to their health and wellbeing.

Our Common Cause: Upland Commons project [35]

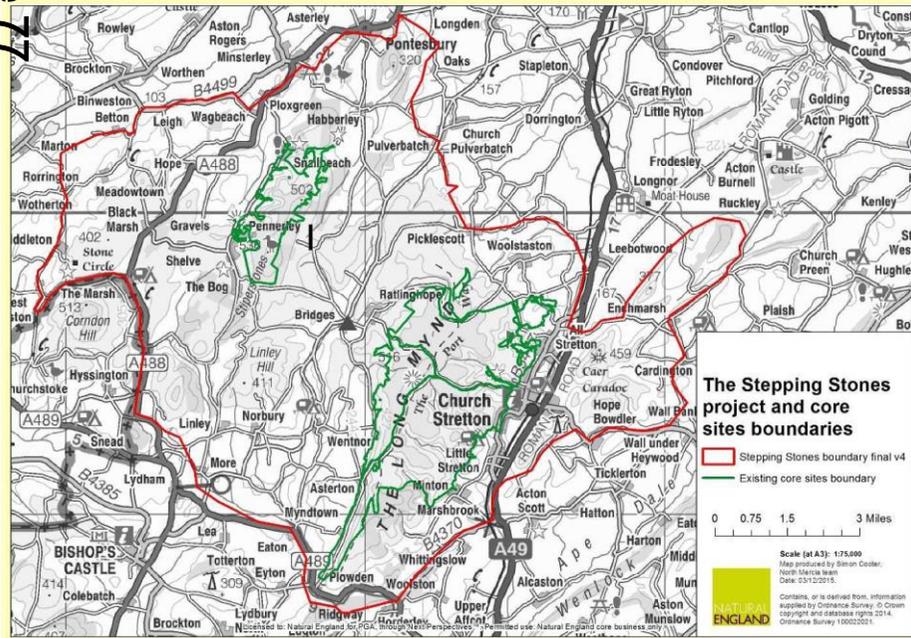
Common land managed by traditional husbandry systems has a centuries-old heritage and delivers many public benefits. This project is working in Dartmoor, the Lake District, Shropshire Hills and Yorkshire Dales, to improve public benefits from common land through:

- Enabling collaborative management
- Reconnecting people with commons

Activities will include collectively building skills, trialling practical conservation, and through learning and volunteering, celebrate heritage and enhance environmental assets. A 20 month development phase is running during 2018 and 2019 funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund. Subject to further successful funding bids, this will be followed by a three year delivery phase.

Our Common Cause: Our Upland Commons

Creating Bridges of Learning and Action to Secure at Risk Heritage Across England



POLICY LM1 - Land Management Supporting Landscape and Natural Beauty

i) Habitats and Networks

Existing areas of high quality habitat should be retained, and networks developed of higher quality habitat through targeted improvements by agreement on privately owned land, by all available mechanisms.

ii) Climate Change Adaptation

Pro-active adaptation to climate change, focusing on natural processes and wildlife, is essential to retaining the natural beauty of the AONB and must be given a high priority.

iii) Regulating Organisations

Organisations which regulate designated sites and features, environmental quality and amenity should make full use of available measures to ensure the highest standards appropriate to a nationally protected landscape are achieved in the AONB. A supportive and awareness-raising approach should be used wherever possible, but mechanisms for legal enforcement should be employed where necessary. Known blackspots and problems should be targeted, while consideration should be given to the secondary AONB purposes of having regard for the needs of rural industries and local communities, and promoting sustainable development.

iv) New Environmental Land Management Schemes

The Shropshire Hills should be a priority area for new environmental land management funding, and farmers should be actively encouraged to utilise options that will best contribute to the AONB Management Plan's aims.

v) Rivers, catchments and water

Management of water resources should be given a high priority, including water quality and quantity, habitats and species. Integrated catchment management approaches are supported.

vi) Woodlands and trees

Broadleaved woodland comprising native species should be expanded, with restoration prioritised on Plantation on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS) and Plantation on Wood Pasture (PWP).

Where felling is taking place, opportunities should be sought to improve design and landscape sensitivity of plantations. Reversion to open habitat should be targeted to locations where landscape benefits and the potential for high value habitats such as heathland are greatest. Any new or replacement planting should follow the highest standards of design guidelines in relation to landscape and amenity, nature and heritage conservation and resource protection.

Planting of new trees outside woodlands should be a high priority, to combat the effects of tree diseases.

Disincentives to tree planting within agricultural funding regimes should be removed wherever possible.

vii) Heritage

The conservation and enhancement of the area's historic environment and heritage assets is a high priority and all activities should seek to enhance or better reveal their significance as well as promote their wider understanding and enjoyment.

viii) Land Management

Farmers and land managers are the main stewards of the landscape, and their actions which help maintain natural beauty and the special qualities of the AONB should be supported. Solutions which enable environmentally, economically and socially sustainable farm businesses should be supported.



Actions – Land Management Supporting Landscape and Natural Beauty

Action	Type	Lead & partners	Priority
Work with Defra, NAAONB and local partners to ensure new Environmental Land Management Schemes deliver Management Plan priorities in the AONB	New action	AONB, NE, NT, SWT, NFU, CLA	High
Develop further web-based guidance material for land managers – about landscape features and about utilising environmental assets sustainably	Aspiration	AONB	High
Implement 'Our Common Cause' upland commons project with local and national partners (subject to delivery phase approval)	In progress	AONB, FCL, NT, NE	High
Develop the Stepping Stones project into long-term delivery initiative for the Long Mynd – Stiperstones area.	In progress	NT, AONB, NE, SWT	High
Continue to improve habitat and water quality in the River Clun for Freshwater Pearl mussel	Ongoing	AONB, EA, NE, SRT	High
Co-ordinate catchment management through the Teme Partnership and Clun Catchment Partnership	Ongoing	SRT, AONB & partners	
Work with landowners through the Water Environment Grant (subject to funding approval)	New action	AONB, SRT	
Establish a large programme of planting of trees outside woodlands, partly to help offset losses from Ash dieback disease	New action	AONB, WT & partners	High
Support well planned woodland creation to enhance landscape, biodiversity and resource protection	Ongoing	FC, WT	
Develop an Upper Teme project – including expanding tree and woodland cover and enhancing the river SSSI	Aspiration	AONB, NE, SRT, EA, NRW	

Action	Type	Lead & partners	Priority
Develop a 'Monumental Volunteers' project for management of historic sites	New action	AONB, HE	High
Work with landowners on restorative management of Plantations on Ancient Woodland sites (PAWS)	New action	AONB, WT, FC	
Develop a social forestry project with funded officer capacity, and a hub linking service providers and users	Aspiration	AONB and partners	
Support management of trees and woodlands along with natural flood management in the Wenlock Edge area, and look at potential for an integrated area project	New action	NT, SWT, AONB, NE, FC	
Support actions to manage hay meadows, species-rich grassland	Ongoing	AONB, SWT, NE	
Expand and support community projects managing road verges for biodiversity	Ongoing	AONB, SWT, SC	
Support continued understanding of the geology of the AONB and the conservation and management of geological and geomorphological sites	Ongoing	SGS, NE, AONB	
Promote training for land management and conservation, and seek to address gaps in provision where identified	Ongoing	AONB, NE, NT, HE	
Work with landowners regarding management of county Wildlife Sites	Ongoing	SWT	
Seek opportunities to improve co-ordination of farm and conservation advice, and address gaps if possible	Ongoing	NE, AONB, SWT	
Continue network of Shropshire Hills Uplands Forum linking with national Uplands Alliance	Ongoing	AONB and partners	
Collate environmental data relevant to the AONB	Ongoing	AONB, NE, SC	

Organisation names and initials are explained on page 64

Planning for a sustainable economy and communities



Planning for a sustainable economy and communities

The Rural Coalition in 2010 described sustainable rural communities - *“in which people enjoy living and working; which are vibrant, distinctive and in keeping with the character of their surroundings, with a full range of good-quality local services; and which enhance local landscapes, heritage and biodiversity while meeting the challenges of climate and economic change.”* [68]

The Shropshire Hills AONB is 23% of Shropshire by area but contains only 6% of the county’s population. Its economy is therefore different from much of the county, with more small, dispersed rural businesses. Although agriculture is the largest land use, tourism is actually larger economically [69].

The special qualities of the AONB’s landscape underpins the area’s economy [70]. Development which draws on these qualities without harming them is sustainable, while activities which undermine the area’s natural capital will have a long-term detrimental effect on the economy. The planning system is the main mechanism for protection of an AONB, and planning policy and decisions should give the designation due recognition.

The AONB designation is not about preventing change, and a large majority of planning applications in the AONB are granted. Appropriate development is necessary for the economic and social wellbeing of those who work and live in the AONB. However, it is important for the planning system to protect the qualities which people value about the area, and some forms of development which may be appropriate elsewhere should be controlled in the AONB.

Lowering carbon emissions from the area is an over-riding priority which should influence all areas of decision making, but should not be seen in isolation.

Energy conservation should be given the highest priority, and should always accompany renewable energy generation. Low carbon community initiatives are supported. In addition to carbon from energy use, the ability of land management to reduce carbon emissions should be optimised. Integration of energy efficiency and renewable energy should be encouraged in all development – new or refurbishment - of any scale, having regard where necessary to the significance of heritage assets.

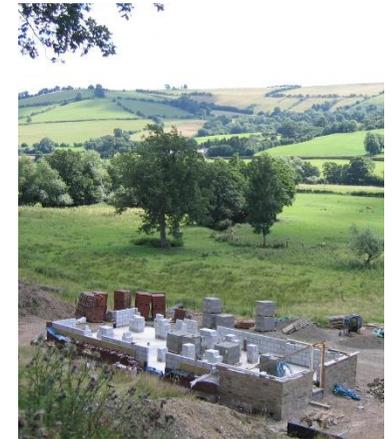
Sustainable development at a high level is summarised as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet

their own needs. It is also described in terms of balancing economic, social and environmental objectives, and this balance is at the heart of planning decisions.

Judgements on whether a particular development is sustainable are not always clear-cut, and the contradictions and trade-offs are always subject to negotiation. Different people will inevitably have different views on the priority factors, and, where conflicts are highlighted, choices have to be made. However, the decision-making process should ensure these choices are explicit, making negotiation of different outcomes possible.

There are too many examples of where the balance has not favoured the AONB landscape. A presumption ‘in favour of sustainable development’ [71] is not simply a presumption in favour of development. There are features of natural capital that distinguish it from other forms of capital – including its basic life-support functions, its necessity for food production, and often the irreversibility of its destruction. Taking this into account does not mean putting the environment before the economy - the long-term requirements of the economy can also be compromised by poor development, and require environmental resources to be looked after. In practice this means:

- not depleting natural capital and assets
- net biodiversity gain
- integration and acknowledgement of economic, environmental, and social concerns throughout the decision-making process.



Planning and AONBs – national policy and context

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty enjoy the same levels of protection from development as those of UK National Parks [71]. Responsibility for local planning policy and decisions in AONBs lies with the relevant local authority (in National Parks it lies with the National Park Authority).

While AONB Management Plans themselves do not form part of a local development plan they are a ‘material consideration’ in the determination of planning applications. They set out the special qualities which contribute to the natural beauty of the AONB landscape, and provide policy and guidance.

National Planning Policy Framework

The NPPF was revised in 2018 [71] and former paragraphs 115 and 116 relating to AONBs were reworded and amalgamated into a new paragraph 172. The importance of this policy to the AONB justifies its inclusion here in full:

172. Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. The conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations in these areas, and should be given great weight in National Parks and the Broads. The scale and extent of development within these designated areas should be limited. Planning permission should be refused for major development other than in exceptional circumstances, and where it can be demonstrated that the development is in the public interest. Consideration of such applications should include an assessment of:*

- a) the need for the development, including in terms of any national considerations, and the impact of permitting it, or refusing it, upon the local economy;*
- b) the cost of, and scope for, developing outside the designated area, or meeting the need for it in some other way; and*
- c) any detrimental effect on the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities, and the extent to which that could be moderated.*

** For the purposes of paragraphs 172 and 173, whether a proposal is 'major development' is a matter for the decision maker, taking into account its nature, scale and setting, and whether it could have a significant adverse impact on the purposes for which the area has been designated or defined.*

The presumption in favour of sustainable development and its footnote relevant to AONBs have been amended, and is now para 11 of the revised NPPF:

11. Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development.

For plan-making this means that:

- a) plans should positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of their area, and be sufficiently flexible to adapt to rapid change;*
- b) strategic policies should, as a minimum, provide for objectively assessed needs for housing and other uses, as well as any needs that cannot be met within neighbouring areas, unless:*

- i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for restricting the overall scale, type or distribution of development in the plan area⁶; or*
- ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.*

For decision-taking this means:

- c) approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or*
- d) where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:*
 - i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed⁶; or*
 - ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.*

Footnote 6. The policies referred to are those in this Framework (rather than those in development plans) relating to: habitats sites (and those sites listed in paragraph 176) and/or designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest; land designated as Green Belt, Local Green Space, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, a National Park (or within the Broads Authority) or defined as Heritage Coast; irreplaceable habitats; designated heritage assets (and other heritage assets of archaeological interest referred to in footnote 63); and areas at risk of flooding or coastal change.



Shropshire Council Local Plan

Shropshire's Local Plan is a collection of documents which consider a wide range of important planning issues such as housing, employment, retail, the environment, and transport. Two of the key policy documents are:

- Core Strategy - adopted 24 February 2011 [72]
- Site Allocations and Management of Development (SAMDev) Adopted Plan – adopted 17 December 2015 [73]

Policies CS5 and CS17 in the Core Strategy and Policy MD12 in SAMDev are the key policies relevant to protecting the AONB.

From 2016-17 Shropshire Council has been carrying out a partial review of the Local Plan. An Issues and Strategic Options consultation looked at housing requirement, strategic distribution of future growth, strategies for employment growth and delivering development in rural settlements. A further consultation on the Preferred Scale and Distribution of Development ran in the autumn of 2017 and the consultation on preferred sites is November 2018 to January 2019.

Telford & Wrekin Local Plan

Following Examination and an Inspector's report, Telford & Wrekin's Local Plan 2011-2031 was adopted in January 2018 [74].

An important supporting document is the Strategic Landscapes Study [75] provides an analysis of three Strategic Landscapes in the Borough (including the Wrekin Forest partly within the AONB). The study identified the landscape characteristics and sensitivities of each area and the broad parameters and nature of change which are compatible with their conservation.



Neighbouring authorities

Developments in Herefordshire and Powys may be immediately adjacent to the AONB, and decisions on these need to take into account potential impacts on the AONB and its setting.

Protecting and enhancing the AONB and its special qualities

The planning system is the most significant way in which the AONB is actually protected. The AONB should not only be considered in relation to visual aspects but for the full range of its special qualities. The 'detail' within the landscape of biodiversity and heritage value is an intrinsic part of natural beauty, as are the ways in which people enjoy and value the area.

Tranquillity has a positive influence on people's physical and psychological wellbeing and contributes to the rural economy by attracting visitors to the area. Dark skies due to low levels of light pollution are valued across the area, and four locations across the Long Mynd have been designated as Dark Sky Discovery Sites.

The role of planning in relation to the AONB is not all about stopping things happening – planning can also drive enhancement of the AONB. All Local Plan documents, Neighbourhood Planning, and planning decision-making processes should identify opportunities to achieve a biodiversity and wider environmental net gain from development. Such gains are valuable locally and make important contributions towards national priorities for nature conservation.

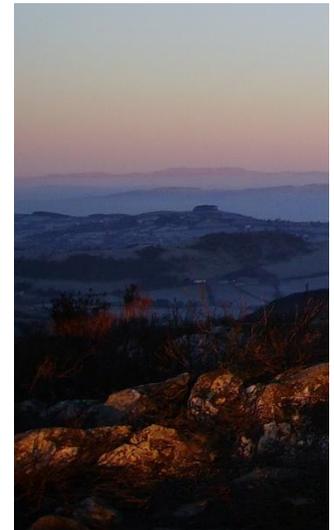
Opportunities could include any of the following:

- Including, protecting or enhancing green infrastructure
- Connectivity of sites and species
- Biodiversity offsetting
- Future management of, and access to, sites or wider countryside
- Use of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding

'Integrity' and 'authenticity' are concepts central to all aspects of heritage protection, being recognised by UNESCO and enshrined in international conventions to which the UK is a signatory.

- integrity: wholeness, honesty
- authenticity: those characteristics that most truthfully reflect and embody the cultural heritage values of a place. [57]

Protection and conservation of the AONB should therefore take account of the integrity of the whole area, not just specific locations, attributes, or features, and also the authenticity represented in the full range of the AONB's special qualities.



Major development

Within AONBs the definition of major development is at the discretion of the decision maker [71]. In some cases, thresholds lower than the normal NPPF definitions may be appropriate, and the Plan defines here some criteria to guide judgements of whether a development affecting the AONB is major:

1. Where development is more than local in its character and significance, and has the potential to have long-term impacts on the landscape, wildlife or cultural heritage of the AONB;
2. Where the scale and location of development (either within the AONB or in its setting) is likely to erode the special qualities of the AONB and/or features of the area where the development is proposed;
3. Where the type of development is not directly compatible with its surroundings; and/or
4. Where the development would conflict with the economic and social needs of local communities and the guiding principle of sustainable development.

Any proposal affecting the AONB deemed to be major development should be accompanied by a report identifying how the special qualities of the AONB are fully respected, and integrated into the planning, design, implementation and management of the development. Any potential detrimental impacts should be identified (relating to the special qualities of the AONB as a whole, as well as those specific to the development site – see Appendix 3 for guidance). Any mitigation identified to moderate these impacts should be:

- clearly detailed, in line with the duty to conserve and enhance the AONB,
- be compatible with the objectives of the AONB Management Plan, and
- be capable of realisation through robust planning conditions or obligation.

POLICY P1 - Protection of the AONB

i) In line with national and local authority planning policies, the AONB has the highest standards of protection for landscape and natural beauty, and the purposes of designation should be given great weight in planning decisions, also taking into account the statutory AONB Management Plan.

ii) Full consideration should be given to the purposes of designation in all decisions affecting the AONB and should reflect sustainability and the full range of special qualities defined in the Management Plan as well as landscape character, views and visual amenity. Exceptionally where a

significant adverse impact associated with development cannot be avoided, appropriate mitigation or compensation measures including habitat creation or community benefits, should be sought.

iii) Tranquillity should be taken fully into account in both strategic and specific decisions. Proposals having a significant impact on tranquillity in the AONB should be prevented where possible. Expansion of airports or alterations to flight path corridors which increase the volume or impacts of air traffic over the AONB should not be allowed.

iv) Small scale quarrying to supply local materials for repairing traditional buildings and structures is supported, subject to careful consideration of environmental factors, including the conservation value of former quarries where these may be reopened.

v) In line with Shropshire Council policy MD8 on infrastructure, opportunities created by technological advances should be sought to remove or reduce the prominence of hilltop telecommunications structures, while still improving services. New overhead cables should be avoided where possible, with emphasis given to undergrounding or off-grid options.

vi) Even with small structures not requiring planning permission, care should be taken to avoid loss of wildness. On many hills and in more secluded valleys, especially where there are few man-made objects, this will mean a preference for no structures at all. In cases where structures are essential, their location and design may need to be modified to reduce the impact on wildness.

vii) Water environment. Development should avoid adverse effects on rivers or streams such as channel alteration or siltation during construction phase, and any ongoing impacts such as increased nutrient run-off or silting due to effects of increased traffic on minor roads. Sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) should be used to aid water quality and slow the speed of water run-off to lessen flooding. Other wetland features such as ponds, marshes and flushes should not be harmed by development.

viii) Setting of the AONB. Development in the area around the AONB should be assessed for its impacts on the special qualities of the AONB itself, and also take account of the special qualities and landscape quality of the setting of the AONB. Measures to consider and mitigate such impacts should include

where required Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments; care over orientation, site layout, height and scale of structures and buildings; consideration of the landscape, land uses and heritage assets around and beyond the development site; careful use of colours, materials and non-reflective surfaces; restraint and care in the use of lighting.

[This policy links with current Shropshire Council Core Strategy policies CS5 Countryside and Green Belt, CS17 Environmental Networks and SAMDev Policy MD12 Natural Environment].

Landscape

Planning has an important role in both protecting landscape and supporting positive change in the landscape. The impact of development on key features of the landscape character should be assessed and where adverse impacts are found to occur, modifications or mitigation measures should be required to remove or reduce the impact of any development. Development which would have a significant effect on landscape character, quality or features should be refused or may be required to have conditions imposed.

New landscaping may compensate for loss or degradation of landscape features, but this should not be an easy way of avoiding good design adapted to retain existing features. New planting for example cannot compensate for loss of mature trees or hedges. The use of fast-growing conifers to screen a development for example can in itself create an intrusive feature. If a development is proposing major earthworks to create screening bunds, these also are a major permanent effect on the landscape and in these cases a smaller scale or alternative location for the development should be considered.

Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment is an important part of Environmental Impact Assessment for more significant planning applications. The two aspects of landscape and visual impact are often wrongly conflated, and both need to be considered.

“Landscape impact assessment, in common with any assessment of environmental effects, includes a combination of objective and subjective judgements, and it is therefore important that a structured and consistent approach is used. ... Landscape and visual impacts are separate, although linked procedures. Landscape effects derive from changes in the physical landscape, which may give rise to changes in its character and how this is

experienced. Visual effects relate to the changes that arise in the composition of available views as a result of changes to the landscape, to people’s responses to the changes, and to the overall effects with respect to visual amenity.”

From Guidelines for Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment 3rd Edition [76]

The weighting of landscape impacts will often come down to fine judgements within the detailed process of Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, which in our planning system are made by people employed by developers to help secure permissions. Decision-makers and objectors are often not well enough informed to challenge professional judgements buried deep within this detailed process. Some approaches observed within this process can lead to conclusions which significantly underplay significance to the landscape of a given proposal, and the resulting conclusions should be treated with caution. These include:

- Describing the landscape of the location as of lower sensitivity, even within an AONB
- Weighting highly some mitigation measures such as new tree planting as ‘enhancements’ to the landscape, sometimes even to the point of describing new developments of large buildings as ‘positive’ for the landscape overall
- Combining slight downgrades of both impact and sensitivity in the matrix process which leads to a much-reduced assessment of significance overall
- Failing to acknowledge that large scale earthworks seeking to reduce visual impact also have a large physical impact on the landscape and its character
- Failing to recognise the often inter-connected impacts on landscape character, heritage, biodiversity and amenity by dealing with topics separately and in isolation.

In support of the Management Plan, a Landscape Guidance document is being developed derived from the Landscape Character Assessment. This will provide further detail on the location, design and landscaping of developments and when available should be taken into account in planning decisions. The AONB website also has other sources of guidance [77].

The surroundings and setting of the AONB are important to its landscape and scenic beauty. Views out of the AONB and into it from surrounding areas are a significant consideration.



Good practice for landscaping of new developments would include:

- Careful location, form and design of development (simple ‘screening’ of poorly considered development is not a substitute for good design, taking into account the character of the local landscape)
- Good landscaping plans which can be understood and commented upon
- Adopting sustainability principles such as use of local materials, low energy consumption, water conservation, decreasing run-off, etc
- Retaining and incorporating existing landscape features, including mature trees, old boundary features such as walls and hedges
- Landscaping which reflects the rural character of the location
- Minimising use of earth bunding with un-natural form
- Avoidance of industrial style fencing and especially fencing on top of banks
- Use of appropriate materials in hard landscaping reflecting rural character, including suitable timber, stone and appropriate bricks where used
- Well-designed mixed planting of trees and shrubs suitable for the soil type and location. Tree and shrub planting should be predominantly native especially in open countryside locations, but non-native species in character with the area are also acceptable close to clusters of domestic buildings. Native species common in the area include pedunculate and sessile oak, birch, alder, hazel, holly, field maple and various species of willow. Seek advice and see what grows near your site. Avoid conifers such as Leylandii.
- Grasslands of higher species diversity, which will often thrive on poorer soils
- Good maintenance of tree and shrub planting to ensure establishment and growth, including weed control and mulching, protection from browsing animals, and replacement planting where necessary

Page 86

POLICY P2 - Landscape

i) Priority should be given to protecting key features of the landscape. Where possible, existing features such as hedges, watercourses, trees and ponds should be incorporated into site design. Landscaping measures and creation of new features can enhance a development, but these must be appropriate to the location. Changes should only be pursued that are appropriate to each landscape type and features and characteristics that are locally distinctive.

[This policy links with current Shropshire Council SAMDev Policy MD12 Natural Environment].

Heritage

Planning will most often need to take account of heritage in relation to particular heritage assets such as buildings or archaeological features. These may be significant for their archaeological, architectural, artistic, historic or other values, even if not individually designated. Chapter 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework [71] sets out an over-arching principle of avoidance of harm to the significance of heritage assets, including their setting. Where harm cannot be avoided, there is a need to take account of the degree of harm to their significance, and implement mitigation measures to reduce this harm. It is important to remember that not all heritage assets are recorded and known, and the potential archaeological interest of sites should also be assessed. Cumulative impacts to heritage may arise from development, over time or simultaneously, and should also be considered.

Development proposals affecting the historic environment are much more likely to succeed if they are designed with understanding of the significance of the heritage assets they may affect. The significance of a heritage asset is the sum of its archaeological, architectural, historic, and artistic interest. Applicants and decision makers should seek advice and appropriate expertise [78] [79].

The historic environment plays an important role in sustainable development, and contributes to delivering social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits. The heritage sector is an important source of economic prosperity and economic growth - direct, indirect and induced heritage activity together account for 1.5% of total GVA in the West Midlands [80]. The historic environment is also a huge draw for visitors, and heritage-related construction sustains many jobs.

Developments which materially detract from an asset’s significance may also damage its economic viability and therefore possibly threaten its ongoing conservation.



Development and existing buildings of heritage value

Individual buildings of heritage value are protected through Listing, with processes of consent required for many works and alterations.

Conservation Area designation is a valuable tool for protecting the character of settlements. These should be backed by a conservation area appraisal involving the local community, ideally leading to a Design Statement. The production of Design Statements should be supported, especially but not exclusively for settlements with Conservation Areas, and adopted statements should be given due weight in planning decisions (see Core Strategy CS6: Para 4.83 [72]). Local Heritage Lists are also valuable for recording non-designated but locally valued heritage assets.

Farm-based developments will often have implications for historic farmsteads, which are a significant feature of the AONB. A high proportion of farmsteads are outside villages and isolated. Some have shrunk back over time from hamlets to a single farmstead and will retain archaeological features. In Shropshire a high proportion of farmsteads have retained some or all of their working buildings, the rates of survival being even higher in the uplands [81]. Finding a future sustainable use for historic farmsteads and their buildings requires an integrated approach, considering their merits as heritage assets, their contribution to landscape character and their potential role in the changing structure of rural communities and economies [82].

Setting of heritage assets

With better information available, development proposals which would directly damage defined archaeological features are thankfully rare, but the setting is more often overlooked. Setting is the surroundings in which an asset is experienced, and may be more extensive than its curtilage. All heritage assets have a setting, irrespective of the form in which they survive and whether they are designated or not [58]. Setting is often considered mainly in relation to views, but other factors such as quiet and tranquillity can be an important part of a setting. The contribution that setting makes to the significance of the heritage asset does not depend on people's current ability to access or experience the setting. Extensive heritage assets, such as historic parks and gardens, landscapes and townscapes, can include many heritage assets, historic associations between them and their nested and overlapping settings, as well as having a setting of their own.

POLICY P3 - Heritage and development

- i) Existing traditional buildings of heritage interest should be repaired and re-used in preference to being replaced by new building, and conservation advice should be sought.
- ii) All proposals relating to the re-use and redevelopment of traditional rural buildings should be informed by an assessment of the farmstead as a whole, including its landscape setting, character, significance and sensitivity to and potential for change. Traditional rural buildings of heritage interest should be retained in appropriate agricultural use, where possible. All proposals for new uses (employment, live-work, residential) will need to be carefully assessed in order to achieve the conservation and enhancement of the heritage asset and secure its sustainable use. Where it can be demonstrated that new buildings will sustain and enhance the significance of a farmstead, an element of new build might offer the most appropriate option.
- iii) New development should take full account of the setting of heritage assets.

[This policy links with current Shropshire Council SAMDev Policy MD13 Historic Environment].



Housing

Construction of new houses in Shropshire and in the AONB has accelerated in recent years, and Shropshire's targets for new housing development are significant. Though policy focuses most development on larger settlements, this still does have implications for the AONB. Bucknell, Clun, and Clee Hill are defined as Community Hubs, along with Community Clusters comprising:

- Aston on Clun, Hopesay, Broome, Beambridge, Long Meadow End, Rowton, Round Oak and Horderley
- Priest Weston, Rorrington Middleton
- Twitchen (with Clungunford)
- Hope, Bentlawnt, Hopesgate, Hemford, Shelve, Gravels (inc Gravelsbank), Pentervin, Bromlow, Meadowtown and Lordstone
- Snailbeach, Stiperstones, Pennerley, Tankerville, Black Hole, Crow's Nest, The Bog
- Wentnor and Norbury
- Bache Mill, Bouldon, Broncroft, Corfton, Middlehope, Peaton, Seifton (Great/Little) Sutton, and Westhope
- Stoke St Milborough, Hopton Cangeford, Cleestanton, and Cleedownton
- Wistanstow
- Buildwas

Church Stretton is the only market town within the AONB which is required to take new development. As the only such town in Shropshire within a nationally protected landscape, the scale and design of development here needs to be of high quality and be sensitive to the location. The fact that no communities have come forward as Hubs or Clusters within Church Stretton's hinterland places greater pressure on the town itself to accommodate housing, while at the same time there are real physical as well as environmental constraints on the availability of sites in the town. There will however be some development in settlements not defined as Hubs or Clusters through the single plot exception sites policy.

The supply of affordable housing remains a significant issue for rural communities. Recent housing delivery has tended to provide more larger, detached properties, and the housing mix is not well matched with local needs, especially for low wage earners. The cost of buying a house in Shropshire ranges from 5.72 to 9.27 times the median income [83]. Shropshire Council encourages affordable housing through the Type and Affordability of Housing Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) [84] through which all new market

housing developments are required to make a contribution towards the provision of affordable housing. The thresholds for funding for affordable housing from open market developments have been reduced by central government which is lowering delivery of affordable housing by this means. The Council is therefore proposing to encourage greater use of other mechanisms including self-build and exception sites.

The AONB Management Plan supports a vision of sustainable rural communities and of development which enhances local landscapes, heritage and biodiversity. Housing developments need to be of appropriate scale to the location and its landscape sensitivity, and of a high standard in terms of design. Location of housing should seek to avoid conflict with other established uses such as farm businesses. The policies below provide guidance and it is intended during the life of this Management Plan to develop a more detailed design guidance document for domestic developments.



POLICY P4 - Housing and Design of Development

- i) Early discussion between applicants, the local planning authority and local community about the design and style of emerging schemes is important to clarify expectations and reconcile local and commercial interests. Applicants should work closely with those who will be affected by their proposals to evolve designs that take account of the views of the community.
- ii) To create truly sustainable places for people to live, great care should be taken to ensure design is of the highest quality whilst at the same time seeking to enhance local distinctiveness. The design of all housing (market priced and affordable) should demonstrate sensitivity to the immediate surroundings and the special qualities of the AONB.
- iii) Where affordable housing is allowed when other forms of development would not be, in order to meet social need, the standards of design and sensitivity to the AONB should not be compromised. Affordable housing within the AONB is expected to be of a higher design quality than outside the AONB. These cases need to include a rigorous assessment of identified local housing need and consideration of the capacity of the landscape to accommodate development without undermining the purposes of designation. Development should not contribute to the loss of irreplaceable habitats or established ancient trees. All development should be designed so as to protect, restore, conserve and enhance the natural, built and historic environment. All development should be appropriate in scale and density to the surrounding properties. Local character and context should be respected. All development should integrate well into the historic pattern and character of the surrounding built environment and landscape. Appropriate landscaping should be used to ensure new developments are softened and sit well within the landscape. Attention should be paid to how new development is viewed at close quarters within the street scene and how it is seen from the surrounding area.
- iv) Building style should reflect local tradition, and local materials should be used wherever possible. Designs should be of a high standard in keeping with the nationally designated landscape. In line with Core Strategy policy CS6, particular regard should be paid to village and town design statements and Conservation Area Appraisals and Design Guides. Innovative sustainable schemes are to be encouraged where they take account of the surrounding

vernacular and the use of local materials as well as conserving the integrity of the surrounding landscape.

v) Roofing materials should be in keeping with those used in nearby buildings, with no bright coloured tiles or reflective surfaces. The use of photovoltaic tiles matching existing and surrounding roof colours should be encouraged in preference to solar panels. External lighting on new developments should be kept to a minimum and use down-lighting to reduce light pollution. Lighting should not highlight structures that would have an adverse visual impact on the surrounding landscape.

[This policy links with current Shropshire Council Core Strategy policy CS6 Sustainable Design & Development Principles, and SAMDev Policy MD2 Sustainable Design].



Agricultural development

Developing and flourishing farm businesses will from time to time require some new buildings. Modernising infrastructure enables farms to develop and can help support improved environmental performance. This does not mean however that any kind and scale of agricultural building is suitable anywhere in the AONB. Smaller types of agricultural building are classed as permitted development and only require notification to the planning authority rather than full planning consent. The AONB Agricultural Buildings Design Guide [85] identifies ways in which new farm buildings can be designed to fit better into the AONB landscape, and existing buildings retained and used sympathetically. Farmsteads with clusters of buildings are a historic part of our landscape [81]. New buildings inevitably change the character of these, but in many cases careful location, design and landscaping will minimise negative impacts, and new buildings are often better placed near to existing ones.

Very large agricultural developments such as multiple sheds for intensive livestock rearing are some of the biggest human structures within our landscape. They are one of the most contentious forms of development, including sometimes among other farmers. Aside from landscape and visual impacts, there can be issues with heavy goods traffic, and for poultry also from disposal of manure and cumulative ammonia emissions. The modelling for assessment of noise and odour impacts is not always adequate to forecast impacts accurately. The strong policies restricting major development in AONBs to 'exceptional circumstances' do not seem to be borne out by the extensive recent consenting of such developments in the AONB. There is a greater argument for new buildings where these support farm activities which directly maintain the AONB landscape, e.g. winter housing of livestock. Many poultry operations bring in feed, and therefore have a less direct connection to the landscape. Direct employment is often very limited, and jobs and economic benefit is often outside the area, while the negative impacts are felt locally.

Diversification

Diversification activities involving new development should work with the qualities of the AONB not against them, and respect the quality of the landscape, which is the basis of many other businesses in the area. If the AONB designation is perceived as a limitation to a certain kind of development, this is an indication that an approach working in harmony with the high quality landscape is not being adopted. Many types of developments of farm

enterprises and diversification can be done without harm to the AONB, including:

- Adding value to products
- Alternative livestock
- Sustainable tourism including accommodation and sensitively planned events
- Care farming and social forestry
- Crafts and training
- Woodlands and agro-forestry
- Alternative uses of buildings

A simple Sustainability checklist for diversification would include looking at:

- Using previously developed land and re-using existing buildings
- Using locally sourced materials and minimising waste
- High quality and sustainable design and construction methods
- Energy efficiency, renewable energy and recycling
- Reducing need for travel and transport
- Protecting and enhancing landscape, heritage and biodiversity



POLICY P5 - Agricultural development

i) Farm enterprises need to be in harmony with the environment and sympathetic to the purposes of AONB designation. Farm developments should not degrade landscape quality, which provides an important economic asset for the future. The impact of business-related traffic to and from the property will be an important consideration, including cumulative effects.

ii) Design of new agricultural buildings and structures should be of a high standard appropriate to the AONB, taking account of the published AONB Agricultural Buildings Design Guidance [85] including on location, structure and materials. Account should be taken of potential impacts on tourism and areas of public access.

iii) Housing related to agricultural development should be appropriate to the legitimate needs of agricultural workers and not a short-cut to open market housing.

iv) Efforts should be made to improve existing buildings where these are of a poor standard, and to remove redundant agricultural buildings which are not suitable for re-use and not of heritage value.

v) Large and multiple agricultural buildings for intensive livestock rearing such as poultry must meet the stringent tests for major development in national policy, and only be permitted in these exceptional circumstances.

vi) Criteria indicating that applications for intensive livestock buildings should be refused include where:

- the scale of buildings would exceed the farmstead's existing built footprint
- proximity to existing sheds would create significant cumulative impacts
- location is proposed in open field locations away from other farm buildings
- significant earth-moving or bunding is proposed
- the topography means that the development will be easily visible
- harm to landscape character cannot be satisfactorily mitigated
- proximity to residential properties or other businesses (within 400m has potential to generate harmful impacts on amenity, as recognised in the restriction in this zone for agricultural permitted development)
- units would be accessed by narrow roads and/or heavy traffic movements would alter the character of rural lanes or damage hedges or verges.

[This policy links with current Shropshire Council SAMDev Policy MD7b General management of development in the countryside].

Roads

The design and management of the rural road network should reinforce the local character and distinctiveness of the AONB. The distinctive character of minor roads contributes to the character of the wider AONB landscape and they are an important means for people to experience the AONB. Insensitive, over-engineered changes to these roads can have a detrimental impact. The increasing use of larger heavy goods vehicles is having damaging impacts. The availability of electric vehicle charging points is expanding but still fairly low.

POLICY P6 - Highways & Road Management

i) Road improvement schemes within and outside the AONB should not increase noise pollution or emissions from traffic. Approaches such as speed management schemes may, for example, be more appropriate than road widening. Potential impacts within the AONB of proposed road improvement schemes beyond the boundary should be considered. Road management and improvement schemes in the AONB should minimise landscape impact and avoid urbanisation of rural roads – for instance through sensitive and appropriate design and use of materials, and avoiding unnecessary signage clutter, road markings and coloured road surfaces. In conservation areas, special care should be taken to use the correct colour and width of lines when marking out roads. Wildflower-rich verges should be managed appropriately.

ii) The potential impact on freshwater habitats should be borne in mind and rural SuDS (Sustainable Drainage Systems) should be used where possible.

iii) The provision of any new public car parking should be in scale with the setting and capacity of roads used to reach the location. Larger car parks should generally be situated nearer to settlements or larger roads. Where informal roadside parking is improved to alleviate traffic problems on smaller roads, care should be taken to avoid adding to traffic levels. Design should be appropriate to a rural setting for example stone surfacing, timber for edging and signs.

iv) Strategies for transport affecting the AONB should not be solely informed by a 'predict and provide' model of increasing capacity to deal with increased traffic flow. The need for road upgrades and improvements which could have detrimental effects on the AONB may be avoided by use of other measures.

Renewable energy

The rationale for the AONB is that small and appropriate scale renewable energy generation can be accommodated within the landscape, drawing on the area's natural resources without harming its special qualities. Larger scale installations should be outside the AONB. As solar energy can be generated anywhere to enable it to enter the grid, the special qualities of the landscape and the purposes of the AONB's designation should take precedence over industrial solar installations.



POLICY P7 - Renewable Energy

i) Major developments of wind and solar energy, and woodfuel or biomass processing should be refused within the AONB, unless it can be demonstrated the proposals are in the public interest and the tests of exceptional circumstances in AONBs as set out in NPPF para 172 can be fully satisfied.

ii) For ground-mounted solar installations in the AONB:

- These should not be overlooked from publicly accessible vantage points
- development should not necessitate the removal of landscape features such as trees and hedgerows.
- ancillary equipment such as security fencing, security lighting, storage cabins and grid infrastructure, should be screened by planting of trees.
- brownfield sites are generally preferable to greenfield sites, but taking into account their biodiversity value.

iii) Small scale domestic renewable installations are encouraged. Where solar panels are used, consideration should be given to visual impacts. Non-reflective or anti-glare options should be used. Solar panels should not be used on Listed Buildings or heritage assets nor on buildings on a site designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument. Greater sensitivity will be required in Conservation Areas and the cumulative effect of solar panels in a Conservation Area should be avoided. In a Conservation Area, solar panels should face away from the road or lane. They should be flush fitting to the roof and be the same colour as the tiles. The design and installation of such installations should take account of visual amenity.

iv) Community low carbon initiatives in keeping with the AONB's purposes should be supported, and renewable energy proposals assessed on a range of sustainability criteria.

v) Existing resources in the AONB, such as woodfuel and agricultural by-products, may contribute usefully to biomass energy as well as sustainable land management, but processing facilities should be of a scale and location appropriate to the AONB. Any establishment of energy crops should avoid harm to biodiversity, water quality and availability, and where larger and longer-lived than normal agricultural crops, should take account of visual amenity (for example, following forestry design guidelines regarding scale and shape of compartments including in relation to landform, structural diversity and edge treatments).

vi) There should be no development of wind turbines (other than in accordance with permitted development rights) within the 'High Open Moorland' and High Volcanic Hills and Slopes' Landscape Types in the AONB.

vii) Proposals for wind turbines and associated infrastructure within the AONB should take account of factors including landscape character, visual amenity and recreation, biodiversity, heritage assets and their setting, and the following guidelines:

- Within 100m of buildings (excluding Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas), one or two wind turbines of up to 12m to blade tip are likely to be acceptable within the AONB.
- Turbines of over 25m to blade tip, or groups of more than two turbines, are not likely to be acceptable within the AONB.
- Wind turbine proposals should be linked to local energy needs and energy conservation measures. Community benefits should relate to energy in preference to amenity or other measures.

viii) Decisions on proposals for wind turbines and associated infrastructure outside the AONB should take account of the potential impacts within the AONB, especially the extent of visibility and significance of viewpoints affected, and potential cumulative effects with existing structures.

ix) Land within 5km of the AONB boundary is unsuitable for large scale windfarm development, and should be excluded from any Search Areas. (As used by TAN 8, the definition of 'large' is developments of 25MW and over).

Visitor Economy

The AONB is one of the jewels in the crown of Shropshire’s visitor economy. The Shropshire Hills Sustainable Tourism Strategy for 2018-23 has recently been prepared by the Shropshire Hills Destination Partnership [24]. The vision of the Strategy is that

“The Shropshire Hills is a nationally recognised, sustainably managed tourism destination, valued for its outstanding landscape, wealth of visitor experiences and important contribution to the economy of Shropshire.”

Planning is of relevance both in regulating the form of tourism development, and in regulating all types of development to ensure the landscape retains the qualities which people come to enjoy. The scale and type of built development for tourism makes a big difference to its sustainability. Tourism should not be used as a front for developments which are in reality residential.

POLICY P8 - Tourism and recreation development

- i) The siting, design and specification of new developments for tourism and recreation should be to high standards of environmental sensitivity and sustainability. The following guidelines should be followed:
- Single developments of more than around 10 accommodation units are less likely to be supported in small settlements and open countryside.
 - Large parks of static caravans, cabins or chalets are likely to be intrusive. Smaller sites with good landscaping are preferable, as are facilities for touring caravans and camping which generally have a low impact by virtue of fewer permanent structures.
 - Built facilities for recreation should only be allowed where their location and the activities they support are compatible with the special qualities of the AONB.
- ii) Smaller, low-key tourism developments designed in sympathy with local character will blend better into the area and spread economic benefits more widely than larger facilities.
- iii) Temporary structures taking an overtly environmental approach (e.g. glamping, yurts) can provide high quality experiences within the rural landscape and be relatively low impact. Their siting should however avoid harm to landscape features such as wildlife or archaeological sites, and related development such as toilet blocks and car parking should be

sensitively designed and landscaped. More permanent structures such as cabins are built development and should in general be sited close to other existing buildings. Static caravans rarely blend in well in any location and are discouraged.

iv) Tourism businesses will be supported to take a sustainable approach and encourage their visitors to do likewise.

v) Recreation activities which are inherently noisy or intrusive should be discouraged, and where possible prevented. Planning mechanisms should be used where possible to control organised motorsports events, which are disproportionately intrusive to other visitors and residents and the environment.

vi) Events such as concerts, festivals, and challenge walks in the AONB should be planned (in location, timing and scale) to minimise environmental impact, and regular events should not be allowed or encouraged to grow to a scale where problems arise. Event organisers should seek advice at the planning stages to enable this. [86] [87]

vii) The quality and suitability of public rights of way as a means of experiencing a high quality rural environment should as far as possible be protected, e.g. against significantly increased vehicle use, inappropriate resurfacing or building directly adjacent.

[This policy links with current Shropshire Council policies CS16 Tourism, Culture & Leisure and MD11 Tourism facilities and visitor accommodation].



Sustainable Communities

There are a number of challenges facing rural communities and businesses in the Shropshire Hills, in common with other upland areas of England:

- Transport – not necessarily ‘connectivity’, but cost and availability
- Broadband coverage
- Affordable housing – availability is an issue especially in rural towns, though in deeper rural areas available properties can sometimes be harder to let due to transport limitations.
- Mobile phone coverage
- Challenges in delivery of rural services
- Keeping farming viable and sustainable environmentally

The loss of European funding including LEADER will require new approaches from government to rural development and funding in a cross-sector, integrated way.

Shropshire Council Place Plans are focussed on the market town areas, covering the AONB area as shown below:



At a more local level, Much Wenlock has a Neighbourhood Plan, and some areas are developing Community Led Plans [88].

Services for basic maintenance of environmental quality are an important contribution to AONB purposes. Litter and fly-tipping are a burden on both authorities and private landowners, and are more common close to centres of population.

Actions – Planning for a Sustainable Economy and Communities

Action	Type	Lead & partners	Priority
Press for stronger status for AONB structures as a statutory consultee in planning and the necessary resources to fulfil duties which go with this	Aspiration	AONB, NAAONB, NE, LAs	High
Expand capacity within the AONB team for work on planning consultations	New action	AONB	High
Develop Design Guidance and a checklist for domestic development	New action	AONB, LAs	High
Develop a Landscape Guidance document	New action	AONB, LAs, NE	High
Continue to foster links and understanding between Partnership and planning officers and committee members	Ongoing	AONB, LAs	High
Support activities contributing to a low carbon Shropshire Hills, compatible with the AONB's special qualities	Ongoing	AONB, LAs	High
Renew Planning Protocol and report on planning applications in the AONB	Aspiration	LAs, AONB	
Continue to foster stronger links with other relevant planning consultees – including Natural England, CPRE and other Council departments	Ongoing	AONB	
Support new Community Led Plans to take the AONB fully into account	Ongoing	AONB	
Make the case for an Article 4 Direction to remove permitted development rights for motorsports in the AONB	New action	AONB	
Develop guidance on management and design of roads in the AONB	Aspiration	AONB, LAs	
Undertake work to identify key viewpoints within the AONB, and looking into it from surrounding areas	Aspiration	AONB and partners	
Demonstrate value of landscape to economy through tourism	Ongoing/Aspiration	AONB, LAs	

People enjoying and caring about the landscape



People enjoying and caring about the landscape

Enjoyment of the landscape in many forms is a key public benefit from the Shropshire Hills and their designation as an AONB. This includes recreation by local people and visitors, but also the ways people can become more attached to the landscape e.g. through work and volunteering. This section links a number of important themes, as shown in the diagram below. We need to understand how people's experiences affect their motivation in order to harness this into active support for conservation. This can also help us to clarify the actions by organisations and providers which enable people to enjoy and care about the landscape.



Experiences of the countryside can be transformative for people, creating an emotional link with places and landscape, which is not necessarily mainly about knowledge. We cannot create that emotional bond by seeking to 'educate' people or just pushing information at them. People who have formed their own attachment to the place will seek to know more, and maybe to do things to conserve and support the area, and we should feed this demand. But we also need to facilitate and support more people to have those initial experiences of the Shropshire Hills which will capture their imagination. These may be very different – from active sports to art, wildlife watching to camping.

The Management Plan supports promoting enjoyment, but also fostering an ethos of care for the landscape, and of enjoying it without harm. There is a strong case for updating national AONB purposes in relation to this topic.



Recreation, health and wellbeing

The health and wellbeing benefits of contact with nature and outdoor exercise are now well documented [89]. In addition to this, practical volunteering brings the additional benefits of social connections and building sense of belonging and purpose. The AONB is visited by several million people a year and offers an accessible 'natural health service'. Health sector funding has been accessed for countryside volunteering activities in Shropshire, but this is now declining. Many forms of countryside recreation are increasing, but there are still real challenges in involving the least active groups in society.

Wellbeing from nature and the landscape should be for all sections of society. Young people are one target group, as there are many factors contributing to a downward trend in their contact with nature and the outdoors. Young people need to be involved in decision-making and project planning, and technology may play a positive role in helping to engage them [90]. The ongoing need for outdoor and environmental education is matched by a need for raising awareness of the countryside and of farming. Recent work by the AONB Partnership has included extensive work with children on the John Muir Award, support for Young Rangers groups and an environmental traineeship scheme. These activities have provided opportunities for young people across a range of ages, and need to be expanded.

A high proportion of the local population is however in older age groups, and these people can also benefit hugely from being outdoors and in nature. The highly successful Walking for Health programmes are an example of this. The activities to engage different age groups may vary, but some things will span age groups, maybe very consciously, such as involving children with older people doing reminiscence. The needs of people with varying degrees of ability and mobility also need to be considered across all relevant services and provision.

The continued expansion of population in Telford and its fringes provides new audiences to engage with the AONB, and of a different demographic profile to most of the rest of the area.

Understanding and learning

Raising awareness needs to be about the AONB landscape and its special qualities, about the issues and need for looking after it, and how it is managed, including activity of the AONB Partnership and of many other organisations. The AONB Partnership has a Communications Strategy which is periodically reviewed. Its limited resources are focused on 'impact groups' within target audiences more than the general public, though social media reaches many people.

For formal education, the AONB is a great resource for further and higher education in a range of subjects, and links could be strengthened with a number of local universities and colleges. Further work could also be done on career training and pathways in to working in conservation or the land management sector.

Active volunteering

Active volunteering brings benefits to the landscape and to people. In the same way that people bond with a place more by visiting it than by reading about it, the attachment is even stronger as a result of working on the land, and volunteering provides a means for many people to do this.



Engaging with some 'hard to reach' groups in society is usually labour intensive and requires particular techniques such as outreach activities. Examples such as Shropshire Council's 'Wild Teams' volunteers, working with adults with learning disabilities and mental health issues, show how effective this can be. Projects are likely to need a critical mass of resource and activity in order to work. An effective balance needs to be struck between reaching 'new' people, and meeting the demand from those already interested.

Contributing

There can be a cross-over of involvement and support to fund-raising. The Shropshire Hills AONB Trust which is now in place is a good vehicle for this as a registered charity, but other organisations also fund-raise for activity which contributes to the AONB Management Plan. People are much more likely to give for direct and tangible project activity than for organisational core costs.

There is a need to help communities and businesses within and around the AONB identify and celebrate being part of a nationally recognised landscape.



Access and activity providers

The Shropshire Great Outdoors Strategy [32] recognises the reduced resources in public sector and proposes an increasing focus on countryside close to centres of population. There is a sound rationale for this, but high quality landscapes are still important as they offer a different experience. Volunteer activity through Parish Paths groups for rights of way maintenance is vital and increasing, and brings health, social and wellbeing benefits to those taking part.

POLICY EC1 - People enjoying and caring about the landscape

i) Tourism activities which draw on the special qualities of the area without harming them should be encouraged. This may include the development of access infrastructure (such as off-road cycle routes and rights of way); the use of public transport, historic and natural sites; interpretation to help aid understanding; enterprises based on the special qualities of the AONB (like wildlife watching, landscape painting, walking festivals); and cultural events.

Recreational Activities

ii) Environmentally sound leisure and recreation activities in keeping with the AONB should be encouraged and promoted - including low resource-use activities, those with minimum damage to the landscape, and following 'quiet enjoyment' principles with minimum disturbance to residents and other visitors.

iii) Recreational off-road use of motor vehicles should not be encouraged or promoted within the AONB. Voluntary measures and pro-active work with users are recommended to minimise the impact of legal off-road use of motor vehicles on the landscape and on people's quiet enjoyment of the countryside. Where the impact on the AONB is significant however, measures including traffic regulation orders restricting legal use should be employed. Illegal motorised activities should as far as possible be prevented, and pro-active support given to the police to do so.

iv) Infrastructure associated with countryside access should be sensitively designed and appropriate materials should be used, including stone for surfacing of a type appropriate to the location, wooden signposts and gates on rights of way, and cycle route signage of a rural character.

Tourism promotion

v) Countryside attractions and walks should be linked where possible to settlements where services and public transport facilities exist and can be promoted, helping to maximise economic benefits, especially from day visitors. Promotion of the area for tourism should aim to minimise car travel. Towns and locations best served by public transport should receive the main

promotion as 'gateways' to the Shropshire Hills, in preference to locations where access is only possible by car.

vi) Opportunities should be taken to strengthen the integrity and identity of the Shropshire Hills for its exceptional landscape value. Consistent use of the 'Shropshire Hills' identity should be given greater prominence in tourism and other forms of promotion, along with the special qualities of the AONB and opportunities for visitors to adopt a sustainable approach.

vii) Opportunities and promotion aimed at both visitors and the local community should encourage people to experience the AONB's countryside more fully in more sustainable and less potentially damaging or disruptive ways.



Actions - People Enjoying and Caring About the Landscape

Action	Type	Lead & partners	Priority
Develop a youth engagement project incorporating the John Muir Award, Young Rangers, and traineeships	New action	AONB and partners	High
Actively engage partners to develop the role and influence of the Destination Partnership, especially to oversee implementation of the Sustainable Tourism Strategy	Ongoing	AONB, SHT and partners	High
Promote less well known locations in the AONB in order to spread the load and benefits of visitors	Ongoing	SHT and partners	
Publicise the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas and use it as tool for engagement, including possible Charter Part II with businesses	Ongoing	AONB, SHT and partners	
Continue to operate Shropshire Hills Shuttles, seeking new funding and refining service	Ongoing	AONB, SC, NT	High
Establish a new sustainable tourism business network for the Shropshire Hills	New action	AONB, SHT	
Support visitor centres – Cardingmill Valley, Discovery Centre, Bog Centre, Acton Scott, Much Wenlock, Bishop's Castle Town Hall	Ongoing	SHT, AONB, LAs	High
Maintain rights of way and promoted walking routes to a good standard, especially prime routes such as Offa's Dyke Path and the Shropshire Way	Ongoing	LAs	High
Support places within the AONB to develop and promote their walking offer	Ongoing	LAs, AONB	
Continue support for Parish Paths groups and Volunteer Rangers	Ongoing	LAs	

Action	Type	Lead & partners	Priority
Improve provision and promotion for cycling of different kinds and levels	Ongoing	LAs, AONB and partners	
Pursue 'Caering for Caradoc' fund-raising appeal and explore possibilities to replicate this, perhaps at the Wrekin	In progress	AONB & Trust	
Repeat five yearly visitor survey	New action	AONB, SHT	
Continue to link Shropshire Hills Discovery Centre with AONB landscape and as an orientation centre for visitors to the area	Ongoing	GCL	
Promote the area's best qualities to the business community and encourage an 'ambassador' approach	New action	AONB, SHT	
Expand membership of Friends of the Shropshire Hills AONB	Ongoing	AONB & Trust	
Develop and promote a varied programme of events and optimise relevance to the AONB	Ongoing	All	
Develop the annual leaflet swap event into a sustainable tourism conference	New action	SHT, AONB	
Seek to develop conservation holidays involving practical volunteering	Aspiration	NT, SWT?	
Improve roadside signage marking AONB at entry points	New action	AONB, LAs	
Foster links with the Shrewsbury University Centre and other HE and FE institutions	New action	AONB	
Improve links with Duke of Edinburgh Award and other outdoor activity providers to raise awareness of the AONB	New action	AONB and partners	
Demonstrate value of landscape to health and wellbeing	Aspiration	AONB, LAs	
Develop an interpretation plan for the AONB	Aspiration	AONB & partners	

Organisation names and initials are explained on page 64

The AONB boundary and Zone of Influence

The Shropshire Hills AONB boundary has not been changed since it was drawn up in 1957 prior to the designation. The conclusion from a study of the AONB boundary commissioned in 2006 was that the boundary was fit for purpose, and the AONB Partnership and the local authorities have for ten years had a clear policy against changing the boundary. It is possible the Glover Review may recommend simplification to the process for boundary changes, which may change the context for this policy.

POLICY B1 - The AONB Boundary

At the current time, the benefits of formally amending the AONB boundary would not be justified against the considerable costs and resources this would entail. The AONB Partnership and local authorities will work, and encourage partners and others to work, in ways which strengthen the integrity and identity of the Shropshire Hills AONB as an area of exceptional landscape value. The Partnership will focus its work strongly on the designated AONB area, but will work in a flexible and pragmatic way in relation to the boundary to secure the maximum benefit for the Shropshire Hills. If the process for amending boundaries is made easier, this policy will be reviewed.

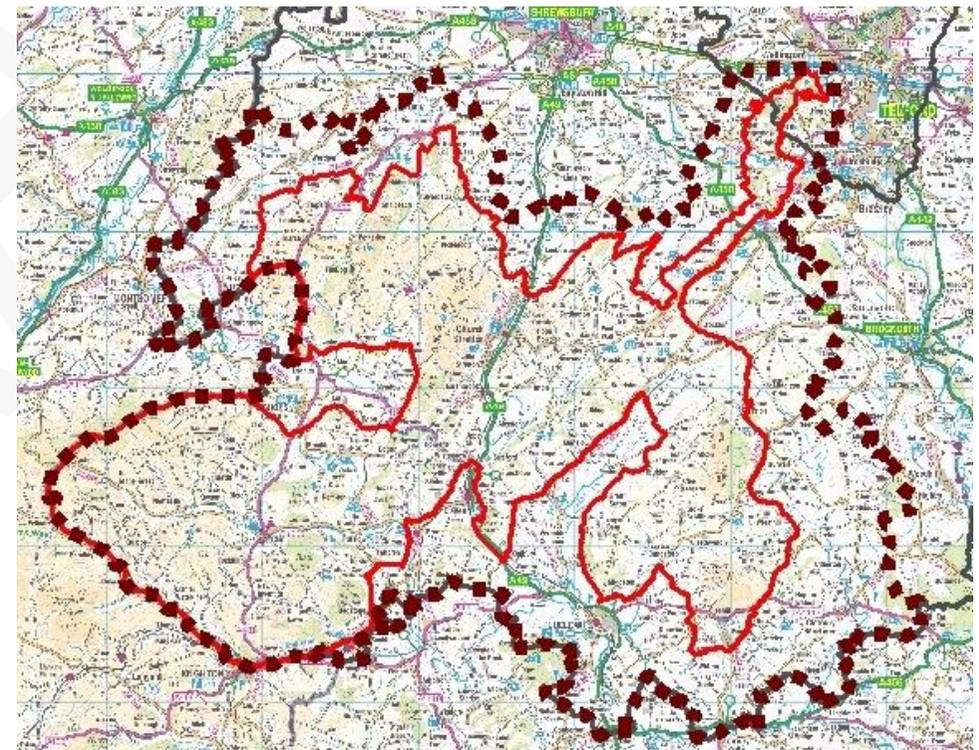
(For further information see full position statement approved February 2008 [93]).



Zone of Influence

The last Management Plan adopted as a 'zone of influence' an area slightly larger than the AONB, including the surrounding market towns and most parishes spanning the boundary. This is not any formal designation, but it does provide recognition that the AONB and its high quality landscape has significant economic and social influence beyond the boundary. This area was used for the 2009-13 LEADER rural development programme, and since 2012 has been the basis of the Shropshire Hills Destination Partnership for co-ordinating tourism activity and marketing. The zone of influence is not regarded as a hard boundary, and further links beyond it (e.g. with Ironbridge, Shrewsbury, North Herefordshire and mid Wales) are all important. Natural England are now more actively encouraging the management of AONBs in their wider geographical context, and the zone of influence is felt to be still of relevance and value.

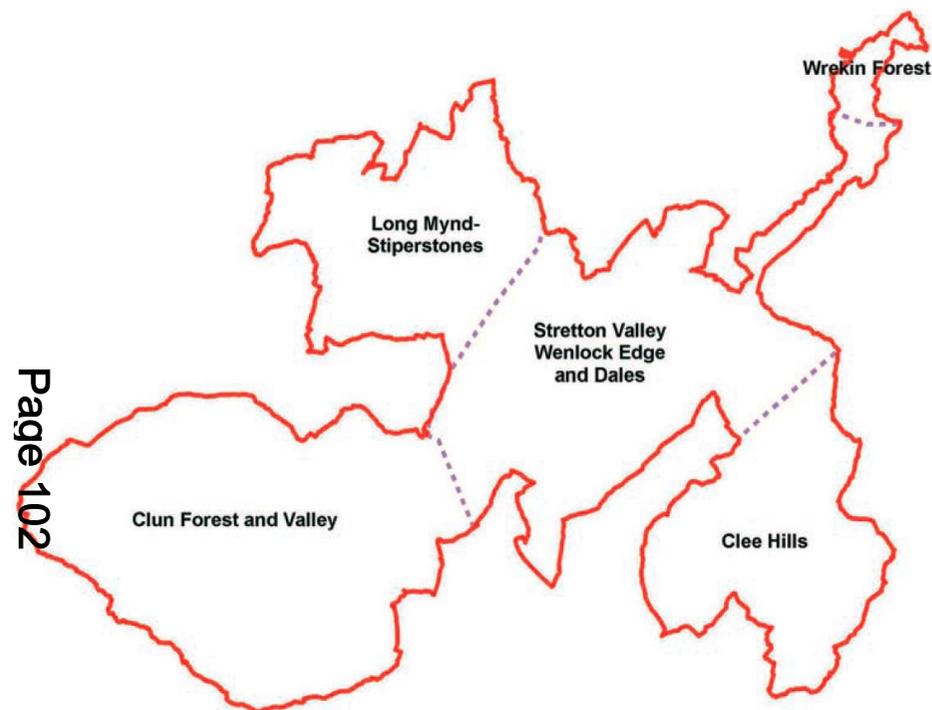
Zone of Influence (brown dashed line) and AONB boundary (red)



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Local priorities for areas of the AONB

The AONB is large and has much diversity in its landscape. This section of the Plan divides the AONB into five areas and describes some of their locally distinctive features, and their particular issues and priorities for management.



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Long Mynd – Stiperstones (including Stapeley Hill and Hope Valley)

This is a 'core' part of the Shropshire Hills in terms of landscape, identity and biodiversity. Some of the most important large conservation sites in the region are also popular walking destinations, and lie among hill farms undergoing significant change, and sparse remote communities. Finding ways to integrate farming with conservation, and of enabling local people to benefit from sustainable patterns of use by visitors, are key to the future of the area.

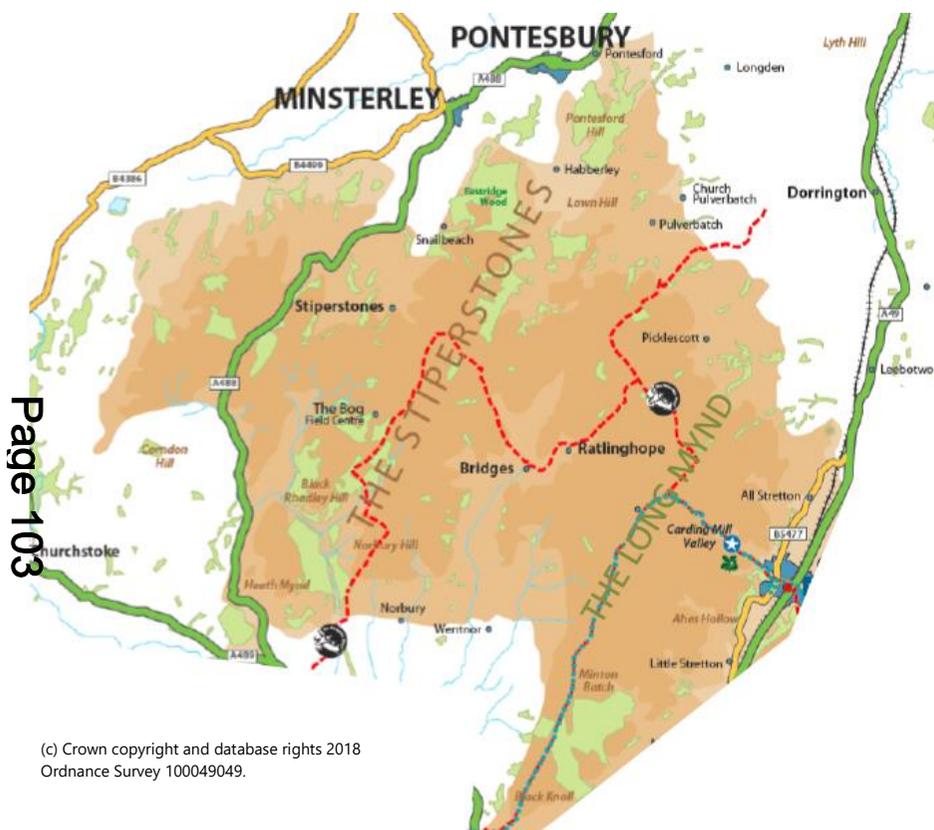
The area has the biggest concentration of upland and of semi-natural habitat within the AONB, including the largest areas of heathland. Although there is a sense of wildness, the upland commons are carefully managed and linked with the surrounding farms. The Long Mynd and Stiperstones themselves are among the most popular walking destinations in Shropshire, and the area also has a good bridleway network, is crossed by the Shropshire Way and served by the Shropshire Hills Shuttles bus service.

Much of the high ground is designated for nature conservation, and land ownership by conservation bodies (including Natural England, National Trust and Shropshire Wildlife Trust) is more extensive here than anywhere else in the AONB. The mosaic of habitats on farmland is also of great value, and grazing by commoners and neighbouring farmers remains important to maintaining heathlands on the hilltops. A high priority needs to be given to retaining and building the inter-relationship between conservation sites and farmed land.

The Onny Valley between the Long Mynd and Stiperstones has a strong farming character, with sparse villages, and some focal points for visitors such as Bridges and Wentnor. There is a gradual transition down the valleys from upland to more intensive lowland farms with more arable land. To the west of the Stiperstones there is more small-holding, and links become stronger across the border with Wales.

The area is important for species such as harebell and mountain pansy, small pearl-bordered fritillary and grayling butterflies, otter, dormouse, curlew, lapwing and barn owl. Small hay meadows survive, with woods on steeper slopes, and high quality rivers like the East and West Onny. The area has an

interesting geology, being crossed by the Pontesford–Linley Fault, and with minerals formerly exploited including lead and barytes. Historic features include hillforts and prehistoric settlements, classic Parliamentary enclosure field patterns on Prolley Moor and mining relics around the Stiperstones. Other significant landscape features include Mitchell's Fold stone circle, Linley Beeches and Bromlow Callow.



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Community involvement in wildlife and heritage is strong through groups such as the Upper Onny Wildlife Group and those involved with mining sites such as Snailbeach and the Bog.

Key Issues

The area has long views and is quiet, making it very sensitive to inappropriate development, either visually or through intrusive activities. Retaining upland

farming and encouraging its activity to be in keeping with the environment is key to conserving the area's character.

The transition of farm conservation funding to the New Environmental Land Management Scheme will be significant. Pasture-fed sheep and cattle are the main enterprises, but mixed farming can also have some environmental benefits. Many farms cross the border with Wales, thus adding an extra level of complexity for being in schemes.

Diversification is likely to continue, and the area has high potential for enterprises based on wildlife, landscape, and heritage. Increasing visitor numbers could create problems, and a sustainable, low-impact approach is necessary, minimising traffic and noise. Encouraging visitors to stay longer, experience more and spend more is preferable to simply chasing greater footfall.

Much has been achieved in this area through the Stiperstones and Corndon Hill Country Landscape Partnership Scheme which finished in 2018. While this level of activity cannot be sustained, maintaining a legacy from the scheme is important and ongoing support from organisations active in the area will help with this.

Priorities

- Farm environmental schemes are vitally important as a means of delivering conservation activity on the ground, and the period of transition over the coming years is crucial. Continued active engagement with farmers and with the wider community, and advice and exchange of practical ideas have an important role to play.
- For visitors, the connection to the AONB and links into it from the north should be developed, e.g. from Pontesbury and Minsterley. Both these settlements should benefit economically from development of more services for visitors. The profile of the AONB in Shrewsbury should be raised and its proximity to this part of the AONB is an advantage. The possibility of developing a cycle/multi-user route out of Shrewsbury in this direction would be of benefit to the AONB.
- Local food activity has significant potential to act as a bridge between farming, conservation and visitors. The pubs and limited visitor facilities in the area provide an important means of developing this.

Clun Forest and Valley

This very rural area is more dependent on farming than any other part of the AONB. Some strong networks have been established, and these are important for managing change in farming to provide the best outcomes for both the landscape and the community. The River Clun catchment is a focus for conservation activity, and people enjoy the heritage and tranquillity of the area.

The Clun area is the most deeply rural part of the AONB and is amongst the most sparsely populated parts of England. Bounded to the west by the Welsh border, the area comprises the catchment of the River Clun and part of that of the River Teme extending from the uplands of the Clun Forest to the lower Clun Valley. Shales and siltstones create a rolling topography, with enclosed and cultivated fields right up to the hilltops, except where remnant and restored heathland remain, such as at Rhos Fiddle and Mason's Bank. There are a number of large, mainly coniferous Forestry Commission woods in the lower Clun valley, some of which support the nationally rare Wood White butterfly. Smaller conifer woods higher up are valued for shelter. Broadleaved woodlands are less common and tend to be small and on steeper slopes and gullies.

Just outside the AONB, the River Clun holds a European level protected site (SAC) for a population of the rare freshwater pearl mussel which is in serious decline. The river and its tributaries are largely tree-lined, but alder disease, stock access to riverbanks and factors affecting water quality, such as nutrients and siltation, are contributing to poor condition of the river for the pearl mussel and other wildlife. Much project work over a period of years targeted at these factors has made some progress, but the issue is becoming more critical.

Offa's Dyke runs north - south across the area, in some of its best preserved and dramatic sections. It connects the Shropshire Hills with other areas along the border including Herefordshire and Radnor and the Clwydian Range. Other archaeological earthworks include Bury Ditches hillfort, and the Upper and Lower Shortditches near the Kerry Ridgeway. The small town of Clun is a natural centre for the area, and its prominent ruined castle shows that this has long been the case. The market towns of Bishop's Castle and Knighton lie just outside the AONB to the north and south, with Craven Arms to the east.

The pattern of landholding is more of medium-sized family farms, with fewer large estates and less smallholding than elsewhere. Livestock rearing dominates, but as the soil is relatively good, potatoes and other crops are cultivated even high up. Tourism and recreation are generally at a much lower level than elsewhere in the AONB, although Clun, Bury Ditches and Offa's Dyke Path National Trail are popular with visitors, and promoted walks are helping to develop the area's potential for sustainable tourism.



Key Issues

Changes in farming will probably have the greatest influence on this area's future. A high age profile, rising costs and the difficulty of making livestock products pay in a competitive global market are felt as keenly here as anywhere, sometimes compounded by the relative isolation of the area. Uptake of former agri-environment schemes was very high, and the transition to new schemes will be significant for both the landscape and farm incomes.

The AONB Partnership has given close support over some years to the Land, Life & Livelihoods group which aims to bring farmers and the rest of the community together and help to secure a sustainable future for the upper Clun Forest part of the area. The group has held many events and practical steps such as advice workshops for farmers. The Upper Clun Community Wildlife Group is also active in monitoring important species, and in encouraging land-owners and managers to maintain and improve habitats for them.



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Page 105

The AONB Partnership has been very active in the Clun Catchment for many years, working with farmers on riparian habitat management, community involvement and an integrated catchment approach. The Clun Catchment Partnership helps to improve co-ordination and raise the profile of the issues with organisations, landowners and community representatives.

Large scale poultry farming has been expanding and is now found further up in the catchment, with concerns about landscape impacts and cumulative nutrient input.

Priorities

- The condition of the rivers (the River Clun SAC and the River Teme SSSI) is an over-riding priority, and links with many other aspects, as it is dependent on activity throughout the catchments. The quality of water and habitats is affected by land management practices near to the rivers themselves, but will also benefit from restoration of heath and wetland habitats and any increases in woodland and tree cover. Continued co-ordinated partnership working and funding for the Clun catchment will be necessary to address the significant issues here.

- The future of farming brings big challenges and issues which are not easily tackled. The continuation of livestock rearing and appropriate cropping are both important for the landscape. Initiatives to reach local markets have been used by some farmers, but the capacity of local markets may not be adequate for this to work for a majority of farmers. Continued development of farmer and community networks and working together will be crucial.
- Tourism development will need to be very sensitive to avoid spoiling the area's quiet rural character. Approaches which make the most of tranquillity and opportunities to slow down and appreciate the natural, historic and cultural features of the area will be the most appropriate.

Clee Hills

This large part of the AONB contains very contrasting areas, but is characterised by the influences of the minerals industry, of traditional farming and of larger settlements further to the east. Maintaining and enhancing quality in the landscape and making the most of the area's undervalued features of interest are important challenges for the future.

The south-eastern part of the AONB is dominated by the main hills of Brown Clee (Shropshire's highest point) and Titterstone Clee. Heath and common land on the tops of these are accompanied by disused and active quarries as well as prominent telecommunications and radar structures. The mark of industry is strong here, and the beauty of a harsher kind than elsewhere in the AONB.



The Clee Hills are a distinct area of uplands separated from those further west. There are some significant areas of common land including Clee Liberty, Clee Hill and Catherton Commons. The hills are surrounded by a high plateau of sandstone with red soils and mostly enclosed pastoral land. Villages are often small and scattered, and there are some medieval deserted settlements. Clee Hill is the largest village, and bears a strong influence of past and present mining and quarrying. The high point of the A4117 on Clee Hill Common provides remarkable views south to the Malvern Hills, Herefordshire and beyond. The old squatter settlements associated with former mining result in a surviving pattern of small land holdings, including non-agricultural uses. Small hay meadows and high quality grasslands survive in amongst these.

In the west the area extends to the perimeter of Ludlow and along the edge of the Corve Dale, where larger traditional country estates are found. To the east lie very rural villages like Ditton Priors and Burwarton, but there are increasingly good links with the market towns of Bridgnorth and Cleobury Mortimer, and also more commuting to the West Midlands conurbation. There are substantial woodlands on the eastern flanks of Brown Clee near Burwarton.

Key Issues

The issues of change in farming, especially in the livestock sector, are found here as elsewhere. The proximity of Ludlow and its local food culture is a factor in the south and west of the area. Woodlands are also a valuable resource in the area, and retaining their landscape value is important as they are affected by fluctuating timber prices and trends such as increased use of woodfuel.

There is pressure for development, including large poultry units, tourism and affordable housing, and concern about appropriateness in the way these can be carried out.

The AONB Partnership supported a Clee Hill Partnership for the area around Titterstone Clee, which has currently lapsed but there is some local interest in reviving it. The Clee Hill Community Wildlife Group is well established. Clee Liberty common is participating in the national Upland Commons project [35].

Priorities

- Improving habitat networks, especially around the main hills is important. Farm environmental schemes and co-operative working with landowners and commoners will be important means of achieving this.
- Developing tourism sustainably will mean a small scale of developments in remoter locations, connecting to walking, cycling and horse riding opportunities. It should involve drawing on the potential of industrial archaeology and geological interest through improved interpretation. Patterns of anti-social use of some of the less attractive former mining and quarrying sites may require concerted efforts to influence.
- The heritage of the area including 19th Century quarrying remains and hydro scheme are significant and there is potential for conservation activity, community involvement, volunteering, and interpretation linked to these.



Stretton Valley, Wenlock Edge and Dales

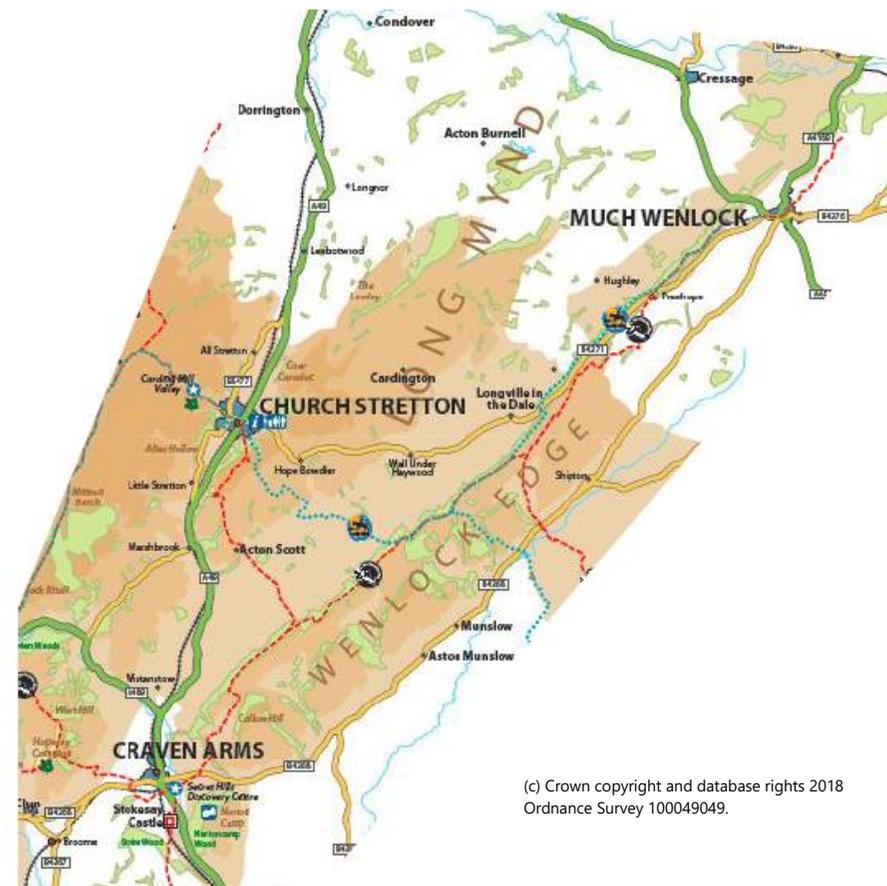
This area can justifiably claim to be the heart of the Shropshire Hills, with the Stretton valley containing a major transport corridor and the AONB's main town, Church Stretton. Key themes for future effort are ensuring development is in keeping with the landscape, developing tourism sustainably, and managing the increase in outdoor activities.

This is the most settled part of the AONB and includes the largest lowland area, with more intensive and arable farming. The A49 corridor makes this the most accessible but also the least tranquil part of the AONB. Church Stretton, the main town within the AONB, has a superb setting among the hills, with the Long Mynd, Caer Caradoc and the Lawley providing some of the most iconic images of the Shropshire Hills. The historic character of the town is enhanced by considerable tree cover.

Tourism is more strongly developed in this part of the AONB than elsewhere. Carding Mill Valley is the major visitor honeypot site in the AONB, predominantly used by day visitors. It is carefully managed by the National Trust, who also own substantial parts of Wenlock Edge. This famous wooded limestone escarpment is a major landmark, running over 20 miles from near Much Wenlock to Craven Arms and separates Ape Dale from the Corve Dale. There are significant former quarry sites on the back of Wenlock Edge, along with areas of species-rich calcareous grassland. The Corve Dale lies mostly outside the AONB but is of conservation value through its many heritage features, the River Corve itself, veteran trees including black poplar, and in views between Wenlock Edge and the Clee Hills.

Key Issues

Development pressures are the highest here of any part of the AONB. Church Stretton has taken its share of new housing and employment development over the years, and the allocation of future sites continues to be contentious. The town links itself strongly with the Shropshire Hills and the AONB, and is seeking to make the most of its location and potential for outdoor activities in the development of tourism in a sustainable way.



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Farming is more diverse in this area due to lower-lying and better quality land, and so has more options for the future than the uplands. More intensive methods and large agricultural buildings therefore have particular potential to cause harm to the landscape quality of the area.

Ash dieback will be a particular issue in this part of the AONB where ash is more common on the lime-rich soils, especially around Wenlock Edge.

Growth in road traffic on the A49 is a concern, and is affected by development well outside the area, including in Shrewsbury and Hereford, and in north and south Wales. This corridor does however offer opportunities for sustainable tourism linked to the railway line and good bus services, and for capturing passing trade through farm shops and other facilities.

Some former quarry sites on Wenlock Edge have been used for industrial activities, which may have limited the areas potential of this part of Wenlock Edge to develop into a really significant visitor destination and contributor to the sustainable tourism economy. There remains a need to maximise opportunities for conservation and quiet enjoyment where possible.



Priorities

The need to retain character and limit the negative impacts of change and development is probably more acute here than anywhere else in the AONB. Church Stretton is an important service centre but is also the only one of Shropshire's Core Strategy market towns within a nationally protected landscape. The physical capacity for further development may be more limited, and it is important that the sensitivities of Church Stretton's location within the AONB are fully considered in decisions.

- A sustainable tourism approach is vital in this part of the AONB and also made more possible by the good transport links, attractiveness for walking and landscape interest in the area. This part of the AONB is a key link for visitors from Shrewsbury, Telford and more populated areas to the north and east. The development of a better located Visitor Information Centre in Church Stretton would be a real benefit.
- The accessibility of the town enables it to provide services for the benefit of other parts of the AONB. Developing further the links between Church Stretton and the AONB should allow the town to play a greater role in raising people's awareness of the AONB and its value, and to develop increasingly as the natural centre or hub of the AONB.

Wrekin Forest

This area has distinct features and needs that are different to the rest of the AONB and extending into the Borough of Telford & Wrekin brings different users, audiences and partners. The same principles of retaining landscape quality and engaging with local people are nevertheless still relevant. The need here to protect the environment and to manage people's enjoyment of it is as significant as anywhere in the AONB. Well established partnership approaches to co-ordinating management of the Wrekin area need continued support and complementing with new practical project activity.

The Wrekin is Shropshire's iconic hill and being surrounded by lower ground, affords excellent views over much of the county and beyond. An outlying hill, the Wrekin area is the least typical part of the Shropshire Hills, lying on the urban fringe of Telford, with significant new development nearby and high levels of recreational and community use.

The woodlands on the Wrekin and the Ercall are of high quality (SSSI), and important for their geology. The area is rich in industrial archaeology and has strong connections to the nearby Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site. The town of Wellington has very strong cultural links with the Wrekin. The AONB boundary is drawn tightly around the wooded hills of the Wrekin and the Ercall, and so the quality of the surrounding area is very important as a setting for the AONB (see Policy P1viii). The 'Wrekin Forest' area includes the AONB and surrounding area. The Wrekin is very important both locally and for those visiting the area, especially the main path up the north side of the hill, which is valued by a wide cross-section of people for fresh air, views and exercise.

Key Issues

The high level of recreational use of the Wrekin creates pressure, and there is no robust framework or resources to manage this, resulting in the quality of the landscape and visitors' experience being less than optimal.

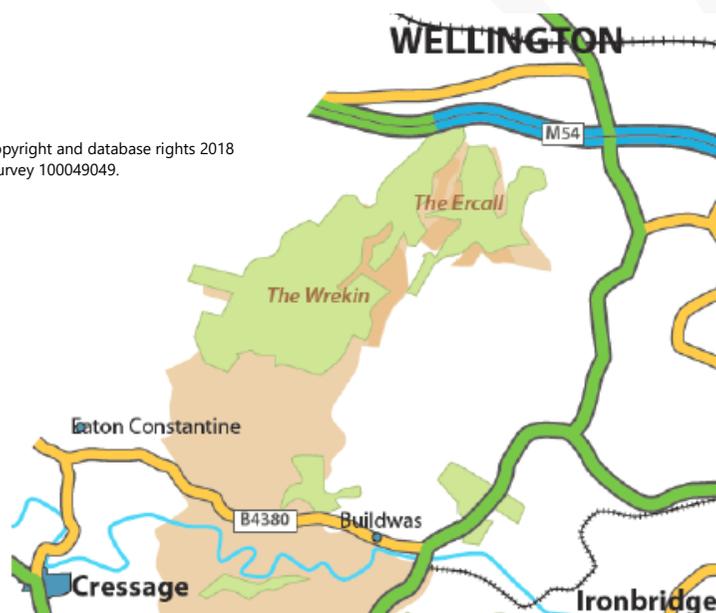
Since 2007 the Wrekin Forest Partnership supported by the AONB Partnership has helped to provide a forum for the discussion of issues and co-ordination, and the Wrekin Forest Plan now in its third phase covering 2015-20 has

provided direction. Practical activity and community engagement by partners including the Shropshire Wildlife Trust has made a real difference on the ground and raised the profile of the value of the area. Volunteers are active in a number of groups, and there is involvement from large companies in Telford.

Shropshire Wildlife Trust manage the main car park at Forest Glen. Visitor management at the Wrekin would however benefit from a more co-ordinated approach, and adequate resources given its importance and scale of use. There is scope to improve parking provision and visitor facilities at or in proximity to the Wrekin, managing pressures and strengthening the quality of recreational offer. These however would need to be planned with sensitivity to the location and to visitor management issues and have a viable business model. Continued co-ordination of activity to manage the Wrekin Forest will depend on partners working together and with local landowners.

Telford & Wrekin Council have defined the Wrekin Forest as a Strategic Landscape [75], which gives it some additional recognition and protection.

The redevelopment of the former Ironbridge Power Station close to the AONB near Buildwas will be a big factor over the coming years. This large site lies right between the AONB and the Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site, and the scale and design of development need to be appropriate and sensitive.



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Priorities

- Development on the eastern fringes of the Wrekin and near Ironbridge needs to respond to the distinctive character of the area.
- A stronger mechanism is desirable for managing the high environmental quality of the Wrekin Forest area and its continued use by visitors. On the ground capacity to take practical action and engage with visitors is key to maintaining the quality of a well-used countryside site. Planning gain from new development nearby should be considered to help manage the increased pressure it will come under, and opportunities should be explored for using this to establish project work or a longer term arrangement. Enjoyment of the Wrekin Forest countryside should go along with promoting understanding of its qualities. Opportunities for participation through activities such as conservation volunteering can be improved.
- Recognition of the national importance of the AONB designation remains important and should be given a higher profile in the Wrekin area. Management of the Wrekin Forest area should link both ways to the wider Shropshire Hills AONB, to Telford's green infrastructure, and to the Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site.
- Priority areas for conservation action will continue to include the woods, other habitats and wildlife, and cultural heritage. Strengthening connections with local people, improvements to access, and community involvement through events, education and volunteering also remain key themes.

POLICY WF1 - The Wrekin Forest

The management of the wider Wrekin Forest area is crucial to the integrity of the Wrekin itself within the AONB and should continue to be recognised and integrated within planning policy. The landscape quality of the wider Wrekin Forest area should be protected as far as possible, and the management of the Wrekin itself integrated with this surrounding area.

The Wrekin Forest Partnership provides a vital local forum for this important area and should be supported and its links to the AONB Partnership maintained. The Wrekin Forest Partnership needs to develop as a long-term structure linked to permanent funding for a dedicated staff resource to take and co-ordinate action on the ground.

Implementation and monitoring

Structures supporting the Shropshire Hills AONB

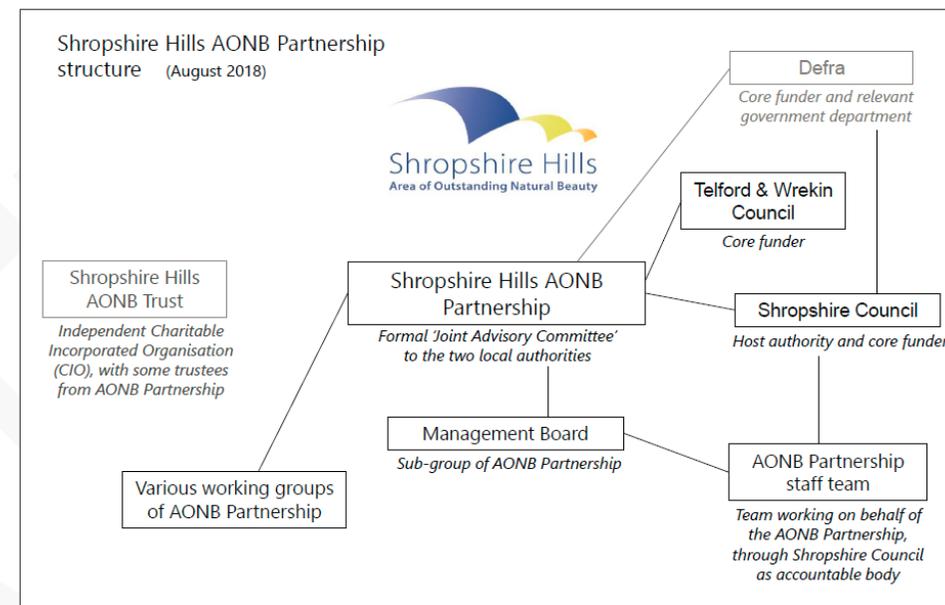
Many people and organisations contribute to conserving the AONB. The Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership is a broad group of stakeholders and supporters, working together with a small professional staff team. It is a Joint Advisory Committee under the Local Government Act, formed by Shropshire Council and Telford & Wrekin Council to assist meeting their statutory duties. The Partnership currently has 41 members representing a wide range of interests. The approach to managing the AONB has a strong ethos of working with local people, valuing their contribution, involving people through events and community projects, and representation in decisions. The Partnership structure of the AONB enables communication and understanding between many different interested parties and building synergies.

The Partnership is supported by a number of sub-groups, area groups and topic groups, and a staff team hosted by Shropshire Council. The AONB team currently has eight members. Through the team and the whole structure, the AONB Partnership's main activities are:

- **Taking action** - on the ground and in our communities - to conserve and enhance natural beauty and to promote enjoyment and understanding
- **Influencing others** - leading and championing the delivery of public benefits from the AONB, working strategically and collaboratively from grassroots to policy level.
- **Managing our business** - developing a robust, effective and financially sustainable AONB organisation.

The AONB Partnership (Joint Advisory Committee) was formed around 1993 and while updated considerably, its basic form has not changed. There has been a reduction in the number of organisations involved (due to factors such as amalgamation and winding up of some public bodies), and a rise in the representation of individuals and Parish Council members.

The **Shropshire Hills AONB Trust** was formed in 2016 with charitable objects strongly aligned with AONB purposes. Its main activities are to raise funds and distribute these to local projects supporting the AONB. The Trust has taken over the running of the AONB Conservation Fund, and jointly with the AONB Partnership runs the Friends of the Shropshire Hills AONB.



Conservation Board proposal

Over 2016-2018 the AONB Partnership with the two local authorities developed and put to Defra a formal proposal for the creation of a Conservation Board for the Shropshire Hills AONB. This was shelved due to the announcement in 2018 of the national Glover Review of National Parks and AONBs but may be revisited depending on the outcome of this review.

A Conservation Board was seen to have advantages of a stronger, more independent voice solely for the AONB, being able to take effective action, raise funds and manage itself more efficiently. The need for this change was perceived to be mainly due to ongoing structural changes in local government and growing pressures on the natural environment and funding availability. A Conservation Board would in addition to the main legal purpose to conserve and enhance natural beauty, have responsibility to increase public understanding and enjoyment of the AONB's special qualities.

In common with other AONBs, there is a widespread feeling among partners that the legal status and influence of the AONB Partnership is not adequate for the tasks it has. The Partnership and local authorities retain the aspiration to achieve a strengthened structure for the AONB in the future.

Delivery of the Management Plan

Partnership and the actions of many people supporting the AONB - especially farmers, landowners and local communities – are key to delivery of the Management Plan. A variety of steering and partnership groups are needed.

Through the Management Plan, the Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership aims to provide co-ordination, advice and assistance. Total membership of the various steering and co-ordination groups led by the AONB Partnership involves several hundred people. Adding the membership of Friends of the Shropshire Hills AONB along with recipients of grants and advice increases this figure further.

The role of the AONB team will vary – sometimes it will be to deliver directly, sometimes to encourage others. Some actions are aspirational, and dependent on resources, either financial or through people's time. These are included as experience shows that opportunities may arise unexpectedly to pursue things, e.g. new funding programmes.

The AONB Partnership itself needs to continue to develop, and a proactive, multi-partnership approach is needed to realise additional activity through new funding sources and increased participation of local people. From 2018-2020 the Partnership jointly with the Shropshire Hills AONB Trust has Heritage Lottery Fund 'Resilient Heritage' funding for capacity building including business planning, training and income generation. Continuing to work with wider protected landscape networks will be valuable, including the National Association for AONBs and the Europarc Federation.

The Actions set out in this Plan are mostly (but not exclusively) focused on organisations that are part of the AONB Partnership. Some additional actions may be suited to implementation by volunteers.



Many different departments of our two local authorities are important stakeholders in the AONB and can contribute to its purposes:

Local authority function	Interaction with AONB purposes
Planning	Protect the AONB against inappropriate development, encourage sustainable and compatible development.
Economic Development	Promote sustainable forms of development, including in tourism, farming and environmental technology
Environment	Specialist support on biodiversity, landscape and trees
Heritage	Responsibility for heritage designations.
Outdoor Partnerships	Manage and promote responsible access, manage sites, co-ordinate active volunteering and Walking for Health
Communication	Support appropriate promotion of the AONB
Community working	Support promotion of social and economic development compatible with the AONB, strengthen communities
Education	Encourage understanding of landscape. Environmental Education, Forest Schools, etc.
Youth services	Encourage participation and enjoyment of the countryside
Museums & Arts	Raising awareness and interpretation, training and skills.
Social care	Encourage wider participation and enjoyment
Highways	Support sustainable transport policy, manage roads to sympathetic designs and standards
Transport	Provide public transport, promote sustainable transport
Waste	Encourage sustainable behaviour and resource use
Maintenance	Manage council land to appropriate standards
Public protection	Enforce Environmental Health and pollution standards, maintain standards in food and animal health
Legal & Democratic services	Support for legal requirements of the designation, minuting and circulation of papers for AONB Partnership meetings, administer aspects of Common Land

Monitoring

Progress with Management Plan activity will be monitored through reporting at the meetings of the AONB Partnership, and the Management Plan Actions will be updated and progress reported widely on a regular basis. This is in addition to continued monitoring of indicators of landscape condition and trends.

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- Page 12
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Abbreviations

Acronyms have been avoided wherever possible and most are defined in the text.

AONB	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
CPRE	Campaign to Protect Rural England
Defra	Department for Food & Rural Affairs
ESA	Environmentally Sensitive Area
ELS	Entry Level Stewardship
HLS	Higher Level Stewardship
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature
PAWS	Plantation on Ancient Woodland Site
SAC	Special Area of Conservation
SAMDev	Site Allocations and Management of Development
WDA	A waste company, former provider of Landfill Tax funding
SPD	Supplementary Planning Document
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
SDS	Sustainable Drainage Systems
WREN	A waste company, provider of Landfill Tax funding

Organisations listed in Actions tables

AONB	Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership
CLA	Country Land & Business Association
EA	Environment Agency
FC	Forestry Commission
FCL	Foundation for Common Land
GCL	Grow Cook Learn
HE	Historic England
LAs	Local Authorities
NE	Natural England
NFU	National Farmers Union
NRW	Natural Resources Wales
NT	National Trust
SC	Shropshire Council
SGS	Shropshire Geological Society
SHT	Shropshire Hills Tourism
SRT	Severn Rivers Trust
SWT	Shropshire Wildlife Trust
Trust	Shropshire Hills AONB Trust
WT	Woodland Trust

Appendix 1 Headline indicators are key statistical measures which can help to summarise the condition of the AONB. Those shown below are based on national guidance for condition monitoring of AONBs and influenced by local priorities. They are linked to the special qualities of the Shropshire Hills AONB, but are dependent on what data is available, and are not intended to be comprehensive.

Special qualities of the AONB	Headline Indicator and status for 2009-14 Plan	Trend at 2009	Trend at 2013	Trend at 2018	Current status (at 2018, or most recent data available)
Diversity and contrast (landscape character)	Character is classed as being 'maintained' in the two National Character Areas in which the AONB falls ^a	→	→	→?	No new data is likely – indicator to be dropped.
Hills	70.5% of farmed land (46,625ha) is managed under some form of agri-environment scheme ^a	↗	↘	↗	77.6% (2016 latest data) Assumed increase due to transition of ESA to ELS/HLS and greater scheme take up outside of ESA areas
Farmed landscape					
Woodlands	50% of overall woodland (6,800ha) is managed under a Forestry Commission Woodland Grant Scheme agreement ^b	→	↘	↗	38.5% in Jan 2018 ^b 31.8% in 2013 ^b NB does not include FC holdings
Rivers and river valleys	0% of river SSSIs are in favourable or recovering condition ^a (one site – River Teme including River Clun SAC)	→	→	↘	Unit 6 (Clun) Declining in 2014 - Considerable activity but no sections are yet in recovering condition ^a
Geology	99.6% of geological SSSIs (by land area) are in favourable or recovering condition ^a	→	↘?	↘	97.4% - small decline data checked Jan 2018 ^a
Wildlife	58.2% of biological SSSIs (by land area) are in favourable or recovering condition ^a	↗	↗	↗	96.7% Major improvement due to prioritised work by Natural England ^a Curlew and Lapwing declines continuing

	Key farmland and upland bird species are declining ^c					- 2016 reporting period ^c
Heritage	52% of Scheduled Ancient Monuments (86) are classified as 'At High or Medium Risk' ^d 2% of Listed Buildings (3) are classified as 'At Risk' ^d		↘*	↘*	↗	23.42% of Scheduled Ancient Monuments (41) are classified as 'At Medium or High Risk' ^e 0.93% at risk 2018 ^e
Environmental and scenic quality	60.3% of all SSSIs (by land area) are in favourable or recovering condition ^a 32% of river length is 'good' water quality ^f		↗	↗	→	96.8% in 2018 ^a 97% in 2012 ^a 15% of River length is Good Ecological Status (Cycle 2 2016) ^f % Decline due to improved data collection
Tranquillity	70% of the AONB is classified as 'tranquil' ^g		↘	↘?	↘?	No new data.
Culture and enjoyment	86.8% of rights of way are classified as 'easy to use'		↗	↘?	↘?	New data not yet obtained

* Downward arrow indicates a negative trend for condition of the AONB

- a Data supplied by Natural England
b Data supplied by Forestry Commission
c Based on data from Shropshire Ornithological Society, Upper Onny Wildlife Group, Upper Clun Community Wildlife Group and Kemp Valley Community Wildlife Group
d http://www.rspb.org.uk/Images/SUKB_2012_tcm9-328339.pdf
e Data supplied by English Heritage
f Data supplied by Environment Agency
g Data supplied by CPRE, 2005¹⁶. Definition of 'tranquil' based on green colour

Appendix 2 Outline priority outcomes for New Environmental Land Management schemes in the Shropshire Hills AONB

Biodiversity

Maintaining priority habitats (especially SSSIs), including:

- heathland
- upland flushes, fens and swamps
- damp pastures with purple moor grass and rushes
- species-rich meadows and grassland
- ancient and native woodland
- riparian habitat linked to rivers and lakes
- wood pasture and parkland with veteran trees
- arable field margins
- open mosaic habitats on previously developed land

Priority habitats for restoration as part of habitat networks include ancient and native woodland, upland heathland, unimproved grassland meadows.

Priority species that need tailored management and advice include:

- Lapwing – nest on spring-tilled arable land or on short grassland with a low stocking rate
- Willow tit – found in damp, scrubby woodland, and nest in standing deadwood but rapidly declining
- Small pearl-bordered fritillary – damp grass, woodland clearings and moorland, larval plant violets
- Lesser horseshoe bat – roost in old mines and buildings, sensitive to disturbance
- Freshwater pearl mussel – filter-feeding mollusc requiring clean water streams with gravels
- White-clawed crayfish – need small, clean streams
- Woodland bird assemblages - 4 or more from: lesser spotted woodpecker, tree pipit, redstart, pied flycatcher, spotted flycatcher, wood warbler, marsh tit, lesser redpoll, hawfinch
- Breeding waders – lapwing, redshank, curlew, snipe
- Great crested newt - managing ponds and ditches

Enhancing farmland habitats: by sowing nectar flower mixes, increasing flowers on grassland, sowing winter bird food mixes to benefit wild pollinators, farmland birds such as grey partridge, tree sparrow and yellowhammer, plus bats and brown hare.

Resource protection

- Fencing watercourses to prevent excessive poaching of riverbanks by livestock and encourage natural regeneration of trees and shrubs
- Restoration of hedgerows and boundary features will reduce soil erosion and benefit soil quality, water quality, pollinating insects, habitat connectivity, biodiversity and flood risk management
- Grass buffer strips in arable farming systems

Water quality

- Works to reduce water-borne phosphate, nitrate and sediment, especially in the River Clun and River Teme SSSI catchments.
- Controlling the source or the movement of potential pollutants, including: nutrients from fertilisers, manures and organic materials; sediment from soil erosion and run-off; pesticides from their use and disposal

Flood risk

Works that reduce the amount and rate of surface water run-off, reduce soil erosion and slow the movement of floodwaters on floodplains, especially in the:

- River Corve: Seifton and Diddlesbury Brooks upstream of Brockton & Bourton.
- Strand & Clee Brooks upstream of Peaton
- Shyte Brook upstream of Much Wenlock
- Habberley Brook upstream of Pontesbury
- River Onny, Rea Brook (west Shropshire)

Woodlands and trees

Bringing existing woods into management especially:

- SSSIs and ancient semi-natural woodland
- Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS) – progressive restoration to broadleaf woodland

Plus other unmanaged broadleaved woodland and unmanaged conifer woodland within catchments subject to eutrophication and acidification.

New woodland planting:

- to buffer and link existing woodlands, in particular ancient woods, and other semi-natural open habitats within priority woodland habitat networks
- to reduce and intercept diffuse pollution, especially in the River Clun and Teme catchments
- to increase infiltration, reduce erosion, or slow the flow of floodwaters on floodplains

A combination of enhancing existing woodlands and expanding woodland cover can benefit landscape character, biodiversity, water quality and flood risk, and key locations include the valleys of

New planting of trees outside woodlands will be a high priority, especially where ash is common and impact of Ash Dieback will be greatest.

Management of alder and replacement planting along rivers is also a priority due to the effects of *Phytophthora*.

Maintenance of hedgerow trees, bankside and in-field trees is a priority, along with planting new ones, especially native trees. Species need to be chosen appropriate to the location.

Historic environment

Active management which ensures the long-term survival of historic environment features and protects them against damage and decay, in particular addressing common threats of scrub and tree growth, erosion from livestock and animal burrowing.

Highest priorities are for:

- designated features - archaeological features of national significance (Scheduled Monuments) and Registered Parks and Gardens (RPG)
- designated and undesignated traditional farm buildings and non-domestic historic buildings on holdings
- undesignated historic and archaeological features of high significance which are part of the Selected Heritage Inventory for Natural England (SHINE)

Also other works to:

- revert archaeological sites under cultivation to permanent grass

- reduce damaging cultivation and harvesting practices through minimum tillage or direct drilling where this offers a suitable level of protection
- remove scrub and bracken from archaeological or historic features
- maintain below-ground archaeology under permanent uncultivated vegetation or actively manage earthworks, standing stones and structures as visible 'above ground' features
- maintain and restore historic water management systems, including those associated with water meadows and designed water bodies
- restore historic buildings that are assessed as a priority in the area
- maintain or restore Registered Parks and Gardens
- safeguard designated and undesignated traditional farm buildings
- maintain priority undesignated historic parklands

The following are particularly relevant to collaborative working across farms:

- Habitat restoration
- Flood mitigation
- Water quality
- Recreation
- Woodlands and forestry
- control of invasive non-native species, and action to safeguard and enhance populations of pollinators

Appendix 3 Considering the AONB's special qualities for planning applications

This Appendix is intended to help developers and decision makers consider the special qualities of the AONB in relation to planning applications. It is in addition to the [description of the special qualities](#) earlier in the Plan.

Diversity and Contrast - The Shropshire Landscape Character Assessment identifies 17 distinct [Landscape Types](#) in the AONB. Development should take account of the particular characteristics of the Landscape Types in and around the site, and adapt design to support rather than erode this character.

See Management Plan Policy [P2i](#)

Components of the landscape:

Hills - The hills define the identity of the area and are the backbone of our landscape. Development on upper open land of any identifiable hills is likely to have a negative landscape impact. The lower slopes of hills often have farmsteads, and the character of these should continue to blend in with the landscape. Views from the most prominent and popular hills will be a consideration

See Management Plan Policies [P1i](#), [P2j](#), [P7](#).

Farmed Countryside - The patchwork of fields with hedges and trees results from generations of farming and gives the landscape a maturity. Development should protect existing and historic features of the landscape, and ensure new features are in keeping e.g. native hedges, walls only where these are a local feature.

See Management Plan Policies [LM1vii](#), [P2i](#)

See [Shropshire Hills AONB Agricultural Buildings Design Guidance](#)

Woodlands - Ancient and semi-natural woodland should not be harmed by development. Landscape planting should enhance woodland networks.

See Management Plan Policy [LM1v](#) See [Landscaping guidance](#).

Rivers and River Valleys - Rivers and streams in the AONB are relatively clean and natural in form; they are of high quality and home to important species. Development will need to avoid adverse effects to rivers, streams or other wetland features during construction phase, as well as any ongoing impacts. Sustainable drainage systems should be used to aid water quality and slow the speed of water run-off to lessen flooding.

See Management Plan Policies LM1v, [P1j](#), [P1ii](#), [P1vii](#).

See [Water Friendly Farming guidance](#).

Characteristics found across the whole area:

Geology - The AONB's variety of rock types and geological structures is not likely to be affected by a single application, although the impact of large quarrying or mining proposals could be significant. Valuable geological sites including SSSIs and RIGS should not be harmed by development – the importance of these can be their visibility and significance in the history of geological science as well as the actual features present.

See Management Plan Policy [P1ii](#) See [guidance on geological conservation](#)

Wildlife - High quality semi-natural habitats are of particular importance and should not be damaged by development, including heathland, grassland, woodland and rivers. Some are protected as SSSIs, but the value of county Wildlife Sites and undesignated priority habitats should be given a high consideration. Wildlife is however found across the whole landscape, and any location can be of value. Appropriate information must be found and considered e.g. surveys for protected species such as bats and great crested newts. Some species can be helped by design features e.g. bats, swifts.

See Management Plan Policies [LM1i](#), [LM1v](#), [P1ii](#)

See [guidance on biodiversity net gain](#)

Heritage - Designated heritage features and their settings should not be harmed by development, but heritage value is widespread in the landscape including undesignated or unrecorded features, and historic character more generally. The scale and design of development should take heritage into account, especially in locations with a high quality built environment such as Conservation Areas.

See Management Plan Policies [LM1vii](#), [P3](#)

See [guidance on heritage and planning](#)

Scenic and environmental quality - Panoramic views extend across and beyond the AONB, and the contrasts are important - of wide open spaces and intimate corners, of relatively wild hills and valleys to softer, settled landscapes. The visibility of new development should be considered, including the location and sensitivity of particular viewpoints. The landscape has relatively clean air and water and performs valuable functions such as water run-off control; these qualities should not be harmed by development.

See Management Plan Policies [P1i](#), [P1v](#), [P1vi](#), [P1vii](#), [P4](#), [P5](#), [P6](#), [P7](#), [P8](#).

See [Landscaping guidance](#).

See [Shropshire Council Sustainable Design SPD](#)

Tranquillity - The Shropshire Hills are a haven of tranquillity – peace and quiet, dark skies and unspoilt views. Impacts from development may be direct e.g. through noise or increased lighting during construction or operational phases of the development, or indirect e.g. through increased traffic, etc.

See Management Plan Policies [P1iii](#), [P6](#), [P7](#), [P8](#), [EC1](#)

Culture and Opportunities for Enjoyment - The variety of cultural settings from urban fringe through market towns to sparsely populated countryside is part of the diversity and character of the AONB. Development should respect these qualities in character and scale. Enjoyment of the landscape and people's wellbeing are hugely important, and the quality of surroundings should not be harmed by development.

See Management Plan Policies [P8](#), [EC1](#)



The AONB Management Plan is produced by Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership on behalf of Shropshire Council and Telford & Wrekin Council.

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Working together to conserve and sustain the landscape

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Committee and Date

Cabinet
12th June 2019

Item

Public

SHROPSHIRE LOCAL PLAN REVIEW: CONSULTATION ON PREFERRED STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT SITES

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1. Summary

- 1.1 The principal purpose of this report is to seek approval for a consultation document which identifies preferred strategic sites in Shropshire. Several strategic sites have been promoted as part of the Local Plan Review process, including: the former Ironbridge Power Station, Buildwas; Clive Barracks at Tern Hill; RAF Cosford; and land north of Junction 3 of the M54.
- 1.2 These proposals provide strategic opportunities to deliver the objectives of Shropshire's Economic Growth Strategy, including the delivery of investment within strategic corridors, to increase the productivity and output of the local economy. These proposals are in strategic locations in the county that have the potential to generate significant new investment in employment, thereby increasing the number but also the quality of jobs locally together with additional housing, improved infrastructure and local services.
- 1.3 The report also provides a summary analysis of the feedback which was received during the previous round of consultation on Preferred Sites between October 2018 and February 2019.
- 1.4 Finally, the report requests approval of an amended timetable for the Local Plan Review to reflect the scale and nature of the proposals which it now includes.

2. Recommendations

- A. That Cabinet approves the draft document for consultation (attached) which identifies preferred strategic sites at the former Ironbridge Power Station, Clive Barracks at Tern Hill and RAF Cosford for consultation subject to minor amendments and editing. The document also seeks views on (but at this stage does not identify as a preferred allocation) outline proposals for a strategic employment site and related community services and housing north of Junction 3 of the M54;
- B. That authority is delegated to the Executive Director of Place in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Strategic Planning to confirm the final version of the documents and to publish these for public consultation;
- C. That Cabinet approves a revised Local Plan timetable as set out in the updated 'Local Development Scheme' attached to this report.

REPORT

3. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

- 3.1 The current Local Plan Review is designed to help ensure that the Local Plan will remain the starting point and platform for planning decisions during the period to 2036. The Council's preferred sites to deliver Shropshire's preferred housing and employment requirements were published for public consultation in November 2018. However, whilst it is considered that these requirements can mainly be met from sites within existing settlements, large mixed-use strategic sites including at the former Ironbridge Power Station, Clive Barracks at Tern Hill, RAF Cosford and north of Junction 3 on the M54 are also being promoted in the County. These sites are strategically located and offer the potential to generate significant new investment in employment, thereby increasing the number but also the quality of jobs locally.
- 3.2 The proposed consultation document proposes that there is sufficient evidence and justification for the former Ironbridge Power Station, Clive Barracks and RAF Cosford proposals to be preferred for allocation as 'strategic sites'. At this stage it is considered that further evidence and justification is required to enable the site at Junction 3 off the M54 to be preferred for development. However, despite this it continues to be considered appropriate for the Council to consult on all four options. If the Junction 3 proposal is proposed as a preferred option for development at the pre-submission draft stage of the plan preparation process, then this outcome will be subject to further consultation at that time.
- 3.3 The potential strategic sites also present a positive opportunity to generate greater resilience in housing delivery in the County through increased choice and competition. In the case of the former Ironbridge Power Station and Clive Barracks, Tern Hill, redevelopment would also demonstrate a proactive approach to bringing forward brownfield land to meet development needs.
- 3.4 Shropshire has the potential to benefit significantly from the delivery of these strategic sites by securing large scale investment in strategic and local infrastructure complementing the managed growth within existing towns and villages. However, the strategic scale of these proposals does inevitably raise issues about capacity of existing infrastructure and environmental assets which are also important challenges for their allocation through the Local Plan process, and this highlights the need for further, more detailed information and for local communities to have an opportunity to have their say on the proposals.
- 3.5 Shropshire's Economic Growth Strategy (SEGS) identifies the need for a 'step change' in Shropshire's economy to: reduce levels of out commuting; retain employment and skills locally; increase productivity; and address housing affordability issues. The SEGS also identifies a number of strategic corridors and growth zones including the M54/A5 and A41 through Shropshire and identifies opportunities arising from the redevelopment of the former Ironbridge Power Station.
- 3.6 The West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) has developed a Spatial Investment and Delivery Plan (SIDP) which identifies priority strategic growth

areas and corridors across the region. The primary purpose of the Plan is to enable the coordinated delivery of housing, employment and infrastructure. In particular, it seeks to deliver planned housing and employment growth so that they are mutually supportive. The latest version of the SIDP sets out a framework for growth that includes priority sites and growth corridors and associated infrastructure requirements and the actions that key stakeholders will take to support the delivery of new homes and employment opportunities in the region. The M54 Corridor is specifically identified in the SIDP as a strategic growth corridor.

- 3.7 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.
- 3.8 Land at Cosford and near junction 3 of the M54 lies within the West Midlands Green Belt. National policy requires Shropshire Council to present an 'exceptional circumstances' argument to justify the release of Green Belt land. There is a significant risk to the future allocation of these two sites if the Council are unable to adequately justify these 'exceptional circumstances' through the Local Plan examination process.
- 3.9 The potential impact of development on Green Belt land in Shropshire is identified as part of the published Green Belt Review which forms part of the evidence base for the Local Plan Review. Any release of land near Junction 3 of the M54 would be predicated on meeting cross-boundary needs from the Black Country. The alternative options available to meet this need, including through Green Belt release within the Black Country and nearby authorities, are currently being investigated by the Black Country Authorities, who will publish their findings as part of the evidence base for the review of the Black Country Core Strategy. The findings of these studies will provide essential evidence to inform any decision about whether the release of land at Junction 3 from the Green Belt is justifiable.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 Planned growth provides the best possible opportunity for Shropshire Council to harness growth potential by providing a stable platform for investors and developers. New growth simultaneously imposes an additional burden on local services and facilities, whilst also providing opportunities to secure investment to improve them. The provision of some of these services and facilities are the responsibility of Shropshire Council and other public service providers, and there is an opportunity for the Council to secure appropriate developer contributions from the developments in order to fund necessary infrastructure improvements.
- 4.2 The WMCA's SIDP (paragraph 3.6 above) will be a key influence on its investment decisions and delivery plans, including projects and plans to secure the public and private infrastructure provision which will be needed to deliver a quality of development essential for sustainable growth. In March 2018, WMCA secured a 'Housing Deal' with Government which provides significant funding for infrastructure, land remediation and acquisition to support its growth delivery plans.

5 Background

Feedback from consultation on preferred sites

- 5.1 The Council's preferred sites to deliver Shropshire's housing and employment requirements were published for public consultation for 10 weeks between October 2018 and February 2019. Responses were received from around 3,600 unique respondents. An objective analysis of these responses was commissioned from consultants which has provided the following headline issues:
- Further evidence and justification will be required to demonstrate that windfall sites are a reliable source of housing supply, and that the Council's windfall housing guidelines are deliverable.
 - The geographical extent within which different types of windfall development (open market / affordable) would be considered acceptable should be more closely defined.
 - Further justification will be required to demonstrate the exceptional circumstances which justify the release of land from the Green Belt.
 - Further definitions or supporting information explaining the meaning of various technical terms e.g. cross-subsidy exception sites, windfall development would be useful.
 - The infrastructure capacity of settlements should be explored further, in particular primarily healthcare facilities, schools, bus services and impacts on the highway network.
 - The provision of affordable housing is a key topic for respondents throughout Shropshire, the common themes raised which relate to affordable housing include:
 - More affordable housing should be delivered to retain local young people and first time buyers;
 - Need to secure more affordable housing from open market schemes;
 - The financial viability of a site/development proposal should be considered when setting affordable housing requirements
- 5.2 This analysis, which will include more detailed comments on specific settlements, will be made available on the Council's Planning Policy web pages during the consultation period.

6 Strategic Sites

- 6.1 Three preferred strategic sites have been identified as preferred options in the draft consultation document, these are:

Former Ironbridge Power Station

- 6.2 The former Ironbridge power station occupies a 350 acre site south of the River Severn near Buildwas. The power station ceased operation in 2015. Harworth Group purchased the site from Uniper Plc in June 2018. Harworth is a regeneration company specialising in large sites with complex issues and have an excellent track record regenerating sites for new development like the former power station. Harworth have appointed specialist contractors to undertake the demolition of the former power station buildings including the cooling towers starting later this year. Harworth has been working closely with

local councils, the local community and other stakeholders to understand the site and the surrounding area. This engagement has helped Harworth to assemble a range of detailed evidence and draft an indicative masterplan for a mixed-use scheme which would provide employment land and around 1,000 homes, together with local services and facilities. The latest version of the masterplan is presented in the consultation document.

- 6.3 The redevelopment of the site presents an opportunity to create jobs, support the local tourism economy, provide housing and to deliver high quality remediation in a sensitive environmental context. The opportunity to capitalise on this significant strategic opportunity has been identified within Shropshire's Economic Growth Strategy (2017-2021) and within the emerging partial review of the Local Plan.
- 6.4 Council officers have worked closely with Harworth and colleagues from Telford & Wrekin Council to help identify and address key infrastructure investment priorities and environmental issues relevant to the site and the wider area. An indication of the evidence base assembled to date, together with an assessment of key constraints and opportunities is presented in the consultation document.

Clive Barracks, Tern Hill

- 6.5 Clive Barracks is a 50 hectare military site on the A41 near Market Drayton which is currently home to the Royal Irish Regiment. MOD announced the intention to redevelop the site in March 2016, and have recently confirmed that they now plan to complete the vacation and disposal of the site by 2025. The site is located on the A41 strategic growth corridor. The site also has potential to benefit from improved connectivity from the new HS2 Rail link and Crewe Hub Station. The MOD and its consultants have been working closely with local councils, the local community and other stakeholders as part of a 'Task Force' led by Owen Patterson MP since 2016.
- 6.6 This engagement has helped MOD and its consultants to assemble a range of evidence and prepare an indicative masterplan for a mixed-use scheme which would provide employment land and around 750 homes as part of a new settlement, together with local services and facilities. Approximately 450 homes are expected to be delivered during the plan period to 2036. The latest version of the masterplan is presented in the consultation document, together with an assessment of key constraints and opportunities and a set of design principles.

RAF Cosford

- 6.7 The recent national defence review has confirmed RAF Cosford as a key MOD asset. However, MOD consider that its potential to meet future operational defence requirements is restricted by its Green Belt location. To reflect this, MOD have asked Shropshire Council to release land in their ownership at Cosford from the Green Belt to provide for an intensification of their use of the existing site.
- 6.8 The Cosford site is expected to act as a centre of excellence for both UK and International Defence Training and is intended to host the relocation of the School of Technical Training from MOD St Athan. Whilst detailed information

on any potential moves and associated users is currently restricted due to the sensitivity of this information, RAF Cosford's future role within the Defence College of Technical Training (DCTT) is expected to generate around an additional 1,500 staff and students using the existing site, although this number could potentially increase even further. These changes would also have associated requirements for new build development of training facilities including technical and domestic accommodation. In addition to the consideration of requirements arising from the DCTT, work is currently underway to capture and consolidate information on the feasibility of other potential moves to RAF Cosford. At present, it is too early to report back on any of the findings of this work, but it is anticipated that it will identify a number of potential non-DCTT users that are interested in utilising the site.

- 6.9 In addition to the MOD use of the site, the RAF Museum Cosford has outlined plans for a £40 million investment programme over 10 years to intensify and expand the museum site. Furthermore, the creation of a specialist aviation academy has recently been announced by the Aviation Skills Partnership in collaboration with Midlands Engine, the RAF, Air Cadets and Telford College. This is a major initiative to address demand for trained entrants to the Aviation Industry across all jobs, roles and skills in accordance with the Government's Green Paper Aviation 2050: The Future of UK Aviation. It also further elevates the importance of this location for UK aviation and potentially creates hundreds of new jobs at the site.
- 6.10 These proposals will require the development of new buildings on MOD owned land south of the railway line. Proposals for new development and intensification of the use of RAF Cosford are expected to be for military use or non-profit making uses rather than acting as a contribution to meeting Shropshire future growth needs.

7. Potential Further Strategic Site

- 7.1 A further potential strategic site has been identified, although it is not at this stage identified as a preferred allocation since further information is required before any decision can be made about whether its development is justifiable.

M54 Junction 3

- 7.2 The Bradford Estate has extensive land holdings north of Junction 3 on the M54 on both sides of the A41, which they promoted to the Council as part of the Local Plan Review. The Estates revised proposals are to provide for the construction of a strategic employment site of around 50 hectares, accompanied by around 3,000 homes, and a local centre to provide services, facilities and infrastructure as part of a planned settlement north of the M54 and west of the A41. The area of search identified by the site promoters is identified within the consultation document.
- 7.3 Recent evidence commissioned by Shropshire Council suggests that the M54/A5 corridor, much of which is located within the Green Belt, is a significant opportunity area and suggests there is considerable latent demand for serviced employment land to meet the needs of both occupiers for inward investment and local occupiers in the target sectors identified in the Shropshire Economic Growth Strategy (SEGS). As part of this work, the consultant has

engaged with neighbouring local authorities and regional organisations including the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA).

- 7.4 It is envisaged that any strategic employment offer in the M54 corridor would be strongly related to the proposed intensification of technical training at RAF Cosford described above and would be complementary, rather than competing with, the employment offer within neighbouring areas. As such, the key objective for such a site would be to deliver supply chain opportunities and growth for companies in key sectors (including but not limited to engineering, advanced manufacturing, aviation, innovative healthcare and environmental technologies) as identified in the SEGS and in many ways complementary to proposals for RAF Cosford.
- 7.5 As a strategic location, the M54 corridor benefits from its proximity to existing international businesses dominant in growth sectors such as advanced manufacturing and engineering. The corridor also benefits from good access to transport infrastructure and will benefit from planned investments in road and rail in neighbouring areas. The corridor is close to higher education and training institutions including key assets such as RAF Cosford, Wolverhampton University and Harper Adams University.
- 7.6 It is not considered that the release of land north of Junction 3 of the M54 would be required to achieve the planned growth for Shropshire. However, national planning policy requires Shropshire Council to plan positively for growth by providing a strategy which, as a minimum, seeks to meet local development needs and to consider any unmet need from neighbouring areas and whether it is practical to meet some or all of this need, where this is considered appropriate and consistent with the principles of achieving sustainable development.
- 7.7 The latest evidence indicates that the Black Country cannot accommodate its identified development needs within its urban area. The Black Country authorities estimate that there will be a shortfall of around 300ha of employment land, with a particular need for additional high quality, accessible sites capable of accommodating national investment requirements. Similarly, even by increasing densities and looking to other sources of urban land supply, the latest evidence also suggests that there will be a significant housing shortfall of at least 22,000 homes in the Black Country. The options available to the Black Country to meet this need, including through Green Belt release within the Black Country and nearby authorities are currently being investigated by the Black Country Authorities.
- 7.8 The characteristics of the M54 corridor highlighted above and its general proximity/accessibility to the Black Country, mean that, subject to the work being undertaken by the Black Country Authorities, there may be potential for Shropshire to agree to provide for some of this shortfall through the construction of a strategic employment site and housing as part of a new planned settlement at Junction 3 of the M54.
- 7.9 The site promoters are undertaking initial assessments of key constraints and opportunities in order to determine initial design principles and produce an initial masterplan.
- 7.10 Shropshire Council recognises that this proposal would represent a 'once in a generation' opportunity, and the development of a new planned settlement to

accommodate a mix of development would represent a significant positive growth opportunity for Shropshire. However, given the likely scale of the proposal it is considered there are a number of significant issues which need further consideration ahead of the Council being able to prefer this land for development, such as:

- i. The strategic scale of these proposals and mix of employment, residential and other uses;
- ii. Concerns about impacts on existing infrastructure, communities and environmental assets;
- iii. Justification for the release of Green Belt land – this is considered to be intrinsically linked with the assessment of the alternative options available to meet Black Country housing and employment needs;
- iv. Securing strategic infrastructure investment and cross boundary agreement with neighbouring authorities;

7.11 A range of further information is therefore required to inform any decision about this proposal and, in light of this, the proposed development north of Junction 3 is not currently being identified as a preferred strategic site. Instead, the draft consultation document seeks comments on:

- i. the potential benefits of the proposed development;
- ii. the issues and impacts which might be generated;
- iii. ways in which these might be mitigated or addressed.

7.12 Further information is therefore specifically required regarding:

- i. Assessment of alternative options available to the Black Country for meeting the housing and employment needs arising in the Black Country;
- ii. The outcome of the Black Country Green Belt review;
- iii. Infrastructure capacity assessment to identify key impacts and investment requirements, including the future needs and opportunities in relation to transport.
- iv. Infrastructure funding;
- v. The views of neighbouring authorities, Government agencies and major infrastructure providers;
- vi. Further evidence to support the economic development context.

8 Local Plan Timetable

8.2 Shropshire Council is required by legislation and national policy to maintain an up to date Local Development Scheme (LDS), which is the 'Project Plan' that describes the current documents which make up the statutory Development Plan for Shropshire and the Local Plan documents that are to be prepared over the next 3-year period to replace existing policies. The current published version of the LDS was agreed by Cabinet on 2 May 2018. Due to the scale and nature of the proposals being considered within the ongoing Local Plan Review and the volume of feedback received during the last round of consultation on Preferred Sites, an updated timetable for undertaking the Local Plan Review has been prepared. This is documented within a revised LDS which covers the period from 2019 to 2022 and has been attached as an appendix to this report.

9 Next steps

- 9.1 Subject to Cabinet approval, the consultation document will be published for 10 weeks between July and September 2019. 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 parish councils in the areas concerned during the consultation period to help them to explore the implications of the proposed approach in their local context.
- 9.2 The consultation responses will be used to inform the next stages of the Local Plan review as described in the revised LDS, with formal consultation on a full 'Pre-Submission' version of the revised Local Plan now expected in Spring 2020, after which the Council expects to formally submit the Local Plan, together with any formal objections, for examination by the Planning Inspectorate in June 2020.

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

- West Midlands Spatial Investment and Delivery (SIDP) Plan Revised Draft 21 February 2019

<https://governance.wmca.org.uk/documents/s2639/2019.02.13%20HLDB%20Revised%20SIDP%20appendix%20to%20covering%20paper%20-%20Public%20paper%20-%20FINAL.pdf>

Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder)

Robert Macey, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Strategic Planning

Local Members

Edward Bird, Kevin Turley, Claire Wild, Karen Calder, Rob Gittins, Paul Wynn

Appendices

1. Consultation document on Preferred Strategic Sites;
2. Shropshire Local Development Scheme (LDS) 2019-2022

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Shropshire Local Plan Review Consultation on Strategic Sites

Consultation Period: To be added before consultation

Scope of the consultation

Topic of this consultation:	<p>This consultation document seeks views on preferred strategic sites and a further potential strategic site to inform the ongoing review of the Shropshire Local Plan. The document:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identifies a series of preferred strategic sites, specifically: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Clive Barracks, Tern Hill; b) Former Ironbridge Power Station; and c) RAF Cosford 2. Identifies a further potential strategic site at Land north of Junction 3 of the M54, which is currently subject to consideration but is <u>not</u> currently a preferred strategic site.
Scope of this consultation:	We are seeking views of all parties with an interest in the preferred strategic sites and/or other potential strategic site, so that relevant views and evidence can be taken into account in deciding the best way forward.
Geography:	These proposals relate to the administrative area of Shropshire Council.
Impact assessment:	The Strategic Consultation Document has been subject to Sustainability Appraisal; has been screened under The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010; and has been subject to an Equality and Social Inclusion Impact Assessment (ESIIA). The reports of these assessments are available on the Council's website.
Duration:	This consultation will run from: To be added before consultation
After the consultation:	We plan to issue a summary of responses on the Council's website within three months of the closing date of the consultation.

How to respond to this consultation

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 website, and paper copies will be provided at libraries and council offices in the main towns.

A significant number of organisations and individuals will be notified directly of the publication of the consultation documents by email in accordance with the SCI.

To respond to this consultation, please use the questionnaire available on the Shropshire Council website at: **To be added before consultation**

Once completed, this questionnaire can be submitted by:

Email to: planningpolicy@shropshire.gov.uk or

Post to: Shropshire Council, Planning Policy & Strategy Team, Shirehall, Shrewsbury, SY2 6ND

Confidentiality and data protection

Information provided in response to this consultation, including personal information, may be subject to publication or disclosure in accordance with the access to information legislation (primarily the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act 2018 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004).

Contents

Scope of the consultation	1
How to respond to this consultation	1
Confidentiality and data protection	1
1. Introduction	3
Strategic Sites.....	3
Why are we reviewing the Local Plan?	3
Strategic Context	4
Progressing the Local Plan Review	4
Supporting Assessments	5
Evidence Base.....	6
Identification of Preferred Strategic Sites	6
Infrastructure Capacity assessments.....	6
What Happens Next?.....	6
2. Preferred Strategic Sites	7
Introduction	7
Clive Barracks, Tern Hill	7
Overview	7
Key Issues and Opportunities	8
Preferred Strategic Site	8
Site Plan	10
Initial Site Guidelines.....	11
Indicative Masterplan	12
Former Ironbridge Power Station.....	13
Overview	13
Key Issues and Opportunities	14
Preferred Strategic Site	15
Site Plan	16
Initial Site Guidelines.....	17
Indicative Masterplan	19
RAF Cosford.....	20
Overview	20
Key Issues and Opportunities	23
Preferred Strategic Site	23
Site Plan	25
Initial Site Guidelines.....	26
3. Other Potential Strategic Sites	27
Introduction.....	27
Land north of Junction 3 of the M54	27

1. Introduction

Strategic Sites

- 1.1 Strategic Sites are large sites of more than 25ha in size, which are not associated with meeting the growth needs of any particular settlement and contribute to achieving the aspirations of the Economic Growth Strategy for Shropshire.
- 1.2 Shropshire's Economic Growth Strategy identifies the need for a 'step change' in Shropshire's economy to: reduce levels of out commuting; retain employment and skills locally; increase productivity; and address housing affordability issues. The Economic Growth Strategy also identifies a number of strategic corridors and growth zones including the M54/A5 and A41 through Shropshire and identifies opportunities arising from the redevelopment of the Former Ironbridge Power Station.
- 1.3 This consultation document seeks views on preferred strategic sites and a further potential strategic site to inform the ongoing review of the Shropshire Local Plan.
- 1.4 These proposals are considered to provide strategic opportunities to deliver the objectives of Shropshire's Economic Growth Strategy, including the delivery of investment within strategic corridors, to increase the productivity and output of the local economy. They also have the potential to generate significant new investment in employment, thereby increasing the number but also the quality of jobs locally; provide additional housing, resulting in a positive opportunity to generate greater resilience in housing delivery through increased choice and competition; and contribute to improved infrastructure and local services.
- 1.5 The preferred strategic sites are:
 - Clive Barracks, Tern Hill;
 - Former Ironbridge Power Station; and
 - RAF Cosford.
- 1.6 Shropshire Council considers that there is sufficient evidence and justification for these proposals to be preferred for allocation as 'strategic sites'.
- 1.7 A further potential strategic site is land at Junction 3 of the M54. At this stage Shropshire Council considers that further evidence and justification is required to enable the site at Junction 3 of the M54 to be preferred for development. However, it is considered appropriate for the Council to consult on the site as a potential strategic site. If the site at Junction 3 of the M54 is proposed as a preferred 'strategic site' for development at the pre-submission draft stage of the plan preparation process, then this outcome will be subject to further consultation at that time.

Why are we reviewing the Local Plan?

- 1.8 The Shropshire Local Plan currently comprises the Core Strategy (adopted 2011) and the Site Allocations and Management of Development (SAMDev) Plan (adopted 2015), together with the adopted Neighbourhood Plans for Much Wenlock and Shifnal. These documents set out proposals for the use of land and policies to guide future development in order to help to deliver sustainable growth in Shropshire for the period up to 2026.

- 1.9 Local Planning Authorities are required to keep under review any matters that may affect the development of its area. Shropshire Council has determined to undertake a Local Plan Review in order to: allow the consideration of updated information on development needs within the County; reflect changes to national policy and our local strategies; extend the Plan period to 2036; and provide a plan which will help to support growth and maintain local control over planning decisions during the period to 2036. Maintaining an up to date Local Plan will support local growth by generating certainty for investment in local development and infrastructure through a policy framework that establishes an up to date and objective assessment of development needs and supports sustainable development in Shropshire during the period to 2036.
- 1.10 The overall strategic approach of focusing growth in Shropshire's Strategic Centre; Principal Centres and Key Centres, whilst enabling some controlled development in rural areas to maintain local sustainability, remains the preferred development strategy. Many of the existing policies in the Core Strategy and SAMDev do not need to be amended and will be carried forward as part of the new Plan. The review will therefore focus on key areas of change, including options for the level and distribution of new housing and strategies for employment growth during the period to 2036, together with any amended policies and new site allocations which are needed to demonstrate that these requirements can be delivered. The existing Core Strategy and SAMDev Plan will remain in force until any new Plan is adopted. This is anticipated to occur during 2021.
- 1.11 The product of the review will be a new Local Plan document which merges the Core Strategy & SAMDev Plans and contains both strategic policies and more applied policies which primarily inform planning decisions, together with existing (and unimplemented) sites and new site allocations.

Strategic Context

- 1.12 Shropshire is a large, diverse but predominantly rural, inland County. However, Shropshire does not operate in isolation; it is influenced by cross boundary interactions with adjacent areas including Herefordshire, Worcestershire, the Borough of Telford and Wrekin, Staffordshire, the West Midlands conurbation, Cheshire and areas across the English-Welsh border. These include: cross border service provision such as shopping, health, education and leisure; transport links and commuting patterns; any inter-dependencies between housing markets and economic areas; and protection of the Green Belt and our landscape, historic and natural environments. These interactions are the subject of on-going discussions with neighbouring planning authorities under our 'Duty to Co-operate'. The spatial context for the Local Plan Review is described in detail in the Authority Monitoring Report (AMR) which is available on the Council's web pages. More detailed facts, figures and trends concerning the Shropshire context are also available on the Council's webpages at: <http://shropshire.gov.uk/facts-and-figures>

Progressing the Local Plan Review

- 1.13 The Strategic Sites Consultation represents the fourth stage of consultation on the Local Plan Review.

- 1.14 Previous stages of consultation undertaken are as follows:
- Issues and Strategic Options Consultation, which covered the following strategic options:
 - Housing requirement;
 - Strategic distribution of future growth;
 - Strategies for employment growth; and
 - Delivering development in rural settlements.
 - Preferred Scale and Distribution of Development Consultation, which set out:
 - The preferred scale of housing and employment development in Shropshire 2016-36;
 - The preferred distribution of this growth;
 - Identified preferred housing and employment growth guidelines for the strategic centre and each principal and key centre;
 - Confirmed the methodology which Shropshire Council proposes to adopt to identify a settlement hierarchy in Shropshire;
 - Lists the settlements which form part of this hierarchy;
 - Proposed draft policies for the management of development within proposed Community Hubs and Community Clusters; and
 - Identified other development requirements which may need to be addressed as part of the Local Plan Review.
 - Preferred Sites Consultation, which:
 - Outlined a housing policy direction to improve the delivery of local housing needs;
 - Established development guidelines and development boundaries for Shrewsbury, the Principal and Key Centres and each proposed Community Hub; and
 - Set out the preferred sites to deliver the preferred scale and distribution of housing and employment growth during the period 2016 to 2036.
- 1.15 Consultation documents and summaries of consultation responses associated with these previous stages of consultation are available on the Shropshire Council website at: <https://shropshire.gov.uk/planning-policy/local-planning/local-plan-partial-review-2016-2036/>

Supporting Assessments

- 1.16 The Strategic Sites consultation document has been subject to Sustainability Appraisal in line with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.
- 1.17 It has also been screened under The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended) and a Strategic Sites: Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening Report.
- 1.18 An Equality and Social Inclusion Impact Assessment has also been undertaken.
- 1.19 Copies of these assessments are available on the Shropshire Council website, during this consultation period.

Evidence Base

- 1.20 The Local Plan Review is informed by an extensive evidence base which is available via the Council's webpages at:
<http://shropshire.gov.uk/planning-policy/local-plan/local-plan-partial-review-2016-2036/>

Identification of Preferred Strategic Sites

- 1.21 Preferred strategic sites have been carefully assessed using a detailed assessment framework which has been applied consistently across the County.
- 1.22 This framework has used available evidence from a variety of sources to assess the suitability of each site. 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.
- 1.23 The site assessment process consisted of three key stages, these are:
- Stage 1: The Strategic Land Availability Assessment (SLAA). This consisted of a strategic screen and review of all sites.
- Stage 2: Detailed screen of potential 'strategic sites'. This screening exercise was informed by consideration of a site's location, availability, size, potential to contribute to achieving the Shropshire Economic Growth Strategy; and whether there were obvious physical, heritage or environmental constraints present, based on the strategic assessment undertaken within the SLAA.
- Stage 3: Detailed site review. This stage was informed by assessments undertaken by the Council's Highways; Heritage; Ecology; Trees; and Public Protection Officers; various studies, including a Landscape and Visual Sensitivity Study and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment; consideration of infrastructure requirements and opportunities; and other strategic considerations and professional judgement.

Infrastructure Capacity assessments

- 1.24 The promoters of the preferred strategic sites have undertaken initial work to determine the capacity and impact of development proposals on infrastructure and the associated improvements to infrastructure to accommodate development proposals. These initial assessments have identified no fundamental infrastructure capacity constraints which cannot be addressed.
- 1.25 It is expected that more detailed infrastructure capacity assessments will be undertaken for these preferred strategic sites alongside the preparation of the Local Plan Review.
- 1.26 Infrastructure capacity assessments will also be undertaken in relation to the other potential strategic site.

What Happens Next?

- 1.27 We will publish a summary of the responses to this Preferred Options consultation on our web pages. The comments we receive will be used to inform the further development of the Local Plan Review.

2. Preferred Strategic Sites

Introduction

- 2.1 A series of preferred strategic sites have been identified across Shropshire. These sites have been subject to initial investigation and assessment by their promoters, resulting in the preparation of indicative masterplans.
- 2.2 This work is considered sufficient to allow Shropshire Council to determine in principle that these emerging proposals represent sustainable options for future development and that each site can contribute to meeting the development needs of Shropshire.
- 2.3 However, due to the size and complexity of development on these sites, lead-in times to development and likely build rates mean that in all likelihood only a proportion of the development proposed will contribute towards meeting the development needs of Shropshire up to 2036, the remainder will contribute to achieving the development needs of Shropshire in the longer term.

Clive Barracks, Tern Hill

Overview

- 2.4 Clive Barracks, Tern Hill is a 50ha military site located on the A41 strategic growth corridor near Market Drayton.
- 2.5 The site is currently home to the 1st (Regular) Battalion of the Royal Irish Regiment. However, in March 2016 the Ministry of Defence (MOD) announced plans to relocate the regiment and dispose of the Barracks for redevelopment.
- 2.6 Since this announcement the MOD and its consultants have been working closely with Local Councils, the local community and other stakeholders as part of a 'Task Force' led by Owen Patterson MP and preparing an extensive evidence base, to inform the sites redevelopment.
- 2.7 Supporting assessments undertaken by the MOD and their consultants include:
 - Topographical Survey;
 - Highways Report;
 - Noise Assessment;
 - Flood Risk and Drainage Assessment;
 - Utilities Assessment;
 - Ecology Survey;
 - Landscape and Visual Impact Appraisal;
 - Heritage Assessment;
 - Geophysical Survey; and
 - Arboricultural Survey.
- 2.8 It is also understood initial discussions have occurred between the MOD and their consultants and utility providers, which indicate sufficient capacity to support site redevelopment (although reinforcement works will be required to the gas network).
- 2.9 This evidence and engagement have informed the preparation of an indicative masterplan by the MOD and their consultants. This indicative masterplan illustrates the mixed-use redevelopment of the site to provide local services and facilities; around 5.75ha of employment land; around 750 homes; and extensive green

infrastructure, as part of a new settlement. Continued engagement through the 'Task Force' will help to refine and finalise proposals for the site.

2.10 The MOD have recently confirmed that they now plan for the site to be vacated and disposal for redevelopment to commence by 2025.

Key Issues and Opportunities

2.11 The table below summaries key issues/opportunities for Clive Barracks, Tern Hill:

Key Issues and Opportunities: Clive Barracks, Tern Hill
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Redevelopment of a primarily brownfield site.• Confirming specific mix of development on the site. There is an opportunity to provide high quality employment, housing, services and facilities and infrastructure (including integrated green infrastructure) as part of a new settlement.• The need to ensure that redevelopment is comprehensive, and delivery of necessary infrastructure, the local centre, leisure and education facilities, housing and employment are linked (site phasing).• Ensuring future occupiers have appropriate access to services and facilities.• Ensuring sufficient infrastructure is provided.• Relationship with nearby settlements, including the Principal Centre of Market Drayton.• As a large strategic site, it is not anticipated that redevelopment will commence until at least 2026/27. With an approximate build rate of 50 dwellings per annum, redevelopment will likely occur over a 16 year period. This means around 450 dwellings are likely to be constructed during the Local Plan Review period to 2036 and the remainder in the period beyond.• Land is required for the provision of a new primary school. This will enable Buntingsdale School and Stoke on Tern Primary School to merge on the site and ensure future residents have access to a primary school.• Ensuring necessary works to the highway network are undertaken.• Pedestrian and cycle connectivity through the site and in particular between the north-eastern and south-western portions of the site - through enhancement of an underpass of the A41.• Discussions required with the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) regarding access to medical services from the site.• Noise associated with the nearby airfield and roads.• Potential contamination on the site.• Continued engagement with utility providers and undertaking any necessary upgrades.• Ensuring natural environment and heritage assets are given appropriate consideration, buffering and where appropriate integrated into the redevelopment.• Community involvement and engagement especially through the Parish Councils and potential for community led projects as part of development.• Undertaking and implementing results of all necessary supporting assessments.

Preferred Strategic Site

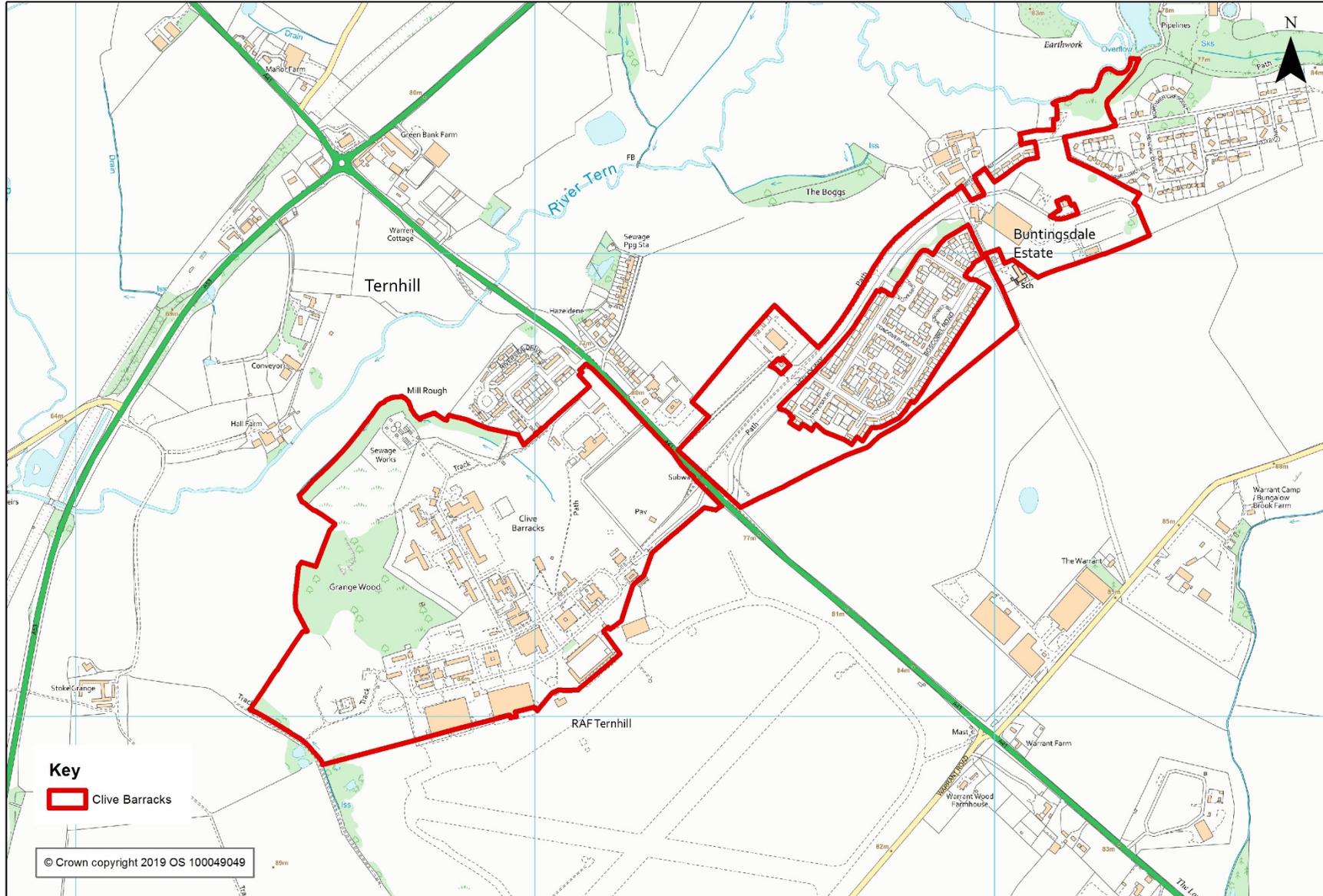
2.12 The Economic Growth Strategy for Shropshire identifies an objective to prioritise investment along strategic corridors and growth zones, including the A41 corridor. The Local Plan Review seeks to reflect this aspiration. The mixed-use redevelopment of Clive Barracks, Tern Hill will provide economic opportunities through the provision of local employment opportunities. It will also provide social and environmental opportunities resulting from the provision of additional new

homes, local services and facilities, extensive green infrastructure and provision of a modern purpose-built school to replace existing facilities.

- 2.13 As such, Shropshire Council considers that emerging proposals for the mixed-use redevelopment of Clive Barracks, Tern Hill represent a sustainable option for the future use of a large predominantly brownfield site. It is therefore considered appropriate to identify Clive Barracks, Tern Hill as a preferred strategic site, the redevelopment of which will contribute to meeting the development needs of Shropshire in the longer term.

Site Plan

2.14 The plan below indicates the location and extent of the Clive Barracks, Tern Hill preferred strategic site:



Initial Site Guidelines

2.15 The table below summarises the initial site guidelines for the Clive Barracks, Tern Hill preferred strategic site:

Site Location	Approximate Site Area	Approximate Capacity
Clive Barracks, Tern Hill	50ha	The MOD and their consultants emerging proposals for the site would involve Mixed-use redevelopment of the site, to provide local services and facilities; around 5.75ha of employment land; around 750 homes; and extensive green infrastructure, as part of a new settlement. These proposals will be subject to consideration as the Local Plan Review progresses.

Site Guidelines:

- a. Housing provision on the site should be of an appropriate quantity, quality, design, mix and layout.
- b. Employment provision is an intrinsic element of the sites redevelopment. Employment provision should be of an appropriate quantity and quality and should occur alongside the provision of housing.
- c. The local centre will comprise of a range of commercial uses (likely to be a family pub plus convenience store and a small number of modest retail units) on land fronting the A41. The local centre ensures future occupiers of the site benefit from access to local facilities. As such its timely provision is an important consideration and should be directly linked to provision and occupation of housing on the site.
- d. Green infrastructure provision should be of an appropriate quantity and quality. Its location should seek to protect and enhance the environmental network.
- e. 1ha of land will be provided for a primary school. This will enable Buntingsdale School and Stoke on Tern Primary School to merge on the site.
- f. Any necessary improvements to access points and the A41/A53 Tern Hill roundabout should be undertaken. Furthermore, an air quality assessment of the impact of increased vehicular movements from this development on Tern Hill roundabout should be undertaken and its recommendations implemented.
- g. Appropriate pedestrian and cycle links provided through the site and, in particular, to the proposed primary school and local centre. This includes enhancement of an underpass of the A41, to ensure connectivity between the north-eastern and south-western portions of the site.
- h. Acoustic design and layout of the site and appropriate building materials (including where necessary appropriate glazing, ventilation and acoustic barriers) should mitigate any impact from noise associated with the nearby A41 and airfield.
- i. The site may contain contaminated land, which will need to be appropriately managed.
- j. The site contains an area of ancient woodland and may contain priority habitats, these will need to be retained and an appropriate buffer provided.
- k. Site design and layout should be informed by an Arboricultural Impact Assessment, with the intention of creating a sustainable juxtaposition of houses and trees.
- l. The site is in proximity of the River Tern and RAF Tern Hill Local Wildlife Sites, these will need to be appropriately buffered.
- m. Site design and layout should reflect and respect the sites heritage and heritage assets within the wider area.
- n. The site should incorporate sustainable drainage, informed by a sustainable drainage strategy. Development should exclude the small portions of the site located in Flood Zones 2 and/or 3 and the small portions of the site located within the 1 in 1,000 year surface flood risk zone.
- o. Any other relevant supporting studies should be undertaken and their recommendations implemented.

Indicative Masterplan

2.16 An indicative masterplan for the redevelopment of the site has been produced by the MOD and their consultants. These proposals will be subject to further consideration as the Local Plan Review progresses.



Former Ironbridge Power Station

Overview

- 2.17 The Former Ironbridge Power Station is a 140ha partly brownfield site comprising the former Power Stations and its associated uses; a former social club (redundant sports pitches, timber pavilion & golf course); borrow pits; Pulverised Fuel Ash (PFA) landfill waste tips; a rail siding, which was historically used to transport coal to the site; and agricultural land.
- 2.18 The site is located in east Shropshire, in close proximity to the village of Buildwas. The site is bounded by Buildwas Road and the River Seven to the north and east. To the west the site is bounded by Much Wenlock Road and agricultural land. The site's southern boundary runs contiguously with Bangham Woods, an ancient woodland and SSSI. The site is also located in close proximity to the Seven Gorge Conservation Area and Ironbridge World Heritage site.
- 2.19 Two power stations have been located on the site. The first, Ironbridge A, officially opened in 1932 and ceased operation in 1981. The second, Ironbridge B, began operation in 1969 and ceased operation in 2015.
- 2.20 Following the closure of the Ironbridge B power station a planning and development brief was prepared for the site in 2017 and it was subsequently purchased for redevelopment by the Harworth Group in 2018. The Harworth Group is a regeneration company specialising in large sites with complex issues. It is expected that the Harworth Group will commence demolition of the former power station buildings, including the cooling towers, later this year.
- 2.21 The Harworth Group have been working closely with Local Councils; the local community and other stakeholders, whilst also undertaking initial necessary assessments to inform redevelopment of the site.
- 2.22 Supporting assessments being produced by the Harworth Group to inform the redevelopment of the Former Ironbridge Power Station include:
- Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment;
 - Tree Survey;
 - Transport Assessment;
 - Travel Plan;
 - Air Quality Assessment;
 - Noise and Vibration Assessment;
 - Built Heritage Assessment;
 - Archaeological Assessment;
 - Extended Phase 1 Ecological Assessment and Phase 2 Habitat and Protected Species Surveys;
 - Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy; and
 - Ground Conditions and Land Contamination Assessment.
- 2.23 Discussions are also underway between the Harworth Group and utility providers to understand the works that will be required to support the redevelopment of the site.
- 2.24 The Harworth Group have also met with representatives of Ironbridge Medical Practice and discussions are underway with the both the Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin Clinical Commissioning Group (CCGs) in relation to GP capacity in the local area and how health needs of the increased population arising from the

proposed redevelopment of the Former Ironbridge Power Station can be met. It is anticipated that a new health facility will be provided as part of the site's redevelopment.

- 2.25 The Harworth Group's emerging proposals for the site would involve a mixed-use development, including around 1,000 dwellings; around 6ha of employment land; a retirement village; the provision of local services and facilities within a village centre; leisure facilities; a nursery and primary school; a park and ride; a railway station; and significant areas of green infrastructure (including allotments and sports pitches), as part of a new settlement. It should also be noted that the National Grid and Western Power Distribution substations and equipment are to be retained on the site.
- 2.26 The potential to re-open the railway line is being actively investigated, with the Harworth Group engaging with Network Rail and other interested groups. Emerging proposals include the identification of a central site for a railway station, this could potentially be used for a 'heritage' service; commuter rail service; and freight in relation to materials and mineral extraction in the early stages of redevelopment.
- 2.27 To illustrate these proposals, the Harworth Group have produced an illustrative masterplan for the site, which is provided below. These proposals and the illustrative masterplan will be subject to further engagement with stakeholders - including Shropshire Council and further comprehensive assessment.
- 2.28 Further information about the Harworth Groups proposals for the redevelopment of the Former Ironbridge Power Station, are available on the site promoter's website at: <https://ironbridgeregeneration.co.uk/>.

Key Issues and Opportunities

- 2.29 The table below summaries key issues/opportunities for the Former Ironbridge Power Station:

Key Issues and Opportunities: Former Ironbridge Power Station:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Redevelopment of a large area of brownfield land.• Confirming specific mix of development on the site. There is an opportunity to provide high quality employment, housing, services and facilities and infrastructure (including integrated green infrastructure) as part of a new settlement.• The need to ensure that redevelopment is comprehensive, and delivery of necessary infrastructure, the local centre, housing and employment are linked (site phasing).• Ensuring future occupiers have appropriate access to services and facilities.• Ensuring sufficient infrastructure is provided.• Relationship with nearby settlements, including Buildwas, Ironbridge, Telford and the Key Centres of Much Wenlock and Broseley.• As a large strategic site (much of which has previously been developed) with complex issues to be addressed, it is not anticipated that redevelopment will commence until at least 2022/23. However, the promoters consider that the development could be completed within the Local Plan Review period to 2036.• Need to retain the National Grid and Western Power Distribution substations, particularly the land take, need for a stand-off, ensuring necessary access restrictions, implications for surrounding land uses and noise.• Utilities infrastructure over and under the site.• Minimising landscape and visual impact.• Demolition, mineral working and decontamination of the site.• Provision of a new nursery, primary school and community facilities/buildings.

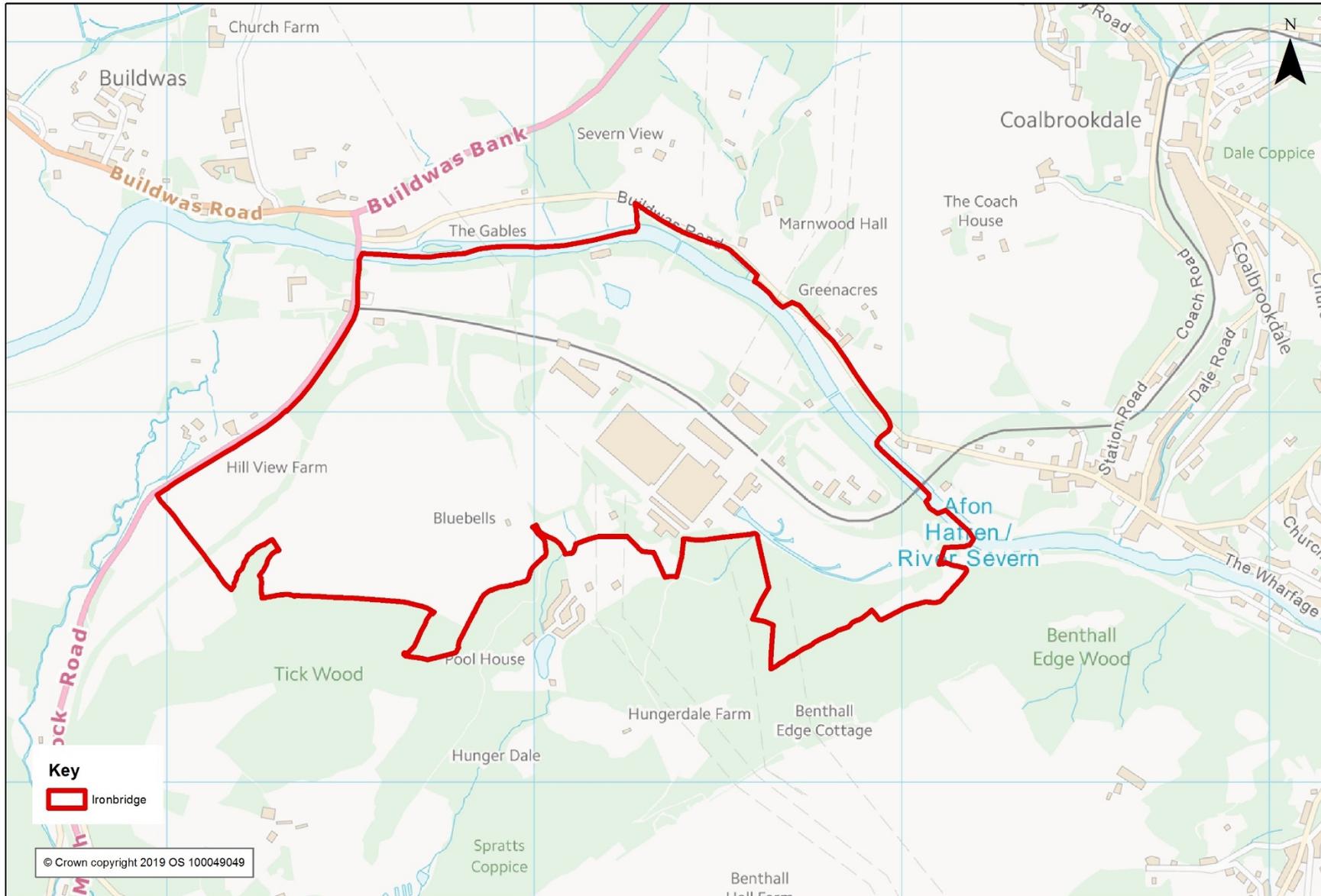
- Continued discussions with relevant CCGs regarding access to medical services. If needed, a medical centre should be provided.
- Ensuring appropriate accesses are provided and necessary works to the highway network undertaken.
- Opportunity to provide a railway station and re-use the existing rail link from the site.
- Enhancements to the leisure offer and supporting the visitor economy including linking to uses on the River.
- Pedestrian and cycle links through the site, particularly to key services and facilities.
- Provision of a park and ride facility.
- Ensuring natural environment and heritage assets are given appropriate consideration and where appropriate integrated into the redevelopment.
- Undertaking and implementing results of all necessary supporting assessments.

Preferred Strategic Site

2.30 The Economic Growth Strategy for Shropshire and the current Local Plan (Core Strategy) identified the opportunity to capitalise on the significant strategic opportunity arising from the redevelopment of the Former Ironbridge Power Station site. Shropshire Council considers that emerging proposals for the mixed-use redevelopment of the Former Ironbridge Power Station site present an opportunity to support the local economy, create jobs, provide housing and to sympathetically remediate the site and as such represent a sustainable option for its future use. It is therefore considered appropriate to identify the Former Ironbridge Power Station as a preferred strategic site, the redevelopment of which will contribute to meeting the development needs of Shropshire in the longer term.

Site Plan

2.31 The plan below indicates the location and extent of the Former Ironbridge Power Station preferred strategic site:



Initial Site Guidelines

2.32 The table below summarises the initial site guidelines for the Former Ironbridge Power Station preferred strategic site:

Site Location	Approximate Site Area	Approximate Capacity
Former Ironbridge Power Station Site	140ha	The Harworth Group's emerging proposals for the site would involve a mixed-use development, including around 1,000 dwellings; around 6ha of employment land; a retirement village; the provision of local services and facilities within a village centre; leisure facilities; a nursery and primary school; a park and ride; a railway station; and significant areas of green infrastructure (including allotments and sports pitches), as part of a new settlement. These proposals will be subject to consideration as the Local Plan Review progresses.

Site Guidelines:

- a. Housing provision on the site should be of an appropriate quantity, quality, design, mix and layout.
- b. Employment provision is an intrinsic element of the sites redevelopment. Employment provision should be of an appropriate quantity and quality and should occur alongside the provision of housing.
- c. The village centre ensures future occupiers of the site benefit from access to local facilities. As such its timely provision is an important consideration and should be directly linked to provision and occupation of housing on the site.
- d. Green infrastructure provision should be of an appropriate quantity and quality. Its location should seek to protect and enhance the environmental network.
- e. If considered needed by the relevant CCGs, the site should include provision of a medical centre.
- f. Community facilities and buildings are required, these should tap-in to the heritage of the site and could include a community hall, art gallery and heritage centre.
- g. If retained, current access points to the site may need to be upgraded to ghost island right turn and/or roundabout junctions as determined through appropriate modelling and engagement. Any additional access points should be appropriately designed and constructed.
- h. Appropriate pedestrian and cycle links need to be provided through the site and in particular to the proposed nursery, primary school and village centre.
- i. A heritage assessment and high-quality design and layout which addresses the sites relationship with designated heritage assets on and in proximity of the site will be required. Particularly given that the site is adjacent to the boundaries and within the setting of Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site and The Gorge Conservation Area.
- j. The Grade II listed Albert Edward railway bridge on the sites boundary and buildings and structures associated with the Ironbridge A interwar power station should be sympathetically retained, enhanced/maintained and adaptively reused.
- k. Acoustic design and layout of the site and appropriate building materials (including where necessary appropriate glazing, ventilation and acoustic barriers) should mitigate any impact from noise associated with the retained National Grid and Western Power Distribution substations and equipment and nearby roads.
- l. Design and layout should minimise landscape and visual impact, particularly associated with any development on greenfield elements of the site.
- m. The site contains contaminated land, which will need to be appropriately managed.
- n. The site contains part of the Buildwas Sand Quarry SSSI and Local Geological Site and may contain priority habitats, these will need to be retained

and appropriate buffers provided. The site is also in proximity of the Tick Wood and Benthall Edge SSSI and Ancient Woodland and River Severn Local Wildlife Site, an appropriate buffer to these sites will be required.

- o. The site supports a large population of Great Crested Newts; bat roosts and is likely home to other protected species. Appropriate assessment and provision on the site will be required for these species.
- p. Site design and layout should be informed by an Arboricultural Impact Assessment, with the intention of creating a sustainable juxtaposition between built development and trees. Where possible trees and woodland should be incorporated into areas of open space and planting should occur to connect to / expand adjoining wooded areas.
- q. Development should exclude the portions of the site located in Flood Zones 2 and/or 3 and the portions of the site located within the 1 in 1,000 year surface flood risk zone.
- r. Mineral extraction opportunities associated with the site should be investigated and where appropriate extraction works undertaken.
- s. The site should incorporate sustainable drainage, informed by a sustainable drainage strategy.
- t. Any other relevant supporting studies should be undertaken and their recommendations implemented.

Indicative Masterplan

2.33 The latest illustrative masterplan prepared by The Harworth Group for the redevelopment of the Former Ironbridge Power Station site. These proposals will be subject to further consideration as the Local Plan Review progresses.

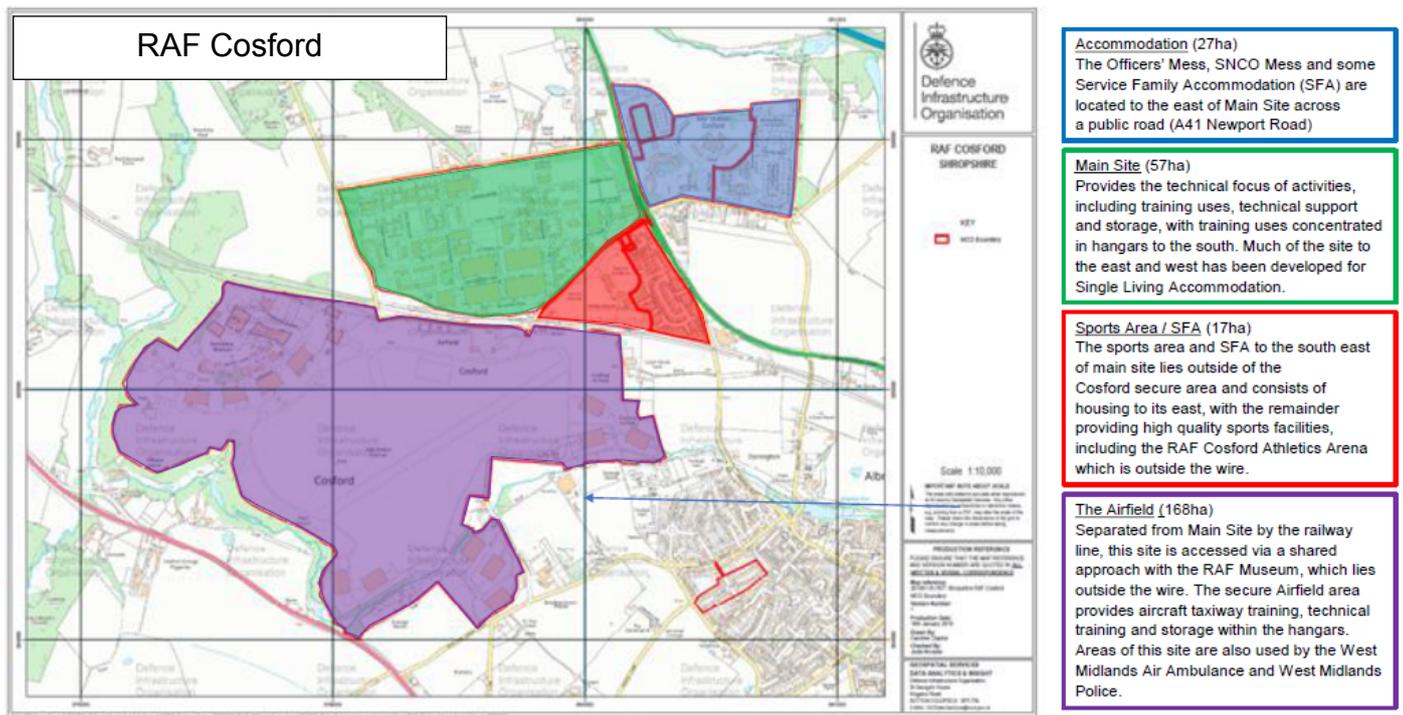


RAF Cosford

Overview

2.34 RAF Cosford is a military base and airfield located wholly in the Green Belt, to the north west of Albrighton. RAF Cosford opened in 1938 as a joint aircraft maintenance, storage and technical training unit and remains primarily a training unit to present day. The site also houses the renowned Cosford Air Museum and hosts the Cosford Air Show. Areas of the site are also used by the West Midlands Air Ambulance and West Midlands Police.

2.35 RAF Cosford consists of four broad areas, these are depicted on the Figure below:



2.36 RAF Cosford is currently a major part of the Defence College of Technical Training (DCTT). It is at the centre of the RAF's mission to deliver flexible, affordable, modern and effective technical training that meets the needs of the UK's Armed Forces now and into the future.

2.37 The MOD is undertaking a 'Defence Optimisation Programme' the aim of which is to create a smaller and significantly better estate that effectively supports our armed forces, and their role in protecting the security, independence and interests of the UK at home and abroad.

2.38 Due to its strategic location; existing built estate; the importance of the role it already plays in defence training; and the site's future potential, the disposal of RAF Cosford was discounted by the MOD at an early stage of this programme. As such, its future is more certain as it has been designated a 'receiver site' and will have an important role to play in the future optimisation of the MOD estate.

2.39 Cosford has since been referenced within the 'Better Defence Estate Strategy' as a centre of excellence for both UK and International Defence Training. The document also refers to the relocation of 4 School of Technical Training from MOD St Athan to RAF Cosford.

- 2.40 Furthermore, as part of its future strategy, the DCTT is reviewing capacity at RAF Cosford, linked to their aspiration to exploit opportunities for technical training consolidation. Whilst this work is ongoing, estimates from DCTT high-level strategic estate planning indicate that over the next 10+ years RAF Cosford would see in the region of an additional 1,500 people (staff and student population), although this could potentially increase further dependant on the outcome of the ongoing work.
- 2.41 In addition to the consideration of requirements arising from the DCTT:
- Work is currently underway by the MOD to capture and consolidate information on the feasibility of other potential non-DCTT moves to RAF Cosford.
 - Cosford Air Museum, located on the site, has outlined plans for a £40 million investment programme over 10 years to intensify and expand the museum site.
 - Plans to form a specialist aviation academy, called the Whittle Academy, at RAF Cosford have recently been announced by the Aviation Skills Partnership in collaboration with Midlands Engine, the RAF, Air Cadets and Telford College. This is a major initiative to address demand for trained entrants to the Aviation Industry across all jobs, roles and skills in accordance with the Government's Green Paper Aviation 2050: The Future of UK Aviation. It also further elevates the importance of this location for UK aviation and potentially creates hundreds of new jobs at the site.
- 2.42 These changes will have associated requirements for new facilities, including training facilities; technical accommodation and domestic accommodation. Although it should be noted that proposals for new development and intensification of the use of RAF Cosford are expected to be for military use or non-profit making uses rather than acting as a contribution to meeting Shropshire's future growth needs.
- 2.43 Whilst there is some potential for the re-use or redevelopment of existing buildings within the Main Site and there could also be some expansion on the accommodation area of the site (although this would in all likelihood need to be limited to domestic development given the current uses on this part of the site), it is likely that any significant expansion of RAF Cosford will also involve the development of land associated with the airfield and/or the re-location of the sports facilities.
- 2.44 RAF Cosford is wholly located within the Green Belt but is recognised as a major developed site within the Green Belt in the current Local Plan. However, if the proposed growth is to occur, there would be a need to remove some or all of the site from the Green Belt.
- 2.45 Government requires changes to the Green Belt to be made through the Local Plan process and for any proposed release of Green Belt to provide for the longer term, enduring well beyond the Plan period. It is expected that Green Belt boundaries should only be altered where justification and satisfactory evidence, known as 'exceptional circumstances' for doing so can be provided.
- 2.46 This includes consideration of the need to promote sustainable patterns of development, including planning for economic growth, housing need, health and wellbeing, accessibility, heritage and environmental factors.
- 2.47 To inform the ongoing Local Plan Review, a two-stage assessment of the Green Belt in Shropshire has been undertaken by specialist consultants and published by Shropshire Council.

2.48 The Green Belt Assessment (Part 1) considers the performance of Green Belt across Shropshire by dividing it into parcels of land and assessing each parcel (providing them a rating of no contribution; weak; moderate or strong) against the five nationally defined purposes that Green Belt serve, these are:

- a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

2.49 The Green Belt Review (Part 2) is focused on considering the potential harm to the Green Belt resulting from the release of parcels of land, areas of opportunity around identified settlements and strategic geographical locations, if they were identified to provide for development needs and support a sustainable pattern of future growth in the County to 2036 and beyond.

2.50 Within the Green Belt Assessment and Review (Part 1 and Part 2), RAF Cosford is considered as part of three parcels of land, specifically parcels P28, P30 and P40.

2.51 The Green Belt Assessment (Part 1) of the performance of these parcels against Green Belt purposes 1a, 1b, 2, 3, & 4 is summarised in the table below. Purpose 5 is identified as important across all parcels, but the study considers that assessment of performance of individual parcels against this purpose is not possible in a meaningful way:

Parcel Reference	Purpose 1a	Purpose 1b	Purpose 2	Purpose 3	Purpose 4
P28	No contribution	No contribution	Weak	Weak	No contribution
P30	No contribution	No contribution	Moderate	Moderate	No contribution
P40	No contribution	No contribution	Moderate	Weak	Weak

2.52 This Green Belt Review (Part 2) indicates the harm to the Green Belt resulting from the release of the parcels which contain elements of RAF Cosford, this can be summarised as follows:

- Main Site and Sports Area is low harm;
- Accommodation area is low-moderate harm; and
- Airfield is primarily low-moderate harm.

2.53 Within the Green Belt Review (Part 2) an opportunity area (Co-1b) containing the majority of RAF Cosford (excluding a small portion of the airfield) was also reviewed and identified as having low-moderate harm to the Green Belt if released.

2.54 Whilst it could be considered that low performing Green Belt may be a less sensitive release option it should be noted that the relatively poor performance of any land against Green Belt purposes, is not in itself, an 'exceptional circumstance' that would justify release of the land from the Green Belt. Conversely, better performing Green Belt may be appropriate for release where 'exceptional circumstances' are demonstrated.

Key Issues and Opportunities

2.55 The table below summaries the key issues/opportunities for RAF Cosford:

Key Issues and Opportunities: RAF Cosford and Cosford Air Museum
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The site is located within the Green Belt. Specifically, RAF Cosford are identified as a major developed site within the Green Belt in the current Local Plan.• The site consists of significant areas of both brownfield and greenfield land.• Ensuring high quality design and layout.• Ensuring future occupiers have appropriate access to services and facilities.• Ensuring sufficient infrastructure is provided.• Discussions will be required with utility providers to determine any necessary infrastructure upgrades and timescales and process for these to be achieved.• Relationship with nearby Albrighton.• Preparation of an indicative masterplan for the site to ensure a strategic and comprehensive approach is taken to any redevelopment and further development of the site.• Pedestrian and cycle links through the site, particularly linking the broad areas of the site.• Opportunity to upgrade Cosford railway station facilities and parking.• Necessary upgrades to highway services.• Ensuring natural environment and heritage assets are given appropriate consideration and where appropriate integrated into the redevelopment.• Development is expected to be for military use or non-profit making uses rather than acting as a contribution to meeting Shropshire's future growth needs.• Opportunities for co-location of supply chain and complementary employment offers. <p>Undertaking necessary supporting assessments and implementing their recommendations.</p>

Preferred Strategic Site

2.56 Shropshire Council considers that emerging proposals for the enhancement of RAF Cosford's role as a centre of excellence for both UK and International Defence Training; plans to form a specialist aviation academy; any opportunities to co-locate other MOD services; and plans for the expansion of the Cosford Air Museum are nationally significant and as such represent a significant strategic opportunity for Shropshire and the MOD. Proposals would also contribute toward achieving the aspirations of the Shropshire Economic Growth Strategy and increase the long-term sustainability of the site, ensuring its continued use as a MOD facility, offering increased employment and education opportunities and housing to meet the needs of personnel.

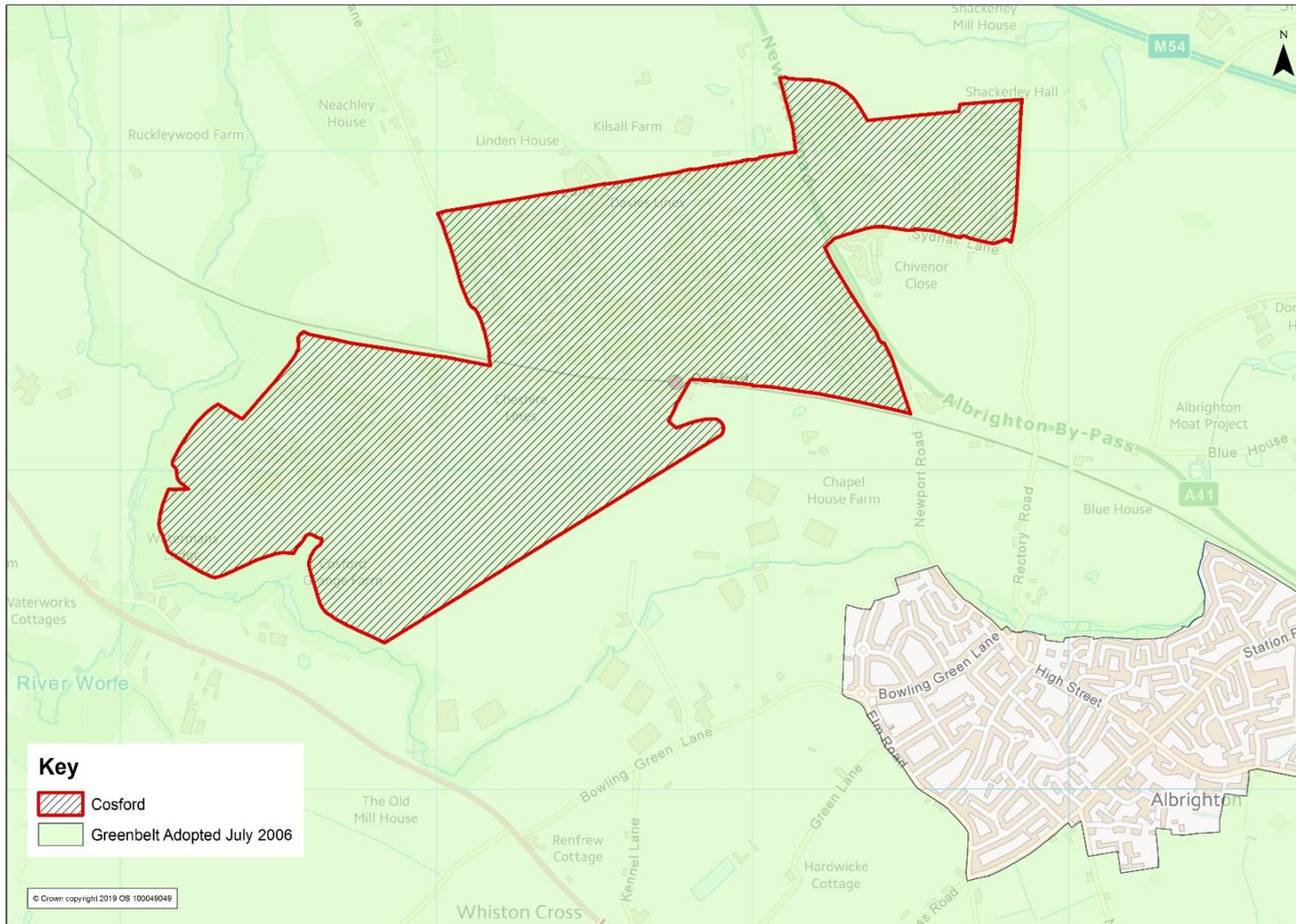
2.57 It is also apparent that there are no alternative locations to achieve these outcomes, given the extent of existing facilities on the site and the findings of the extensive 'Defence Optimisation Programme' undertaken by the MOD.

2.58 It should be noted that proposals for new development and intensification of the use of RAF Cosford are expected to be for military use or non-profit making uses rather than acting as a contribution to meeting Shropshire's future growth needs. However, the proposals do have the potential to offer wider benefits resulting from the co-location of supply chain and complementary employment offers over a much wider geography including a number of neighbouring Local Authorities.

- 2.59 As such it is considered appropriate to identify RAF Cosford as a preferred strategic site. It is also considered appropriate to propose to remove an element of the site from the Green Belt (the specific area is illustrated in the site plan below).
- 2.60 The area identified for release from the Green Belt reflects the main operational area (including ancillary uses such as accommodation and the museum) and land potentially needed for short/medium term development needs and to provide future operational flexibility including reflecting security requirements. This is in line with national guidance which seeks to ensure that changes to Green Belt boundaries endure for the longer term beyond the Plan period. Significantly, the extent of Green Belt release which is proposed maintains Green Belt within the important gap between RAF Cosford and the settlement of Albrighton.
- 2.61 The Council acknowledges that it will need to demonstrate robust 'exceptional circumstances' through the Local Plan Examination process in order for any land to be released from the Green Belt and for any planned development to happen.

Site Plan

2.62 The following map depicts the location and extent of the area Shropshire Council is proposing for release from the Green Belt in order to support the identification of RAF Cosford as a preferred strategic site. Boundaries are defined by a combination of roads; natural features such as woodland belts and hedgerows; and the runway.



Initial Site Guidelines

2.63 The table below summarises the initial site guidelines for the RAF Cosford preferred strategic site:

Site Location	Approximate Site Area	Approximate Capacity
RAF Cosford	203ha	<p>The 'Defence Optimisation Programme' has identified RAF Cosford as a 'receiver site'. As such it is considered by the MOD to have capacity for increased MOD and associated uses. Particularly:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhancement of RAF Cosford's role as a centre of excellence for UK and International Defence Training. • Plans for expansion of the Cosford Air Museum. • Opportunities to co-locate other MOD services. • Formation of the Whittle Academy by the Aviation Skills Partnership in collaboration with Telford College. <p>Identification as a preferred strategic site and proposed removal of land from the Green Belt would facilitate these uses.</p> <p>These proposals will be subject to consideration as the Local Plan Review progresses.</p>

Site Guidelines:

- a. Existing services and facilities, including sports provision should be maintained or appropriate and proportional compensatory provision made.
- b. Extensive areas of green infrastructure, including areas of public open space should be integrated into any development proposals. Green infrastructure provision should seek to protect and enhance the environmental network (particularly in the south and west of the site).
- c. The site is likely home to protected species, including Great Crested Newts. Appropriate assessment and provision on the site will be required for any protected species present.
- d. The site may contain priority habitats, these will need to be retained and an appropriate buffer provided. Any mature trees and hedgerows present should also be retained on the site.
- e. Reflecting likelihood of increased movements to and from the site, improvements to the railway station and station car parking should be provided.
- f. Necessary improvements to existing access points should be undertaken and any additional access points should be appropriately designed and constructed.
- g. Appropriate pedestrian and cycle links need to be provided through the site and in particular between the main site and airfield.
- h. The site may contain contaminated land and is in proximity of sources of odour (sewage treatment works), which will need to be appropriately managed.
- i. The design, layout and materials of any development on the site should mitigate impact from noise associated with the airfield and railway line.
- j. The site should incorporate sustainable drainage, informed by a sustainable drainage strategy. Development should exclude the portions of the site located within the 1 in 1,000 year surface flood risk zone.
- k. The site contains the majority of the expansion period airfield; Grade II listed Fulton Building; and a range of other military buildings which are considered to be non-designated heritage assets. As such a heritage assessment will be required and its recommendations implemented. Site design and layout should be sympathetic to these assets and should contribute to better revealing and enhancing their significance.
- l. Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) will be required.
- m. Any other relevant supporting studies should be undertaken and their recommendations implemented.

3. Other Potential Strategic Sites

Introduction

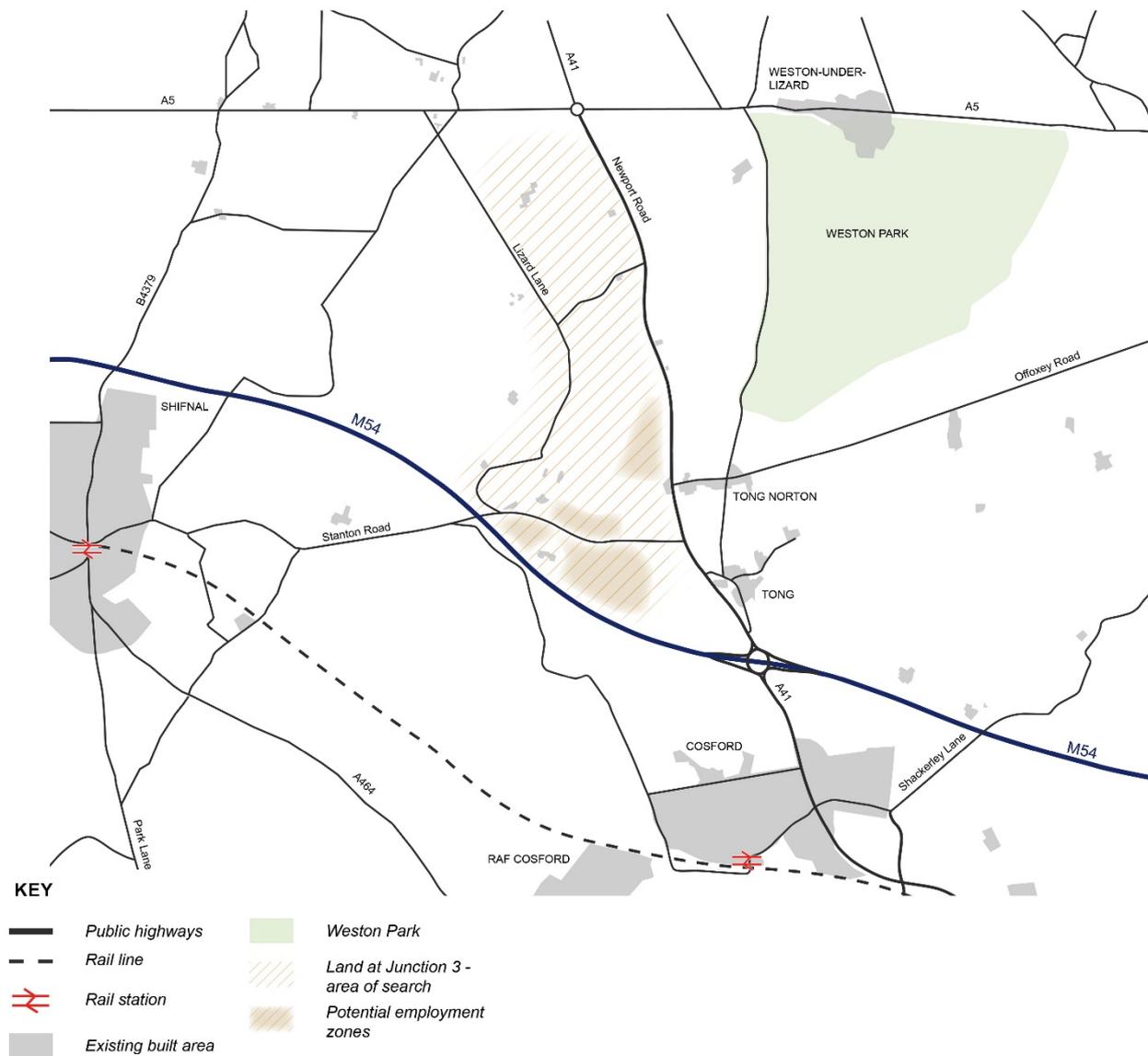
- 3.1 In addition to the three preferred strategic sites, a further potential strategic site has been identified: specifically land north of Junction 3 of the M54.
- 3.2 However, a range of further information is required to inform any decision about this proposal. In light of this, this site is **not** currently being identified as a preferred strategic site. Instead, this consultation document seeks comments on:
 - The potential benefits of the proposed development;
 - The issues and impacts which might be generated; and
 - Ways in which these might be mitigated or addressed.
- 3.3 Responses to this consultation, alongside the information gathered as part of the evidence base to inform the ongoing Local Plan Review will inform the decision as to whether or not this site will be identified as a preferred strategic site.
- 3.4 If land north of Junction 3 of the M54 is proposed as a preferred strategic site for development at the pre-submission draft Local Plan stage, then this outcome will be subject to consultation as part of the pre-submission consultation.

Land north of Junction 3 of the M54

- 3.5 The M54/A5 corridor is a key east-west road and rail transport corridor between Shropshire and the West Midlands. It is identified within the Economic Growth Strategy for Shropshire as a strategic corridor, in recognition of the economic opportunities associated with this transport infrastructure and its contribution to reinforcing Shropshire's close proximity to the West Midlands conurbation.
- 3.6 Furthermore, recent evidence commissioned by Shropshire Council suggests that the M54/A5 corridor, much of which is located within the Green Belt, is a significant opportunity area and suggests there is considerable latent demand for serviced employment land to meet the needs of both occupiers for inward investment and local occupiers in the target sectors identified in the Economic Growth Strategy for Shropshire. As part of this work, the consultant has engaged with neighbouring Local Authorities and regional organisations including the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA).
- 3.7 It is envisaged that any strategic employment offer in the M54 corridor would be strongly related to the intensification of engineering training at RAF Cosford and would be complementary, rather than competing with, the employment offers within neighbouring areas. As such, the key objective for such a site would be to deliver supply chain opportunities and growth for companies in key sectors identified within the Economic Growth Strategy for Shropshire (including but not limited to engineering, advanced manufacturing, aviation, innovative healthcare and environmental technologies) and in many ways complementary to proposals for RAF Cosford.
- 3.8 As a strategic location, the M54 corridor benefits from its proximity to existing international businesses, dominant in growth sectors such as advanced manufacturing and engineering. The corridor also benefits from good access to transport infrastructure and will benefit from planned investments in road and rail infrastructure in neighbouring areas. Importantly, the corridor contains and is close

to higher education and training institutions including key assets such as RAF Cosford, Wolverhampton University and Harper Adams University.

- 3.9 Land to the north of Junction 3 of the M54 was promoted for development on behalf of the landowners the Bradford Estate, in March 2017, in response to the Issues and Strategic Options consultation of the Local Plan Review.
- 3.10 The site promoters have since amended the scale and extent of proposals. The most recent proposals are focused on land to the north of Junction 3 of the M54 and west of the A41. These proposals are for the construction of a strategic employment site of around 50ha; accompanied by around 3,000 homes; and a local centre to provide services, facilities and infrastructure, as part of a planned settlement.
- 3.11 The site promoters have identified an 'area of search' informed by initial assessments of key constraints and opportunities. The map below depicts the 'area of search' identified by the site promoters.



- 3.12 As this location is within the Green Belt, there would be a need to demonstrate robust 'exceptional circumstances' through the Local Plan Examination process in order for the site to be removed from the Green Belt and for any planned development to occur.

3.13 Within the Green Belt Assessment and Review the area of search identified by the Site Promoters of land at Junction 3 of the M54 is considered as part of parcels P4, P8 and P25.

3.14 The Green Belt Assessment (Part 1) of the performance of these parcels against Green Belt purposes 1a, 1b, 2, 3, & 4 is summarised in the table below. Purpose 5 is identified as important across all parcels, but the study considers that assessment of performance of individual parcels is not possible in a meaningful way:

Parcel Reference	Purpose 1a	Purpose 1b	Purpose 2	Purpose 3	Purpose 4
P4	No contribution	No contribution	No contribution	Strong	Weak
P8	No contribution	No contribution	Weak	Strong	Weak
P25	No contribution	No contribution	Weak	Moderate	No contribution

3.15 This Green Belt Review (Part 2) indicates the harm to the Green Belt resulting from the release of the parcels which contain elements of the site at land north of Junction 3 of the M54, this can be summarised as follows:

- P4 is not specifically assessed, however there is likely to be high harm based on similarities to P8;
- P8 is high harm; and
- P25 is moderate-high harm.

3.16 Within the Green Belt Review (Part 2) a large opportunity area (J3-1) containing the majority of the site at land north of Junction 3 of the M54 and significant additional land was also reviewed and identified as having high harm to the Green Belt if released.

3.17 Whilst it could be considered that low performing Green Belt may be a less sensitive release option it should be noted that the relatively poor performance of any land against Green Belt purposes, is not in itself, an 'exceptional circumstance' that would justify release of the land from the Green Belt. Conversely, better performing Green Belt may be appropriate for release where 'exceptional circumstances' are demonstrated.

3.18 Based on the information currently available, it is not considered that the release of land north of Junction 3 of the M54 would be necessary to achieve the planned growth for Shropshire. However, national planning policy requires Shropshire Council to plan positively for growth by providing a strategy which, as a minimum, seeks to meet local development needs and to consider any unmet need from neighbouring areas and whether it is practical to meet some or all of this need, where this is considered appropriate and consistent with the principles of achieving sustainable development.

3.19 The latest evidence indicates that the Black Country cannot accommodate its identified development needs within its urban area. The Black Country Authorities estimate that there will be a shortfall of around 300ha of employment land, with a particular need for additional high quality, accessible sites capable of accommodating national investment requirements. Similarly, even by increasing densities and looking to other sources of urban land supply, the latest evidence also suggests that there will be a significant housing shortfall of at least 22,000 homes in the Black Country. The options available to the Black Country to meet this need, including through Green Belt release within the Black Country and nearby Local Authorities are currently being investigated by the Black Country Authorities.

- 3.20 The characteristics of the M54 corridor highlighted above and its general proximity/accessibility to the Black Country, mean that, subject to the work being undertaken by the Black Country Authorities, there may be potential for Shropshire to agree to provide for some of this shortfall through the construction of a strategic employment site and housing as part of a new planned settlement at Junction 3 of the M54.
- 3.21 The initial assessments of key constraints and opportunities undertaken by the site promoters include:
- Preliminary Highways Review;
 - Preliminary Access Review in respect of the proposed Strategic Employment Area (SEA);
 - Preliminary Appraisal of Flood Risk, Surface Water Drainage and Water Resources;
 - Preliminary Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA);
 - Ecological Desk Study;
 - Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey;
 - Initial Heritage Assessment;
 - Initial Heritage Gazetteer;
 - Archaeological Appraisal;
 - Preliminary Landscape and Visual Appraisal and Capacity Study;
 - Ground Conditions Technical Note;
 - Utilities Constraints Briefing Note; and
 - Initial Sustainability and Energy Review.
- 3.22 The site promoters intend to further develop these assessments in order to determine initial design principles and inform preparation of an initial masterplan. The site promoters intend to provide information about their proposals on their website at: **Awaiting link from site promoters - To be added before consultation.**
- 3.23 These assessments and proposals will be subject to consideration as the Local Plan Review progresses.
- 3.24 Investigation of infrastructure capacity, including: the infrastructure requirements directly associated with this development; the strategic infrastructure requirements within the wider corridor; and identification of funding options available to deliver necessary infrastructure improvements, is also being undertaken.
- 3.25 This information will allow Shropshire Council to undertake a comprehensive consideration of the opportunity, if it is required to meet Black Country needs.
- 3.26 Shropshire Council recognises that this proposal may represent a 'once in a generation' opportunity to meet cross-boundary needs, through delivery of nationally significant employment opportunities, high quality housing and a local centre to provide services, facilities and infrastructure as part of a planned new settlement within an important strategic corridor. However, given the likely scale of the proposal it is considered there are a number of significant issues which need further consideration ahead of the Council being able to prefer this land for development, such as:
- The strategic scale of these proposals and mix of employment, residential and other uses;
 - Concerns about impacts on existing infrastructure, communities and environmental assets;

- Justification for the release of Green Belt land – this is considered to be intrinsically linked with the assessment of the alternative options available to meet Black Country housing and employment needs; and
- Securing strategic infrastructure investment and cross boundary agreement with neighbouring authorities.

3.27 A range of further information is therefore required to inform any decision about this proposal and, in light of this, land north of Junction 3 of the M54 is **not** currently being identified as a preferred strategic site. Instead, the consultation document seeks comments on:

- The potential benefits of the proposed development;
- The issues and impacts which might be generated; and
- Ways in which these might be mitigated or addressed.

3.28 The further information required includes but is not limited to:

- Assessment of alternative options available to the Black Country for meeting the housing and employment needs arising in the Black Country;
- The outcome of the Black Country Green Belt review;
- Infrastructure capacity assessment to identify key impacts and investment requirements;
- Infrastructure funding;
- The views of neighbouring authorities, Government agencies and major infrastructure providers; and
- Further evidence to support the economic development context.

3.29 Shropshire Council is working with neighbouring authorities and stakeholders to obtain this information and carry out further work.

SHROPSHIRE COUNCIL LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME 2019

1. Introduction

What is a Local Development Scheme?

- 1.1 The Shropshire Local Plan currently comprises the Core Strategy (adopted 2011) and the Site Allocations and Management of Development (SAMDev) Plan (adopted 2015), together with the adopted Neighbourhood Plans for Much Wenlock and Shifnal. These documents set out proposals for the use of land and policies to guide future development in order to help to deliver the sustainable growth in Shropshire for the period up to 2026.
- 1.2 The LDS is the 'Project Plan' that identifies the documents the Council will prepare as part of the Local Plan over the next 3-year period. The Local Development Scheme (LDS) explains:
 - The purpose of the Local Plan documents;
 - The resources the Council will require; and
 - Timescales for producing Local Plan documents, including when public consultation will take place.
- 1.3 This LDS will cover the period 2019 to 2022. It replaces the existing LDS (May 2018). The LDS will be kept up to date by considering the need to revise it on an annual basis.
- 1.4 The LDS can be viewed:
 - On the Shropshire Council website at: [http://shropshire.gov.uk/planning-policy/local-plan/local-development-scheme-\(lds\)/](http://shropshire.gov.uk/planning-policy/local-plan/local-development-scheme-(lds)/)
 - At the Council's office at Shirehall, Shrewsbury
- 1.5 Individual documents may be reviewed as directed in regulations or when monitoring indicates that this is required.

Why is the LDS being amended?

- 1.6 The main changes are due to:
 - the scale of the work required to assemble an appropriate evidence base for the Plan;
 - the unanticipated impact of significant development proposals which have been promoted in response to the review process;
 - recently announced changes to national planning policy.

If I need further information about the LDS, who should I contact?

- 1.7 Further advice on this LDS or other planning policy documents can be obtained from the Council's Planning Policy team on 0345 678 9004 or email: planning.policy@shropshire.gov.uk

2. The Development Plan and Related Documents

- 2.1. The statutory Development Plan for Shropshire comprises:

- The Local Plan which is prepared by Shropshire Council and is subject to independent testing by the Planning Inspectorate; and
- Neighbourhood Plans prepared by local communities and subject to testing by an independent examiner.

2.2. More detailed advice or guidance on the policies in the Local Plan may be provided through the preparation of Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD's) which are subject to rigorous community involvement, but are not subject to independent testing and do not form part of the statutory Development Plan.

2.3. The stages of preparing a Local Plan comprise:

1. Pre-production	Evidence gathering stage to develop the evidence base to inform the preparation of a 'sound' Local Plan.
2. Production	Preparation of Issues and Options by involving the community and other stakeholders and consultation on these. A final or Pre-Submission draft version of the Local Plan is prepared for gathering representations on 'soundness' for the Examination. Should significant new issues be raised there is the opportunity to go back to a previous stage before submitting the Local Plan for Examination to the Secretary of State in the light of the representations received.
3. Examination	Independent examination by a Planning Inspector to consider the 'soundness' of the Plan;
4. Adoption	The Inspector prepares a report possibly with modifications to make the Local Plan sound which may require further consultation. Once undertaken if required the Council adopted and publish the Local Plan.

2.4. The stages of preparing a Neighbourhood Plan comprise:

1. Designation	The qualifying body submits an application to designate a neighbourhood area to the local planning authority, which publicises and consults on the area application for minimum of 6 weeks;
2. Production	The qualifying body develops proposals advised by the local planning authority. This comprises: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • gathering baseline information and evidence; • engaging and consulting with those living and working in the neighbourhood area and those with an interest in or affected by the proposals (eg service providers) • talking to land owners and the development industry • identifying and assessing options

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> determining whether a plan or an Order is likely to have significant environmental effect starting to prepare proposals documents
3. Pre-submission consultation	The qualifying body invites representations on the draft plan and considers consultation responses and amends it if appropriate. The qualifying body prepared a consultation statement.
4. Submission to the Local Planning Authority	<p>The qualifying body submits the plan to the local planning authority, which checks that submitted proposal complies with all relevant legislation. If the local planning authority finds that the plan or order meets the legal requirements it:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> publicises the proposal for minimum 6 weeks and invites representations; notifies consultation bodies referred to in the consultation statement; appoints an independent examiner (with the agreement of the qualifying body)
5. Independent Examination	The local planning authority sends the draft plan and representations to the independent examiner, who undertakes examination and issues a report to the local planning authority and qualifying body. The local planning authority publishes the report and reaches its own view on whether to send the plan to referendum.
6. Referendum and Making the neighbourhood plan	Shropshire Council publishes an information statement and a notice of referendum. Polling takes place and the results are declared. Subject to the results, the local planning authority 'makes' the neighbourhood plan, bringing it into force.

2.5. The process of preparing Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) is shorter and does not involve independent examination:

1. Preparation of Draft SPD	Includes evidence gathering and the involvement of the community and stakeholders from an early stage.
2. Consultation on Draft SPD	Representations invited on a published draft.
3. Adoption	Council considers representations received and finalises SPD before adoption.

2.6. Accompanying the Local Plan documents will be additional documents describing:

- The sustainability implications of the new documents (*Sustainability Appraisal* or SA which incorporates *Strategic Environmental Assessment* or SEA).

- A *Habitat Regulations Assessment* or HRA, assessing the implications of development for European sites in and adjoining the Plan Area. This will include *Appropriate Assessment* as necessary.
- A *Statement of Community Involvement* or SCI which shows how Shropshire Council intends to achieve continuous and meaningful community involvement in the production of Local Plans to help build consensus regarding their content.
- The results of annual monitoring (*Authority's Monitoring Report* or AMR).

3. Purpose and content of the Local Development Scheme

3.1 This document is the Council's 'Project Plan' for the period from 2019 to 2022. Its main purposes are:

- To inform the community and other stakeholders of the Local Plan documents for the area and the timescales they can expect for their preparation and subsequent review, and;
- To establish the Council's priorities for the preparation of the Local Plan and its associated work programme.

3.2 The LDS sets out:

- The Local Plan documents that are to be prepared over the forthcoming 3-year period to replace existing policies;
- The current Local Plan documents which make up the statutory Development Plan for Shropshire and any existing policies that will be saved;
- The subject matter and the geographical area to which each document relates;
- Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) that are to be prepared over the forthcoming 3-year period to clarify and provide further guidance;
- Which organisation is to lead the process of each document preparation and which, if any, are to be prepared jointly with other local planning authorities;
- The arrangements for monitoring of the Local Plan.

4. Structure and Operation of the Shropshire Local Plan

Local Plan Review

4.1 The Council considers that to provide further certainty and clarity for development and investment, it is sensible and pragmatic to carry out an early review of the Local Plan. Reflecting the advice in Paragraph 153 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) for flexibility to respond to changing circumstances and as acknowledged by the Inspector for the SAMDev Local Plan document in her Inspectors Report (October 2015).

4.2 The timetable in this LDS may change further in response to changes in the evidence base; changes in national government policy and guidance; and the availability of Council resources. The LDS will therefore be kept under regular review.

- 4.3 The draft content and programme for review and production of the Local Plan and associated evidence base are set out in the Schedule of Proposed Documents (Table 1) which follows this section and the Individual Document Profiles in Appendix 1.

Table 1: SCHEDULE OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT PLAN DOCUMENTS

<i>Document Title</i>	<i>Status (Local Plan/SPD)</i>	<i>Brief Description</i>	<i>Chain of Conformity</i>	<i>Date of Issues & Options Consultation</i>	<i>Date for Submission to Secretary of State</i>	<i>Proposed Date for Adoption</i>
Local Plan Review 2016-2036	Local Plan document	Document identifying revised growth requirements and additional sites proposed to deliver this growth during the revised plan period.	General conformity with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and National Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)	January 2017	June 2020	October 2021
Neighbourhood Plans	Dev Plan document	Neighbourhood Plans setting out local objectives, development management policies and allocations	Core Strategy, SAMDev, future Local Plan documents	tbc	tbc	tbc

4.4 The current (adopted) Local Plan for Shropshire comprises:

Core Strategy

4.5 The Core Strategy sets out the approach and strategic framework for development in Shropshire. It incorporates the spatial elements of the Sustainable Community Strategy and other corporate strategies. The Core Strategy underwent independent examination during November and December 2010 was found to be “sound” and adopted by Shropshire Council in March 2011. The Core Strategy:

- Sets out the broad community vision and spatial strategy;
- Identifies key strategic sites for development;
- Sets out a settlement strategy, with criteria-based policies to enable development to come forward;
- Provides strategic guidance for development management in conjunction with national and other guidance but does not contain numerous development control policies; and
- Sets out an investment/implementation plan, including priorities and mechanisms for infrastructure delivery.

4.6 Further information on the adopted Core Strategy can be found via:

<http://shropshire.gov.uk/planning-policy/local-plan/core-strategy-2006-2026>

Site Allocations and Management of Development (SAMDev)

4.7 Although strategic site allocations are set out in the Core Strategy, it is necessary to ensure that sufficient land is allocated specifically to meet Shropshire’s needs for housing employment, retail and services. In particular, it is imperative that we can meet housing needs and the government requirement to identify a 5 year supply of available housing land. It is also important to ensure that the range of strategic policies in the Core Strategy is complemented by a suite of more detailed policies in this Local Plan document. This is to make sure there are no ‘gaps’ with national and regional policies and that a suitable policy framework is in place to enable a ‘development management’ approach to be delivered.

4.8 Therefore a single Site Allocations and Management of Development (SAMDev) Local Plan document for Shropshire was prepared. It was not the intention to identify every single site for development over the next 15-20 years, as criteria-based policies within the Core Strategy and SAMDev provide a framework for additional sites to come forward. The SAMDev was examined during November and December 2014 and adopted in December 2015.

4.9 Further information on the SAMDev Local Plan document can be found via:

<http://shropshire.gov.uk/planning-policy/local-plan/samdev-plan-2006-2026/>

Saved Policies

4.10 Whilst the Local Plan Review will result in a new, single Local Plan document, many of the existing policies in the Core Strategy & SAMDev do not need to

be amended and will be carried forward. The review will focus on key areas of change, including options for the level and distribution of new housing and the delivery of the Council's Economic Growth Strategy during the period to 2036, together with any amended policies and new site allocations which are needed to demonstrate that these requirements can be delivered. The existing Core Strategy & SAMDev Plan will remain in force until any new Plan is adopted which is anticipated around 2021.

Neighbourhood Plans

- 4.11 Parish and Town Councils can prepare Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs) putting in place policies to guide the future development of the area. Shropshire Council has a legal duty to support the preparation of any NDP, including the provision of information and evidence, advice on sustainability assessment, the appointment of a suitable person who will publicly examine the NDP and holding a referendum within the area covered by the NDP.
- 4.12 Shifnal and Much Wenlock have adopted Neighbourhood Plans. The parishes of Bicton; Burford; Stoke upon Tern; and Woore have been formally designated during the monitoring period as Neighbourhood Areas for the purpose of preparing a Neighbourhood Plan.
- 4.13 Any NDP must be in general conformity with 'strategic policies' in the Local Plan and with national policy. NDPs are not able to propose lower levels of development than those set out in up to date Local Plans but could propose higher levels. Before an NDP is adopted it must be subject to a referendum. If over 50% of the votes are in favour the local planning authority would have a duty to 'make' (adopt) the NDP.
- 4.14 The Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan sets out a range of locally derived and supported objectives to be delivered through locally specific development management policies and a housing targets rather than a site allocation. The NP successful passed a referendum in May 2014 (85% in favour) and was adopted or 'made' by Shropshire Council in July 2014.
- 4.15 The Shifnal NP sets out a range of locally derived and supported objectives to be delivered through locally specific development management policies. No housing site allocations are proposed and the plan's aspirations are limited to infill developments within the settlement boundary. The NP successful passed a referendum in September 2016 (93% in favour) and was adopted or 'made' by Shropshire Council in December 2016.
- 4.16 Further information on neighbourhood planning can be found via <http://shropshire.gov.uk/planning-policy/much-wenlock-neighbourhood-plan/>

Authority's Monitoring Report

- 4.17 An Authority's Monitoring Report (AMR) is a requirement of every planning authority and should be published in December of every year. The Council will monitor annually how effective its policies and proposals are in meeting the vision and objectives set out in the Core Strategy. It will aim to prepare an

AMR before 31 December each year that will cover the previous financial year (1 April to 31 March). The task of monitoring and producing the AMR will, in effect, become part of the process of maintaining an up to date evidence base and tracking plan-making progress.

4.18 The AMR will include:

- A survey and review of the area's characteristics, including: published statistics that help paint a social, environmental, economic, physical and demographic background; and local indicators on particular local issues, concerns or policy objectives;
 - Whether the Council is meeting, or is on track to meet, the targets and milestones set out in the LDS, and if not the reasons why;
 - An assessment of the extent to which policies in the Local Plan are being implemented and, if not, the reasons why;
 - The actions required to address any identified issues (the AMR itself will not revise or amend policies, but it will set out the steps the Council will take to address those issues, e.g. bring forward a review); and
 - Indicate whether any new Local Plan documents need to be prepared.

4.19 The latest AMR covering the financial year 2016-2017 was published in March 2018. Further information can be found at: [http://shropshire.gov.uk/planning-policy/annual-monitoring-report-\(amr/\)](http://shropshire.gov.uk/planning-policy/annual-monitoring-report-(amr/)) Shropshire Council is currently preparing a new AMR covering the period 2017-18 and expects to publish this later in 2019.

Supplementary Planning Documents

4.20 Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) are intended to expand upon policy or provide further detail to policies in adopted Local Plan Documents. Supplementary Planning Documents replace the old system of supplementary planning guidance, but act in a similar way. SPDs give further information to the policies contained in the development plan documents, and can cover a wide variety of issues. The Council currently has three adopted SPDs: The Developer Contributions SPD and Sustainable Design SPD (both adopted in 2011); and the Type and Affordability of Housing SPD (adopted in 2012). Whilst SPD's have also been drafted to provide additional guidance to support Local Plan policies on the Historic Environment and the Natural Environment, further progress with these documents is currently a lower priority than the Local Plan Review. The existing Developer Contributions SPD will also be reviewed to reflect proposed changes in national policy once these have been confirmed.

4.21 Further information on Shropshire Council's SPD's can be found via: [http://shropshire.gov.uk/planning-policy/supplementary-planning-documents-\(spds\)/](http://shropshire.gov.uk/planning-policy/supplementary-planning-documents-(spds)/)

5 Community Infrastructure Levy

- 5.1 The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a charge on new development to help fund supporting infrastructure. The CIL process is closely related to but not part of the statutory planning framework. Statute for the CIL is provided by Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 (as Amended). Shropshire Council's CIL levy is based on the size, type and location of new development. CIL liability is calculated using the Gross Internal Area of a development. In order to secure the necessary infrastructure funding, Shropshire Council have an adopted Charging Schedule in place and have been implementing the CIL since 1st January 2012. The Charging Schedule sets out CIL rates per square metre of floorspace for all open market residential development only.
- 5.2 No review of the Council's CIL Charging Schedule is currently proposed, but this may be required in future in response to changes in national legislation and local viability evidence. Further information on CIL can be found via: <http://shropshire.gov.uk/CIL>

Table 2: Preparation Programme

Document	2019			2020												2021			2022							
	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	
Annual Monitoring																										
Annual Monitoring Report including Local Aggregates Assessment							P											P	P							
5 Year Housing Land Supply Statement									P																	
Shropshire Local Plan Review 2016 - 2036																										
Draft Plan		2	2	2				C	3		④															
Sustainability Appraisal																										
Habitats Regulations Assessment																										

Key:

- C Cabinet
- © Council
- ◆ Pre-Hearing Meeting (if required)
- ® Inspector's Report
- P Final Publication

Preparation Stages

-  Pre-Production stage
-  Production stage
-  Examination
-  Adoption
-  Formal Consultation

Sustainability Appraisal & HRA

-  SA refining alternatives & assessing effects
-  SA Final Draft
-  SA Submission Report
-  Habitat Regulations assessment
-  Habitat Regulations Final Report

Milestones

- 0 - Start of preparation
- 1 - Development of Issues & Alternative Options;
- 2 - Targeted Consultation on Preferred Options
- 3 - Publication of Final Plan/Pre-Submission Draft
- 4 - Submission to Secretary of State;
- 6 - Examination Hearing
- 7 - Proposed Adoption;

6 Risk Management

- 6.1 The Risk Management Log (Appendix 2) contains analysis of the areas of uncertainty and risk facing production of the Local Plan, with risks of a critical or significant potential impact and of a very high or high likelihood including for example: staff turnover and recruitment difficulties or receipt of large numbers of objections.
- 6.2 There are significant risks that could impact upon delivery of the Local Plan to the schedules set out within this Local Development Scheme. In order to minimise possible impacts, risk management has been embedded in the Local Plan production processes in order that risk can be evaluated and where possible eliminated. Whilst proposed responses or mitigation measures have been set out, seeking where possible to manage these risks, some areas of risk are outside the Council's control. In addition, financial pressures could curtail many of the proposed mitigation measures.
- 6.3 In conclusion, the risk assessment would suggest that the Local Plan programme remains extremely challenging. For example, where individual document production milestones are missed it could be difficult to get "back on track" without impacts on other elements of the overall programme. The most fundamental overall mitigation measure that can be made is to ensure sufficient resources are available throughout the timescale of the LDS and to build-in realistic document production timescales into this LDS at the outset.

Appendix 1: Document Profiles

Shropshire Local Plan Review 2016 - 2036	
Document Overview	
<i>Role & subject:</i>	Sets out the vision, objectives, targets and spatial strategy for the development of Shropshire together with site allocations to meet development requirements for this period and detailed development management policies.
<i>Geographical area:</i>	Shropshire
<i>Status:</i>	Statutory Local Plan document
<i>Conformity:</i>	General conformity with NPPF and NPPG
Timetable	
<i>Commence preparation</i>	June 2016
<i>Consultation on Issues & Options</i>	January 2017
<i>Targeted engagement on Preferred Options</i>	October 2017 – September 2019
<i>Publication of Pre-Submission draft Plan</i>	March 2020
<i>Submission to S of S</i>	June 2020
<i>Examination</i>	June 2020
<i>Inspector's Report</i>	July 2021
<i>Adoption</i>	October 2021
Arrangements for Production	
<i>Lead for production process</i>	Planning Policy & Strategy Manager
<i>Political Management arrangements</i>	Local Plan Member Group, Cabinet & Council
<i>Resource requirements</i>	Core Planning Policy staff supported by contractors and

	by staff across a wide range of other council services
<i>Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) and Sustainability Appraisal (SA) (incorporating Strategic Environmental Assessment or SEA).</i>	HRA and combined SA incorporating SEA carried out in-house
<i>Evidence Base</i>	Resource data held by Councils, statutory bodies, consultation responses
<i>Involvement of stakeholders & the community</i>	Compliance with the published Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) and Duty to Co-operate requirements
Monitoring and Review	
<i>Monitoring requirements</i>	Monitored on an annual basis (AMR) and subject to review if the monitoring highlights a need
<i>Review timescale</i>	The document will be formally reviewed at least once every five years or linked to the implications of new evidence.

Appendix 2: Local Plan production Risk Management Log

Area of Uncertainty/Risk		Effect	Likelihood	Impact	Total Risk Score	Response / Counter Measures
1	Revision/change of LDS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approval of LDS delayed. Causes slippage in overall Local Plan programme 	4	3	12 (medium)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Close relationship and advocacy with members and directors
2	Constrained Council financial resources – insufficient budgetary provision to adequately finance Local Plan Review project Rising Inspectorate fees are also noted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work cannot be progressed to published timescales Objectives on quality compromised 	3	4	12 (medium)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A strong a case for setting an appropriate budget to deliver Local Plan and costs/budget kept under review. Use of funding for Service improvements. Maximise use of matrix management to draw on suitable staff resources within the Council Expand partnership working to draw upon the skills and resources within other organisations Review LDS timetables where necessary
3	Lack of in-house skills for specialised areas of policy work/background studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Slow progress causing a slippage in programme Evidence base challenged or undermined Quality compromised 	4	3	12 (medium)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Obtain training for areas where expertise is lacking. Review the adequacy of staffing as part of annual service reviews. Expand partnership working In some cases it will be more efficient to engage consultants where specialist skills are required to short timescales and in-house development is unrealistic.
4.	Project Team required to contribute to other work priorities (eg: Planning Appeals,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diverts Team from Local Plan causing a slippage in 	4	3	12 (medium)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make Local Plan a Corporate Priority Identify key staff to be 'shielded' from other work

Area of Uncertainty/Risk		Effect	Likelihood	Impact	Total Risk Score	Response / Counter Measures
	Infrastructure planning)	programme.				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase size of team
5.	Staff turnover and recruitment difficulties – Some staff turnover might be expected over the LDS period and this could have a considerable impact.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced capacity causing slippage in programme or failure to prepare Local Plan 	3	4	12 (medium)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take prompt action to fill vacancies with staff with the required skills • Pay recruitment/ retention incentives • Where recruitment difficulties are encountered, consider interim arrangements such as temporary appointments, use of agency staff or secondment of staff.
6.	Staff absence e.g. long term sickness, maternity leave.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced capacity causing slippage in programme or failure to prepare Local Plan 	4	3	12 (medium)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider interim arrangements such as temporary appointments, buying in agency staff or secondment of staff. • The adequacy of staffing levels will be evaluated through the monitoring of the preparation of the Local Plan.
7.	Joint working with other internal departments and / or external authorities causes delay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Causes a slippage in programme 	4	3	12 (medium)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that timescales for the Local Plan Review realistically reflect partner organisations ability to contribute to joint working • Ensure commitment to milestone dates and resource allocation is obtained from relevant parties in advance in particular HE, NE and EA • Consider involvement mechanisms carefully, seeking to ensure stakeholders feel engagement is worthwhile. • Consider ways to help improve the ability of local stakeholders to get involved and where possible will look to achieve efficiencies by linking with Community Enablement Team processes for example.
8.	Volume of work greater than	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Causes slippage in 	4	3	12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure timetable is realistic but has

Area of Uncertainty/Risk		Effect	Likelihood	Impact	Total Risk Score	Response / Counter Measures
	anticipated e.g. higher level of representations than expected	programme.			(medium)	some flexibility built in <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor progress against LDS • Consider additional resources
9	Planning Inspectorate unable to meet the timescale for examination and/or reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examination and/or report is delayed • Key milestones in programme not met 	3	3	9 (medium)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Once the LDS is in place there is a Service Level Agreement with PINS regarding the proposed public examination dates in this Scheme. • Close liaison with PINS to ensure early warning of any problems (e.g. consultation on LDS) • Experience has shown that PINS delays occur post examination in the reporting phase leading to problems with decision taking and at appeal
10	Political considerations – all key Local Plan preparation steps involve Member decisions. Reports also need to be prepared around a month before the date of decision.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change in membership of Local Plan Member Group • Change in approach/priorities arising from new members 	2	3	6 (low)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lead-in-time to member decisions has been allowed for in all document timetables in this LDS • Members involved in the Local Plan preparation process in order to provide ownership, leadership and commitment to future implementation • It is proposed that quarterly performance against these indicators will be included in the Council's performance management framework.

Area of Uncertainty/Risk		Effect	Likelihood	Impact	Total Risk Score	Response / Counter Measures
11	Local Plan Review found unsound	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Plan cannot be adopted without significant additional work 	2	4	8 (medium)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure Local Plan is sound, founded on a robust evidence base with sustainability appraisal and well audited community and stakeholder engagement Keep in view best practice elsewhere. Obtain training for areas where expertise is lacking.
12	Legal Challenge on procedural grounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adopted Local Plan quashed Additional workload 	2	4	8 (medium)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure all relevant regulatory procedures are complied with
13	National planning policy changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uncertainty & delay Need to revise scope, content or timetable for review 	3	3	9 (medium)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Officer level / political engagement with CLG; Careful project design and management, including particularly the measures identified under 2-8 above.

Risk Definition Guidance

Risk Matrix

R I S K I M P A C T	5					
	4					
	3					
	2					
	1					
		1	2	3	4	5
RISK LIKELIHOOD						

15 - 25	High	Immediate Senior Management action
8 - 12	Medium	Manage closely at Directorate level
4 - 6	Low	Continue to manage at Manager level
1 - 4	Very Low	Continue to manage at Service level

Likelihood Definitions

Score	Likelihood	Definitions (replacing all previous)
1	Rare/ Highly Unlikely	It is unlikely that the event will occur
2	Possible	It is likely that this event will occur but not within the next year
3	Likely	There is a fair chance (50:50) that this event will occur within the next year
4	Almost Certain	The event will almost certainly occur within the next six months
5	Certain	The event has occurred or will almost certainly occur within the next three months

Impact Definitions

Score	Impact	Definitions (replacing all previous)
1	Negligible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Day to day operational problems • Budgetary issues that can be resolved within Service
2	Minor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manageable disruption to services • Noticeable internal impact, but the Service would remain on course to achieve priorities • Budgetary issues that can be resolved within Service Management Team • Localised reputational damage • Isolated complaints • Minor Injury to employees or those in the Council's care

Score	Impact	Definitions (replacing all previous)
3	Significant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant loss, delay or interruption to services • Disruption to one critical Council Service for more than 48hrs • Non-delivery of corporate and service plan objectives • Significant stakeholder concern • Attracting short term media attention and potential for litigation/ prosecution from legislative or regulatory bodies • Long term regional damage to reputation • Budgetary issues that can be resolved at Directorate level. • Serious Injury to employees or those in the Council's care • Significant complaints
4	Major	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Widespread medium to long term impact on operational efficiency, performance and reputation. • Major disruption to Council's critical services for more than 48hrs (e.g. major ICT failure) • Breach of legal or contractual obligation attracting medium-term attention of legislative or regulatory bodies. • Adverse coverage in National Press/Front page news locally • Budgetary issues that can only be resolved by Section 151 Officer / Chief Executive / Members • Serious Injury to employees or those in the Council's care
5	Critical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential to threaten the existence of a service/s • Death of employees or those in the Council's care • Inability to function effectively, Council-wide • Service delivery has to be taken over by Central Government • Front page news story in National Press • Serious breach of legal or contractual obligation resulting in National impact with rapid intervention of legislative or regulatory bodies. • Extensive adverse media interest. • Budgetary intervention at national level

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