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Shropshire Council

Shropshire Council
Legal and Democratic Services
Guildhall,
Frankwell Quay,
Shrewsbury
SY3 8HQ

Date: Tuesday, 13 January 2026

Committee:
Cabinet

Date: Wednesday, 21 January 2026
Time: 10.30 am
Venue: Council Chamber, The Guildhall, Frankwell Quay, Shrewsbury, Shropshire, SY3 8HQ

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

There will be some access to the meeting room for members of the press and public, but this will be limited. If you wish to attend the meeting please email democracy@shropshire.gov.uk to check that a seat will be available for you.

Please click here to view the livestream of the meeting on the date and time stated on the agenda

The recording of the event will also be made available shortly after the meeting on the Shropshire Council Youtube Channel Here

Tim Collard Service Director – Legal, Governance and Planning

Members of Cabinet
Heather Kidd
Alex Wagner
Bernie Bentick
Roger Evans
Andy Hall
Ruth Houghton
James Owen
Rob Wilson
David Vasmer
David Walker

Your Committee Officer is:

Ashley Kendrick Democratic Services Officer
Tel: 01743 250893
Email: ashley.kendrick@shropshire.gov.uk

AGENDA

1 Apologies for Absence

2 Disclosable Interests

Members are reminded that they must declare their disclosable pecuniary interests and other registrable or non-registrable interests in any matter being considered at the meeting as set out in Appendix B of the Members' Code of Conduct and consider if they should leave the room prior to the item being considered. Further advice can be sought from the Monitoring Officer in advance of the meeting.

3 Minutes (Pages 1 - 12)

To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 3 December 2025.

4 Public Question Time

To receive any questions from members of the public, notice of which has been given in accordance with Procedure Rule 14. Deadline for notification is not later than 12 noon on Thursday 15 January 2026.

5 Member Question Time

To receive any questions from Members of the Council. Deadline for notification is not later than 12 noon on Thursday 15 January 2026.

6 Scrutiny Items

7 Draft Financial Strategy 2025/26 - 2029/30

Lead Member – Councillor Roger Evans, Portfolio Holder for Finance

Lead Officer – James Walton, Executive Director (S151)

REPORT TO FOLLOW

8 Capital Strategy 2025/26 – 2030/31 - In-Year Review

Lead Member – Councillor Roger Evans, Portfolio Holder for Finance

Lead Officer – Cheryl Sedgely, Head of Financial Management and Reporting

REPORT TO FOLLOW

9 Approval of Shropshire Hills National Landscape Management Plan 2025-30 and new Shropshire Hills National Landscape Advisory Committee Terms of Reference (Pages 13 - 178)

Lead Member – Councillor James Owen, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Leisure

Lead Officer – Andy Wilde, Service Director - Infrastructure

10 Baschurch Neighbourhood Plan - Area Designation (Pages 179 - 188)

Lead Member – Councillor David Walker, Portfolio Holder for Planning

Lead Officer – Eddie West, Planning Policy and Strategy Manager

11 Recommendation for the Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan Review to Proceed to Referendum (Pages 189 - 390)

Lead Member – Councillor David Walker, Portfolio Holder for Planning

Lead Officer – Eddie West, Planning Policy and Strategy Manager

12 Provider Services Redesign (in-house) (Pages 391 - 428)

Lead Member – Councillor Ruth Houghton, Portfolio Holder for Social Care

Lead Officer – Natalie McFall, Service Director – Care and Wellbeing

13 Exclusion of 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

14 Leisure Service Contract Retendering (Pages 429 - 448)

Lead Member – Councillor James Owen, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Leisure

Lead Officer – Laura Tyler, Service Director - Commissioning

15 Date of Next Meeting

To note that the next meeting is scheduled to take place on Wednesday 11 February 2026.

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Shropshire Council

Committee and Date

Cabinet

21 January 2025

CABINET

Minutes of the meeting held on 3 December 2025
In The Council Chamber, The Guildhall, Frankwell Quay, Shrewsbury, SY3 8HQ
10.30 am – 12.20 pm

Responsible Officer: Amanda Holyoak
Email: amanda.holyoak@shropshire.gov.uk Tel: 01743 250893

Cabinet Members Present
Councillors Heather Kidd (Leader), Alex Wagner (Deputy Leader), Bernie Bentick, Roger Evans, Andy Hall, Ruth Houghton, James Owen, Rob Wilson and David Walker

Also present: Councillors Dawn Huseman, Group Leader, Reform UK, Dan Thomas, Group Leader Conservatives, Councillor Julian Dean, Deputy Group Leader, Green and Progressive Independent, Councillor David Minnery (Chair of Transformation and Improvement Overview and Scrutiny Committee),

81 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Councillor David Vasmer.

Labour Group Leader Cllr Rosemary Dartnall and Green and Progressive Independent Group Leader Cllr Duncan Kerr had also sent apologies.

82 **Disclosable Interests**

None were declared

83 **Minutes**

RESOLVED

To approve the minutes of the last meeting as a correct record.

84 **Public Question Time**

Two public questions were received:

From Judy Bradley, in relation to Wem High Street

From John Palmer – in relation to Price Waterhouse Coopers

The full questions and the answers provided to them are available here

85 Member Question Time

Three public questions were received:

From Ed Potter, in relation to Education, Health and Care Plans

From Julian Dean, in relation to Road Safety and Active Travel Schemes

From Colin Taylor, in relation to cycle routes and funding

The full questions and answers to them are available here (appendix to SEND question: here)

86 Scrutiny Items

a Scrutiny Item – Report of the Station Gyratory (LUF2) Task & Finish Group

The Chair of the Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee presented the findings and recommendations of the Station Gyratory Rapid Task and Finish Group, which was formed in response to public concern and scrutiny committee recommendations regarding the Levelling Up Fund Project in Shrewsbury.

The group had conducted a full day of investigations, engaging with emergency services, businesses, stakeholders, and council officers to gather evidence and inform their recommendations.

Key issues identified included: a breakdown in communication among stakeholders - resulting in a scheme that differed from initial plans; concerns about congestion and emergency service access; insufficient information sharing; and a lack of opportunity to pause and review the project.

The group had noted that despite significant external funding commitments, the Council was left vulnerable to liability, and an independent safety audit of the site was recommended to assess risks and guide next steps. Other recommendations focused on improving governance, oversight, and applying lessons learned to future and existing projects to ensure robust management and public confidence.

The Group had emphasized the need for immediate improvements, such as traffic light sequencing, addressing bus stop issues, and ongoing scrutiny workstreams, particularly around the movement strategy and quality assurance for future projects.

The Portfolio Holder for Transport and Economic Growth thanked the Task and Finish Group for its swift and thorough work. He said the report clearly outlined a series of problems with the scheme, noting links to earlier issues raised about project delivery in the council. Opportunities to stop or reconsider the project were missed, with some officers raising concerns that were not acted upon, which he recognised as a serious problem. He stressed the need to rebuild confidence with partners, as the project became disconnected

from the broader strategy as it developed and changes were made. He committed to learning lessons and doing things differently in future.

Cabinet accepted the recommendations set out the report in full and agreed to review the position in 6 months time.

b **Scrutiny Item - Improvement Plan**

The Chair of the Transformation and Improvement Overview and Scrutiny Committee provided a verbal report on the committee's consideration of the Improvement Plan at its meeting held on 1 December. The Committee had been broadly positive and supportive of the plan, understanding that it was not yet a detailed delivery plan but agreeing that it set out clear aims and programmes of work to be delivered in order for the Council to become financially stable and sustainable in the future. It was noted that Members had been engaged .and informed as the plan developed.

The Committee had also considered how the Improvement Board would fit with the Council's political governance structures, and the role of overview and scrutiny overall in adding value in the most agile and effective way, ensuring the Improvement Plan is delivered and supported, whilst avoiding duplication of the role of the Board. Focus on outcomes rather than processes would be required and protocols would be needed for monitoring progress. Recognising the demand on scarce resources, it had been recognised that there may be a need for some Members to take on or assist with background work of Task and Finish Groups.

The Leader thanked the Chairman of the Committee for his useful report.

87 **All Age Autism Strategy 2025 - 2030**

The Portfolio Holder for Social Care introduced Shropshire Council's All-Age Autism Strategy for 2025–2030. The strategy had been based on extensive engagement with autistic people, families, carers, and professionals and aims to make Shropshire an inclusive place where autistic people of all ages are understood, supported, and able to thrive.

The strategy aligns with the Shropshire Plan and the recent House of Lords report *"Time to Deliver"*, which reviews progress since the Autism Act 2009. It focused on early intervention, prevention, and person-centred support in response to rising autism prevalence both nationally and locally.

Key aims included reducing assessment waiting times, improving access to support, and enabling autistic people to live fulfilling and independent lives. The approach emphasised collaboration across health, education, employment, housing, social care, and the criminal justice system. It also highlighted the importance of lived experience, data-driven service design, and mandatory autism and neurodiversity training for staff.

RESOLVED

3.1 To approve the Shropshire All-Age Autism Strategy 2025-2030

3.2 To endorse the development of an All-Age Autism Strategy delivery plan to embed the recommendations included and inform policy overseen by the Service Director for Commissioning in consultation with the Portfolio holder for social care.

3.3 To review progress and implementation at People Scrutiny in 12 months, December 2026

3.4 To commit Shropshire Council to be a neuroinclusive employer

88 **Improvement Plan**

The Leader introduced the draft Improvement Plan, stressing the urgent need to address the Council's financial emergency, respond to external audit and peer challenge findings, and restore stability. The plan outlined three improvement aims and nine priority programmes, forming a framework to coordinate existing work and guide transformation through to 2027. An independently chaired Improvement Board would oversee progress and provide challenge and ideas.

It was noted that the plan was not a detailed delivery document but a high-level framework that would continue to evolve. Transparency and engagement had been central to its development, with input from staff, members, partners, and scrutiny. Further supporting plans, in addition to the People Plan, would follow.

During discussion, Members raised points on value for money, redesigning services, digital inclusion, and the need for broader community partnerships. It was confirmed that several LGA deep-dive reviews (children's finances, adults' social care, transformation) were underway. Early findings showed pressure linked to high service demand and reduced investment in early prevention. Officers noted that capacity gaps limited the Council's ability to assess minimum service levels and emphasised the need to rebuild capability, strengthen place-based work, and improve organisational understanding.

Members recognised the scale and difficulty of the transformation required and the need to make rapid progress.

RESOLVED

3.1 To review, comment on, and recommend the draft Improvement Plan (Appendix 1) to Council.

3.2 To recommend to Council the governance arrangements set out in the Plan.

3.3 To recommend to Council that the capacity and resources to support the delivery of transformation required through this plan will be aligned to the MTFS.

89 **People Plan**

The Leader introduced the People Plan as a key element of the Corporate Peer Challenge recommendations and a central part of the Council's ambition to become an enabling, modern authority. The plan sets out a commitment to empower, support and collaborate with staff, partners and communities, with the aim of improving outcomes for residents. It

included programmes focusing on organisational values, communications, engagement, equality and inclusion, wellbeing, and the introduction of a new performance management framework with clear KPIs.

Delivery of the plan would be overseen by a dedicated People Board, with regular reporting to the Leadership Board and Cabinet. The plan was designed to be collaborative, with strong emphasis on staff engagement, trust, and capturing staff ideas for improvement and efficiency. It aligned directly with the Council's wider Improvement Plan, supporting modernisation, financial sustainability, and improved service delivery.

During discussion, Members raised questions about the resourcing required to implement the plan, and it was confirmed that funding requirements formed part of the Improvement Plan and may depend on the outcome of the Council's request for Exceptional Financial Support. Members emphasised that investment in staff was essential if the Council is to deliver the improvements required.

Portfolio holders spoke about severe staffing pressures across multiple departments, with some services operating at or below minimum viable levels. Members stressed the need to protect and rebuild critical teams, improve staff morale, and ensure that officers are not overwhelmed. Several Members also highlighted the importance of celebrating staff achievements and improving public understanding of service pressures.

All agreed that the People Plan was vital to supporting organisational change and ensuring the workforce is equipped and motivated during a challenging period.

RESOLVED

3.1 To review, comment on, and recommend to full Council the approval of the draft People Plan (Appendix 1).

3.2 To agree the governance arrangements, the aims and values, set out in the Plan.

3.3 To agree the capacity and resources necessary to support the delivery of organisational change and development, as outlined in this plan, are aligned with the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) to ensure effective and sustainable implementation

90 **Financial Monitoring Period 7**

The Portfolio Holder presented the Period 7 financial monitoring position, noting a further deterioration. The forecast outturn overspend has increased by £3.677m, resulting in a total projected overspend of £50.746m. With the General Fund balance standing at £34.280m, this leaves an unfunded overspend of £16.466m.

He reminded all of the financial emergency already declared, and all possible actions were being taken to minimise in-year expenditure and maximise income. The three operational boards were meeting regularly and focused on tighter spend control across the organisation.

The plan for managing the in-year position has been set out, to establish a minimum level for the General Fund balance; create a contingency fund from earmarked reserves and actively engage with the DLHC regarding Exceptional Financial Support (EFS) for 2025/26 and future years.

Members noted that the position, while worsening, remains containable if spending stabilises and begins to reduce.

RESOLVED

A. To ensure actions taken by officers under the declared Financial Emergency are focussed to ensure all spending and income generation over the remainder of the financial year is scrutinised to actively improve the Council's projected year end position. Action must predominantly focus on reducing spend, increasing income, delivering remaining savings and mitigating in-year spending pressures.

B. To support the continued use of Operations Boards, which have been in place from August 2025, to challenge all in-year spending, and more recently have been further enhanced to bring greater Service Director scrutiny. The impact of these boards will continue to inform future Finance Monitoring reports.

C. To consider the projected spend over budget at Period 7 of £50.746m.

D. To consider the indicative level of savings delivery at Period 7 of £20.917m (34.94%).

E. To support the proposal for a minimum value of £5m for the General Fund Balance and the ringfencing of a Contingency Fund of £5.478m.

F. To support the proposed application for Exceptional Financial Support of £71.361m made up of £21.466m for revenue monitoring pressures, up to £10m for transformation activity and up to £38.895m for NWRR write off costs (should this be necessary). The decision on the final application will be made by the s151 Officer in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance.

91 **Treasury Management Update Quarter 2 2025/26**

The Portfolio Holder for Finance reported that the Council currently held £44.1 million in investments and had £420m of borrowing. During Quarter 2, a 4.11% had been returned on cash balances, slightly below the benchmark by 0.08%. The returns guaranteed a net income of £1.246 million for the Council. He noted that the Council's Audit Committee is responsible for effective consideration of treasury management.

RESOLVED

3.1. To note the summary of the wider economic environment and the Council's borrowings and investments set out in Appendix A.

3.2. To note the performance within prudential indicators for quarter 2, 2025/26 (Appendix B)

92 Treasury Strategy 2025/26 Mid-Year Review

The Portfolio Holder for Finance presented the report.

RESOLVED

3.1. To agree the Treasury Strategy activity as set out in the report.

93 Fees and Charges Pricing Policy

The Portfolio Holder introduced the Corporate Fees and Charges Policy, explained that the purpose of the policy was to ensure fees and charges were set within a consistent framework and supported the Council's financial sustainability. The core objective was to move towards full cost recovery for discretionary services as the default position. It was noted that some fees were nationally set or limited by statutory restrictions, including caps on inflationary increases.

Two appendices accompanied the report, including an initial Equality and Social Inclusion Assessment, which currently identifies a low or negative impact. Further assessments might be undertaken where new or significantly altered fees were proposed.

During discussion, a member highlighted the need to consider the cumulative impact on small businesses, which were facing pressures from multiple sources. It was noted that many statutory fee caps prevent the Council from recovering full costs, adding to financial pressures. Cabinet acknowledged these concerns and emphasised the need for balanced decision-making when detailed proposals came forward.

RESOLVED

a. To consider the Fees and Charges Policy attached at Appendix 1

b. To recommend to Council the approval and adoption of the Fees and Charges Policy for 2026/27 and incorporation into the Medium-Term Financial Strategy and budget setting process in February 2026.

94 Pre-Budget Report

This item was withdrawn.

95 Setting the Council Tax Taxbase for 2026/27

The Portfolio Holder for Finance introduced the technical report on setting the Council Tax Base. The report confirmed that Shropshire had 121,852.27 Bank D equivalent properties, and increase of 4,175 equivalents from the previous year. The collection rate had been set at 98%, representing a 0.2% reduction from the current year.

RESOLVED

To agree and recommend to full Council:

3.1 To approve, in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012, the amount calculated by Shropshire Council as it's Council Tax taxbase for the year 2026/27, as detailed in Appendix A, totalling 121,852.37 Band D equivalents.

3.2 To note the changes to the Council's localised Council Tax Support (CTS) scheme in 2026/27. The scheme is attached at Appendix B.

3.3 To note the Council Tax Support Scheme amendments detailed in Appendix B have no impact on the taxbase determination.

3.4 To note the exclusion of 7,950.74 Band D equivalents from the taxbase calculation as a result of localised Council Tax Support.

3.5 To note continuation of the discretionary Council Tax discount policy to not award a discount in respect of vacant dwellings undergoing major repair, i.e. former Class A exempt properties.

3.6 To note continuation of the discretionary Council Tax discount policy in respect of vacant dwellings, i.e. former Class C exempt properties, of 100% for one month i.e. effectively reinstating the exemption and the resulting exclusion of 243.34 band D equivalents from the taxbase calculation. Cabinet 3rd December 2025 – Setting the Council Tax Taxbase 2026/27 Contact: james.walton@shropshire.gov.uk 3

3.7 To note continuation of the "six week rule" in respect of vacant dwellings, i.e. former Class C exempt properties.

3.8 To note continuation of the discretionary Council Tax discount policy to levy a Council Tax premium of 100% in relation to dwellings which have been unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for more than one year (but less than five years) and the resulting inclusion of an additional 859.89 Band D equivalents in the taxbase calculation.

3.9 To note continuation of the discretionary Council Tax discount policy to levy a Council Tax premium of 200% in relation to dwellings which have been unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for more than five years (but less than ten years) and the resulting inclusion of an additional 194.22 Band D equivalents in the taxbase calculation.

3.10 To note continuation of the discretionary Council Tax discount policy to levy a Council Tax premium of 300% in relation to dwellings which have been unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for more than ten years and the resulting inclusion of an additional 202.66 Band D equivalents in the taxbase calculation.

3.11 To note the continuation of the discretionary Council Tax discount policy to levy a Council Tax premium of 100% in relation to second homes (other than those that retain a 50% discount through regulation as a result of job related protection) and the resulting inclusion of an additional 1,390.00 Band D equivalents in the taxbase calculation.

3.12 To approve a collection rate for the year 2026/27 of 98.0%.

3.13 That the Council Tax Support policy and other similar Council Tax and Business Rate policies are reviewed and consulted upon, where necessary, over 2026 with a view to implementing any revisions by Financial Year 2027/28 at the latest.

96 Children's Services Annual Reports 2024-25

The Portfolio Holder for Social Care introduced the annual Children's Services report, which provided a summary of activity across children's social care over the past year. Members were reminded of their responsibilities as corporate parents and the importance of being fully informed about the safety, quality and outcomes of services delivered for children and young people.

The report highlighted the breadth and complexity of children's social care. Members were reminded that earlier in the year Children's Social Care received an 'Outstanding' Ofsted rating, with children's residential homes also achieving Good or Outstanding ratings. The Portfolio Holder praised staff for their dedication in delivering strong outcomes despite financial pressures.

A key recommendation asks Council to require all members to complete mandatory training in children's safeguarding and corporate parenting, reflecting statutory duties for members. The Portfolio Holder emphasised the importance understanding these responsibilities.

Looking ahead she reported that work through the Families First Partnership and the Children's Ambitions Board would focus on early intervention, improved outcomes, and delivering services differently across the partnership.

RESOLVED

3.1 That Cabinet acknowledge the content of the reports attached and the positive impact and outcomes that services are achieving for children and young people.

3.2 That Cabinet acknowledge the breadth of statutory requirements being successfully delivered and achieving good outcomes for the children and young people in Shropshire.

3.3 Where Cabinet wish to influence progress and development opportunities this can be incorporated into the plans of the Ambitions Board which will be driving forward the services continuous improvement plan.

3.4 That Cabinet recommend to Council that it receive the Annual Report and resolve that Childrens Safeguarding training becomes a mandatory requirement for all elected Members in order that they are well equipped to fulfil their role as corporate parents.

97 Annual Infrastructure Funding Statement 2025

The Portfolio Holder for Planning presented the Annual Infrastructure Funding Statement for 2025, confirming that £6.5m of developer contributions had been received, £7.1m allocated, and £5.7m spent between April 2024 and March 2025. A further £1.1m was distributed to town and parish councils as Neighbourhood Fund during the same period.

The statement covered Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and Section 106 contributions supporting sustainable growth and essential infrastructure.

He explained that although the statement must be published before the end of the calendar year, officers had been asked to publish future reports earlier in the financial year, when figures were more current and useful. The infrastructure list remained indicative; inclusion did not guarantee funding, and projects not listed were not excluded from receiving CIL funding.

In discussion, members noted ongoing concerns regarding the transparency and progress of CIL-funded projects. References were made to the ongoing task-and-finish work reviewing the future use and allocation of CIL.

The Leader emphasised the importance of aligning CIL spending with the Council's wider financial context and improving visibility given that most projects do not currently require Cabinet approval unless above £500k.

A Member highlighted issues accessing the place plans via the link in the report, which officers agreed to investigate.

RESOLVED

A. To agree the Infrastructure Funding Statement - Appendix 1 to this report – for publication before the end of 2025

B. To delegate responsibility to the Service Director – Legal, Governance and Planning, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning, to agree, if necessary, amendments to the Infrastructure Funding Statement before its publication.

98 **Update on the School Library Service (SLS)**

The Portfolio Holder for Children and Education presented the report on the School Library Service, a non-statutory offer currently used regularly by only 13 schools across Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin and beyond.

He explained that due to declining school engagement, rising financial pressures on schools, and the Government's September 2025 announcement requiring all state schools to have on-site libraries by the end of the parliamentary term, the service was no longer financially viableand was forecast to make a £90,000 loss this year. In light of the Council's declared financial emergency, options for reducing the cost of non-statutory services had to be considered.

It was proposed that the Director of Children's Services would seek expressions of interest from external organisations, for example, schools, multi-academy trusts, town and parish councils and charities to explore transferring the service. If no viable provider emerged, the Council may donate resources to schools to support the establishment of their own libraries, aligning with the National Year of Reading 2026.

During discussion, concerns were raised about the viability of transferring the service and the likelihood of it ultimately being discontinued. The Portfolio Holder and Leader

emphasised the change in circumstances since previous years, including reduced buy-in from schools, years of under-investment in the book stock, and the new government funding commitments for school libraries.

RESOLVED

3.1 To approve the proposal to cease the operation by the Council of the Schools Library Service but before closing the Service altogether, delegate to the Director of Children's Services, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Children and Education, the implementation of an engagement process to ascertain the viability of the service being maintained by a Multi-Academy Trust, Federation, town or parish council, or other third-party organisation. Should that engagement be unsuccessful in identifying a viable interest in operating the Service, it will be closed.

99 **Exclusion of Press and Public**

100 **Exempt Minutes**

RESOLVED

That the exempt minutes of the last meeting be confirmed as a correct record.

101 **Date of Next Meeting**

Thursday 21 January 2025 at 10.30 am

Signed ..... (Chairman)

Date: .....

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Shropshire Council

Cabinet 21st January 2026

Item

Public

Approval of Shropshire Hills National Landscape Management Plan 2025-30 and new Shropshire Hills National Landscape Advisory Committee Terms of Reference

Responsible Officer:	Andy Wilde		
email:	andy.wilde@shropshire.gov.uk	Tel:	01743 256401
Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder):	Cllr James Owen		

1. Synopsis

The statutory Shropshire Hills National Landscape Management Plan 2025-30 is put forward for formal approval. The plan is delivered in partnership, and so also presented for approval are new Terms of Reference for a re-formed Joint Advisory Committee for the National Landscape.

2. Executive Summary

2.1. A **Management Plan** for the Shropshire Hills National Landscape (renamed but still formally designated as an 'area of outstanding natural beauty') is required every five years under the Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000. The new Plan has been prepared over the last two years by the National Landscape Team and Partnership, and the draft Plan was out for public consultation between mid-May and mid-July. The National Landscape covers 23% of Shropshire and also extends into Telford & Wrekin, whose Council must also approve the Plan.

2.2. The Plan's Vision is that:

- **Nature** is restored and natural processes regenerated,
- **Climate** is stabilised through decarbonising, and we are resilient to change,
- **Land** is nurtured so it can sustain us,
- **Water** is clean, and its flows and cycles support our lives, and all life,
- **People** are healthy and connected to nature – in vibrant communities and as welcome visitors,
- The Shropshire Hills are valued and cared for as a special **Place**.

2.3. The **final draft Plan for approval is provided as Appendix A.** The Plan is for the area and not for any particular organisation. It sets out policies, recommendations and aspirations to guide a wide variety of stakeholder organisations and individuals. Implementation is through a large range of mechanisms, and there is no single budget or programme for delivery of the Plan. The Shropshire Hills National Landscape Team is hosted by Shropshire Council but majority funded by DEFRA. The Team have an important role to support delivery of the Plan, but have roles to animate, facilitate and co-ordinate partner activity in addition to direct delivery.

2.4. A **Partnership structure** for the Shropshire Hills National Landscape (formerly AONB) has existed since 1993 in the legal form of a local authority Joint Advisory Committee. Since 2002 this has been known as the Partnership, and enables the Council to fulfil its legal duty to prepare and review the Management Plan jointly with Telford & Wrekin Council, as well as involving a variety of other stakeholders (36 members in total). Following a review during 2025 to modernise partnership structures, Terms of Reference have been drawn up and consulted on for a new Joint Advisory Committee of 12 members. **The proposed Terms of Reference for approval are provided as Appendix B.**

2.5. The new Advisory Committee will include representatives appointed by Shropshire Council and Telford & Wrekin Council, plus open seats appointed through an application process. The Committee will provide scrutiny and advisory oversight of work of the National Landscape Team and provide advice to the two local authorities in relation to the National Landscape as necessary. The Committee will operate in close co-ordination with other partnership arrangements for the National Landscape, including collaboration arrangements with key delivery partner organisations (including those with a statutory duty) and a new Shropshire Hills Forum. The Forum will engage a wide and inclusive range of stakeholders, including all Ward Councillors, Parish & Town Councils, community groups and individuals, in a flexible and more informal format. The new structure will provide stronger governance as well as targeted collaboration and broader general engagement.

2.6. **The Equality, Social Inclusion and Health Impact Assessment (ESHIA) covering both the Plan and the new Advisor Committee is included as Appendix C.**

3. Recommendations

3.1. That Cabinet formally approve on behalf of Shropshire Council the new Shropshire Hills National Landscape Management Plan 2025-2030.

3.2. That Cabinet formally approve on behalf of Shropshire Council the Terms of Reference for the new Shropshire Hills National Landscape Advisory Committee.

Report

4. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

4.1. The Management Plan, while statutory, relates to what could be termed the strategic place-shaping role of the Council for Shropshire rather than large scale delivery of direct Council services. Overall therefore, risks associated with this are relatively low for the Council. There is a reputational risk around the Council's stewardship of this national designation – there are 36 National Landscapes in England and Wales, making up around 15% of the land area.

4.2. Since December 2023 the legal duty on all public bodies in relation to National Landscapes has been strengthened from 'having regard' to the purpose of designation ('to conserve and enhance natural beauty') to 'seeking to further' the purpose of designation. For the Council, this applies to any service or function which may have relevance to, or impact upon, the National Landscape. The Management Plan will provide significant assistance in enabling any Council department to understand how to fulfil their legal duty.

4.3. Risk table

Risk	*Mitigation*
Statutory requirement to review the Management Plan not fulfilled.	The new Plan has been prepared by an experienced team, taking account of the latest nationally published guidance, and good practice from elsewhere in the National Landscape network. Stakeholder involvement has been strong both through the Partnership and more broadly, and the consultation process has been robust. Approval of the Plan is now needed by both Councils to fulfil the legal requirement. The deadline for completion was extended by ministerial letter from the end of March 2024 to the end of December 2025.
Failure to fulfil required supporting procedures.	A Sustainability Appraisal (incorporating statutory Strategic Environmental Assessment) has been prepared, as has a Habitats Regulations Assessment.
Failure to fulfil legal duty to 'seek to further' the purpose of designation.	The Management Plan will provide significant assistance in enabling any Council department to understand how to fulfil their legal duty.
Inadequate structures to support delivery of the Management Plan, and review and preparation of the next Plan.	In absence of an Advisory Committee and associated partnership structures to encourage and co-ordinate delivery, the potential of the Management Plan to deliver benefits for the National Landscape and fulfil its aims would severely limited.

Contact: Andy Wilde andy.wilde@shropshire.gov.uk

4.4 At this stocktake moment, the initial assessment of likely equality and social inclusion impacts of the Management Plan is for these to be positive for people across all nine Protected Characteristics as set out in the Equality Act 2010, as well as for people in our additional local groupings of Carers, Social Inclusion, and Young People Leaving Care. The anticipation is also that impacts would be neutral to low positive for people in the grouping set out in the Armed Forces Act 2023, i.e. veterans and serving members of the armed forces and their families. There is potential for the impacts to move from neutral to low positive to low to medium positive, where partnership efforts may achieve positive outcomes for those in the groupings of Age and Disability, particularly people with neurodiverse conditions or sight or hearing loss. This would draw upon good practice around use of signage and wayfaring materials, and link with related policy work across the Council around accessing the built and natural environment.

4.5 The Council is already working with the Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin ICS at national level, with the University of Leicester and with Cornwall Council and Natural England, to co-produce a national policy briefing paper during 2026 on anti-racism actions in the countryside and develop case studies and associated materials for wider use.

4.6 This follows a University of Leicester research report* around rural racism in the countryside, which identified myths including that “minoritised communities have no respect for or affinity with the countryside”, that “racism in the countryside is a figment of people’s imagination”, that “there are no genuine barriers to accessing the countryside” and that “forming Black and Muslim walking groups is unnecessary and divisive”. *(*“The rural racism project: towards an inclusive countryside”).* Through this high profile work, building upon recommendations including the need to make rural spaces welcoming and accessible, there is potential for the impacts for people in the groupings of Race and of Religion and Belief to move from ‘neutral to low positive’ to ‘low to medium positive’, serving to strengthen overall outcomes in the National Landscape Management Plan for everyone.

4.7 The Plan contributes importantly to people’s physical and mental health and wellbeing, acting as a preventative measure to improve people’s quality of life and to save money on services to address problems that would otherwise arise or be worse. This links in to joined-up approaches across Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin, including through the ICS, around the positive impacts and the likely increase in walking/hiking and physical/mental benefits.

5. Financial Implications

5.1. Shropshire Council continues to manage unprecedented financial demands and a financial emergency was declared by Cabinet on 10 September 2025. The overall financial position of the Council is set out in the monitoring position presented to Cabinet on a monthly basis. Significant management action has been instigated at all levels of the Council reducing spend to ensure the Council's financial survival. While all reports to Members provide the financial implications of decisions being taken, this may change as officers and/or Portfolio Holders review the overall financial situation and make decisions aligned to financial survivability. All non-

essential spend will be stopped and all essential spend challenged. These actions may involve (this is not exhaustive):

5.2.

- scaling down initiatives,
- changing the scope of activities,
- delaying implementation of agreed plans, or
- extending delivery timescales.

5.3. There are no binding financial commitments for the Council from approving the Management Plan.

5.4. The high quality landscape of the Shropshire Hills National Landscape supports the economy of Shropshire and people's wellbeing. Care and stewardship of the landscape, guided and supported by the Management Plan, is good for the prosperity of Shropshire. It also contributes importantly to people's physical and mental health and wellbeing, acting as a preventative measure to improve people's quality of life and to save money on services to address problems that would otherwise arise or be worse.

6. Climate Change Appraisal

6.1. Climate change is one of the six core topics of the Plan and runs right through it. The Climate section of the Plan includes content on reducing greenhouse gas emissions, carbon storage and sequestration, adaptation, renewable energy, attitudes and behaviour change, just transition, and nature-based solutions. The National Landscape team is very active on the topic of climate change and at the forefront of knowledge on carbon storage and sequestration in land, soil and vegetation. The connections of climate change to the Plan relate much less to the Council's corporate carbon footprint and more to influencing the footprint of the whole county. This is valuable as this aspect has received less attention by the Council. The Plan also has important content on climate change adaptation. Protected landscapes have provided input collectively to the Government's National Adaptation Programme, and content in the Plan draws on this work. At present the Council centrally has not undertaken Adaptation risk assessment or planning, and content in the Plan should be of assistance to this process, which is a legal requirement.

7. Conclusions

7.1. The new Management Plan 2025-2030 provides a good basis to guide the future of the Shropshire Hills National Landscape for the next five years.

7.2. The new Advisory Committee is a robust update of the existing structure, which will provide improved governance for the National Landscape, and in conjunction with the linked Forum and key partner structures, improved partnership working and stakeholder engagement.

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

State of the Shropshire Hills report

Habitat Regulations Assessment baseline report

Sustainability Appraisal report, matrix and non-technical summary

All available at https://www.shropshirehills-nl.org.uk/a-special-place/management-plan/2025-30-management-plan.

Local Members:	Cllr Samuel Walmsley Cllr Colin Stanford Cllr Ruth Houghton Cllr Heather Kidd Cllr Joshua Dickin Cllr Mark Morris Cllr David Davies Cllr George Hollyhead Cllr Charles Shakerley-Bennett Cllr Chris Naylor Cllr Pamela Davies Cllr Dan Thomas Cllr Susan Coleman Cllr Nick Hignett Cllr Andy Boddington Cllr Roger Evans

Appendices

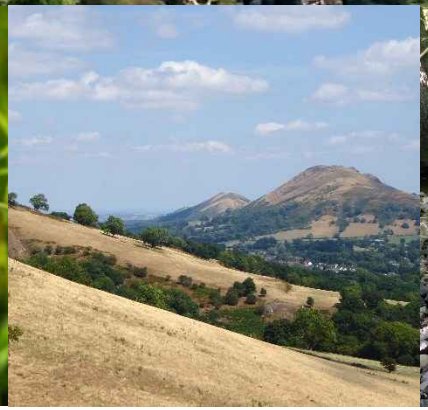
Appendix A Shropshire Hills National Landscape Management Plan 2025-30

Appendix B Terms of Reference – Shropshire Hills National Landscape Advisory Committee

Appendix C Equality, Social Inclusion and Health Impact Assessment (ESHIA)

Thriving in balance with nature

Shropshire Hills National Landscape



Shropshire Hills National Landscape: An Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2025-2030

Guiding sustainable future directions for the Shropshire Hills landscape

Final draft for approval, Dec 25

Our vision for the Shropshire Hills…

Thriving in balance with nature

Climate is stabilised through decarbonising, and we are resilient to change

Everyone can play their part in looking after what makes the area special

Nature is restored and natural processes regenerated

People are healthy and connected to nature – in vibrant communities and as welcome visitors

Water is clean, and its flows and cycles support our lives, and all life

Land is nurtured so it can sustain us

Shropshire Hills National Landscape

The Plan's Vision is set out in a visual format, in this short summary form here, and in a fuller form later in the Plan.

Summary of proposed key Plan priorities

Under each Vision heading, these are headline summaries of the Plan's priorities, which are fleshed out in Policies, Recommendations and Aspirations within the Plan.

Nature is restored and natural processes regenerated

- Build the **nature recovery network** by restoring and creating more connected habitats for wildlife – woodlands, rivers and wetlands, meadows, scrub, hedges, road verges, etc.
- Avoid further harm and **manage existing good habitats**.
- **Integrate nature with farming** and land management.
- Increase **native tree and woodland cover**.
- Targeted action for particularly important **species**.
- Support and enable **natural processes**.
- Help people to **connect to nature**.

Climate is stabilised through decarbonising, and we are resilient to change

- **Face up to the challenge** – changing, preparing, adapting.
- Achieve **big reductions in greenhouse gas emissions** through technological, behavioural and structural changes in all sectors.
- Encourage **dialogue and collective action** on climate.
- Undertake more detailed work on **adaptation**.
- Maximise **storage and sequestration of carbon in land**, and apply nature-based solutions at scale.
- Appropriate deployment of **renewable energy**.
- Seek to ensure a **just transition** for all of society.

Land is nurtured so it can sustain us

- Forge a **new sustainable future for farming** - especially livestock farming in the uplands, balancing food production with nature.
- Transition to **more agro-ecological farming**.
- Understand and value our **exceptional geology**.
- **Look after soils**, especially through regenerative practices.
- Support the movement for a **fairer and healthier food system**.
- Ensure **appropriate forms of built development** on farms.
- Support **sustainable forestry**, balancing production with other benefits.
- Support **skills development** for land management.
- Develop the role of **farmer clusters and groups**.

Water is clean, and its flows and cycles support our lives, and all life

- **Re-naturalise our rivers and their catchments** - with less engineered stream and river channels.
- **Hold more water higher up for longer** to slow flood peaks and maintain flows in dry periods, including rewetting headwater land.
- **Reduce all forms of pollution** to achieve cleaner rivers.
- **Manage catchments in an integrated way** for multiple benefits.
- Improve **management and storage of water** as a resource.

People are healthy and connected to nature – in vibrant communities and as welcome visitors

- Support **meeting everybody's basic needs of wellbeing**.
- Take active steps to **address barriers faced by underserved communities** (including local people and visitors).
- **Involve and welcome a wider range of people** from all parts of society to enjoy the area.
- Encourage **active recreation for health and wellbeing**.
- Invest in improvements and maintenance of the **access network**.
- Manage localised **impacts and pressures from visitors**.
- Support **learning** related to all aspects of the landscape.
- Enable more opportunities for **volunteering and involvement**.

The Shropshire Hills are valued and cared for as a special Place

- Build a **regenerative economy** that supports a healthy environment and meets the needs of all of society.
- **Reject developments which harm** or take from the environment.
- Support transitions to **sustainable tourism and transport**.
- Protect **tranquillity and dark skies**.
- Value and celebrate our varied **cultural heritage**.
- Develop **sense of place** at local levels and for the Shropshire Hills.
- Build strong **communities**, and support **local action.**
- Optimise links between the Shropshire Hills and **surrounding areas**.

Contents (with links to relevant sections)

Plan Vision - Thriving in balance with nature (short form)

Summary of proposed key Plan priorities

Contents

Introduction
- Forewords from the Minister and the Partnership Chair

Background
- About the Shropshire Hills (with map)
- Summary on legal basis and context with links to appendices

The Management Plan review
- Special qualities and statement of significance
- Key issues identified and drivers of change
- Highlights and challenges in the last Plan period
- The Doughnut Economics model as a framework
- Summary of condition of the Shropshire Hills National Landscape
- Protected Landscapes Targets & Outcomes Framework

Plan Vision - Thriving in balance with nature (long form)

Priority theme sections - introduction
- Overall protection of the National Landscape

Priority themes – with Policies, Recommendations and Aspirations
- **Nature** is restored and natural processes regenerated
- **Climate** is stabilised through decarbonising, and we are resilient to change
- **Land** is nurtured so it can sustain us
- **Water** is clean, and its flows and cycles support our lives, and all life
- **People** are healthy and connected to nature – in vibrant communities and as welcome visitors
- The Shropshire Hills are valued and cared for as a special **Place**

Local priorities for areas of the Shropshire Hills
- Stretton Valley and Hills/ A49 corridor
- Long Mynd & Stiperstones
- Clun Forest & Valley
- Clee Hills
- Wenlock Edge & Dales
- The Wrekin

Delivery
- Analysis informed by Theory of Change
- Deliverers
- Funding
- Partnership working
- Potential project areas
- Monitoring

Appendices
1. The Landscapes Review
2. Rebranding as National Landscapes
3. Legal framework including strengthened legal duty on public bodies
4. 30 by 30 and Environmental Improvement Plan targets
5. International context
6. Shropshire Hills National Landscape structures – the Team, the Trust, advisory oversight and partnership
7. National Landscapes Association and wider networks
8. The Plan review process
9. Supporting documents and processes:
   - Strategic Environmental Assessment/Sustainability Appraisal
   - Habitats Regulations Assessment

Introduction

Among the gentle folds of the Shropshire Hills are farms, woods, rivers and meadows. Villages and fields retain ancient patterns while the remains of hillforts, mines and quarries tell of historical chapters now passed. A varied geology forms the bones of the land, whose mantle of nature and natural processes have been shaped over centuries by human activity – sometimes sympathetic, and sometimes less gentle. The whole created by these natural, cultural and aesthetic qualities is a landscape that is loved and cherished, but shows signs of pressure, and sits in a delicate balance.

This Plan for the Shropshire Hills National Landscape aims to set a future direction for the area. It is based on the legal purpose for which the area is designated – to **'conserve and enhance natural beauty'**, and on addressing the challenges we face, both here and more broadly:

- The damage to **climate and nature** threatens human wellbeing and the balance of life on earth – we need a new goal and framework of **meeting everyone's needs within planetary boundaries**.
- **Finding a balance of land use** – where farming produces healthy food, sustaining the land and rural communities, and supporting nature recovery and other public benefits. This requires communication on differing viewpoints and building of trust and consensus.
- **Improving our water environment** – in terms of both water quality and management of water flows.
- We need to **de-carbonise and adapt rapidly** across all sectors through **behavioural change as well as technology**, embracing the huge opportunities for a new economy and better wellbeing.
- **Encouraging economic activity focused on meeting people's needs in harmony with the environment**, with all sectors urgently cutting emissions and adapting to climate change, to build resilience.
- **Supporting more people to have closer connection with nature**, be more active for health, help to nurture their environment and be part of vibrant communities.
- **Upscaling positive action** to achieve these things, stopping actions which continue to cause harm and go in the wrong direction, and winning hearts and minds for a harmonious relationship with nature.

This Plan aims to inspire, inform, connect ideas, co-ordinate activity, communicate strategic direction and gather support.

It is a plan for the Shropshire Hills area and not for any one organisation. **Making the Plan happen is a shared responsibility and everyone can contribute.** Its success therefore depends on the collective will of people to agree on the challenges and support the Vision and actions to address these. Organisations, land managers, businesses, communities and individuals all play their part in looking after the Shropshire Hills. All of these are audiences for the Plan, but this document has to be definitive and thorough, so summary supporting material will be developed to help engage people more widely.

The landscape has never stayed the same. Layers of human history are steeped into the land. People who live and work here have adapted to many changes and the different challenges of different times. They have responded with their skills and resilience, up to the present day. This plan looks forwards and is not about going back in time, or indeed about keeping things exactly as they are. Efforts to conserve nature and to make farming and visitor use more sustainable have already made much progress.

But other influences are pushing in unfavourable directions, and the challenges and urgency have increased. For climate we are at a critical point in time. A global rebalance is needed between human activities and the natural world, so that current and future generations can thrive, and is very evident in our local issues. We need to add to the best actions from the past, and do more, including in new ways. Changes in land use and our economies to recover the climate and nature can and should be done in a way that revives our rural area socially, economically and culturally.

"In every corner of the world can be found landscapes that have been shaped by the interactions of people and nature over time. These landscapes have been created by traditional patterns of land use that have contributed to biodiversity and other natural values, have proven sustainable over centuries, and are living examples of cultural heritage. They are rich in natural and cultural values not in spite of but because of the presence of people. Protecting these landscapes requires a conservation approach that recognises natural as well as cultural values, sustains traditional connections to the land, and engages people in stewardship of the places where they live and work."

Brown, Mitchell & Beresford IUCN, 2005 The Protected Landscape Approach: linking nature, culture and community

A protected area is more an opportunity than a constraint. It should be a focus for collaboration and positive vision. The Shropshire Hills National Landscape (still formally designated as an area of outstanding natural beauty) has some legal protection, and the designation brings some funding to look after the landscape. But we have to be honest that current levels of protection and funding aren't adequate to meet the challenges we face, nor the big goals which the government seeks from protected landscapes. The Plan has been developed by a broad Partnership set up for this purpose and supported by a small staff team. It represents local priorities as well as taking account of influences from outside the area, including global environmental change and national policies. The draft plan was open for public consultation from May to August 2025 and has been refined taking into account comments received. See Appendix 8 for more about the Plan review process.

The Plan is a statutory document and the partners behind it want to maximise its influence, but the Plan does not seek to dictate or control. It adds no new regulation or restrictions. The Plan is the place where the legal purpose to 'conserve and enhance' which relevant authorities are now required to 'seek to further' is articulated in some detail. It seeks to set out how the relevant government environmental targets will be met locally. It provides guidance on a range of topics, signposting other documents where appropriate. It summarises statutory requirements, defines Policies and Recommendations on key topics to guide the actions of stakeholders and sets out Aspirations for actions by partners. This is a balance of ambition and realism.

While the Plan is now going forward for approval, we need to keep it alive during the five year period it covers, and we still welcome views on its content, and how you may be able to help to deliver it.

Foreword from the Minister

Protected Landscapes are our most iconic and inspiring places.

They were created from 1949, with post-war Britain recognising everyone has a right to access the countryside – from Northumberland's dark skies to the South Downs' Seven Sisters. 75 years on, the needs are greater than ever, with nature underpinning our health, economy and climate. That's why this government will empower Protected Landscapes to become greener, wilder and more accessible.

Covering 25% of England, but half of our priority habitats, Protected Landscapes are essential to nature's recovery. This government understands that we will not achieve our Environment Act targets or commitment to protect 30% of nature by 2030 without Protected Landscapes.

Recovering this natural capital is essential to ensure sustainable economic growth. Protected Landscapes are fundamental to strengthening the nation's economic health by looking after the natural resources we depend on. Through nature's recovery, Protected Landscapes protect communities from flooding, fight climate change, enable sustainable food production and create green jobs. They also have a vital role in connecting diverse communities with nature - underpinning the nation's mental and physical health and reducing the strain on our NHS.

This incredible potential is beginning to be set out in the Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework. However, it will only become reality through the work of Protected Landscapes teams in collaboration with local communities, land managers, public bodies and other partners.

Protected Landscape Management Plans provide the focal point for all partners to agree a local ambition and a pathway to deliver it, shaping the future of our most special places, and therefore the country. It is vital that all partners work together to develop and implement Management Plans. To support this collaboration, we have issued guidance on the Protected Landscapes duty which requires relevant authorities to seek to further the purposes of Protected Landscapes.

In recognising their importance to the nation, this government has committed to reinvigorating Protected Landscapes with new legislation, resources and tools. I look forward to developing this with you and other partners because it is only together that we can protect and enhance these re-markable places for generations to come.

Mary Creagh, CBE MP
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State (Minister for Nature)

Foreword from the Partnership Chair

Welcome to 'Thriving in Balance with Nature' - the new Shropshire Hills National Landscape Management Plan.

We have worked collaboratively with Partnership members, the National Landscape Team, local communities and the wider public to set out a vision for the future of the Shropshire Hills National Landscape thriving in balance with nature.

This is the first management plan produced following the renaming of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) to National Landscapes. This change followed recommendations from the Landscapes Review and seeks to improve inclusivity and engagement with local communities and visitors to the area; these are fundamental tenets of the Management Plan.

Our core themes of nature, climate, water, land, people and place are intrinsically interconnected and interdependent, and the Plan clearly identifies the importance of these linkages. No one theme stands above another and the summary of proposed priorities provides a consolidated overview of both opportunities and challenges across these six areas.

The Shropshire Hills National Landscape is also increasingly exposed to complex external factors, notably - ongoing changes in national land use and agricultural policy, uncertainty in funding availability for protected landscapes and land managers, engaging with green finance, reform of the planning system and contributing to delivery of a range of national and international targets for nature recovery. Only through extensive partnership working will we be able to achieve and expand on the recommendations and aspirations identified in the Plan.

We have adopted the pioneering doughnut economics model to help understand where we are now and where we want to be. This approach recognises that global issues such as climate change, water management and food production are equally as important at the local level and highlights how action within the National Landscape is also important for positive national and international outcomes.

The Plan provides a broad framework to facilitate individuals, communities and organisations working together to develop and deliver innovative approaches; ensuring an environmentally, economically and socially sustainable future for the Shropshire Hills.

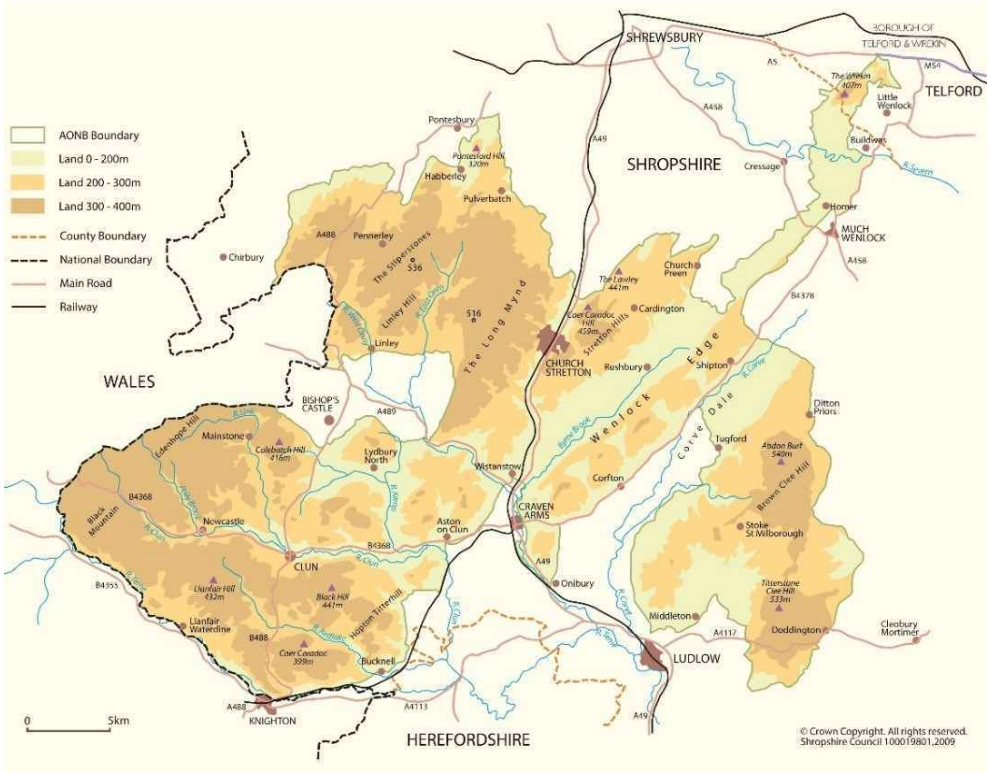
Alex Carson-Taylor
Chair, Shropshire Hills National Landscape Partnership

Background

About the Shropshire Hills

The Shropshire Hills are a beautiful rolling 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 National Landscape 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 is one of 46 National Landscapes in the UK - 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 a National Landscape.



Key statistics (for details see State of the Shropshire Hills report)

Size: 802km² =80,200ha (covering 23% of Shropshire); designated 1958

2 unitary local authorities: Shropshire Council, Telford & Wrekin Council

Highest point: Abdon Burf, Brown Clee 540m (1,771 feet)

4,626 ha of Sites of Special Scientific Interest; 10,282ha priority habitats

Resident population: 19,900; average age 51

80% of area used for agriculture, of which 63% is permanent grass

887 registered farm holdings; 2,019 people employed in farming

232km river and several thousand km of brooks and streams

4,042km rights of way (2,520 miles); 9,289ha of open access land

175 scheduled monuments; 1,075 Listed Buildings

14% of land is wooded; 6,800km hedgerows

2022 net carbon emissions 227.3 ktCO_2e = 12.3 tCO_2e per capita

‘Story of Place’ for the Shropshire Hills

This set of roughly chronological notes is intended to stimulate thought and understanding on the historical context of the area, from both natural and human perspectives. It is not exhaustive but includes some of the more significant things that have shaped the area to be as it is now as a National Landscape, and which may influence its future.

Rocks from many different geological periods, back to the Precambrian. Movement along fault lines create the SW-NE oriented topography.

Location just beyond the edge of the ice sheet in the last glacial maximum 27,000 years ago. Non-glaciated V-shaped valleys.

Neolithic and Bronze Age settlement - hillfort sites, barrows, stone circles, trade routes for axes. Early working of iron.

Edge of the Roman empire – Ancient Britons and Romans fought. Hillforts in the landscape and place names e.g. Caer Caradoc, Wrekin.

Wroxeter an important Roman military base and town. Watling Street Roman road. Roman mining activity.

Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Mercia, on the England-Wales border. Offa's Dyke mostly built in 8th Century.

Norman castles, Marcher Lords, hunting forests.

Cattle trading, drovers’ routes across the hills.

Wool trade, local sheep breeds – Clun Forest, Shropshire.

Growth of towns and villages - settlement, road and field patterns largely fixed from medieval times.

Plague (Black Death) 1348, a factor in desertion of medieval villages.

Dissolution of monasteries and land transfer to Crown. Skirmishes with Wales. England-Wales border fixed in 1536. English Civil War 1642-53.

Enclosure of common land. Reduction in woodland cover.

Importance of water transport, especially on the River Severn.

Birthplace of the Industrial Revolution at Ironbridge - iron smelting used charcoal from woodlands. Later coke made from coal (Abraham Darby).

Important place for development of geological science - Murchison and others. Rocks from Silurian and Ordovician periods were named here.

Darwin was born and grew up in Shrewsbury, the formative years for his interest in natural history.

Mining of barytes and coal, quarrying of dhustone (basalt) & limestone.

Railways around 1850s. Growth of Craven Arms as a sheep market.

Growth in visitors to the Shropshire Hills - Church Stretton known as 'Little Switzerland'. Forest Glen at the Wrekin a popular destination.

Post-war farming policies and grants focussed on increased production.

Modernisation of beef and dairy farms with continental breeds of cattle.

Development of stratified sheep production system.

Shropshire Hills designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty 1958.

Increase in road traffic, house building, telecommunications masts.

Long Mynd bought by National Trust 1965.

Creation of Telford new town, 1960s.

Growth of the poultry industry, especially from 1970s.

Robert Hart develops concept of ‘Forest Gardening’ near Wenlock Edge.

Some of first farm environment schemes 1980s. Clun Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA), later also Shropshire Hills ESA.

Ironbridge became a World Heritage Site 1986.

Ludlow's growing reputation as a food destination.

Unitary Telford & Wrekin Council split from Shropshire 1998.

BSE (mad cow disease) 1980s – 90s. Foot and Mouth epidemic 2001.

Shropshire local authorities become unitary Shropshire Council 2009.

More conservation activity - projects, land acquisition for nature.

Increasing outdoor recreation. Shropshire Hills secures EUROPARC Sustainable Tourism Charter.

LEADER rural development programmes. Lottery funded projects.

Improved provision of broadband and mobile phone service.

Closure of Ironbridge Power station 2015.

Polarisation over development e.g. large scale poultry units, housing.

Increasing focus on river catchments. Clun catchment nutrient issues.

More frequent flooding on River Severn and other rivers.

Widespread declaration of Climate and Ecological Emergency.

Covid-19 pandemic and recovery 2020-22.

National Landscape name. Farming in Protected Landscapes programme.

Interest in regenerative farming and formation of farmer groups.

Geographical context

Shropshire is England's largest inland county, and the Shropshire Hills forms part of headwaters of the Severn, the UK's longest river. The Shropshire Hills is one of the more sparsely populated areas of England, with a density of people 17 times less than the average for England.

The Shropshire Hills National Landscape makes up most of the uplands of Shropshire, covering 23% of the county but holding only around 6% of its population. There is a big contrast between the relatively remote western parts of the Shropshire Hills along the Welsh border, and the eastern edges which lie close to Wolverhampton and the West Midlands conurbation. The closest other protected landscapes are the Malvern Hills about 12 miles to the south-east of Cleehill, and Cannock Chase about 20 miles to the east of the Wrekin. The Shropshire Hills is the largest National Landscape in the Midlands area, and some distance from the nearest National Parks (Eryri and Bannau Brycheiniog). It is therefore very important as an accessible, high quality landscape for a wide catchment area including large urban populations.

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.

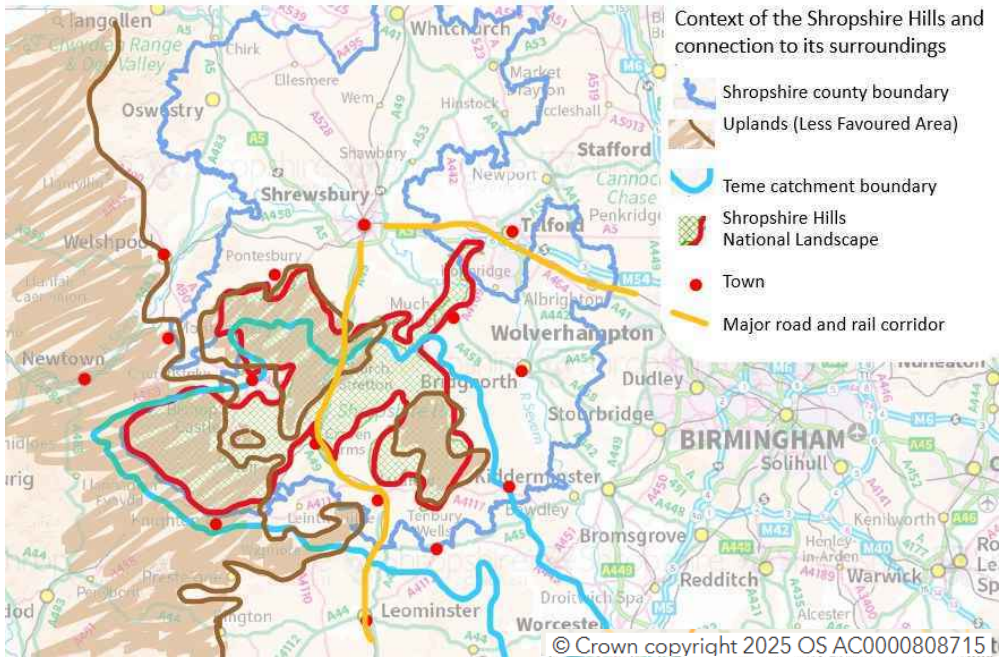
The Shropshire Hills is not an absolute unit of area which works for every purpose, but it is a coherent whole as a National Landscape, encompassing almost all of the upland area of Shropshire and associated land of high ecological value. Neither is it a self-contained or isolated unit, but it connects to and interacts with its surrounding areas, and forms a nested part of wider units of different kinds, which extend in different directions, especially:

- The administrative unit of Shropshire – extending mainly to the north and east
- The River Teme catchment – extending to the south-east towards Worcester
- As an outlier of the uplands of mid Wales and the Marches – extending to the west

The Shropshire Hills is surrounded closely by a ring of modest sized towns – Craven Arms, Ludlow, Cleobury Mortimer, Much Wenlock, Wellington, Pontesbury, Minsterley, Montgomery, Bishop's Castle and Knighton. And slightly further away by larger settlements – Shrewsbury, Telford, Bridgnorth, Newtown and Welshpool. The Shropshire Hills has links with all of these towns, economically and culturally.

The major road and rail corridors north-south along the A49 and east-west along the M54/A5 are significant connections for the area. Other linear features crossing in and out of the area include Offa's Dyke in the west, as well as brooks and streams flowing north into the mid Severn catchment from the northern part of the area.

While the population within the designated area is around 19,900, the population within the designated area plus a 5km radius of it is substantially higher, at 205,246.



All of these connections need to be taken into account when considering the Shropshire Hills as a place connected with its surroundings, and its future potential as a special landscape.

Summary on the legal basis and context, with links to appendices for more detail

Protected Landscapes Targets & Outcomes Framework
A new framework of targets and outcomes for National Landscapes and National Parks was defined by government in 2024. These are targets for the areas and not for any particular organisation. They are a key focus of this Plan. The targets cover the topics of managing, restoring, and creating habitats; greenhouse gas emissions; nature friendly farming; peat, woodland and trees; accessibility and engagement; and heritage assets.
To read more on this see Targets & Outcomes Framework section.

The Landscapes Review
An independent review commissioned by government of National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty reported in in 2019. It made recommendations including to strengthen AONBs. The government have implemented some of these.
To read more on this see Appendix 1.

Rebranding as National Landscapes
AONBs were rebranded in November 2023 as National Landscapes. The legal designation remains as area of outstanding natural beauty.
To read more on this see Appendix 2.

Legal framework including strengthened duty on public bodies
The single statutory purpose of the designation is *'to conserve and enhance natural beauty'*, unchanged since 1949. In 2000 the Management Plan became a statutory document. In 2023, the statutory duty on 'relevant authorities' from was strengthened from 'have regard' to the purpose of designation to 'seek to further' the purpose. This includes all public bodies and statutory undertakers.
To read more on this see Appendix 3.

30 by 30 and Environmental Improvement Plan targets
The UK government has signed up to an international commitment to protect 30% of land by 2030 (a target known as 30 by 30). Other key government environmental targets are set out in the Environmental Improvement Plan.
To read more on this see Appendix 4.

International context
National Landscapes are classified in the international system of protected areas as cultural landscapes (IUCN Category V) - where the interaction of people and nature over time has produced a character that is valued.
To read more on this see Appendix 5.

Shropshire Hills National Landscape structures – the Team, the Trust, advisory oversight and partnership
There is no single 'organisation' responsible for the Shropshire Hills National Landscape. Certain legal duties rest with the Shropshire Council and Telford & Wrekin Council. Shropshire Council employs a National Landscape staff team of currently 12 people, which convenes various partner groups. New National Landscape structures of an Advisory Committee, Forum and Key Delivery Partner group are being put in place from 2026 with the approval of this Plan.
The Shropshire Hills Landscape Trust charity also raises funds and gives small grants in support of the National Landscape purpose.
To read more on this see Appendix 6.

National Landscapes Association and wider networks
There are 46 National Landscapes in the UK, represented by a National Association which advocates, communicates and supports the network to be as effective as possible. The Shropshire Hills team is also active in international networks through the EUROPARC Federation.
To read more on this see Appendix 7.

The Management Plan review

The Plan review process

The review process has been led by the National Landscape Team and Partnership on behalf of the two local authorities, and began in 2023. The process has involved workshops with the Partnership, evidence gathering and a public questionnaire, topic group meetings and work with key partners. The review was delayed by a year to bring the timescale to 2025-30 in line with relevant government programmes.

To read more on this see Appendix 8.

Answers to "What one thing do you most value about the Shropshire Hills?" in our public survey during 2024

Supporting documents and processes:

Sustainability Appraisal (incorporating Strategic Environmental Assessment)

The Management Plan process has to be accompanied by a Strategic Environmental Assessment to check for any policy conflicts and alternatives. We do this through a broader Sustainability Appraisal which also looks at potential conflicts with social and economic objectives.

Habitats Regulations Assessment

Habitat Regulations Assessment involves looking at the Plan in relation to Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) within or nearby the National Landscape. The principal consideration here is the Stiperstones NNR/SAC, though the River Clun SAC lies just outside the boundary and is important also in the context of this plan. Some other sites further away are also considered.

To read more on these see Appendix 9.

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 aim of this section is to capture what is distinctive and significant, to help determine how best to look after these qualities within the remit of the National Landscape and how the area can evolve positively. 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 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 mature character. 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 in a national context relatively clean and natural in form, and of high importance. 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 National Landscape. 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 Shropshire Hills makes

up the majority of the headwaters of the Teme catchment, and a short stretch of the River Severn within the National Landscape 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 Shropshire Hills are 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 Shropshire Hills, especially heathland, grassland, ffridd, 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 National Landscape is very significant in the region for upland species such as 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 species formerly more widespread in England like skylark, black poplar and great-crested newt.

Marsh violet

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 Shropshire Hills, 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 control of water run-off.

Tranquillity

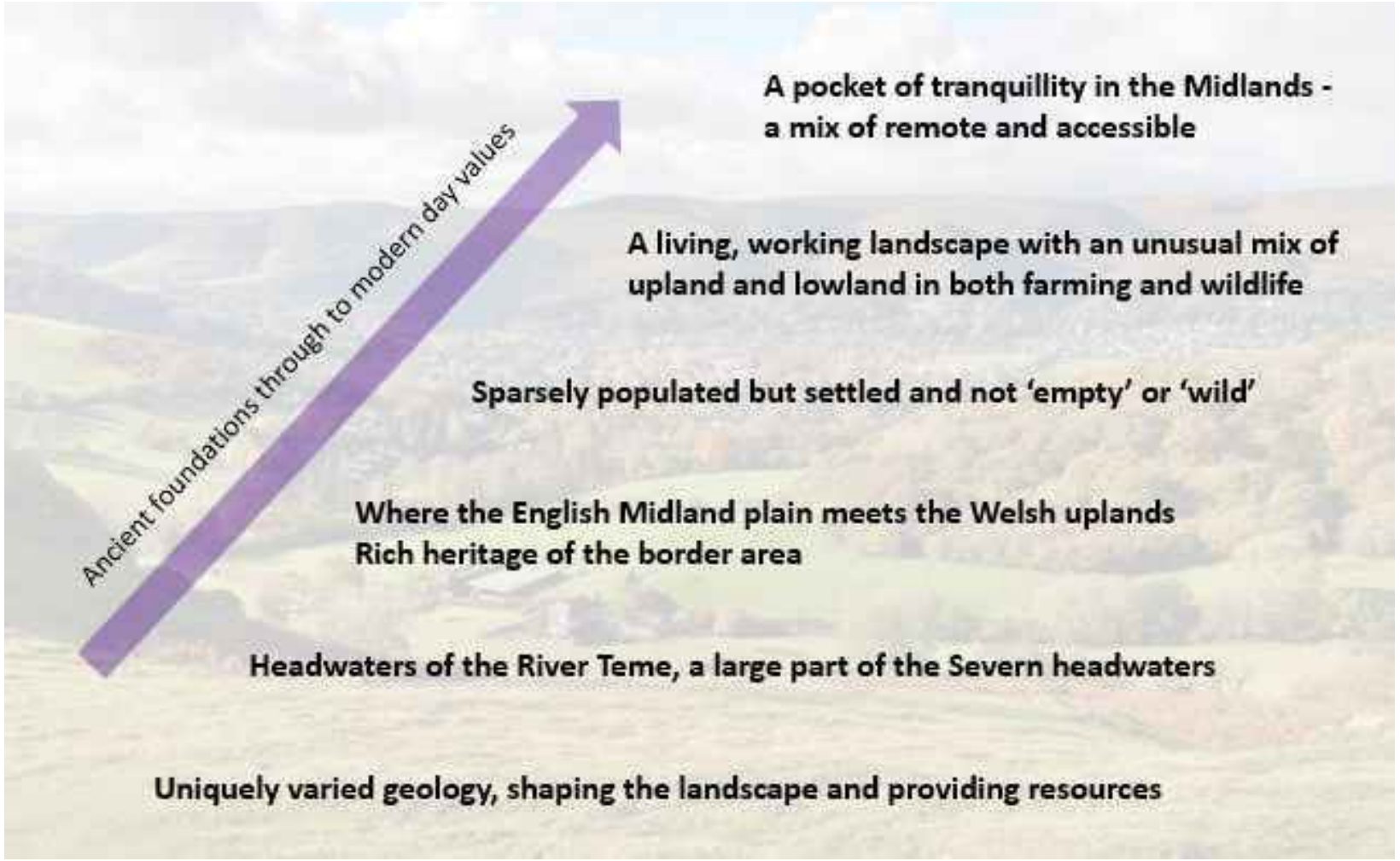
Off the beaten track and remote in the context of this part of England, the Shropshire Hills are a haven of tranquillity – peace and quiet, dark skies and unspoilt views. Relatively low levels of noise and development are coupled with modest visitor numbers to create an unspoilt quality that is greatly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

Biocultural uniqueness of the Shropshire Hills

As an addition in this new Plan we have tried to define what is unique about the Shropshire Hills, resulting from the particular interaction of natural and human factors over time. These shape the future interaction and can guide our best actions.



Key issues identified and drivers of change

Building on work undertaken by the Partnership at the start of the review process the following issues and drivers of change have been identified to address in this plan:

- **Climate change mitigation and adaptation**, including integrating and developing content from the AONB Partnership's Climate Change Action Plan, and from local and national strategies and plans for Net Zero.

- **Need for nature recovery** – linking to the Colchester Declaration, the Shropshire Hills draft Nature Recovery Plan, the emerging Local Nature Recovery Strategy, and Biodiversity Net Gain. The evolving roles of small landowners, Town and Parish Councils and the aspirations of local communities in nature recovery.

- **Agriculture transition** – shift of subsidies to public money for public goods, and especially the implications for upland farmers. Implementation of the Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELM) and support for those forms of farming most compatible with the National Landscape. Developing farmer groups and clusters and supporting their collaboration. Making the best use of land use tools and mapping, research and studies.

- **Resolving conflicts over planning** – especially providing sufficient affordable housing to sustain communities. Solutions are still needed in the Clun catchment to resolve nutrient issues to allow some controlled housing development. Review of the Shropshire Local Plan and Telford & Wrekin Local Plan. Changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and development of the National Land Use Framework. Raising awareness of the National Landscape with planning officers and committees, improving information and guidance for applicants, linking with Neighbourhood Plans.

- **Meeting government priorities** including the Environmental Improvement Plan 2023 and implementation of the Landscapes Review, and changes to duties and targets which result from this.

- Need for closer attention to **natural capital** assets and the **ecosystem services** they provide, along with emerging opportunities for **green finance**, and the limitations of carbon offsetting.

- **Pressures on the local authorities** - financial pressures and loss of capacity. Priorities in the Shropshire Plan. Government steer towards local authority amalgamation as part of devolution policy.

- **Need to broaden engagement** - The rebranding to National Landscapes and associated uplift in status and recognition. Communicating the value of the National Landscape more widely. Health and wellbeing, inclusion and participation. Engagement with young people, and following through from younger to teenage to post-school. Making the Plan accessible to a wide audience.

- **Achieving sustainable tourism** - Some concerns about dispersal affecting quieter areas, and pressure on areas of conservation importance. Ongoing high levels of car transport.

- **Risks to heritage assets** from climate change, along with underfunding in the public sector and loss of income affecting heritage charities due to the cost of living. Decline in heritage skills.

Highlights and challenges from the last Plan period 2019-2024

This section summarises selected highlights from the huge amount of activity by many people and organisations during the last five years. It is based on the three priority headings of the last Management Plan. Some short case studies are also included.

Land management supporting landscape and natural beauty

- The **Farming in Protected Landscapes programme** in the Shropshire Hills has supported over 180 projects over four years, distributing over £3 million in grants. The programme is now in a fifth year, and Defra are envisaging a long term role of land management advice for National Landscape teams.
- Habitat creation, farmer engagement and community activity through the **Stepping Stones project** led by the National Trust.
- **Our Upland Commons project** has achieved some good outcomes on Longmynd, Stiperstones and Clee Liberty commons, such as heritage and wildlife work, public engagement and support to commoners including securing a Higher Level Stewardship agreement for Clee Liberty.

- The **Ancient Woodlands project** has achieved practical restoration on a number of sites and given advice to more owners.
- Considerable progress with community and smallholder management of **meadows** and **verges**.
- **Tests & Trials** for Environmental Land Management Scheme.
- Increase in application of **Natural Flood Management** techniques.
- A number of important sites have been purchased by **Middle Marches Community Land Trust** – Cudwell Meadow, High Leasowes, part of Norbury Hill, Minsterley Meadows SSSI.
- Increase in knowledge on **Carbon in land and soil** through Cranfield University contract and extensive use of farm carbon toolkits.
- **Clun Unmuddying the Waters** and **Water Environment Grant projects** completed.

- **CPRE Hedgerows project** delivering new planting and engagement .
- **Development of farm clusters and farmer groups** – including Upper Onny Farmers Group, Clee View Farmers Group, Upper Teme and Apedale groups, and continuation of Upper Clun group (Land Life & Livelihoods).
- **Draft Shropshire Hills Nature Recovery Plan** published.
- **Opening the Ark project** on churchyards by Caring for God's Acre.
- **Offa's Dyke Conservation project**.

Delivery challenges:

- **Agricultural transition** and development of new ELM schemes not as far advanced as expected, significant concerns in farming community.
- **River Clun water quality and nutrient issues** remain fairly intractable despite a lot of effort and attention.
- **Low levels of new woodland and tree planting** (though very recently increased public sector activity).

Planning for a sustainable economy and communities

- The number of adverse major developments has reduced, including large housing developments and intensive poultry units.
- New specific National Landscape Local Plan policy drafted.
- Production of AONB Partnership Climate Action Plan, considerable activity by South Shropshire Climate Action and Zero Carbon Shropshire (now merged as Shropshire Climate Action).

Delivery Challenges:

- Impact of national reforms of planning and environmental legislation more in favour of development.
- The draft Shropshire Local Plan was withdrawn in July 2025 and the Council is starting to develop a new draft Local Plan with anticipated adoption in 2028. The number of houses Shropshire has been allocated by government to provide has been roughly doubled. A five year land supply of allocated sites is not currently in place, affecting decision making.
- Provision of adequate housing and rural services to meet local needs.
- Lack of resolution of water quality issues in River Clun preventing development, including of much needed local housing.
- Very limited capacity for input into planning casework by the National Landscape team and no new capacity to improve this.
- No progress by government on statutory consultee status for National Landscape bodies.
- No progress on new planning guidance related to the Shropshire Hills National Landscape.

People enjoying and caring about the landscape

- Partner liaison to support management of visitors in post Covid lockdown peaks and new visitor trends apparent.
- Successful three year **Young Rangers project** now continuing through core team capacity.
- Diversity and Inclusion study completed with many useful recommendations and good partner engagement.
- New Engagement Ranger post conducting outreach work with under-served communities.
- New Shropshire Hills Sustainable Tourism Strategy and renewal of EUROPARC Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas.
- Completion of 'Fix the Fort' repairs on Caer Caradoc hillfort.
- Continuation and consolidation of Shropshire Hills Shuttle bus.
- Shropshire Destination Management Plan completed and strong Shropshire Hills presence in 'Shropshire Welcomes' campaign.
- Local participation in Generation Green 2 national project, working with new audiences to help young people experience the area.
- 10 years of management of the Shropshire Hills Discovery Centre under the social enterprise 'Grow Cook Learn', and gain of freehold.
- Creation of the Acton Scott Heritage Farm Trust and re-opening of the farm attraction.
- Growth of citizen science initiatives including wildlife monitoring, water quality and other aspects.
- Shropshire Love Nature Festivals and Shropshire Hills Hay Meadow Festivals.
- Continuation through the Shropshire Hills Landscape Trust of the Conservation Fund, awarding grants to many community projects.

- Farm education visits completed through several programmes.
- Delivery of 'Access for All' Defra capital projects through partners.

Delivery Challenges

- Reduction in rights of way maintenance capacity and funding.
- Understanding of the National Landscape is still relatively low.
- Achieving better inclusion at scale is a real challenge.
- Diversity within National Landscape governance structures and workforce is low.

Overall highlights during period of 2019-2024 Plan

- **The Landscapes Review** of 2019 led by Julian Glover has resulted in changes which do amount to a step change for AONBs, even if not all the recommendations were implemented by government.
- **Rebranding** from AONBs to National Landscapes has helped to build recognition, engage new audiences, and strengthen the national family of these landscapes.
- **Strengthening of the legal duty** on public bodies, now to 'seek to further' the purpose of designation.

Delivery Challenges:

- The National Landscape team has had to pick up **new government initiatives at short notice**. Though the funding is welcome, the **timescales have made forward planning difficult**.
- Linked to the above, it has been especially difficult to **connect Management Plan actions to delivery** through this plan period.
- Capacity and connection to the National Landscape of some **key partner organisations** has been a challenge.
- The **geographical spread of delivery activity** around the Shropshire Hills is quite uneven, with generally more in the west.

New National Landscape logos – a coherent family identity

Selected case studies from 2019-2024 spanning multiple Plan priorities
(Other case studies are included in the Plan under specific headings)

Farming in Protected Landscapes programme (FiPL)

In July 2021, Defra launched this grant programme for farmers and land managers in England's Protected Landscapes, to support one-off farming projects that provide benefits to climate, nature, people and place. The Shropshire Hills National Landscape Team was allocated £1.9 million over the first three years, a further £1.3million for an extension year 4 and £1.1 million for a fifth year 2025-26. The team recruited a full-time Adviser (later two full time posts) to support applicants, and an Administrator. Other members of the team also assisted with advising applicants and developing applications. A Grant Awards Panel was set up involving local farmers and land managers, alongside representatives of organisations with relevant interests and experience.

The Shropshire Hills outputs from 2021-24 included (among others):

- 151 projects approved, across 19,864 ha of land
- 228 farmers participating in the programme (including some in collaborative groups and clusters)
- £3,165,769 distributed in grants to farmers and land managers
- 1,114 ha of land managed with regenerative farming techniques
- 12,537m of hedgerow planted, and 15,386m hedgerow managed
- 13,952 trees planted.

Shropshire Hills Landscape Trust and the Conservation Fund

The Trust continues to support local people to take action to care for the countryside around them. Around £15,000 a year is distributed to projects through the Conservation Fund.

From 2022-25 the Conservation Fund supported 35 Projects. Total funding distributed: £47,067 - providing an average of 49% of the financing to successful projects. Organisations funded include 8 charities, 15 community groups, 2 schools, and 3 groups focusing on young people. Projects included wildlife habitat creation, improvement and maintenance by local communities and special interest groups, nature-focused learning and adventures for young people, river surveys, contributing to saving curlews, and monitoring pine marten activity across the county.

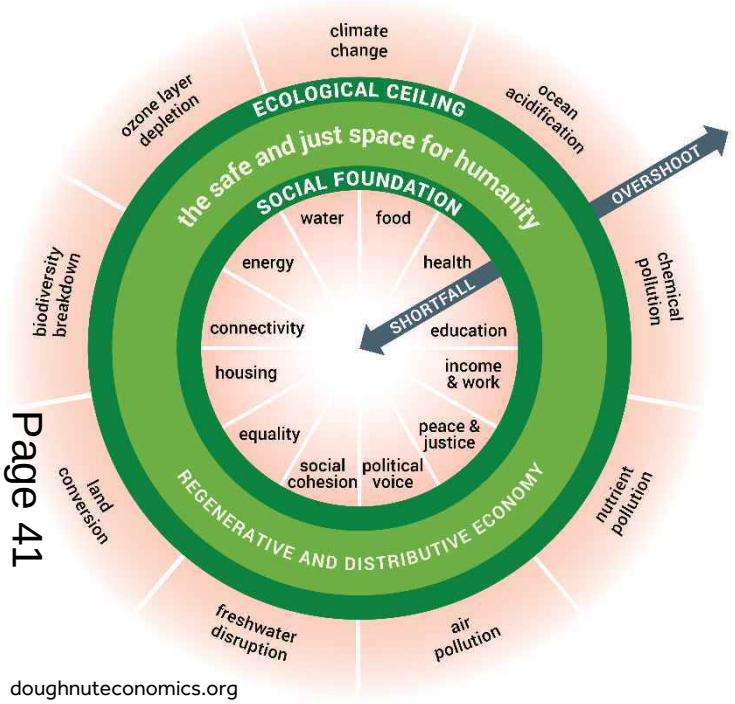
Distribution of Conservation Fund projects over the last four years

Stepping Stones – a partnership project led by the National Trust

The project area covers over 200km² within the Shropshire Hills, and includes two major sites of conservation importance: Long Mynd SSSI and the Stiperstones NNR. Stepping Stones takes an innovative, landscape-scale approach to nature conservation. The aim is ecological connectivity: connecting wildlife habitats by strengthening or creating 'stepping stones' and corridors of habitat between and around the two core sites of Long Mynd and the Stiperstones. In practice, this means creating areas of heathland, flower-rich grassland and broadleaved woodland and linking them by a network of hedgerows, road verges, hillsides and streamside wetlands. There have been three main strands to the programme: working with farmers, working with the wider local community and volunteers, and managing 'stepping stones' owned by the National Trust and partner organisations. The project has also been driving forward the implementation of 12 Species Action Plans for key local species.

The Doughnut Economics model as a framework

The Doughnut is a powerful visual model of how we can meet the needs of all people within the means of the living planet. It is gaining momentum as a tool for use at global and local levels and informs this Plan's Vision.

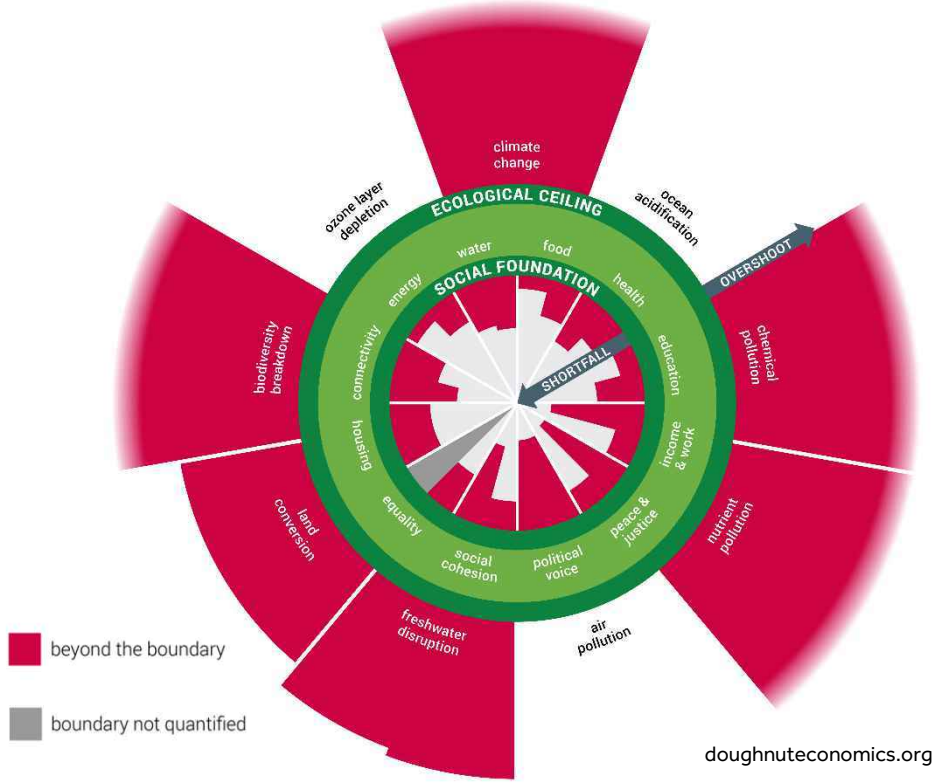


This image is the concept of the doughnut – the scale of humanity's use of resources radiates out from the centre. The 'social foundation' is about people having life's essentials, and the 'ecological ceiling' is the Earth's life-support systems.

Between these two sets of boundaries lies the doughnut-shaped space (in bright green) that is both ecologically safe and socially just - a space in which humanity can thrive.

The nine dimensions of the ecological ceiling are the planetary boundaries defined by Earth system scientists - processes which if disrupted risk the stability of the entire planet. The 12 dimensions of the social foundation are derived from the social priorities agreed in the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The Doughnut model brings together these widely accepted measures and reminds us to see that our system is a complex interdependent whole. There is no single answer or single measure of progress - we need to see things 'in the round'.

Using measurable indicators of the social and ecological dimensions, the image below shows a snapshot of where we are considered to be now globally (updated 2025, using 2022 data). The length of the red segments shows by how much people are falling short on life's essentials, and by how much we are overshooting the planetary boundaries.



This shows a world that is deeply out of balance - these are the 'red warning lights' on the earth's life support systems and on the opportunities for all people to have reasonable lives. The trends show some progress on bringing more people out of critical deprivation but a worsening of critical planetary degradation. To avoid the breakdown of life systems and further great suffering we need to make plans, strategies and decisions at all levels that help us to meet the needs of all people within planetary boundaries pursuing a narrow goal of economic growth at any cost. And to challenge and rethink plans and decisions which don't help us do that. For more on this see https://doughnuteconomics.org/about-doughnut-economics.

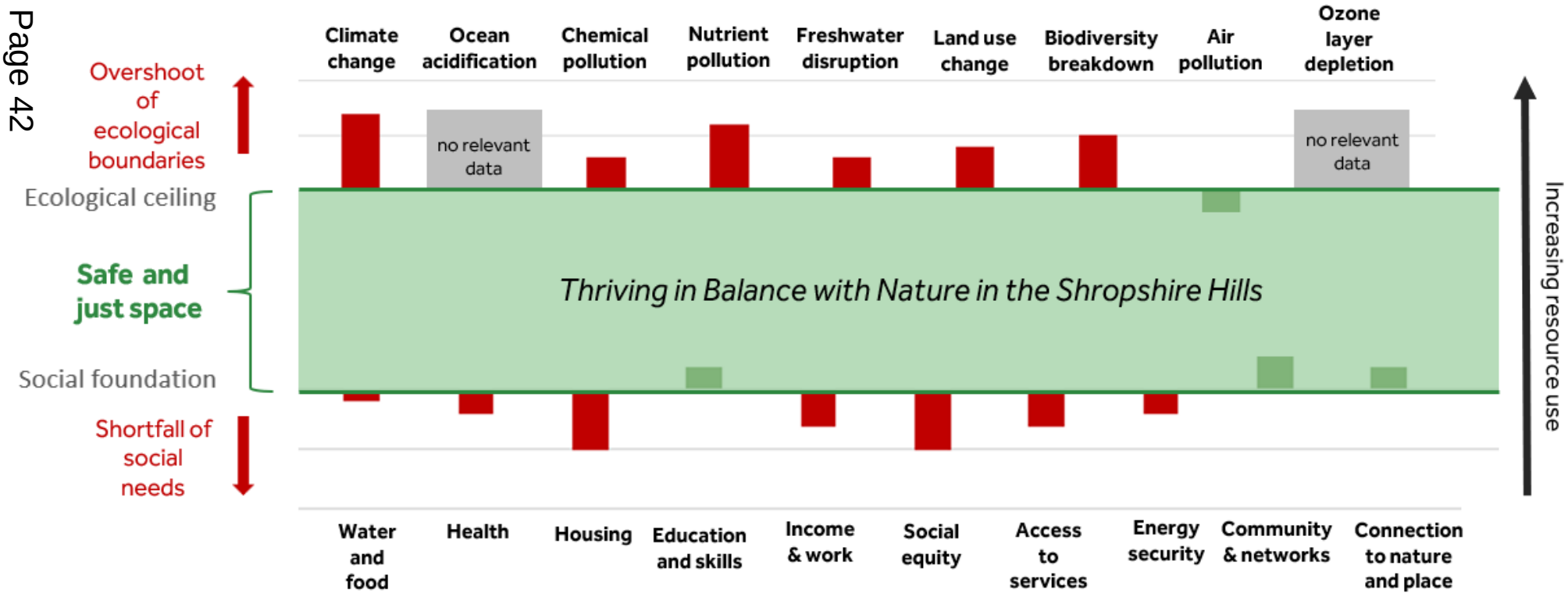
Summary of condition of the Shropshire Hills National Landscape and trends

We have used the Doughnut as a framework to understand and discuss issues facing the Shropshire Hills, and the diagram below is our 'doughnut unrolled' data portrait summary to help visualise where the Shropshire Hills is now. This isn't an exact process but is intended to engage people in the idea of balancing a complex of multiple ecological and social factors, and in conversations about where we think we are and what constitutes 'progress'.

'Unrolling' the Doughnut, to see the overshoot and shortfalls more clearly

The size of the red bars indicates the approximate scale of problem or imbalance, and the green bars the scale of positive, forming a useful 'dashboard'. This is based on scores given from a rounded assessment of available data on each heading. The headings used in the data portrait are based on the standard doughnut model, and further explanation of what the headings mean is available in the full data portrait document. Less data is available specific to the Shropshire Hills for the social factors, so the confidence level for these scores is lower.

The **top ecological challenges are climate, nutrients and the healthy functioning of nature (integrity of the biosphere)**. The **top social challenges are housing, social equity, income and work, and access to services**. Projects and interventions should be aiming to shrink the red bars by reducing overshoot of ecological boundaries and shortfall of social needs. The desired state is to have no red bars at all – this is 'thriving in balance', within the safe and just space.



Data portrait for the Shropshire Hills based on the Doughnut 'unrolled'

Protected Landscape Targets & Outcomes Framework

The government in January 2024 published a new Protected Landscapes Targets & Outcomes Framework *"to support Protected Landscapes in meeting their huge potential for nature, climate, people and place".*

These ten targets will promote the actions that are most needed to achieve positive changes and will set the ambition for how Protected Landscapes can help to achieve three outcomes from the Environmental Improvement Plan:

- Goal 1: Thriving plants and wildlife (targets 1-5)
- Goal 7: Mitigating and adapting to climate change (targets 6-8)
- Goal 10: Enhancing beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment (targets 9 & 10)

Natural England are now generating data against these annually (though the source data may not be updated so often). The available figures from releases to date are shown below and provide a baseline and some indication of trends (positive trends are highlighted with green shading, though the speed of change may still be inadequate to mee the target).

Targets	2024 level Shropshire Hills	2025 level Shropshire Hills
Target 1: Restore or create more than 250,000ha of a range of wildlife-rich habitats within Protected Landscapes, outside protected sites by 2042 (from a 2022 baseline).	No data yet	No data yet
Target 2: Bring 80% of Sites of special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) within Protected Landscapes into favourable condition by 2042.	**58.5% of SSSI features in favourable condition**	**59.3% of SSSI features in favourable condition**
Target 3: For 60% of SSSIs within Protected Landscapes assessed as having 'actions on track' to achieve favourable condition by 31 January 2028.	**14.4% of SSSI features have actions on track**	**16.1% of SSSI features have actions on track**
Target 4: Continuing favourable management of all existing priority habitat already in favourable condition outside of SSSIs (from a 2022 baseline) and increasing to include all newly restored or created habitat through agri-environment schemes by 2042.	No data yet	No data yet
Target 5: Ensuring at least 65% to 80% of land managers adopt nature friendly farming on at least 10% to 15% of their land by 2030.	No data yet	No data yet
Target 6: Reduce net greenhouse gas emissions in Protected Landscapes to net zero by 2050 relative to 1990 levels. *(Note that data used excludes consumption based emissions).*	A **31.7% reduction** in the total of measured greenhouse gas emissions linked to the Shropshire Hills National Landscape has been observed between **2005 and 2022**.	No data yet
Target 7: Restore approximately 130,000 hectares of peat in Protected Landscapes by 2050.	**0 ha of peat committed for restoration**	**No change**
Target 8: Increase tree canopy and woodland cover (combined) by 3% of total land area in Protected Landscapes by 2050 (from 2022 baseline).	**Total area 11,352 ha (=14% of land area)**	No data yet
Target 9: Improve and promote accessibility to and engagement with Protected Landscapes for all using existing metrics in our Access for All programme.	No data yet	No data yet
Target 10: Decrease the number of nationally designated heritage assets 'at risk' in Protected Landscapes.	**Listed Buildings 5.1% at risk** **Scheduled Monuments 7.4% at risk**	**No change**

Condition and trends statistics by theme heading

(including key statistics from the State of the Shropshire Hills report)

Nature

- There is lots of conservation activity through protected sites and conservation organisations, and through agri-environment schemes (though coverage of these is reduced) and FiPL.
- Building a nature recovery network is however proving challenging, and achieving new habitat creation is difficult due the high value of most land for farming.
- Some quite intractable issues remain with condition of some SSSIs.
- Little information is available on condition of Local Wildlife Sites and priority habitats.
- There are some declines in biodiversity, especially outside designated conservation sites - e.g. key bird species, flowering plants and invertebrates, and also some mammals such as hedgehogs.
- Concerted work on certain priority bird species (e.g. curlew, lapwing) has helped to slow but not stabilise declines, and numbers of some species are still critically low.
- 36% of existing woodland is not in active management.
- There has been a recent increase in the levels of new woodland planting, in both the public and private sectors, and the type, scale and design of woodland planted remains crucial to whether this is environmentally beneficial overall.

Climate

- Greater focus on climate change has led to understanding that CO2 emissions from the area are higher per capita than the national average and are not declining rapidly enough to meet net zero targets.
- The land within the Shropshire Hills has however been shown to be an important carbon store, and this needs safeguarding in addition to looking for additional sequestration opportunities.
- There is an increase in net negative carbon flux for land (i.e. sequestration). Grassland is sequestering more now than 2012 to 2020.

Land

- 43% of farms are LFA livestock grazing. There has been a reduction in mixed holdings and an increase in arable.
- 41% of businesses in the area are in agriculture, forestry and fishing, forming the biggest category. Employment in farming has increased by 7% and accounts for 10% of the resident population.
- There has been an increase in agricultural holdings less than 5 ha, and a slight decline in 50-100ha farms. The total number of holdings is down from 917 in 2016 to 887 in 2021.
- Poultry numbers have doubled between 2010 and 2021 to 1.7 million.
- The transition to new farming support grants based on public money for public goods has not been as smooth as hoped and remains a big challenge. The recent freeze to the Sustainable Farming Incentive has knocked the confidence of farmers in the schemes.
- Uptake in the Shropshire Hills of agri-environment schemes overall appears to have declined significantly linked to these uncertainties, but the figures are not comparable to get an exact measure.
- There has been strong participation in the Shropshire Hills of Defra Tests & Trials for the Environmental Land Management scheme.
- There is also a rise in interest in regenerative farming practices and an increase in the number and development of active farmer clusters and groups.
- The Farming in Protected Landscapes programme has helped around a quarter of the area's farmers to be involved with projects, many trying out this new form of grant funding with support.

Water

- Of 232km of Water Framework Directive water bodies in the area, 0 km are of 'High' ecological status, 8.5km are 'Good', 188.1km are 'Moderate', and 35.4km are 'Poor'.
- The health of the water environment is of even more concern than five years ago, with a deterioration in the length of river length classified as of 'Good Ecological Status', and no sections of river SSSI in either 'favourable' or 'recovering' condition. This is despite considerable activity and investment, without which the situation would be worse, but indicating the deep-rooted nature of the issues.
- Siltation and raised nutrient levels in streams and rivers are a problem for some important species.
- The River Clun SAC remains in unfavourable condition for the freshwater pearl mussel population due to water quality issues.

People

- There are fewer young people, and the proportion of working age is down. 55-59 has become biggest age bracket. There is very low ethnic diversity.
- Health of the population is quite good and only a small proportion have bad or very bad health.
- Earnings are slightly below average. Housing affordability is slightly below the average for all National Landscapes, but above the average for rural England overall.
- There has been a 14% drop in registered employment.
- Working from home doubled 18% to 38% between 2011 and 2021, with travel to work falling correspondingly, though the Covid peak in home working has now passed.
- Recreational use of the countryside was subject to unprecedented peaks and new patterns in the post-Covid period. Patterns have stabilised but on a general trend of increase. 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.
- Tourism has not quite recovered to pre-Covid levels, and patterns of use are now different with a continued rise in small self-catering units of various kinds.

Place

- Development pressure on the Shropshire Hills has been somewhat lower over the last five years due to a slowing in house building and in new intensive poultry units. Recent national policy changes regarding housing targets and renewable energy are likely to increase pressure in the future.
- In the historic environment, the condition of scheduled monuments has improved with fewer classified as 'At Risk'.
- Lack of resources for maintaining heritage features is a concern, and some suffer from neglect for this reason, or through lack of skills or awareness of their value.
- Scheduled Monuments at risk have declined 111 to 59, 2012 to 2023.

Text summary of condition of the Shropshire Hills National Landscape and trends

This summary combines insights from our Shropshire Hills Doughnut data portrait, available data from the Protected Landscapes Targets & Outcomes Framework and the detailed 'State of the Shropshire Hills' report, a supporting document to this Plan.

The quality of the Shropshire Hills landscape continues to be high in a national context but is under a range of pressures. Despite a lot of activity and positive efforts, condition of some of the special qualities of the National Landscape is declining, and progress in addressing the most urgent issues is inadequate. Gains in some aspects are offset by declines in others, and the potential of the area to deliver even greater public benefits is hampered by these trends.

- **Nature** Good quality habitats are fragmented, and not all valuable sites are in good condition, with limited progress to improve these. Ecosystem functions (e.g. hydrology, soils, pollinators) are reduced.
- **Climate** Greenhouse gas emissions are higher than the national average, and only reducing at half the speed necessary to reach net zero by 2050. Carbon storage within land and soils in the area is very significant, but some of this is being lost as emissions.
- **Water** The quality of water has declined in some sub-catchments. Levels of some nutrients in water are higher than needed to maintain important ecological features.
- **Land** The proportion of land in agri-environment schemes has fallen. There is some increase in agro-ecological farming and in woodland.
- **People** The area is fairly prosperous on average but there are pockets of deprivation and some people face real challenges, often across intersecting issues, e.g. income, health, access to services and nature.
- **Place** – Development pressures and increasing road transport are gradually eroding quality of place and tranquillity. The condition of heritage assets has improved. Community activity remains strong.

Implications for this Plan of current condition and trends observed

The Shropshire Hills National Landscape has been designated now for 66 years. The objectives of the designation are being partially met, but are being undermined to an extent by insufficient resourcing and activity, as well as by harmful forms of activity and economic development, often supported by government or local government policy. Harm to the National Landscape's special qualities is done not just by activities which are unlawful, but by some things which are regarded as normal practice. Until this changes, the purpose of the designation and the potential of the area to deliver the optimum public benefits will not be fully met. At both national and local level there is a need to change the policy incentives that are just extracting value and causing harm to the National Landscape. This is in common with other protected landscapes in the UK. Until we succeed in preventing further harm we are running to barely keep still.

There is a lot of positive activity by many people and organisations but it is not enough. This reinforces the approaches of the Plan to seek to upscale activity. However, even this is not likely to be adequate, and we need also to go beyond just 'doing more good', to also win hearts and minds and to seek change at a system level. This means adopting a guiding principle of sustaining and regenerating life in the area - of humans and of all living things.

Our vision for the Shropshire Hills…

Thriving in balance with nature

The National Landscape delivers against national priorities and is relevant to current issues..

as one of a family of protected landscapes which contribute to a global goal of meeting everybody's needs within planetary boundaries

Partners locally work together to agreed common aims

Communities, businesses and individuals all play their part in looking after what makes the area special

Climate is stabilised through decarbonising, and we are resilient to change

Greenhouse gas emissions are reduced to net zero in all areas - energy and buildings, transport, land use, etc

Nature-based solutions are deployed at scale

Adaptation is active for nature, infrastructure and the economy and society

Nature is restored and natural processes regenerated

Existing good habitats are managed well for nature and better connected

The best sites for nature are in good condition

Networks of wildlife-rich habitats have been restored and created

Trees and woodland are increased

People are healthy and connected to nature – in vibrant communities and as welcome visitors

People have sufficient income, housing and services

All parts of society can enjoy natural beauty

Water is clean, and its flows and cycles support our lives, and all life

Streams and rivers are naturalised and healthy, from headwaters to flood plains

Water resources are managed carefully

Soils are healthy

Farming produces good food sustainably while supporting nature

Land is nurtured so it can sustain us

Shropshire Hills National Landscape

The position of theme headings is based on the concept that we need to live within ecological boundaries (outer circle), but we need also to meet people's needs (inner circle). The Plan develops this idea, drawing on the Doughnut Economics model (Raworth, 2017) and the Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework.

Priority theme sections - introduction

The six headings are a way to organise concepts, and these topics overlap and inter-relate. They are not all equivalent topics one to another. Whenever we take apart the whole into these topics, we need both to keep in mind the links, and to put it all back together again.

The order does not imply priority, but it has a logical flow. One way to think of the headings is shown here:

Nature and Climate

The conditions for life we need, and which are in danger

Land and Water

Where it all happens, and what we need to nurture

People and Place

The bonds that connect us, and motivate us to act

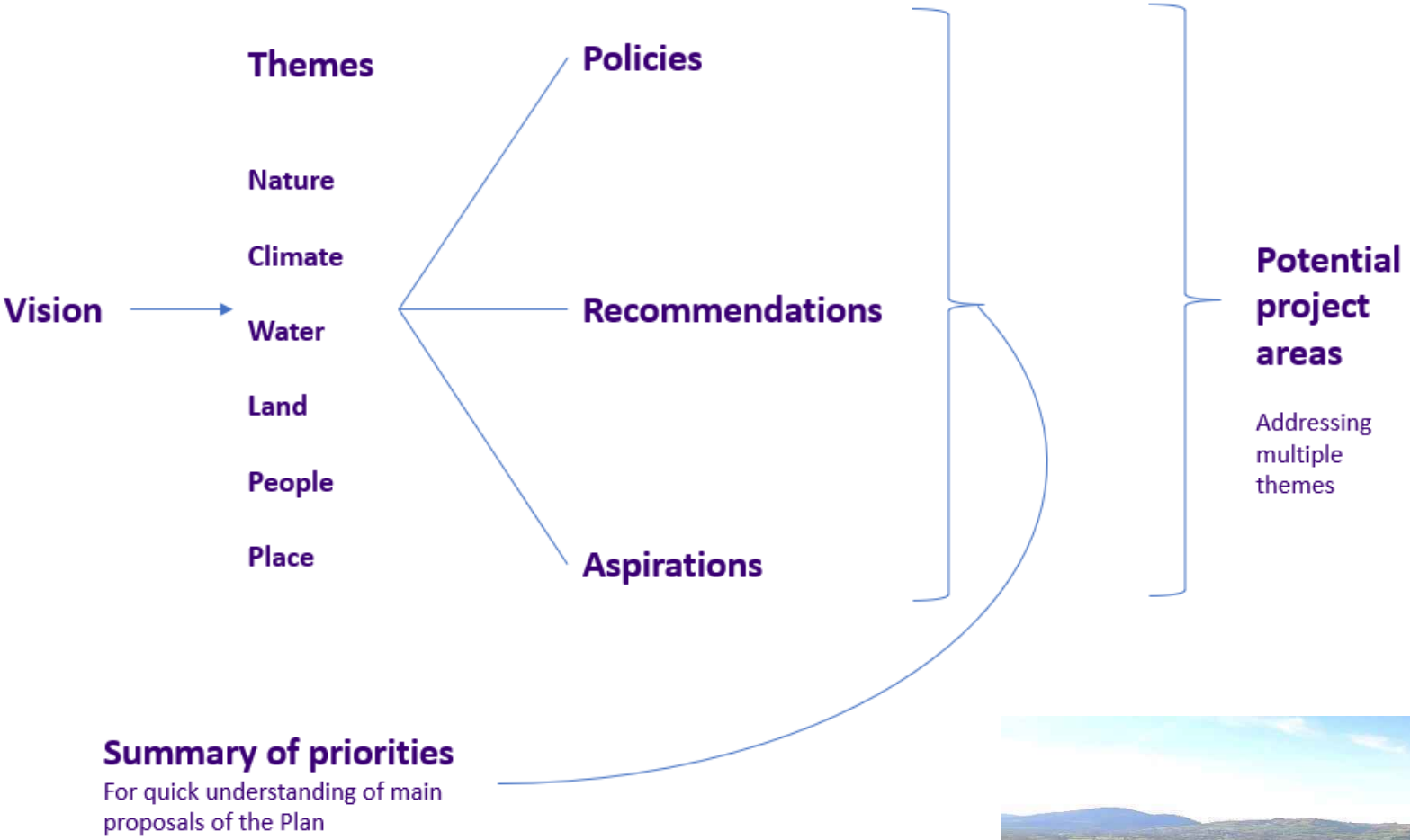
At the end of each section is a 'key link to other headings'. This reminds us that the headings are inter-connected and also provides an 'in between' place to put some topics which span theme headings and could otherwise be difficult to place. There are of course other inter-connections and links between themes as well.

Statutory requirements, Policies, Recommendations and Aspirations

Reflecting the role of the Plan as an influencing document, each topic section introduces a hierarchy of statements of what the Plan says should happen, starting with the strongest:

- **Summary of statutory requirements and duties** (with links) - these exist regardless of the Plan and are shown in summary as reminders.
- **Management Plan Policies** – are used where there is a particular need for clarity of position and to influence others. When approved they become policy of the relevant local authorities (as explicitly required by the CRoW Act 2000). Plan Policies related to land use planning topics aim to add local detail and nuance to existing national and local planning policies but as a material consideration only, they do not have the same status as formal planning policies. In some cases, since the Plan is aspirational, Plan Policies may encourage decision makers to 'go further' than current extant planning policies, to benefit the National Landscape. While the Plan has statutory status, it cannot require anyone to do anything which is not already mandated by other means. The Plan Policies are however a firm steer, and relate to things that need to happen for the Plan's vision to be realised. Where Plan Policies relate to topics on which the local authorities do not have decision-making powers, they are put forward to guide the decisions of others.
- **Recommendations** – are more informal, flexible, and advisory. They aim to provide guidance based on knowledge or experience, to influence decisions and actions of any relevant person or organisation.
- **Aspirations** – are actions which are desirable but which aren't guaranteed to happen. A broad range of good ideas are generated by partners during the Plan review process. Not all of these can necessarily be implemented, but retaining motivational ambitions in the Plan should help these ideas develop and come to fruition.

Diagram of the flow through the Plan



Overall protection of the National Landscape

Planning and protection of the National Landscape

The planning system provides the principal protection for National Landscapes with regard to new development. Appropriate development for housing, employment etc is necessary for the economic and social wellbeing of those who work and live in the area, and a large majority of planning applications in the Shropshire Hills National Landscape are granted. However, National Landscapes enjoy the same levels of protection in government policy as National Parks, and some forms of development which may be appropriate elsewhere should be controlled within the National Landscape. Planning is not all about stopping things happening though, and national planning policy refers to both conserving and enhancing National Landscapes.

Responsibility for local planning policy and decisions affecting National Landscapes lies with the relevant local authority (in National Parks it lies with the National Park Authority). The statutory duties connected with this are summarised opposite. The National Landscapes Association have published Guidance for Local Authorities in applying the CRoW Act section 85 duty to 'seek to further the purpose' in National Landscapes.

'Natural beauty' is not just the look of the landscape, but includes landform and geology, plants and animals, landscape features, and the rich history of human settlement over the centuries. It includes landscape and scenic quality, natural heritage (species, habitats, geology and physical geography), wildness, tranquillity and dark skies, and cultural heritage (including cultural traditions and the historic and other built environment that makes the area unique). The historic environment is also fundamental to the distinctive character, sense of place and natural beauty of each National Landscape.

Other regulatory functions

A variety of public sector bodies have regulatory functions relevant to the National Landscape remit, including the Environment Agency, Natural England and local authorities. Used proportionately, these functions have an important role in supporting the purposes of the designation.

Summary of statutory requirements and duties – Overall protection of the National Landscape
(not exhaustive)

Paragraphs 189 and 190 of the latest December 2024 National Planning Policy Framework set out the main policies – that *"great weight should be given to* ***conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty*** *… (in these areas) which have* ***the highest status of protection*** *in relation to these issues."* Further *"The scale and extent of development within all these designated areas should be limited…"* and *"the conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations…".* Footnote 7 to Policy 11, the presumption in favour of sustainable development, affords significant priority to National Landscapes as among *"areas or assets of particular importance" providing "a strong reason for restricting the overall scale, type or distribution of development in the plan area."*

The National Landscape Management Plan, its Vision and Plan Policies are a 'material consideration' in the development of planning policy and in decision making in respect of planning applications affecting the National Landscape. This applies not only to the visual aspects of the National Landscape, but also to its natural beauty and all of its special qualities.

Decision makers who are public bodies must also fulfil their statutory duty to seek to further the purpose of designation.

PLAN POLICY – CONSERVING & ENHANCING THE NATIONAL LANDSCAPE

1. Development

i) The National Landscape should be considered in planning decisions for the full scope of natural beauty and all of its special qualities, and not only in relation to landscape and visual aspects.

2. Regulating Organisations

i) Organisations which regulate designated sites and features, protected habitats and species, environmental quality, access, and recreation should ensure such aspects of the landscape are protected, maintained, and managed to the highest standards as appropriate to the National Landscape designation. An informative and educational approach should to regulation where possible, but appropriate enforcement powers used where necessary.

Plan Recommendations - Major development

(See the explanation of what the Recommendations are)

Within National Landscapes the definition of major development is at the discretion of the decision maker. 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 National Landscape 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 National Landscape;
2. Where the scale and location of development (either within the National Landscape or in its setting) is likely to erode the special qualities and other key characteristics of the National Landscape 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 Any proposal affecting the National Landscape deemed to be major development should be accompanied by a report identifying how the special qualities and other key characteristics of the National Landscape are fully respected, and integrated into the planning, design, implementation and management of the development. Any potential qualities of the National Landscape as a whole, as well as those specific to the development site). Any mitigation identified to moderate these impacts should be:
   - clearly detailed, in line with the duty further the purpose to conserve and enhance the National Landscape,
   - be compatible with the objectives of the Management Plan,
   - be capable of realisation through robust planning conditions or obligation.

Extracts from Vision:

Nature

is restored and natural processes regenerated

- Existing good habitats are managed well for nature and better connected
- The best sites for nature are in good condition
- Networks of wildlife-rich habitats have been restored and created
- Trees and woodland are increased

Subsections in this 'Nature' section of the Plan:

Nature recovery

Habitats – grasslands, heath and moorland, woodland and trees, ffridd and scrub, wetlands

Condition of existing sites, habitat creation and restoration

Species – mammals, birds, invertebrates, plants, fungi, micro-organisms

Natural processes, biosphere integrity

Ecosystem services, natural capital

Pests, diseases and biosecurity

Air quality

Biodiversity Net Gain

*Key link to other Plan themes - **Nature connection for people***

"On Wenlock Edge the wood's in trouble;
His forest fleece the Wrekin heaves;
The gale, it plies the saplings double,
And thick on Severn snow the leaves."

A E Housman

Nature recovery

The legal purpose of a National Landscape to 'conserve' has always been accompanied by 'enhance', and so is not entirely static. But the decline in nature is reaching critical levels which worldwide threaten humans' survival as well as quality of life. 'Conserving' is no longer enough – we need actively to help nature recover. Natural systems have remarkable capacity to recover, if we can prevent further harm and allow and nurture the right conditions, but there are also positive things we can do to help.

Current government targets are set out in the Environment Act and the Environmental Improvement Plan 2023: *"The Nature Recovery Network is central to the government's 'apex goal' of improving nature, taking us from protection to active restoration of the natural world. By creating more wildlife-rich places that are bigger, better and joined-up.."*

Key government **Environmental Improvement Plan targets** include:

- protect and manage 30% of land and sea for nature by 2030
- halt species decline by 2030
- increase species abundance
- restore or create wildlife-rich habitat

Progress nationally is not good however:

"many of the key actions and policies required remain at the early stages of design and implementation. Policy and delivery gaps remain. As things stand, the prospects of meeting key targets and commitments are largely off track." Office for Environmental Protection, Progress in improving the natural environment in England 2022/2023

The **Lawton principles** of 2010 set out what needs to be done:

(i) Improve the **quality** of current sites by better habitat management

(ii) Increase the **size** of current wildlife sites

(iii) Enhance **connections** between, or join up, sites, either through physical corridors, or through 'stepping stones'

(iv) **Create** new sites

(v) **Reduce the pressures** on wildlife by improving the wider environment, including through buffering wildlife sites

Local Nature Recovery Strategies are a statutory process at the county level and being prepared at the same time as this Plan. The Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) has been prepared at the same time as this Plan and is due to be adopted in 2026. Principles set out in the Shropshire Hills draft Nature Recovery Plan of 2021 have been incorporated into the LNRS, and so the structure of the LNRS is used here. Relevant LNRS current draft Priorities (in bold) and Actions (bulleted) are shown below (note that these may evolve further):

Enhance nature alongside food production

- Establish Farmer Groups
- Enhance soil health and nature on arable land
- Enhance soil health and nature on pastures
- Create, restore and manage nature-rich farmland mosaics

Restore, enhance, expand and appropriately manage the hedgerow network

- Restore and manage the existing hedgerow network
- Create more connectivity in the landscape by establishing new hedgerows

Re-naturalise rivers and stabilise flows

- Improve water quality
- Reduce both flood risk and low flows
- Remove physical barriers
- Restore streams and rivers to a more natural state
- Create, enhance and appropriately manage riparian buffers

Restore peatland and wetland mosaics

- Restore existing areas of high-quality peat, fen and bog habitat
- Restore, connect and expand areas of wetland mosaic habitat

- Restore ability of catchment headwaters to act as a sponge
- Target regularly flooded land for wetland creation and grazing marsh

Create, restore and manage ponds, glacial pools and meres

- Enhance existing ponds, pools and meres
- Create new ponds

Safeguard and enhance veteran trees

- Identify, appropriately manage and safeguard the future of veteran trees
- Secure continuity of veteran trees in the landscape

Restore and expand nature-rich woodlands

- Restore and expand nature rich ancient semi-natural woodland and long-established broadleaf woodland
- Improve condition of deciduous, mixed and wet woodlands
- Restore plantation on ancient woodland sites
- Create new woodlands

Restore and expand nature-rich woody habitats

- Restore and expand wood pasture
- Restore parkland
- Plant and manage mosaics of scrub
- Establish new, and safeguard traditional, orchards
- Plant more trees in the farmed landscape

Restore, connect and expand species-rich grasslands across the county

- Set up infrastructure to support grassland restoration and creation
- Safeguard and enhance traditional hay meadows and other existing species-rich grasslands
- Create and restore species-rich grassland
- Restore grassland on roadside verges and alongside paths and tracks

Restore, connect and expand heathland sites

- Establish effective management regimes for heathland sites
- Restore heathland where geology allows to increase habitat connectivity

Increase the area of upland fringe habitat

- Enhance areas of upland fringe habitat
- Create new areas of upland fringe habitat to benefit a wide range of species

Enhance the wildlife value of open mosaic habitats

- Create, enhance and appropriately manage close mosaics of open habitats on former coalmining and post-industrial sites
- Enhance open mosaic habitats on brownfield sites
- Retain the wildlife value of scree

Bring nature into towns, villages and amenity spaces

- Integrate nature recovery within new developments
- Create wildlife-friendly gardens at homes and businesses
- Enhance wildlife value of multifunctional green space
- Effective water management in the built environment
- Reduce the adverse impact of light pollution on wildlife
- Increase canopy cover in the built environment

Reduce invasive non-native species across whole catchments

- Prevent the spread of invasive non-native species
- Implement a targeted programme to reduce invasive non-native species

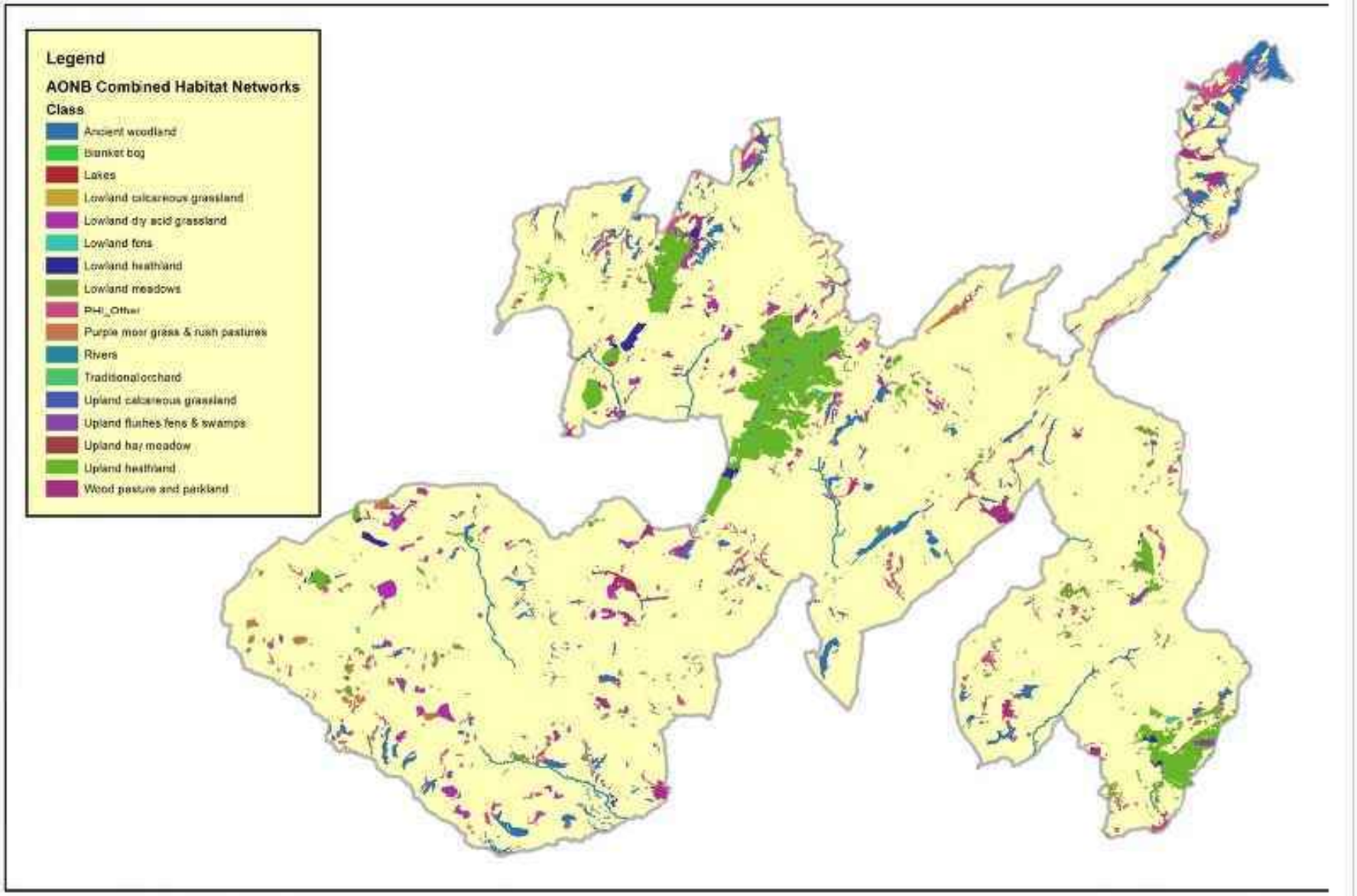
Enable more access to and connection with nature for health and wellbeing

- Enable access to nature-rich sites
- Create a more comprehensive network to enable active travel
- Enhance peoples' connection with nature

Priority habitats in the Shropshire Hills now

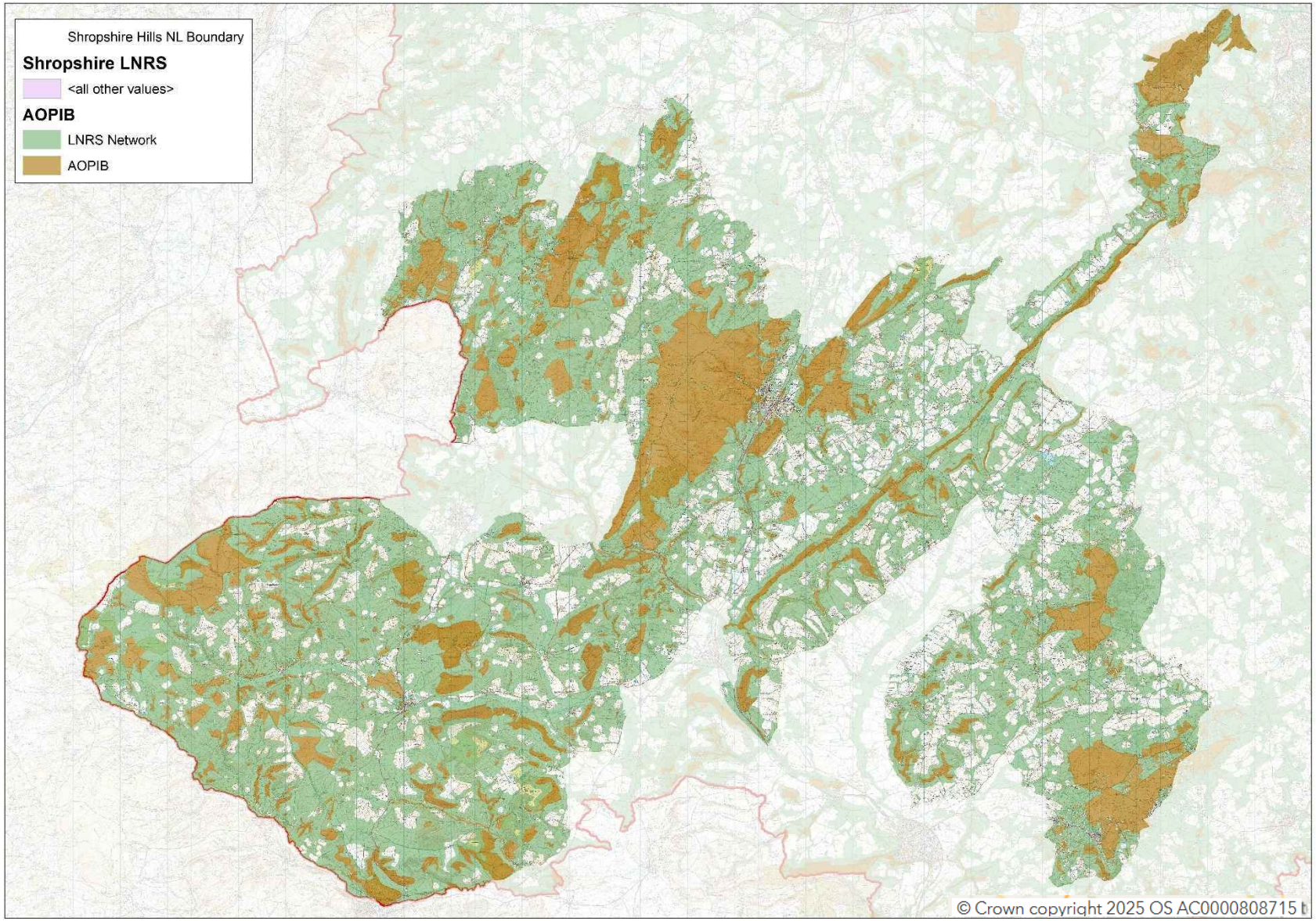
Everywhere is habitat of some kind, but these are the good quality 'semi-natural' habitats identified as threatened and requiring conservation action.

They cover around 13% of the area. It is clear that these are highly fragmented, and the nature recovery network is about expanding and connecting good quality habitats through restoration and creation.



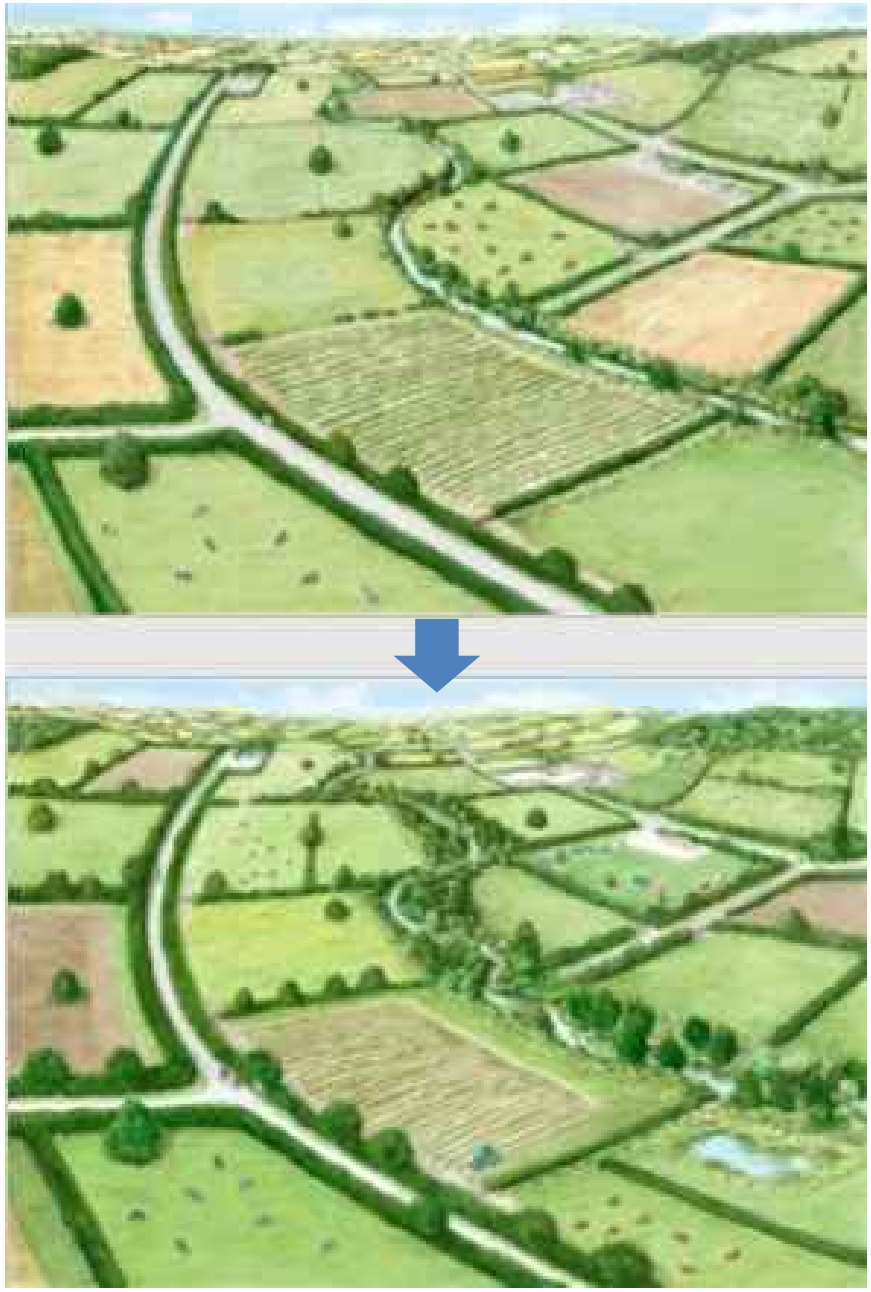
Shropshire Nature Recovery Network
from draft Local Nature Recovery Strategy
(pre-publication draft)

The green areas show where the best places to create or restore new habitat will be (and not that all green areas need to change).



What might this look like?

In the lowlands:



In the uplands:

These drawings are intended to be broadly illustrative of the kinds of changes which would help to deliver nature recovery

Condition of existing sites

Condition of SSSIs (Sites of Special Scientific Interest)
This is now measured by each SSSI 'feature' rather than by area compartment, so the newer data is not directly comparable with older data. The previous trend was of gradual improvement.

There are 48 designated SSSIs covering a total of 4,626ha in the Shropshire Hills National Landscape, making up 5.7% of its area.

The Targets & Outcomes Framework sets a target to bring 80% of SSSI features within Protected Landscapes into favourable condition by 2042 (Target 2). Currently 59.3% of the SSSI features in the Shropshire Hills are in a favourable condition. This may rise once the status of the features not currently recorded is known. This is above the National Landscapes average of 42.3%, and the England level of 40.5%.

The Targets & Outcomes Framework Target 3 is by 2028 for 60% of SSSI features within Protected Landscapes to have 'actions on track' to achieve favourable condition. The Shropshire Hills current level for this target is 16.1% (19 out of 118 features). This is behind the National Landscapes average 20.7%, and all England 20.9%, indicating some of the remaining issues are quite intractable.

Local Wildlife Sites are an important second tier of nature conservation sites, but these do not have much protection and there is unfortunately little professional capacity available to advise owners of these how best to manage them. There are 214 of these non-statutory sites in the National Landscape, making up 6% of its area. Detailed data on their condition in the Shropshire Hills is not available.

Case study - Stiperstones Landscape National Nature Reserve (NNR)

Landscape NNRs are an initiative of Natural England, expanding existing NNRs by adding new land where partners share similar objectives. The Stiperstones Landscape National Nature Reserve (NNR) was declared in August 2025. Covering 1,562 ha, it has absorbed the existing NNR designated in 1982, and added more than 300% of additional land. The result is an expansive area along the spine of the Stiperstones ridge, representing a step change in the scale, biodiversity and community value of the reserve. The new NNR includes land owned by Natural England, Shropshire Wildlife Trust, Linley Estate, Forestry England, Middle Marches Community Land Trust and Shropshire Council. As well as the previous NNR, the new reserve includes 5 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and 1 Special Area of Conservation (SAC)).

The land has important habitats including heathland, upland oak woodland, acid grassland, hay meadow, mire and swamp which provide home for species such as red grouse, curlew, small pearl-bordered fritillary, pied flycatcher, dormouse and the bilberry bumblebee. The new NNR will help consistency and collaboration between partners on objectives such as conservation grazing, bracken control, recreation management and headwater management, and will enable sharing of resources and expertise. This next generation of partnership NNRs aim to tackle the climate, nature and wellbeing crises at a landscape-level, as well as helping create wonderful places for visitors and residents.

Habitat creation and restoration

Target 1 in the Targets & Outcomes Framework is to restore or create nationally 250,000ha of wildlife-rich habitats by 2042. The basic apportionment for the Shropshire Hills by area of all National Landscapes is 6,383.6ha by 2042, or 319.2ha/year. This would be very difficult since most of the potential land is currently farmland. A challenging but potentially feasible target for the Shropshire Hills is proposed as follows:

Potential habitats for creation/restoration	20 years (ha)	5 years (ha)
Lowland mixed deciduous woodland	480	120
Mixed woodland (minimum 70% native broadleaves)	480	120
Upland oakwood	90	22.5
Wood pasture and parkland	90	22.5
Ancient woodland restoration	200	50
Arable field margins	18	4.5
Scrub - blackthorn, gorse, hawthorn, etc	16	4
Upland heathland	18	4.5
Hedgerows	14.4	3.6
Lowland meadows	14.4	3.6
Purple moor grass and rush pasture	10.8	2.7
Wet woodland	10	2.5
Neutral grassland	14.4	3.6
Traditional orchards	6	1.5
Mesotrophic lakes	4	1
Acid grassland	3.6	0.9
Blanket bog restoration	10	2.5
Wet heathland restoration	20	5
Rivers and streams	4	1
Floodplain wetland mosaic	2	0.5
Lowland calcareous grassland	2.4	0.6
Upland hay meadows	2.4	0.6
Upland flushes, fen and swamp	1.2	0.3
Ponds	1.5	0.38
Line of trees	4	1
Inland rock and scree	0.8	0.2
Totals (in hectares)	**1,517.9**	**379**

Woodland creation

Target 8 in the Targets & Outcomes Framework is also set nationally "*to increase tree canopy and woodland cover (combined) by 3% of total land area in Protected Landscapes by 2050 (from a 2022 baseline)".* A basic apportionment of this target by area of all National Landscapes arrives at a figure for the Shropshire Hills of 2,424.7ha by 2050, equivalent to 86.6 ha per year. A more detailed consideration of potential and recent experience of tree and woodland planting in the Shropshire Hills has been carried out for the Plan preparation. Based on this, a **target for woodland creation in the Shropshire Hills of 58ha per year is suggested (= 1,680ha 2022 - 2050).**

The total of the estimated target figures for categories of woodland classed as 'wildlife-rich habitat' in the Target 1 breakdown above is 41ha/year. Woodland creation will count for Target 8 as well as Target 1. Target 8 also includes other woodland, e.g. mixed woodland of less than 70% broadleaves, and conifer woodland. There is less congruence of these woodland types to the aims of the Management Plan, so a lower amount is allowed for of these in the local target proposed.

With woodland creation a numerical target is insufficient since the way it is done makes a big difference to the potential environmental benefits or indeed disbenefits if done in the wrong ways. Further guidance is set out in the Policies and Recommendations in this Plan and in woodland creation guidance. It is notable that the target includes tree canopy i.e. trees outside woods.

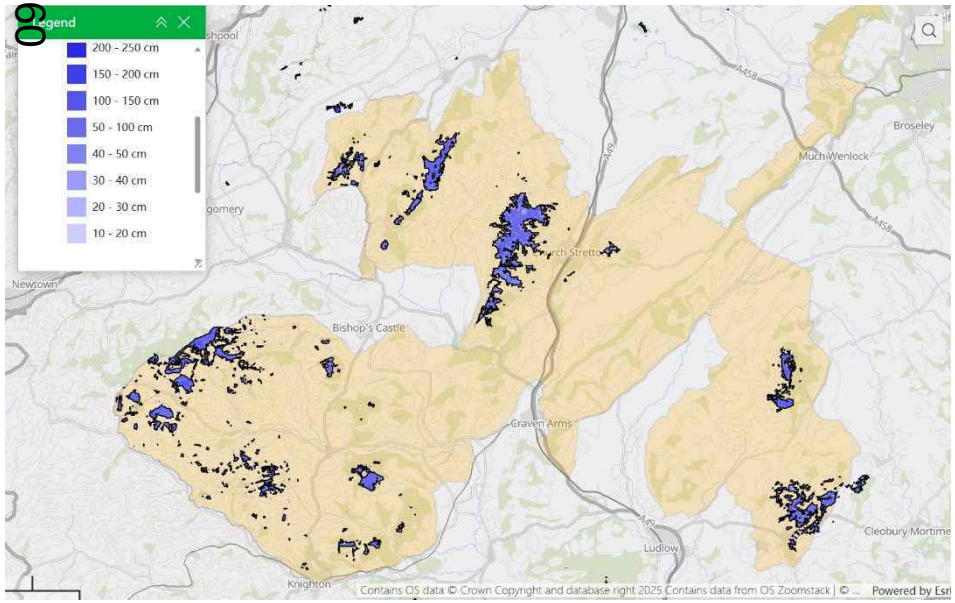
Peat restoration

Targets & Outcomes Framework Target 7 is a national figure, to *"restore 130,000 hectares of peat in Protected Landscapes by 2050".*

New data in Natural England's England Peat Map (May 2025) indicates 3,519.8ha of peaty soils in the Shropshire Hills. The majority of this is classified as over 40cm in depth, though the mapping is largely based on modelling and indicates low confidence on depth of peat, and local knowledge suggests deep peat is much more restricted. The area of deep peat in the Shropshire Hills in previous national data was 42 ha.

Most deep peat is in poor condition as habitat, and is also a significant source of carbon emissions, so restoration is a high priority, mainly by restoring natural hydrology (rewetting) in headwater areas.

A target for deep peat restoration for the Shropshire Hills of 2ha per year is suggested (= 56ha 2022 - 2050). Since the area of deep peat in the Shropshire Hills is thought to be relatively small and this is such a high priority, this target equates to trying to restore all of our deep peat by 2050, and there seems no good reason to aim lower than this.



Distribution of peaty soils in the Shropshire Hills
(England Peat Map, Natural England 2025)

Peat with Sphagnum mosses on
the flanks of the Stiperstones

Species – mammals, birds, invertebrates, fish, plants, fungi, micro-organisms, invasive non-native species

The Shropshire Hills spans upland and lowland and includes a mix of species of northern Britain and those more associated with the south. 41% of species have declined in the UK since 1970, and unfortunately the situation in the Shropshire Hills reflects national trends. Some of the threatened species are obscure, but these are nevertheless important parts of ecosystems.

<u>Mammals</u>

11 of the 47 mammals native to Britain are classified as being at risk of extinction, a further five are classified as 'near threatened' and since 1970 the average distribution of mammals has declined by 26%.

Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Priority Species in the Shropshire Hills are: Lesser horseshoe bat, Noctule bat, Polecat, Eurasian Otter, Hazel dormouse, European Hare, Harvest Mouse, Hedgehog, Pine marten.

Dormouse

<u>Birds</u>

The Shropshire Hills is important in a regional context for upland and farmland birds, including Curlew, Lapwing, Dipper, and Snipe, but the breeding populations of all these species except Dipper have fallen to critically low levels. As elsewhere, these long-term declines are linked principally to loss of habitat, with predation becoming significant when numbers reach low levels.

Priority bird Species in the Shropshire Hills are:
Dipper, Grey Wagtail, Meadow Pipit, Common Cuckoo, Common Sandpiper, Curlew, Grasshopper Warbler, Kestrel, Nightjar, Pied Flycatcher, Red Grouse, Snipe, Tree Pipit, Wheatear, Whinchat, Willow Tit, Wood Warbler, Lesser Redpoll, Redstart.

Those from the Farmland Bird Assemblage such as Cuckoo, Curlew and Kestrel would benefit to a greater or lesser extent from:

- uncultivated field margins, rich in invertebrates
- more hedgerows, and increasing the width, height and species diversity of those that remain.

Curlew (Leo Smith)

Curlew are arguably a special case, as it is regionally and nationally important. Nationally curlew has declined by 65% since 1970. In Shropshire, the population declined by an estimated 77% between 1990 and 2010, down to 160 pairs, with a further decline since. The Shropshire Hills holds around 60 pairs, over 12% of the population south of a line from the Dee to the Wash. Curlew is "the most important bird conservation priority in the UK" (Brown et al, 2015). Predator pressure is known to be a factor, and there is strong evidence from the Shropshire Ornithological Society's Save our Curlews project work that the high level of gamebird releases in contribute to this. Up to 2/3 of released gamebirds may not be shot, and so are available as supplementary food for predators and scavengers including those which take Curlew eggs and chicks (and other ground-nesting birds).

The Long Mynd is the only site where Whinchat now breed regularly, and it holds the large majority of the Red grouse population (the only other, smaller, population is on The Stiperstones). Whinchat nest primarily in bilberry heath mosaic, and Grouse are totally dependent on heather.

Case study - Pine marten monitoring in the Shropshire Hills

Pine martens are England's rarest mammals and were thought to be extinct in Shropshire for over 100 years. They have been found again recently in the Shropshire Hills and are now being monitored. In 2024, the Shropshire Hills Landscape Trust supported three pine marten projects through the Conservation Fund, aiming to empower communities to get involved with surveying for the presence of this mammal in key areas, using camera tapping and den box surveys.

These projects have trained volunteers to use camera traps in woodlands near the Stiperstones, Snailbeach, Poles Coppice, as well as near to Church Stretton and Wenlock Edge. Monitoring by volunteers is also taking place in Wheathill Parish and on Pontesford Hill, with camera traps here helping to confirm whether pine marten are present. At Wheathill, a three mile stretch of Cold Green Dingle is now monitored, informing where to locate den boxes to encourage resting and breeding places for pine marten. The Friends of Pontesford Hill group now has a dedicated volunteer team of 15 people monitoring the site, which will help to inform better management for pine marten here.

A number of public events and talks have also been held, to continue awareness-raising in local communities on the importance of not only pine martens, but the overall need to improve and connect existing habitats and to create better quality habitats to support nature recovery.

Pine marten on camera

Installing cameras at Nipstone

Butterflies, Bees and Beetles

Invertebrates are the very heart of our natural systems but are suffering the greatest declines. As Buglife puts it - "it is the small things that run the planet". Many of our bugs are specialists with specific habitat requirements and therefore at greatest risk from rapid environmental change. There are thousands of UK invertebrate species and two out of three UK bug species are in decline.

BAP Priority Species in the Shropshire Hills: Grayling, Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary, Wood White, White Letter Hairstreak, Drab Looper, Bilberry bumblebee

Grayling

Molluscs

The Shropshire Hills used to be a stronghold for the freshwater pearl mussel. 16th Century accounts affirm that the River Clun was once carpeted with mussels, perhaps in the hundreds of thousands. These populations were sustained by our unpolluted rivers, but in recent decades populations from the Rivers Teme and Onny have been lost, and the Clun population is now limited to less than one thousand individuals, is contracting in range, and restricted to waters outside the National Landscape. Influenced by unsustainable practices in the Shropshire Hills, recruitment of juveniles is thought to be zero and the Clun population is considered functionally extinct. Critically endangered, the freshwater pearl mussel is at risk of global extinction.

BAP Priority Species: Freshwater pearl mussel - critically endangered and decreasing (occurs just outside the National Landscape)

Freshwater Pearl Mussel

Crustaceans

The Clun, Redlake and Onny catchments support populations of White-clawed crayfish (our only native crayfish).

BAP Priority Species in the Shropshire Hills: White-clawed crayfish

White-clawed crayfish

Reptiles & Amphibians

BAP Priority Species in the Shropshire Hills:

Adder, Grass Snake, Common Lizard, Slow Worm, Great Crested Newt, Common Toad

Adder

Fish

BAP Priority Species in the Shropshire Hills:

European Eel, Atlantic salmon, Brown Trout, Grayling, Bullhead, Brook Lamprey, Nine-spine Stickleback, Three-spine Stickleback

Vascular plants

BAP Priority Species in the Shropshire Hills:

Green winged orchid, Marsh Gentian, Lesser Butterfly-orchid, Floating Water Plantain, Annual Knawel, Basil Thyme, Yellow Bird`s-nest, Spreading Bellflower, Mountain Pansy, Black poplar

Green-winged orchid

Non-Vascular plants

The Shropshire Hills has one of only 11 sites known in the UK for Marsh Flapwort (*Biantheridion undulifolium*), an endangered species found in hillside wet flushes.

BAP Priority Species in the Shropshire Hills: Marsh flapwort

Marsh Flapwort
Des Callaghan, British Bryological Society

Micro-organisms

There is greater understanding of the role of beneficial micro-organisms e.g. in soil and animal health. This can help at a cultural level us to see that we are highly connected to and dependent upon other living things, which is the basis of a healthy and sustainable relationship with nature.

Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS)

There were 2,000 invasive non-native species in Great Britain in 2021, with 10-12 new ones becoming established every year, mirroring the global trend. They threaten biodiversity and ecosystems and have significant economic impacts. Climate change is expected to increase the risk from invasives, through more frost-free winters and increased flooding events, and stress on habitats causing more vulnerability.

The most prevalent invasive species in the Shropshire Hills are those that are common across the country, in terrestrial and freshwater habitats. Along riparian corridors, Himalayan balsam is widespread, causing erosion to river banks, forming dense stands that supress native plants and reduce biodiversity. Management and eradication of this rigorous plant is challenging and most effective if carried out at a catchment-scale as the plant uses watercourses for seed dispersal .

Populations of the native white-clawed crayfish are under increasing threat from the widespread North American signal crayfish, which out compete our native crayfish and act as a vector the fungal disease ‘crayfish plague’. The signal crayfish are also known to modify aquatic habitats, through extensive bank burrowing, causing erosion and sediment release.

Natural processes, biosphere integrity

Nature is not just species and habitats, but natural processes and natural systems which shape and support our everyday lives, such as the water cycle, carbon and nutrient cycles, soil formation and climate regulation.

The biosphere is the whole living system on which we depend. We can't just keep a few pieces of it as protected bits of biodiversity. We need to maintain the integrity of the biosphere which includes bio-abundance (retaining large number of any species) and healthy natural processes.

Dynamic habitats and processes

What habitat classifications can overlook is that what is best for nature is habitat mosaics and dynamism. Our birds, invertebrates, etc all evolved in a dynamic environment, with both dense and more broken wooded areas through to open heath and grassland, across a spectrum of wet to drier ground. We no longer have the bison, woolly rhinos, wild boars, etc which maintained this dynamic landscape and we tend now to manage land in neat parcels – fields, woods, ponds, hedges, etc. Where possible we should look to allow space for nature to be dynamic, and make our interventions mimic the effects of the large wild herbivores and carnivores which are no longer here.

Living systems

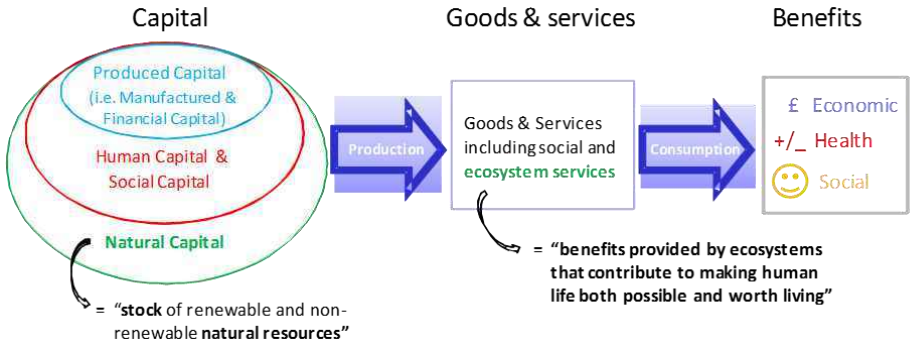
The growing understanding of living systems has great relevance to the Plan. This approach recognises their complexity, but also acknowledges that living systems have ability to regenerate themselves. They are not machine systems that we need to control, initiate or apply force to change. Living systems understanding recognises interconnectedness and that interdependent systems are nested at different scales. They tend to create conditions conducive to life, and we can nurture these conditions to allow living systems to regenerate. They are dynamic and adapt, they change and evolve, but can be destabilised. These principles apply to 'natural' ecosystems, but we can apply them also to what we see as 'human' systems, which are also living and inter-connected with natural ones.

The ecosystem approach recognises that:

- 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.

Natural capital and ecosystem services are ways to think about the value which nature has to humans, though are sometimes criticised for encouraging an overly utilitarian and human-centric view.

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, ecosystem. 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.



Pests, diseases and biosecurity

Since everything in living systems is connected, with climate and ecosystem change these are increasingly an issue - with new diseases such as Ash Dieback affecting trees, bird flu affecting poultry and wild birds, and through threats or potential threats to livestock from diseases such as Bluetongue and Foot & Mouth. Most biosecurity measures are taken by those working within the relevant industries, though with some pathogens and at times of heightened threat, biosecurity measures by members of the public can become very important too. There are sometimes cross-overs to risk to human health too, further raising the importance of upstream preventative work where at all possible.

Air quality

Air in the National Landscape is relatively clean regarding human health, but ammonia and aerial nitrogen deposition are significantly affecting habitats. There are examples of wildlife sites already at c200% to 600% of their Critical Levels or Loads of nitrogen (i.e. levels above which species will be lost and habitats damaged). The cumulative impacts of intensive poultry units is a factor in levels of ammonia.

Biodiversity Net Gain associated with new development has potential to contribute positively to the landscape's natural beauty, biodiversity, and community value. It offers an avenue to support landscape character and enhance the natural environment alongside new development, for example by linking and strengthening environmental networks or supporting landscape character by integrating nature-based solutions that reflect local distinctiveness. The Shropshire Hills has relatively low levels of development and the hierarchy in the system requires that on or near-site BNG measures be used wherever possible. The scale of BNG as a mechanism for the Shropshire Hills is therefore likely to be relatively low, but it could nevertheless be a useful tool in places. The BNG system is expected to continue to evolve, with changes expected especially for smaller developments.

Key link to other Plan themes - Nature connection for people

"Nature connection is about our sense of relationship with the rest of nature – how we think about, feel towards and engage with the natural world."

Nature Connected Communities Handbook, University of Derby

People more connected to nature so that they care about it and see the benefits to their wellbeing, quality of life and prosperity.

Nature connection is not just about knowledge, but about emotional connection. It is associated with greater wellbeing for individuals, and pro-environmental behaviours including active participation in caring for nature. It is a route to us establishing a new and harmonious relationship in which we are a part of nature and can influence it positively rather than just reducing the harm we do.

Five pathways to nature connection have been defined:

Senses - Exploring and experiencing nature through all the senses
Beauty - Seeking and appreciating the beauty of the natural world
Emotion – Noticing and welcoming the feelings nature inspires
Meaning – Celebrating and sharing nature's events and stories
Compassion – helping and caring for nature

If you pause for a moment and think about a favourite place that you associate with nature, you probably feel a sense of calm, just in a few moments. It's a known thing that nature makes us feel better. We as humans evolved in nature, as part of it, those connections are deep rooted within all of us. People in hospital recover more quickly if they have a view of trees or nature, or even a picture of it on the wall. You felt calmer just by thinking about it, in a few seconds. So we know from our own experience that nature is good for us. Of course we need natural resources and processes actually to survive and live – clean air, water, growing food, but nature is also good for our wellbeing. Even the health value of physical exercise has been shown to be greater when it's done in a natural setting compared to indoors.

Summary of statutory requirements and duties – Nature
(not exhaustive)

Strengthened duty to seek to further the purpose of the National Landscape to conserve and enhance natural beauty

Strengthened 'biodiversity duty' on public bodies

Biodiversity net gain from new development

SSSI duties for public bodies and other occupiers

Protected species legislation

Environmental Impact Assessment requirements e.g. for ploughing up semi-natural grasslands

Controls on tree felling - Tree Preservation Orders and trees in Conservation Areas, felling licence requirements

Regulations relating to pests and diseases

Nature connection is not just about knowledge, but about emotional connection

PLAN POLICIES - NATURE

(See the explanation of what the Policies are)

3. Existing assets

i) Further harm to nature should be prevented, and opportunities sought to enhance the status or condition of current nature assets. Designated sites such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) should be protected, maintained and enhanced.

ii) Appropriate use should be made of regulatory mechanisms to protect nature, e.g. protected species.

iii) Irreplaceable habitats should be protected (as defined at https://www.gov.uk/guidance/irreplaceable-habitats).

iv) Habitats and species of principal importance for nature conservation should be maintained and enhanced.

v) Natural capital should be protected and enhanced.

4. Nature Recovery

i) The recovery of nature should be encouraged through all opportunities, especially through public support for farmers and connected with built development and land use change.

ii) The nature recovery network of good quality habitats should be enhanced, as set out in maps and priorities of the Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

iii) Ecological networks and green infrastructure should be maintained, and their connectivity enhanced through targeted habitat creation and restoration.

iv) The area's contribution to the 30 by 30 target should be maximised, and to the wider Convention on Biological Diversity goal of a world living in harmony with nature by 2050.

5. Development

i) Development under the planning system should have regard to the biodiversity duty, make use of wildlife surveys where necessary, and use the mitigation hierarchy: Avoid – Minimise – Mitigate – Offset.

6. Woodland and Trees

i) Ancient woodlands should be protected and managed, and Plantations on Ancient Woodland sites restored, according to good practice. All existing woodlands should be sustainably managed, for environmental, social and economic factors.

ii) The cover of native broadleaved woodland should be expanded with appropriate species in suitable locations, as set out in guidance within and referenced by this Plan.

iii) New planting of woodland should follow the highest standards of design to support landscape, nature, heritage and amenity. The proportion of native broadleaved trees should be as high as possible in commercial woods, and planting projects should be encouraged to deliver a higher proportion of broadleaves than conifers. The design of new woodland should take into consideration long term management and access requirements for harvesting and extraction.

iv) Trees outside woodlands should be cared for and retained where possible, and planting of trees outside woodlands should be increased – including hedgerow trees, wood pasture and agro-forestry. Opportunities should be sought to integrate trees and woodland more with farming, and to raise awareness of their agricultural benefits.

v) Where felling is to take place, high standards of resource protection (soils, water, etc) should be adopted, and opportunities should be taken to improve woodland design for landscape and to facilitate nature recovery.

vi) Where justified by a site's importance for open habitats, the on-site reduction in woodland footprint to enable the creation or restoration of open habitats should be allowed.

7. Other habitats

i) Where possible space should be allowed for dynamic evolution of habitats, and human interventions adjusted to mimic the more natural past disturbances of large wild animals.

ii) Hedgerows and hedge banks and should be maintained and managed for optimum wildlife value. Management using traditional methods such as hedge laying is encouraged.

iii) Creation of new hedgerows is encouraged. Planting should follow best practice, using a mix of native species characteristic of the local landscape.

iv) Areas of deep peat within the Shropshire Hills should be protected, and efforts made to improve their management and condition, especially by restoring more natural hydrology.

v) Wetland areas such as ponds, lakes, mires, flushes and wet woodland should be protected and restored where necessary. Creation of new wetland habitats in suitable locations is encouraged, avoiding harm to any existing features of value.

vi) Species-rich meadows, unimproved grassland and higher quality road verges should be managed for their biodiversity value.

8. People's connection to nature

i) Opportunities should be taken to support greater connection to nature across all of society, including emotional connection, public engagement, education programmes and interpretation.

Plan Recommendations - Nature

(See the explanation of what the Recommendations are)

N 1. Support implementation of priorities and actions set out in the Shropshire & Telford & Wrekin Local Nature Recovery Strategy, by farmers and landowners as well as smaller scale action by smallholders, community groups and individuals.

N 2. Support Parish scale action for nature, including local nature recovery strategies, management of public land, and support for action by farmers, smallholders and for wildlife gardening.

N 3. Influence national policy relating to nature, especially to emphasise the benefits of nature, to ensure consistency with other policy areas and to avoid portraying nature as a constraint.

N 4. Support strong delivery of new farm incentives for nature through Environmental Land Management (ELM).

N 5. Follow the Plan's guidance below about favoured locations for appropriate tree planting, focused as far as possible on native species:

i. In field corners and hedgerows where individual trees and small groups of trees will enhance the landscape

ii. Along watercourses and in upland dingles, and where planting will buffer, extend or link woods, especially ancient woodland

iii. Replacement planting where mature trees may have to be removed

iv. Avoiding land take of higher agricultural value land

v. Avoiding sites of archaeological interest

vi. Avoiding land which is valuable open habitat, e.g. species-rich grasslands, meadows, heathlands or wetlands, except in character with mosaic habitats

vii. Avoiding locations within 1km of nest sites of ground-nesting birds, to avoid improving conditions for predators. Every effort should be made to check local and national records of such birds.

N 6. Optimise delivery of Biodiversity Net Gain in the Shropshire Hills.

N 7. Maximise benefits of the new Stiperstones Landscape National Nature Reserve (incorporating land of a number of partners).

N 8. Support management of deer populations in a careful and sustainable way to enable natural regeneration in woodlands and enable planted trees to grow.

N 9. Raise awareness of ffridd and scrub habitats which are undervalued.

N 10. Improve the resilience of all woodlands and plantations to the effects of climate change.

N 11. Seek to minimise the harm from pests and diseases affecting wild populations by raising awareness and following best practice including biosecurity.

N 12. Control invasive non-native species where needed, according to best practice guidelines.

N 13. Support provision of adequate advisory capacity on nature for different types of people – including farmers, smallholders and community groups, consulting them on their needs.

N 14. Continue to develop the network of community wildlife groups.

N 15. Continue networking organisation for small meadow owners (Marches Meadows Group).

N 16. Rewilding initiatives should take account of the current nature value of land, and any nature conservation value which derives from a long history of sensitive management, which may be best to continue. Any species reintroduction should be done through official mechanisms.

N 17. Improve data and knowledge regarding key evidence gaps on nature, and share more nature recovery case studies. Continue to gather and make available data on nature, including through expansion of citizen science approaches.

Plan Aspirations - Nature

(See the explanation of what the Aspirations are)

N(a). Secure funding from National Lottery Heritage Fund for a Shropshire Hills Landscape Connections project delivering at a large scale for nature recovery (along with other project elements).

N(b). Explore opportunities for Green Finance and seek to develop some demonstration projects to help people understand the opportunities and potential pitfalls.

N(c). Expand conservation ownership of key sites which come on the market by suitable community or conservation organisations where appropriate.

N(d). Connect organisations who are active on nature – to share knowledge and ideas.

N(e). Develop area and theme-based projects for nature, e.g. rivers, grassland, wetlands, etc. linking with other objectives.

N(f). Create new habitat to meet the Targets & Outcomes Framework target 1.

N(g). Targeted work on priority species, e.g. curlew, butterflies, including through local species action plans.

N(h). Ancient and veteran trees should be recorded and have appropriate management plans to retain their landscape and biodiversity benefits.

N(i). Reinstate advisory capacity for owners of Local Wildlife Sites.

N(j). Encourage skills development for relevant people to support nature recovery.

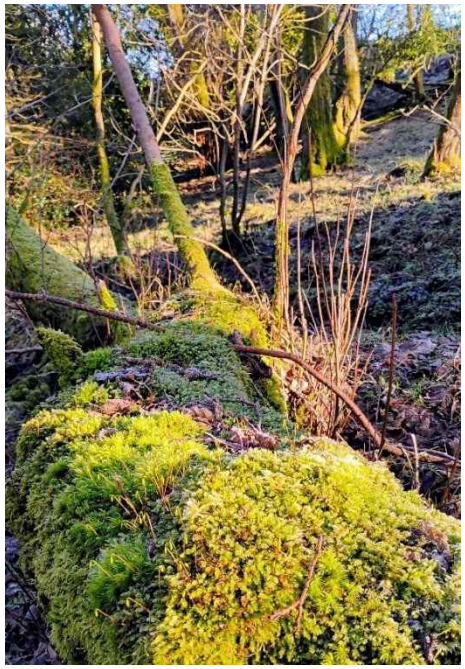
N(k). Expand community initiatives to grow and plant trees.

N(l). Support people to take inspiration from their experiences of nature in the Shropshire Hills to become more sustainable and pro-environmental in their behaviours and choices.

N(m). Increase the proportion of people who spend time in nature, especially creating opportunities for those who currently do not participate.

N(n). Include regular content on the theme of nature in public communication and engagement.

N(o). Use themes from the People's Plan for Nature to support engagement: Vision & Leadership, Regulation & Implementation, Nature-friendly Farming, Food Production and Consumption, Waterway & Catchment Management, Local Access to Nature, Using Evidence Effectively.



Extracts from Vision:

Climate

is stabilised through decarbonising, and we are resilient to change

- Greenhouse gas emissions are reduced to net zero in all areas - energy and buildings, transport, land use, etc
- Nature-based solutions are deployed at scale
- Adaptation is active for nature, infrastructure and the economy and society

Subsections in this 'Climate' section of the Plan:

Reducing greenhouse gas emissions – pathway to net zero, in all sectors

Carbon storage and sequestration in land and soil

Adaptation, including risk assessment and reporting

Renewable energy

Attitudes and behaviour change

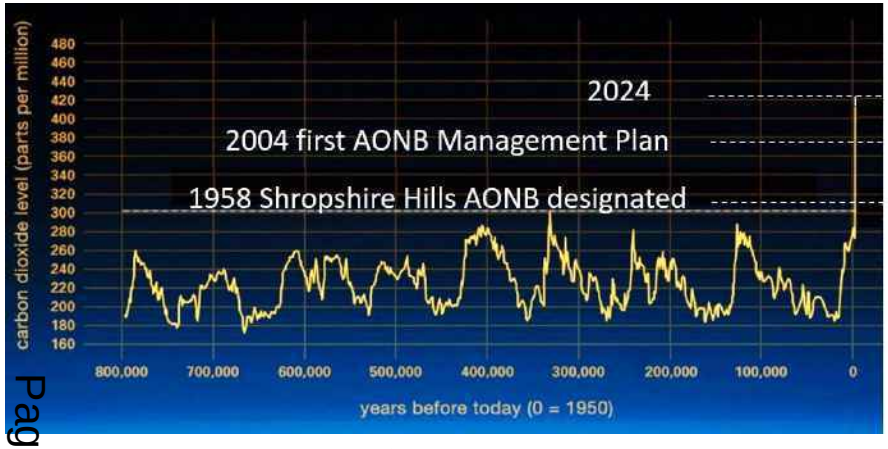
Just transition

*Key link to other Plan themes - **Nature-based solutions***

"We are the first generation to feel the effect of climate change and the last generation who can do something about it."

Barack Obama, Former US President, 2015

Climate Change has become a central issue for protected landscapes as the urgency of the climate crisis has ramped up. 2024 was the hottest year on record and records continue to be broken. As shown below, the sharp increase in global atmospheric CO2 levels within the lifespan of the Shropshire Hills AONB due to fossil fuel use is greater than the range of natural fluctuations over the previous 800,000 years. Globally, despite all our efforts, greenhouse gas emissions are still rising.



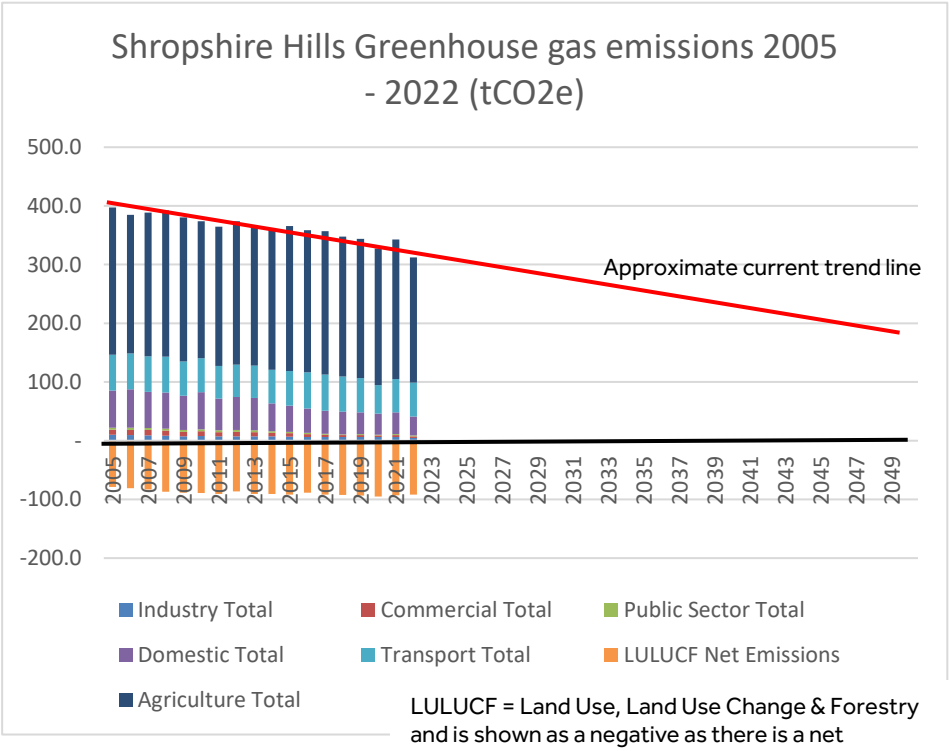
The relatively stable period of climate through the Holocene era which has enabled humans to thrive is coming to an end, unless we act faster. As in other topics of this Plan, there is a lot of good activity locally, but not at sufficient scale and pace, and too many factors and activities are still pushing the wrong way. This plan covers the second half of the decade to 2030, a period described as critical to achieving the Paris Agreement target of holding global heating to 1.5 degrees above pre-industrial levels, and to avoid levels of climate change which threaten the future of humanity.

Global commitments of Protected Areas on climate change are set out in the Protected and Conserved Areas Joint Statement.

The national statement of commitment from AONB Chairs on Climate Action of April 2022 states that *"[National Landscape] teams and partnerships must now more than ever confirm their leading role and ambition in addressing this challenge."* The Chairs pledged to *"Empower our partnerships to explore their full potential in terms of climate action: what they can deliver directly and what they can influence."*

Reducing greenhouse gas emissions – a pathway to net zero, in all sectors

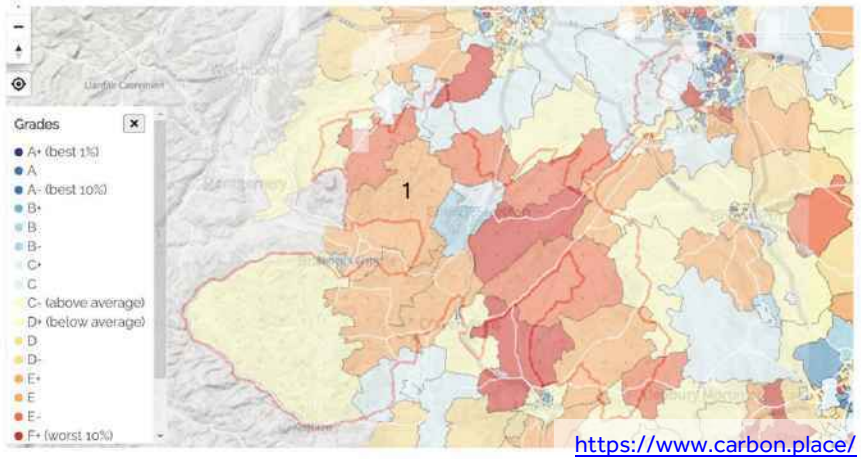
The government data for greenhouse gas emissions (which exclude consumption-based emissions and so are not a complete picture) show a noticeable reduction over the last 20 years, as below. However the rate of reduction is only about half what is required to reach net zero by 2050.



LULUCF = Land Use, Land Use Change & Forestry and is shown as a negative as there is a net sequestration rather than emission.

Evidence shows that per capita emissions in the Shropshire Hills are higher than the national average. This is partly a consequence of the rural nature of the area leading to higher emissions from domestic energy and transport, but is also linked to high levels of consumption.

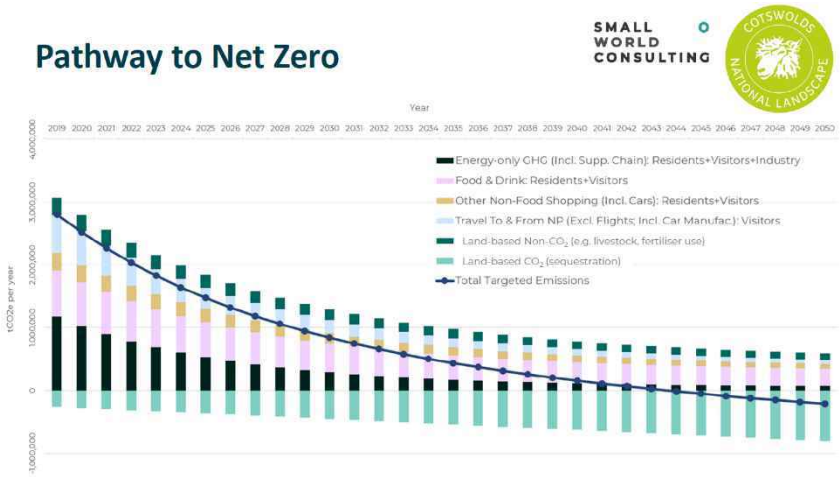
Carbon emissions by super-output area in the Shropshire Hills



https://www.carbon.place/

Red shows highest emissions through yellow to blue showing lowest emissions

We need to promote an 'emissions descent' pathway as below from the Cotswolds. This will require energy transition, demand reduction, behavioural as well as technological change, and action in all sectors.



The National Landscapes Association collaborative work on climate change identified priorities in relation to five headings – agriculture, sustainable tourism and transport, buildings and energy efficiency, renewable energy, and nature-based solutions. These form the basis of this Plan's approach.

Agriculture - Overall goal: Reduce greenhouse gas emissions from farming (including CO2, methane and N2O) while continuing to produce healthy and nutritious food, improving long and short-term food security and enabling nature recovery.

Greenhouse gas emissions from land and farming need to be reduced while continuing to produce food. We need farming systems which improve soil condition and integrate with nature (such as regenerative/ agro-ecological), plus changes to the food system and diets.

Sustainable transport and tourism - Overall goal: Reduce greenhouse gas emissions from transport and tourism, continuing to meet people's needs but challenging hypermobile trends of travel and reducing demand, at the same time improving health and wellbeing.

We need to adapt tourism infrastructure and influence visitor behaviours, connect people better to nature, support active travel, and access for all.

Buildings and energy efficiency - Overall goal: Reduce greenhouse gas emissions from domestic and commercial buildings, new and existing.

We need better resilience and sustainability in new buildings, retrofit for large numbers of older existing houses, and to take account of landscape sensitivity.

The content for renewable energy and nature-based solutions is included within the headings later in this section.

Carbon storage and sequestration in land and soil

The National Landscapes Association worked with Cranfield University in 2022 and gained a lot of knowledge of carbon in land in our landscapes. Key learning points included:

- A variety of habitats and land cover types within National Landscapes are valuable carbon stores with good potential for carbon sequestration.
- Soil carbon stock (carbon per ha) is generally higher in priority habitats than other land types .
- Peat soils have the highest soil carbon stocks .
- The bulk of carbon is stored within the soil rather than biomass.
- Emissions are associated mainly with arable land (and peatlands which are not wet enough).
- The first priorities are about holding on to important carbon stores and reducing/stopping emissions from land.

Types of land which are important because they are carbon-rich:

- Extensive areas of high organic content soil in upland grassland.
- Woodlands – strongly sequestering Carbon.
- Peatlands (these are not well represented by the habitat/ land use classes used) - hold a big Carbon store for their size (related to depth), but lots are in poor condition and still emitting Carbon.

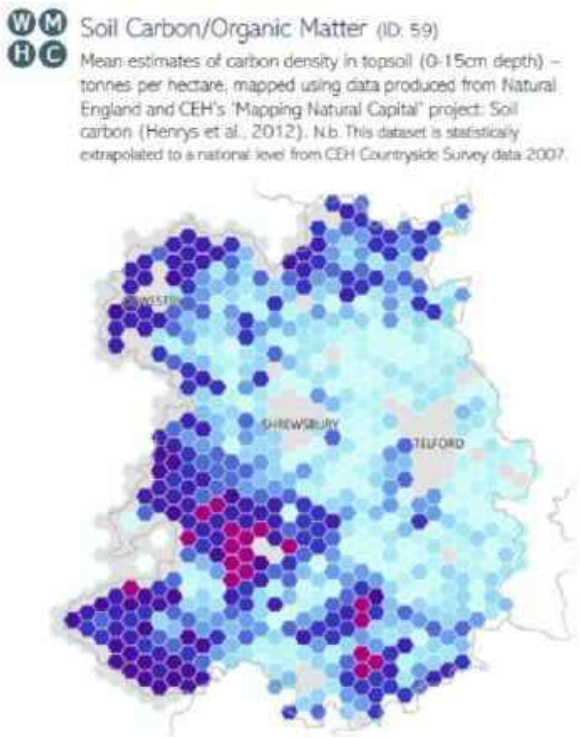
Shallow peat soils in the headwaters of the Clun catchment

Types of land which are important because large areas are present:

- Big carbon stores in arable land but these are generally emitting.
- Big carbon stores in grassland - these are generally holding it or emitting very slowly (carbon balance of grasslands is variable).

Generic actions which will optimise carbon storage and sequestration in land and soil in the Shropshire Hills:

- Support agricultural practices which raise soil organic carbon in grassland and arable land.
- Reduce carbon loss in arable land by reducing tillage where possible.
- Expand tree and woodland cover in ways sympathetic to nature, farming and landscape.
- Increase trees outside woods and grow hedges to larger volume.
- Rewet peat areas to reduce and then halt emissions.
- Protect heathland and manage sensitively.
- Stabilise the large areas of high organic content soil by reducing intensity of land management.



The soils of the Shropshire Hills are significantly high in carbon/organic matter in the context of the county (Natural England)

(pale blue lowest through dark blue then red to highest)

Adaptation, including risk assessment and reporting

Global heating is already having a clear impact in the UK through warmer wetter winters, hotter drier summers, and more frequent extreme weather events – including heatwaves, intense rainfall events, and storms with high winds. Projections indicate that these trends will continue and grow. Even in the best scenarios of emissions reductions and climate stabilisation, the changes in climate already 'locked in' are likely to create significant impacts which will affect all aspects of the economy, society, infrastructure and the natural environment. Climate justice requires us to acknowledge that the vulnerability of different people to the effects of climate change is very unequal, and globally those most at risk have contributed least to causing the problem.

The effects of climate change include interacting risks, in-combination effects, thresholds and tipping points. The severity of impacts from greater levels of warming such as 3 or 4 degrees which we are still headed for, would exceed the capacity of adaptation responses and are existential for human civilisation and the ecosystems in which we live. This is the reality of the Climate and Ecological Emergency and the evidence is strong that collectively we are not doing nearly enough.

The indirect effects of climate change in other parts of the world will affect geopolitics and our economy, and these influences are likely to prove at least as significant for the Shropshire Hills as any direct bioclimatic effects. Continued integration of adaptation with reducing emissions and with nature recovery and action to stay within other planetary boundaries remains vitally important. This requires international collaboration and overcoming barriers to action including fear, apathy, misinformation and vested interests.

National Landscapes have contributed collectively to the current round of Government reporting in the National Adaptation Programme (NAP4). There is a requirement for each protected landscape to have a Climate Change Adaptation plan by 2028. The information here is a preliminary risk assessment and identification of actions, which will be elaborated through a fuller process by 2028. Work on this topic for the National Landscape needs to be a guide, and to link to activity of the local authorities and other partners, since the management of infrastructure and property does not rest with the National Landscape team.

The UN Environment Programme's global foresight report 'Navigating New Horizons' identifies that **climate change is part of the 'polycrisis' of interconnected environmental and societal challenges facing the world**. These have implications for global security, conflict and forced displacement of people. The study identifies that these systemic problems require systemic solutions based on values – a new social contract, engaging a more diverse range of stakeholders, giving young people a voice and rethinking measures of progress to go beyond GDP. The report also identifies that communities and local level networks and initiatives play a major role in coping with short-term shocks and building long-term resilience and adaptive capacities. It highlights the importance of robust local government leadership to provide the necessary governance and structural arrangements, and links with national authorities. Within protected landscapes we need to do all of our local work in the context of global challenges, since the scale of these means that we just can't succeed in maintaining our landscapes as 'islands' of sustainability. The approaches recommended in this Plan fit well with the solutions identified in the UNEP report, if they can be implemented.

The UK Climate Change Risk Assessment CRA3 (2021) by the Climate Change Committee identified the following 8 top risks:

1. Risks to the viability and diversity of terrestrial and freshwater **habitats and species** from multiple hazards
2. Risks to **soil health** from increased flooding and drought
3. Risks to **natural carbon stores** and sequestration from multiple hazards leading to increased emissions
4. Risks to **crops, livestock and commercial trees** from multiple hazards
5. Risks to **supply of food, goods and vital services** due to climate-related collapse of supply chains and distribution networks
6. Risks to people and the economy from climate-related failure of the **power system**
7. Risks to human health, wellbeing and productivity from increased **exposure to heat** in homes and other buildings
8. Multiple risks to the UK from climate change **impacts overseas**

An outline assessment of risks relative to features of the Shropshire Hills is below:

Feature/characteristic of the Shropshire Hills	**Headline risks and implications of climate change** *(to be set out more fully in Adaptation Plan)*
Varied geology and topography	The landscape provides a big variety of conditions, which may help species to adapt.
Soils	Vulnerability to soil erosion. Surface water flooding.
Relatively fragmented habitats	Less connectivity for species to move through the landscape.
Upland habitats	Heath and moorlands at greater risk of wildfire. Drought, including in-combination effects e.g. greater susceptibility to heather beetle.
Woodlands	Change in growing conditions for trees. Drought affecting new planting. More tree diseases as a result of warming and loss of cold winter periods.
Veteran trees	Risk of loss of trees in storm events.
Hedgerows	Potential pressure on land use affecting hedges.
Grasslands	Extremes of water availability.
Rivers and streams	Greater risk of drying up in drought periods. Increased flooding especially where very modified. Declines in water quality die to storm run-off.
Wetlands	Risk of drying out. But of importance in retaining water and reducing wildfire risk.
Farming	Changes in crop suitability. Availability of grazing. Differing value and responses of land for water retention. Waterlogging of land in winter and flood periods. Risk of loss of income or livelihoods.
Archaeological sites	Risk of fire and land disturbance.
Heritage buildings	Greater risk of damage from extreme weather. Older buildings are often better at remaining cool in hot weather.
Road infrastructure	Large network of minor lanes. Damage to road surfaces due to extreme weather – storms and heat
Rural power grid	Potential extra pressure on grid and more outages.
Private water supplies	Potential for groundwater supplies to be depleted.
Path network	Path surfaces and small bridges especially vulnerable to flood damage.
Scenic quality	Changes to landscape and views.
Environmental quality	Threats to water and air quality from increased flooding and fires.
Towns and villages	Vulnerability to flooding, and potentially wildfire.
Older population	Increased likelihood of higher deaths due to extreme weather especially heat related illness.

Potential actions in response to climate risks for the Shropshire Hills
(these overlap with actions for other goals)

Land and water

Build a connected nature recovery network of habitats.

Rewet catchment headwaters.

Water storage and infrastructure for farms e.g. solar pumps, distributed stock watering, restructuring of field boundaries.

Regenerative methods for pastures such as rotational grazing can be more robust to drought.

Infrastructure

Build resilience in Infrastructure – transport, etc.

Adapt design e.g. shade in public spaces.

Building and property adaptation for extreme weather.

Increase rainwater storage.

Prevent 'maladaptive' actions e.g. increasing reliance on private cars, building on flood-prone land.

Society

Localise to enhance resilience but remain interdependent and collaborative – e.g. food systems, local energy.

Strengthen community resilience and maintain social cohesion. Shared public spaces (built or green spaces) have an important role to bring people together. Community groups and local governance structures are vital.

Give priority to values, truth and justice, and to necessary skills of thinking, relating, collaborating and acting.

Strengthen nature connection – to realise that we are part of with nature and need to nurture the conditions for life.

Reduce inequality – focus on meeting people's needs and avoiding excess consumption. Use better measures of progress.

Encourage responsible recreation – including avoiding wildfire risk, reducing water consumption, using active travel, and avoiding damage to sensitive sites.

Encourage citizen science.

Renewable energy

Previous Shropshire Hills AONB Management Plans have since 2009 championed the necessary shift to low carbon, and supported approaches to renewable energy which are compatible with the special qualities and other key characteristics of the Shropshire Hills. Approaches are also favoured which support a transition to more decentralised zero carbon energy systems that empower and benefit local communities, with broader sustainability benefits.

Wind generation has been effectively prevented by national planning policy over recent years, since it had to be supported by a Neighbourhood Plan, and these are so limited in coverage. There is also no policy to guide planning applications for wind microgeneration in the National Landscape. It could be argued that the relative lack of action to expand sensitive small scale renewable generation in the area increases the likelihood of large development proposals which could be harmful to the National Landscape.

The National Association collaborative climate change work defined the **overall goal for renewable energy as**: **Facilitate an increase in generation of renewable energy in National Landscapes which does not harm their special qualities.** We need a better national strategy and local planning for renewables.

It should be possible to achieve a very substantial increase in renewable energy generation in Shropshire without harm to the Shropshire Hills National Landscape, but achieving the balance is more likely to be achieved by having a clear strategy and policy for renewables in the county, drawing on best practice from other areas and utilising tools such as landscape character and capacity assessment. Raising community engagement on the topic of renewable energy through the development of policy and consultation will help to advance much needed renewable generation, and to close the gap between general high levels of public support in principle and the frequently observed resistance to particular local proposals.

Attitudes and behaviour change

Action on climate change needs to be done at all levels – government, businesses, communities, individuals, etc, and these levels can all help to reinforce each other. The responsibility for climate action should not be all loaded onto individuals, but individual change is integrally linked with system change – in driving societal change and influencing governments. Households and people in the top percentages of income have disproportionately large emissions, and have the greatest responsibility to reduce these.

The social behavioural model describes how people are influenced by those around them, and how there are 'social tipping points'. Small scale changes can lead to more, and can change the way people perceive themselves – action can influence attitudes as well as the other way round.

Climate Outreach specialise in social science insights and have looked at the difference of attitudes and behaviours in rural communities, which is relevant to our area. They find that climate change is of high concern to rural citizens (87%) across the political spectrum. 60% of rural citizens think that we are already feeling the effects of climate change (c.f. 56% urban), and rural citizens have high civic and political participation. Compared to those in urban areas, rural citizens are more likely to engage certain actions to reduce their climate impact:

- Recycle, re-use plastic
- Reduce electricity use
- Buy local food
- Improve home insulation
- Switch to renewable energy
- Holiday near home

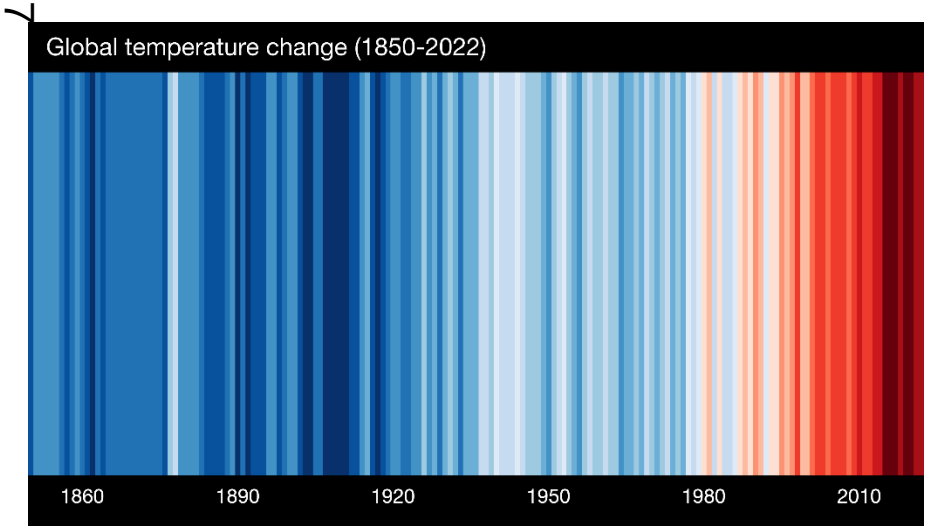
Rural citizens are less likely to:

- Walk, cycle, and use public transport
- Vote for a political party based on their climate policies
- Attend a climate change protest

Just transition

The impacts of climate change on people are uneven and so too are the impacts of attempts to mitigate carbon emissions. For many climate impacts it is the most vulnerable in society that will be most impacted and who also have the least ability to adapt. Adaptation actions to address these risks will also themselves have unequal impacts, and these may be different to those arising from the climate risks that they are seeking to avoid. There is potential for some adaptation actions to have unintended negative effects, increasing exposure of others to climate risks.

Action to enable a 'just' transition tries to combat this inequality to bring about fairer outcomes as the world transitions to decarbonisation, maximising the benefits of climate action and minimising the negative impacts for workers and their communities. The climate change transition process should be fair and involve all communities, ensuring that no communities are unduly impacted. The importance of the just transition is recognised at the international level through its inclusion in the 2015 Paris Agreement.



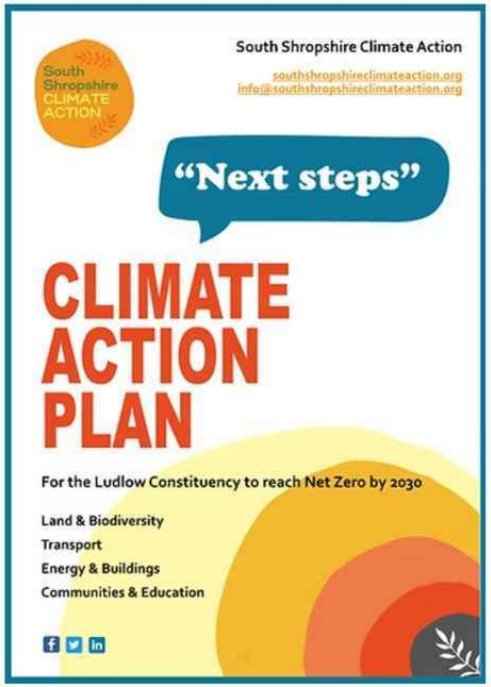
Professor Ed Hawkins (University of Reading) https://showyourstripes.info/

Case study – South Shropshire Climate Action Plan

South Shropshire Climate Action produced in 2021 the 'Next Steps' Climate Action Plan for the Ludlow constituency to reach Net Zero by 2030. This was accompanied by two major local conferences which generated a lot of engagement, and was a big achievement for a community group

The Plan makes recommendations across headings of Land and Biodiversity, Energy and Buildings, Transport, Communities and Education. The group has now merged into the county level group of Shropshire Climate Action.

"In telling the truth about the Climate Emergency, we acknowledge that the future is uncertain, difficult and dangerous, but also full of opportunity and hope. In our choices we can improve life, creating an inclusive and fair society for all, sharing resources equally and respecting differences."



Key link to other Plan themes - Nature-based solutions

The National Association collaborative climate change work defined the **overall goal for nature-based solutions as: Safeguard the carbon stores in our landscape, reduce emissions from land and increase carbon sequestration, in ways which are compatible with nature.** Halt and reverse the loss of good quality habitats and restore and recreate habitat networks across the landscape.

The integration of nature-based climate solutions with actions for nature recovery is vital. We must be "nature positive and carbon negative" at the same time. Measures adopted will often have other ecosystem benefits such as flood attenuation and also climate change adaptation benefits to improve resilience. They also connect with climate change mitigation and adaptation through agriculture and forestry – we must look at nature-based solutions holistically. Land (and water) delivers many benefits and services and must not be thought of just in terms of carbon. Nature-based solutions have an important role for tackling climate change, but Carbon offsetting mustn't harm nature or be used as an easy way of avoiding the necessary deep cuts in emissions in all sectors.

The most relevant nature-based solutions for the Shropshire Hills are:

- Peatland restoration
- Woodland creation and management
- Water, wetlands and natural flood management
- Grassland and heath – creation and management

Summary of statutory requirements and duties - Climate
(not exhaustive)

Legally binding government targets for reductions in greenhouse gas emissions - halve emissions by 2030, net zero by 2050

Climate change risk assessment and adaptation reporting duty on public bodies

Planning requirements for energy efficiency in new development (imminent implementation of Future Homes Standard)

PLAN POLICIES - CLIMATE

(See the explanation of what the Policies are)

9. Integrated action

i) Action needs to be taken at the Shropshire Hills level on both climate change mitigation and adaptation, and these aspects should be linked and integrated as far as possible.

10. Mitigation

i) Measures to mitigate climate change should remain integrated with and not harm action for nature recovery.

ii) Greenhouse gas emissions linked to the Shropshire Hills should be reduced in all sectors on a clear pathway to reach net zero by 2050 at the latest.

iii) Developments, activities and trends which increase greenhouse gas emissions should be resisted.

iv) The large existing carbon store in land should be safeguarded by halting losses, and sequestration in land increased.

v) Demand should be reduced in energy use and transport, as well as changing energy sources to renewable technologies. Insulation and retrofit of energy saving measures should be accelerated in existing and especially older buildings.

11. Adaptation

i) Action for climate change adaptation and to increase resilience in all ways should be supported. All development should support adaptation of the landscape, infrastructure and society to the significant risks and impacts of climate change.

ii) Nature-based solutions should be applied at scale to increase carbon storage and for climate resilience.

12. Renewable and Low Carbon Energy

i) Small scale and community-led renewable energy installations should be encouraged. Community low-carbon initiatives in keeping with the Plan's priorities should be supported, and renewable energy proposals should be assessed on a range of sustainability criteria.

ii) Ground-mounted solar installations in the National Landscape should be at appropriate scales and locations and should:

- **be out of prominent view from key publicly accessible vantage points;**
- **maintain, protect, and enhance existing landscape features and heritage assets;**
- **include appropriate planting to screen site infrastructure, such as fencing, substations and buildings;**
- **erect the minimum of external artificial lighting, and where necessary design lighting to be in accordance with the Bat Conservation Trust - Guidance Note GN08/23 Bats and Artificial Lighting at Night; and**
- **prioritise brownfield land over greenfield sites (and if a greenfield site is selected, justification of site selection process and reasoning of selection should be presented).**

iii) Biomass installations in the National Landscape should be at appropriate scales and locations.

iv) Developments for wind energy and associated infrastructure should:

- **be generally of smaller scale;**

- **not take place on prominent hills (within the High Open Moorland and High Volcanic Hills and Slopes landscape types);**
- **minimise impacts on landscape, nature, heritage, recreation, scenic beauty, and tranquillity; and**
- **evidence community engagement and local support.**

v) Renewable energy developments outside the designated area boundary should take account of the special qualities and other key characteristics of the National Landscape.

vi) Renewable energy proposals should be assessed in conjunction with neighbouring local authorities where appropriate.

Plan Recommendations – Climate

(See the explanation of what the Recommendations are)

C 1. Increase the pace and scale of response to climate change.

C 2. Support mutually reinforcing actions at all levels: e.g. government – business – community - individual.

C 3. Support dissemination of accurate information and encourage climate conversations at all levels.

C 4. Encourage behavioural change using understanding from social science, as well as technical solutions.

C 5. Support action by local/parish level climate groups.

C 6. Support wide roll-out of Climate Fresk and Carbon Literacy training.

C 7. Promote the concept and practices of just transition as part of climate policies to ensure that no-one is unfairly disadvantaged.

C 8. Undertake more detailed adaptation planning and reporting for the Shropshire Hills, linked to wider local authority work on this.

C 9. Raise understanding by publishing more case studies on low carbon initiatives and adaptation.

C 10. Improve resilience of infrastructure to climate impacts where possible, including rights of way, e.g. path drainage, bridges.

C 11. Encourage further Carbon footprinting on farms and action to reduce emissions and increase carbon storage through farming.

C 12. Improve local planning policy and guidance on renewables, including a strategy for increasing renewable generation capacity in the county while protecting the National Landscape.

C 13. Encourage more woodland and trees of appropriate kinds in suitable places (in line with policies and recommendations in the Nature section of the Plan), and allow hedges to grow to larger volume with hedgerow trees.

C 14. Set a high aspiration on low carbon travel, applying the transport hierarchy (Avoid - Shift – Improve), seeking to lower car use and encourage active travel – walking, cycling, etc

Plan Aspirations – Climate

(See the explanation of what the Aspirations are)

C(a) Connect organisations who are active on climate – to share knowledge and ideas, and promote engagement, communication and collaboration.

C(b) Explore and promote economic models which work in harmony with climate and natural systems and promote opportunities of a positive low carbon economy.

C(c) Highlight the health and quality of life benefits of low carbon lifestyles, e.g. more active travel, healthier food, reduced stress.

C(d) Raise understanding of carbon storage in soils, land and vegetation, and steps to improve sequestration and storage.

C(e) Expand use of biochar from waste biomass to store carbon and improve soils.

C(f) Explore wider use of carbon markets, taking into account nature and social implications and ethical considerations.

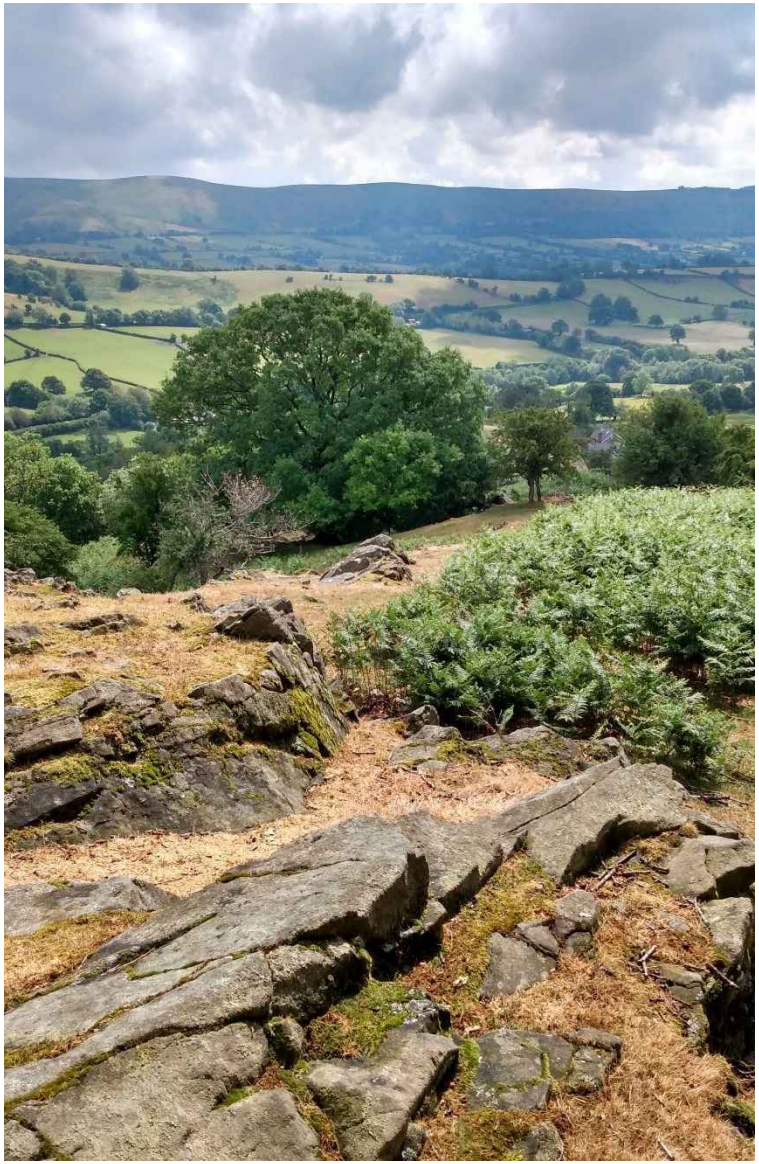
C(g) Seek to minimise air travel connected with people visiting the Shropshire Hills, e.g. tourism marketing focused on domestic markets.

C(h) Integrate Nature-Based Solutions for greenhouse gas emissions with benefits for nature, water management, climate change adaptation, etc.

C(i) Cease all horticultural use of peat.

C(j) Highlight good examples of renewable energy generation within protected landscapes.

C(k) Champion visits to and within the area by public transport, where possible highlighting specific services that facilitate and support this e.g. by providing discount to those arriving not by car.



Extracts from Vision:

Land

is nurtured, so it can sustain us

- Farming produces good food sustainably while supporting nature
- Soils are healthy

"Anything I do now will probably be for good for nature, you know, and farming at the same time. You mustn't forget that. It's got to be farming and nature. It's got to be in combination."

Matt Betton, Shropshire Hills farmer

Subsections in this 'Land' section of the Plan:

Geology

Soil health

Land use

Farming – transition to new government support regime

Agricultural development and diversification

Sources of practical **guidance**

Forestry and woodlands

*Key link to other Plan themes - **Local food and food systems***

Geology

The Shropshire Hills contain a great variety of geological features from across a very wide range of geological eras or time periods. This has given rise to a diversity of landscapes with hills, crags, scarps and valleys, as well as different building styles, generating the varied character that is so distinctive. The geology that underpins the whole landscape is the basis for understanding the soils, ecology and land use which overlays it.

Due to the robustness of the basic geological resource, earth science conservation is focussed on conserving particular 'exposures' which are significant to the understanding of certain stages, groups or processes. Key geological sites are protected as SSSIs and Locally Important Geological and Geomorphological Sites (LGS), with the very best listed in the Geological Conservation Review. Some sites are known to be deteriorating through growth of vegetation including trees and scrub, and through scree accumulation masking vertical faces, such as in former quarries.

Some geological sites are used for interpretation and education, and here priority action relates often to the accessibility and visibility of sites. Capacity for maintenance and monitoring is however very limited. Ideally geology needs to be integrated along with other themes.

Soil health

There has been significant activity by farmers through various projects related to soil health and conservation, which can be developed further. Catchment Sensitive Farming 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. There is now greater understanding of the importance of the soil microbiome, and soil health is a key principle of regenerative farming which is gaining in popularity.

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.

Land use

Finding a balance of land use is one of the most important challenges facing the Shropshire Hills – a balance where farming produces healthy food while sustaining the land and allowing nature recovery and other public benefits. This is not an either/or, and it needs integrated solutions.

This is quite a fast moving policy environment, with recent consultation on the National Land Use Framework and the final Framework expected soon. The Food, Farming & Countryside Commission have undertaken a number of useful county-level land use frameworks. The long term of food security requires the environment which sustains it to be looked after. An integrated approach breaking down silos is likely to help – land uses which are harmful for the environment are often driven by single issue decision-making. Land serves multiple uses and purposes, and some land is more suitable for some functions than others.

A greater diversity of land ownership is gradually happening in the Shropshire Hills, with some sites being bought by Community Land Trusts (especially the Middle Marches CLT). Other new owners of land as individuals or for investment sometimes bring different objectives, which can offer opportunities and occasionally threats to the special qualities or features of the National Landscape.

Farming – transition to new government support regime

The continuation of farming in ways that produces food while being sensitive and sympathetic to the landscape is vital to conserving the qualities that are valued in the National Landscape. Much good work is being done, but there is further to go, to address returns to farmers for nature-friendly business and to reverse declines in biodiversity and the water environment. Working with the natural characteristics and processes of the area offers a sustainable model. We need our farming to be good for people and for nature – providing a supply of good food, respecting and protecting the environment and natural resources, and providing a fair income for farmers.

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 located within the National Landscape. Grass-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 Shropshire Hills, but the 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).

The transition for upland farming is a key issue for the area, and solutions enabling farm businesses to be environmentally, economically and socially sustainable are supported.

Much of the Shropshire Hills is used for raising grass-fed livestock which is relatively low intensity farming, but some of the land is worked quite hard and has become ecologically simplified. There

are directions within the industry towards regenerative and agroecological farming, and lower input grazing systems where reducing stocking rates can increase profitability by reducing costs. These approaches could be very beneficial to nature recovery.

The benefits to nature from farming can come not just from looking after habitats at the fringes – the fields themselves matter too. This is recognised in High Nature Value (HNV) farming where relatively low-intensity farming systems maintain large areas of semi-natural habitat in high quality countryside. Apart from conserving wildlife, these types of farming provide ecosystem services such as carbon storage, clean water and fire prevention, and much of the rich social fabric and character of landscape.

Maintaining these kinds of farming system and preventing abandonment or wholesale intensification is therefore a priority. The social and economic realities of farming systems are important to conservation strategies. Across the larger areas outside nature reserves, conservation of semi-natural habitats is more likely to be effective and meaningful if embedded in the cultural and socio-economic activity of the communities which created them and now maintains them.

Case study – Upper Onny Farmers Group

The Upper Onny Farmers Group was formed in 2018 initially with 8 farmers, now 32 members. The group has the aim to *'share views about the main issues affecting the future of farming and the environment in the upper Onny valley, and to explore ways for improving the environment, the landscape and its wildlife in ways that are integral to profitable farm businesses'*. It has been supported in its development over several years by staff from the Shropshire Hills National Landscape Team and the National Trust, the latter providing significant funding for staff time by both organisations, as part of the Stepping Stones project. The Group has recently formed as an independent organisation.

Members of the Upper Onny Farmers group on a visit to Cumbria

Case study - Clee View Farmers Group

With 3 years of support from the Countryside Stewardship Facilitation Fund a significant group of over 60 farmers has formed on the Clee Hills, covering over 15,000ha. A wide variety of events have been organised including on herbal leys, soils, carbon accounting, water, and natural capital assessment.

Agricultural development and diversification

Diversification activities involving new development should work with the qualities of the National Landscape rather than against them, and respect the quality of the landscape, which is the basis also of many other businesses in the area. If the designation is perceived as a limitation to a certain kind of development, this is an indication that the development is not adopting an approach working in harmony with the high quality landscape. Many types of developments of farm enterprises and diversification can be done without harm to the National Landscape, including:

- Adding value to agricultural 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:

- Where possible 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.
- Minimising the need for travel and transport.
- Protecting and enhancing landscape, heritage and biodiversity.

Sources of practical guidance

Shropshire Hills National Landscape website. Includes: Conservation and Land Management – Water Friendly Farming, Planting and Caring for Trees, Black Poplar management, alder coppicing, conserving curlews, hedgerow birds, lapwings. Good practice guide to geological conservation.
https://www.shropshirehills-nl.org.uk/help-to-look-after/resources/guidance-and-grants#wood

Farm Wildlife is a partnership of 8 leading wildlife organisations, brought together to provide a single source of best-practice management advice for wildlife on farmland.
https://farmwildlife.info/

Practical Guidance for Farmers – **Natural Flood Management** – Catchment Based Approach

Upland Farmer Toolkit https://uplandfarmertoolkit.org.uk/

Nature Friendly Farming Network https://www.nffn.org.uk/

Linking Environment & Farming (LEAF) https://leaf.eco/

Farming Advice Service (Defra funded)
https://www.farmingadviceservice.org.uk/

Catchment Sensitive Farming
https://www.gov.uk/guidance/catchment-sensitive-farming-reduce-agricultural-water-pollution

Regenerative Food & Farming CIC
https://regenerativefoodandfarming.co.uk/

Forestry and woodlands

Woodlands and trees are important features in the Shropshire Hills National Landscape and are recognised as one of the special qualities of the area. The area has higher than the national average of woodland overall (13%) and of ancient and semi-natural woodland. 4.95% of the area is covered by ancient woodlands but approximately two thirds of that area are sites classed as Plantation on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS).

The Shropshire Hills are important for commercial forestry due to their position geographically and the suitability of the land. While conifers clearly have an ongoing role for timber and biomass, more could be done to encourage and support the restoration and development of management skills, supply chains, and markets for hardwood timber. Commercial forests are owned both by Forestry England and private estates. Policy and grants have for some time encouraged multi-purpose forestry for conservation and recreation benefits as well as timber production, supporting greater diversity with more broadleaved trees and open space. Forestry and woodland creation along with management of existing woodland offers valuable opportunities to farmers and landowners to diversify their businesses. Steep slopes and access for machinery to manage these woodlands can be a constraint and well-designed access tracks are needed.

Key link to other Plan themes - Local food and food systems

There can be a positive link between changes to the food system and landscape. The Food, Farming & Countryside Commission sees the synergy between farming for healthier diets in people and for a healthier environment, with a more mixed farming system with greater crop diversity and more biodiverse and permanent grasslands, grazed by native ruminants. This could deliver more sustainable/ regenerative land use, improving health, tackling climate change etc, all at once. More sustainable and healthier diets would include eating in season, eating lots of plants, less but better quality meat, home growing, less processed foods, and more whole foods. People's behaviour as consumers can help drive these changes but changes are needed in supply chains and the food system also. Shropshire Good Food Partnership is working on all these things locally with partners.

The affordability of local food remains a core factor where cost of living issues are systemically embedded within many communities in the National Landscape. Public understanding of the many different food accreditations is also an issue. Scalability, supply reliability, diversity of consumer choice and investment in local food chains within the National Landscape are relatively underdeveloped. In the Shropshire Hills a small number of meat producers sell direct, either from the farm, by mail order or through Farmers' Markets. Availability of local abattoirs is a barrier for local meat supply. The Pasture for Life group has been undertaking a project locally and nationally with FiPL funding.

In more fertile and sheltered valleys there are some vegetable growers. There are some speciality products such as cheeses, organic milk, ice cream and gin. Beer, cider and juices are a feature of the area with a number of local breweries and orchards. Outlets for local food include markets, farm shops and venues such as restaurants, cafes, shops. There are also some events such as the Slow Food Festival at The Bridges, and the now annual Shropshire Good Food Trail. Some regenerative farms do public events and engagement.

Summary of statutory requirements and duties - Land
(not exhaustive)

(many of the statutory requirements highlighted in other topics also relate to land, especially those in Nature and Water)

Rules for farmers and land managers - what you must do when you keep livestock or manage land.

Nitrate Vulnerable Zones

Hedgerow regulations

Environmental Impact Assessment (Agriculture) regulations

PLAN POLICIES – LAND

(See the explanation of what the Policies are)

13. Geology and Soils

i) Sites of geological and geodiversity importance should be protected, and actively managed and enhanced where necessary.

ii) Soils should be protected, and soil degradation reversed by minimising erosion and compaction and increasing organic content.

iii) The sustainable management of soils should be a priority, to increase their overall health and to support nature recovery, natural water management, climate change mitigation and adaptation, and long-term productivity of land.

14. Land use

i) An optimum balance of land use should be sought to deliver the best overall long-term benefits to society.

ii) The multi-functional benefits of land should be optimised.

15. Farming

i) Farmers should be supported to continue growing food through profitable enterprises, in ways which are sympathetic to nature, climate, water, heritage and landscape. Farming and land management practices should as far as possible be sympathetic to the purpose of the National Landscape and priorities of the Plan.

ii) The best and most versatile agricultural land should be protected from development.

iii) The Environmental Land Management scheme and other relevant government funding schemes should deliver Management Plan priorities as far as possible.

iv) Opportunities to develop and promote local food supply chains should be supported, and to increase local food resilience,

opportunities to expand sustainable horticulture and vegetable production should be supported where possible.

16. <u>Agricultural development</u>

i) Agricultural and diversification development regulated through the planning system should be in keeping with the special qualities of the National Landscape.

ii) New farm buildings should be of high design standards in keeping with the special qualities of the National Landscape and take account of published Agricultural Buildings guidance. The minimum of external artificial lighting should be erected, and where necessary, design lighting to be in accordance with the Bat Conservation Trust - Guidance Note GN08/23 Bats and Artificial Lighting At Night;

iii) Major development for intensive livestock including poultry should only be allowed where the stringent tests of exceptional circumstances in national policy are met. Criteria indicating that applications for intensive livestock developments should be refused include where:

- **the scale of new buildings would exceed the farmstead's existing built footprint;**
- **proximity to other developments would create significant cumulative adverse impacts;**
- **development is proposed in open field locations away from other farm buildings;**
- **significant earth-moving or bunding is proposed, or landscape features landscape features such as hedgerows, watercourses, trees, and ponds are affected;**
- **the topography means that the development will be easily visible from publicly accessible vantage points;**
- **harm to local amenity and 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.**

iv) Development of dwellings for rural workers should be allowed where:

- **the proposal can demonstrate an essential need for permanent accommodation at or near a place of work;**
- **no significant adverse impacts upon the local community, landscape, nature, heritage, natural beauty, and tranquillity can be demonstrated.**

17. <u>Forestry</u>

i) The optimum delivery of nature and public benefits from commercial forestry is encouraged.

Recommendations – Land

(See the explanation of what the Recommendations are)

L 1. Continue the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme (this is a Defra decision) and a land management advice function in the National Landscape Team.

L 2. Raise awareness of and champion agro-ecological and regenerative farming methods with a focus on soil health, and facilitate knowledge exchange for new sustainable farming methods.

L 3. Continue to adapt to rapidly evolving government policy for land and farming.

L 4. Support the development of farmer groups and clusters – including new and existing groups, linking and sharing experience.

L 5. Continue to make the case for extensive grazing of livestock as a sustainable use of hill land.

L 6. Support the special role of common land to deliver multiple benefits, and the continuation of common grazing and commoners associations.

L 7. Raise awareness of geology as the foundation of our landscape and of how knowledge of rocks helps to understand soil – its pH, hydrology, etc, and what kinds of habitats would naturally develop, to inform land management decisions.

L 8. Support a 'nature positive' and 'carbon negative' food system, and local food initiatives – e.g. networking producers with outlets, developing short supply chains, marketing which draws on the special qualities of the area and the quality of production.

L 9. Seek to ensure an adequate and co-ordinated provision of farm advisers across all relevant topics, co-ordinated among a variety of providers.

L 10. Support the provision of training and skills relevant to agricultural transition (e.g. habitat creation, carbon footprinting) as well as traditional skills (e.g. hedge laying, drystone walling).

Aspirations - Land

(See the explanation of what the Aspirations are)

L(a) Secure DEFRA Landscape Recovery programme funding for appropriate areas of the Shropshire Hills.

L(b) Foster ongoing constructive dialogue between farmers and other stakeholders to build common ground and reduce polarisation.

L(c) Explore Maximum Sustainable Output approaches for farming, looking to lower inputs while maintaining or improving profitability.

L(d) Explore local application of principles of the new Land Use Framework to influence local land use decisions.

L(e) Apply holistic deer management strategies to enable woodland regeneration, and support this by building local venison supply chains.

L(f) Support local provision of Community Supported Agriculture, where customers build a link with a producer through subscription, and through events and volunteering.

L(g) Expand markets for a variety of woodland products to support sustainable woodland management.

L(h) Support husbandry techniques to reduce methane emissions from livestock.

L(i) Manage a priority suite of geological sites to a high standard with access and interpretation.

L(j) Foster a local food culture, promoting local food and drink to visitors and through suppliers, retailers, and hospitality businesses.

L(k) Develop a regular competition for a Shropshire Hills Local Food Hero – to reward and profile as a personal story in order to raise awareness of local food activity.

Extracts from Vision:

Water

Water is clean, and its flows and cycles support our lives, and all life

- Streams and rivers are naturalised and healthy, from headwaters to floodplains
- Water resources are managed carefully

"In the valleys of spring of rivers
By Ony and Teme and Clun,
The country for easy livers
The quietest under the sun…"

Extracts from 'A Shropshire Lad' by A E Housman, 1896.

Subsections in this 'Water' section of the Plan:

Integrated catchment management

Water quality

Flood attenuation, and managing low flows

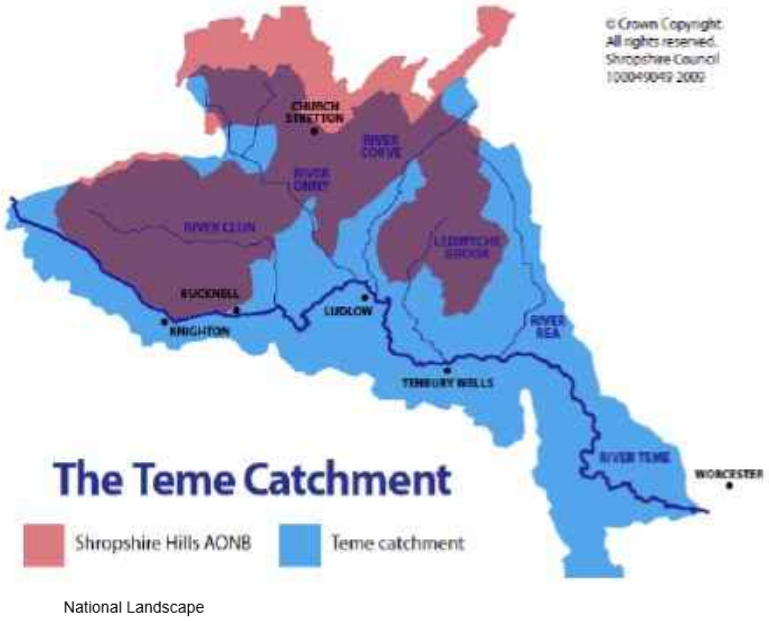
Catchment **headwaters**

Water as a **resource**

*Key link to other Plan themes - **Managing land in order to look after water***

Integrated catchment management

A catchment is the area of land, often bounded by high ground, which drains into a given river and its tributaries, eventually joining a larger river or flowing out to the sea. The Shropshire Hills forms the majority of the headwaters of the Teme catchment, and it is helpful to think of it as this. Administrative units focus attention within a county boundary, but the way land and water are managed in the Shropshire Hills affects water flows beyond Shropshire, such as at Tenbury Wells and Worcester.



Integrated catchment management is about treating a river catchment as a system, looking at flood risk, water quality and other ecosystem functions together and engaging relevant stakeholders. The government supports this through the Catchment Based Approach (CaBA) and in our area there is the Teme Catchment Partnership, which is led by Severn Rivers Trust. Sub-catchments can also be a useful scale to work at, and in our area the Clun Catchment is the obvious example.

The Vision for the Teme Catchment is for:
"Healthy functioning rivers flowing through a balanced living landscape, cherished by all in the Teme Catchment."

High level objectives for the Teme Catchment include:

- Water bodies with high ecological status and natural ecological function.
- A healthy and recruiting population of Freshwater pearl mussels.
- Wildlife returning to the river and the catchment, including rare fish, such as shad and formerly common birds such as cuckoo.
- Healthy and connected trees and woodlands.
- River sediment reduced to natural levels through improved practices, such as sustainable urban and rural drainage and good buffer strips along river banks on cultivated land and fewer livestock accessing the river.
- Sustainable levels of water in the streams and rivers.
- No need for pesticide removal from drinking water.

Northern parts of the National Landscape drain north into the Middle Severn especially via the Cound Brook, ending up also in the River Severn below the Teme confluence.

A small area in the north-west of the Shropshire Hills drains into the Upper Severn and falls within the area of the Severn Valley Water Management Scheme which is seeking to implement catchment management solutions to reduce flooding in Shrewsbury especially. This sits as part of the broader River Severn Partnership working for a sustainable future for the whole Severn catchment.

Catchments in the Shropshire Hills include valuable standing water – ponds and small lakes, as well as rivers and their tributaries. An integrated catchment approach recognises the connections of all these.

Water quality

The Water Environment (Water Framework Directive) Regulations 2017 put the EU Water Framework Directive into UK law post Brexit. The regulations require that a river basin management plan is prepared for each river basin district, ours being the Severn.

In a national context water quality in the Shropshire Hills is quite good, but it is not as good as it should be, and in many places has deteriorated. In 2024 figures, 0% of river length in the Shropshire Hills had 'high' ecological status, 3.7% had 'good' ecological status, 81% had 'moderate' status and 15% had 'poor' status. While the overall trend appears to be one of deterioration, the earlier data are not directly comparable so the amount of change is not entirely clear.

There are a range of factors affecting water quality in the area, but diffuse pollution from agricultural sources remains a significant one. The River Clun Special Area of Conservation with its population of freshwater pearl mussel rightly takes the most attention in the area, but the issues around water quality and influences on it are also applicable to other sub-catchments in the Shropshire Hills.

River Clun

In March 2022 Natural England published updated guidance on water quality and nutrient neutrality advice (NE785) which was based on the River Clun SAC being classified as in 'unfavourable condition' due to the continued depletion of the freshwater pearl mussel population as a result of declining water quality. As a result, Shropshire Council are not able to grant planning permission for new developments that provide overnight accommodation within the catchment of the River Clun SAC, unless it can be clearly demonstrated that they will not have a detrimental impact in terms of nutrient loading to the designated protected area.

Freshwater pearl mussels are very sensitive to water quality, with juvenile mussels being particularly susceptible to pollution. The River Clun SAC is in unfavourable and declining condition caused by high levels of phosphate, nitrogen and silt. Agricultural activities give rise to all three of these, whilst development mostly contributes phosphates from surface and foul water discharges. The phosphate levels required by the freshwater pearl mussel are extremely low and they are already too high for the pearl mussels to breed and also too high to maintain adult pearl mussels. Therefore, any additional phosphate entering the river will make the condition of the special area of conservation worse.

A joint statement by the Environment Agency, Natural England, Shropshire Council and Severn Trent Water of 2021 states that whilst the favourable conservation targets recognise the unique environmental value of the River Clun SAC, there is also the need to recognise the value of the area as an important rural community.
"Our combined vision for the River Clun SAC is therefore for the whole catchment area to be restored to a functional unit where a nature recovery plan enables ecological and human needs to successfully interact, thereby balancing the needs of people, economy and the environment."

The Clun Protected Site Strategy (PSS) is currently still in its pilot research and development phase. A Diffuse Water Pollution Plan for the Clun has also been recently prepared.

Flood attenuation, and managing low flows

Flooding is of two types - surface water flooding caused by water that is on a journey *towards* the river channel, and river flooding that is caused by excess water spilling *out of* a river channel. Available modelling including online public tools indicate that there is a low risk of river and surface flooding within the National Landscape except by the River Severn, and along the banks of the River Clun and its tributaries. However, damaging localised surface and river water floods are being seen increasingly often due to extreme weather events. There is a need to plan pro-actively, but a concern that the national modelling may underestimate the risks in our area. Such modelling also has the challenge of trying to take account of climate change predictions, which show that rainfall events will increase in their frequency and intensity, posing greater threat of flash flooding to communities.

Surface water flooding affects roads and paths as well as properties

There is a greater understanding now that holding water higher in a catchment for longer 'slowing the flow' helps to reduce or attenuate flood risk downstream, since so many catchment streams come together. There is however still misunderstanding about flooding, and some attempts to reduce flooding by removing obstacles and speeding up flow simply exacerbate flooding downstream. The strategy can be summarised as "Slow it, sink it, spread it."

Re-naturalising and 're-wiggling' rivers to more natural form is a way to slow the flow further down the course of a river as well as having habitat benefits. Low flows also affect rivers in the area, especially the River Teme which has suffered from drying periods with significant impacts on fish and wildlife. They also affect the River Redlake and the Clun. Holding water back for longer high in a catchment also helps to recharge groundwater levels, which then maintain base flows for rivers and reduce the risk of drying.

The River Teme drying up in a drought year (Environment Agency)

The interaction with heritage features and assets of action to slow flows needs to be considered e.g. ditches are sometimes of historical significance or protected. Compromise solutions can often be found.

Catchment headwaters

Headwaters are the tributaries feeding a river system, defined as the first 2.5km of streams from their source. Due to the very high number of branching small channels, these can make up 70% of total river length. They are the essential ecological foundation for healthy functioning river systems, a habitat in their own right and the support system for downstream rivers. Hydrologically they are the 'gathering grounds' for river flow and are crucial in controlling water supply (quality and quantity) and flood risk management.

Approximate extent of headwater areas in orange

The degree of naturalness or modification of land at stream sources makes a big difference to the river catchment. In the Shropshire Hills, headwaters are often highly modified - by drainage, simplified vegetation and in some cases culverting. The aim should be to restore natural headwater function and mosaics of in-channel, riparian and wetland habitats. Restoration of natural processes include natural flow, geomorphology and water quality regimes. This requires a large-scale perspective, looking at the land areas at catchment headwaters and not just the stream or riparian area.

Case study - Soil and hydrology surveying in the River Clun headwaters to inform work to re-naturalise hydrology

During 2023-25 detailed eco-hydrology survey work was done on 900ha of land where shallow peat was thought to be present, including farmland, forestry and nature reserves. The survey has made recommendations for enhancing environmental benefits by re-naturalising hydrology in the headwaters. The importance of high-functioning natural processes in headwater areas is key in climate change resilience. These soils, rich in organic matter and in places peaty, are important for water regulation as well as storing carbon and maintaining water quality. Hydrology in the Clun catchment is quite highly modified. Gaining detailed site-specific information about hydrology and habitats is seen as key to informing and encouraging land management centred on restoring natural hydrology.

The aim was to understand the condition and extent of shallow peaty soils and the current hydrology to inform future management, including:

- Peat soil survey (presence, depth, condition & extent)
- Vegetation surveys to understand plant communities and links between peaty soils, vegetation diversity and roughness, and hydrology.
- Eco-hydrology surveys to identify natural and human influences on water movement (surface water flows, ground water and streams)

https://www.shropshirehills-nl.org.uk/our-work/projects/clun-headwaters

Looking at shallow peat at Rhos Fiddle SWT nature reserve

Water as a resource

Water is used directly from watercourses and water bodies by farm livestock, through abstraction (pumping from streams and rivers), and treated mains water is used by farms, homes and businesses.
The water 'footprint' of different activities is increasingly understood to be important to consider and seek to minimise.

Rainwater capture and storage systems for farming have potential to reduce pressure on water resources at key times, as well as increasing the resilience of the farm business. Depending on the farm, use can also be made of natural storage with benefits to wildlife.

Solar powered pump for livestock watering funded by a Farming in Protected Landscapes grant

Key link to other Plan themes - Managing land in order to look after water

The land and water systems are integrally linked, and many of the measures to manage water quality and quantity are taken on land.

Water friendly farming techniques for water quality are set out in the Teme Rivers Water Friendly Farming Guide, including livestock managements, ditches, woody debris, run-off and erosion.

Natural Flood Management measures on land include:

- Buffer strips along watercourses
- Peat restoration
- Soil management
- Tree planting, especially contour woodlands/hedges
- Passive floodplain storage
- Formal flood store areas
- Taller and more complex vegetation

New hedge with ditch reprofiled as a swale which will slow the flow over time

Beavers have been proven to have very beneficial effects on naturalising hydrology as well as improving habitats. They are a keystone species and their dams help to store water and slow the flow, with beneficial effects in lowering flood peaks. Species reintroduction needs to be done with great care and appropriate consultation, but the first beavers have arrived in the Shropshire Hills and could have an increased role to play in future.

Summary of statutory requirements and duties - Water
(not exhaustive)

The Water Environment (Water Framework Directive) Regulations 2017 – ecological and chemical status of rivers

Environment Act water targets

Farming rules for water

Nutrient neutrality

Pollution laws in Water Resources Act 1991

Consent regimes for alterations to watercourses

PLAN POLICIES – WATER

(See the explanation of what the Policies are)

18. Water Quality

i) All feasible steps should be taken to improve the condition of the River Clun SAC and the River Teme SSSI.

ii) Land use and land management should avoid adverse impacts on the quality of watercourses, waterbodies, and natural water systems. Water-friendly farming techniques should be encouraged to reduce diffuse pollution and soil loss to rivers.

iii) Development should avoid harm to water quality, including chemical pollution, nutrient pollution and sedimentation, and including through cumulative effects.

iv) Highways management and drainage should seek to minimise movement of sediment into watercourses, by careful management of road verges and use of sediment traps and swales, etc. where appropriate.

v) Sewage and wastewater treatment should be of a high standard to have no adverse impacts on river water quality.

vi) Septic tanks should be maintained to high standards to avoid harm to water quality.

vii) Impacts on water quality and nutrient levels from intensive pheasant rearing and duck shooting should be minimised.

19. Flood attenuation, and managing low flows

i) Natural Flood Management measures should be used to increase water storage, reduce flood risks, maintain aquifers and to help prevent low flows and drying of rivers.

ii) Development should support and enable the natural storage of water through sustainable drainage systems.

iii) Drainage and water management measures should avoid displacing flooding, and should look to water storage solutions where possible rather than speeding up flows.

iv) Natural water storage should be enhanced e.g. through restoration and creation of ponds and other small waterbodies.

20. <u>Water as a resource</u>

i) Harm should be avoided to water resources, by protecting rivers, wetlands and water environment. Regulation should be used where needed to protect water resources and the water environment.

ii) Water resources should be managed to be sustainable and more resilient to pressures from climate change.

iii) On-farm storage of water is encouraged, to help reduce demand on river and stream water supplies.

21. <u>Managing land to look after water</u>

i) Naturalness of watercourses and floodplains should be enhanced and restored, and river and riverbank habitats improved. Artificial in-channel obstructions limiting the natural range of fish should be removed where possible.

ii) Land use and land management in upland areas should support retaining water for longer in catchment headwaters.

iii) Methods should be adopted to avoid as far as possible soil compaction which reduces infiltration and accelerates run-off.

iv) Nature-based solutions should integrate water measures with nature recovery, climate mitigation and adaptation.

Leaky barrier to slow the flow in a small stream

Recommendations – Water

(See the explanation of what the Recommendations are)

W 1. Deliver improvements to the condition of the River Clun SAC through activity linked to the Protected Site Strategy pilot.

W 2. Take necessary steps for all rivers in the National Landscape to reach good ecological and chemical status.

W 3. Strengthen co-ordination and avoid siloing water issues, by adopting a holistic approach.

W 4. Focus on headwaters and upper catchments as a key significance of the Shropshire Hills area.

W 5. Seek opportunities for rewetting, especially of deep peatland, valley mires and high organic matter soils in the headwaters.

W 6. Support landowners to implement recommended actions from recent Upper Clun surveys to re-naturalise hydrology.

W 7. Continue and promote Catchment Sensitive Farming scheme providing advice and grants for farmers for works to help improve water quality.

W 8. Promote working and thinking at catchment and sub-catchment scales as functional units.

W 9. Support the further reintroduction of beavers in selected and controlled suitable sites.

W 10. Undertake re-meandering or re-wiggling of rivers at suitable sites to restore more natural form and habitats.

W 11. Support greater public engagement and understanding about rivers and the water environment, including iconic species such as salmon, otter and water vole, and steps that individuals can take.

W 12. Promote existing legal public access to rivers, and seek opportunities to extend access, such as through agreements.

W 13. Encourage safe and sustainable use of water for recreation, including paddling and wild swimming.

Aspirations - Water

(See the explanation of what the Aspirations are)

W(a) Establish a major project or area initiative for the Teme headwaters focusing on re-naturalising hydrology of headwater areas.

W(b) Widespread adoption of water-friendly farming techniques.

W(c) Undertake further hydrology surveys where appropriate.

W(d) Use of soil erosion risk mapping to inform land management to avoid siltation in rivers.

W(e) Raise awareness of human health importance of water quality.

W(f) Strengthen fish populations.

W(g) Support citizen science involvement in water and river health.

Extracts from Vision:

People

are healthy and connected to nature –
in vibrant communities and as welcome visitors

- People have sufficient income, housing and services
- All parts of society can enjoy natural beauty

Subsections in this 'People' section of the Plan:

Meeting the **needs of residents** – income, housing, access to services

Access and recreation – walking, cycling, other activities

Health and wellbeing

Equity, Diversity & Inclusion – young people and other underserved communities

Public engagement and communications, interpretation

Education, learning, skills and training

Volunteering and involvement, fund-raising

Key link to other Plan themes - ***Visitor management and environmental sensitivity***

"Have you ever beheld freedom through these eyes?
These tall hills sitting right beneath the skies
A painful path is gonna teach you how to fly
In the dirt I think I saw a butterfly."

Nature's Anthem, Still Shadey (Nature Calling arts project)

Meeting the needs of residents – income, housing, access to services

These topics lie beyond the direct scope of National Landscape purposes, but are a vital part of the context of the area, and so to any environmental work. These aspects are represented in the 'social foundation' inner ring of the Doughnut model used as a framework for this Plan. Through our Doughnut data portrait process, the top social challenges in the Shropshire Hills area were identified as housing, social equity, income and work, and access to services.

Though affordable housing is a particular priority, it is recognised that there is also a need for some market housing to meet local needs.

Communities in the Shropshire Hills face considerably higher levels of deprivation than the England average for rural areas, with 67% of the population falling within the five most deprived deciles in the Index of Multiple Deprivation (compared to 28% for rural areas in England).

Other challenges relating to access to services facing rural communities and businesses in the Shropshire Hills include:

- Transport – not necessarily 'connectivity', but cost and availability
- Broadband and mobile phone coverage, though these have improved
- Delivery of health and social services in sparse rural areas

Access and recreation – walking, cycling, other activities

Enjoyment of the landscape in many forms is a key public benefit from the Shropshire Hills and their designation as a National Landscape.

Walking is the most popular activity, enjoyed by a high proportion of visitors.

Many forms of countryside recreation are increasing, and patterns of use continue to change and evolve. New recreational users of the countryside often have a high reliance on poor quality digital mapping and low awareness of access rights and responsibilities, which can exacerbate visitor management issues.

The area has greater potential for cycling touring and both road and off-road cycling. The Shropshire Way is a valuable resource with potential to attract more people for multi-day walking holidays using local accommodation.

Physical pressure from numbers of visitors can be seen at well-used sites such as at the Long Mynd, the Wrekin and some other hills.

Path widening due to heavy use near the Wrekin summit

Health and wellbeing

The health and wellbeing benefits of contact with nature and outdoor exercise are well documented, including physical and mental health. On the other hand, there are increasing levels of obesity, and a widening divide in society between those who are physically active and those who aren't.

At a deeper level of connection, practical volunteering brings along with physical exercise the additional benefits of building sense of purpose and belonging to a place and often also of social connections.

The Shropshire Hills are visited by several million people a year and offer an accessible 'natural health service'. Health sector funding has been accessed in the past for countryside volunteering activities in Shropshire, but this has declined in recent years. The case for this kind of upstream, preventative investment remains strong however.

Equity, Diversity & Inclusion – including young people and other underserved communities

In March 2023 the National Landscape team commissioned a study on improving engagement with underserved groups in the Shropshire Hills. The recommendation themes in the report were:

1. Communicating confidently about diversity and inclusion
2. Maximising the health and wellbeing potential of the landscape
3. Increasing diversity in participation
4. Improving accessibility
5. Developing creative connections to nearby urban areas
6. Strengthening commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion
7. Aligning strategy and action with national policy and best practice

Engaging with some 'hard to reach' groups in society is usually labour intensive and requires particular techniques such as outreach activities.

The Shropshire Hills Discovery Centre can play an even stronger role in enthusing people about climate action, nature recovery, cultural heritage, sustainable tourism and local regeneration, as a gateway to the Shropshire Hills.

Farm visit in the Shropshire Hills through Generation Green 2, a national project for young people

Case study - Young Rangers

From 2021-2023 the National Landscape team had project funding from our National Lottery and employed a new officer in our team three days per week specifically to run the Young Rangers. South Shropshire Youth Forum were also contracted to run a second group. Each group had an activity roughly every two weeks.

"I have learnt teamwork. I'm more brave and confident than I was. I'm more open and have joined in more activities. I've taken the lead in some of them and I feel myself and I can make new friends."

"Young Rangers has been fantastic for our son who is dyslexic and struggles sometimes at school. He also struggles a bit with social interactions so it's good practice to interact with other young people in a safe and caring environment". [Parent]

An informal consultation session with a Young Rangers group in August 2025 introduced the Doughnut model and asked young people what might be missing from this Plan that was important to them and they could help us understand. The main point they made was the **need to make more opportunities available and accessible for young people to get outdoors and connect with nature**. They recognised the barriers that exist for young people to get outside, but also how valuable this was for their mental health, especially to counteract the addictive patterns of use of online technology.

Case study - outreach work by Shropshire Hills Engagement Ranger

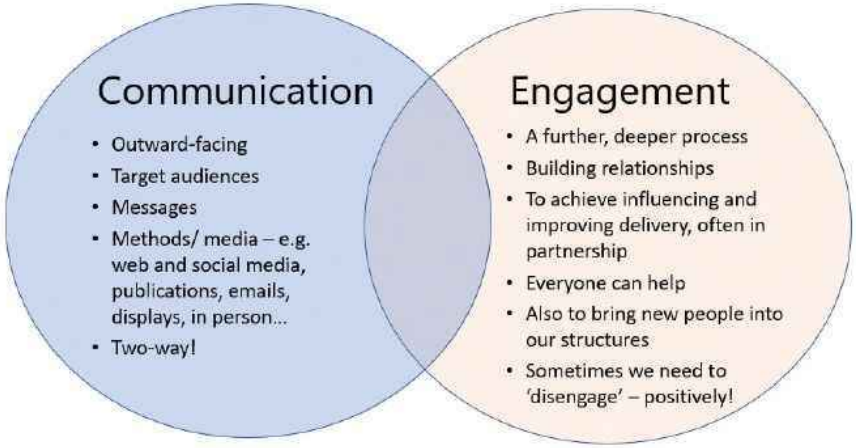
Through the new Engagement Ranger post, the National Landscape team worked in 2024 with new audiences including those with sight loss, Parkinson's disease and refugees. 20 organised events involved a total of 185 attendees. Insights from this were added to through our involvement in a EUROPARC study visit in 2024 on social inclusion in tourism. Lessons learned included:

- People face different and sometimes intersecting barriers, including money, knowledge, confidence and social norms.
- A 'pathway' or gradual progression through local visits might be useful for people for whom the barriers are significant.
- Initiatives which help people to connect to greenspace close to where they live are likely to help people to develop confidence and interest, which may encourage them to participate more.
- Outdoor and environmental education programmes for children are a valuable way to give opportunities to underserved groups, including day visits and residentials. These may lead to children encouraging their parents to make trips to the countryside.
- Even relatively low cost opportunities for visits may exclude some people, due to cost, access to a car or outdoor equipment.

Visit to the Stiperstones by a Sight Loss group from Telford

Public engagement and communications, interpretation

Communication and engagement are seen as complementary and overlapping activities – engagement being more ongoing and done more through direct personal contact:



The National Landscape Team has a Communications and Engagement Strategy which is being reviewed in light of this Plan. There is a balance to strike between focusing limited resources on engaging 'high influence' stakeholders for maximum impact, and reaching new audiences in the general public. Both have a place.

Interpretation is used to invite people to explore, appreciate, enjoy and respect the special qualities of the National Landscape. All interventions should be carefully planned to ensure only the most appropriate and accessible approaches are used, for the right audiences, in the right locations and at the right times. Ideally, relevant people should be involved from the outset in communicating the significance of these places and the nature, stories, events, and objects that make them special. Media used may be digital, fixed, visual, audio, tactile, spoken, written, carved, crafted, performed, played, and demonstrated means to most effectively convey what makes the Shropshire Hills a special place.

Education, learning, skills and training

Education and learning can connect with and benefit the National Landscape at all levels. For formal education, the Shropshire Hills is a great resource. There are primary schools within the National Landscape and Secondary Schools in the towns around. There are further and higher education colleges which have courses in a range of relevant subjects. Local universities include Harper Adams, Chester and Birmingham. Cardingmill Valley and the Shropshire Hills Discovery Centre are particularly important venues for school visits and outdoor learning.

Adult learning happens through a wide variety of providers. Practical skills include those for nature conservation, heritage such as traditional buildings, and land management. More could be done on career training and pathways in to working in conservation or the land management sector.

Photo from a Generation Green 2 event in the Shropshire Hills

Volunteering and involvement, including fundraising

Active volunteering brings benefits to the landscape and to people. A number of organisations support practical volunteer activity in the Shropshire Hills, including the National Trust, Shropshire Wildlife Trust and Restoring Shropshire's Verges project. Volunteers are also involved in looking after heritage sites and biological recording. Organisations such as the Middle Marches Community Land Trust provide valuable learning and networking opportunities for voluntary groups through their conferences.

There can be a cross-over of involvement and support to more active donation and fundraising. The Shropshire Hills Landscape Trust is a good vehicle for this as a registered charity, but other organisations also fundraise for activities which contribute to the Management Plan.

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

Key link to other Plan themes - Visitor management and environmental sensitivity

In our landscape, some of the most visited sites are hills which are also amongst our most important conservation sites. Physical pressure from numbers of visitors can be seen at well-used sites such as at the Long Mynd, the Wrekin and some other hills. There are also some disturbance impacts to wildlife from people and dogs, and localised adverse impacts from recreational off-road vehicle use. Negative impacts of tourism on natural and cultural resources are not as severe as in some more heavily visited places, but the resources available here to manage these problems are also quite limited.

A set of strategies for managing visitors and encouraging environmental sensitivity which were developed in the post-Covid peaks of visitor numbers have ongoing relevance:

- **Good public information to prevent problems at source**
  Using key on-line platforms and sites, alignment of messages, listing of sites and locations
- **Managing popular sites and encouraging dispersal**
  Better public information about parking places
- **Encouraging responsible visitor behaviour**
  Using lessons from behavioural science – positive messages, connecting with people's motivations
- **Monitoring and understanding visitor use**
  Lessons from visitor surveys and further data collection
- **Support for businesses, farmers and communities impacted by visitor pressure**
  Co-ordinated messaging, ideally a troubleshooting capacity
- **In the longer term, develop and improve visitor infrastructure**
  Walking and cycling routes, small scale parking, sites with facilities.

Summary of statutory requirements and duties - People
(not exhaustive)

Statutory levels of service for local authorities

Housing targets

Public rights of way – guide for farmers and landowners

Rights of Way – Council responsibilities

Rights of Way – responsibilities of users

PLAN POLICIES – PEOPLE

(See the explanation of what the Policies are)

22. Housing

i) Development of affordable housing to meet local needs should be prioritised to increase the sustainability of communities within the National Landscape.

ii) Development of affordable housing within the National Landscape should be supported where:

- **development design is of high design quality, and has regard for local and traditional vernacular styles;**
- **density of development is sympathetic to existing housing density within the local area; and**
- **no significant adverse impacts upon the local community, landscape, nature, heritage, natural beauty, and tranquillity can be demonstrated.**

23. Employment

i) Opportunities for local employment in activities which are sympathetic to the special qualities of the National Landscape should be supported and encouraged. Creation of jobs in activities which are harmful to the special qualities and other key characteristics of the National Landscape should not be used to justify harmful developments.

24. Services

i) Priority should be given to maintaining and enhancing local community services and amenities and improving access to these.

ii) Rural services should be delivered in sustainable ways, make the most of health and wellbeing opportunities from the landscape,

and as far as possible support the purpose of designation and the priorities of the Plan.

25. Access and recreation

i) The access network (including public footpaths, bridleways and roads, and open access areas) should be valued, protected and maintained as the bedrock of recreation, economic value and nature connection.

ii) Responsible access and sustainable recreation activities should be promoted, with a focus on quiet enjoyment and a strong ethic of care for visitors and providers. All recreation facilities, activities and events should be planned and promoted to ensure no significant impacts upon the local community, landscape, nature, heritage, natural beauty, and tranquillity.

iii) Recreational use of motor vehicles off sealed surface roads should not be encouraged or promoted within the National Landscape. Voluntary measures and pro-active work with users should be used where possible to minimise the impact of legal off-road use of motor vehicles on the landscape and on other people's quiet enjoyment of the countryside. Where local impacts are significant however, measures including traffic regulation orders restricting legal use should be employed. Illegal motorised activities should as far as possible be prevented.

26. Health and wellbeing

i) Opportunities should be maximised for improving people's health and wellbeing from outdoor exercise and relaxation, and from contact with nature and the landscape.

27. Inclusion and new audiences

i) The Shropshire Hills should strive to be a more inclusive and welcoming destination, reaching new audiences. Priority should be given to inclusivity, equity and diversity and to improving provision for under-served groups and those with special needs.

ii) Access for as wide a range of people as possible should be encouraged, through easing physical access barriers where possible, with reasonable adjustments provided where environmental factors may limit access.

28. Promotion and public engagement

i) Promotion of the Shropshire Hills to visitors should be linked to the special qualities of the National Landscape and should encourage sustainable tourism practices and behaviours, including sustainable and active transport and travel.

ii) Interpretation and a variety of communication and engagement tools should be used to help enhance people's enjoyment, raise understanding of special qualities of the area, and to encourage people to help and participate.

29. Volunteering

i) Active participation in care for the landscape through volunteering and community groups should be encouraged.

30. Visitor management

i) Publicity and other management measures should, through promotion of a wide variety of visitor locations, seek to disperse visitors and spread visits across the area, to reduce pressures at heavily used locations and to spread economic benefits.

31. Education and skills

i) Opportunities should be maximised for outdoor and environmental education, and for skills development linked to caring for the landscape.

Recommendations – People

(See the explanation of what the Recommendations are)

P 1. Foster mutual understanding among different stakeholders to help build consensus around management of the Shropshire Hills National Landscape.

P 2. Use the Shropshire Hills Discovery Centre, along with other visitor centres and higher profile staffed visitor sites as gateways to the Shropshire Hills.

P 3. Promote visitor information services and support visitor facing staff, businesses, and volunteers to be ambassadors for the area.

P 4. Continue good levels of maintenance of public and recreation facilities on sites which are part of the public forest estate.

P 5. Manage promoted walking routes to a high standard.

P 6. Continue the successful Shropshire Hills visitor map.

P 7. Continue and develop the Shropshire Hills Shuttle service.

P 8. Continue to support volunteers to undertake path maintenance work through the Parish Paths Network.

P 9. Continue and expand active engagement and outreach to expand opportunities for underserved groups and to help address health and wellbeing inequalities and barriers.

P 10. Make more use of social prescribing to spread the benefits that the National Landscape provides for the health and wellbeing of residents and visitors.

P 11. Support countryside site providers to manage pressurised sites through on the ground repairs, information and influencing patterns of use and behaviour.

P 12. Co-ordinate and maintain high-quality visitor information, including on available parking and facilities highlighting opportunities to suit all abilities and tastes, including on-line, social media, print and interpretation.

P 13. Continue to develop a network of providers of countryside sites to share ideas and best practice.

P 14. Expand the range of visitor sites which are accessible to a people with a wider range of abilities.

P 15. Increase provision and opportunities for children and young people resident in the area and nearby, to experience the Shropshire Hills and have increased contact with nature.

P 16. Implement projects to encourage walking and cycling as identified in the Shropshire Great Outdoors Development Plan.

P 17. Continue a varied programme of events for the public through various organisations and community groups.

P 18. Maintain funding and investment for maintenance of rights of way, including capital programmes for larger items such as bridges.

P 19. Raise awareness of the links between sustainable management of the landscape and people's health through food, exercise, nature and relaxation.

P 20. Continue to maintain and promote the Offa's Dyke Path National Trail.

P 21. Strengthen training opportunities and pathways to employment linked to caring for the landscape.

P 22. Support continuation and expansion of care farming and social forestry opportunities.

P 23. Support and promote opportunities for environmentally friendly activities e.g. horse riding, adventure sports.

P 24. Strengthen and expand mechanisms for visitors and local people to donate to support conservation work.

P 25. Improve virtual access and use of digital platforms to reinforce nature connection.

P 26. Continue to monitor visitor use and trends, and attitudes.

Aspirations – People

(See the explanation of what the Aspirations are)

P(a) Support opportunities for people to have life-changing experiences of nature which in turn promote pro-environmental behaviours.

P(b) Broaden the National Landscape engagement through the new Forum to encourage greater participation.

P(c) Make greater use of arts projects as an engagement tool to reach new audiences.

P(d) Support and promote specific itineraries and products based on visiting and exploring on foot and by bike.

P(e) Seek to engage new sectors in sustainable tourism principles and practices. e.g., creative enterprises, outdoor activity providers and challenge event organisers.

P(f) Develop geological interpretation along the Shropshire Way and update the Shropshire Hills geology trail leaflets.

P(g) Provide more 'changing places' facilities for people with particular needs.

P(h) Develop an Active Travel and Access Priorities map linking gateways and visitor hotspots.

Ukrainian refugees on a supported visit to Stokesay Castle

Extracts from Vision:

Place

The Shropshire Hills are valued and cared for as a special Place

- The working landscape supports livelihoods
- Heritage assets are looked after
- Cultural heritage is celebrated
- The economy is regenerative and circular

Subsections in this 'Place' section of the Plan:

Landscape including landscaping, tranquillity, dark skies

Heritage and historic environment

Sustainable, circular and regenerative economies:

Tourism and visitor economy

Sustainable transport

The National Landscape **boundary, setting and connections to surrounding area**

*Key link to other Plan themes – **Communities, cultural heritage, connection to place***

"When we work in place we can see the impact and respond. Place is the one unit of measurement that allows us to change our behaviour. If we save the places of the world, we save the planet."

Bill Read, Regenesis Institute.

Landscape

The European Landscape Convention 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 is unaffected by Brexit and the UK remains a signatory. The Convention defines three principles of landscape action:

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.

Landscaping - good practice for landscaping of new developments would include:

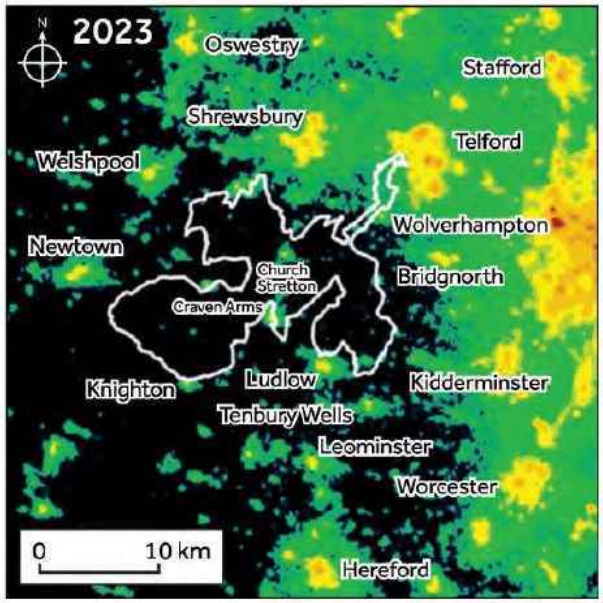
- Careful location, form and design of development (simple 'screening' of poorly considered development is not a substitute for good design, taking into account the character of the local landscape).
- Good landscaping plans which can be understood and commented upon .
- Landscape schemes should be linked to well-designed Biodiversity Net Gain on new developments
- 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.

Tranquillity, Dark Skies & Light pollution

Tranquillity is one of the less tangible and measurable assets of the National Landscape, but is nevertheless very significant in the way people value the area. CPRE undertook mapping work on this in 2007 and their methodology included assessing a range of objective factors such as levels of noise, light pollution and visual presence of man-made structures, as well as more subjective factors of people's perception, including apparent naturalness and encounters with other people. The Shropshire Hills area is very significant for tranquillity in a regional and local context, and at a national scale, the Shropshire Hills and Marches area generally are significant, along with larger areas of the north and south-west of England.

The key sources of intrusive noise identified in the Shropshire Hills are road and air traffic which are both continuing to increase.

Awareness of light pollution issue has risen, and technology and design has enabled steps to be taken (e.g. street lights which allow much less upward escape of light) and more sensitive security lighting.



Map of artificial light at night clearly shows the value of the Shropshire Hills for dark skies

Heritage and 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, 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 archaeological 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 changes affecting them. 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. Historic and natural aspects of the environment are closely inter-related – for example hedgerows, veteran trees, parkland and ancient woodland.

Archaeological work on Nordy Bank, Clee Liberty Common

Setting of heritage assets

With better information available now, development proposals which would directly damage defined archaeological features are thankfully rare, but their 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. Setting is often considered mainly in relation to views, but other factors such as quietness 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.

Case study - Offa's Dyke Conservation project

The Offa's Dyke Conservation Project is a cross-border initiative with Historic England and CADW, Shropshire Council, the Offa's Dyke Association and the Offa's Dyke National Trail. The project aims to showcase the benefits of integrating people, nature and place around the focus of a monument conservation programme. Focussing on the Dyke corridor has delivered benefits throughout a landscape that we today value for its scenic, historic and nature conservation importance. The project is also being identified in collaborative nature recovery initiatives such as Local Nature Recovery Strategies, and the Welsh Integrated Natural Resources Scheme.

Removal of conifers from Offa's Dyke

Case – study - Fix the Fort

The public appeal to raise money to fix Caer Caradoc's worn-down ramparts generated around £4,000. This was boosted in autumn 2022 with additional funding from HF Holidays (£10,000) and Farming in Protected Landscapes (£13,000), enabling the Fix the Fort project to start. After preparatory archaeological and ground work, 50 bags of stone and soil were airlifted onto the hillside by helicopter. Repairs to the ramparts were made over the winter of 2022-23 with support from some Young Rangers and volunteers. The work has created steps at key points where the footpath crosses the earthworks, and repaired other erosion scars.

Sustainable, circular and regenerative economies

Regenerative concepts have become more prominent in farming and in tourism, but can be applicable to economies and places as a whole. This is where there is an emphasis on economic and human activity actually *improving* the environment and society rather than just seeking to avoid harm. It means looking beyond sustainability and seeing how we can create and nurture the right conditions in which living systems are able to regenerate themselves. This approach will focus on 'upstream' interventions and is in contrast to a linear or extractive economy, which is not only less sustainable but will also be less resilient.

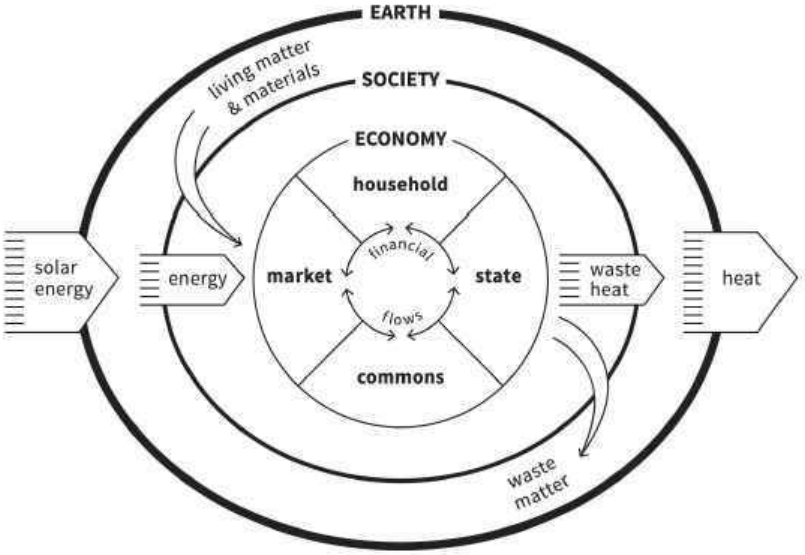
"A regenerative economy means moving away from extractive business models and unlocking the potential for positive contributions for nature and society. Businesses have the potential to be climate positive, socially positive and economically positive by moving beyond a solitary focus on limiting emissions into the environment".

Smith School of Enterprise and Environment, University of Oxford

"The circular economy is a system where materials never become waste and nature is regenerated. In a circular economy, products and materials are kept in circulation through processes like maintenance, reuse, refurbishment, remanufacture, recycling and composting."

Ellen MacArthur Foundation

These concepts are also similar to the 'Wellbeing economy' and to the Doughnut Economics model we have used in our Vision and data portrait profiling.



Economy embedded within society and dependent on the living world

(Credit: Kate Raworth and Marcia Mihotich CC-BY-SA 4.0)

"Economic change that is sourced from place, is a foundational pillar in designing regenerative economies. It deals with the varying aspects of bringing our economies back towards a localised, place-sourced design that derives its thrivability from the five key 'capitals' that surround it – ecological, social, human, production, financial – whilst still operating inside our existing global economy as it slowly transforms."

Really Regenerative Centre

Some key points from the workshop held in the Plan consultation period on Doughnut Economics/ regenerative approaches were:

- keep relating local action to wider systemic change,
- highlight threats posed by widening inequality, and
- maintain momentum of these conversations linking with other groups and networks.

Sustainable or regenerative tourism and visitor economy

As in other fields there is a move from sustainable towards regenerative tourism – looking beyond just minimising impacts, and towards an overall philosophy of how tourism can positively benefit the environment as well as economies and society. This might include businesses contributing and visitors doing volunteer work, but also things such as structures and ownership that build local communities.

The Shropshire Hills holds the Europarc Federation's Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas. The Shropshire Hills Sustainable Tourism Strategy 2024-29 has the following strategic themes:

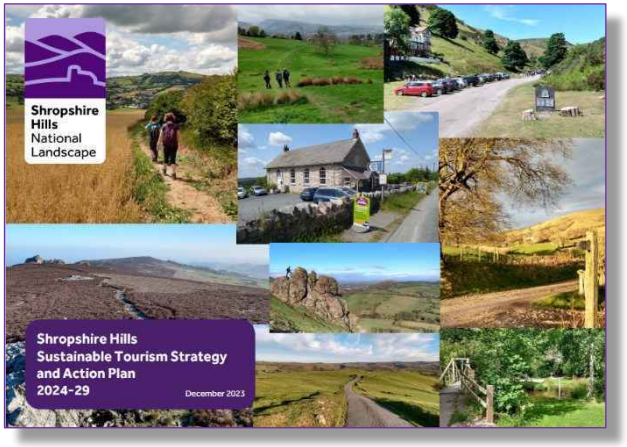
i. Setting an ambitious sustainable vision for tourism and engaging people with this.

ii. Improving provision of sustainable tourism services which draw on the area's special qualities.

iii. Supporting and encouraging environmental practices and behaviours by businesses and visitors.

iv. Managing the effects of localised visitor pressure, mitigating impacts, and sharing economic benefit by promoting visitor activity across the area.

v. Co-ordinating and adding value to sustainable tourism delivery.



Roads and Highways

The design and management of the rural road network should reinforce the local character and distinctiveness of the National Landscape. The distinctive character of minor roads contributes to the character of the wider Shropshire Hills landscape and they are an important means for people to experience the National Landscape. 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.

Sustainable transport

Transport and accessibility are important in the rural area but remain a barrier to some people, with 8% of households in the Shropshire Hills having no car. Public transport is limited and most people are reliant on private cars. An increase in home-working has reduced the need to travel for some people.

Case study - Shuttles

The Long Mynd & Stiperstones Shuttle bus in 2024 carried over 950 passengers and travelled over 4,600 miles. The Shuttle service continues to be very popular.

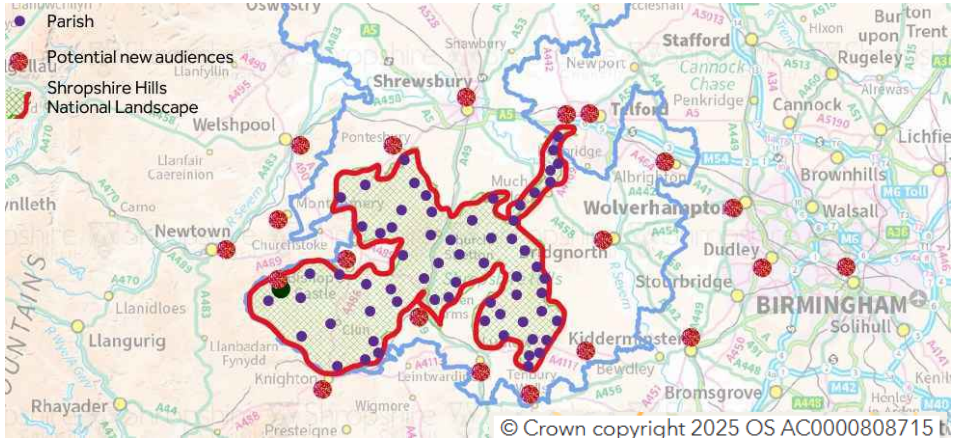
Shropshire Hills National Landscape
Long Mynd & Stiperstones Shuttle Bus

The National Landscape boundary, setting and connections to surrounding area

The Shropshire Hills National Landscape boundary has not been changed since it was drawn up in 1957 leading to the designation as AONB. The conclusion from a study of the boundary commissioned in 2006 was that the boundary was fit for purpose, and the Partnership and the local authorities have since then had a clear policy against seeking to change the National Landscape boundary.

The 'setting' of the National Landscape is the area around it, which adds value to the qualities of the designated area. This is not precisely defined geographically, but it should be considered in planning decisions for developments close outside the boundary. The NPPF requires that development within the setting "should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated areas."

The National Landscape is an asset to Shropshire and to Telford & Wrekin, and has links across the border to Wales. It is connected to the surrounding area and is not and should not be like an 'island'. It can provide benefits economically, environmentally and socially to the wider area. Most Parishes span the boundary in and outside the National Landscape, and potential new audiences lie in the nearby urban areas. These positive connections with the surrounding area can be built as part of the National Landscape model.



Key link to other Plan themes - Communities, cultural heritage, connection to place

The Rural Coalition in 2010 described sustainable rural communities as those *"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."*

The Shropshire Hills National Landscape is 23% of Shropshire by area but contains only 6% of the county's population. Its sparse population means its economy is therefore different from much of the county, with more small, dispersed rural businesses.

Social balance and cohesion are key to successful communities and this relies on sharing spaces where people can mix. Public spaces whether green or built can have an important role in social cohesion, culture and sense of community. In the Church Stretton Neighbourhood Plan, comments were made about community, integration, social issues, the role of voluntary groups, meeting the needs of everyone etc along with comments relating to the need to make changes to the old market square – it was seen by many as having a role as a meeting place, rather than a car park - the need to maintain shops and services in the town centre etc.

Market at Church Stretton
(Church Stretton Town Council)

Cultural heritage includes both physical artefacts and intangible aspects. Though interpretations of history can be contested, there are often aspects of cultural heritage which can unite people from a locality.

A sense of place is key to people's connection to where they live, work and visit. Heritage contributes to people's sense of place and belonging and there are lessons from past ways of living which are relevant to some of our modern day problems.

A place-based approach is about understanding the issues, interconnections and relationships in a place and coordinating action and investment to improve the quality of life for that community.

Thinking about the 'potential' of a place to be an even better version of what it is now can open up new ways of thinking, and can be more energising than a conventional focus on problem solving. Here are some ideas around future potential for the Shropshire Hills based on its unique qualities, which can be explored further during the Plan period :

Potential of the Shropshire Hills?

The Place

Headwater sponge

Carbon sink

Nature powerhouse

Tranquil haven

Vibrant rural area

Basis of livelihoods

A 'source' area for its surrounding areas

The People/ Community/ Culture/ Protected Landscape

Connected sharer

Applicable example

Inspiring beacon

Welcoming community

Model of balance

Relevant hub

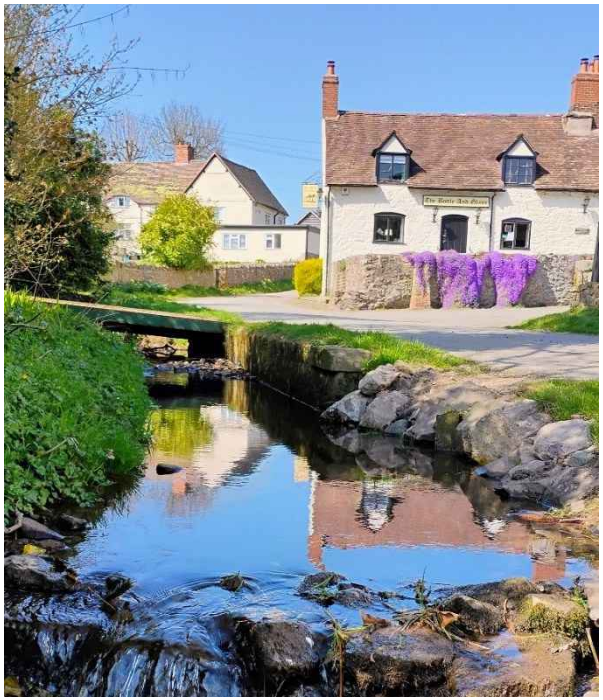
Statutory requirements for Place
(not exhaustive)

Planning – requirements for Local Plans and Neighbourhood Plans

Planning requirements to get planning permission for development

Special requirements for major development

Heritage – protection of scheduled monuments and other heritage assets



PLAN POLICIES - PLACE

(See the explanation of what the Policies are)

32. Landscape

i) A holistic view of landscape should be adopted in decision making, respecting the principles of the European Landscape Convention to protect, manage and plan for landscapes, and safeguarding the integrity of the sympathetic interaction between people and landscape.

ii) Local distinctiveness should be celebrated, linked to the natural and cultural heritage of the landscape. All development should consider local character and distinctiveness.

iii) Tranquillity should be protected in all aspects – peace and quiet, views, visual harmony, absence of intrusive influences.

iv) Dark skies should be valued, and planning policy and decisions on public lighting should be used to minimise and reduce light pollution.

v) In remoter locations and on hilltops a perceived sense of wildness should be retained and built structures minimised.

33. Heritage

i) Designated heritage sites and assets should be protected, and development should seek to protect and enhance the significance of all heritage assets (including undesignated assets), including their setting.

ii) Measures should be supported to ensure cultural heritage is better understood and celebrated.

34. Regenerative and circular economies

i) A regenerative economy should be fostered, focussing on wise management and wellbeing – an economy which is nature and climate positive, and good for people.

ii) Waste and resource use should be reduced by supporting a circular economy.

35. Tourism and visitor economy

i) New development for tourism and recreation should be of suitable scale and siting, of the highest standards of design and sustainability and avoid harm to the special qualities and other key characteristics of the National Landscape. Tourism businesses, facilities, activities, and events should adopt high standards of sustainability.

ii) Tourism activities based on nature and heritage should be prioritised, to increase people's connection to nature and better reveal the significance of heritage assets and their story within the context of the Shropshire Hills.

iii) Development of permanent caravans and chalets should be on a small scale only (e.g. less than 10 units), in suitable locations and following high standards of landscaping of natural and rural character.

36. Sustainable transport

i) Development of infrastructure such as transport and utilities should be sensitive to the special qualities and other key characteristics of the National Landscape and seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing it. The rural character of roads and highway network should be maintained, with design and structures in keeping with the high quality landscape.

ii) The use of excessively large vehicles on small rural lanes should be discouraged, including to protect verges and minimise soil loss to rivers.

iii) Maintaining, and extending public transport provision within the National Landscape should be prioritised over the further development of car-based infrastructure.

37. The boundary and setting of the National Landscape

i) The National Landscape boundary should not be formally amended in the foreseeable future, as any benefits would not be justified against the considerable costs and resources this would entail. Partners should work in ways which strengthen the integrity and identity of the Shropshire Hills as an area of exceptional landscape value. The National Landscape Team will work in a flexible and pragmatic way in relation to the boundary while seeking the best outcomes and delivery for the designated area.

ii) Development in the setting of the National Landscape should be assessed for its impacts on the designated area itself, and also take account of the landscape quality of the setting. Mitigation measures should consider impacts on the special qualities and other key characteristics of the National Landscape.

38. Communities, cultural heritage, connection to place

i) Local councils, including town and parish councils, should support and enable the development of sustainable communities within the National Landscape.

ii) Improved use of built and green public spaces in villages and towns should be encouraged for better social connection and cohesion, and to enhance vitality in communities.

iii) The Shropshire Hills identity and the combined elements of the National Landscape model (Plan, Advisory Committee, Forum, Team, etc) should be strengthened to help support people's motivation to actively care for the area's special qualities.

Recommendations – Place

(See the explanation of what the Recommendations are)

PL 1. Support the development of mixed, balanced and sustainable communities, that are good places for people to live in, and are socially cohesive.

PL 2. Support Parishes and community groups to care for their local landscape. Continue events to link and support community groups taking action for the local landscape.

PL 3. Foster positive economic, social and environmental connections of the Shropshire Hills with its surrounding areas.

PL 4. Promote suitable heritage sites for visitors and encourage greater understanding of heritage.

PL 5. Complete an inventory of public car parking areas in the Shropshire Hills and use this to improve public information for people of all abilities and to aid dispersal of visitors.

PL 6. Take action to bring all Scheduled heritage sites in favourable condition and management, prioritised at sites which are 'At Risk' and 'Vulnerable'.

PL 7. Keep sustainable and regenerative tourism prominent within the area's tourism sector and foster a sense of shared environmental responsibility among both businesses and visitors.

PL 8. Continue targeted conservation action on Offa's Dyke.

PL 9. Continue with the EUROPARC Sustainable Tourism Charter, providing a structured framework for sustainable tourism management, optimise learning from the network and promote appropriately.

PL 10. Make sensitive use of improved signage to encourage sense of place and aid orientation of visitors.

PL 11. Promote and improve existing channels for people to give back to the area, e.g., through membership organisations, through the Shropshire Hills Landscape Trust's Conservation Fund and potential other specific appeals.

PL 12. Give greater recognition to the Shropshire Hills National Landscape as an asset in the strategies and plans of Councils and public bodies.

PL 13. Maintain the profile of the Shropshire Hills and sustainable tourism in the new Local Visitor Economic Partnership.

PL 14. Strengthen links between Management Plan topics and priorities and Local Transport Planning.

PL 15. Continue to monitor economic trends and patterns in tourism to inform future strategies.

PL 16. Foster local area identities within the Shropshire Hills that support the connection of people to places.

PL 17. Encourage the development of heritage-based tourism activities that draw on the rich cultural heritage of the area and help generate support to maintain heritage assets.

PL 18. Reduce volume of air traffic and make alterations to flight path corridors to decrease the volume and noise impacts of air traffic over the National Landscape.

PL 19. Give priority to community consultation ahead of major development and other significant changes to the landscape, and carry this out early in the design and decision making process.

PL 20. Communities and businesses are encouraged to value and celebrate being part of the Shropshire Hills National Landscape.

PL 21. Encourage use of the 'Shropshire Hills' name and the new National Landscape branding, to reinforce identity and sense of place. Discourage the forming and use of acronyms such as NL, SHNL which are a barrier to understanding and engagement.

Aspirations - Place

(See the explanation of what the Aspirations are)

PL(a) Build shared knowledge of regenerative economies and place-making, with principles and examples which could be applied.

PL(b) Use local food to enhance sense of place, distinctiveness and connection to the area.

PL(c) Prioritise and seek a new generation of strategic investment in infrastructure for active travel and recreational walking and cycling including development of multi-user routes along suitable disused former railway lines.

PL(d) Increase promotion of dark skies as a powerful nature experience and as a motivator for improved sustainability on lighting.

PL(e) Increase celebration of cultural heritage to encourage connection and pride of place.

PL(f) Give greater profile of the National Landscape status for the Wrekin area as an engagement tool for the wider Shropshire Hills landscape.

PL(g) Develop material to raise awareness of geology along the Shropshire Way.

PL(h) Create a scheme for volunteers to participate in caring for monuments and heritage features.

PL(i) Improve provision of training for heritage skills.

PL(j) Help tourism businesses to access good sustainability advice and to promote their good practices and gain recognition for these.

PL(k) Use the qualities of the National Landscape and its culture to build association of the Shropshire Hills as somewhere to have a sustainable holiday/visit e.g. a change of pace, physically active, healthy, and low car miles, with a locally distinctive, authentic experience.

PL(l) Undertake landscape sensitivity and capacity assessment to help guide development.

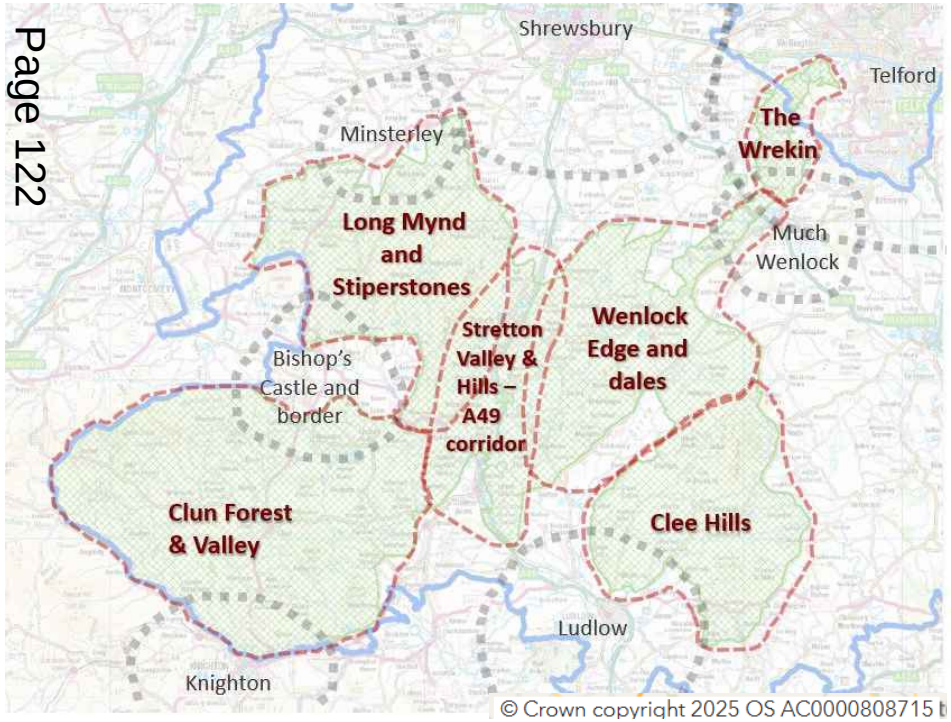
PL(m) Improve the provision of design guidance for built development in the National Landscape.

PL(n) Develop work around the re-defined local areas within the Shropshire Hills, and more detailed local sections in the next Plan.

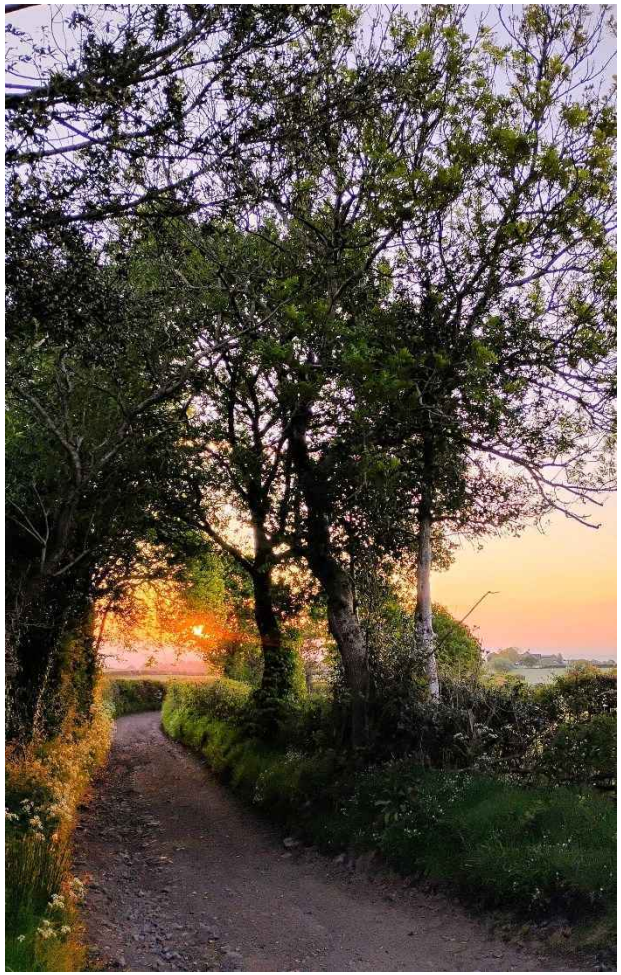
Local priorities for areas of the Shropshire Hills

This part of the Plan looks briefly at the features, particular issues and priorities for six distinct areas within the National Landscape.

The Shropshire Hills is a large area and has much diversity in its landscape. The sections set out here aim to be based on local areas that are meaningful to people's sense of place. This isn't the same for everyone – some people will relate to the areas shown here more than others. Each of these areas also has distinct local places within it. The lines are not absolute, and some of the areas defined overlap others.



Local areas within the Shropshire Hills (red)
and the overlapping generalised hinterlands of nearby towns (grey)



Stretton Valley & Hills/ A49 corridor

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

The A49 corridor makes this the most accessible but also the least tranquil part of the National Landscape. Church Stretton, the main town within the designated area, 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 National Landscape than elsewhere. Carding Mill Valley is the major visitor 'honeypot' site in the Shropshire Hills, predominantly used by day visitors, especially from Shropshire and the West Midlands conurbation. It is carefully managed by the National Trust but reaches capacity on peak days.

Key Issues

Development pressures are the highest here of any part of the National Landscape. 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 identifies strongly with the Shropshire Hills National Landscape, and is seeking to make the most of its location and potential for outdoor activities in the development of tourism in a sustainable way.

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.

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 Shropshire Hills. Church Stretton is an important service centre but is also the only one of Shropshire's defined market towns within a nationally protected landscape. The physical capacity for further development may be more limited than other towns, and it is important that the sensitivities of Church Stretton's location within the National Landscape are fully considered in planning decisions.

- A sustainable tourism approach is vital in this part of the Shropshire Hills and also made more possible by the good transport links, attractiveness for walking and landscape interest in the area. This part of the Shropshire Hills 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 Shropshire Hills. Developing further the links between Church Stretton and the National Landscape should allow the town to play a greater role in raising people's awareness of the National Landscape and its value, and to develop increasingly as the natural centre or 'hub' of the Shropshire Hills.

Nature recovery network strengths and opportunities

Stretton Valley – A49 corridor

1. The big areas of **upland heathland** (Long Mynd, Stiperstones) can be enhanced by **restoring habitat beyond the margins and creating/restoring heathland on suitable adjacent sites**, especially to connect smaller outlying areas of heathland e.g. the ridge south of the Stiperstones NNR.
2. The **Stretton Hills have fragmentary heathland** in amongst grassland, which could be enhanced by less intensive management.
3. The **wooded dingles** between All Stretton north to Wilderley are strong features in the network of habitats, which could be enhanced by further woodland planting and connections.
4. The **woods of the Stretton Valley** form a good network which could be developed further.

Long Mynd & Stiperstones

This is undisputably a 'core' part of the Shropshire Hills in terms of landscape, identity and biodiversity. The important large conservation sites of the Long Mynd and the Stiperstones 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 this area.

The area has the biggest concentration of upland and of semi-natural habitat within the Shropshire Hills, including the largest areas of heathland. Much of the high ground is designated for nature conservation, and land ownership by conservation bodies (including Natural England, the National Trust and Shropshire Wildlife Trust) is more extensive here than anywhere else in the National Landscape. Although there is a sense of 'wildness', the upland commons are carefully managed by grazing and linked with the surrounding farms.

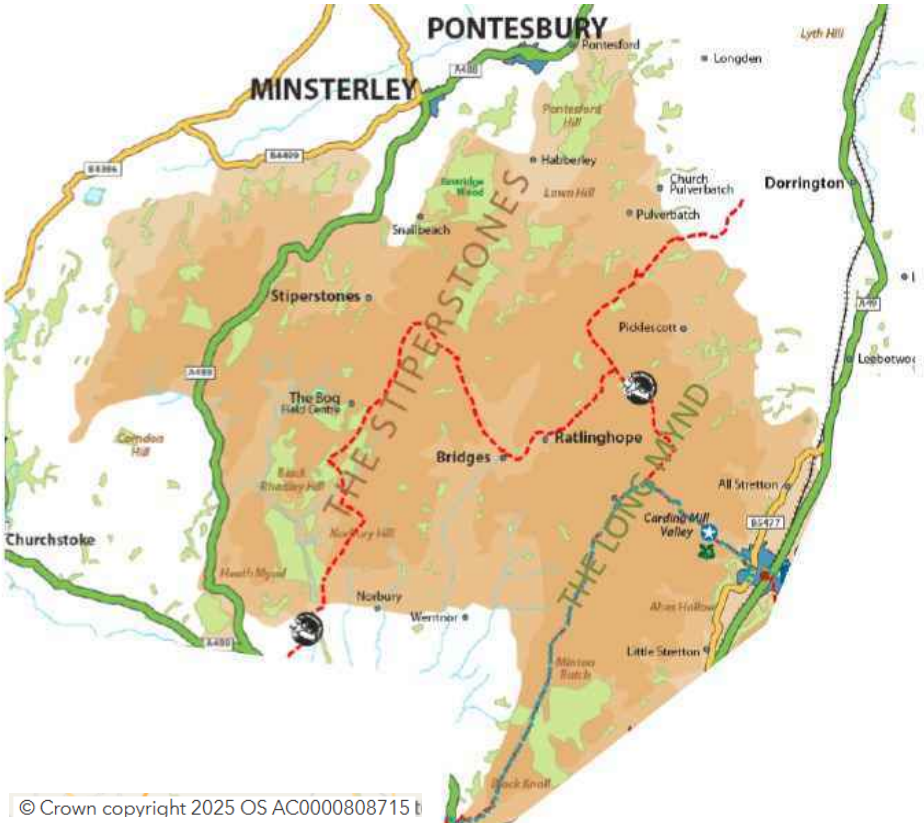
The mosaic of habitats on farmland is also of great value. A high priority needs to be given to retaining and building the inter-relationship between conservation sites and farmed land.

As well as the extensive open access hill land, the area also has many footpaths and a good bridleway network, is crossed by the Shropshire Way and served by the Shropshire Hills Shuttles bus service.

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 The 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 are more smallholdings, 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 and scattered scrub 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 rectangular 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.



Community involvement in wildlife and heritage is strong in this area through groups such as the Upper Onny Wildlife Group and those involved with former mining sites now open to visitors such as Snailbeach and the Bog.

The Upper Onny Farmer Group has become well established in recent years and is providing a very valuable forum for farmers in the area.

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 Environmental Land Management (ELM) scheme will be significant. Pasture-fed sheep and cattle are the main enterprises, but mixed farming can also have 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.

Priorities

- Farm environmental schemes are vitally important as a means of delivering conservation activity on the ground, and the continued 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 Shropshire Hills and links into it from the north should be developed, e.g. from Pontesbury and Minsterley. Both of these settlements could benefit economically from development of more services for visitors. The profile of the Shropshire Hills in Shrewsbury should be raised and its proximity to this part of the National Landscape is an advantage. The possibility of developing a cycle/multi-user route out of Shrewsbury in this direction would be of benefit to the National Landscape.

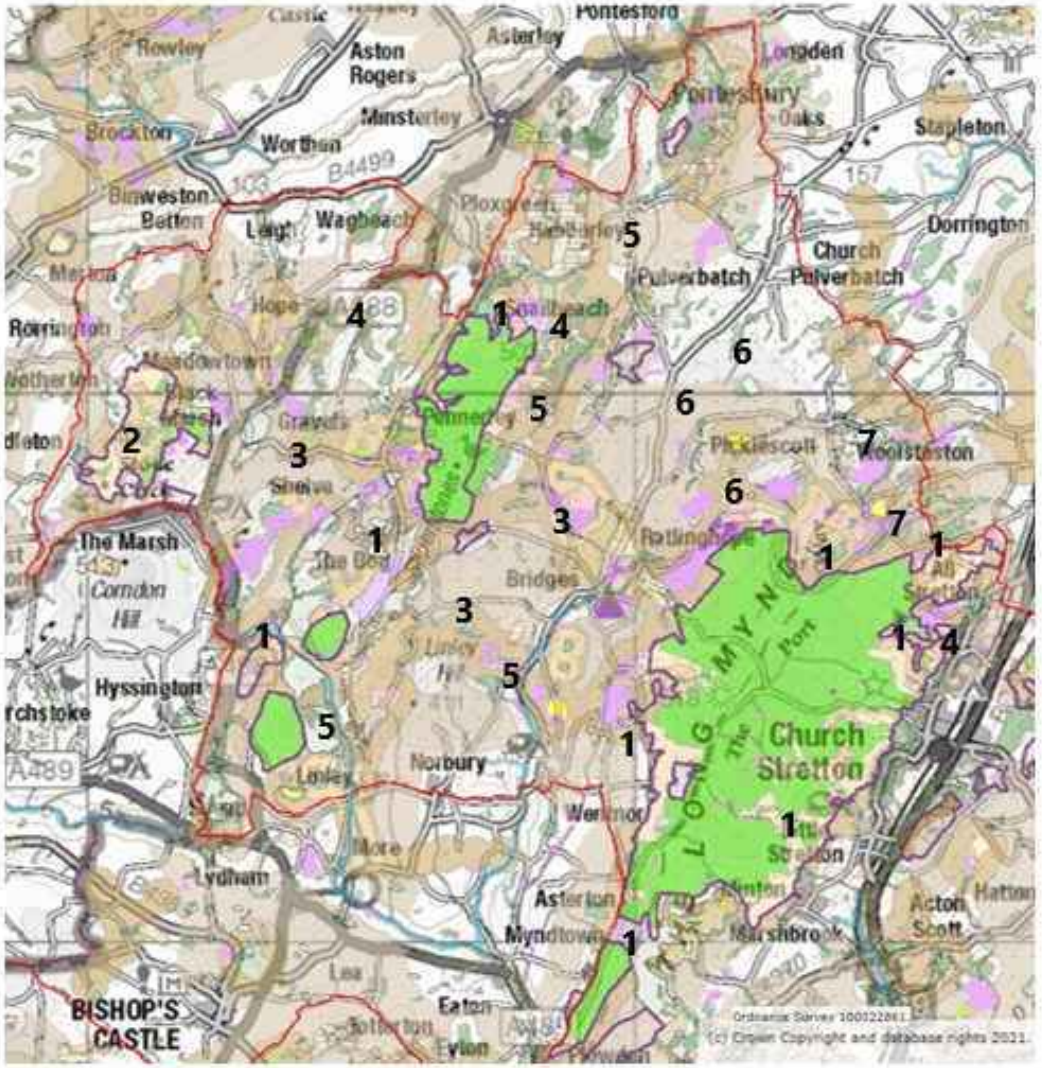
- Local food activity has significant potential to act as a bridge between farming, conservation and visitors. The pubs and visitor facilities in the area provide an important means of developing this.

Looking down to the Cardingmill reservoir

Nature recovery network strengths and opportunities

Long Mynd – Stiperstones area

1. The big areas of **upland heathland** (Long Mynd, Stiperstones) can be enhanced by **restoring habitat beyond the margins and creating/restoring heathland on suitable adjacent sites**, especially to connect smaller outlying areas of heathland e.g. the ridge south of the Stiperstones NNR.
2. **Stapeley Common has fragmentary heathland** in amongst grassland, which could be enhanced by less intensive management.
3. The **'bridges' of higher land between Long Mynd and Stiperstones** are obvious (around Gatten Hill and Linley/Norbury Hill) to enhance links of better quality habitat, probably more of rough grassland with ffridd and scrub than heathland. There are similar links west from Stiperstones across the high ground around Shelve, towards Stapeley Common.
4. The **woods** around the Stiperstones and Hope Valley form a strong network to enhance with further planting and connections, similarly the woods of the Stretton valley.
5. The **Habberley Brook catchment** has strong potential for enhanced habitat networks, starting up at the Stiperstones and leading down to the important area of mixed good habitats around Earl's Hill. The East and West **Onny Valleys** also have good potential.
6. The potential of connecting better upland habitats along the **high ground of the Portway north of the Long Mynd**, Cothercott/Wilderley Hill and Paulith Bank is under-represented on the map, as is the potential for enhancing woodland, grassland and scrub/rough habitats in the valley above Pulverbatch.
7. The **wooded dingles** between All Stretton north to Wilderley are strong features in the network of habitats, which could be enhanced by further woodland planting and connections.



Existing priority habitats are the brighter colours – green is heathland and grassland, purple is good semi-improved grassland. The Moorland Line is edged in purple. The more extensive pale brown areas are zones defined for network enhancement and expansion and action to address fragmentation.

Clun Forest & Valley

This very rural area is perhaps more dependent on farming than any other part of the Shropshire Hills. 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 and its catchment is a focus for conservation activity, and people enjoy the heritage and tranquillity of this area.

The Clun Forest (the old name for the Clun uplands) and the Clun Valley are the most deeply rural part of the National Landscape 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 upper River Teme. Relative soft shale and siltstone rocks create a rolling, rounded 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 but could be improved for landscape and nature. Broadleaved woodlands are less common and tend to be small and on steeper slopes and gullies.

Just outside the National Landscape, a section of the River Clun close to its confluence with the Teme is designated a Special Area of Conservation for the rare freshwater pearl mussel, which is in serious decline. The River Clun 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 in the area 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 National Landscape to the north and south, with Craven Arms to the east.

The pattern of landholding here 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 lower level than elsewhere in the Shropshire Hills, although Clun and the 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 in the farming community, 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 National Landscape team has given support over many 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.

The National Landscape Team 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, landowning and community representatives.

Large scale poultry farming has been expanding and is now found further up in the catchment, prompting 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 planning aspects of the River Clun are discussed elsewhere in the Plan. 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.

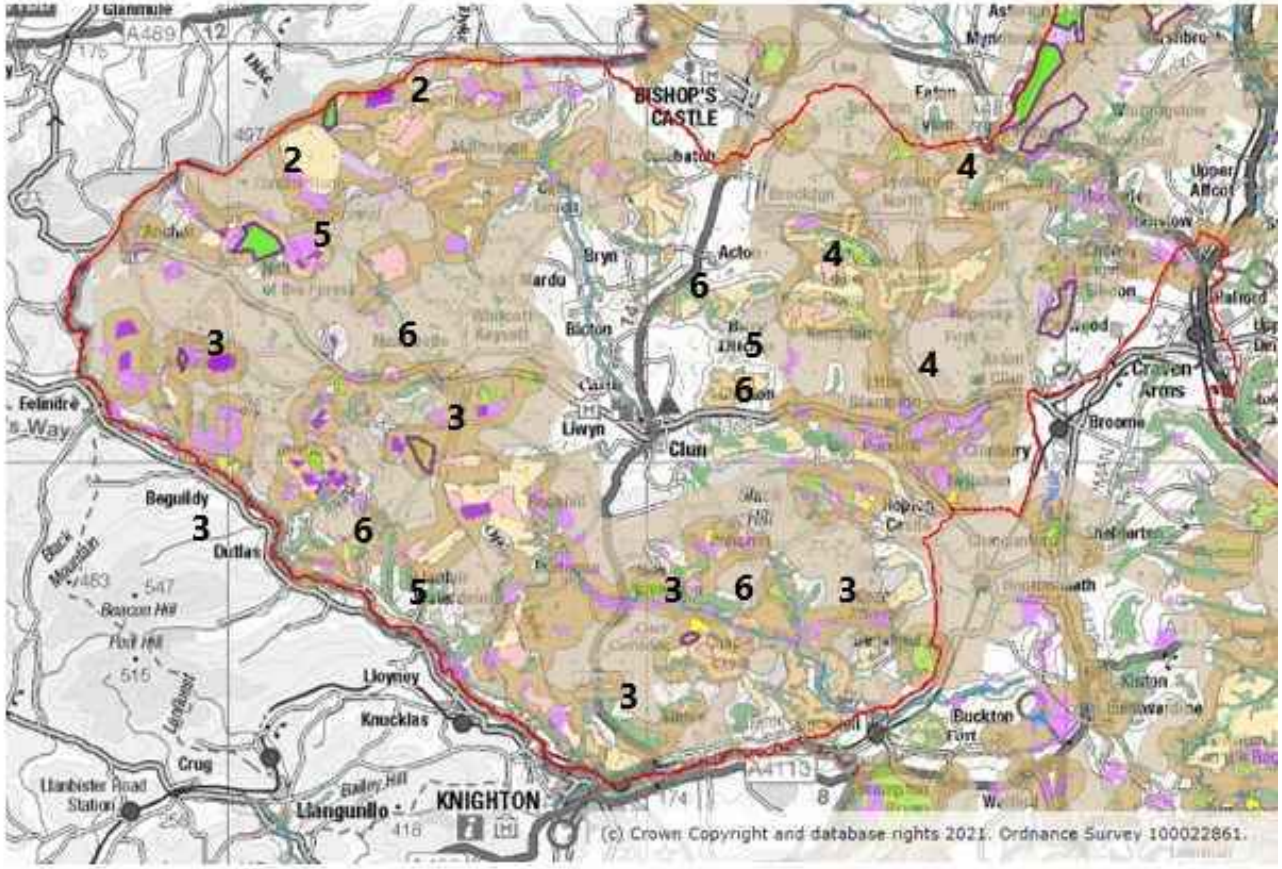
- The future of farming brings big challenges and issues which are not easily tackled. The continuation of livestock rearing and appropriate cropping are both important for the landscape. Initiatives to reach local markets have been used by some farmers, but the capacity of local markets may not be adequate 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.

Nature recovery network strengths and opportunities

Clun Valley

1. **Heathland and good quality grassland habitat is limited in extent and very fragmented** across the whole area. There are however **extensive areas of high ground** with improved grasslands which have potential to link the better patches in good habitat networks.
2. The **headwaters of the Folly Brook and the Unk** is the strongest area of upland habitat network, from Rhos Fiddle north-east towards the Kerry Ridgeway. Habitat restoration in the connecting areas would be a top priority.
3. The potential network of good upland habitat across **high ground south of the River Clun** extends for the full length of the valley from around Black Mountain through Llanfair Hill, Stowe Hill above the Teme and Black Hill to Hopton. The high ground and habitat network extends over the border into Wales.
4. A different network of **lowland habitats is obvious in the lower Clun valley and the Kemp valley** (Walcot to Clunbury). This connects in the north to the Onny Valley around Plowden.
5. This map and modelling undervalues the **river corridors** – the main River Clun and other tributaries and the River Teme SSSI are all important habitat network corridors, as well as the Redlake and Unk which are shown.
6. The **woodland networks** along the River Clun, Teme and Redlake are strong (also around Bury Ditches) and should be linked with more woodland creation.



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Clee Hills

This large part of the National Landscape 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 Shropshire Hills 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 Shropshire Hills.

The Clee Hills are a distinct area of upland 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.

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The Clee Hill Community Wildlife Group is well established. Clee Liberty common participated in the national 'Our Upland Commons' project and is now in Higher Level Stewardship. The Clee View Farmers Group has gained momentum in recent years and now covers a large area both within and beyond the National Landscape.

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.

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.

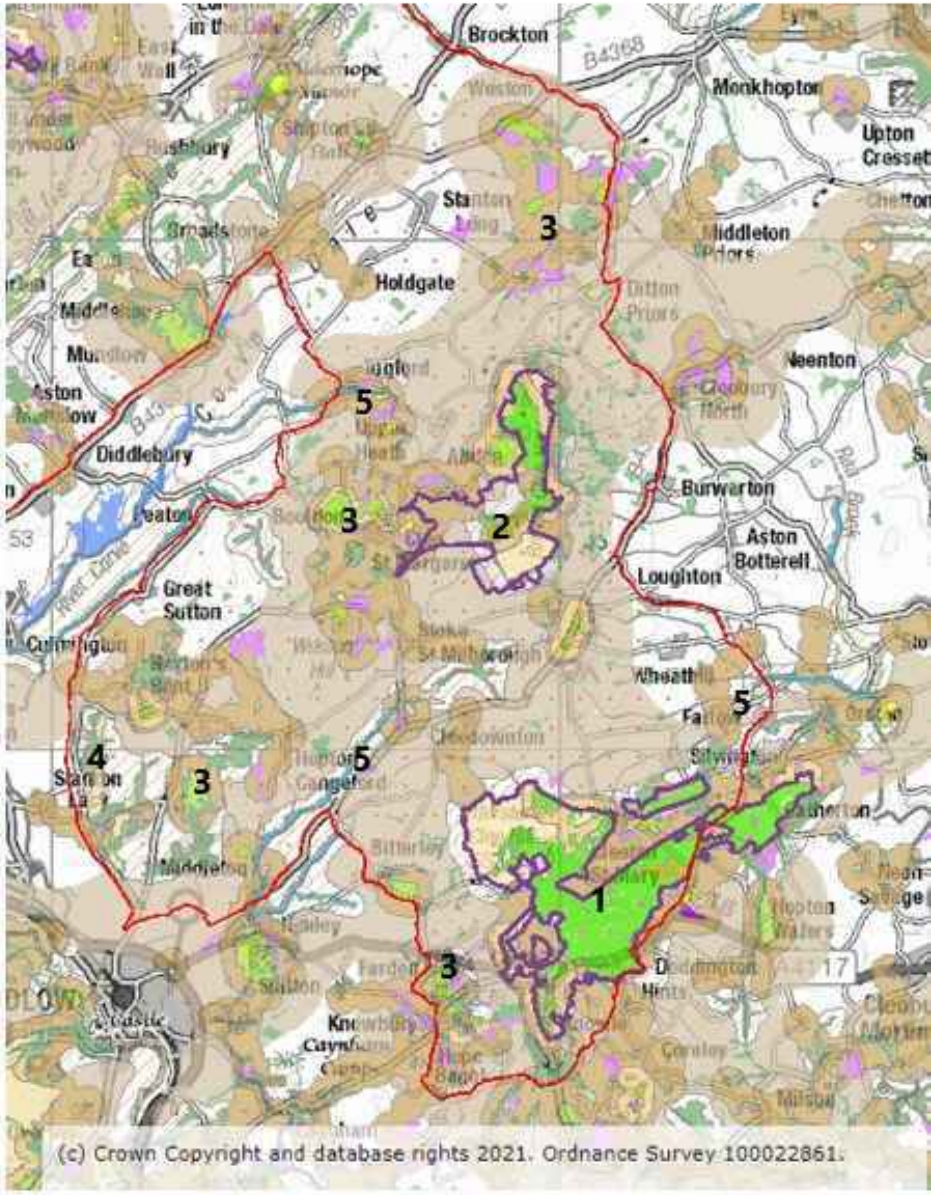
- Developing tourism sustainably will mean a small scale of developments in remoter locations, connecting to walking, cycling and horse riding opportunities. It should involve drawing on the potential of industrial archaeology and geological interest through improved interpretation. Patterns of anti-social 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.

Nature recovery network strengths and opportunities

Clee Hills

1. The **extensive upland heaths and grasslands of Titterstone Clee/ Clee Hill** are the strongest habitat network, extending east out of the National Landscape at Catherton Common. Improving condition of the core sites and habitat creation/ restoration around the margins would be a high priority.
2. The **upland heathlands and grasslands at Brown Clee** are also an important network, with similar priorities.
3. Other network potential areas shown are mostly based on good **lowland grassland habitats, and with woodlands interspersed**. Habitat creation in the connecting zones would be the priority, avoiding establishing any new woodland on good grassland habitat. There are further small hay meadows are scattered across this area which do not show at this scale.
4. The **western edge of the Clee plateau** has strong woodland networks which could be enhanced by further connecting planting.
5. The **stream corridors** are always important network elements, though in this part of the Shropshire Hills they are mostly small headwater streams.



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Wenlock Edge & Dales

More lowland in character than much of the Shropshire Hills, the Apedale and Corvedale either side of Wenlock Edge are relatively quiet and secluded. The National Trust own and manage 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 National Landscape 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

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 potential to impact the landscape quality of the area.

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

Some former quarry sites on Wenlock Edge have been re-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

- Sustainable farming activities here will include more measures for arable land such as field margins.
- The recently re-opened Acton Scott Heritage Farm has important potential for sustainable tourism and for traditional skills education.
- Improved off-road cycling provision along Wenlock Edge as a strategic route would be beneficial.

Nature recovery network strengths and opportunities
Wenlock Edge and Dales

1. The narrow but continuous **woodland along the steep face of Wenlock Edge** is one of the strongest habitat network features. Close around it are some valuable calcareous grasslands, with potential for more of these. New woodland planting should avoid sites with good potential as grassland habitat.

2. The **Stretton Hills** form the main area of upland habitats, extending south and east into more lowland grassland with woodland network areas.

3. The **south side of Wenlock Edge** has some well developed **wooded dingles** leading down to the Corve Dale, also with pockets of good grassland.

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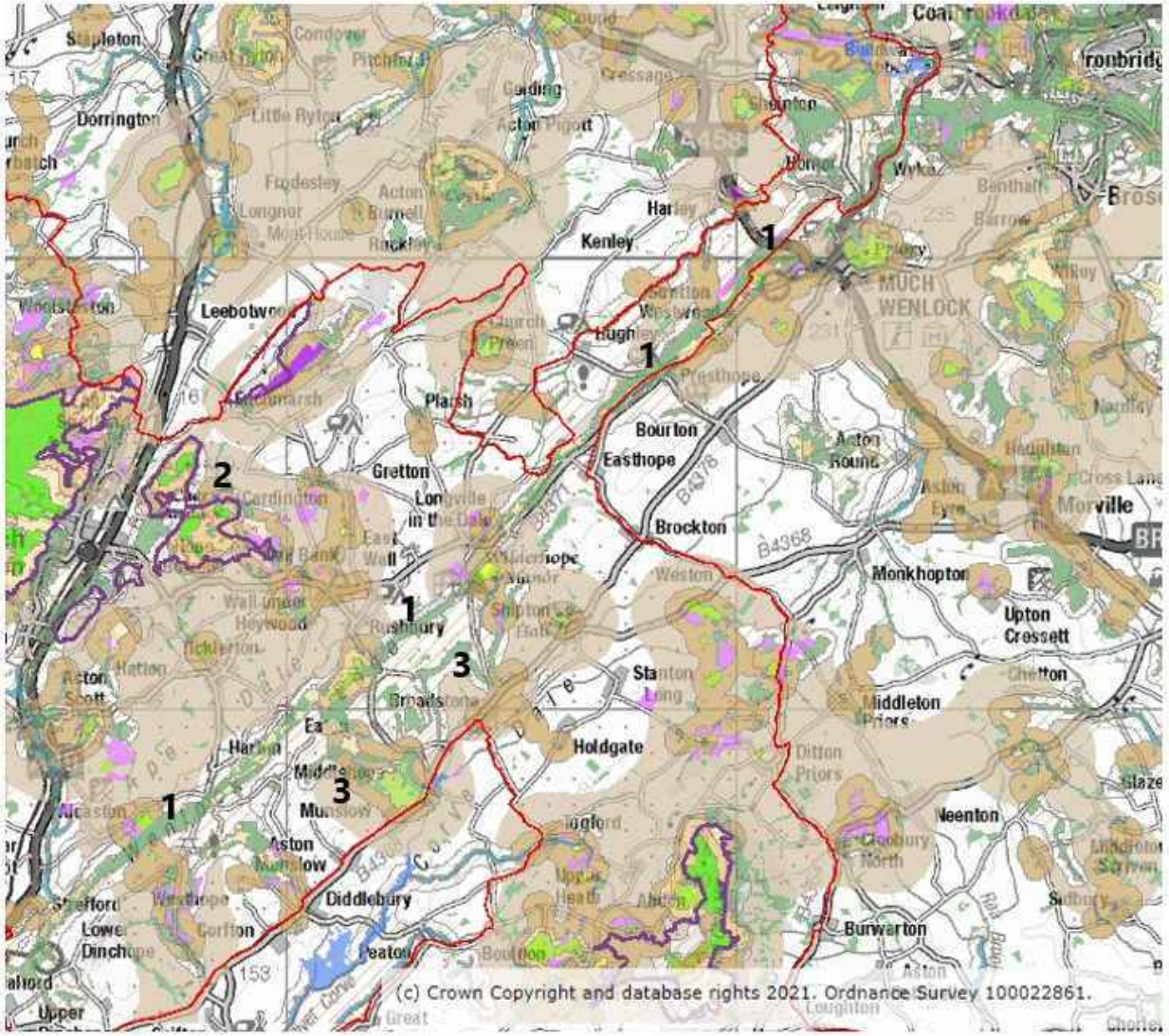

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The Wrekin

The Wrekin area is rich in geology, wildlife and views. Extending into the Telford & Wrekin Council area, it also has its own users, audiences and partners. The same principles of retaining and enhancing 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 Shropshire Hills.

The Wrekin is Shropshire's iconic hill, and being surrounded by lower ground, affords excellent views over much of the county and beyond. Lying on the urban fringe of Telford, with significant new development nearby it has 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 National Landscape 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 National Landscape. 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.

Issue 3 Sept 2025

Key Issues

The high level of recreational use of the Wrekin creates pressure, including unauthorised mountain biking as well as the volume of foot traffic. There is no real framework or adequate resources to manage this pressure, resulting in the landscape quality and visitors' experience being less than optimal.

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 resourcing, given its importance and scale of use. There is scope to further improve parking provision and visitor facilities at or in proximity to the Wrekin, managing pressures and strengthening the quality of recreational offer. These however need to be planned with sensitivity to the location and to visitor management issues and have a viable business model.

Telford & Wrekin Council have defined the Wrekin Forest (a wider area than that included in the National Landscape) as a 'Strategic Landscape' in their Local Plan, which gives it some additional recognition and protection.

The redevelopment of the former Ironbridge Power Station close to the National Landscape near Buildwas will be a big factor over the coming years. The implementation of development needs to be appropriate and sensitive to this location.

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Priorities

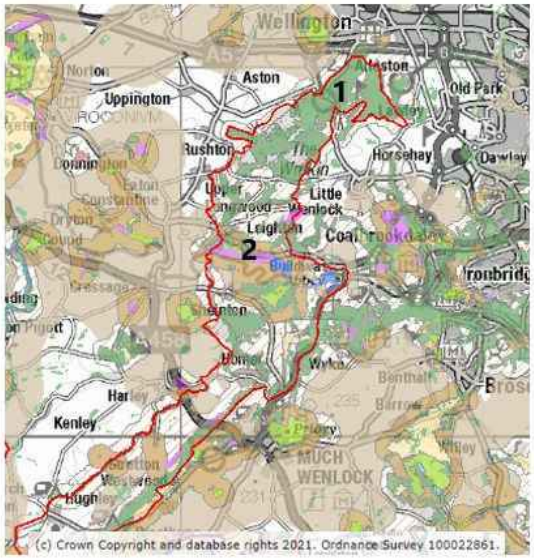
- Development on the eastern fringes of the Wrekin and near Ironbridge needs to respond to the distinctive character of the area.
- A stronger mechanism is desirable for managing the high environmental quality of the Wrekin area and its continued use by visitors. On the ground capacity to take practical action and engage with visitors is a key tool to maintain the quality of a well-used countryside site.
- Enjoyment of the Wrekin area's 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 National Landscape designation could be given a higher profile in the Wrekin area. Management of the Wrekin area should link in different directions to the wider Shropshire Hills, 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.

Nature recovery network strengths and opportunities

The Wrekin

1. The **Wrekin/Ercall** is a very strong woodland habitat network, linking with the more extensive woods of the Severn Valley.

2. The **River Severn** is an important river habitat corridor, though only a short length is within the National Landscape.



Delivery

The Plan is for the Shropshire Hills as an area and not for any single organisation. There is no single budget or programme for delivery, so the Plan seeks to influence, guide and suggest rather than setting out a defined schedule of actions which may not prove feasible.

This section sets out information and some priorities on:

- **Overall model for shared delivery**
- **Deliverers** – the wide range of organisations and actors that have a role
- **Funding** – from many potential sources
- **Partnership working** – structures, processes and culture which support delivery
- **Potential project themes** – suggested priority projects flowing from the earlier theme sections

Overall model for shared delivery

A wide range of organisations, as well as land managers, community groups and individuals, do things which deliver and support the vision of the Plan. They don't all do these things directly because of the National Landscape or because of the Plan. There is a complex overlay with the varied drivers and priorities of deliverers, including many synergies – especially with activities such as nature and heritage conservation, sustainable land management, promotion of outdoor recreation and management of visitor sites, and youth involvement.

The Plan and the processes that support it have potential to:

- maximise the **synergies** between others' priorities and those of the National Landscape,
- help to **co-ordinate activity** between partners and deliverers,
- provide a **'centre of gravity'** and focus which builds momentum,
- through understanding and dialogue, help **to minimise any conflicting directions** within partner activity, and encourage partners to adapt their activities where possible to achieve better benefits for the National Landscape.

This Plan for the first time applies the 'theory of change' approach, to help understand the processes and pathways to achieving the outcomes that the Plan seeks. We have not undertaken a full Theory of Change methodology, but the analysis on the following page has proved useful. It highlights the importance of the 'hearts and minds' link, and people's attachment to 'place' in motivating them to take action. **'Projects' and delivery often tend to focus on technical solutions, but their impact can be greater if at the same time, we are also trying to shift institutional and cultural norms, systems, and wider still to tap into or shift underlying values.** These broader or higher levels will be more effective for generating lasting and transformative change.

Analysis informed by Theory of Change

The Protected Landscape model – designation, structure etc

Recognition as a special place

Pride & connection

Political support

Greater knowledge and understanding of the landscape and issues

Support/ networks/ encouragement

Funding & resources

Partnership structure

Staff team capacity to convene/enable/deliver

Part of wider family/network

Opportunities for enjoyment

Opportunities to support and get involved

How is this implemented in practice?

Management Plan

Partners

Staff

Projects

Events

Communications

Charitable trust

Also through partners:

Grants

Advice & guidance

Demonstration sites

Volunteering opportunities

Regulation

Conservation ownership

Connection and Pride ('Hearts and minds')
plus **Inspiration**
plus **Support**
plus **Shared sense of ownership**
leads to
Motivation and Skills to act, e.g.

- Managing land differently
- Joining in group actions
- Behaviour choices
- Using economic power as consumers
- Advocating to others
- Action reinforces people's commitment

by

Stakeholders (who)

National Landscape Team, Partnership, & Trust

Key partner organisations (especially relevant authorities)

Land managers

Other partners

Community groups & organisations

Businesses

Individuals – residents, visitors

Outcomes:

More activity to support the landscape, nature, climate

Nature, climate, landscape & heritage in better condition

More people, further involved and with improved wellbeing

Stronger sense of community

Reduced conflict, more consensus

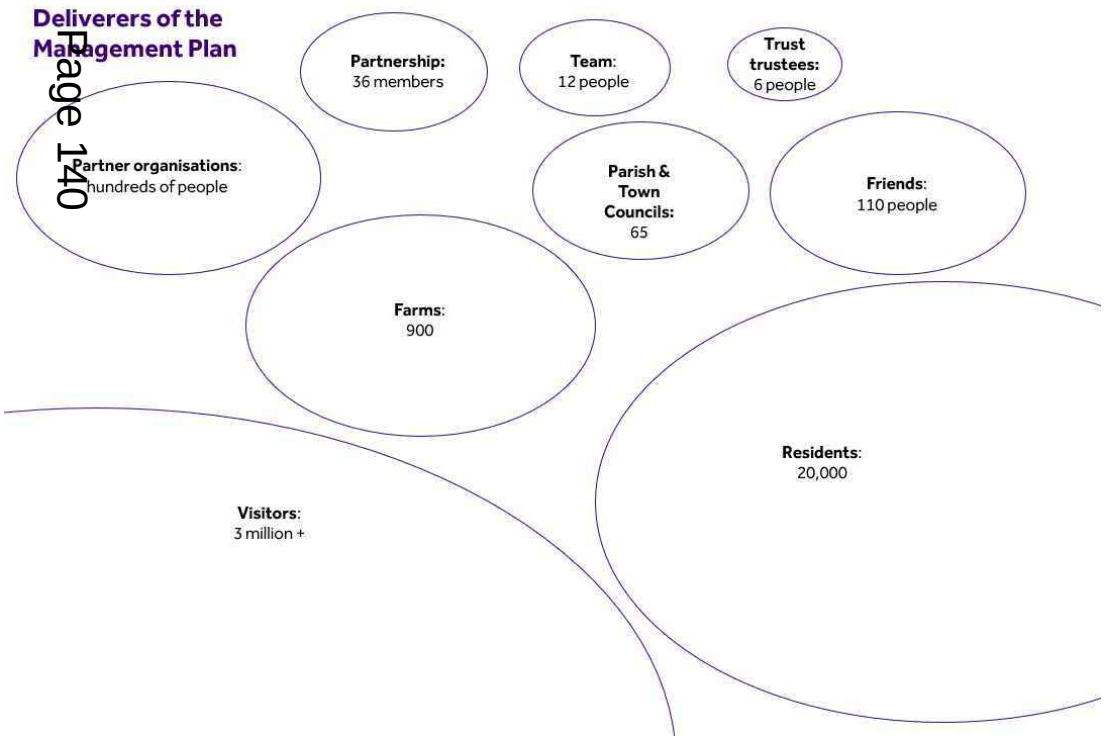
People alter environmental behaviours more generally

Protected landscapes influence the wider world – as models of sustainability

Deliverers

Public bodies have strong role and a duty to seek further the purpose of designation and the Plan helps guide how they can do that. The National Landscape Team are there to deliver some of the Plan's ambitions, but also to enable, support and animate others and provide a degree of coordination. The Team are only one part of delivery.

The dozens of organisations, 65 parish and town councils, the 900 farmers, hundreds of businesses, 20,000 residents and over 3 million visitors a year can all play their part, and this is key to upscaling activity in support of the National Landscape.



Relevant authorities (for the new duty to 'seek to further' the purpose)

Further detail on the duty is in Appendix 3.

Relevant authorities who are currently well engaged include:

- Shropshire Council
- Telford & Wrekin Council
- Forestry Commission
- Natural England
- Environment Agency
- Historic England
- Parish & Town Councils (variable engagement)

Relevant authorities currently not well engaged include:

- Statutory Undertakers – rail and utilities companies (water and sewerage such as Severn Trent, electricity, gas, telecommunications)
- National Highways
- Government departments
- Some departments of the Councils

Plus many other public bodies which are relevant authorities.

There is also a need to liaise with neighbouring local authorities such as Herefordshire and Powys Councils regarding cross-border issues.

Stakeholder delivery – priority actions

We can identify some key roles for certain organisations as follows:

Organisation/Stakeholder	Desired role and priority actions regarding the Shropshire Hills National Landscape
DEFRA	Update, broaden and strengthen legal purposes. Provide consistent funding. Operate ELM scheme.
Natural England	Responsible for SACs, NNRs and SSSIs. Operate Catchment Sensitive Farming initiative. Undertake enforcement roles appropriately.
All Relevant Authorities	Recognise the special qualities of the National Landscape, make it a priority area for action and different to other places.
Forestry Commission	Grants and regulatory roles for woodlands.
Environment Agency	Regulatory roles on rivers and pollution. River Basin and Catchment Management.
Historic England	Regulatory role for protected heritage features.
Town & Parish Councils	Use the Management Plan to inform Parish level plans and when considering planning applications. Implement local nature recovery actions. Celebrate being part of the National Landscape and help to raise awareness.
Conservation organisations	Recognise the special qualities of the National Landscape, and adapt activities to fit with the Plan.
Farmers, landowner and land management organisations	Use the Management Plan to guide land management, and development proposals, to align with the Plan's aims and deliver public benefits.
Tourism organisations and businesses	Support a sustainable or regenerative tourism ethic. Encourage contribution to conservation.
Developers, and infrastructure providers (including utilities) –	Use the Management Plan to guide development proposals, and to avoid adverse impacts, mitigate and where necessary compensate.

The local authorities have a very important role, across many topics:

Council department (generic description)	Role regarding the Shropshire Hills National Landscape
Planning	Protect the National Landscape against inappropriate development, encourage sustainable and compatible forms of development.
Outdoor Recreation	Manage and promote appropriate public access, and manage council countryside sites.
Policy & Environment	Specialist support e.g. on biodiversity, data, policy, management of trees and historic buildings.
Public Health & Biodiversity	Local Nature Recovery Strategy, nature and landscape protection through input to planning. Enforce Environmental Health and pollution standards, maintain standards in food and animal health.
Culture Leisure & Tourism	Raise awareness of and interpret the Shropshire Hills through Museums and cultural venues, websites and events. Support relevant training and skills.
Transport planning and public transport	Plan for sustainable transport, provide public transport, support active travel including walking and cycling.
Economic Development	Promote sustainable forms of development, including in tourism, farming and environmental technology.
Climate Change	Support climate mitigation and adaptation action within the Council and in the wider community of the county.
Communication	Support appropriate promotion of the National Landscape and raising awareness of special qualities.
Highways	Support sustainable transport policy, manage roads to sympathetic designs and standards.
Waste	Encourage sustainable behaviour and resource use, avoidance of flytipping.
Education	Encourage understanding, participation and enjoyment of the countryside.
Social care	Encourage wider participation and enjoyment of the countryside.
Legal & Democratic services	Support for legal requirements of the designation, administer aspects of Common Land.

Shropshire Hills National Landscape Team

The National Landscapes Association describes the roles of National Landscape Teams as to **Convene, Enable and Deliver.**

The Team is made up of currently 13 people, made up of core and project staff. Current key activities of the team include:

- Farming in Protected Landscapes programme
- Convening and supporting partnerships
- Ancient Woodlands restoration project
- Delivery of Defra capital funding
- Sustainable tourism delivery including Shuttles
- Clun headwaters
- Young Rangers and outreach work
- Strategic work and input to consultations
- Support to Shropshire Hills Landscape Trust
- Communications and engagement
- Collaboration locally and in wider networks

The Shropshire Hills Landscape Trust is a charity dedicated to promoting the conservation and enhancement of the of the Shropshire Hills and integral to the composite structures of the National Landscape. The majority of the Trust's work is achieved through the Conservation Fund, supported by the National Landscape Team. This is a small grant pot to support practical projects by community groups that help the Shropshire Hills to be a beautiful landscape where nature and people thrive together.

Priority areas for projects are:

- Conserving and enhancing the natural beauty, landscape, wildlife or heritage of the Shropshire Hills.
- Educational and awareness-raising activities relating to the area and its conservation, especially involving young people.

Funding

Government funding

In scale, agri-environment is the largest area of government funding in support of the National Landscape, though it is not directly linked to National Landscape structures. The transition to the ELM schemes has been difficult, and at the time of writing, farmer confidence is not high.

National Landscapes funding – Defra funding has in recent years been variable, with an uplift in core revenue funding in 2024-25 and then a reduction for 2025-26 back to the level of 2022-23, which with inflation is a significant real terms cut. Capital funding has been provided by Defra in recent years, which has enabled some good projects through partners. However the National Landscape team holds no assets to invest capital funding in directly. The late announcement of government funding, short periods of funding agreements, and short notice new programmes make forward planning very difficult and this is a key reason why a detailed implementation plan is not included in this Plan.

The Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme has been extended twice, into a fifth year (2025-26). This is very welcome, but the future of the programme is uncertain at the time of writing.

Defra have undertaken to develop a new formula for Protected Landscapes, and to improve overall funding for National Landscapes.

Major project funders

The National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF), is a significant fund, especially the large scale new 'Landscape Connections' programme offering projects with 8 years of delivery.

Green Finance

The National Landscape team have explored with the National Landscapes Association team potential theme areas for green finance relevant to the Shropshire Hills, including Peat, Wood & Trees, Water and Agriculture. This is an active area for further exploration. Green Finance may be used directly by landowners without involvement of the National Landscape team.

Partnership working

Partnership working includes the structures, processes and culture which support delivery. To support implementation of the Plan, the National Landscape structures and ways of partnership working are being modernised. This has been informed by good practice elsewhere, and by the stakeholder matrix below, to enable better engagement with high influence stakeholders, and at the same time to enable more people with high interest to get involved.

Matrix of stakeholders

Passionate and concerned without decision making power	Key decision-making or influential figures who are deeply interested
Not particularly interested nor hold any significant influence	Hold significant power but not engaged

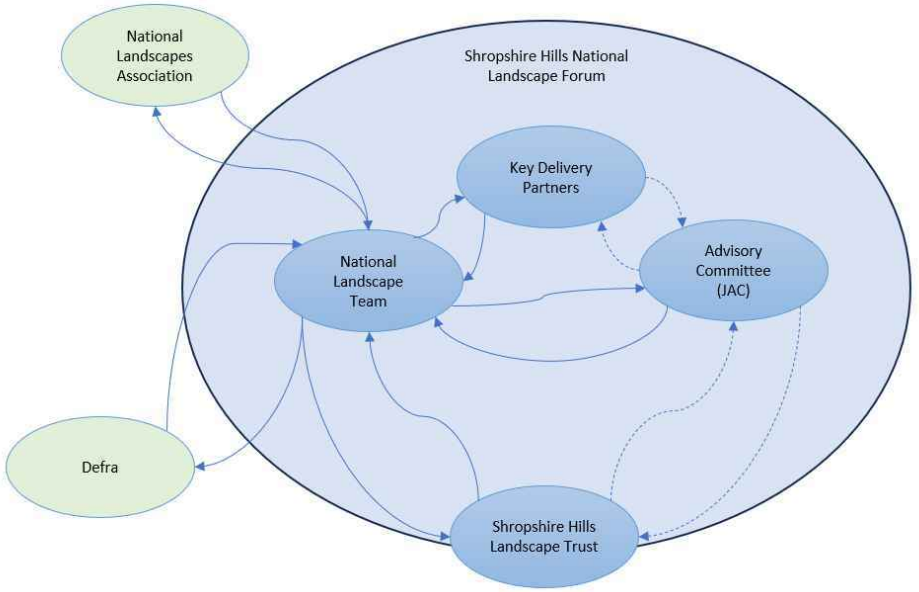
INTEREST

INFLUENCE

The changes being taken forward with the Plan include:

- More regular but flexible liaison with **Key Delivery Partners** (especially relevant authorities), supported by occasional Topic Groups.
- Creating a **broader and more informal Forum**, with meetings twice a year, to broaden engagement and explore topics. This style of group will be more inclusive and participative than the previous Partnership.
- Re-forming a smaller **Advisory Committee** to have advisory oversight of the team's work and advise the Councils where needed in relation to the National Landscape.

The Shropshire Hills National Landscape has a composite structure, with no legal entity organisation. The new structure can be represented as:



Effective partnership processes include understanding the nested systems of organisations and people, and their key nodes and flows. From this can be judged where to have the best input. Partnerships with other organisations may need to be formalised in appropriate ways. Reporting of partner activity supporting the Plan will be encouraged.

The culture of partnership working comes from things such as:

- Listening and respecting other viewpoints
- Taking the time to develop relationships
- Being sensitive to cultural differences and power dynamics
- Understanding the motivators and drivers for other partners
- Considering whose voices aren't being heard
- Good communication, honesty and assertiveness
- Being willing to adapt our own activities
- Working for mutual benefit
- Collaborating not competing

Appropriate values will be encouraged in partnership work.

Potential project areas

Ideas for potential new projects arising from the Recommendations and Aspirations are identified here (which could be led by any variety of organisation and in partnership with any combination of partners).

Good projects will often address a number of the plan themes at once e.g. nature, climate and people, rather than just nature. Note that not all actions are 'projects' – ongoing routine activities are still very important and the Policies can guide how many of these can best be done.

The following list is exploratory and not exhaustive.

Potential project	Main themes addressed					
	Nature	Climate	Water	Land	People	Place
Shropshire Hills Landscape Connections (project under NLHF funding stream, in early stages of development)	x	x	x	x	x	x
Significant project for the Teme Headwaters focusing on re-naturalising hydrology	x	x	x	x	x	
Landscape Recovery project(s)	x	x	x	x	x	x
Development of farmer clusters and a local network for these	x	x	x	x	x	x
Restoration of deep peat areas	x	x	x			
Targeted projects to bring priority nature sites into good condition	x	X	x	x		
Targeted habitat creation, enhancing the nature recovery network and contributing to 30x30 targets	x	x	x	x		
Agroforestry, wood pasture and trees outside woods	x	x	x	x	x	x
Structured and enhanced support for parish level nature recovery activity	x				x	x
Control of invasive non-native species	x		x	x		
Exploration of Green Finance and trial projects	x	x	x	x		
Further controlled release of beavers in selected carefully managed sites	x		x			
Ongoing targeted work on curlew conservation	x					
Expansion of farm carbon audits		x		x	x	
Community-led renewable energy project		x			x	x
Further production and use of biochar	x	x	x	x		
Expansion of natural flood management	x	x	x	x		
Further work on soil carbon, sequestration and storage, expanding knowledge and disseminating	x	x	x	x		
Soil protection, erosion risk mapping	x	x	x	x		
Further work on highways including sustainable drainage and road verges	x		x	x		x
Expansion of demonstration farms	x	x	x	x	x	
Co-ordinated deer management to benefit woodlands	x	x		x		

Potential project	Main themes addressed					
	Nature	Climate	Water	Land	People	Place
Support for citizen science, such as monitoring and recording	x		x		x	x
Volunteer maintenance and monitoring of historic monuments				x	x	x
Targeted projects to bring priority heritage sites into good condition					x	x
A competition or awards scheme to support National Landscape priorities e.g. good quality development, land management, tourism businesses	x	x	x	x	x	X
New multi-user access routes					x	X
Arts projects for engagement	x	x			x	X
More youth activities	x	x			x	x
Awareness raising on low carbon activities and lifestyles		x			x	
Promote and maintain a network of the best geological sites				x	x	x
Scheme to encourage visitors and tourism businesses to donate towards conservation projects	x				x	x
Support to tourism businesses to develop regenerative approaches	x	x	x	x	x	x
Dark Skies project raising awareness of light pollution					x	x

Potential project	Main themes addressed					
	Nature	Climate	Water	Land	People	Place
Expanded delivery of Climate Fresk and carbon literacy training and support to local climate groups		x			x	
Developing and publicising recreation opportunities using public transport					x	x
Events for the public celebrating nature, heritage and cultural heritage	x			x	x	x
Structured interpretation improvements at key visitor sites	x	x	x	x	x	x
Integrated conservation, heritage and visitor management in the Wrekin area.	x	x	x	x	x	x
Local food – promotion and linking producers with outlets				x	x	
Projects trialling alternative economic models	x	x	x	x	x	x
More delivery of access for all physical improvements					x	x
Social prescribing for outdoor activities					x	x
Targeted new engagement and opportunities for outdoor and nature experiences for under-represented groups, both residents and visitors.					x	x
Developing and promoting new opportunities for active travel and recreational walking and cycling					x	x
Revitalising green and built public spaces in villages and towns	x	x		x	x	x

Monitoring

This section relates to monitoring of **condition** of the Shropshire Hills – the state of the National Landscape and trends in this, through data and indicators. This relates to the **outcomes** of activity, but at a landscape level, data often only show net trends, which can include pressures pushing the wrong way, e.g. hedgerows planted and others lost.

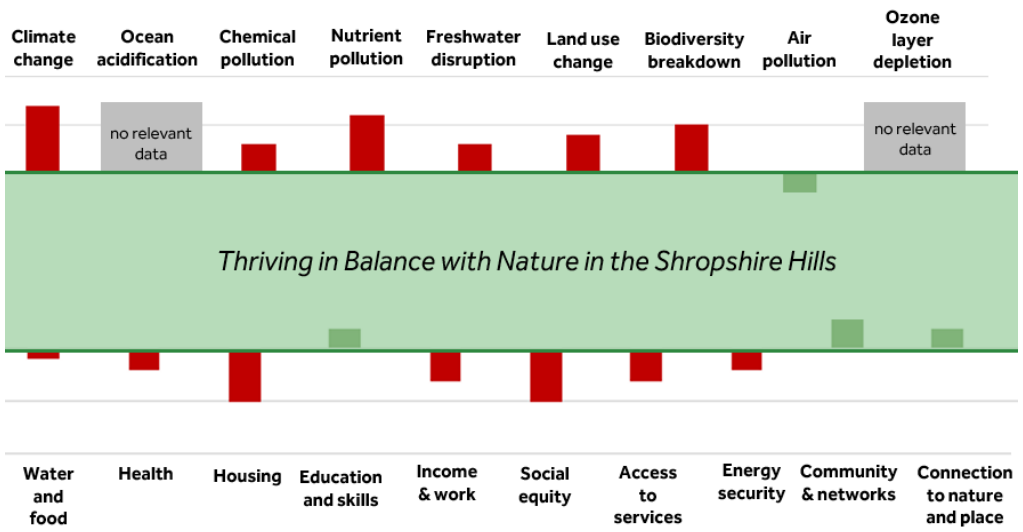
This will be principally led by the **Targets and Outcomes Framework**, which focuses on environmental targets. While online data, mapping tools etc continue to improve, the capacity of public sector bodies to work with data and monitoring has decreased, and this includes the National Landscape team. Water is notably absent from the Framework, and the **% of watercourses in good ecological status** is a useful indicator also to follow, for which data is available. A suite of 55 headline indicators are included in the beginning of the State of the Shropshire Hills report.

There is a tension between what is measurable (and for which data exists) and what is important. The Sustainable Tourism Strategy set out measures or indicators of sustainability, focusing on what matters rather than being driven by data availability:

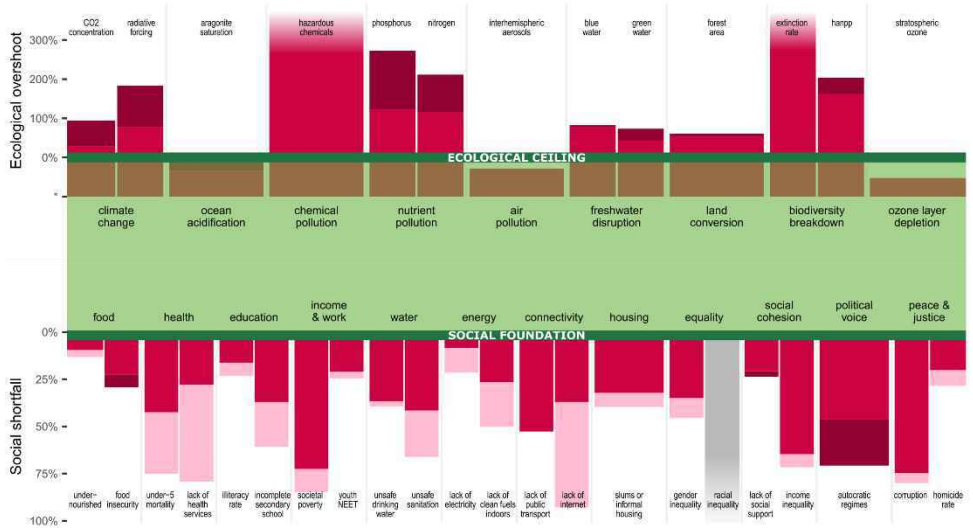
- Carbon emissions from travel to and within the area.
- Carbon emissions from tourism businesses e.g. energy use, footprint of food, drink and products.
- Negative environmental impacts from tourism e.g. path erosion, wildlife disturbance, loss of tranquillity, harm to water environment.
- Financial support for conservation and nature recovery through tourism and visitors.
- Proportion of sustainable and local food and drink used by visitors.
- Degree of social inclusion of tourism and among visitors.
- Social benefits, and avoidance of harm, to local communities from tourism.
- Improved health, wellbeing, learning and connectedness to nature among visitors.
- Degree to which visitors show or develop pro-environmental behaviours.
- Adaptation to climate change (e.g. repairs plus improvements to infrastructure).
- Inclusive governance and partnership.

This approach requires us then to see what we, with partners, can discern or discover about these factors.

The version of the Doughnut unrolled methodology used in this Plan is similar, focusing on what is important, using data where available and complementing this with informed assessment. It is intended to develop the Doughnut unrolled dashboard below as a monitoring tool for the Plan:



This is in line with the 2025 development of the global Doughnut unrolled, shown below, which shows **trends** through the shading of the colour bars (pink shows an improvement and crimson shows a deterioration):



Appendices

1. The Landscapes Review (the Glover Review)

The government commissioned in 2018 an independent review into whether the protections for National Parks and AONBs were still fit for purpose, and what might be done better. The Review Panel was chaired by Julian Glover, who visited the Shropshire Hills in January 2019 as part of the Panel's evidence gathering. The Landscapes Review final report was published in September 2019, and its effects have been working through during the last Plan period. Among the review's 27 recommendations were strengthening AONBs, with updated legal purposes, more powers and doubled core funding.

The government ran a consultation from January 2022 in response to the Landscapes Review, with promising interest in a range of improvements. On 29th November 2023 the government published the outcome of the consultation, with disappointing news of those of the Review's recommendations which were not being enacted. This stage effectively brought to a close the 'once in a generation' process of the Landscapes Review, and uptake by government of the review's recommendations had been partial. A step change was possibly achieved for National Landscapes, but not such a big step as had been hoped for. Subsequent developments including the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme have helped raise further the funding, role and profile of National Landscape teams.

There are some areas which were highlighted in the Review which Defra has indicated it is still interested in progressing, including:

- Work on a new funding formula for protected landscapes (National Landscapes and National Parks)
- Update and potential expansion of legal purposes of designation
- Potential for statutory consultee status in planning (though the legalities of this are not easy as most National Landscape bodies are not legal entities).

2. Rebranding as National Landscapes

Rebranding to National Landscapes, as part of a range of measures to update and strengthen the AONB designation, was proposed in the Glover Review report of 2019. This recognised the longstanding problems with the awkward and inaccessible AONB acronym, and the very long full name. Rebranding was taken forward by Defra and the National Association for AONBs, including consultations with various stakeholders. New branding proposals were developed over a year or so, informed by work with AONB staff teams, partners, government, businesses, farmers and people from communities who are under-represented as visitors to the areas. As well as a brand strategy and communication guidelines, the work involved developing a new identity for the NAAONB as the 'National Landscapes Association', and for the family of National Landscapes, both collectively and individually. New logos for each National Landscape were designed as part of a coherent set, taking inspiration and cues from photographs and information supplied by the teams on the special characteristics of each area.

The rebranding was launched successfully in November 2023. It is much more than a cosmetic change of logos, but marks a new era for these areas as National Landscapes, with a greater focus on nature recovery, on appealing to wider audiences and being a stronger, more coherent national network.

The wording in the legislation remains 'area of outstanding natural beauty' and there may be some occasions where use of these words in addition is a useful clarifier. However, government have fully embraced the National Landscape name in both Defra publications and in planning policy such as the National Planning Policy Framework. Since one aim of rebranding was to get rid of an acronym which was a barrier to understanding, the use of new acronyms such as NL or SHNL is not encouraged.

3. Legal framework for National Landscapes, including strengthened legal duty on public bodies

The **primary purpose** of the designation is '**to conserve and enhance natural beauty**'. The **1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act** first established the 'area of outstanding natural beauty' designation and this statutory purpose. The Act provided these areas with protection under planning law against inappropriate development and gave **local authorities general powers to take action in support of the purpose** (which remain in place). Government have published guidance on the designation and management of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Natural beauty goes well beyond scenic or aesthetic value. The natural beauty of a National Landscape 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.

The Landscapes Review recommended updating and extending the purposes of designation to encompass aspects such as nature recovery, cultural heritage and social inclusion. This was not taken up in the government's response to the Review, but in December 2024 the new government committed to bringing forward primary legislation to update the purposes of designation of protected landscapes. The broad view taken by this Plan therefore represents the direction of travel.

Countryside Commission guidance of 1991 defined **secondary purposes** for areas of outstanding natural beauty. These do not carry the same weight but have not been removed or updated so they are still relevant:

- *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** (CRoW Act) was a significant step forward and added additional legal responsibilities:

- **a statutory duty on local authorities 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 a National Landscape 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 areas of outstanding natural beauty when coming to any decisions or carrying out activities relating to or affecting land within these areas. The CRoW Act defines relevant authorities as:
  - Government Ministers,
  - Public bodies, include local authorities, Parish and Town councils, amongst others.
  - Statutory undertakers include rail and utilities companies (water and sewerage, electricity, gas, telecommunications).
  - Any persons holding a public office - including Elected Members.

The **Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023** (LURA)strengthened for English National Landscapes the S85 statutory duty from 'have regard' to the purpose, to 'seek to further' the purpose:

> ***85.— General duty of public bodies etc.***
> *(A1) In exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in an area of outstanding natural beauty in England, a relevant authority other than a devolved Welsh authority* ***must seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty*** *of the area of outstanding natural beauty.*
> *(1A) The Secretary of State may by regulations make provision about how a relevant authority is to comply with the duty under subsection (A1) (including provision about things that the authority may, must or must not do to comply with the duty).*

This is a very significant change. Government guidance has been published on the new duty in December 2024 and further regulations through statutory instrument are expected on this. The guidance is considered to be weaker than similar provisions in legislation on duties for public bodies e.g. on equality. In particular, the consideration of what is 'reasonable and proportionate' is down to the relevant authority itself to determine, which undermines accountability and strength of the duty. Additional guidance for relevant authorities on the new duty has been published by the National Landscapes Association.

The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 also enables the Secretary of State by regulations to make provision:

- Requiring a National Landscape **Management Plan to contribute to the meeting of Environment Acts targets** and setting out how (Section 90 (2A))
- Requiring a **relevant authority to contribute to the preparation, implementation or review of the Management Plan** and setting out how (Section 90A).

These regulations have not yet been prepared. The requirement for relevant authorities to contribute to the implementation of a National Landscape Management Plan is new, and could be a significant positive change. Previously the statutory duty only extended to preparing and reviewing the Plan, which was an obvious loophole.

4. 30 by 30 and Environmental Improvement Plan targets

The government have committed to protecting 30% of the UK's land by 2030, which is target 3 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. The ultimate goal of this is to halt and reverse the steep decline of biodiversity worldwide, an outcome based on seeking a transformative change in the way humans manage our shared planet. The Global Biodiversity Framework is articulated as a step towards the objective of "people living in harmony with nature" by 2050. The Government's Environmental Improvement Plan 2023 sets out the approach to delivering 30 by 30 on land in England by:

1. Strengthening: ensuring effective policy and statutory safeguards and powers are in place to improve management for nature, preventing degradation and ensuring appropriate access for people.
2. Extending and creating: designating new protected areas and restoring or creating wildlife rich habitat outside of these
3. Investing: investing in habitat restoration across our protected areas and beyond.

In October 2024 Defra published criteria that land needs to meet to contribute towards 30by30 in England. These focus on 3 themes:

Purpose - demonstrate that their purposes or management objectives will ensure the delivery of in-situ conservation outcomes.

Protection - demonstrate that in-situ conservation will be sustained over the long term (at least 20 years)

Management - be effectively managed and able to demonstrate overall progress towards in-situ conservation outcomes.

5. International context

National Landscapes are recognised by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) as 'Category V Protected Landscapes, 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.'*

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, pioneering integrated countryside management based on voluntary partnerships engaging and working with local communities to secure common goals.

The Shropshire Hills is a member of the EUROPARC Federation which provides a forum to share experience, collaborate and progress common aims among protected areas in 40 countries. The Shropshire Hills participates in a number of EUROPARC programmes including the Sustainable Tourism Charter and Young Rangers. The Shropshire Hills is also active in the EUROPARC Atlantic Isles section.

National Landscapes are within a grouping of Landscape, Regional and Nature Parks (as distinct from National Parks), of which there are around 900 across Europe, with slightly different models in different countries.

6. Shropshire Hills National Landscape structures – the Team, the Trust, advisory oversight and partnership

The Shropshire Hills National Landscape Team currently comprises 12 staff, employed by Shropshire Council to work for the purpose of the National Landscape and the aims of the Management Plan. The team are core funded by Defra with contributions from the two local authorities. As well as direct delivery, the team act as 'animators' – facilitating, advising, and supporting action by a wide range of partners.

The Shropshire Hills National Landscape Partnership was, up to the end of 2025, the joint advisory committee structure established by Shropshire Council and Telford and Wrekin Council to prepare and oversee delivery of the management plan for the National Landscape.

With the formal approval of this Plan will go approval by the two Councils of a new smaller **Advisory Committee** which will scrutinise and advise on work of the Team. Along with a new broad and more informal **Forum** to engage wider stakeholders, and new working arrangements for collaboration with **Key Delivery Partners**, the new structure will strengthen governance and partnership working for the National Landscape.

The Shropshire Hills Landscape Trust is a charity formed in 2016, dedicated to promoting the conservation and enhancement of the of the Shropshire Hills National Landscape. The Trust works in a collaborative and complementary way with the Team to raise money and distribute it, mainly through the Conservation Fund, a small grant pot to support practical projects by local groups.

7. National Landscapes Association

The National Landscapes Association is a charity which supports the UK's network of National Landscapes to help them to be as effective as possible. Its Vision is **"Beautiful landscapes where nature and people thrive together"**.

The Association has defined its purpose as to lead and champion activity, in partnership with National Landscapes, to protect and restore the UK's most outstanding landscapes and make sure everyone can enjoy them.

The summary page of the Association's current strategy is shown below.

8. The Plan review process

The Plan cycle was delayed by one year to bring it into the 2025-2030 cycle, at the suggestion of Defra in a ministerial letter of July 2022. A review statement was published in July 2023 confirming the one year delay, identifying new issues and clarifying that the previous Plan would remain valid until 2025 when this new one is in place.

The process followed as far as possible the draft Management Planning guidance from Natural England, though in some places this was felt to be over-complex. Government published Management Plan guidance in June 2025, when this Plan was already fully drafted and out for public consultation. A scoping stage involved gathering data, and information on community views through a public survey carried out during 2024. The Plan review was brought to every meeting of the Partnership through 2023 and 2024, which proved very useful for sense checking. The Sustainability Appraisal process has been carried out alongside as detailed below. A meeting of a new key partner delivery group was held in January 2024.

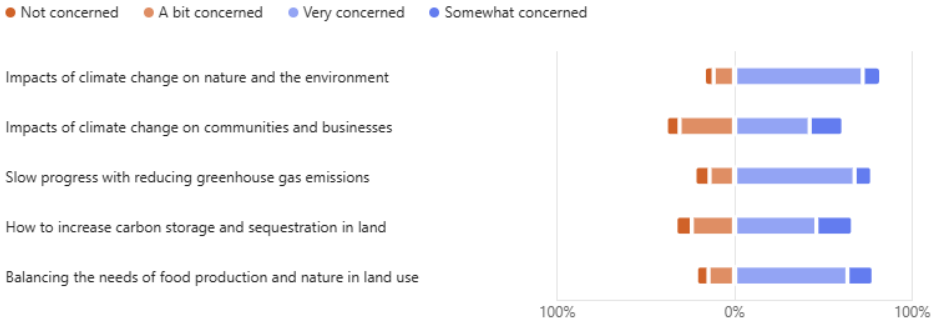
The main review stage involved looking at existing policies and plan content, creating a new vision and new topic sections. Two meetings of topic groups were held in July 2024 – for 'Landscape, Natural Beauty and Land Management' and for 'Planning'.

General inputs to Plan review process

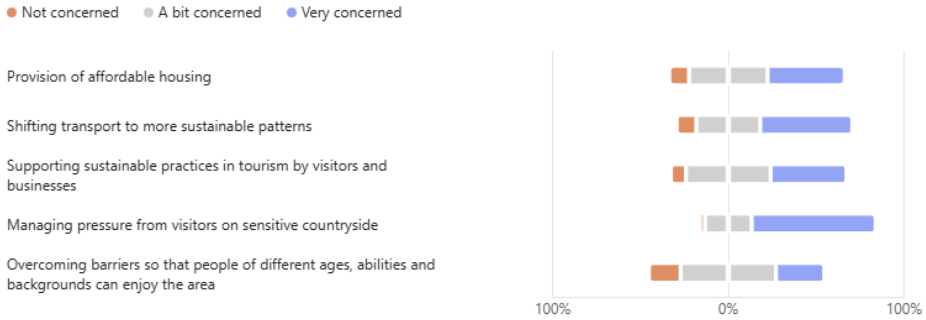
During drafting a number of people have had input into sections and provided comments. An external contractor (Cragattak, who also completed the State of the Shropshire Hills report) undertook an independent critical review of the draft Plan. All of these inputs have been very useful.

Answers to how concerned people are on various topics:

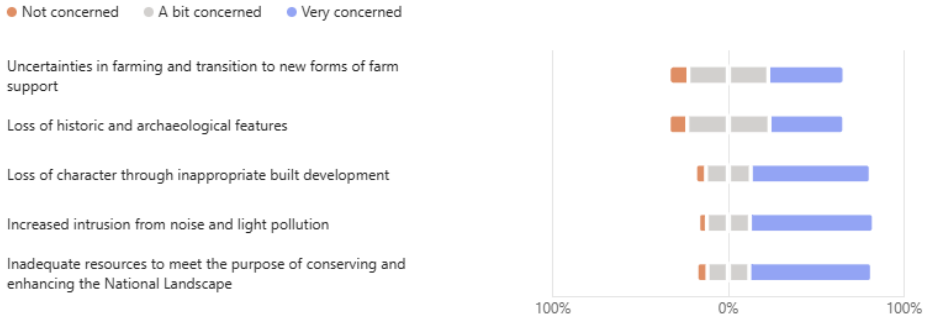
Climate



People



Place



Consultation

After a delay due to the local government elections, the public consultation period for the Plan ran from mid-May to mid-August 2025. Significant efforts were made to engage people with the Plan - a 2 minute audio introduction was produced and the Summer Forum event on 5th June acted as a launch of the draft Plan with 85 people in attendance. A 20 minute presentation on the Plan was given by members of the Team to around 10 groups reaching several hundred people. This included four online sessions with 'key delivery partners'. The presentation was also made available on YouTube. An online questionnaire was opened, along with a new web page communicating the Vision and main themes of the Plan. A workshop was held on Doughnut Economics and regenerative approaches on 24th July which was a useful addition to the consultation process. A face to face meeting was held with representatives of the NFU and Glee View Farmers Group. An informal consultation was held with the Young Rangers group.

In making changes to the draft Plan, the balance of all the comments received were considered. Some partner organisations were involved in further discussions on the matters raised.

9. Supporting documents and processes

Documents relating to the following mandatory processes supporting the Management Plan are available here.

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, while also going further, to assess the Plan against economic and social aims. The process is based on Natural England's guidance and the practice of local authorities on sustainability appraisal for Local Plans.

The Scoping Report was published in December 2024 and includes a review of current policies and strategies affecting the Plan.

The Sustainability Appraisal report and non-technical summary were published in August 2025 to complement the draft Management Plan and some useful feedback was received from consultees.

The report identified ways in which areas of potential conflict identified might be resolved, including:

- The policies of the Management Plan are **generally strong for overall sustainability** as well as conserving and enhancing natural beauty, and there are many more positive interactions between issues than negative ones. The National Landscape and processes supporting it, including the Management Plan, are an important means to navigate some of the key issues for the area towards a sustainable future.
- It remains important to **demonstrate the positive economic effects of the environment and of looking after it**.
- A robust system is required to **ensure that affordable housing can be provided to meet social needs**, but in keeping with the high quality landscape.

- We need to be **willing to embrace landscape change which is positive ecologically**.
- There is rightly an increased urgency to tackling climate change and reducing greenhouse gas emissions to net zero . There is a **need to plan for 'just transition'** where sections of society could be disproportionately affected by changes.
- The relative lack of detailed guidance for **renewable energy** means that decisions will probably continue to turn on case by case merits. All means of reducing carbon emissions need to be actively promoted, including energy conservation, carbon management in soils, biomass and small scale renewables.
- **Both climate change mitigation and adaptation are needed**. Despite overwhelming scientific evidence there is still work to do to convince some people that the current unprecedented changes to climate are human-induced and that action on emissions by the UK is worthwhile since every country must act if there is to be a global solution.
- To avoid any potential tension between nature-based solutions for climate mitigation and nature recovery, the **climate and ecological crises need to be addressed together by integrated measures.**
- As a rural area, many people are very **dependent on transport by private car and some people are very constrained in travel opportunities and choices by cost**. Influencing patterns of behaviour on private car use will be a long-term process and will require significant investment and commitment to alternatives. There is evidence of the economic and social value of reducing transport, and the level of homeworking is increasing.

Habitats Regulations Assessment

The Habitats Regulations require assessment of the Plan's proposals against any Natura 2000 sites. The only site protected under the Habitats Regulations within the National Landscape is the Stiperstones and the Hollies SAC. Just outside the National Landscape boundary, and clearly affected by activities within it, is the River Clun SAC. Slightly further outside the boundary is Downton Gorge SAC. The HRA Scoping report assesses the Plan against these three sites.

The assessment concluded that the proposal can be screened out from further stages of assessment because significant effects are unlikely to occur, either alone or in combination with other 'plans'. On the basis of the information provided, Natural England concurred with this view.

Shropshire Hills National Landscape

Prepared and published,
with grateful thanks for the input and support of many people and partners,
by the Shropshire Hills National Landscape Team

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Appendix B to Shropshire Council Cabinet report *"Approval of Shropshire Hills National Landscape Management Plan 2025-30 and new Shropshire Hills National Landscape Advisory Committee Terms of Reference"*

Terms of Reference – Shropshire Hills National Landscape Advisory Committee

Status

The Committee will have 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").

Purpose of the Committee

To provide advisory oversight and scrutiny of the work of the Shropshire Hills National Landscape Team and of the local delivery system for the National Landscape designation more generally. The Advisory Committee members will act as advocates for the Shropshire Hills National Landscape, representing its interests at appropriate local and national levels.

Values

The Advisory Committee will support values that reflect and support the purposes of the designation, engage people, promote accountability, reduce fragmentation and reflect the complex relationships and interdependencies of the National Landscape. These include:

- Reflective and reflexive awareness as individuals and a group.
- Developing relationships, respect and active listening.
- Honesty, assertiveness and positive challenge.
- Co-creation, collaboration and building consensus to support holistic outcomes.
- Valuing diversity and being sensitive to cultural differences.
- Considering whose voices are not heard.

Roles and responsibilities of the Committee:

The Committee will provide scrutiny and advisory oversight of:

- Work of the National Landscape Team, including strategic direction and monitoring progress with the annual Team work programme, providing guidance and making recommendations to optimise the effectiveness and performance of the Team.
- Budgets, accounts and the deployment of resources at the disposal of the Shropshire Hills National Landscape Team.
- Implementation (by all parties) of the National Landscape Management Plan, and monitoring progress in achieving its vision, policies and recommendations.
- Fulfilment by defined relevant authorities of their legal duty to 'seek to further the purpose' of designation.

The Committee will champion the interests of, and vision for, the Shropshire Hills National Landscape, as contained in the statutory Management Plan, and promote a coherent and strong identity for the area.

Membership

Membership of the Committee will consist of a maximum of 12 people comprising the following:

- Two elected Members and one officer appointed by Shropshire Council (elected member representatives should be relevant portfolio holders or local ward members);
- One elected member and one officer appointed by Telford and Wrekin Council (the elected member representative should be a relevant portfolio holder, hold a relevant role in the Council, or be a local ward member);
- Seven members appointed based on skills relevant to the work of the Committee. These will be defined in the appointment process for the Committee and may include: understanding of protected landscape issues, strategic planning and financial management appropriate to the scale of work of the National Landscape Team, knowledge of the public sector and multi-sector partnerships, understanding of both delivery and influencing roles, ambassadorial qualities. People appointed to these seven seats could be organisation representatives, individuals, or elected members of parish or town councils.

Though the make-up of the Committee is intended to encompass a range of interests, it is intended that all members 'represent' principally the collective interests of the Shropshire Hills National Landscape rather than representing certain organisations or interest groups.

The Committee may assign certain members to advise on particular topics to provide additional support to the Chair and National Landscape Team Manager. If assigned, the scope and responsibilities for any such roles will be defined in writing.

Members will be encouraged to undergo relevant training and development in the Committee role, which could include public policy awareness, understanding governance and media skills. Participation in the network of the National Landscapes Association is also encouraged.

Appointment process

The two local authorities will appoint to their allocated member and officer seats through their own processes.

The National Landscape Team will operate an application process for the remaining seats. The process will be transparent and non-discriminatory. Appointments will normally be for three years, but at creation two seats will be appointed for one year and two seats for two years to create a stagger to avoid too much turnover at one time in future. Members may apply again but may only serve a maximum of three consecutive terms.

Appointments will be made by a Panel consisting of the appointed Councillors, the current Chair, and the National Landscape Team Manager. (This is in line with the principle that the Committee is not an independent entity, it is a joint advisory committee to the two Councils, who therefore play the principal role in appointing its members).

Appointment of applicants will be based on the following criteria:

- Resident or working in the Shropshire Hills National Landscape or very nearby;

- Proven commitment to National Landscape purposes and relevant areas of interest;
- Relevant knowledge and experience;
- Ability to make a valuable contribution to the Committee based on the skills defined.

Procedure of meetings

All parties recognise that the Committee 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.

The Committee will normally meet three times per year. Additional meetings may be called (or cancelled) as necessary by the Chair.

The Committee 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 in this role for more than three consecutive terms (i.e. six years maximum).

Two Vice Chair posts will also be elected biennially by the Committee, 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 Committee member.

Nominations for Chair and Vice Chairs will be invited in advance of the meeting at which the elections take place. Role Descriptions for the Chair and Vice Chair positions will be made available for guidance.

The Chair will also act as Chair for the wider Forum group, and may on occasions need to make public statements of position on behalf of the Advisory Committee.

Declaration of interests

Members of the Committee 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.

Councillor members of the Committee shall, when acting as a member of the Committee, comply with the code of conduct of their local authority.

Non-Councillor members of the Committee shall, when acting as a member of the Committee, comply with the code of conduct of Shropshire Council.

In the event of conduct or alleged conduct of a member which is not consistent with the Committee's Terms of Reference, every effort will be made to resolve the issue by informal negotiation. The Committee may however resolve to withdraw membership, or, in the case of a Councillor, resolve to ask the relevant Council to provide a different representative.

Relationship to other groups

The Committee will operate in collaboration with the new wider Forum, Key Delivery Partner working arrangements, the Shropshire Hills Landscape Trust (registered charity) and the National Landscape staff team. The Advisory Committee will have the most formal structure and legal status of the groups, and will provide an important advisory governance 'anchor' to the broader combined structure for the National Landscape. All of the groups will have valuable input into the Management Plan review process.

Members of the Committee will automatically be members of the Shropshire Hills National Landscape Forum and encouraged to participate actively in the Forum.

Shropshire Council
Equality, Social Inclusion and Health Impact Assessment (ESHIA)
Stage One Screening Record 2026

Please note that part A and part B of this document should be completed.

A. Summary Sheet on Accountability and Actions

Name of proposed service change
Approval of Shropshire Hills National Landscape Management Plan 2025-30 and new Shropshire Hills National Landscape Advisory Committee Terms of Reference

Name of the officer carrying out the screening
Phil Holden, Shropshire Hills National Landscape Team Manager

Decision, review, and monitoring

Decision	**Yes**	**No**
Initial (Stage One) ESHIA Only?	✓	
Proceed to Stage Two Full ESHIA or HIA (part two) Report?		✓

If completion of a Stage One screening assessment is an appropriate and proportionate action at this stage, please use the boxes above, and complete both part A and part B of of this template. If a Full or Stage Two report is required, please move on to full report stage once you have completed this initial screening assessment as a record of the considerations which you have given to this matter.

Assessment of likely neutral, negative impact or positive impact of the service change in terms of equality and social inclusion considerations
The statutory Shropshire Hills National Landscape Management Plan 2025-30 is going forward for formal approval by Cabinet. The plan is delivered in partnership, and so also presented for approval are new Terms of Reference for a re-formed Joint Advisory Committee for the National Landscape. The Plan's Vision is that: • **Nature** is restored and natural processes regenerated, • **Climate** is stabilised through decarbonising, and we are resilient to change, • **Land** is nurtured so it can sustain us, • **Water** is clean, and its flows and cycles support our lives, and all life, • **People** are healthy and connected to nature – in vibrant communities and as welcome visitors, • The Shropshire Hills are valued and cared for as a special **Place**.

Policies, recommendations and actions (for a wide variety of implementers) are put forward in the Plan under each of these headings. Diversity and Inclusion is a strong theme within the Plan and proposals build on recent good practice and initiatives in the Shropshire Hills and within the National Landscapes network. The National Landscape team employed by the Council exists to support and advise others as well as for direct delivery.

Some parts of society do experience barriers to accessing and enjoying the high quality landscape of the Shropshire Hills and efforts are being made to overcome these where possible. These efforts are being made in partnership with other organisations, as the Plan does not solely relate to Shropshire Council services.

At this stocktake moment, the initial assessment of likely equality and social inclusion impacts of the Management Plan is for these to be positive for people across all nine Protected Characteristics as set out in the Equality Act 2010, as well as for people in our additional local groupings of Carers, Social Inclusion, and Young People Leaving Care. The anticipation is also that impacts would be neutral to low positive for people in the grouping set out in the Armed Forces Act 2023, ie veterans and serving members of the armed forces and their families.

There is potential for the impacts to move from neutral to low positive to low to medium positive, where partnership efforts may achieve positive outcomes for those in the groupings of Age and Disability, particularly people with neurodiverse conditions or sight or hearing loss. This would draw upon good practice around use of signage and wayfaring materials, and link with related policy work across the Council around accessing the built and natural environment.

Assessment of likely neutral, negative or positive impact of the service change in terms of health and wellbeing considerations

The Plan contributes importantly to people's physical and mental health and wellbeing, acting as a preventative measure to improve people's quality of life and to save money on services to address problems that would otherwise arise or be worse. This links in to joined-up approaches across Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin, including through the Integrated Community Services, around the positive impacts and the likely increase in walking/hiking and physical/mental benefits.

The Plan will have positive implications for health, but delivery depends on a wide range of partners, it is not just for particular Council services. The National Landscape team act mainly in an advocacy role regarding access to nature with health benefits, but do make some small scale direct provision. The Plan supports continuation of this, but it is very funding dependent. The operation of the Advisory Committee itself has no identified implications for health.

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

In recruitment for the new Advisory Committee a high priority will be given to equality, diversity and inclusion. In this advisory function of the Committee, a broad range of perspectives and lived experiences will help ensure the best delivery by the team and advice to the Councils. The recruitment materials and processes are being prepared to help ensure that some new audiences are reached and hopefully some people from previously under-served groups may participate. We have had advice on this from the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Lead for the Protected Landscapes Partnership (through Natural England).

The Council is already working with the Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin ICS at national level, with the University of Leicester and with Cornwall Council and Natural England, to co-produce a national policy briefing paper during 2026 on anti racism actions in the countryside and develop case studies and associated materials for wider use.

This follows a University of Leicester research report* around rural racism in the countryside, which identified myths including that “minoritised communities have no respect for or affinity with the countryside”, that “racism in the countryside is a figment of people’s imagination”, that “there are no genuine barriers to accessing the countryside” and that “forming Black and Muslim walking groups is unnecessary and divisive”.
(“The rural racism project: towards an inclusive countryside”).*

Through this high profile work, building upon recommendations including the need to make rural spaces welcoming and accessible, there is potential for the impacts for people in the groupings of Race and of Religion and Belief to move from neutral to low positive to low to medium positive, serving to strengthen overall outcomes in the Management Plan for everyone.

The Council and partners will also build upon positive work through Shropshire Archives and through awareness raising about our diverse communities and their long historical associations with and contributions to the countryside, e.g. Gypsy Roam and Traveller Communities and e.g. Black gardeners and botanists in Shropshire.

Progress with Management Plan activity will be monitored through reporting at the meetings of the Advisory Committee and Forum, 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 through the national Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework. The Framework includes a section of metrics on ‘Access for All’.

Associated ESHIAs

A previous impact assessment was carried out in 2019 for the Shropshire Hills AONB Management Plan 2019-24 and Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership Terms of Reference.

Related impact assessments have also been carried out for Acton Scott Historic Working Farm, Cultural Strategy work, Leisure Services, the Shropshire Great Outdoors Strategy, and the Shropshire Museums Strategy.

Reference may also usefully be made to the screening impact assessments carried out in relation to the various stages of the Local Plan Partial Review and the Council's Economic Growth Strategy.

Assessment of likely neutral, negative or positive impact, and actions to review and monitor overall impacts, with regard to climate change impacts and with regard to economic and societal impacts

Climate change

Climate change is one of the six core topics of the Plan and runs right through it. The Climate section of the Plan includes content on reducing greenhouse gas emissions, carbon storage and sequestration, adaptation, renewable energy, attitudes and behaviour change, just transition, and nature-based solutions. The National Landscape team is very active on the topic of climate change and at the forefront of knowledge on carbon storage and sequestration in land, soil and vegetation. The connections of climate change to the Plan relate much less to the Council's corporate carbon footprint and more to influencing the footprint of the whole county. This is valuable as this aspect has received less attention by the Council.

The Plan also has important content on climate change adaptation. Protected landscapes have provided input collectively to the Government's National Adaptation Programme, and content in the Plan draws on this work. At present the Council centrally has not undertaken Adaptation risk assessment or planning, and content in the Plan should be of assistance to this process, which is a legal requirement.

Economic and societal/wider community

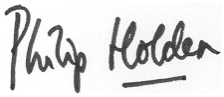
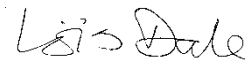
The high quality landscape of the Shropshire Hills National Landscape supports the economy of Shropshire and people's wellbeing. Care and stewardship of the landscape, guided and supported by the Management Plan, is good for the prosperity of Shropshire.

It also contributes importantly to people's physical and mental health and wellbeing, acting as a preventative measure to improve people's quality of life and to save money on services to address problems that would otherwise arise or be worse.

Impacts for communities will potentially also be themselves enhanced through complementary actions around local transport planning.

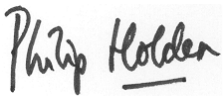
Where possible and appropriate, this could involve action to support and inform the priorities of the Local Transport Plan 4 on matters pertaining to access to, and promotion of the National Landscape.

Scrutiny at Stage One screening stage

People involved	Signatures	Date
Lead officer for the proposed service change **Phil Holden** Shropshire Hills National Landscape Team Manager		8th January 2026
Officer carrying out the screening **Phil Holden** Shropshire Hills National Landscape Team Manager		8th January 2026
*External support** **Mrs Lois Dale** *Senior Insights and Research EDI Specialist* **Phil Northfield** *Public Health Integration & Inequalities Officer*	 	7th January 2026 8th January 2026

This refers to support external to the service and within the Council, e.g., the Senior Insights and Research EDI specialist, the Integration & Inequalities Officer – Public Health, other Insights and Research or Public Health colleagues, the Feedback and Insight Team, Climate Change specialists, etc.

Sign off at Stage One screening stage

Name	Signatures	Date
Lead officer's name **Phil Holden** Shropshire Hills National Landscape Team Manager		8th January 2026

Service manager's name		12/01/2026

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

B. Detailed Screening Assessment

Aims of the service change and description
The statutory Shropshire Hills National Landscape Management Plan 2025-30 is going forward to Cabinet for formal approval. The plan is delivered in partnership, and so also presented for approval are new Terms of Reference for a re-formed Joint Advisory Committee for the National Landscape. A Management Plan for the Shropshire Hills National Landscape is required every five years under the Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000. The new Plan has been prepared over the last two years by the National Landscape Team and Partnership, and the draft Plan was out for public consultation between mid-May and mid-July. The National Landscape covers 23% of Shropshire and also extends into Telford & Wrekin, whose Council must also approve the Plan. The Plan is for the area and not for any particular organisation. It sets out policies, recommendations and aspirations to guide a wide variety of stakeholder organisations and individuals. Implementation is through a large range of mechanisms, and there is no single budget or programme for delivery of the Plan. The Shropshire Hills National Landscape Team is hosted by Shropshire Council but majority funded by DEFRA. The Team have an important role to support delivery of the Plan, but have roles to animate, facilitate and co-ordinate partner activity in addition to direct delivery. Following a review during 2025 to modernise partnership structures, Terms of Reference have been drawn up and consulted on for a new Joint Advisory Committee of 12 members. The new Advisory Committee will include representatives appointed by Shropshire Council and Telford & Wrekin Council, plus open seats appointed through an application process. The Committee will provide scrutiny and advisory oversight of work of the National Landscape Team and provide advice to the two local authorities in relation to the National Landscape as necessary. The Committee will operate in close co-ordination with other partnership arrangements for the National Landscape, including collaboration arrangements with key delivery partner organisations (including those with a statutory duty) and a new Shropshire Hills Forum. The Forum will engage a wide and inclusive range of stakeholders, including all Ward Councillors, Parish & Town Councils, community groups and individuals, in a flexible and more informal format. The new structure will provide stronger governance as well as targeted collaboration and broader general engagement.

Intended audiences and target groups for the service change
The Shropshire Hills National Landscape is a nationally recognised asset, so stakeholders include the public nationally and visitors from all parts including abroad, as well obviously as Shropshire residents and especially those who live and work in the Shropshire Hills. A wide variety of organisations have an interest in the National Landscape, and many of these are represented on the Partnership through which the Plan was prepared. The Plan is relevant to a range of service areas across the two local authorities – including countryside and environment, economic development, education and community, highways, leisure and culture, planning, public health and public protection, and public health.

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 'State of the Shropshire Hills report was commissioned from consultants, and its findings have informed the Plan.

Specific consultation and engagement with intended audiences and target groups for the service change
A scoping stage involved gathering data, and information on community views through a public survey carried out during 2024. The Plan review was brought to every meeting of the Partnership through 2023 and 2024, which proved very useful for sense checking. The Sustainability Appraisal process has been carried out alongside as detailed below. A meeting of a new key partner delivery group was held in January 2024. The main review stage involved looking at existing policies and plan content, creating a new vision and new topic sections. Two meetings of topic groups were held in July 2024 – for 'Landscape, Natural Beauty and Land Management' and for 'Planning'. After a delay due to the local government elections, the public consultation period for the Plan ran from mid-May to mid-August 2025. Significant efforts were made to engage people with the Plan - a 2 minute audio introduction was produced and the Summer Forum event on 5th June acted as a launch of the draft Plan with 85 people in attendance. A 20 minute presentation on the Plan was given by members of the Team to around 10 groups reaching several hundred people. This included four online sessions with 'key delivery partners'. The presentation was also made available on YouTube. An online questionnaire was opened, along with

a new web page communicating the Vision and main themes of the Plan. A workshop was held on Doughnut Economics and regenerative approaches on 24th July which was a useful addition to the consultation process. A face to face meeting was held with representatives of the NFU and Clee View Farmers Group. An informal consultation was held with the Young Rangers group.

In making changes to the draft Plan, the balance of all the comments received were considered. Some partner organisations were involved in further discussions on the matters raised.

Initial equality impact assessment by grouping (Initial health impact assessment is included below this table)

Please rate the impact that you perceive the service change is likely to have for a grouping, through stating this in the relevant column, including if it is anticipated to be neutral (no impact).

Please also record in here your headline rationale for the ratings you have given.

Protected Characteristic groupings and other groupings locally identified in Shropshire	**High negative impact** *Stage Two ESHIA required*	**High positive impact** *Stage One ESHIA required*	**Medium positive or negative impact** *Stage One ESHIA required*	**Low positive, negative, or neutral impact (please specify)** *Stage One ESHIA required*
Age (please include children, young people, young carers, young people leaving care, people of working age, older people. Some people may belong to more than one group e.g., a child or young person for whom there are safeguarding concerns e.g., an older person with a disability)			✓low to medium positive	
Disability (please include cancer; HIV/AIDS; learning disabilities; mental health conditions and syndromes; multiple sclerosis; neurodiverse conditions such as autism; hidden disabilities such as Crohn's disease; physical and/or sensory disabilities or impairments)			✓low to medium positive	
Gender re-assignment (please include associated aspects: safety, caring responsibility, potential for bullying and harassment)				✓neutral to low positive

Marriage and Civil Partnership (please include associated aspects: caring responsibility, potential for bullying and harassment)				✓neutral to low positive
Pregnancy and Maternity (please include associated aspects: safety, caring responsibility, potential for bullying and harassment)				✓neutral to low positive
Race (please include ethnicity, nationality, culture, language, Gypsy, Roma, Traveller)			✓low to medium positive through partnership efforts	
Religion or Belief (please include Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, Judaism, Nonconformists; Rastafarianism; Shinto, Sikhism, Taoism, Veganism, Zoroastrianism, and any others)			✓low to medium positive through partnership efforts	
Sex (please include associated aspects: safety, caring responsibility, potential for bullying and harassment)				✓neutral to low positive
Sexual Orientation (please include associated aspects: safety; caring responsibility; potential for bullying and harassment)				✓neutral to low positive
Other: Social Inclusion (please include households in poverty or on low incomes; people for whom there are safeguarding concerns; people you consider to be vulnerable; people with health inequalities; refugees and asylum seekers; rough sleepers and those at risk of homelessness; and rural communities)			✓low to medium positive	
Other: Carers (please include families and friends with caring responsibilities)				✓neutral to low positive
Other: Veterans and serving members of the armed forces and their families (as per Armed Forces Act 2023)				✓neutral to low positive

Other: Young people leaving care				✓neutral to low positive

Initial health and wellbeing impact assessment by category

Please rate the impact that you perceive the service change is likely to have with regard to health and wellbeing, through stating this in the relevant column, including if it is anticipated to be neutral (no impact).
Please also record in here your headline rationale for the ratings you have given.

Health and wellbeing: individuals and communities in Shropshire	**High negative impact** *Part Two HIA required*	**High positive impact**	**Medium positive or negative impact**	**Low positive negative or neutral impact (please specify)**
Will the proposal have a *direct impact* on an individual's health, mental health and wellbeing? For example, would it cause ill health, affecting social inclusion, independence and participation? .				Neutral
Will the proposal *indirectly impact* an individual's ability to improve their own health and wellbeing? For example, will it affect their ability to be physically active, choose healthy food, reduce drinking and smoking? .				Yes. Helping to maintain a high-quality environment in the Shropshire Hills and giving people access to this. Availability of green space is well evidenced to support mental wellbeing.
Will the policy have a *direct impact* on the community - social, economic and environmental living				Support for active travel, climate change

conditions that would impact health? For example, would it affect housing, transport, child development, education, employment opportunities, availability of green space or climate change mitigation? .				mitigation, connection to nature. Provision of free opportunities to exercise and improve both physical and mental wellbeing.
Will there be a likely change in *demand* for or access to health and social care services? For example: Primary Care, Hospital Care, Community Services, Mental Health, Local Authority services including Social Services? .				No

Initial health equity assessment	
For the following categories, please complete with the expected impacts of this service change on wider inequalities, not just those that are health-related (whether positive, negative, or neutral) – include any additional information you feel is pertinent or useful. **Consider and record which you can control, which you can influence, and which may be out of your control**.	
Which population groups/demographics will face health impacts as a result of this change (if any)? • Socio-Economically Deprived • Geographic Deprivation (inc. Rurality) – *if so, where?* • Inclusion Health & Vulnerable Groups[1] • Other	All parts of society may benefit.
What mitigations/enhancements are already in place, or what mitigations/enhancements do you plan to include for the foreseeable consequences of these changes?	There are no negative impacts so no mitigation needed. Enhancing the benefits depends on good delivery of the Plan, which rests with a wide range of partners.

1- *Inclusion health is an umbrella term used to describe people who are socially excluded, who typically experience multiple overlapping risk factors for poor health, such as poverty, violence, and complex trauma. This includes people who experience homelessness, drug and alcohol dependence, vulnerable migrants, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, sex workers, people in contact with the justice system and victims of modern slavery. Health impacts for this wide grouping will therefore potentially be the same as those recorded under the Social Inclusion category in the equality impact table.*

Guidance Notes

1. 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. By way of illustration, some local authorities focus more overtly upon human rights; some include safeguarding. It is about what is considered to be needed in a local authority's area, in line with local factors such as demography and strategic objectives as well as with the national legislative imperatives.

Carrying out these impact assessments 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.

These screening assessments for any proposed service change go to Cabinet as part of the committee report, or occasionally direct to Full Council, unless they are ones to do with Licensing, in which case they go to Strategic Licensing Committee.

Service areas would ordinarily carry out a screening assessment, or Stage 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.

These screening assessments are recommended to be undertaken at timely points in the development and implementation of the proposed service change.

For example, a Stage One ESHIA would be a recommended course of action before a consultation. This would draw upon the evidence available at that time, and identify the target audiences, and assess at that initial stage what the likely impact of the service change could be across the national Protected Characteristic groupings and our additional local categories. This ESHIA would set out intended actions to engage with the groupings, particularly those who are historically less likely to engage in public consultation eg young people, as otherwise we would not know their specific needs.

A second Stage One ESHIA would then be carried out after the consultation, to say what the feedback was, to set out changes proposed as a result of the feedback, and to say where responses were low and what the plans are to engage with groupings who did not really respond. This ESHIA would also draw more upon actions to review impacts in order to mitigate the negative and accentuate the positive.

Meeting our Public Sector Equality Duty through carrying out these ESHIAs is very much about using them as an opportunity to demonstrate ongoing engagement

across groupings and to thus visibly show we are taking what is called ‘due regard’ of the needs of people in Protected Characteristic groupings.

If the screening indicates that there are likely to be high negative impacts for groupings within the community, the service area would need to take advice on whether or not to carry out a full report, or Stage Two assessment. This is resource intensive but will enable more evidence to be collected that will help the service area to reach an informed opinion.

In practice, Stage Two or Full Screening Assessments have only been recommended twice since 2014, as the ongoing mitigation of negative equality impacts should serve to keep them below the threshold for triggering a Full Screening Assessment. The expectation is that Full Screening Assessments in regard to Health Impacts may occasionally need to be undertaken, but this would be very much the exception rather than the rule.

2. Council Wide and Service Area Policy and Practice on Equality, Social Inclusion and Health

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, Social Inclusion and Health Impact Assessments (ESHIAs) come in. Where you carry out an ESHIA 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 or to Strategic Licensing Committee.
- What target groups and audiences you have worked with to date.
- What actions will you take in order to mitigate any likely negative impact upon a group or groupings, and enhance any likely positive effects for a group or groupings; and
- What actions you are planning to monitor and 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.

There are nine Protected Characteristic groupings defined in the Equality Act 2010. The full list of groupings is: Age; Disability; Gender Reassignment; Marriage and Civil Partnership; Pregnancy and Maternity; Race; Religion or Belief; Sex; and Sexual Orientation.

There is also intersectionality between these. Eg a young person with a disability would be in the groupings of Age and Disability, and if they described themselves as having a faith they would then also be in the grouping of Religion or Belief. 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.

For the individuals and groupings who may be affected, ask yourself what impact do you think is likely and what actions will you currently anticipate taking, to mitigate or enhance likely impact of the service change? If you are reducing a service, for example, there may be further use you could make of awareness raising through social media and other channels to reach more people who may be affected.

Social inclusion is then a wider additional local category we use in Shropshire, in order to help us to go beyond the equality legislation in also considering impacts for individuals and households with regard to the circumstances in which they may find themselves across their life stages. This could be households on low incomes, or households facing challenges in accessing services, such as households in rural areas, or people that we might consider to be vulnerable, such as refugee families or rough sleepers.

Please note that veterans and serving members of the armed forces and their families are a grouping to whom we are required to give due regard under Armed Forces legislation, although in practice we have been doing so for a number of years now.

We also identify two further distinct separate local groupings due to their circumstances: care leavers, as vulnerable individuals, and carers, due to the support they give and the support they need.

When you are not carrying out an ESHIA, you still need to demonstrate and record 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 ESHIA, 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.

Carry out an ESHIA:

- If you are building or reconfiguring a building.
- If you are planning to reduce or remove or reconfigure 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

Carry out and record your 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 that 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, we need to demonstrate a community leadership approach

3. Council wide and service area policy and practice on health and wellbeing

This is an area to record within our overall assessments of impacts, for which we ask service area leads to consider health and wellbeing impacts, and to look at these in the context of direct and indirect impacts for individuals and for communities.

A better understanding across the Council of these impacts will also better enable the Public Health colleagues to prioritise activities to reduce health inequalities in ways that are evidence based and that link effectively with equality impact considerations and climate change mitigation.

Health in All Policies – Health Impact Assessment

Health in All Policies is an upstream approach for health and wellbeing promotion and prevention, and to reduce health inequalities. The Health Impact Assessment (HIA) is the supporting mechanism

- Health Impact Assessment (HIA) is the technical name for a process that considers the wider effects of local policies, strategies and initiatives and how they, in turn, may affect people's health and wellbeing.
- Health Impact Assessment is a means of assessing both the positive and negative health impacts of a policy. It is also a means of developing good evidence-based policy and strategy using a structured process to review the impact.
- A Health Impact Assessment seeks to determine how to maximise health benefits and reduce health inequalities. It identifies any unintended health consequences. These consequences may support policy and strategy or may lead to suggestions for improvements.
- An agreed framework will set out a clear pathway through which a policy or strategy can be assessed and impacts with outcomes identified. It also sets out the support mechanisms for maximising health benefits.

The embedding of a Health in All Policies approach will support Shropshire Council through evidence-based practice and a whole systems approach, in achieving our corporate and partnership strategic priorities. This will assist the Council and partners in promoting, enabling and sustaining the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities whilst reducing health inequalities.

Individuals

Will the proposal have a *direct impact* on health, mental health and wellbeing?

For example, would it cause ill health, affecting social inclusion, independence and participation?

Will the proposal directly affect an individual's ability to improve their own health and wellbeing?

This could include the following: their ability to be physically active e.g., being able to use a cycle route; to access food more easily; to change lifestyle in ways that are of positive impact for their health.

Provision or change to a service that allows greater reach to those most in need, this can involve relocation, pooling of resource/efficiency changes, or digitisation of some provision. It may also involve greater opportunities for employment, decreasing socio-economic inequality. Physical alternatives to be made available (where practical) to be offered wherever possible to avoid digital exclusion and reduce social isolation. These changes can be either positive or negative depending on the proposal.

An example of this could be that you may be involved in proposals for the establishment of safer walking and cycling routes (e.g., green highways), and changes to public transport that could encourage people away from car usage. and increase the number of journeys that they make on public transport, by foot or on bicycle or scooter. This could improve lives. It could also involve virtual support sessions/appointments to avoid unnecessary travel and provide greater flexibility with individuals work schedules. It may involve greater internet connectivity, to improve remote working opportunities and air pollution concerns, or improved communications coverage through closer partnership working – targeting those most in need of specific information.

Will the proposal *indirectly impact* an individual's ability to improve their own health and wellbeing?

This could include the following: their ability to access local facilities e.g., to access food more easily, or to access a means of mobility to local services and amenities? (e.g. change to bus route)

Similarly to the above, an example of this could be that you may be involved in proposals for the establishment of safer walking and cycling routes (e.g. pedestrianisation of town centres), and changes to public transport that could encourage people away from car usage, and increase the number of journeys that they make on public transport, by foot or on bicycle or scooter. This could improve their health and wellbeing.

Communities

Will the proposal directly or indirectly affect the physical health, mental health, and wellbeing of the wider community**?**

A *direct impact* could include either the causing of ill health, affecting social inclusion, independence and participation, or the promotion of better health.

An example of this could be that safer walking and cycling routes could help the wider community, as more people across groupings may be encouraged to walk or engage in active travel. Increasing physical activity and minimising the time spent sitting down helps to maintain a healthy weight and reduces the risk of cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, cancer, and depression. The UK Chief Medical Officers recommend that adults should do at least 150 minutes of moderate activity, or 75 minutes of vigorous activity, each week. At a wider level, reductions in vehicular emission lead to better air quality, and a reduction in NO_2 in the atmosphere.

An *indirect impact* could mean that a service change could indirectly affect living and working conditions and therefore the health and wellbeing of the wider community.

An example of this could be: an increase in the availability of warm homes would improve the quality of the housing offer in Shropshire and reduce the costs for households of having a warm home in Shropshire. This can reduce the risks of cold related health effects, as well as reduce the financial burden on the population, whose ability to shoulder these costs can vary. Often a health promoting approach also supports our agenda to reduce the level of Carbon Dioxide emissions and to reduce the impact of climate change.

Please record whether at this stage you consider the proposed service change to have a direct or an indirect impact upon communities.

Demand

Will there be a change in demand for or access to health, local authority and social care services?

For example: Primary Care, Hospital Care, Community Services, Mental Health and Social Services?

An example of this could be: a new housing development in an area would affect demand for primary care and local authority facilities and services in that location and surrounding areas. If the housing development does not factor in consideration of availability of green space and safety within the public realm, further down the line there could be an increased demand upon health and social care services as a result of the lack of opportunities for physical recreation, and reluctance of some groupings to venture outside if they do not perceive it to be safe.

For further advice: please contact
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Cabinet | January 21st, 2026

Item

Public

Application by Baschurch Parish Council for Baschurch Parish to be Considered as a Neighbourhood Area

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Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder):	Councillor David Walker		

1. Synopsis

This report seeks approval for the application by Baschurch Parish Council for the Parish area of Baschurch to be considered as a Neighbourhood Area for the purposes of preparing a Neighbourhood Development Plan.

2. Executive Summary

2.1. It is Shropshire Council's role to decide if the proposed Neighbourhood Area, in this case, the area covered by Baschurch Parish Council, is an appropriate area for the purposes of preparing a Neighbourhood Development Plan (referred to in this report as the 'Neighbourhood Plan'). The recommendation focuses solely on the extent of the area to be used in the preparation of the proposed Neighbourhood Plan. This recommendation does not deal with the proposed content of the Neighbourhood Plan, which are issues to be considered by Baschurch Parish Council in cooperation with Shropshire Council in due course.

The application is attached as Appendix A, and the proposed area map as Appendix B. It is considered the identification of the Baschurch Parish area as a Neighbourhood Area responds positively to the Shropshire Plan's objectives, in particular meeting the ambition to improve the health of Shropshire's economy and environment.

3. Recommendations

3.1. That Cabinet agree the designation of the proposed Neighbourhood Area identified on the map in Appendix B, covering the Parish of Baschurch as an appropriate basis for the development of a Neighbourhood Development Plan and notifies Baschurch Parish Council accordingly.

Report

4. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

4.1. The power to designate a Neighbourhood Area is exercisable under Section 61G of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 ("the Act"). Under Regulation 5(1) of The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 an Area Application must include a map that identifies the area to which the application relates and a statement to explain why the area is considered appropriate to be designated as a Neighbourhood Area and that the body is in fact a "relevant body" for the purposes of Section 61 G(2) of the Act. Baschurch Parish Council is a relevant body for the purposes of the Act.

4.2. The relevant material (the application from Baschurch Parish Council for the designation of the proposed Baschurch Neighbourhood Plan area and the map of the proposed Baschurch Neighbourhood Plan area, included as Appendix A and B to this report) was submitted by Baschurch Parish Council and received by Shropshire Council on 30 September 2025. As stated under Regulation 5A (1b) and 5A (3) of The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012, it is not required that the area application be publicised or undergo public consultation where the area for designation relates to the full parish area i.e. regulations 6 and 6A do not apply.

4.3. In determining the application Shropshire Council must have regard to the desirability of designating the whole of the parish area as a Neighbourhood Area and the desirability of maintaining the existing boundaries of areas already designated as neighbourhood areas. In the event the designation is approved,

will be published on the Council's website in accordance with Regulation 7 (1) to bring the designation to the attention of people who live, work or carry on business in the neighbourhood area. If the designation is refused under Section 61G (9) of the Act, reasons must be given and the decision publicised in accordance with Regulation 7 (2) of the Regulations. It is considered there is significant risk to the Council of not agreeing to the Baschurch Parish Area as a Neighbourhood Area without sound rationale.

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4.4. The designation of an appropriate area for a Neighbourhood Plan is to confirm the geographic area the Plan will cover. This does not set policies to be contained in the Neighbourhood Plan, or the thematic scope of that Plan. Indeed, and importantly, the designation of a Neighbourhood Area does not commit the Parish or Town Council to producing or completing a Neighbourhood Plan. It is, however, a first important step in the process of preparing a Neighbourhood Plan as required by regulations.

4.5. When approved, Neighbourhood Plans form part of the statutory development plan for the area. The statutory framework covering the production of neighbourhood plans is therefore quite prescriptive and there is little risk for either Shropshire Council or Baschurch Parish Council in following this carefully. However, it is important that a high degree of trust and cooperation between the Councils is maintained in order to reduce any risk of inconsistency and conflict between the Neighbourhood Plan and those other parts of the Development Plan prepared by Shropshire Council.

4.6. Shropshire's statutory Development Plan will be an important and ongoing consideration in the context of any Neighbourhood Plan prepared for the Baschurch Parish Council area. At present the Core Strategy and Site Allocations and Management of Development (SAMDev) Plans (2006-2026) represent the Countywide adopted Development Plan. In response to the Inspectors' soundness concerns, the Draft Local Plan Review (2016-2036) was withdrawn from examination, a decision approved by Full Council on 17th July 2025. Shropshire Council have now been required to set out a timeframe for a further Local Plan review, with work commencing in September 2026 on a 30-month timetable, with adoption scheduled in March 2029. The timeframe of the future Local Plan is likely to be 2025 to 2045.

4.7. A Neighbourhood Plan will, after passing through the relevant stages of consultation, submission, examination and the referendum, go on to become part of the statutory Development Plan for the area. By definition, the Neighbourhood Plan should be a product of the community and as such will contain policies that, whilst in general conformity with other elements of the Development Plan, should have their own distinct character. The degree of scrutiny to be applied to a Neighbourhood Plan through its examination process is dependent upon the scope of the plan, and it will continue to be particularly important for appropriate evidence to be produced to inform the Neighbourhood Plan. Statute provides that planning applications should be determined in accordance with the provisions of relevant Development Plan policies unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The weight given to the Plan thus remains to be balanced with other considerations when taken in the round by decision makers.

4.8. Risk table

Risk	*Mitigation*
Risk of non compliance with Regulations 5, 6 and 7 of The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012.	Complying with the regulations by: 1) including with the Area Application a map that identifies the area to which the application relates and a statement to explain why the area is considered appropriate to be designated as a

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	Neighbourhood Area and that the body is in fact a "relevant body" for the purposes of Section 61 G(2) of the Act, and; 2) not carrying out a public consultation as this is not required as the area for designation relates to the full parish area; and having regard to the desirability of designating the whole of the parish area as a Neighbourhood Area and the desirability of maintaining the existing boundaries of areas already designated as neighbourhood areas.
Risk of inconsistency and conflict between the Neighbourhood Plan and those other parts of the Development Plan prepared by Shropshire Council.	Maintain a high degree of trust and cooperation between the Councils.

5. Financial Implications

5.1. Shropshire Council continues to manage unprecedented financial demands and a financial emergency was declared by Cabinet on 10 September 2025. The overall financial position of the Council is set out in the monitoring position presented to Cabinet on a monthly basis. Significant management action has been instigated at all levels of the Council reducing spend to ensure the Council's financial survival. While all reports to Members provide the financial implications of decisions being taken, this may change as officers and/or Portfolio Holders review the overall financial situation and make decisions aligned to financial survivability. All non-essential spend will be stopped and all essential spend challenged. These actions may involve (this is not exhaustive):

- scaling down initiatives,
- changing the scope of activities,
- delaying implementation of agreed plans, or
- extending delivery timescales.

5.2. Schedule 10, paras 3(1) and 7(3) of the Localism Act 2011 and the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 read in their entirety provide that the following costs would fall to Shropshire Council: delivering a supporting role particularly in the latter stages of the Plan's development, appointing an Examiner for the Plan, conducting an Examination and holding a Referendum. Current provisions allow an application for these additional costs to be met, and a reimbursement of costs will therefore be sought from Central Government. It is considered likely the robustness of the Neighbourhood Plan policies will be tested over time by independent Planning Inspectors on planning appeals made under Section 78 of the Act. Members are advised that the liability for future appeal costs rests with Shropshire Council as Local Planning Authority and as such the usability of such plans and their impact on local decision making will need to be carefully monitored.

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6. Climate Change Appraisal

6.1. The designation of the Baschurch Neighbourhood Area allows the important first step in the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan for the parish of Baschurch. Whilst at this stage the contents of the Plan are not known and will be subject to the objectives led by Baschurch Parish Council in consultation with their communities, it does present an opportunity to explore additional development management policies for the local area, which could respond to the ongoing need to reduce energy and fuel consumption, generate renewable energy, offset and mitigate carbon emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change. Any new development management policies would need to demonstrate they are deliverable and ensure development remains viable.

7. Background

7.1. Shropshire Council fully supports the principle of areas seeking to develop their own Neighbourhood Plans to supplement and complement the wider policies of the Development Plan. The Government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) supports the principle of Neighbourhood Plans and their status as part of the Development Plan. The NPPF states "Neighbourhood plans should support the delivery of strategic policies contained in local plans or spatial development strategies; and should shape and direct development that is outside of these strategic policies". It is also made clear that Neighbourhood Plans should not promote less development than set out in the strategic policies for the area or undermine those strategic policies.

7.2. The development of a Neighbourhood Plan must be facilitated by the Town or Parish Council and will, in most cases, proceed with support and assistance from volunteers across the community. It is recommended that Baschurch Parish Council begin early consultation with their communities, including on how to finance the creation of the Neighbourhood Plan, including any supporting evidence which will be required.

7.3. In due course and as part of the Neighbourhood Plan preparation process, Shropshire Council will consider whether the Baschurch Neighbourhood Plan conforms to the adopted strategic policies of the wider Development Plan as part of ongoing cooperation between the Councils and as part of formal consultation responses. Ultimately, the Neighbourhood Plan will be subject to an independent assessment and will need to meet a number of mandatory 'basic conditions' set out in legislation.

8. Additional Information

8.1. Shropshire Council officers have had early discussions with representatives from Baschurch Parish Council, specifically to discuss the extent of the proposal and to further understand the rationale for the area proposed.

Contact: Rosie Corner | Rosie.Corner@shropshire.gov.uk or Eddie West | Edward.West@shropshire.gov.uk

8.2. Having had these early discussions, it is considered the proposed area, which accords with the parish boundary, is appropriate for the purposes of preparing a Neighbourhood Plan and that the proposed Neighbourhood Plan can therefore offer the opportunity to deliver some additional value through the preparation of locally relevant planning policies to support the delivery of appropriate development, whilst continuing to be in conformity with the strategic policies of the Local Plan.

8.3. Baschurch Parish Council must seek to ensure the future sustainable development of the settlement by providing detailed planning policies for their area. Whilst the exact scope and remit of the Neighbourhood Plan is to be discussed, at this stage it is clear there is an understanding from the Parish Council as to the general role of the Neighbourhood Plan and the type of policies it is likely to introduce. Further discussions will help to clarify this. In addition, it should be recognised that in line with national regulations on Community Infrastructure levy (CIL), areas with adopted ('made') Neighbourhood Plans in place, receive 25% CIL Neighbourhood Funds (uncapped) from CIL liable development in its area after the Plan's adoption, compared with 15% (capped) in non-Neighbourhood Plan areas.

9. Conclusions

9.1. Baschurch Parish Council has indicated they wish to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan for their whole Parish area. It is the officer recommendation to proceed with agreeing the parish as a Neighbourhood Area, and that there are no appropriate reasons not to do so.

9.2. This report only seeks to agree the Parish as a Neighbourhood Area. It does not cover any matters of content of a Neighbourhood Plan for the area, and it is fully acknowledged this is a responsibility of Baschurch Parish Council to lead. However, it does identify the ongoing need for Council officers, where appropriate, to work collaboratively with Baschurch Parish Council on the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan and sets out the regulatory requirements of Shropshire Council within this process.

Local Member:	***Councillor David Walker***

Appendices [Please list the titles of Appendices]

Appendix A – Application from Baschurch Parish Council for the designation of the proposed Baschurch Neighbourhood Plan area

Appendix B – Map of proposed Baschurch Neighbourhood Plan area

Contact: Rosie Corner | Rosie.Corner@shropshire.gov.uk or Eddie West | Edward.West@shropshire.gov.uk

Application to designate a Neighbourhood Area

Town and Country Planning Act 1990

Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulation 2012

Parish Clerk details:
Mrs Anne Howls
The Newlands,
Crosscut Lane,
Baschurch,
Shrewsbury SY4 2DD
anne.howls@baschurchpc.org.uk
01939 260442

Relevant body:
We confirm that we are the relevant body to undertake neighbourhood plan in our area in accordance with section 61G of the 1990 Act and section 5C of the 2012 Regulations. Baschurch Parish Council resolved to develop a plan for the Neighbourhood Area at the Council Meeting on Monday, 7th July 2025

Name of Council
Baschurch Parish Council

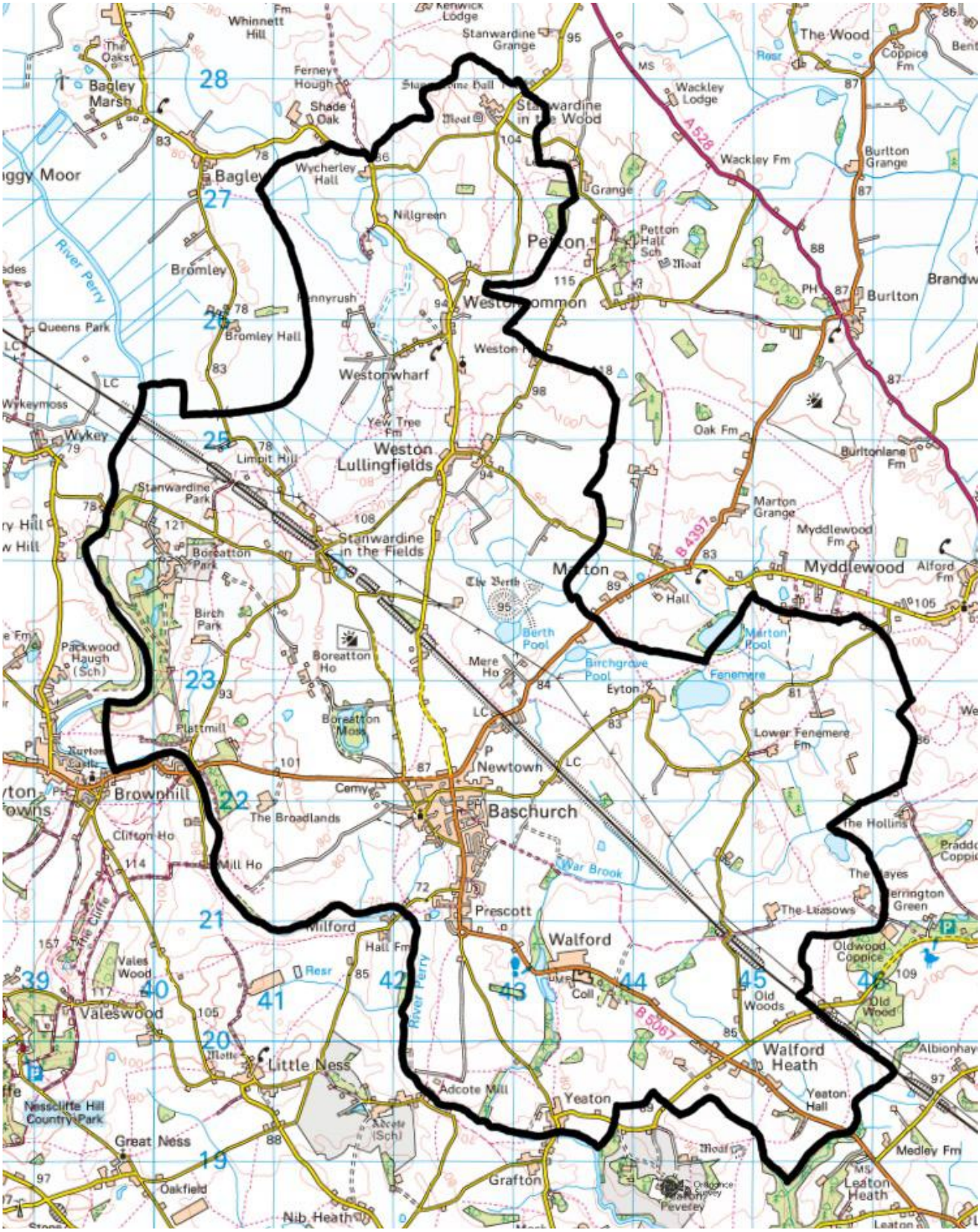
Extent of the area:
Whole Parish boundary area – please see map attached.

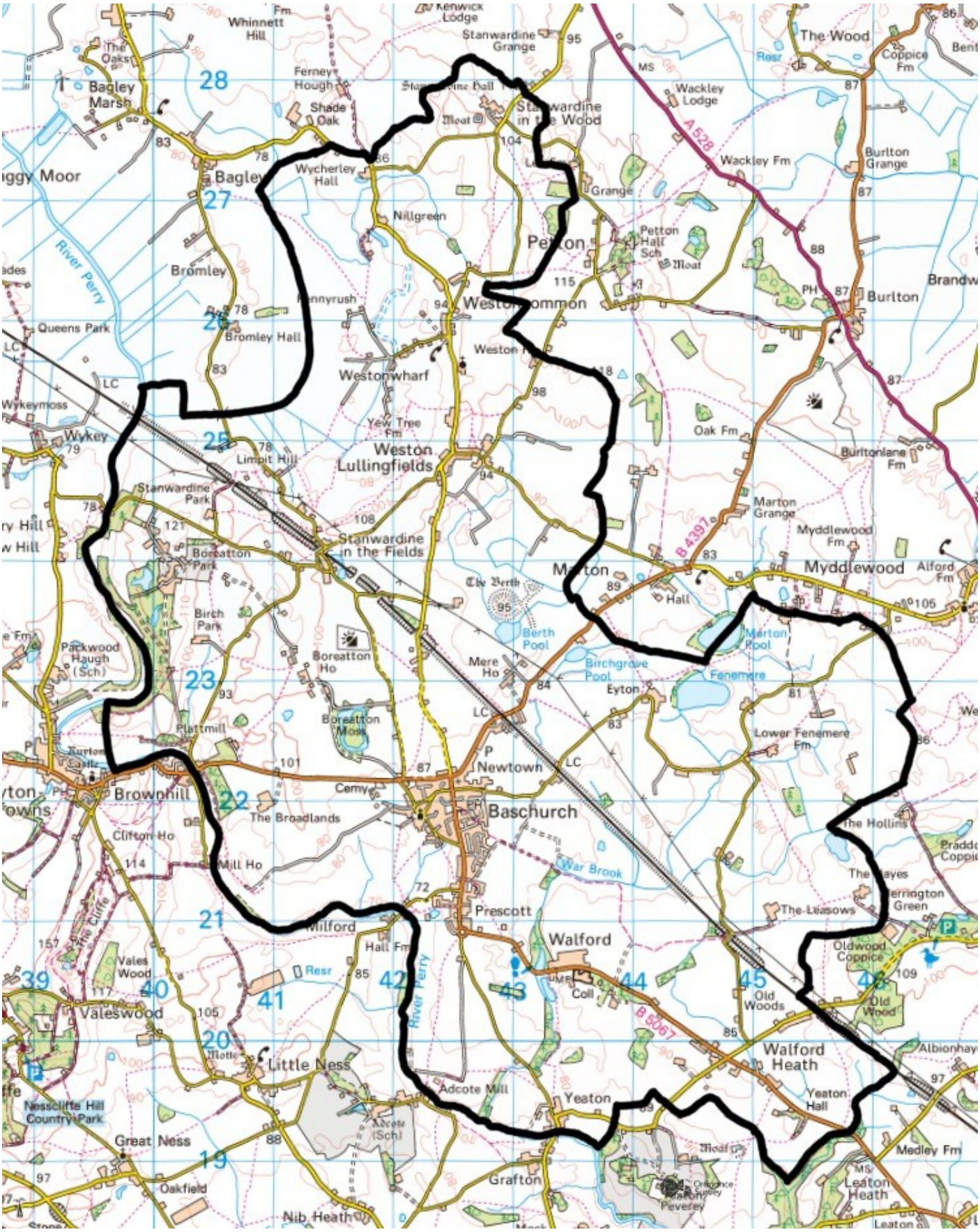
Justification statement:
With the Shropshire Draft Local Plan being withdrawn and the likelihood of a new Local Plan being approved in the next few years the Parish Council feels that it is important to have a neighbourhood Plan in place. This is to ensure that we can influence how future developments take place in the Parish. The Council also wants to ensure that all aspects of village life can be considered by this plan to ensure that the health and wellbeing of all residents is catered for, the overall aim being:

'To preserve and communicate the historical artefacts in the parish of Baschurch, whilst providing residents' agreed proposals for its future including new housing and amenities'.

Name: Anne Howls
Position: Clerk to the Parish Council
Date: 30th September 2025

Baschurch Parish Neighbourhood Planning Group




Whinnett Hill
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The Wood
Coppice Fm
Bagley Marsh
Ferneys Hough
Shade Oak
Wackley Lodge
A 528
Wackley Fm
Burlton Grange
Wycherley Hall
Nillgreen
Petton
Petton Hall Sch
Bromley
River Perry
Weston Common
Burlton
Queens Park
Bromley Hall
Westonwharf
Yew Tree Fm
Oak Fm
Wykey
Limpit Hill
Weston Lullingfields
Burltonlane Fm
Stanwardine Park
Marton Grange
Myddlewood Fm
Stanwardine in the Fields
Borreatton Park
Marton
Myddlewood
Alford Fm
Birch Park
Packwood Haugh (Sch)
Boreatton Ho
Mere Ho
Berth Pool
Birchgrove Pool
Marton Pool
Fenemere
Eyton
Boreatton Moss
Plattmill
Lower Fenemere Fm
Newtown
Brownhill
Cemy
Baschurch
The Broadlands
The Hollins
Clifton Ho
Mill Ho
War Brook
Prescott
Walford
Hall Fm
The Leasows
Oldwood Coppice
Vales Wood
Valeswood
Resr
Old Woods
Walford Heath
Little Ness
Adcote Mill
Yeaton
Yeaton Hall
Nesscliffe Hill Country Park
Great Ness
Oakfield
Grafton
Medley Fm
Leaton Heath
Nib Heath

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Committee Meeting Cabinet 21st January 2026	Item Public

Recommendation for the Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan Review to Proceed to Referendum

Responsible Officer:	Rosie Corner Eddie West		
email:	Rosie.Corner@shropshire.gov.uk Edward.West@shropshire.gov.uk	Tel:	01743 256422 01743 254617
Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder):	Councillor David Walker		

1. Synopsis

This report seeks Cabinet approval to proceed to local referendum on the Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan Review.

2. Executive Summary

2.1. The purpose of this report is to seek Cabinet approval for the Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan Review ('the Plan') to proceed to referendum to determine whether the reviewed Plan should replace the made Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan Review (2013-2026) and become part of the statutory Development Plan for the neighbourhood area and therefore be used in the determination of planning applications in that neighbourhood area.

2.2. The Shropshire Plan recognises the importance of creating a Healthy Environment with a strategic objective to '*maintain, protect and enhance our outstanding natural and historic environment, promoting positive behaviours and greater biodiversity and environmental sustainability*'. The Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan Review

contains policies which strive to encourage development to achieve these objectives alongside those contained within the wider Development Plan for Shropshire.

2.3. Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan Review has been produced in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (referred to in this report as 'the Regulations'). The Plan has been prepared by the Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan Review Steering Group, with Much Wenlock Town Council acting as the local 'Qualifying Body'. Work on the plan began in 2023 and has included several consultation stages. The draft version of the plan was submitted to Shropshire Council in May 2025, after which Shropshire Council undertook further statutory consultation and appointed an independent person to conduct the examination into the plan.

2.4. The purpose of the independent examination process is to ensure Neighbourhood Development Plans meet a set of nationally prescribed 'Basic Conditions', and to recommend if the Plan should proceed to a local referendum. The examination into the Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan Review concluded in November 2025. The Examiner's Report is attached as Appendix 1.

2.5. The Examiner has concluded that the proposed Plan is significantly different in nature to the existing adopted ('made') Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan Review (2013-2026) which the draft Plan would replace. In particular, he has noted that the draft Plan contains 13 new policies.

2.6. The Examiner has recommended that the draft Plan can proceed to local referendum, subject to a number of modifications being made. It is now Shropshire Councils role to consider the outcome of the Examiner's report, including the proposed modifications, and to agree if the plan can proceed to referendum.

2.7. The schedule of modifications is shown in Appendix 2. This schedule has followed consideration of the Examiner's conclusions and proposed modifications. Appendix 3 of this report sets out the proposed final 'referendum' version of the Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan Review. It is therefore recommended that the 'referendum' version of the Plan proceed to referendum.

2.8. If agreed, the referendum will take place on a date to be arranged **but must** be within 56 days of receiving Cabinet approval which equates to the period of 22nd January up to and including 13th April 2026. Should the Plan gain public support at the referendum, Shropshire Council's Full Council will be asked to formally 'make' (adopt) the Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan Review to form part of the statutory Development Plan for Shropshire.

3. Recommendations

Cabinet Agrees:

3.1. The Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan Review meets the 'Basic Conditions' and all the other legal requirements as summarised in the Independent Examiner's Report, subject to the modifications proposed in the Schedule of Modifications (Appendix 2).

Contact: Rosie Corner – Rosie.Corner@shropshire.gov.uk
Contact: Eddie West – Eddie.West@shropshire.gov.uk

3.2. The required modifications be agreed, and that the final 'referendum' version of Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan Review (Appendix 3) proceed to local referendum.

3.3. The referendum area be that as defined as the designated area to which the Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan Review relates.

Report

4. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

4.1. Having received a draft Neighbourhood Plan from a qualifying body (normally a Parish or Town Council), it is the responsibility of the Local Planning Authority (LPA), under regulation 16 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012, to publicise and to seek representations on the Plan. It is also the responsibility of the Local Planning Authority under paragraph 7 of Schedule 4B of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (TCPA 1990) to appoint an independent person to assess the Plan. In following these requirements Shropshire Council published and consulted on the submission version of the Plan for six weeks from the 13th June to the 25th July 2025. In agreement with Much Wenlock Town Council, Timothy Jones, Barrister, FCIArb was appointed to examine the Plan in August 2025.

4.2. Only a draft Neighbourhood Plan that meets the basic conditions can be put to a referendum and be 'made' (adopted) by the Local Authority. The basic conditions, as set out in paragraph 8(2) of Schedule 4B of the TCPA 1990 that are applied to Neighbourhood Development Plans by section 38A of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 are:

a) having regard to national policies and advice contained within guidance issued by the Secretary of State it is appropriate to make the Neighbourhood Plan;
b) the making of the Neighbourhood Plan contributes to the achievement of sustainable development;
c) the making of the Neighbourhood Plan is in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan for the area of the authority (or any part of that area);
d) the making of the Neighbourhood Plan does not breach, and is otherwise compatible with retained EU obligations; and
e) prescribed conditions are met (in relation to the Neighbourhood Plan) and prescribed matters have been completed in connection with the proposal for the Neighbourhood Plan.

4.3. In assessing the Plan, the examiner has three options:

a) that the Plan proceeds to referendum as submitted;
b) that the Plan is modified by the LPA to meet 'basic conditions' and then the modified version proceeds to referendum; or
c) that the Plan does not proceed to referendum.

4.4. The Neighbourhood Development Plan examination is therefore a particularly focused process, unlike that of an examination applied to Local Plans prepared by Local Planning Authorities. This leaves little in the way of opportunity to actively make changes to improve the plan at this stage, unless these changes (or modifications) are to ensure the Plan meets one or more of the basic conditions.

4.5. The Examiner's Report is included as Appendix 1 of this report. It is the role of Shropshire Council to consider the overall conclusions and the proposed modifications in the Examiner's Report. The Examiner's Report is not binding on the Authority and there may be occasions where it is necessary for the Local Authority to propose a different modification to that proposed by the Examiner, or indeed disagree with the need for a modification. However, it is considered there is a risk of legal challenge if the Local Authority's conclusions were to differ significantly from that of the Examiner without appropriate rationale.

4.6. The Examiner's report into the Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan Review has concluded that it should be modified by the Local Planning Authority to meet the basic conditions. It is this modified version of the Plan which should proceed to referendum. The Schedule of Modifications attached as Appendix 2 to this report show how the Local Planning Authority has considered each of the modifications proposed by the Examiner.

4.7. In this case, officers have considered in detail the recommendations of the Examiner, supported by further discussions with Much Wenlock Town Council. As explained in more detail in paragraph 7.6 below, Much Wenlock Town Council has indicated that it is happy that the updated version of the Plan, which takes account of the conclusions of the Examiner's report, should now proceed to referendum. As such, it is proposed that the recommended changes to the Plan are incorporated into the final 'referendum' version. It is this version which is before Cabinet and included as Appendix 3. It is considered the proposed modifications are necessary and support the Plan meeting the 'basic conditions'. The changes involve partial amendments to the wording of policies and in some cases partial replacement with a suggested alternative. It is not considered that these changes taken as a whole fundamentally impact on the wider objectives of the Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan Review.

4.8. The Examiner's report recommends that the Referendum Area be restricted to the Neighbourhood Plan Area, the parish of Much Wenlock.

4.9. Assuming Cabinet approve the draft Plan to proceed to referendum, the Councils' Electoral Services will administer this process in line with the Neighbourhood Plan Regulations, which specifies that this should take place no more than 56 days from publication of the decision statement. Taking into account the necessary notice periods it is considered the referendum will take place between 22nd January and 13th April 2026 inclusive**.**. It is considered there is little risk to the Council if this process follows the regulations closely.

4.10. Risk table

Risk	*Mitigation*

Contact: Rosie Corner – Rosie.Corner@shropshire.gov.uk
Contact: Eddie West – Eddie.West@shropshire.gov.uk

Legal challenge if the Local Authority's conclusions differ significantly from that of the Examiners Report.	Should the Local Authority propose a different modification or disagree with the need for a modification as proposed by the Examiner, an appropriate rationale should be provided.
Legal challenge to the referendum process	This risk is significantly reduced by Shropshire Council administering the process in line with Neighbourhood Plan Regulations and ensuring the referendum takes place no more than 56 days from publication of the Cabinet decision statement

5. Financial Implications

5.1. Shropshire Council continues to manage unprecedented financial demands and a financial emergency was declared by Cabinet on 10 September 2025. The overall financial position of the Council is set out in the monitoring position presented to Cabinet on a monthly basis. Significant management action has been instigated at all levels of the Council reducing spend to ensure the Council's financial survival. While all reports to Members provide the financial implications of decisions being taken, this may change as officers and/or Portfolio Holders review the overall financial situation and make decisions aligned to financial survivability. All non-essential spend will be stopped and all essential spend challenged. These actions may involve (this is not exhaustive):

- scaling down initiatives,
- changing the scope of activities,
- delaying implementation of agreed plans, or
- extending delivery timescales.

5.2. The Localism Act and Regulations provide that the following costs would fall to Shropshire Council: delivering a supporting role particularly in the latter stages of the Plan's development; appointing an Examiner for the Plan; conducting an Examination and holding a Referendum. Current provisions, which have recently been clarified by the government in December 2025, allow an application for these additional costs to be met, and a reimbursement of the costs will therefore be sought from central Government. Such claims are submitted by officers via the DELTA system and payments made under section 31 of The Local Government Act 2003, and will be submitted by 6th March 2026 From previous experience of organising and managing Neighbourhood Planning referendums it is considered that the likely cost of this process will be met in full by the reimbursement.

5.3. The robustness of the Neighbourhood Plan Policies will be tested over time by independent Planning Inspectors on Planning Appeals made under Section 78 of the TCPA 1990. Members are advised that the liability for the future appeal costs rests with Shropshire Council as the Local Planning Authority and as such the usability of such plans and their impact on local decision making will need to be carefully monitored. However, it should be noted that in seeking approval to proceed to referendum on this Plan, there is agreement that the content of the Plan is in broad conformity with the policies of Shropshire's adopted Local Plan. It is therefore considered that there is very limited risk to Shropshire Council and additional financial liability as a result of this report and recommendations.

6. Climate Change Appraisal

6.1. The recommendations propose that Cabinet agree to proceed to referendum with the Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan Review. If successful at referendum and subsequently adopted by the Council, the reviewed Plan will replace the made Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan Review (2013-2026) and become part of the statutory Development Plan for the area and will be used in the determination of planning applications.

6.2. Energy and fuel consumption.

6.2.1. *Policy MW2: Meeting local housing needs* makes reference to achieving energy efficiency and sustainable design in new developments.

6.2.2. *Policy MW19: Energy efficiency and mitigating climate change* seeks to ensure that proposals have regard to optimising solar gain, incorporating thermally efficient building materials and energy efficiency measures such as loft and wall insulation and double glazing. It also supports the sensitive retrofitting of heritage assets to reduce energy demand.

6.2.3. *Policy MW25: Dark skies* seeks to improve energy efficiency by reducing wastage from unnecessary or excessive lighting, thus reducing the Parish's carbon footprint.

6.3. Renewable energy generation.

6.3.1. Policy MW1: Supporting sustainable development seeks to prioritise the use of 'brownfield sites' (i.e. previously developed land) for mixed-uses including community-scale energy regeneration.

6.3.2. *Policy MW19: Energy efficiency and mitigating climate change* strongly supports proposals which incorporating on-site energy generation from renewable sources such as solar panels/tiles/glass, ground source heating and energy generation etc. It also supports the sensitive retrofitting of heritage assets to generate renewable energy.

6.3.3. *Policy MW26: Renewable and community energy* explains how, subject to criteria, individual and community-scale energy from hydroelectricity, solar PV panels, local biomass facilities, anaerobic digestion and wood fuel products will be supported.

6.4. Carbon offsetting or mitigation.

6.4.1. *Policy MW19: Energy efficiency and mitigating climate change* seeks to ensure that development meets the highest environmental standards in terms of its construction, materials and energy use. It will strongly support proposals which provide low carbon sustainable design and avoiding or mitigating all regulated emissions using a combination of on-site energy efficiency measures (such as insulation and low energy heating systems), on-site zero carbon technologies (such as solar panels) and, only where necessary, off-site measures to deal with any remaining emissions.

Contact: Rosie Corner – Rosie.Corner@shropshire.gov.uk
Contact: Eddie West – Eddie.West@shropshire.gov.uk

6.5. Climate change adaptation.

6.5.1. *Objective 7: Green and open spaces, local landscape and wildlife* describes how the Plan will protect existing areas of green space within the parish and ensure that their quality and or multi-functionality is improved. It explains the importance of considering existing spaces for retrofitting in adaptation for climate change.

7. Background

7.1. Shropshire Council supports Neighbourhood Development Plans being brought forward under the Localism Act and the 2012 Neighbourhood Planning Regulations, indeed, the Council is legally obliged to do so. The Government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) supports the principle of Neighbourhood Plans and their status as part of the Development Plan. The NPPF at paragraph 13 states 'Neighbourhood plans should support the delivery of strategic policies contained in local plans or spatial development strategies; and should shape and direct development that is outside of these strategic policies.' It is also made clear that Neighbourhood Development Plans should not promote less development than set out in the strategic policies for the area or undermine those strategic policies.

7.2. Neighbourhood Development Plans must follow a defined regulatory process in both their preparation and adoption. This includes the formal designation of the area (Regulation 6 stage), the consultation on a draft version of the Plan (Regulation 14 stage), submission to the Local Planning Authority (Regulation 15 stage), and consultation and examination of the Final Draft version of the Plan (Regulation 16 stage).

7.3. An application by Much Wenlock Town Council to designate a neighbourhood plan area went out for public consultation from 27th June to 10th August 2012. The application was approved by Shropshire Council's Cabinet on 12 September 2012. The neighbourhood area shares its boundary with that of the Parish. The Town Council, as the Qualifying Body, set up a Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group comprising local councillors and community volunteers to lead on the preparation of the Plan. In consultation with the community, local businesses and others, the Steering Group has reviewed the vision and objectives for the future of the designated area and set out how that vision will be realised through planning land use and development change over the period to 2038. Work on the Plan has been guided by the need to engage with the local community. Apart from the statutory requirements for public consultation at various stages, measures to draw in a wider range of contributions included regular newsletter articles, a parish-wide survey, Plan Review exhibitions and discussions with groups and individuals in the parish.

7.4. Between the 11th November 2024 and 6th January 2025 Much Wenlock Town Council ran a statutory consultation into the pre-submission version of the Neighbourhood Development Plan (Regulation 14 stage). The draft version of the Plan responded to the initial community consultation and survey results and proposed a number of development management policies.

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7.5. In May 2025 Much Wenlock Town Council presented the submission draft of the Neighbourhood Development Plan to Shropshire Council (Regulation 15 stage) along with the required Consultation Statement and Basic Conditions Statements. In meeting the statutory requirements, Shropshire Council proceeded to carry out the Regulation stage 16 consultation between 13th June to the 25th July 2025 with statutory consultees and other locally interested individuals and organisations. In August 2025 Timothy Jones, Barrister, FCIArb was appointed to examine the Plan. As required by the Regulations, this appointment was agreed by Adderley Parish Council as the Qualifying Body.

7.6. Mr Jones' examination was carried out as written representations only. In addition to the Plan submission documents, Mr Jones considered the representations made at the Regulation 16 stage consultation and incorporated this within the Examiner's final report. Officers have liaised with Much Wenlock Town Council as the qualifying body on the updated version of the Plan, which takes account of the conclusions of the Examiner's report, and they are satisfied that this version of the Plan should now proceed to referendum.

7.7. If Cabinet agree for the Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan Review to proceed to referendum, the question will be:

Do you want Shropshire Council to use the Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan Review to help it decide planning applications in the neighbourhood area?

7.8. The Plan will need to gain the support of over 50% of those who cast a vote to be able to move forward to be 'made' (adopted) by Shropshire Council. If this is the case the decision to 'make' the Plan will need to be taken to Full Council. Assuming the recommendations are agreed a final date for the referendum will be formalised after 21st January 2026.

8. Additional Information

8.1. The appendices to this report provide information on the Examiner's report into the Plan, the proposed modifications, and the final 'referendum' version of the Plan which incorporates all the required modifications.

9. Conclusions

9.1. Further to the outcomes of the Examiner's report into the Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan Review, it is recommended that all the necessary modifications are agreed and that the final version of the Plan proceed to local referendum.

Local Member:	Councillor Dan Thomas

Appendix 1 – Examiner's Report

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Contact: Eddie West – Eddie.West@shropshire.gov.uk

Appendix 2 – Schedule of Modifications

Appendix 3 - Final 'referendum' version of the Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Development Plan

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THE MUCH WENLOCK NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN 2024 - 2038

Report of the Examination into the Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan 2024 – 2038

Timothy Jones, Barrister, FCIArb,

Independent Examiner

No 5 Chambers,

Birmingham - London - Bristol

To Shropshire Council

And to Much Wenlock Town Council

7th November 2025.

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Report of the Examination into the

Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan 2024 – 2038

1. Introduction

Neighbourhood planning

1. The Localism Act 2011 Part 6 Chapter 3 introduced neighbourhood planning, including provision for neighbourhood development plans. A neighbourhood development plan should reflect the needs and priorities of the community concerned and should set out a positive vision for the future, setting planning policies to determine decisions on planning applications. If approved by a referendum and made by the local planning authority (as has happened here) such plans form part of the Development Plan for the neighbourhood concerned. Applications for planning permission should be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

2. This report concerns a proposed modification ("the Draft Plan") to the Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan 2013-2026 which Shropshire Council ("SC") approved in 2014 ('the Made NDP"). The neighbourhood area was designated on 12th September 2012 and is the parish of Much Wenlock. The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 ("PCPA") Schedule A2 provides the statutory framework for modifications of neighbourhood plans.

Appointment and role

3. SC with the consent of qualifying body, Much Wenlock Town Council ("MWTC"), has appointed me to undertake the independent examination of the Draft Plan in accordance with PCPA Sch A2 para 9(4). I am a planning barrister and am independent of SC, MWTC, and of those who have made representations in respect of the Draft NDP. I have been trained and approved by the Neighbourhood Planning Independent Examiner Referral Service and trained others who wish to be examiners. I have extensive experience both as a planning barrister and as a neighbourhood planning examiner. I do not have an interest in any land that is, or may be, affected by the Draft Plan.

4. My examination has involved considering written submissions and a detailed site visit on Saturday 18th October 2025. I have read and considered all the documents with which I have been provided.

Shropshire Council's determinations

5. The proposal is a modification proposal as defined in the PCPA Sch A2, paragraph 1. Before referring the matter to me, PCPA 2004 Sch A2 paragraph 8 required SC to consider

whether the draft plan complies with the provision made by or under PCPA sections 38A and 38B and to be satisfied:

(a) that MWTC is authorised for the purposes of a neighbourhood development plan to act in relation to the neighbourhood area concerned as a result of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 "TCPA" s 61F (as applied by PCPA s 38C(2)(a));

(b) that the proposal complies with provision made by or under s61F;

(c) that the proposal and the documents and information accompanying it (including the Draft Plan) comply with provision made by or under Schedule A2 paragraph 1; and

(d) that MWTC has complied with the requirements of regulations made under Sch A2 paragraph 4 of the Schedule imposed on it in relation to the proposal.

6. SC was satisfied with these. It was right to be so satisfied. These requirements in respect of modification proposals have been met.

2. My preliminary determination

7. I must first determine whether the modifications contained in the Draft Plan are so significant or substantial as to change the nature of the neighbourhood development plan which the Draft Plan would replace.[1] I determined that the modifications would be so significant as to change the nature of the Made Plan. The reasons for this determination were the same as those in the Modification Statement. In particular, I noted that the draft Plan contains 13 new policies.

3. My role

8. My role may be summarised briefly as to consider whether certain statutory requirements have been met, to consider whether the Draft NDP meets the basic conditions, to consider human rights issues, to recommend which of the three options specified in paragraph 16 below applies and, if appropriate, to consider the referendum area. I must act proportionately, recognising that Parliament has intended the neighbourhood plan process to be relatively inexpensive with costs being proportionate.

4. Other Preliminary Matters

Public consultation

9. Consultation and community involvement are important parts of the process of producing a neighbourhood plan. Community engagement is summarised in the Draft NDP's paragraphs 1.17 and 1.18. Details of Consultation are contained in the Consultation Statement. I am satisfied that MWTC took public consultation seriously and that consultation is accurately

[1] PCPA Sch A2 para 10(1).

recorded in the Consultation Statement. Consultation has been sufficient and meets the requirements of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 ("the General Regulations") and the human rights of occupiers of homes and of property owners.

Other statutory requirements

10. I am also satisfied of the following matters:

(1) The neighbourhood area consists of the parish of Much Wenlock.[2]. MWTC is authorised to act in respect of this area (Town and Country Planning Act 1990 ("TCPA") s61F (1) as read with the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 ("PCPA") s38C (2)(a));

(2) The Draft NDP does not include provision about development that is excluded development as defined in TCPA s61K (PCPA s38B (1)(b) and (6)), and does not relate to more than one neighbourhood area (PCPA s38B (1)(c);

(3) No neighbourhood development plan has been made for the neighbourhood area other than the Made Plan;

(4) There is no conflict with PCPA s38A and s38B (TCPA Sch 4B para 8(1)(b) and PCPA s38C (5)(b)); and

(5) The Draft NDP specifies the period for which it is to have effect, namely 2024-2038, as required by PCPA s38B(1)(a).

11. I am satisfied with the Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Statement (November 2024) and with the Habitat Regulations Assessment Screening Statement (November 2024).

5. The Extent and Limits of an Examiner's Role

12. I am required to consider whether the Draft NDP meets the basic conditions specified in PCPA Sch A2 para 11(2), namely:

(a) having regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State, it is appropriate to make the Plan;
(b) the making of the Plan contributes to the achievement of sustainable development;
(c) the making of the Plan is in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan for the area of the authority (or any part of that area);
(d) the making of the Plan does not breach, and is otherwise compatible with, assimilated *obligations; and*

[2] This is shown on the Draft NDP's Figure 1 .

(e) prescribed conditions are met in relation to the Plan and prescribed matters have been complied with in connection with the proposal for the Plan.

13. There is one relevant prescribed basic condition:[3] *"The making of the neighbourhood development plan does not breach the requirements of Chapter 8 of Part 6 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017."* Chapter 8 comprises regulations 105 to 111.

14. TCPA Sch 4B para 8(6) and para 10(3)(b) and the Human Rights Act 1998 mean that I must consider whether the Draft NDP is compatible with Convention rights. *'Convention rights'* are defined in the Human Rights Act 1998 as (a) Articles 2 to 12 and 14 of the European Convention on Human Rights ("the Convention"), (b) Articles 1 to 3 of its First Protocol, and (c) Article 1 of its Thirteenth Protocol, as read with Articles 16 to 18 of the Convention. The Convention rights that are most likely to be relevant to town and country planning are those under the Convention's Article 6(1), 8 and 14 and under its First Protocol Article 1.

15. In my examination of the substantial merits of the Draft NDP, I may not consider matters other than those specified above.[4] In particular, I may not consider whether any other test, such as the soundness test provided for in respect of independent examinations under PCPA s20, is met.[5] Rather, Parliament has decided not to use the soundness test, but to use the, to some extent, less demanding tests in the basic conditions. It is important to avoid unduly onerous demands on qualifying bodies. It is not my role to rewrite a neighbourhood development plan to create the plan that I would have written for the area. It is not my role to impose a different vision on the community or to examine non-policy actions.

16. Having considered the basic conditions and human rights, I have three options, which I must exercise in the light of my findings. I must recommend:

(a) that the local planning authority should make the draft plan,

(b) that the local planning authority should make the draft plan with the modifications specified in the report, or

(c) that the local planning authority should not make the draft plan.[6]

17. My power to recommend modifications is limited by statute in the following terms:

The only modifications that may be recommended are—

(a) modifications that the examiner considers need to be made to secure that the draft plan meets the basic conditions …

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3 Sch 2 para 1 of the General Regulations prescribes this. PPG Reference ID: 41-079-20190509.

4 PCPA Sch A2 para 11(3).

5 Woodcock Holdings Ltd *v.* Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government [2015] EWHC 1173 (Admin), 1st May 2015, Holgate J., para 57; *R.* (Crownhall Estates Limited) *v.* Chichester District Council [2016] EWHC 73 (Admin) 21st January 2016, Holgate J., para 29; PPG Reference ID: 41-055-2018022.

6 PCPA Sch A2 para 13(2).

(b) modifications that the examiner considers need to be made to secure that the draft plan is compatible with the Convention rights,

(c) modifications that the examiner considers need to be made to secure that the draft plan complies with the provision made by or under sections 38A and 38B, and

(d) modifications for the purpose of correcting errors.[7]

18. The word *"only"* prevents me recommending any other modifications. The fact that a modification would be of benefit is not a sufficient ground in itself to recommend it. So, for example, the fact that a policy could be strengthened or added to does not justify a modification unless this is necessary for the reasons given above. I must not take an excessively restrictive view of the power to recommend modifications, but must bear in mind Lindblom LJ's explanation of its extent in his judgment in Kebbell Developments Ltd *v.* Leeds City Council.[8] Errors include statements that were correct when written, but have become out of date. I may not recommend a modification that would put the Draft NDP in breach of a basic condition or of human rights. When I conclude that a modification is necessary, I must, in deciding its wording, bear in mind material considerations including government advice. This includes the importance of localism. Where I properly can, my recommended modifications seek to limit the extent to which the substance of the Draft NDP is changed.

19. It is not my role to consider matters that are solely for the determination of other bodies such as SC, the Environment Agency or Historic England. Nor is it my role to consider matters that an NDP could consider, but which are not considered in the Draft NDP, unless this is necessary for my role as explained above. It is not my role to consider aspirations that are not policies.

6. Consideration of Representations

20. I have read each representation and given it careful consideration, but have not felt it necessary to respond to all of them. Rather in accordance with the statutory requirement[9] and bearing in mind the judgment of Lang J in *R.* (Bewley Homes Plc) *v.* Waverley Borough Council,[10] I have mainly concentrated on giving reasons for each of my recommendations.[11] Where I am required to consider the effect of the whole Draft NDP, I have borne it all in mind. Substantial parts of the responses suggest additions to draft NDP. However, I can only recommend modifications for the reasons given in paragraph 17 above.

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7 PCPA Sch A2 para 13(3).

8 [2018] EWCA Civ 450, 14th March 2018, paras 34 and 35.

9 PCPA Sch A2 para 13(5)(a).

10 [2017] EWHC 1776 (Admin), Lang J, 18th July 2017.

11 TCPA Sch 4B, para 10(6).

7. Public Hearing and Site Visit

21. The general rule is that the examination of the issues by the examiner is to take the form of the consideration of the written representations.[12] However, an examiner must cause a hearing to be held for the purpose of receiving oral representations about a particular issue in any case where the examiner considers that there are exceptional reasons for doing so, or in such other cases as may be prescribed.[13] Neither applies. I therefore did not hold a public hearing.

22. I decided that an unaccompanied site visit was necessary and held a detailed one on Saturday 18th October 2025. The weather was fine, there were no impediments to the visit and I was able to see all that I wished to see. The site visit included, but was not limited to, viewing: Much Wenlock, Bourton, Homer and Wigwig; all proposed non-designated heritage assets but one;[14] all proposed local green spaces; both conservation areas; and specific locations mentioned in representations. The site visit helped me to gain a sufficient impression of the nature of the area for the purpose of my role.

8. Basic Conditions and Human Rights

Regard to national policies and advice

23. The first basic condition requires that I consider whether it is appropriate that the NDP should be made *"having regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State"*. A requirement to have regard to policies and advice does not require that such policy and advice must necessarily be followed, but they should only be departed from if there are clear reasons, which should be explained, for doing so.[15]

24. The main document in which national planning policy is contained is the National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024) as amended slightly[16] on 7th February 2025 ("NPPF") and I have borne that in mind. Other policy and advice that I have borne in mind includes national Planning Practice Guidance ("PPG").

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12 PCPA Sch A2 para 12(1); PPG Reference ID: 41-056-20180222.

13 PCPA Sch A2 para 12 (2).

14 Havelock Well, Stretton Road (proposed non-designated heritage asset 14), which is on a very overgrown wall.

15 *R.* (Lochailort Investments Limited) *v.* Mendip District Council [2020] EWCA Civ 1259, Lewison LJ, 2nd October 2020, paras 6, 31 and 33.

16 The amendments were to correct cross-references from footnotes 7 and 8 and to amend the paragraph 155's first sentence and were not intended to change policy.

Contributing to the achievement of sustainable development

25. The second basic condition means that I must consider whether the making of the Plan contributes to the achievement of sustainable development. Unless the Draft NDP, or the Draft NDP as modified, contributes to sustainable development, it cannot be made. This condition relates to the making of the Plan as a whole. It does not require that each policy in it must contribute to sustainable development. It does require me to consider whether constraints might prevent sustainable development and, if they might, whether the evidence justifies them. That involves consideration of site-specific constraints, both existing and those proposed in the Draft NDP. The total effect of the constraints in the Draft NDP when read with existing constraints must not prevent the achievement of sustainable development.

General conformity with the development plan's strategic policies

26. The third basic condition means that I must consider whether the Draft NDP as a whole is in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan for the area of the authority. The development plan for the purpose of my examination does not include the made NDP.[17] It includes the Shropshire Core Strategy (adopted 2011) and the Site Allocations and Management of Development (SAMDev) Plan (adopted 2015). SC is at an early stage of preparing a new Local Plan for the period to 2045. It is anticipated that this will be adopted in 2028 and will establish a new settlement hierarchy with, where appropriate, growth strategies for settlements. This is not relevant to this basic condition.

27. The adjective *'general'* allows a degree of (but by no means unlimited) flexibility and requires the exercise of planning judgement. The Draft NDP *"need not slavishly adopt every detail"*.[18] This basic condition only applies to strategic policies - there is no conformity requirement under it in respect of non-strategic policies in the development plan, or in respect of other local authority documents that do not form part of the adopted development plan, although such documents may be relevant to other matters. In assessing general conformity and whether a policy is strategic, I have borne in mind helpful PPG advice.[19] I have also born in mind the relevant part of the judgment in R. (Swan Quay LLP) *v.* Swale District Council.[20]

Assimilated obligations

28. The fourth basic condition requires me to consider whether the Draft NDP breaches, or is otherwise incompatible with, assimilated obligations (formerly retained EU obligations). I have in particular considered the following, together with the UK statutory instruments implementing them in England: the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive

17 PCPA Sch A2 para 16.

18 Wiltshire Council *v.* Cooper Estates Strategic Land Ltd [2019] EWCA Civ 840, para 3, 16th May 2019.

19 PPG Reference IDs: 41-074-20140306; 41-075-20190509; 41-076-20190509; and 41-077-20190509.

20 [2017] EWHC 420 (Admin), para 29, Dove J, 27th January 2017.

(2001/42/EC); the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive (2011/92/EU); the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC); the Wild Birds Directive (2009/147/EC); the Waste Framework Directive (2008/98/EC); the Air Quality Directive (2008/50/EC); the Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC); and the General Data Protection Regulation (2016/679/EU). I have also considered the judgment of the European Court of Justice in People Over Wind *v.* Coillte Teoranta.[21] I have borne in mind that proportionality is a concept of and underlies EU law and must be wary of requirements that would be disproportionate to the Draft NDP.

29. I am satisfied that no issue arises in respect of equality under general principles of EU law or any EU equality directive.

Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017

30. I am satisfied that the making of the NDP would not be incompatible with the prescribed basic condition and that it is not necessary to consider the matter further in this report.

Human Rights

31. The planning law of England and Wales in general complies with the Convention. This matter can be dealt with briefly in advance of further consideration of the contents of the Draft NDP. I have considered whether anything in the Draft NDP would cause a breach of any Convention right. The Convention rights that have been most relevant to town and country planning are those under the Convention's Article 6(1), 8 and 14 and under its First Protocol Article 1 and I have considered these. I have also considered last year's landmark judgment of the European Court of Human Rights' Grand Chamber in Verein KlimaSeniorinnen Schweiz and Others *v.* Switzerland,[22] which held that under article 8 a State has a positive obligation to implement sufficient measures to combat climate change. In Convention jurisprudence a State includes its emanations, including local government. First Protocol Article 1 reinforces the common-law principle that private property rights should not be removed without proper justification, and I have borne that in mind. Apart from those, nothing in my examination of the Draft NDP has required further consideration of human rights.

9. The Nature of the Neighbourhood Area

32. In considering the contents of the Draft NDP I must consider the nature of the neighbourhood area. Its gist is well described in the Draft NDP. Much Wenlock parish is in Shropshire and includes the town of Much Wenlock, together with much smaller settlements including Bourton, Homer and Wigwig, and open countryside. Apart from Bourton church,

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21 Case C-323/17, 12th April 2018.

22 Application no. 53600/20, (2024) 79 EHRR 1, 9th April 2024.

there are no facilities in any settlement other than Much Wenlock. None of these other settlements is served by public transport. In 2021 census there were 3,907 residents living in the parish in 1,345 homes.

33. The parish has a wealth of heritage assets, including the medieval Wenlock Priory (a Scheduled Monument), numerous listed buildings (including three grade I[23]) and Conservation Areas ("CAs") in Much Wenlock and Bourton. These make it an attractive destination for tourists.

34. Part of the western and northern areas of the parish are within the Shropshire Hills National Landscape and there are four Sites of Special Scientific Interest.

35. There are buses between Much Wenlock and Telford, Bridgnorth and Shrewsbury, Broseley and Oswestry. There is no railway station in the parish or in any adjoining parish.

10. The contents of the Draft NDP

Introduction

Page 4, paragraph 1.1

36. There is a small error in this paragraph. As the Foreword correctly states, the Made Plan runs until 2026.

Recommended modification 1

Page 4, paragraph 1.1

Replace "2013-2026" with "2021-2026".

Page 6

37. Paragraph 1.12 was correct when written, but needs to be brought up to date and to be more detailed.

Recommended modification 2

Page 6, paragraph 1.12

Replace the whole paragraph with "SC had been working on a review of their Local Plan, which had reached Examination stage. The Inspector wrote to SC on 17 February 2025 to set out concerns about the soundness of the plan. SC issued a letter on 13 March 2025, setting out their intention to withdraw the Plan from Examination. On 17 July 2025 SC's Full Council made the decision to withdraw the Plan and it was formally withdrawn from

[23] Holy Trinity church Much Wenlock, Wenlock Abbey and the Priory of St Milburga (Ruins).

examination on 25 July 2025. On 12 February 2025 SC's cabinet agreed that the evidence base supporting the now withdrawn emerging Plan forms a material consideration in decision making on relevant planning applications, to support the implementation of the presumption in favour of sustainable development. This includes planning applications for new development on sites proposed to be allocated in the now withdrawn Plan."

A vision and objectives for Much Wenlock

Page 13

38. The third indent on this page, "keeping sites free from development if they have the potential to be used to slow down the flow of surface water through engineering or natural means", while understandable in the light of Much Wenlock's history of serious flooding, is too absolute. What is required is keeping sufficient land with such potential free, not all sites if fewer will suffice and not the whole of a site if only part of a site is needed. Also, not all development would impede such use. Without modification the indent could prevent the achievement of sustainable development and indeed prevent development the net effect of which was to reduce the risk of flooding. The same applies to page 44

Recommended modification 3

Page 13, objective 3 and page 44, objective 3

Replace the 3rd indent page 13 and the 6th indent on page 44 with "keeping sufficient land that has the potential to be used to slow down the flow of surface water through engineering or natural means free from development that would prevent such use".

39. There is an obvious minor error in the final line. This is repeated on page 82.

Recommended modification 4

Page 13 final line and page 82 second indent

Delete "are created".

Spatial strategy and housing

Page 16, policy MW1

40. Part B of policy MW1 is too demanding. Criteria (i) and (iii) should be alternatives, not cumulative requirements. Appropriate factors for a national landscape are not always relevant to other designations. For example, tranquillity is not required for all listed buildings, all local green spaces or for geological SSSIs. The Part could prevent the achievement of sustainable development and requires modification.

Recommended modification 5

Page 16, policy MW1

Replace Part B with:

"Development proposals outside the defined development boundary (as shown in the most recent development plan) will only be supported where appropriate consideration is given to the effect on designated sites and they involve:
i. development supported in such locations in national and local planning policies; or
ii. the proposal is a "rural exceptions scheme" delivered in accordance with Policy MW3; or
iii. where appropriate, it brings redundant or vacant agricultural or farm buildings or historic buildings of heritage value back into viable optimal use consistent with their conservation in a manner that does not cause harm in terms of additional traffic."

Good Quality Design, Local Character and Heritage

Page 79

41. Policy MW20 C (i) refers to "the relevant Conservation Area Management Plan". Neither of the parish's two CAs has a Management Plan and SC has no intention at present to produce a management plan for either area. In these circumstances it is confusing to refer to a Management Plan. Should such a plan unexpectedly be created, relevant content would in any event be capable of being a material consideration in development management. I recommend removal of this requirement.

Recommended modification 6

Page 79, policy MW20 C (i)

Delate "i. be guided by the relevant Conservation Area Management Plan; and" and renumber the rest of the policy.

Page 80, paragraph 4.146

42. There is a minor error at the end of this paragraph.

Recommended modification 7

Page 80, paragraph 4.146

Replace "Appendix D" with " Appendix E".

Green and Open Spaces, Local Landscape and Wildlife

Pages 83 to 85 Local Green Spaces

43. Pages 83 to 85 and Appendix E consider 8 proposed local green spaces ("LGSs"), namely:

1. The Railway Walk
2. Windmill Hill
3. Gaskell Recreation Ground
4. Southfield Road green space
5. Havelock Crescent green space
6. Hunters Gate
7. Cemetery on Bridgnorth Road
8. Allotments on Southfield Road

44. These are shown on Figure 17. The first six are designated LGSs in the Made Plan. The last two are new are designated as LGSs:

45. The NPPF provides for LGSs in its chapter 8, which is headed "Promoting healthy and safe communities". Under the sub-heading "Open Spaces and Recreation", its paragraphs 106 and 107 state:

> *106. The designation of land as Local Green Space through… neighbourhood plans allows communities to identify and protect green areas of particular importance to them. Designating land as Local Green Space should be consistent with the local planning of sustainable development and complement investment in sufficient homes, jobs and other essential services. Local Green Spaces should only be designated when a plan is prepared or updated, and be capable of enduring beyond the end of the plan period.*
>
> *107. The Local Green Space designation should only be used where the green space is:*
>
> *a) in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;*
>
> *b) demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife; and*
>
> *c) local in character and is not an extensive tract of land."*

46. These paragraphs are central to any consideration of whether land should be designated as an LGS. They should be followed unless there is a sufficiently good reason not to do so and none is apparent to me. In considering the proposed LGS designations, I have borne in mind the judgment of the Court of Appeal in *R.* (Lochailort Investments Ltd) *v* Mendip District Council.[24] The phrase in paragraph 101 *"capable of enduring beyond the end of the plan*

[24] [2020] EWCA Civ 1259, 2nd October 2020.

period" was given specific consideration. While this is a less demanding policy than applies to Green Belt designation where the stronger *"permanently"* is used, it is still important.

47. I have viewed each proposed LGS. Bearing in mind the documents that I have read and what I have seen, I am satisfied that the whole of each site satisfies NPPF paragraphs 106 and 107 and that their designation would not conflict with a basic condition or with a Convention right. Each should be designated as an LGS.

Page 92, figure 20

48. The symbols on the first row of the figure are not explained in the draft NDP and are by no means so clear that their meaning would be apparent to all reasonable readers. They should be explained.

Recommended modification 8

Page 92, paragraph 4.174

Replace the symbols in the first row with: "Biodiversity & Geology"; "Landscape, Heritage & Culture"; "Water Resources"; "Active Travel, Access & Recreation"; "Health & Wellbeing"; and "Climate Change". This text can be written vertically.

Appendices

Page 126, Description

49. The former railway station house is now two dwellings, not one.

Recommended modification 9

Page 126, Description

Replace "Private dwelling" with "Private dwellings".

Page 146

50. There is a minor error in of the title.

Recommended modification 10

Page 146, title

Replace "Appendix F" with "Appendix E".

Page 150

51. There are minor errors with the name William Penny Brookes in two places.

Recommended modification 11

Page 150

Replace "penny" with "Penny" in the two places where this occurs.

Page 153.

52. The Havelock Crescent Green Space is to the west, not the east of the town centre.

Recommended modification 12

Page 153, title

Replace "east" with "west".

Page 162

53. There is a minor error in the title.

Recommended modification 13

Page 162, title

Replace "Appendix G" with "Appendix F".

11. Updating

54. It may be that parts of the draft NDP will need updating. Nothing in this report should deter or delay appropriate updating prior to the referendum in respect of incontrovertible issues of primary fact. For example, if Prior's Lodging and Infirmary part of the Wenlock Priory were removed from the Register of Heritage at Risk, it would be appropriate to update paragraph 4.149.

12. The Referendum Area

55. I have considered whether the referendum area should be extended beyond the designated plan area.[25] However, I can see no reason to extend the area and therefore recommend that the referendum area be limited to the neighbourhood area, the parish of Much Wenlock.

13. Summary of Main Findings

56. I commend the Draft Plan for being clear and a pleasure to read, and for the thought and effort that has gone into its creation. It has struck the right balance between intelligibility to a lay person and the use of technical words that ensure precision.

[25] PPG Reference ID: 41-059-20140306.

57. I recommend that the Draft Plan be modified in the terms specified in Appendix A to this report to meet basic conditions and to correct errors. I am satisfied with all parts of the Draft Plan to which I am not recommending modifications.

58. With those modifications, the Draft Plan will meet all the basic conditions and human rights obligations. Specifically:

- Having regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State, it will be appropriate to make the Plan;
- The making of the Plan will contribute to the achievement of sustainable development;
- The making of the Plan will be in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan for the neighbourhood area;
- The making of the Plan will not breach, and will not otherwise be incompatible with, assimilated obligations;
- The making of the Plan will not breach the requirements of Chapter 8 of Part 6 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017; and
- The Plan will be compatible with Convention rights contained in the Human Rights Act 1998.

59. I recommend that SC should make the Draft Plan with the modifications specified in Appendix A to this report.

Timothy Jones, Barrister, FCIArb,

Independent Examiner,

No 5 Chambers

7th November 2025.

Appendix A: Recommended Modifications

Recommended modification 1

Page 4, paragraph 1.1

Replace "2013-2026" with "2021-2026".

Recommended modification 2

Page 6, paragraph 1.12

Replace the whole paragraph with "SC had been working on a review of their Local Plan, which had reached Examination stage. The Inspector wrote to SC on 17 February 2025 to set out concerns about the soundness of the plan. SC issued a letter on 13 March 2025, setting out their intention to withdraw the Plan from Examination. On 17 July 2025 SC's Full Council made the decision to withdraw the Plan and it was formally withdrawn from examination on 25 July 2025. On 12 February 2025 SC's cabinet agreed that the evidence base supporting the now withdrawn emerging Plan forms a material consideration in decision making on relevant planning applications, to support the implementation of the presumption in favour of sustainable development. This includes planning applications for new development on sites proposed to be allocated in the now withdrawn Plan."

Recommended modification 3

Page 13, objective 3 and page 44, objective 3

Replace the 3rd indent page 13 and the 6th indent on page 44 with "keeping sufficient land that has the potential to be used to slow down the flow of surface water through engineering or natural means free from development that would prevent such use".

Recommended modification 4

Page 13 final line and page 82 second indent

Delete "are created".

Recommended modification 5

Page 16, policy MW1

Replace Part B with:

"Development proposals outside the defined development boundary (as shown in the most recent development plan) will only be supported where appropriate consideration is given to the effect on designated sites and they involve:
i. development supported in such locations in national and local planning policies; or

ii. the proposal is a "rural exceptions scheme" delivered in accordance with Policy MW3; or

iii. where appropriate, it brings redundant or vacant agricultural or farm buildings or historic buildings of heritage value back into viable optimal use consistent with their conservation in a manner that does not cause harm in terms of additional traffic."

Recommended modification 6

Page 79, policy MW20 C (i)

Delate "i. be guided by the relevant Conservation Area Management Plan; and" and renumber the rest of the policy.

Recommended modification 7

Page 80, paragraph 4.146

Replace "Appendix D" with " Appendix E".

Recommended modification 8

Page 92, paragraph 4.174

Replace the symbols in the first row with: "Biodiversity & Geology"; "Landscape, Heritage & Culture"; "Water Resources"; "Active Travel, Access & Recreation"; "Health & Wellbeing"; and "Climate Change". This text can be written vertically.

Recommended modification 9

Page 126, Description

Replace "Private dwelling" with "Private dwellings".

Recommended modification 10

Page 146, title

Replace "Appendix F" with "Appendix E".

Recommended modification 11

Page 150

Replace "penny" with "Penny" in the two places where this occurs.

Recommended modification 12

Page 153, title

Replace "east" with "west".

Recommended modification 13

Page 162, title

Replace “Appendix G” with “Appendix F”.

Appendix B: Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used in this report:

CA	Conservation Area
Convention	European Convention on Human Rights
Draft NDP	Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan 2024 – 2038
EU	European Union
General Regulations	Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended)
LGS	local green space
Made NDP	Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan 2013 - 2026
MWTC	Much Wenlock Town Council
NDP	Neighbourhood Development Plan
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024)
para	paragraph
PCPA	Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended)
PPG	national Planning Practice Guidance
s	section
SC	Shropshire Council
Sch	Schedule
TCPA	Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended)

Where I use the verb *'include'*, I am not using it to mean *'comprise'*. The words that follow are not necessarily exclusive.

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Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan Review – Schedule of Modifications by the Examiner

APP2

Reference	Section	Recommended modification	Agreed (Y/N)
1	Page 4, paragraph 1.1	Replace “2013-2026” with “2021-2026”.	N Much Wenlock Town Council has noted a factual error in the recommended modification. ‘Replace “2013-2026” with “2021-2026”’ should read ‘Replace “2013-2036” with “2013-2026”’ The NDP has been modified to display the correct timeframe for the existing Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan.
2	Page 6, paragraph 1.12	Replace the whole paragraph with “SC had been working on a review of their Local Plan, which had reached Examination stage. The Inspector wrote to SC on 17 February 2025 to set out concerns about the soundness of the plan. SC issued a letter on 13 March 2025, setting out their intention to withdraw the Plan from Examination. On 17 July 2025 SC’s Full Council made the decision to withdraw the Plan and it was formally withdrawn from examination on 25 July 2025. On 12 February 2025 SC’s cabinet agreed that the evidence base supporting the now withdrawn emerging Plan forms a material consideration in decision making on relevant planning applications, to support the implementation of the presumption in favour of sustainable development. This includes planning applications for new development on sites proposed to be allocated in the now withdrawn Plan.”	Y

3	Page 13, objective 3 and page 44 objective 3	Replace the third indent on this page with “keeping sufficient land that has the potential to be used to slow down the flow of surface water through engineering or natural means free from development that would prevent such use”.	Y
4	Page 13 final line and page 82 second indent	Delete “are created”.	Y
5	Page 16, policy MW1	Replace Part B with: “Development proposals outside the defined development boundary (as shown in the most recent development plan) will only be supported where appropriate consideration is given to the effect on designated sites and they involve: i. development supported in such locations in national and local planning policies; or ii. the proposal is a "rural exceptions scheme" delivered in accordance with Policy MW3; or iii. where appropriate, it brings redundant or vacant agricultural or farm buildings or historic buildings of heritage value back into viable optimal use consistent with their conservation in a manner that does not cause harm in terms of additional traffic.”	Y
6	Page 79, policy MW20 C (i)	Delete “i. be guided by the relevant Conservation Area Management Plan; and” and renumber the rest of the policy.	Y

7	Page 80, paragraph 4.146	Replace “Appendix D” with “Appendix E”.	N Much Wenlock Town Council has confirmed that *Appendix D – Non-Designated Heritage Assets* is correctly referenced.
8	Page 92, paragraph 4.174	Replace the symbols in the first row with: “Biodiversity & Geology”; “Landscape, Heritage & Culture”; “Water Resources”; “Active Travel, Access & Recreation”; “Health & Wellbeing”; and “Climate Change”. This text can be written vertically.	Y
9	Page 126, Description	Replace “Private dwelling” with “Private dwellings”.	Y
10	Page 146, title	Replace “Appendix F” with “Appendix E”.	Y
11	Page 150	Replace “penny” with “Penny” in the two places where this occurs.	Y
12	Page 153, title	Replace “east” with “west”.	Y
13	Page 162, title	Replace “Appendix G” with “Appendix F”.	Y

Factual errors amended:

- Amended various references from ‘Gaskell Road Corner’/ ‘Gaskell Corner’ to ‘**Gaskell Arms junction**’ for consistency. All relate to the junction of the A4169 and A458.
- Amended Barrow ‘Street’ to Barrow ‘**Road**’, which is factually correct.
- Policy MW21 B(1) – corrected the spelling of Pavillion to ‘**Pavilion**’.
- Amended throughout ‘Gaskell Field’ to ‘Gaskell Recreation Ground’, which is the proper name and for consistency.
- Amended references from ‘Lady Milnes Gaskell’ to ‘**Mrs Mary Ward**’ (of the same family), which is factually correct.
- Correction of ‘Wenlock Estate’ throughout to ‘Wenlock Estate**s’**, which is factually correct.
- Additional wording at Table 18 to note the spelling errors in the Table taken from the SC Open Spaces Assessment.
- Para 4.97: Factually correcting road routes.
- Para 4.175: Addition of ‘Whitwell Coppice’ as a factual correction.
- Page 100 and page 101, amendment of ‘Corve Dale’ to ‘Corvedale’ – factual correction.
- Page 106 – Correction of ‘Seve**r**n’ Trent.
- Page 108: Correction of ‘Olympics’ Trail to ‘**Olympian** Trail’; addition of ‘&’ between Telford Wrekin.
- Page 125 – added in that this was the ticket office from the Railway Station for accuracy.
- Page 130 – correction of the name ‘Pou**n**tney’.

Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan

Our plan – Our future

Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan 2024 to 2038

~~Submission~~ Referendum Version

~~May~~ November 2025

Prepared by the Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group on behalf of Much Wenlock Town Council

Foreword

Much Wenlock is a town with a strong sense of identity, history and purpose, and it has embraced the opportunity to update its existing Neighbourhood Plan. Back in 2013, Much Wenlock created the first Neighbourhood Plan in Shropshire, leading the way for communities to shape development in their parishes.

The adopted plan runs until 2026, so it is appropriate to have an interim review. As in 2013, the level of engagement by residents has been remarkable, providing the steering group with a wealth of perspectives that has shaped every aspect of this plan.

At the heart of our approach has been the delicate balance between preserving Much Wenlock's unique character and heritage whilst ensuring our town remains vibrant and fit for purpose in the 21st century. Our steering group, comprising both members of the public and Town Councillors, has worked tirelessly to craft policies that reflect the aspirations and concerns of our community. Those whose families have been here for generations and those who have moved to our town and villages more recently.

Throughout our consultations, we have consistently heard about the importance of sympathetic development that respects our distinctive architectural legacy and rural setting, protecting those qualities that make Much Wenlock special. This document represents the culmination of listening carefully to residents, landowners, community groups and a range of local organisations. We have aimed to reach balanced, practical compromises that are both viable and achievable within the planning framework.

When adopted, this Neighbourhood Plan will provide Much Wenlock, through its Town Council, with greater significant influence over proposed developments. This means we can better ensure that future growth aligns with our community's vision and meets its genuine needs. It will also secure more substantial contributions from developers towards the infrastructure required to support new development. While the powers granted through a Neighbourhood Plan are not unlimited, they do provide our community with a stronger voice in shaping our future.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to everyone who has contributed to this process. Your passion for Much Wenlock and commitment to its future have made this plan possible.

Cllr Dan Thomas

Chairman, Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This document is the Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan (MWNP). It replaces the 2013-202~~3~~6 Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan.

1.2 It sets out planning and land-use policy for the town and wider parish, over the period 2024 to 2038, forming part of the development plan for Shropshire Council (SC). SC designated the Much Wenlock neighbourhood area on 12 September 2012. The neighbourhood area shares its boundary with that of the Parish (*Figure 1*).

1.3 The Plan has been prepared in accordance with the Town & Country Planning Act 1990, the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the Localism Act 2011 and the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended). The Town Council, as the Qualifying Body, set up a Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group comprising local councillors and community volunteers to lead on the preparation of the Plan. In consultation with the community, local businesses and others, the Steering Group has reviewed the vision and objectives for the future of the designated area and set out how that vision will be realised through planning land use and development change over the period to 2038.

1.4 The MWNP policies form part of the development plan for Shropshire Council and must be considered by any interested parties wishing to submit planning applications for development within Much Wenlock parish. The policies also set out how land should be considered, in planning terms, locally, and alongside the policies of the local development plan, is a material planning consideration in the determination of applications.

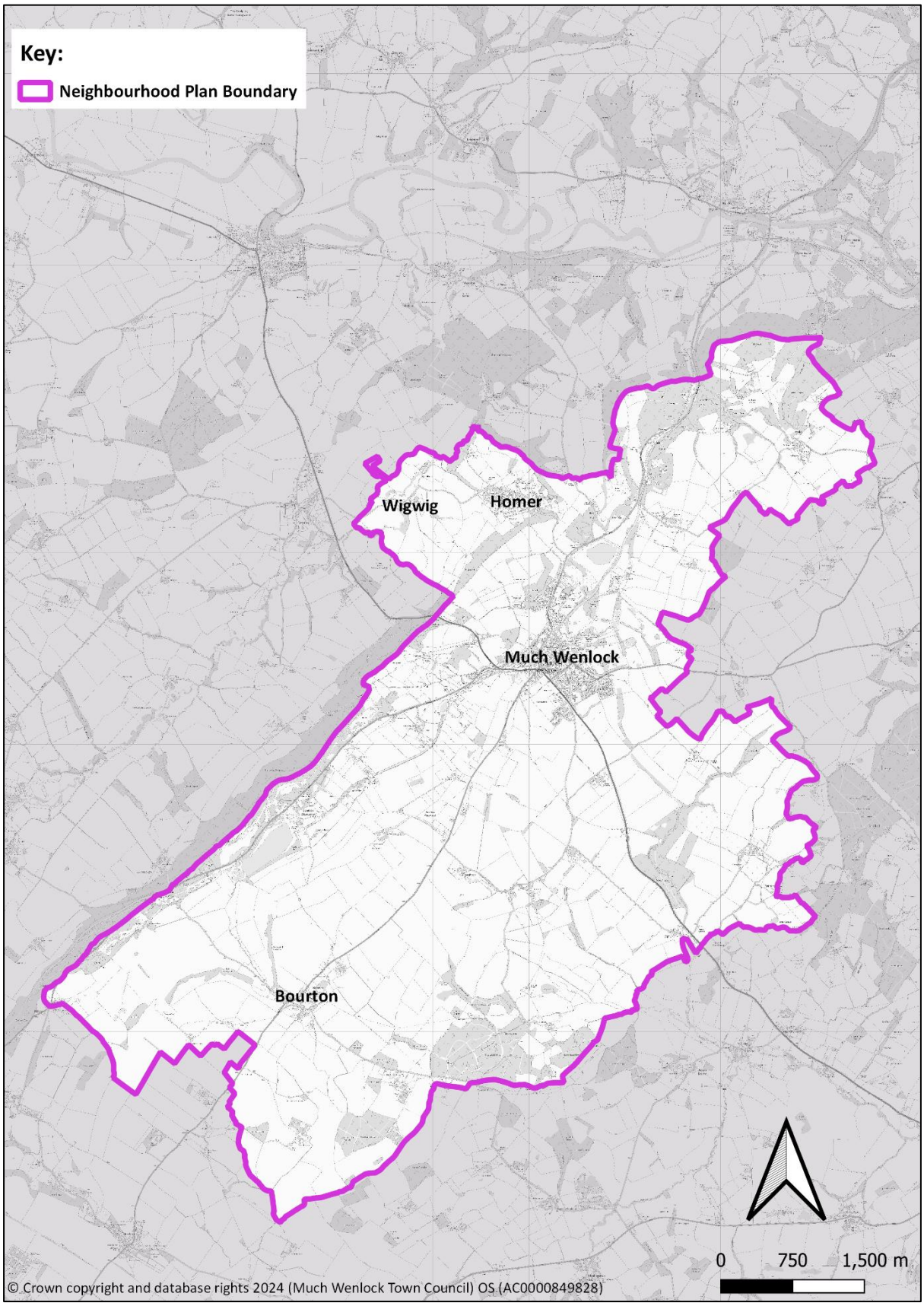
1.5 The process of reviewing the MWNP has sought to reflect matters that are of considerable importance to the local community. Within each section there is a summary of what the policy seeks to achieve and a justification, providing the necessary understanding of why the policy is needed and how it should be applied. The policies themselves are presented in the green boxes and these will be used to determine planning applications. To understand the full context for any individual policy, it should be read alongside the supporting text and evidence documents that have been compiled to underpin the MWNP.

1.6 Beneath each policy is a conformity reference. These list the relevant strategic policies in the adopted and emerging Shropshire Local Plan documents and the paragraphs of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (most recently updated in December 2024) to which the policy conforms to. Alongside some policies are Community Actions.

1.7 The MWNP also identifies local community projects that are not met through planning policy but which are important to the well-being of the community. Finally, the Plan sets out the Community Infrastructure Priorities and a framework for monitoring and implementation.

1.8 Note that the Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Area Design Guidelines (Appendix C) form part of formal policy for the MWNP.

Figure 1: Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan designated area



The Planning Policy Context

National Planning Policy

1.9 The MWNP has been prepared in accordance with the NPPF (most recently revised in December 2024). It states:

> *"Neighbourhood planning gives communities the power to develop a shared vision for their area. Neighbourhood plans can shape, direct and help to deliver sustainable development, by influencing local planning decisions as part of the statutory development plan.* ***Neighbourhood plans should not promote less development than set out in the strategic policies for the area, or undermine those strategic policies*** *(Neighbourhood plans must be in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in any development plan that covers their area)."*
>
> "*Once a neighbourhood plan has been brought into force,* ***the policies it contains take precedence over existing non-strategic policies in a local plan covering the neighbourhood area, where they are in conflict****; unless they are superseded by strategic or non-strategic policies that are adopted subsequently."*

Local Planning Policy

1.10 The policies of the MWNP must be in general conformity with the adopted strategic policies of the Shropshire Core Strategy (adopted 2011) and the Site Allocations and Management of Development (SAMDev) Plan (adopted 2015).

1.11 The Shropshire Development Plan also comprises a series of 'made' neighbourhood plans and other supplementary planning guidance.

~~1.11~~1.12 SC had been working on a review of their Local Plan, which had reached Examination stage. The Inspector wrote to SC on 17 February 2025 to set out concerns about the soundness of the plan. SC issued a letter on 13 March 2025, setting out their intention to withdraw the Plan from Examination. On 17 July 2025 SC's Full Council made the decision to withdraw the Plan and it was formally withdrawn from examination on 25 July 2025. On 12 February 2025 SC's cabinet agreed that the evidence base supporting the now withdrawn emerging Plan forms a material consideration in decision making on relevant planning applications, to support the implementation of the presumption in favour of sustainable development. This includes planning applications for new development on sites proposed to be allocated in the now withdrawn Plan.

~~1.12 SC has been working on a review of their Local Plan, which had reached Examination stage. The Inspector wrote to SC on 17 February 2025 to set out concerns about the soundness of the plan. SC issued a letter on 13 March 2025, setting out their intention to withdraw the Plan from Examination, a decision which will need to be approved at Full Cabinet, likely July 2025.~~

1.13 The SC Cabinet~~committee~~ Meeting held on 12 February 2025 notes agreement that "the evidence base supporting the draft Local Plan (2016-2038) is a material consideration in decision making on relevant planning applications, to support the implementation of the

presumption in favour of sustainable development. This will include planning applications for new development on sites proposed to be allocated in the submitted version of the Local Plan (2016-2038). This evidence base has been drawn on to inform policies of the MWNP.

The Shropshire Hills National Landscape Management Plan

1.14 Part of the Shropshire Hills National Landscape (SHNL) falls within the parish, to the west and north. The remainder of the parish contributes to the setting of the SHNL. Local authorities with land in a national landscape are legally obliged under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 to produce a Management Plan. The Shropshire Hills Management Plan 2019-2024 is used to guide environmental land management and assess the impact of development or other changes on the national landscape.

1.15 The objectives of the Management Plan have been considered in the development of this Neighbourhood Plan, as has the advice contained in the suite of documents, such as the Agricultural Building Design Guide.

1.16 It is noted that work on a Management Plan 2025-30 is underway.

Community engagement

1.17 Work on the MWNP Review (*Table 1)* has been guided by the need to engage with the local community. Apart from the statutory requirements for public consultation at various stages, measures to draw in a wider range of contributions included regular newsletter articles, a parish-wide survey, Plan Review exhibitions and discussions with groups and individuals in the parish. These ~~will~~ were~~be~~ set out fully in the Consultation Statement, which accompanied the~~.~~ ~~submitted alongside this~~ Submission Version Plan.

1.18 Table 1: Summary timeline of activity

Date	Milestone	Key activities
2023	Much Wenlock Town Council decides to review the MWNP	• Funding sought and consultancy support engaged • High level review of existing Plan undertaken to identify potential amendments and gaps
2024	Evidence and engagement Pre-Submission Version (Regulation 14) Plan published	• Dedicated webpage established • Steering Group established • Working groups established • Community Survey launched • Community exhibition on review of objectives • Housing Needs Assessment prepared • Design Guidance and Codes prepared • Initial draft plan prepared for Strategic Environmental Assessment / Habitats Regulations Assessment screenings • Regulation 14 consultation carried out

2025-2026	Regulation 16 Plan published Examination Referendum	• Submission Version Plan submitted to SC for second round of formal consultation • Plan independently examined • Plan finalised for Referendum • Plan 'made'

Sustainability of the Neighbourhood Plan

1.19 The MWNP has been screened by SC to ascertain whether a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is required. The screening document was subject to consultation with Historic England, Natural England and the Environment Agency for five weeks from 18 September 2024 to 24 October 2024. The Screening Determination Statement has concluded that the MWNP is unlikely to result in significant environmental effects and therefore does not require a Strategic Environmental Assessment.

1.20 In addition, the screening determined that the 'appropriate assessment' stage of the HRA process, that ascertains the effect on integrity of any European Sites, does not need to be undertaken. This conclusion was sent to Natural England for consideration and their response is in agreement. A copy of the Screening Determination statements is available on the Town Council website.

2. ABOUT MUCH WENLOCK PARISH

2.1. Much Wenlock is a small historic Shropshire market town with a wider rural parish area which runs from the lip of the Severn Gorge down to the south west along Wenlock Edge. Part of the western and northern areas are situated within the Shropshire Hills National Landscape, with the remainder forming part of its setting. Some areas of the parish are nationally geologically important with a high number of Sites of Special Scientific Interest.

2.2. There are 2,907 residents in the parish living in 1,345 homes (2021 census, see also *Figure 2*). The main settlement is Much Wenlock itself, recognised as being associated with the origins of the Modern Olympic Games due to the meetings and correspondence between William Penny Brookes and Baron de Coubertin.

2.3. Smaller villages and hamlets include Bourton, Homer and Wigwig.

2.4. The market town has at its heart, the medieval Wenlock Priory (a Scheduled Monument) and Guildhall with several further medieval buildings in the High St. There are also numerous listed buildings including within the Conservation Areas of Much Wenlock and Bourton.

2.5. There is a healthy High Street, and a range of facilities including a health centre and two schools, alongside many community groups covering a wide range of interests.

2.6. Much Wenlock is also one of the most desirable places to live in Shropshire because of the town's qualities and especially its attractive rural location. It is convenient for the growth points of Telford and Shrewsbury and being within easy commuting distance of the West Midlands conurbation. It is split by the busy A458 and A4169 carrying rising numbers of commercial and heavy goods vehicle traffic.

2.7. The resulting development pressures and high house prices set a challenge to provide housing, supported by the necessary infrastructure, to meet local needs in a way that respects the quality of the town and its rural setting.

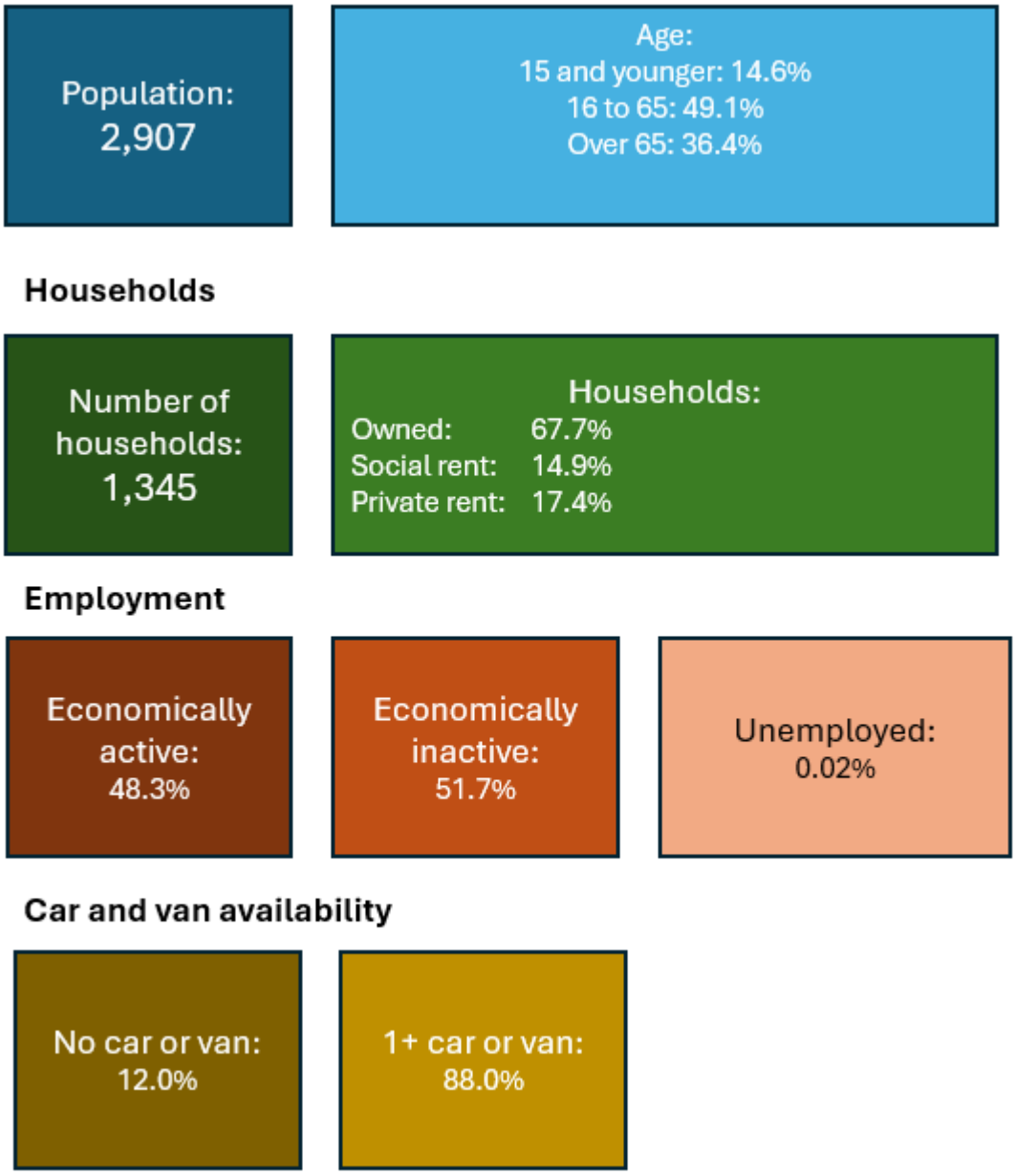
Issues and opportunities for Much Wenlock

2.8. In consultation with the community, including the town surveys and visioning and objectives workshop, the following issues and opportunities have been identified:

- There are approximately 2,900 people living in the parish. In terms of age profile, there is a higher percentage of those aged 65 years and over when compared to Shropshire as a whole. It will be important that the specific needs of older residents are considered in terms of housing provision and accessibility, access to services and local transport.
- The parish is attractive to families and there is also a high number of children aged between 5 and 18 years living locally. It will be important to ensure that there are adequate and affordable homes suited to the needs of young and growing families, and the provision of amenities required by this demographic.
- The parish suffers from significant flooding, from a range of sources, which impacts people's daily lives when it occurs. This is becoming an increasingly frequent event.
- House prices in the parish are high when compared to local incomes.
- The A458 cuts through the town, linking Shrewsbury to Bridgnorth. It meets the A~~1~~469 and B4378 at the Gaskell Arms junction, which is problematic in traffic terms. This pinchpoint junction experiences heavy traffic at peaks times, including HGVs. Whilst the MWNP has limited influence over such strategic transport matters, it is something that needs to be considered carefully as the town grows.
- The parish is rurally located and there is no railway station in the parish, the nearest ones being at Shrewsbury and Telford. Bus transport is fairly good although concerns have been raised about frequency and reliability of services. This means that most residents are inevitably reliant on their car to get around and to access services and employment Inevitably this has led to a high car dependency, with 88% of residents owning at least one vehicle. Nevertheless, that leaves 12% of residents without a private car and therefore it will vital that they can access services either via public transport or by foot. This is particularly the case for the smaller, more isolated settlements in the parish. Much Wenlock is theoretically very walkable for those who are willing and able. Opportunities to optimise walking routes should be sought.
- The town centre and High Street play a central role in the life of residents and need to be supported in terms of its ongoing viability and offering a mixed set of uses.
- The majority of those in employment travel outside the parish to reach their place of work. Opportunities for locally based employment should be supported where possible to reduce the reliance on out-commuting. As space for commercial development is limited space, such uses should be safeguarded and where, necessary mixed-use developments may offer a suitable solution.
- The parish benefits from a very attractive landscape environment within the setting of the Shropshire Hills National Landscape. Safeguarding the landscape character, the habitats it supports and the important green spaces within it is critical.

- The parish comprises a number of settlements, each with their own identity and character. Maintaining their individuality is something that residents are keen to ensure.
- The parish is home to a wealth of heritage assets, both above and below ground. These need to be preserved and celebrated as they add to the story of the parish.
- Tourism is an important sector and should be managed in a sustainable way.

Figure 2: Some statistics about Much Wenlock parish (2021 census)



3. A VISION AND OBJECTIVES FOR MUCH WENLOCK

The Community Vision and objectives for the Neighbourhood Plan

3.1. The starting point for the review of MWNP was to ensure that the residents were given the opportunity to shape development and land use until the end of the Plan period in 2038. The existing vision, encapsulated by the line, **'Our Plan, Our Future'** continues to resonate locally having been defined by the desires, concerns and aspirations of local residents and other stakeholders of Much Wenlock parish.

3.2. The planning policies are couched within a series of overarching objectives that stem directly from the views and opinions expressed at the consultation events hosted by community volunteers and the on-line survey. The objectives are shown in *Table 2*:

Table 2: MWNP Objectives

Objective 1: Spatial strategy and housing ✓ developing collaborative partnerships with one or more Housing Associations to bring forward affordable housing on exception and other sites. ✓ supporting small-scale infill sites and conversions within the wider parish. ✓ actively supporting the redevelopment of brownfield sites. ✓ making sure that developments include a suitable mix of housing suited to local needs, including dwellings suited to older residents and those with disabilities. This should include good access and safe or green walking to facilities within the town.
Objective 2: The economy and jobs ✓ safeguarding existing commercial and employment land-uses. ✓ making sure that existing employment sites are kept for employment use wherever possible and appropriate. ✓ supporting new/expanded business premises in suitable locations. ✓ protecting the vitality of Much Wenlock town centre. ✓ supporting new mixed-use developments where an existing commercial site is demonstrated unviable, retaining an element of employment so that where appropriate, people can combine work and home life. ✓ encouraging appropriate and sustainable rural tourism activities.
Objective 3: Reducing flood risk ✓ recognising the significance of the designation of Much Wenlock as within a Rapid Response Catchment subject to the Highest Category of flood risk. ✓ minimising the impacts of flooding within the town's conservation area, implicit in a worst-case flood scenario, by a catchment wide flood attenuation strategy. ✓ making a prior assessment, of any impact on flood risk, a key element in preparing for the implementation of each of the council's policies.

- ✓ restricting new development to locations least likely to increase flood risk.
- ✓ encouraging the development of nature-based solutions throughout the catchment to reduce runoff and to slow the flow of surface water.
- ~~✓~~ keeping sufficient land that has the potential to be used to slow down the flow of surface water through engineering or natural means free from development that would prevent such use. ~~keeping sites free from development if they have the potential to be used to slow down the flow of surface water through engineering or natural means.~~
- ✓ making sure that developments minimise the impact on water quality and subsequent health risks particularly during flooding conditions.
- ✓ protecting and improving local water quality.

Objective 4: Transport and movement

- ✓ supporting plans to improve the infrastructure for local walking, cycling and equestrian transport, in line with the principles of the 20-minute neighbourhoods.
- ✓ making sure that new developments have enough associated off-street car parking to meet current and future needs.
- ✓ safeguard existing off-street public car parking and support additional car parking to alleviate pressure in the town centre.
- ✓ supporting local and strategic traffic management proposals which reduce the number of HGV/LGV vehicles travelling through the parish in order to minimise their adverse impact.
- ✓ managing new developments so that they do not have an unacceptable traffic impact on local residents.
- ✓ ensuring that traffic impacts at pinchpoint junctions and stretches of road are minimised.

Objective 5: Community well-being

- ✓ creating new facilities for families, the elderly and young people.
- ✓ supporting developments or uses associated with a positive visitor experience.
- ✓ protecting existing community buildings and services.
- ✓ providing new public toilet provision to cater for local and visitor needs.

Objective 6: Good quality design, local character and heritage

- ✓ respecting the scale, style and setting of the historic townscapes of Much Wenlock (in particular the unique characteristics of the 'bowl' setting) and Bourton.
- ✓ making sure that in Much Wenlock and Bourton, the use of building materials is in keeping with those used in their respective Conservation Areas. Elsewhere, new developments should use materials which respect their setting and rural environment.
- ✓ ensuring that any development or change be of the highest quality design.
- ✓ ensuring that new developments will include gardens of an appropriate scale to the property.

Objective 7: Green and open spaces, local landscape and wildlife

- ✓ protecting the existing areas of green space within the parish and ensuring that their quality and or multi-functionality is improved. It is important that existing spaces be considered for retrofitting in adaptation for climate change.
- ✓ creating extra areas of high-quality green space ~~are created~~ within new developments.
- ✓ taking opportunities taken to create linkages between sites, address green and pedestrian gaps in existing networks, create of new foot and cycle routes, and wildlife biodiversity corridors.
- ✓ ensuring that new accessible and inclusive green space should exceed or at least meet Shropshire Council's standards for green open spaces, play spaces and allotments. New designated spaces will be welcomed if they meet the required standards.
- ✓ identifying opportunities to increase potential new green and open spaces for enjoyment of the local landscape and countryside are identified.
- ✓ undertaking sympathetic management of the countryside and natural outdoor environment in and around the parish is undertaken to enhance the quality of the landscape, improve local biodiversity and provide other benefits to the community's quality of life.

3.3. Underpinning the objectives is the need to ensure that all policies contribute to mitigating the impacts of climate change.

4. THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN POLICIES

OBJECTIVE 1: SPATIAL STRATEGY AND HOUSING

The Plan will provide for a limited amount of housing to meet local needs. It will do this through:

- ✓ developing collaborative partnerships with one or more Housing Associations to bring forward affordable housing on exception and other sites.
- ✓ supporting small-scale infill sites and conversions within the wider parish.
- ✓ actively supporting the redevelopment of brownfield sites.
- ✓ making sure that developments include a suitable mix of housing suited to local needs, including dwellings suited to older residents and those with disabilities. This should include good access and safe or green walking to facilities within the town.

Policy MW1: Supporting sustainable development

Purpose

4.1. This policy seeks to ensure that any development within the parish is directed to the most appropriate, sustainable locations, where there is easy access to the main town services and facilities. This will help to protect the wider sensitive landscape of the parish and safeguard against the sprawl and coalescence of the individual parish settlements. The policy supports the re-use of previously developed (brownfield) land in preference to greenfield. It also supports the concept of compact and walkable neighbourhoods to address the potential additional strains of development in the parish on road systems, particularly for developments that are furthest away from the main facilities.

POLICY MW1: SUPPORTING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

A. Development proposals within the defined development boundaries (as shown in the most recent development plan) will be supported where they comply with other development plan policies. Development proposals must meet the following criteria:

i. it is of a scale and nature appropriate to the character and function of the area, with particular consideration given to how the proposal will mitigate any impacts on the character, and/or visual amenity, and/or tranquillity impact on the Shropshire Hills National Landscape and its setting; and
ii. new development must be designed to take full account of any existing flood risk, irrespective of the source of flooding in accordance with Policy MW10; and
iii. it maintains and, where possible, enhances the natural and built appearance and character of the area; and
iv. it is capable of connecting to the primary movement network hierarchy (see Policy MW12), to support the delivery of the 20-minute (10 minutes each way) walkable neighbourhood concept; and
v. it improves, where appropriate, the strategic linkages from the site to the town, focussing on pinchpoints in accordance with Policy MW14; and
vi. development growth must relate to and be in line with growth of infrastructure.

B. Development proposals outside the defined development boundary (as shown in the most recent development plan) will only be supported where appropriate consideration is given to the effect on designated sites and ~~they where~~ they involve:

i. development supported in such locations in national and local planning policies; or ~~and meet the following criteria:~~

ii. the proposal is a "rural exceptions scheme" delivered in accordance with Policy MW3; or~~and~~

~~iii. consideration is given to how the proposal will mitigate any impacts on the character, or visual amenity, or tranquillity of the Shropshire Hills National Landscape and its setting and other designated sites (e.g. SSSIs); and~~

~~iv.~~iii. where appropriate, it brings redundant or vacant agricultural ~~/~~ or farm buildings or historic buildings of heritage value back into viable optimal use consistent with their conservation in a manner that does not cause harm in terms of additional traffic.

C. In determining development proposals, substantial weight will be given to the value of using suitable previously developed (brownfield) land within the development boundaries and, where relevant, in accordance with Policy MW5.

Conformity Reference: Shropshire Core Strategy (2011): CS1, CS3, CS4, CS5, CS8; SAMDev Plan (2015): MD1, MD7a, and b, S13; NPPF (2024): 7, 8, 29, 61, 73, 82, 83, 84, 96, 98, 111, 124, 125, 126, 129, 130, 135, 187

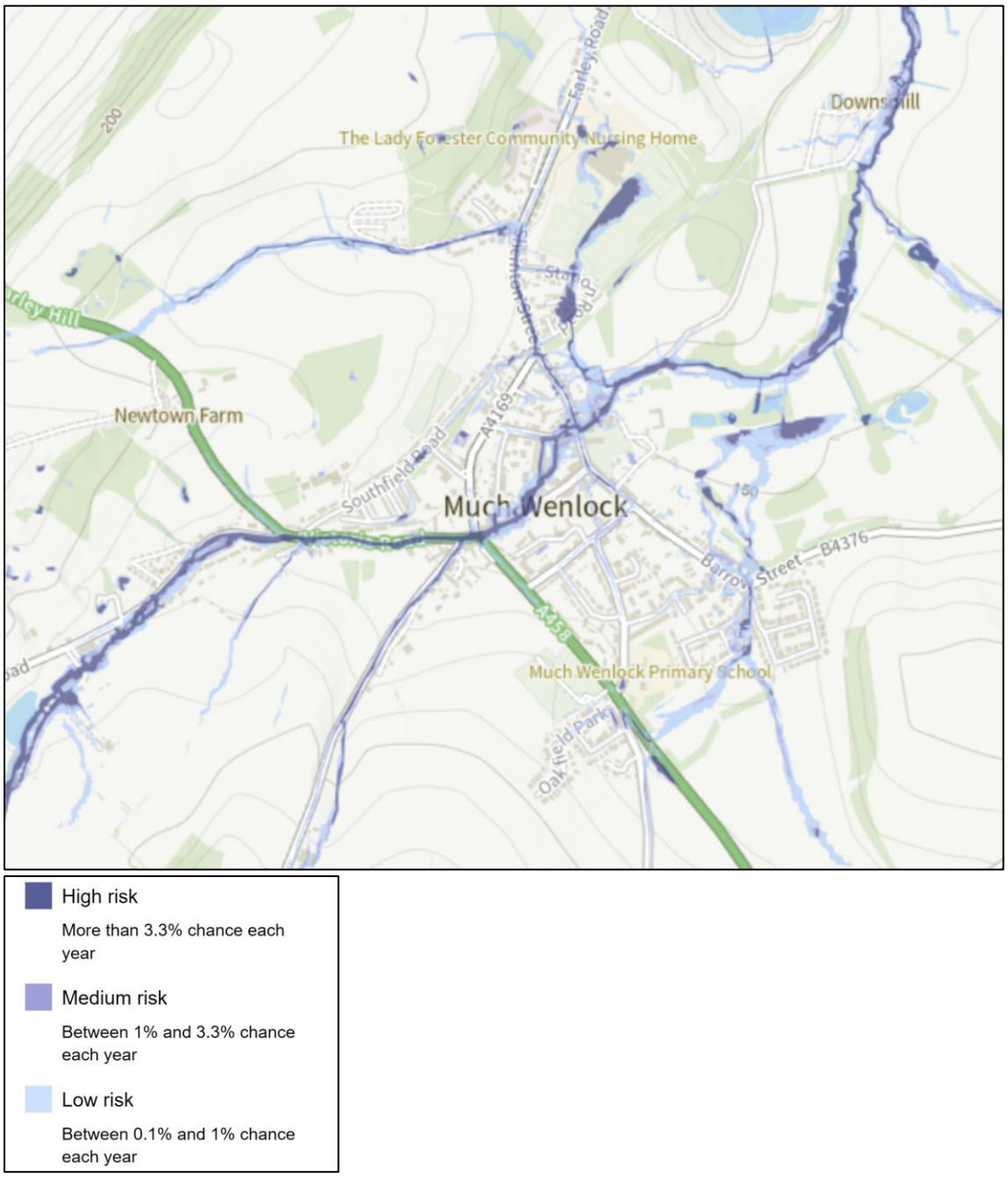
Justification

4.2. The Neighbourhood Plan does not seek to allocate sites for development, a position that has been agreed with SC.

4.3. Policy MW1, supported by other policies in this Plan, seeks to achieve the following in terms of sustainable development:

- focusing development to within the defined development boundaries - The adopted settlement policy boundaries are shown on *Figures 4 and 5* alongside the statutory designations in the parish. Note that minor amendments to the development boundaries may be identified in any future Local Plan Review. Much Wenlock, as the main settlement, is the focus for development. Within Bourton's development boundary, only limited infill is supported. Outside the development boundaries, new development will be strictly controlled in line with national policy and Core Strategy CS5 or its successor.
- avoiding flood zones – Flooding is a significant problem in Much Wenlock. Development should be directed to smaller sites within the development boundary avoiding known flood zones (*Figure 3*). Development outside the development boundary will be subject to Rural Exception Site assessment. Further detail on flooding and drainage is provided in Policies MW10 and MW11.

Figure 3: Flood Risk Map (surface water)



- prioritising the use of previously developed (brownfield)land in preference to greenfield sites - Brownfield sites, which may be existing sites that come for redevelopment, should be used to support mixed-use development, which could comprise small-scale commercial/light industrial uses, community-scale energy regeneration, housing (notably affordable housing) and/or those working from home (i.e. space to work within a residence). There is scope within the wider countryside to bring back into use any vacant sites, including agricultural sites to optimise their use.
- a focus on smaller sites - Large-scale development is less acceptable to the community and where new housing is needed, the consensus is that it should be delivered through smaller

sites and where it can be supported by adequate infrastructure. There is an overwhelming desire to maintain the scale, style and setting of Much Wenlock and to protect the rural settlements and surrounding countryside from development.

- conserving and enhancing the historic and natural environment - The parish is home to a wide range of natural features. To the west, and partially within the parish, lies the Shropshire Hills National Landscape. There are also a series of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and some significant areas of ancient woodland. Alongside these natural features, elements of the historic environment also need protecting, including Much Wenlock and Bourton Conservation Areas, the Scheduled Monuments (notably Wenlock Priory), plus the designated and non-designated heritage assets.
- ensuring that the overall quantum of development does not put an unacceptable strain on infrastructure capacity – Much of the core infrastructure planning (e.g. schools, GPs) sits outside the scope of the MWNP as it is the responsibility of other organisations. However, the Plan seeks to ensure that any new major development (as defined in the NPPF, see Glossary) is carefully masterplanned, with early community involvement, to ensure that adequate facilities and infrastructure that meets local requirements are provided.
- ensuring that new development is well-connected to the existing movement network - Improving and adding to this network where possible, to provide accessible, safe and pleasant pedestrian and cycle links. The Town and Country Planning Association supports Walkable Neighbourhoods and a 10 minute journey time (one-way from home to destination) is considered optimal. For the MWNP, the emphasis is on connectivity and ensuring that new major development improves the strategic links within the parish, to help unlock identified pedestrian and vehicular pinchpoints. These are described more fully in Policy MW14.

4.4. *Figures 4 and 5* show the parish, the adopted settlement policy boundaries and the extent of statutory designations that exist in the Parish.

Figure 4: Map showing development boundaries within the Parish and other key statutory designations

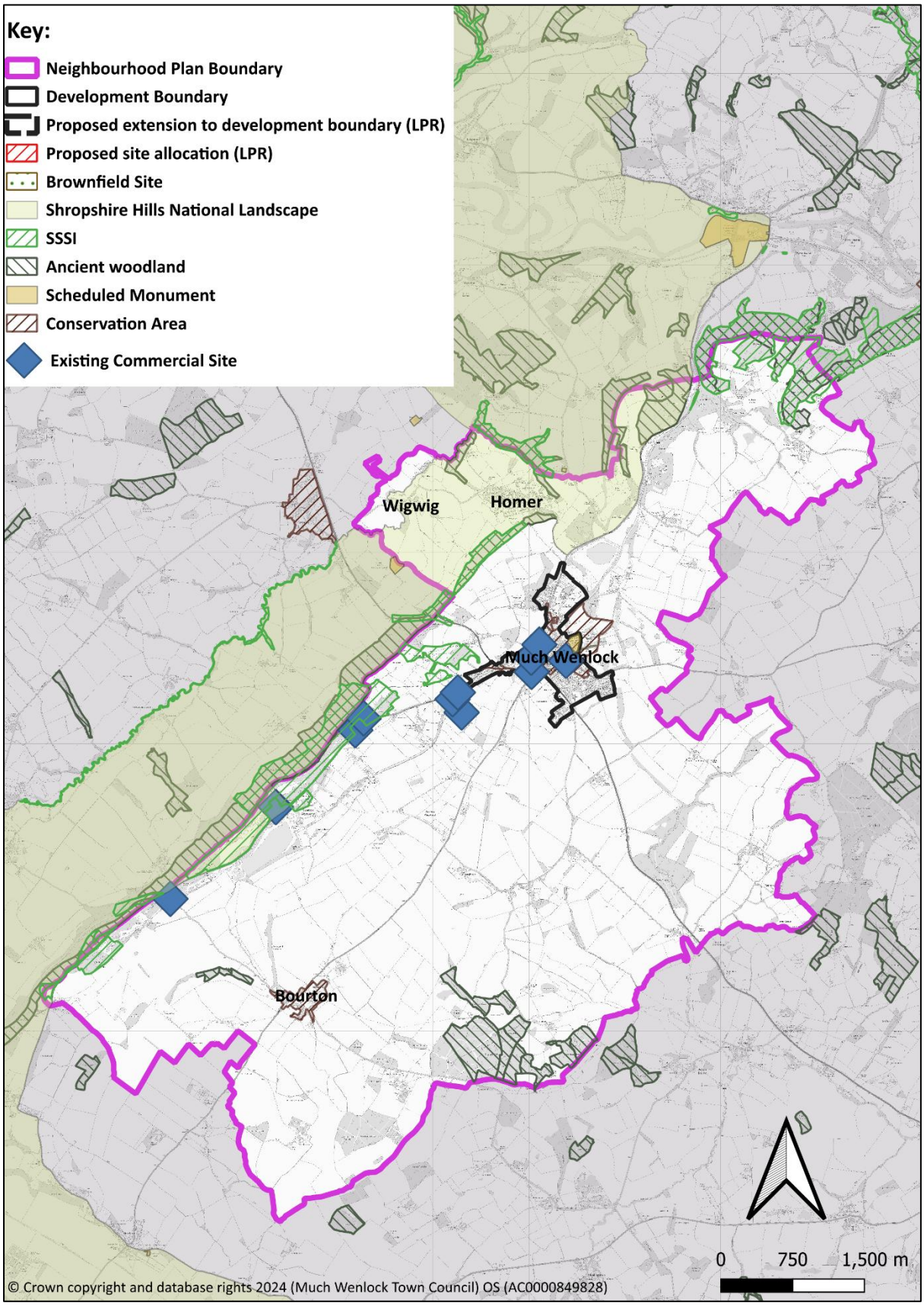
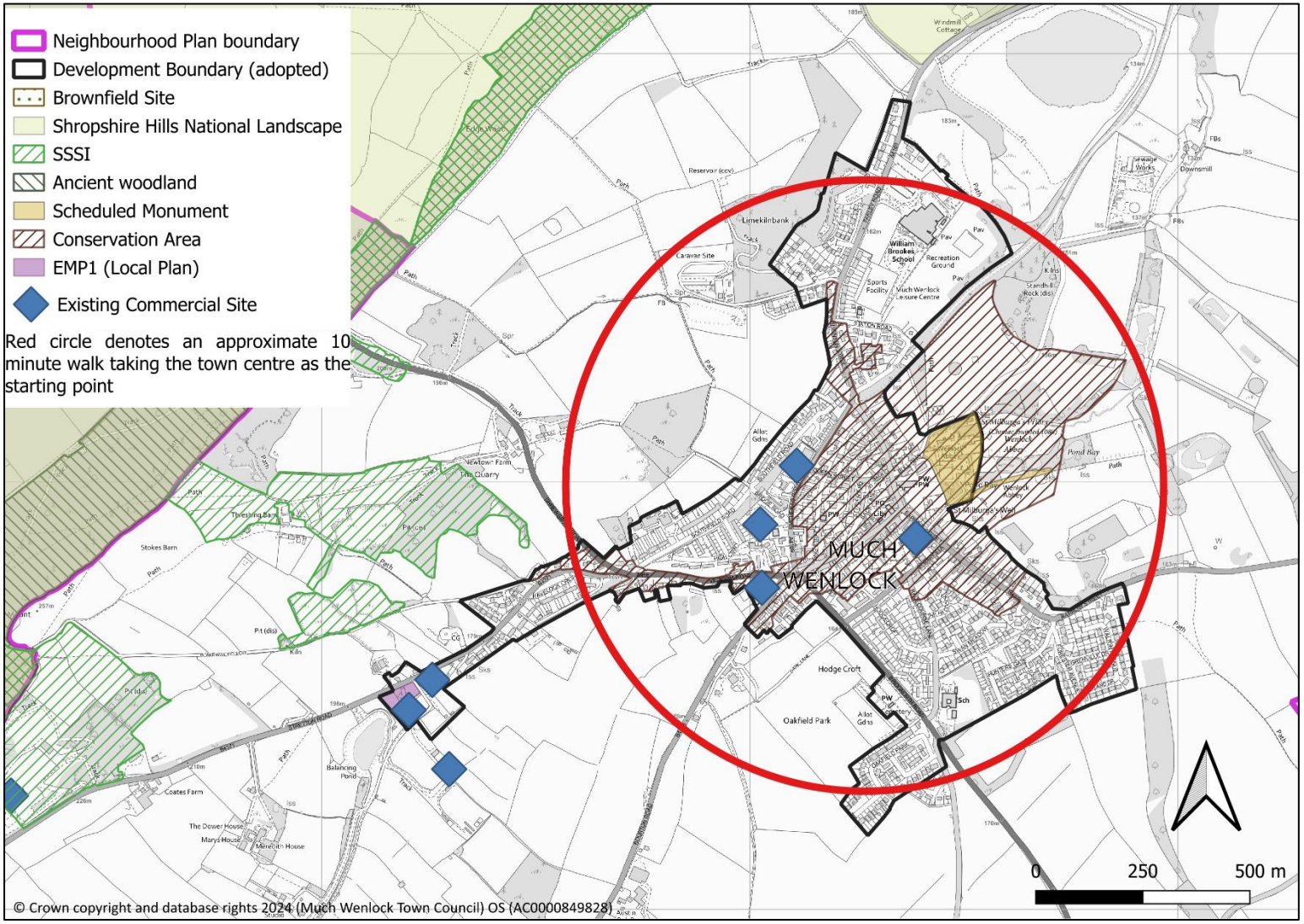


Figure 5: Map showing development boundaries within the Parish and other key statutory designations - Much Wenlock town



Policy MW2: Meeting local housing needs

Purpose

4.5. This policy seeks to ensure that housing delivered in Much Wenlock meets the specific housing needs of the parish in terms of size, tenure, affordability and the needs of people at different stages of their lives.

4.6. Definitions of the different types of affordable housing are contained in the Glossary.

POLICY MW2: MEETING LOCAL HOUSING NEEDS

A. Other than in development designed to meet an identified specialist housing need, the mix of housing sizes, types, tenures, and affordability in proposed development should, in so far as is reasonably practicable and subject to viability, assist in meeting needs identified in the most recently available Much Wenlock Housing Needs Assessment. As appropriate to their scale, nature, and location, development proposals for residential use should respond positively to the following principles:

- **i. new housing should focus on smaller and modest-sized dwellings (1-3 bedrooms) including accommodation that is arranged on a single level, suited to downsizers; and**
- **ii. all new residential development within the neighbourhood area must provide a quantity of affordable housing in line with the requirements contained within the Shropshire Core Strategy or its successor. Affordable homes should be tenure-blind and well-integrated with market housing; and**
- **iii. support proposals that enable greater affordability uplifts and prioritise those with a local connection to Much Wenlock Parish (see Glossary) and key workers (such as the use of First Homes); and**
- **iv. the tenure of affordable units should meet the specific needs of the parish, reflecting a 70 (affordable housing for rent):30 (intermediate housing for purchase) tenure split.**

B. Residential development that could reasonably be expected to meet the needs of older people (by virtue of its size and location) should demonstrate how it has reflected the Housing our Ageing Population Panel for Innovation (HAPPI) principles and the guidance contained in the RTPI's "Dementia and town planning: Creating better environments for people living with dementia".

C. All dwellings specifically designed for older people or those with disabilities or special needs will be built to the M4(3) (wheelchair user dwellings) standard within Building Regulations. On sites of 5 or more dwellings, at least 5% will be built to the M4(3) (wheelchair user dwellings) standard within Building Regulations and a further 70% of the dwellings will be built to M4(2) (accessible and adaptable dwellings) or higher standard within Building Regulations, unless site-specific factors indicate that step-free access cannot be achieved. Development proposals that support an uplift in this provision will be particularly supported.

D. Subject to the other policies of this plan, proposals for self- and custom build housing will be supported.

Conformity Reference: NP objectives: 1; Shropshire Core Strategy (2011): CS11; SAMDev Plan (2015): S13; NPPF (2024): 61-66, 71, 73, 74, 82-84

Justification

4.7. It is important that any new residential development within Much Wenlock parish addresses local housing needs. Policy CS11 (Type and Affordability of Housing) of Adopted Core Strategy (2011) states that *"an integrated and balanced approach will be taken with regard to existing and new housing, including type, size, tenure and affordability".*

4.8. To understand local housing need policy, a Housing Needs Assessment (HNA), contained in the Evidence Base, was prepared for Much Wenlock in March 2024, informed by the work of the Strategic Market Housing Assessment 2020 (Part 1; Part 2) at the strategic level as well as national datasets and population forecasts. In addition, feedback from local residents was gathered. The findings revealed the following:

4.9. **There is an imbalance of property sizes available within Much Wenlock.** Much Wenlock has a large proportion of detached homes (46.3% of the stock in 2021). Semi-detached homes account for around one quarter of the stock with terraces accounting for 20%. There is a smaller proportion of flats at 7.2%. There are approximately 190 single-level dwellings, which accounts for approximately 15% of dwellings locally or 1 in 7 homes. These represent an important resource for those wishing to downsize later in life.

4.10. The vast majority of dwellings within Much Wenlock have 3 or more bedrooms with 28.7% having 4 or more. Smaller 1- to 2-bedroom properties account for just over 30% of the stock, with just 7.7% 1-bedroom properties. This corresponds to a smaller stock of flats and terraces within Much Wenlock as discussed above.

4.11. Most households in the parish have more bedrooms than they need, notably amongst older households. This does not imply that these older households should downsize; many will be occupying homes that meet their lifestyles, including caring for grandchildren, having family stay, continuing to pursue their interests (and even working in later life and needing a space to work or study). However, some may be interested in downsizing so it is useful to consider whether there are suitable local options.

4.12. Equally, the lack of smaller homes makes it more difficult for first time buyers to purchase locally. This is evidenced by the fact that just 18.7% of households in Much Wenlock are families with dependent children. This compares to 21.8% in Shropshire and 25.8% in England as a whole. Much Wenlock has a relatively low share of families with children.

4.13. The HNA suggests that a range of dwelling sizes are needed in Much Wenlock over the plan period but with a focus on 2- to 3-bedroom sized homes (*Table 3)*. This aligns to the Shropshire SHMA 2020, which also anticipated that the largest proportion of homes over the projection period in the SHMA (2016-2038) would be for 3-bedroom properties.

Table 3: Indicative dwelling size mix for Much Wenlock (overall housing on site)

Number of bedrooms	Mix in 2011	Current mix (2021)	Suggested mix 2038	Balance of new housing to reach suggested mix
1	8.2%	7.7%	7.6%	7.3%
2	23.2%	23.2%	25.8%	34.1%
3	41.4%	40.5%	43.7%	53.9%
4+	27.2%	28.7%	22.9%	4.7%

4.14. The adopted Core Strategy (2011) Policy CS11 requires 33% affordable housing. In light of the historic shortfall in affordable housing delivery in Much Wenlock, the HNA finds there to be robust evidence of need for affordable housing in Much Wenlock, and every effort should be made to maximise delivery where viable.

4.15. The HNA's indicative tenure mix for Much Wenlock is shown in *Table 4.*

Table 4: Indicative tenure for Much Wenlock

Tenure	Indicative mix
Routes to home ownership, of which	**30%**
• First Homes	25%
• Shared ownership	0-5%
• Rent to Buy	0-5%
Affordable Housing for rent, of which	**70%**
• Social rent	To be set by Registered Providers
• Affordable rent	To be set by Registered Providers

4.16. The introduction of First Homes presents an opportunity for local authorities to require higher discounts on these affordable homes (intermediate housing) for sale, where the need can be evidenced locally and where viable. Within Much Wenlock, the HNA reveals that there would be a benefit to raising discounts (up to 50% where viable) on any First Homes delivered as part of the affordable housing on the sites, to enable those in single-person median and lower quartile earnings the opportunity to enter the housing market.

4.17. Opportunities to deliver affordable homes include bringing forward a rural exception site and Policy MW3 provides detail on this.

4.18. A higher percentage of older households is expected by the end of the Plan period. The older population (age 75+) is expected to make up 25% of the population of Much Wenlock in 2038 compared to 18% in 2021. A strong response from older residents who attended the community consultation events that sheltered or housing suitable for older residents was a high priority.

4.19. There is a total of 60 units of specialist housing in the parish at present, with the majority available for social rent (35 homes) and the remainder for ownership (25 homes). All are described as age exclusive or retirement housing and do not have onsite care.

4.20. In relation to accessibility, building regulations includes three categories of dwellings:

a. M4(1) Category 1: Visitable dwellings.

b. M4(2) Category 2: Accessible and adaptable dwellings.

c. M4(3) Category 3: Wheelchair user dwellings.

4.21. M4(1) is mandatory for all new dwellings unless one of the optional requirements M4(2) or M4(3) applies. M4(2) and M4(3) apply where a Local Plan introduces such a requirement. Evidence that had been prepared for the (withdrawn) Local Plan Review suggested proposed specific provision requirements for these, in response to the aging population in Shropshire as a whole.

4.22. It is considered that such needs will be more nuanced in Much Wenlock given the age profile here when compared to Shropshire as a whole, therefore Policy MW2 supports a more prescriptive approach, and an uplift to this where possible.

4.23. To best meet the needs of this demographic, it should be considered whether new homes are well tailored to older people's requirements in terms of space, flexibility, quality, location and accessibility. In addition, the "Housing our Ageing Population Panel for Innovation (HAPPI)" has, since 2009, developed a series of principles for good design of housing generally. Many of the principles are recognisable from good design generally - good light, ventilation, room to move around and good storage - but they have particular relevance to the spectrum of older persons' housing which needs to both offer an attractive alternative to the family home and be able to adapt over time to meet changing needs. The ten principles are:

- Space and flexibility
- Daylight in the home and in shared spaces
- Balconies and outdoor space
- Adaptability and 'care ready' design
- Positive use of circulation space
- Shared facilities and 'hubs'
- Plants, trees, and the natural environment
- Energy efficiency and sustainable design
- Storage for belongings and bicycles
- External shared surfaces and 'home zones'

4.24. Housing should be designed to support the needs of those living with disabilities. The Royal Town Planning Institute's guidance "Dementia and town planning: Creating better environments for people living with dementia" should inform planning applications.

4.25. The adopted Core Strategy (2011) policies also encourage the development of self-build properties for local need on suitable plots both within and adjacent to the development boundary and the MWNP supports this approach.

Policy MW3: Rural Exception Sites

Purpose

4.26. This policy provides the criteria against which rural exception sites should be considered.

POLICY MW3: RURAL EXCEPTION SITES

Proposals for small scale rural exception sites outside the development boundaries will be supported subject to the following criteria:

i. **they comprise up to 25 dwellings; and**
ii. **the proposals contribute to meeting the affordable housing needs of people with a strong local connection and in accordance with Policy MW2; and**
iii. **the development is subject to an agreement which will ensure that it remains as affordable housing for people with a strong local connection in perpetuity; and**
iv. **the proposals would not have a significant impact on the surrounding rural landscape and the landscape setting of any settlement in the plan area; and**
v. **the development is appropriate in terms of its scale, character and location with the settlement to which it is associated. Open market housing will only be permitted outside the Much Wenlock development boundary where this type of development can be demonstrated to be essential to ensure the delivery of affordable housing as part of the same development proposal. The exception would be cross-subsidy exception schemes, where 30% open market housing will be supported in order to enable 70% affordable housing.**

Conformity Reference: NP objectives: 1; Shropshire Core Strategy (2011): CS11; SAMDev Plan (2015): MD7a, S13; NPPF (2024): 61, 63-65,82-84

Justification

4.27. Historically, local Housing Associations have not bought sites or built homes in the parish, rather they have expanded their stock through acquisitions within market development sites. In order to meet identified affordable housing needs (as evidenced in the Much Wenlock HNA) the MWNP seeks a new way of working to bring forward small-scale social rented and affordable housing on exception sites through collaborative partnerships with local Housing Associations (or equivalent mechanisms) and Shropshire Council. This positive approach will provide greater certainty and local control over delivery to meet specific local needs.

4.28. To ensure that houses on exception sites meet local needs for people with a strong local connection, occupants will be expected to meet the requirements of Shropshire Council's SPD 'The Type and Affordability of Housing' (Dec 2012, para 5.34).

4.29. Since 2013, with the adoption of the original MWNP, 26 affordable social rented and shared equity homes have been brought forward on one exception site within the Neighbourhood Plan area.

Policy MW4: Infill development and conversions

Purpose

4.30. This policy sets out the criteria against which infill development and conversions of existing properties should be assessed.

POLICY MW4: INFILL DEVELOPMENT AND CONVERSIONS

Within the development boundary, and within Bourton, housing infill development will be supported where it contributes positively to local character and where it helps to meet local housing needs. Within the conservation areas of Much Wenlock and Bourton, infill development should conserve or enhance the special architectural and historic character of these settlements. Adequate off-road parking space must be provided, in accordance with Shropshire Parking Standards.

Conformity Reference: NP objectives: 1; Shropshire Core Strategy (2011): CS1, CS3, CS4; SAMDev Plan (2015): S13, MD3; NPPF (2024): 61, 73, 75

Justification

4.31. Infill involves the development of a small gap in an otherwise built-up frontage. It usually consists of a frontage plot only and often comprises the side gardens of existing houses.

4.32. In recent years, infill sites have provided a steady supply of housing. This trend is likely to continue but the MWNP allows for the numbers to be kept under review to ensure that sufficient development is coming forward to meet local needs. A review may also be triggered by national changes in policy, updated information on housing needs or issues raised by the public, private or third sector regarding the operation of the MWNP. Much Wenlock Town Council has resolved to review the Plan within five years.

OBJECTIVE 2: THE ECONOMY AND JOBS

The Plan will help business create jobs by:

- ✓ safeguarding existing commercial and employment land-uses.
- ✓ making sure that existing employment sites are kept for employment use wherever possible and appropriate.
- ✓ supporting new/expanded business premises in suitable locations.
- ✓ protecting the vitality of Much Wenlock town centre.
- ✓ supporting new mixed-use developments where an existing commercial site is demonstrated unviable, retaining an element of employment so that where appropriate, people can combine work and home life.
- ✓ encouraging appropriate and sustainable rural tourism activities.

Policy MW5: Commercial development

Purpose

4.33. Beyond retail provision, there is only a modest amount of existing commercial/industrial space within the town and wider parish. It is important that such employment land provision remains available, if needed. The policy seeks, ideally, to protect commercial activities and employment at these spaces. Where this does not prove sustainable, the policy prioritises mixed use redevelopment, to enable the delivery of housing to meet local needs, alongside compatible commercial/employment uses.

4.34. The policy notes that 0.75ha of land at site EMP1 (Stretton Road) is allocated for employment use in the Shropshire Core Strategy. Should such a use not be viable on this site, alternative commercial space will need to be considered in any the future Local Plan to ensure that adequate commercial employment land (up to 2ha as per the strategic requirement) is provided in the parish.

POLICY MW5: COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Protecting existing employment

A. Insofar as planning permission is required, proposals for a change of use within Site EMP1, and/or an existing Employment Site and/or commercial premises (as shown on *Figure 7*) to a use and operation that does not provide any employment opportunities, will not be supported unless it can be demonstrated that the commercial premises or land:

i. has not been in active use for at least 12 months; and
ii. has no potential for either reoccupation or redevelopment for solely employment generating uses as demonstrated through the results of:

a. **marketing campaign lasting for a continuous period of at least 6 months and a supplemental report evidencing the marketing undertaken and the market response; and**
b. **a detailed valuation report assessing the viability of the land and buildings for employment use.**

Where these criteria are demonstrated, development proposals for housing on such sites (*Figure 7*) will be supported, in accordance with Policy MW2, only where this can be achieved as part of a broader package of compatible commercial and other uses, such as community and green space.

Supporting new employment

B. Development proposals to expand existing employment premises, and/ or provide new start-up business space – including office/workshop space and start-up units on flexible terms - will be supported, including in former agricultural buildings provided that:

i. **there is no adverse impact on the character and nature of the surrounding area from visual or operational impacts or on nearby occupiers of existing premises or residential properties; and**
ii. **the proposal would not have significant harmful impacts on the surrounding landscape and the wider setting of the town; and**
iii. **the proposal would not have any significant harmful impacts on the ecological setting of the site; and**
iv. **the proposal's forecast traffic generation would not have an unacceptable traffic impact on the wider town and the capacity and operation of its highway network, paying particular regard to HGVs; and**
v. **the site would not cause or exacerbate flooding.**

Conformity Reference: NP objectives: 1, 2; Shropshire Core Strategy (2011): CS13, CS14; SAMDev Plan (2015): MD9, S13; NPPF (2024): 85, 86, 88, 89, 96, 125

Justification

4.35. With no railway station in the parish, the majority of those out-commuting are doing so by car. Over a third (37.5%) of those in employment travel at least 10km to reach their place of work (2021 census). Many of these are driving to the nearby settlements of Telford, Shrewsbury and Bridgnorth, where work is more readily available.

4.36. Of those working in the parish, approximately 32% work from home, with others employed in agriculture and farming, retail and other service industries. It will be important to ensure that for those working locally, the infrastructure exists – particularly in terms of broadband and mobile availability – to serve their needs. Such provision falls outside the scope of the MWNP but work with partners including mobile and internet provides is included as a non-policy action in Section 7 of this Plan.

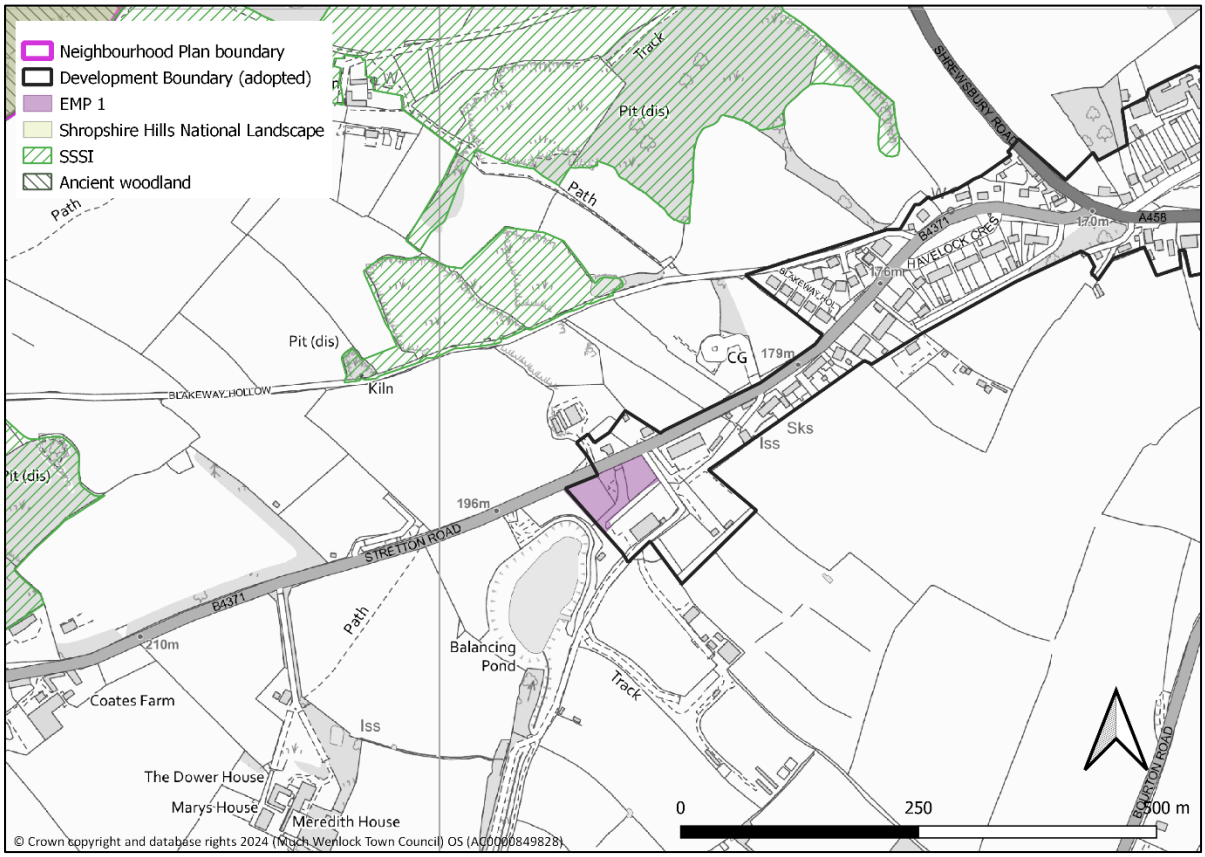
4.37. Protecting existing and providing new space for employment is considered important to ensure that there are opportunities locally for work.

4.38. **0.75 ha of land at Stretton Road:** One site of 0.75ha Land at Stretton Road, is identified in the Local Plan as commercial employment land (*Figure 6)*. This is also the only brownfield site in the

parish currently listed on SC's brownfield register. The site lies immediately adjacent to an arm of an environmentally sensitive area and care will be needed to ensure that there are no adverse effects (including through lighting) and that landscaping should enhance the network where possible in line with Shropshire Core Strategy Policy CS17. Any development on previously undeveloped (greenfield) land areas of this site would be subject to an Ecological Assessment.

4.39. Should the site be redeveloped into uses that do not comprise wholly commercial space, additional commercial land should be identified in the Local Plan to ensure that there is no overall net loss of commercial employment land in the parish. This would need to be at a site suitable for such development, as expressed in the Policy.

Figure 6: Employment Site - EMP1



4.40. **Other commercial sites:** There are few sites, beyond agricultural uses, within Much Wenlock which are dedicated to commercial activity (*Figure 7).*

4.41. Development proposals on all commercial sites will need to be able to demonstrate that they do not have an unacceptable impact on traffic movements in the town, paying particular regard to HGVs. A transport assessment would be the most appropriate way of doing so. It should be noted, however, that the site was previously included in a land allocation for employment use in the Bridgnorth Local Plan in 2005, since when there has been little interest in its development. It appears, therefore, that some up-front public or private investment will be required to facilitate its use and SC's statement of intent offers assurances that this will take place. Unless this investment is made, there will be a significantly increased risk of the Core

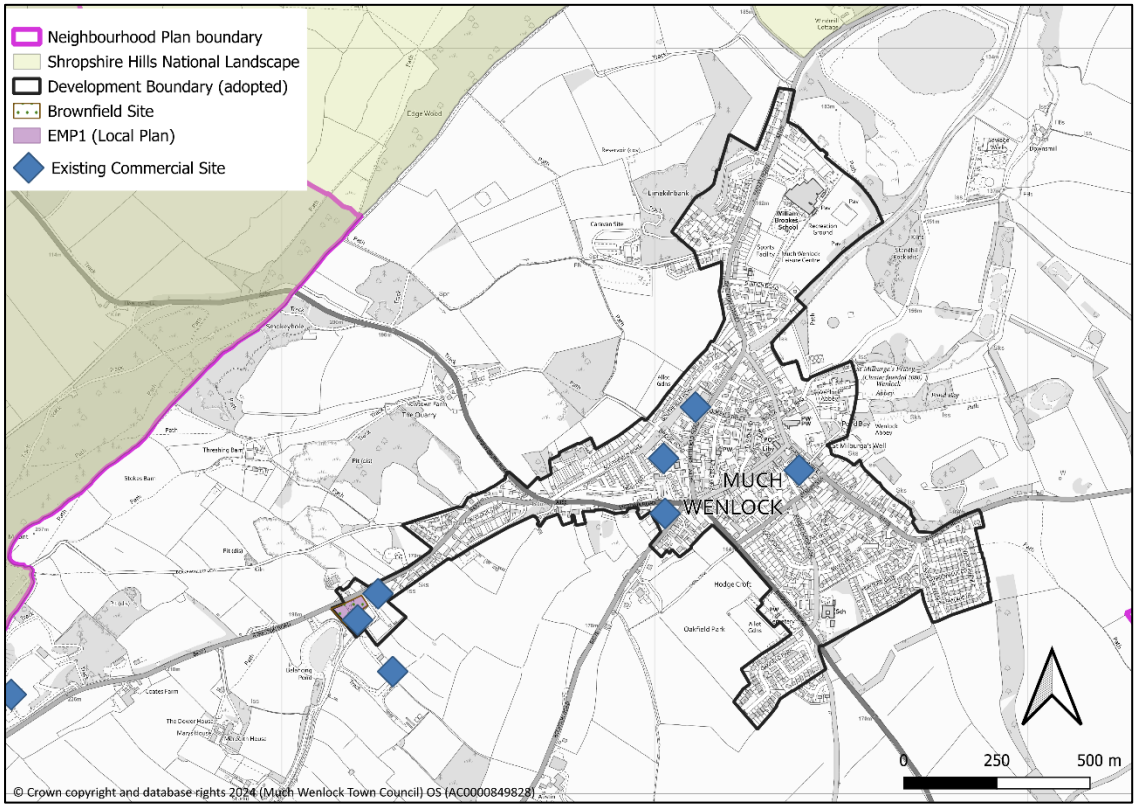
Strategy policy failing to provide for local employment to balance housing allocations and avoid creating a town increasingly dependent on commuting.

4.42. Given the limited availability of land within the development boundary, brownfield sites should be prioritised for employment uses. Redevelopment proposals should focus on retaining and enhancing the existing commercial and industrial character of these areas. Where appropriate, the intensification of employment uses on brownfield sites should be explored to maximize job opportunities within the existing settlement area. This approach will help to protect and create local jobs, reduce out-commuting, and promote a sustainable local economy

4.43. Given the relative lack of brownfield sites within the development boundary, special consideration should be given to proposals for mixed use (employment, residential etc.), where this would optimise brownfield land use and potentially negate the need to identify greenfield sites beyond the development boundary for such uses, as per Policy MW1 (Location of Development). Mixed uses should retain an element of commercial (see Appendix A) alongside residential (notably affordable residential), and other uses compatible with work-living. The protection of an element of employment within these sites and, where appropriate, support for new employment opportunities locally will not only provide greater prospects for residents to access jobs locally but will ensure that these are sustainable in terms of the patterns of commuting that they generate.

4.44. Outside the settlement boundary, there are agricultural businesses, and also a number of former quarry sites, which provide valuable employment now, such as Lime Green and Edge Renewables. These should be supported. The conversion of agricultural buildings to commercial properties is supported subject to Policy MW1 and where traffic generation, notably HGV, is at an acceptable level. Any such developments need to mitigate flood impacts, as per the policies in this MWNP.

Figure 7: Map showing allocated site EMP1 and other existing commercial sites



Policy MW6: Protecting and enhancing the role and setting of Much Wenlock town centre

Purpose

4.45. This policy seeks to support uses that will enable an economically vibrant, mixed-use town centre in Much Wenlock, attracting additional footfall, enhancing its historic setting, improving accessibility and improving overall the look and feel of the public area.

POLICY MW6: PROTECTING AND ENHANCING THE ROLE AND SETTING OF MUCH WENLOCK TOWN CENTRE

A. To secure the ongoing vitality of Much Wenlock town centre (High Street, Barrow Street and Wilmore Street: *Figure 8)*, proposals which protect, enhance and promote a diverse range of town centre uses (Uses C1, E, F1 and F2 and Sui Generis) – including retail, leisure, commercial, office, tourism, cultural and community - will be supported, subject to the other policies in this Neighbourhood Development Plan.

Upper floor residential

B. Proposals that offer opportunities for housing on otherwise underused upper floors will be supported, both where separate access can be achieved and where these are shown to be no longer suitable for commercial use.

Existing retail premises

C. The permanent change of use of Classes C1, E, F1, F2 and Sui Generis to other uses will only be supported where the following can be demonstrated:

i. the proposed use will maintain the vitality and viability of Much Wenlock Town Centre;

ii. the premises in question have not been in continuous active use for at least 12 consecutive months; and

iii. the Class E retail premises have no potential for either reoccupation as demonstrated through the results both of a full viability report and a marketing campaign lasting for a continuous period of at least 6 months.

Temporary uses

D. The use of Class E, F1 and F2 premises for temporary uses will be supported. Such uses include 'pop up' shops and cultural, creative and leisure uses introduced on a temporary basis or for specific events.

E. Such uses must demonstrate that they will not have a detrimental impact on the amenity of neighbouring uses, particularly residential through excessive noise and pollution.

F. Such uses will generally not be considered appropriate if the operation of the business requires such large amounts of vehicle parking in order to function unless sufficient off-street parking arrangements have been implemented.

Re-use of historic buildings

G. The reuse of historic buildings within Much Wenlock Town Centre for activities that will enhance the vitality and viability of the Town Centre will be particularly supported. This could include community uses, eating places, retail or business. Any associated physical alterations should be sympathetic to the historic and architectural significance and character of the building concerned.

Public realm

H. Development proposals to enhance the public realm in Much Wenlock Town Centre will be supported where this will not result in the demolition of or significant detrimental impact to existing heritage assets. Proposals which enhance the pedestrian experience will be supported including:

- **i. the widening of pavements;**
- **ii. the consolidation of street clutter and superfluous signage, including provision of signage that will improve pedestrian links between the retail areas along High Street and Barrow Street;**
- **iii. the inclusion of cycling facilities;**
- **iv. the reinforcement of the distinctive character of the area, as set out in Policy MW18 (Design and character of development) including through the use of planting, seating, and installation of public art, celebrating the heritage and history of the parish; and**
- **v. the confirmation that development proposals should contribute to improved wayfinding and signage for the parish, as appropriate to their scale, nature and location, provided that they can be satisfactorily integrated within their surroundings.**

Conformity Reference: NP objectives: 2; Shropshire Core Strategy (2011): CS15; SAMDev Plan (2015): MD10a, MD10b; NPPF (2024): 90, 96, 98, 101, 103, 131-141

Justification

4.46. Much Wenlock's popularity as both a local centre and a visitor destination/ stop-off point means that there is a fairly significant level of footfall in the town centre throughout the year, supporting a mix of uses including shops, cafes and visitor accommodation.

4.47. A meeting with local traders operating businesses in the town centre identified the following concerns:

- Car parking – There are only a few car parks serving the High Street and these are fairly small and also expensive. This makes it challenging to those people wanting to 'pop-and-shop' or visit for the whole day. It also makes it difficult for those arriving by car to attend town events, such as the Christmas Fayre, because of the inability for people to arrive by car. Whilst it is an aim of this MWNP to promote walking (and, where possible, cycling) locally, this is not an option for everyone and certainly the majority of visitors to the parish arrive by

car due to the lack of local railway station and reliable bus routes. Additional accessible and well signposted off-street car parking provision is supported in Policy MW13.

- Active promotion of the High Street– there was a feeling that more could be doing more to promote the High Street to both residents and visitors. The town is very quiet on bank holidays, for example.
- Challenges in employing staff, other than students, particularly on weekdays.
- Public toilets – The facilities located in St Mary's are often broken or vandalised. There is a need to ensure fully working, accessible toilets.
- Dog fouling.
- Inadequate signage in the car parks to the main local destinations.
- Competition from neighbouring larger settlements, notably Bridgnorth, Telford and Shrewsbury, where there is a greater choice of facilities including larger supermarkets.
- Competition from online retailers, such as Amazon.

4.48. Business owners felt that hosting markets – differentiated from those selling products already available in the High Street - could assist in raising footfall. The current Made in Shropshire Markets are considered to be helpful but could be better promoted. In addition, more events aimed at a broader range of people were cited in particular to draw in families and young people.

4.49. There was also a call more generally to improve the attractiveness of the High Street, for instance the use of bunting, attractive planting (for instance in eye-catching containers) and so forth.

4.50. Looking to the future, the following priorities have been identified:

4.51. Support uses that will enable an economically vibrant, mixed-use town centre: To protect the diverse architectural, historical and environmental qualities of the town centre in Much Wenlock and promote a mix of uses that will draw footfall and reinforce the town centre as the heart of the community. Priorities include:

- Resisting the change of use of retail units, public houses and other community uses to housing, which would gradually erode the core of Much Wenlock (see Appendix A).
- Continuing to focus residential uses at first floor level and above (where this is accessible and adaptable to changing needs) provided there is no adverse impact on the road.
- Ensuring that proposals for development or alteration to retail units in the High Street conserve or enhance its historic character.
- Supporting opportunities for new or replacement tree planting in the street scene, where it can be achieved without reducing sightlines. They should be selected to reflect native species, colour etc.
- Supporting the provision of additional off-street car parking spaces.
- Supporting temporary ("pop-up") shops, which can provide a service to the growing number of home-workers as well as discouraging long-term empty units.

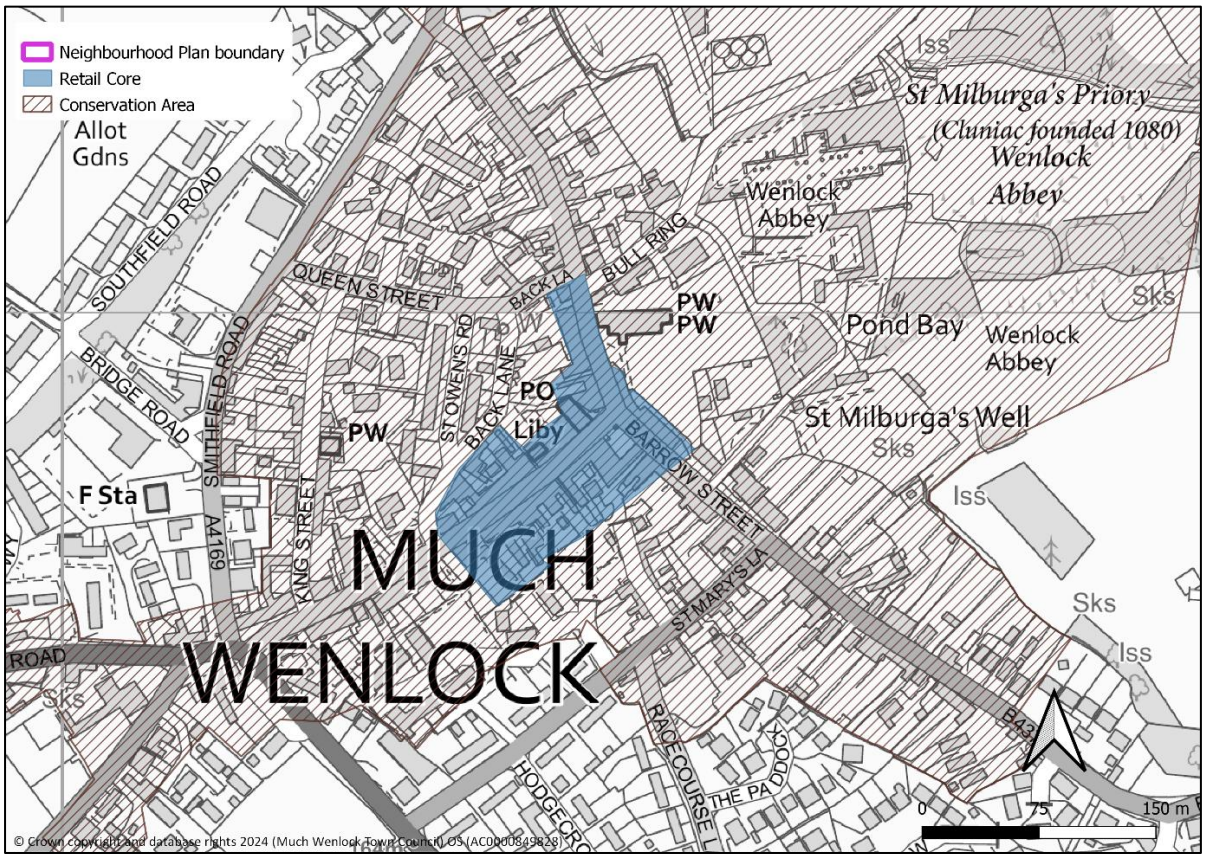
4.52. Improve the look and feel of the public areas: These need to be pedestrian-friendly, safe, accessible and attractive. Priorities include:

- Reducing the negative effects of car movements through the High Street, in partnership with Shropshire Council. This could incorporate traffic calming measures and to investigate feasibility for a "shared space" scheme to better prioritise space between cars and people.
- Provision of additional outdoor seating.
- Installing public art that reinforces the history of the parish.
- Reducing superfluous clutter in terms of bollards, bins etc. Where these are required, there needs to be a consistency in design to reflect the local character.
- Introducing additional markets to the town centre, potentially in conjunction with local suppliers, such as local produce.

4.53. Signage, accessibility and functionality: In order to encourage a pedestrian-first approach to the town centre and assist visitors arriving from further afield. Priorities would include:

- Restricting wayfinding signs to those which convey essential information.
- Signage designed to be accessible and reinforce local character. Further guidance is available from Historic England's booklet Streets for All: Advice for Highway and Public Realm Works in Historic Places.
- Promoting accessibility, for instance by applying the ~~guidance~~ advice contained in the RTPI's guidance aimed at planning neighbourhoods for those living with dementia as well as measures to assist other disabilities.
- Considering restricting on-street parking along the High Street to disabled bays only, to improve safety along the narrow pavements here.
- Upgrading the existing public toilets to a design that would reduce vandalism. Supporting the upgrade of toilets to Changing Place requirements (see Policy MW17 and Appendix B).

Figure 8: Much Wenlock Town Core



Potential action: Shared space/ traffic calming in the town centre

In order to offer a more pleasant pedestrian experience for residents and the visitors to the town, the creation of a shared space, which would give equal priority to pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles in the lower part of the High Street, and the area by the Square, the Guildhall (*Figure 9)*, could be explored.

This could draw from the success of this idea in other places, for instance Dawley, Poynton in Cheshire, and in similar small historic towns to Much Wenlock further afield, for example the Netherlands.

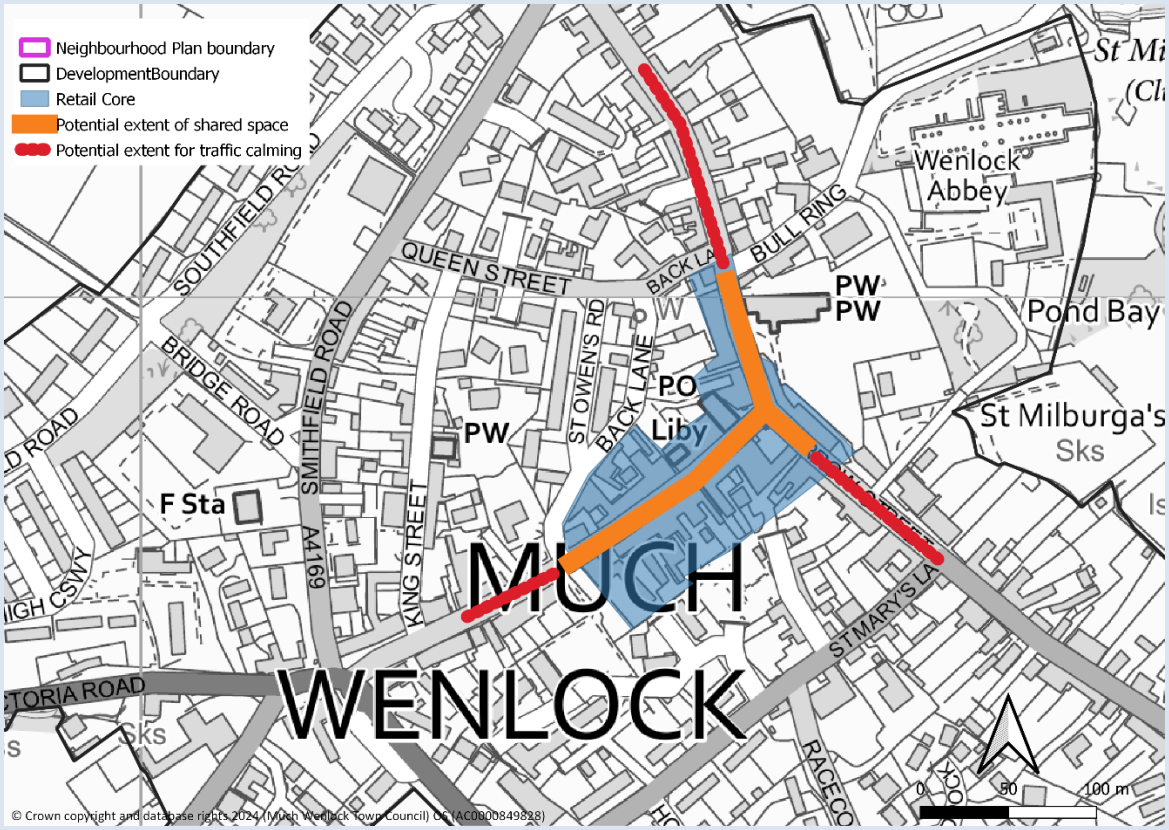
Altering the pavement and road surfaces slows vehicle traffic and ensures that all road users understand that they do not have priority and must show one another consideration.

Consideration also needs to be given to providing disabled parking in the town centre and secure, covered bicycle racks and other infrastructure for cyclists in the Square. Plans were drawn up in 2020 for cycle racks by the museum/Spar area, in space where they would not impede pedestrians and would not be visually intrusive. Such a scheme could be revisited.

To ensure road users appreciate the change in use of the road network on approach to the shared space, we suggest additional traffic calming on Barrow Street and Sheinton Street such as chicanes with traffic giving way e.g. Bridge Road. Planters and wider pavements with benches

would encourage more people to walk into town, especially from the Hunters Gate area where feedback has told us many older residents struggle with existing pavement surface, width and camber.

Figure 9: Potential for shared space and traffic calming



Policy MW7: Promoting sustainable rural tourism

Purpose

4.54. The attractive location of the parish, within the setting of the Shropshire Hills National Landscape and with its proximity to a great number of regionally and nationally significant visitor attractions, presents an opportunity for the parish to develop itself as both a destination and base for sustainable rural tourism.

POLICY MW7: PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE RURAL TOURISM

A. Development proposals that support the aims of the Shropshire Destination Management Plan will be supported. This includes new or expanded sustainable rural tourism-related facilities, recreational enterprises, visitor accommodation (subject to Policy MW8), attractions, and activities to encourage day and staying visitors. The reuse of historic buildings for such activities will be particularly supported. Any associated physical alterations should be sympathetic to the historic and architectural significance and character of the building concerned.

B. As appropriate to their scale, nature and location, development proposals for tourism development (including Use Class C1 hotels and other built accommodation) should meet the following criteria:

- **i. the proposal should seek to support and provide sustainable employment;**
- **ii. the proposal should seek to promote the production and consumption of local produce and materials;**
- **iii. the siting, scale and design should be informed by, and positively contribute towards, landscape character, natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage and must not adversely affect the amenity, appearance, character, and historical significance of the area, including the Shropshire Hills National Landscape and its setting;**
- **iv. there are demonstrable economic and social benefits to the proposals;**
- **v. sufficient off-street car parking is provided, in line with Shropshire Parking standards; and**
- **vi. there is no significant detrimental impact on the existing community.**

C. Proposals that would result in the loss of all or part of tourism related facilities will not be supported unless it can be demonstrated that it is:

- **i. not viable, or unlikely to become commercially viable; and**
- **ii. it has been the subject of appropriate marketing for a period of at least 18 months and consideration has been given to other alternative commercial uses.**

Conformity Reference: NP objectives: 2; Shropshire Core Strategy (2011): CS16; SAMDev Plan (2015): MD11; NPPF (2024): 85, 88, 89

Justification

4.55. The Shropshire Destination Management Plan has the following Vision: ***"Shropshire will be a sustainably managed destination that welcomes the curious and the adventurous to explore its outstandingly beautiful natural landscapes and internationally recognised built heritage in a way that safeguards these precious assets now and for future generations. It is a place where world-changing ideas were born and are celebrated, and it continues to display a refreshing independence of thought and spirit. Its market towns and towns are alive with artisan producers, cultural practitioners and hospitality businesses that combine to create a quality environment in which visitors and residents alike are able to rethink, refresh and recharge."*** *(where cultural practitioners are defined as individuals/businesses operating in the culture, arts and crafts sector).*

4.56. As a visitor destination, Much Wenlock has an important role to play in delivering this vision, capitalising on its location within the Shropshire Hills, its culture and heritage and rich offering of facilities and attractions.

4.57. Approximately 200 people are employed in the tourism sector in Much Wenlock. Just over half of these are employed in accommodation and food services and the remainder in the arts, entertainment, recreation and other services. This is the equivalent of 20.3% of the total Much Wenlock workforce, which represents a higher share than for Shropshire as a whole (14.7%). 1.1% of total employment in the tourism sector in Shropshire is provided by Much Wenlock.

4.58. The town and wider parish is a popular destination with visitors attracted by its links to the modern Olympics, the Priory ruins and the geology of the surrounding Wenlock Edge.

Who is visiting Much Wenlock?

4.59. Domestic visitors to Much Wenlock come from all over the UK. A large proportion come from the West Midlands on a day trip. But there are also many visitors from overseas from a number of European countries and from as far as Australia, New Zealand and the USA. Most visitors are visiting for the first time, with 75% only visiting once. Some are passing through Much Wenlock to reach another destination and decide to stop for a break. There are also organised groups arriving, for instance walking groups.

4.60. Wenlock is seen as a pleasant day out with interesting buildings, shops, cafes and visitor attractions (including the Priory, Guildhall and Museum). For families the latter two provide free entry which visitors appreciate. Overnighters, usually couples as opposed to family groups, tend to stay at local camping and caravan sites and cottages. They use these as a base to explore Wenlock, Ironbridge, Bridgnorth, Shrewsbury, Ludlow and Church Stretton.

4.61. Much Wenlock has been featured in the national media, including the television programme, Escape to the Country, along with newspaper articles written by travel editors. Local events such as 'Made in Shropshire' increase visitor numbers as does the Christmas Fayre and Get a Word in Edgeways festival. There have been issues with availability of car parking, however, which has impacted the ability of visitors from further afield in attending these.

4.62. The majority of visitors arrive by car due to the lack of a railway station in the parish. Many are also stopping off at Wenlock on the way to somewhere else, making public transport linkages difficult to plan for in advance due to timings. Most visitors will have already looked online to find places of interest. Nevertheless, Much Wenlock Museum houses the Information Centre although their reduced opening hours (only certain days of the week) limits access. It would be helpful to have another venue that could provide visitor information during the intervening days.

4.63. A further suggestion would be for more signage relating to visitor attractions. For example the Olympian Trail map sign is very effective; a sign nearby that shows the locations of the Museum, Guildhall, and Priory would be helpful. Visitors themselves provide the following feedback:

Positive experiences	**Areas to improve**
• The wonderful carvings and the historic authenticity of the Council Chamber. • The list of Bailiffs and Mayors is appreciated along with the Display cabinets, information boards and the RAF Memorial. • Local people pop in each month to see the latest Art Exhibition. • The newly installed Children's activity table is very popular. • The Guildhall Story, Music and Poetry listening post provides another source of interest. • Visitors enjoy being able to purchase locally produced gifts, cards and books. • Generally, visitors comment on the considerable historic importance of Much Wenlock.	• Access for people in wheelchairs or with limited mobility. There is one local artist who has been unable to access the art exhibitions at all. • Increased opening of the Guildhall. • Additional cafes to be open on Sundays. • Additional car parking. • Better signage. • Provision of toilets. • Access to the Information Centre on all days. • Additional cycle parking – see Transport section

Potential Action: Visitor Strategy for Much Wenlock

Some of the opportunities to promote tourism locally sit outside planning policy and one of the actions for the Town Council, in partnership with others, will be to prepare a Visitor Strategy for the parish.

Policy MW8: Visitor accommodation in rural areas

Purpose

4.64. The policy seeks to limit the development of owner-occupied second homes outside the development boundary. Any tourism-related development in the countryside will only be accepted if the design is of exceptional quality, meaning that any subsequent change from holiday use would still result in exceptionally designed development. The policy reflects the NPPF by only allowing tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside.

POLICY MW8: VISITOR ACCOMMODATION IN RURAL AREAS

A. Proposals for new and extended touring caravan and camping sites should have strong regard to the cumulative impact of visitor accommodation on the natural and historic assets of the area, road network, or over intensification of the site.

B. Static caravans, chalets and log cabins are recognised as having a greater impact on the countryside. Therefore, in addition (to clause A) schemes should be landscaped and designed to a high quality and be at an appropriate capacity and scale.

C. Any holiday let development that does not conform to the legal definition of a caravan and is not related to the conversion of existing appropriate rural buildings, will be resisted in the countryside (unless it conforms to clause D below) and in accordance with Policy MW1.

D. Much Wenlock Town Council recognises the appeal of a holiday in a rural setting. Therefore, permanent holiday let development may be approved in countryside locations provided that it can be demonstrated that the design is of exceptional quality (as outlined in the NPPF) and in accordance with Policy MW19. Any subsequent changes to such holiday lets in these locations (such as change to residential occupation) will be resisted, as per E below.

E. To retain the benefit to the visitor economy, robust conditions will be applied to new planning permissions for visitor accommodation to ensure the accommodation is not used for residential occupation. Proposals for the conversion of holiday lets to permanent residential use should demonstrate that their loss will not have a significant adverse impact on the visitor economy and meet the criteria relating to suitability for residential use in Policy MW1.

F. For existing static caravan, chalet and log cabin sites in areas of high flood risk, positive consideration will be given to proposals for their relocation to areas of lower flood risk to ensure they are capable of being made safe for the lifetime of the development.

Conformity Reference: NP objectives: 2; Shropshire Core Strategy (2011): CS16; SAMDev Plan (2015): MD11; NPPF (2024): 85, 88, 89

Justification

4.65. There have been examples of visitor accommodation built within the rural parts of the parish that have, over time, been used and converted to permanent accommodation. Concerns have been raised by parishioners about such developments, once permanent, in terms of their impact on local infrastructure.

Policy MW9: Supporting flexible workspaces and opportunities for homeworking

Purpose

4.66. This policy recognises the growing contribution of home-based and small-to-medium sized businesses in Much Wenlock and seeks to encourage opportunities for them. This would include by supporting the provision of start-up and move-on business units as well as the provision of a shared office space. This would provide a greater incentive and opportunity for local people to work locally. Homeworking has become commonplace for many in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic.

POLICY MW9: SUPPORTING FLEXIBLE WORKSPACES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR HOMEWORKING

A. Proposals to provide working spaces that encourage homeworking, co-working and creative small industries, for instance through incubator/start-up business space on flexible terms, will be supported through:

- **i. the provision of new buildings or conversion of existing buildings, within the development boundary;**
- **ii. enabling extensions and garden offices to facilitate homeworking;**
- **iii. enabling microbusinesses;**
- **iv. supporting the diversification of farm and rural businesses, in accordance with Policy MW1;**
- **v. the provision of start-up businesses by enabling low-cost facilities in cooperative clusters; and**
- **vi. support for improved communications infrastructure (mobile, broadband) where this can be achieved sympathetically to local character.**

As appropriate to their scale, nature and location, proposals for new workspaces should demonstrate the way in which they can be incorporated within their immediate locality without generating any unacceptable impact on the amenity of residential properties and on the capacity and safety of the local highways network.

B. The reuse of historic buildings for such activities will be particularly supported. Any associated physical alterations should be sympathetic to the historic and architectural significance and character of the building concerned.

Conformity Reference NP objectives: 2; Shropshire Core Strategy (2011): CS13, CS14; SAMDev Plan (2015): MD9, S13; NPPF (2024): 85, 86

Justification

4.67. Much Wenlock has a well-qualified workforce, but its rural location in the setting of the Shropshire Hills National Landscape means that the parish is fairly limited in its ability to identify land for employment uses. A notable feature of the parish is the number of small businesses and sole traders operating locally, many from their own homes. Approximately 32% of those in employment work from home (2021 census). There is an opportunity, therefore, to explore ways to provide more space for early-stage businesses and start-ups, shared working space and opportunities to enable further homeworking. This would also potentially help to reduce number of vehicles commuting out.

4.68. To achieve, it is necessary to encourage appropriate buildings that can be rented out at sufficiently low rents to attract their use by business start-ups and existing home workers. A potential source of such space in Much Wenlock Parish is vacant farm and rural buildings, where this can be achieved in a sustainable way without compromising the landscape or adding to highway issues or flood risk.

OBJECTIVE 3: REDUCING FLOOD RISK

The Plan will aim to secure ways of reducing existing flood risk and avoiding any increase in flood risk, while also reducing water pollution throughout the parish by:

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- ✓ recognising the significance of the designation of Much Wenlock as within a Rapid Response Catchment subject to the Highest Category of flood risk.
- ✓ minimising the impacts of flooding within the town's conservation area, implicit in a worst-case flood scenario, by a catchment wide flood attenuation strategy.
- ✓ making a prior assessment, of any impact on flood risk, a key element in preparing for the implementation of each of the council's policies.
- ✓ restricting new development to locations least likely to increase flood risk.
- ✓ encouraging the development of nature-based solutions throughout the catchment to reduce runoff and to slow the flow of surface water.
- ~~✓~~ keeping sufficient land that has the potential to be used to slow down the flow of surface water through engineering or natural means free from development that would prevent such use. ~~keeping sites free from development if they have the potential to be used to slow down the flow of surface water through engineering or natural means.~~
- ✓ making sure that developments minimise the impact on water quality and subsequent health risks particularly during flooding conditions.
- ✓ protecting and improving local water quality.

Policy MW10: Flood prevention

Purpose

4.69. Much Wenlock and surrounds suffers from significant flooding. The two policies in the section seek to ensure that flood risk is minimised in Much Wenlock and that adequate drainage is in place.

POLICY MW10: FLOOD PREVENTION

A. Development proposals must be designed to take full account of any existing flood risk, irrespective of the source of flooding. Where a site, or its immediate surroundings, has been identified to be at risk of flooding, all opportunities to reduce the identified risk should be investigated at the masterplanning stage of design. The identified mitigations should be subsequently incorporated at the detailed design stage, during construction, throughout the lifetime of the development and in respect of other parts of the catchment when compared to current use, to reduce the overall level of flood risk. Sites which can deliver flood mitigation and reduce runoff to the Town alongside securing wider benefits, including but not limited to, residential development/net gains in Biodiversity/formal areas of open space, should be supported.

B. Existing watercourses (inclusive of all ditches and land drains) should remain open, and the land safeguarded for management of existing flood risk. Development will not be supported in existing or potential flood attenuation areas where development would reduce the ability

of these areas to alleviate flooding by employment of either engineering or natural solutions.

C. It is essential that the drainage scheme proposed to support new development:

i. protects people and property on the development site from flooding; and

ii. does not create any additional flood risk outside of the development in any part of the catchment, either upstream or downstream; and

iii. the proposed scheme is future-proofed to take account of climate change projections.

D. For all developments, the following approach is supported:

i. no development shall commence until full details of the proposed drainage schemes for surface and foul water (including details of their routing, design, and subsequent management and maintenance) have been submitted to and approved by the planning authority; and

ii. no building shall be occupied until the drainage schemes have been implemented in accordance with the approved details; and

iii. parking spaces and driveways associated with new development will be encouraged to have permeable surfaces.

E. For major development, appropriate flood warning and evacuation plans must be in place.

F. Infrastructure provision or improvements shall be provided on-site as an integral part of the development and off-site (for instance via a S106), at the cost of the developer.

Conformity Reference: NP objectives: 3; Shropshire Core Strategy (2011): CS18; SAMDev Plan (2015): MD2; NPPF (2024): 161-164, 170-182

Policy MW11: Sustainable drainage design and management

POLICY MW11: SUSTAINABLE DRAINAGE DESIGN AND MANAGEMENT

A. Development proposals must demonstrate that the sewer network can accommodate the additional demand for sewerage disposal, both from the development itself and from permitted developments in the area where this can be accommodated within the sewer network, either in its existing form or through planned improvements to the system, in advance of the construction or occupation of the development.

B. In accordance with the NPPF, surface water drainage on any development must not add to the existing site run off or cause any adverse impact to neighbouring properties or the surrounding environment/wildlife habitat.

C. Development proposals creating new drainage requirements must demonstrate that Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) will be effective and incorporated in any proposed

developments. This should allow for above surface water management on site taking account of the underlying geology and seasonally high ground water table affecting parts of the parish. The concept of SuDS trains, incorporating two or three different surface water management approaches is supported.

D. Any drainage scheme must manage all sources of surface water, including exceedance flows and surface flows from offsite, provide for emergency ingress and egress and ensure adequate connectivity.

E. Development proposals must be supported by a drainage scheme maintenance plan which demonstrates a schedule of activities, access points, outfalls and any biodiversity and archaeological considerations. The maintenance plan must also include an indication of the adopting or maintaining authority or organisation and may require inclusion within a register of drainage features.

Conformity Reference: NP objectives: 3; Shropshire Core Strategy (2011): CS16; SAMDev Plan (2015): MD11; NPPF (2024): 161-164, 170-182

Justification

4.70. The NPPF states that, when determining planning applications, local planning authorities should, *"…ensure flood risk is not increased elsewhere. Where appropriate, applications should be supported by a site-specific flood-risk assessment. Development should only be allowed in areas at risk of flooding where, in light of this assessment (and the sequential and exception tests, as applicable) it can be demonstrated that: within the site, the most vulnerable development is located in areas of lowest flood risk unless there are overriding reasons to prefer a different location; the development is appropriately flood resistant and resilient; it incorporates sustainable drainage systems, unless there is clear evidence that this would be inappropriate; any residual risk can be safely managed; and safe access and escape routes are included where appropriate, as part of an agreed emergency plan."*

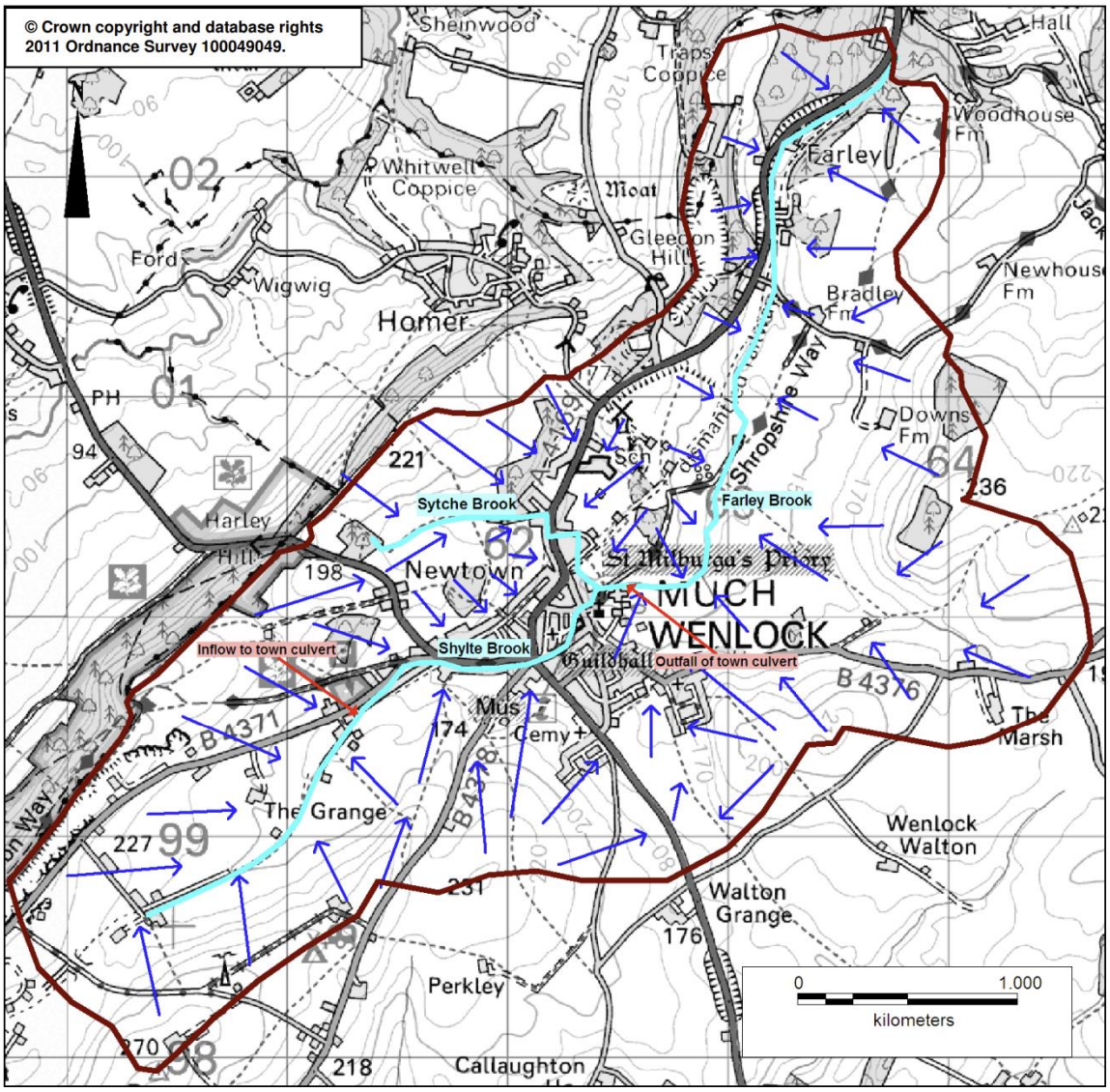
4.71. Flooding is a significant local issue. Much Wenlock and the surrounding areas are highly susceptible to flooding. The town and surrounding settlements, are effectively situated within a 'bowl' in the landscape, surrounded by higher hills, from which water run-off has frequently had devastating effects.

4.72. The most common cause of flooding is persistent rainfall over many hours, sometimes in a season which has been quite wet. Water running off the steep slopes surrounding Much Wenlock travels rapidly into the bowl of the town, causing significant flooding. The duration and intensity of rain, hail and snow is worsening with climate change and the situation is exacerbated by the increased use of hard (impermeable) surfaces. The intense storm of June 2023, for instance, lasted no more than 30 minutes but caused terrifying flooding. It is predicted that climate change will make such floods more frequent and also more intense and long lasting, causing immense damage.

4.73. As a consequence, Much Wenlock is designated as a High Category Rapid Response Catchment by the Environment Agency - the only one in Shropshire – notably in relation to the Shylte Brook, which runs through the town (*Figure 10*). This means that after heavy rain or rapid snowmelt, the flow of water is so rapid that it's not possible to prepare proper flood defences

or to give adequate warnings to residents. Risk to life, livelihood and property is therefore high. Extreme and fast flooding can occur with very little warning, and the depth and speed of flood water can increase quickly.

Figure 10: Main runoff paths (blue arrows), watercourses and whole catchment of the Much Wenlock and Farley (source: IUDMP, 2011)



4.74. Due to the frequency and severity of past flood events in Much Wenlock in 2010, SC commissioned an Integrated Urban Drainage Management Plan (IUDMP) to be prepared for the town, which explains the issues at hand. A combination of recommendations included the introduction of additional attenuation ponds and improved land practices, improved maintenance and increased number of gullies and changes to the drainage network in the Hunter's Gate area and additional attenuation ponds to avoid adverse effects downstream.

4.75. In November 2017, the Much Wenlock Flood Alleviation Scheme, which seeks to reduce flood risk to more than 140 properties, officially opened. The scheme has seen the construction of two ponds which catch and store water that could otherwise flood properties, businesses and

roads in the town. One pond is on the Sytche Brook to the north west of the town and the other is on the Shylte Brook to the south west. The ponds, which will usually be empty, fill during times of heavy rain. The collected water is then released in a controlled manner so that flood risk downstream is reduced. The ponds, which are now fully operational, will drain down sufficiently quickly so that repeat rainfall events can be stored in a similar manner. The scheme also includes the restoration of Westwood Quarry on Stretton Road. The Much Wenlock Flood Group, formed by a group of interested volunteers, has a vast knowledge of the Shylte Brook catchment and how it behaves, and will be a major part of work in the wider community regarding the flash flooding issue.

4.76. Despite the success of the scheme, flooding is still commonplace. The two most damaging recent floods both occurred during 2023. These floods had different origins. The first, in June 2023, arose following a sudden and relatively short period of geographically limited intense precipitation. While the attenuation ponds reduced the impact of the storm, properties in the High Street were badly flooded and traffic on the A458 was brought to a halt by the depth of the water. In October 2023 an even more extensive flood arose following a protracted period of persistent, though not intense, rainfall. Once again, it was properties in the High Street which were worst affected. Without the attenuation ponds, damage might have been even more serious. Those features were shown to be valuable though not sufficient.

4.77. The areas most badly affected by regular flooding lie at the heart of the Much Wenlock Conservation Area. Many of the homes are listed mediaeval buildings, central to the townscape. The Conservation Area forms an essential element in attracting visitors and its destruction would adversely affect the town's tourist economy. Changing weather patterns will only make matters worse and may require the existing IUDMP to be updated.

4.78. A careful analysis of the origins of the local flood risk was presented in February 2024 to the Town Council's Strategic Flood Advisory Group, at a meeting chaired by Philip Dunne MP. The findings were accepted as accurate by the representatives of the Environment Agency and SC. The nature of the landscape and geology play an important part as does the nature and distribution of existing development. While local action can aid marginally in reducing flooding, for example by regular drain clearance, the key to limiting future flooding lies in effective development management.

4.79. It is therefore considered critical that any new built development properly addresses the threat of flood risk and ensures, through good design, that it is capable of contributing towards the reduction of overall flood risk and can adapt the challenges posed by climate change. This would include the use of SuDS but also measures to retain water on site (both rain and grey water) to allow its reuse or subsequent release when peak flows diminish. Good design should incorporate such systems into new development.

4.80. The appropriate application of a Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) scheme to a specific development is heavily dependent upon the topography and geology of the specific site (and its surrounds). Careful consideration of the site characteristics must therefore be given to ensure the future sustainability of the adopted drainage system. Severn Trent Water notes that it is the responsibility of a developer to make proper provision for surface water drainage to

groundwater courses or surface water sewers. It must not be allowed to drain to the foul sewer, as this is the major contributor to sewer flooding.

Flooding at The Pound and Gaskell Arms Junction

4.81. **Natural flood management and the use of SuDS:** Incorporating biodiverse SuDS into new developments would assist in reducing the amount of rainwater running off into the combined sewage system. *Table 5* identifies additional natural solutions that should be considered:

Table 5: Natural drainage solutions

	Planting additional trees and hedgerows in public green spaces and along verges. Soakaway crates can be installed beneath trees, which serve to capture excess water, slowing its movement until it soaks naturally into the earth or taken in by the tree. This chimes with the aspiration for a minimum 20% tree canopy across the area (Biodiversity policy). The Much Wenlock Tree Forum is heavily involved in supporting tree planting locally for this purpose.
	Small rain gardens along streets can be created to capture surface water before it enters the drain. The use of larger stone and cobbles can assist in removing sediment from the water.

	Diverting water courses in the higher hills to reduce flow speed and incorporating materials to naturally filter the water from materials that might otherwise enter the drainage network. This is an approach actively supported by the Severn Rivers Trust and can incorporate: installation of leaky dams to slow flow within the watercourses; development of wetland scrapes and similar features that can hold water during storm events and allow water to slowly seep out; reconnection of flood plain areas to the rivers to allow an increased area of land for temporary water storage; creation of woodland to increase absorption of rainfall; and development of a green finance model for nature based solutions to water resource management.
	The use of ponds as attenuation areas to capture surface water. Land in the surrounding area to the town could be actively safeguarded to act as attenuation areas. The Town Council will work with landowners and the Local Wildlife Trust to identify suitable locations.
	Parking spaces and driveways associated with new development should incorporate permeable surfaces. Existing residents will also be discouraged from contributing to increasing community flood risk by creating new hard or impermeable surfaces within their own properties.

	Supporting different ways of farming can encourage richer soils. This helps to preserve organic matter in the soil, which will help improve soil structure, water-holding capacity, and overall soil health. Soils with higher organic matter content can absorb and store more water, reducing the volume of water that runs off and contributes to flooding.

4.82. **Sewerage network capacity** – The current Much Wenlock Place Plan acknowledges the flooding problem immediately upstream of the main outfall sewer to the Wastewater Treatment. It is therefore recommended for SC to make any planning permission conditional upon the sewerage authority (Severn Trent Water) first taking any steps necessary to ensure that the public sewer will be able to cope with the increased load. This can be secured through the use of 'Grampian' style pre-commencement planning conditions. SC will then determine any details submitted pursuant to such conditions in accordance with any views expressed by Severn Trent Water. Such conditions would commonly be worded broadly as follows: '*No dwelling hereby permitted shall be occupied until works to improve the existing public foul sewerage network so that it is able to cope with the flows from the proposed development have been completed.'*

4.83. The use of Grampian-style pre-commencement planning conditions are considered to be particularly helpful in Much Wenlock, given the overall flooding issues, exacerbated by the combined sewer/drainage network. Their use by SC would therefore be welcomed. In order to inform the justification and application of such conditions, Much Wenlock Town Council will continue to work with Severn Trent Water and SC to review the capacity of the Sewage Treatment Works and assess whether applications, on an individual basis, require such a condition. This is not a policy matter but a non-policy action.

4.84. In parallel with the MWNP, it is imperative that the organisations responsible maintain drainage features, such as ditches, culverts and drains.

OBJECTIVE 4: TRANSPORT AND MOVEMENT

The Plan will support new ways of managing the traffic in and around the town of Much Wenlock and enabling active travel by:

- ✓ supporting plans to improve the infrastructure for local walking, cycling and equestrian transport, in line with the principles of the 20-minute neighbourhoods.
- ✓ making sure that new developments have enough associated off-street car parking to meet current and future needs.
- ✓ safeguarding existing off-street public car parking and support additional car parking to alleviate pressure in the town centre.
- ✓ supporting local and strategic traffic management proposals which reduce the number of HGV/LGV vehicles travelling through the parish in order to minimise their adverse impact.
- ✓ managing new developments so that they do not have an unacceptable traffic impact on local residents.
- ✓ ensuring that traffic impacts at pinchpoint junctions and stretches of road are minimised.

Policy MW12: Improving walking, cycling and equestrian opportunities

Purpose

4.85. This policy seeks to enhance opportunities for active modes of transport (notably walking and, where feasible, cycling, and equestrian) along routes which are most likely to encourage a shift away from the private car for short journeys in and around the parish.

POLICY MW12: IMPROVING WALKING, CYCLING AND EQUESTRIAN OPPORTUNITIES

A. As appropriate to their scale, nature and location, development proposals should ensure safe pedestrian, and where possible cycle, access to link up with the existing footpath network, as defined in *Figure 12*, and the public transport network.

B. The provision of new, or the enhancement of existing, cycle and pedestrian routes that are, where feasible, physically separated from vehicular traffic and from one another will be strongly supported. Such routes should be of permeable material and ensure that access by disabled users and users of mobility scooters is secured.

C. Insofar as planning permission is required, the design and layout of works related to the widening of footpaths or the provision of traffic-calming measures should enhance the rural character of the town and retain and/or provide hedgerows, trees and soft verges wherever practicable. The materials used in such works should be sympathetic to local character, in accordance with Policy MW18.

D. Proposals for new segregated bridleways will be supported wherever possible; in all new developments existing bridleways must be retained where they exist or, alternatively, new or amended bridleway links provided together with safe road crossing points that enable connectivity between the town and the wider countryside.

E. Proposals should enable or promote the provision of community transport and car share schemes that provide accessible, affordable and responsive transport choice.

Conformity Reference: NP objectives: 4; Shropshire Core Strategy (2011): CS7; SAMDev Plan (2015): MD8; NPPF (2024): 96, 105, 109, 110, 111, 115, 117, 135

Justification

4.86. The community has a high level of concern about the existing amount of traffic in the parish, notably into and through Much Wenlock town, where heavy congestion is experienced, particularly at peak times.

4.87. Many people rely on their car for a variety of reasons, for instance, they may have limited mobility, they may be transporting young children, carrying larger loads, or simply be short of time.

4.88. Whilst such journeys may be unavoidable, it is important that 'active travel' (i.e. walking and cycling) is enabled and encouraged, particularly for journeys within the Parish and to nearby settlements. Active travel – walking, cycling and recreational horse-riding - brings health benefits, both physical and mental, and can assist in reducing congestion and air pollution whilst freeing the roads for those who are less able to give up their cars for the reasons stated above.

4.89. Much Wenlock has no dedicated cycling routes, and the historic nature of the area will make it difficult to engineer the existing routes to create such routes. Nevertheless, there is scope to ensure that provision for cyclists is in place and this is considered in Policy M13 (Public parking provision). This includes provision for leisure cyclists that frequently visit and pass through the town.

Promoting Walking

4.90. There is greater scope when it comes to walking. An aspiration of the MWNP is to promote Much Wenlock as a 'walkable town'. This is a concept promoted by the Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA) whereby developments are encouraged to be no more than a 10 minute walk from key facilities (*Figure 11*).

Figure 11: Principles of the '20 minute' neighbourhood (i.e. 10 minutes each way) (source: TCPA)

4.91. The concept is not intended to stifle development, rather to emphasise the importance of enabling and improving connectivity by foot and by bike. New development proposals in the parish, which may be allocated in a future Local Plan for instance, should take account of the walkable town concept and provide the infrastructure to link new homes to existing facilities to encourage active travel.

4.92. *Figure 12* shows the areas that are walkable (one-way from home) within 10 minutes of the town centre, as a central point in the town. The concept could be applied to other community amenities and leisure facilities, for instance, that are not necessarily located in the town centre.

4.93. Policy MW12 does not directly comment on the 20-minute neighbourhood. It takes a more general approach in advising that development proposals should ensure safe pedestrian, and where possible cycle, access to link up with the existing footpath and cycleway network, and public transport network, as defined in *Figure 12*. Nevertheless, proposals which meet the 20 minutes neighbourhood concept will be particularly supported. This approach overlaps with that taken in Policy MW1, which focuses on new development within the Development Boundary. Plainly this approach will provide convenient access to the town centre and to the main amenities and attractions.

4.94. *Figure 12* also identifies how and where the walking network as a whole can be improved and better connected within the town. These improvements could form the basis for funding priorities for any developer contributions received and should be considered in partnership with Shropshire Council as the Highways Authority. The improvements are summarised in *Table 6,* where numbering corresponds to the map, which also prioritises them in order of urgency.

Figure 12: Walkable map (10 minutes each way) taking the town centre as the central point and key improvement points

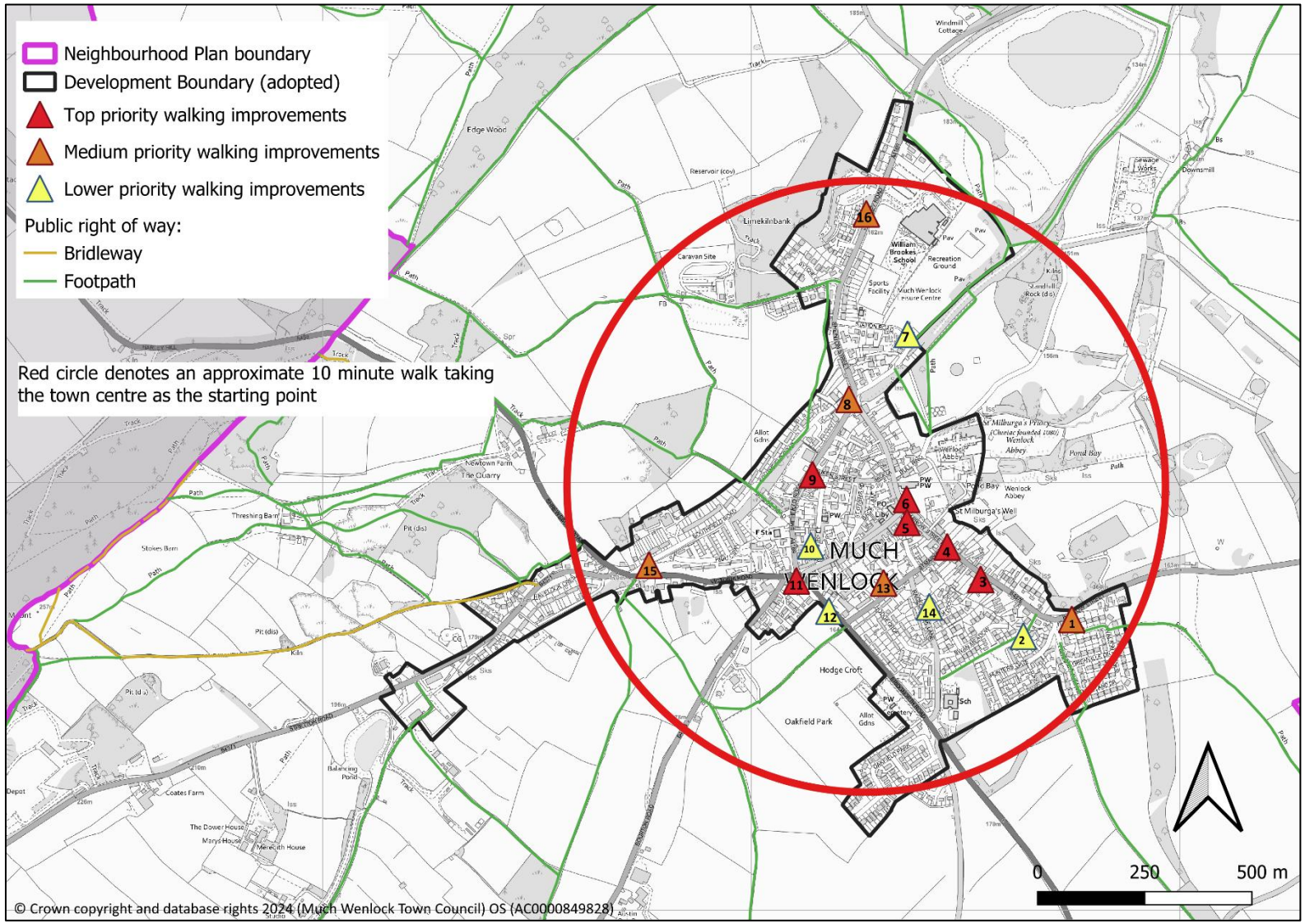


Table 6: Improvements to Much Wenlock's walking route network

	Location	Problem	Solution	Progress August 2023	PRIORITY LISTING
1.	Junction of Forester Avenue and Barrow St	Speed of traffic and poor visibility due to the bend, and in the summer vegetation growth can also obscure the view	Move 30 mph limit Cut back Vegetation	Undergrowth cut back	MEDIUM Priority
2.	Kissing Gates on Hunters Gate	Difficult for mobility scooter and buggies	*Open double gate for users, consider design in future*		LOW Priority
3.	Barrow Street	Pinch points on both sides of the road forcing people to use the road. Uneven surfaces prevent some people walking	*Consider design of road to create traffic calming e.g. chicanes located at pinch points to enable pavements to be widened*	*None*	TOP Priority
4.	Raven Junction – Barrow St / St Mary's Lane	Uneven and steep dropped kerbs. Cars and buses mount the kerb adding to the danger to pedestrians.	*Improvements to alignment of dropped kerbs as need to change angle of approach if on a mobility scooter.*	*None*	TOP Priority
5.	High St Junction and The Square	Limited dropped kerb crossing points often obliterated by parked cars	*Create raised table at junction, slowing traffic making it more a shared space and discouraging through traffic*	*None*	TOP Priority
6.	Wilmore St and Sheinton Street	Narrow pavement – pedestrians forced onto road	*As above*	*None*	TOP Priority
7.	Station Road	Uneven pavement surface	*Maintenance required*	*None*	LOW priority
8.	Smithfield Road (A4169)	Pavement switches sides with limited safe crossing places for school children or other vulnerable	*Install pedestrian refuges, carry out safety audit*	*None*	MEDIUM priority

	Location	Problem	Solution	Progress August 2023	PRIORITY LISTING
		pedestrians/scooter users.			
9.	Mardol Terrace (A4169)	Pavement tarmac is cracked No pavement from bus terminal Queen Street to Mardol Terrace	*Maintenance required carry out a safety audit.*	*None*	TOP Priority
10.	King St	No pavements to or from the Health Centre forcing disabled, vulnerable or people with small children to walk in the road.	*Consider road markings to demark safer pedestrian way*	*None*	LOW Priority
11.	Gaskell ~~C~~Arms Junction~~orner~~	No safe pedestrian access to the bus stop or across *Victoria Rd*.	*Further consideration to be given to improving pedestrian/cycle crossings at the Gaskell Arms ~~j~~Junction. Improve safety for pedestrians*	*None*	TOP Priority
12.	Bridgnorth Road	Very narrow and uneven footpath on the cemetery side. At the safer crossing further down the hill you have to scramble up the bank on the garage side to reach the pavement.	*Improve surface of pavements.*	*Safe crossing at Oakfield Park proposed*	LOW Priority
13.	St Mary's Road	Poor pavement surfaces for mobility scooter users, an impassable step where the driveway from Falcons Court meets the road. Few dropped kerbs.	*Improve pavement surface and access*	*None*	MEDIUM Priority
14.	Racecourse Lane	Overgrown hedges	*Cut back*	*Needs monitoring all the time.*	LOW Priority

	Location	Problem	Solution	Progress August 2023	PRIORITY LISTING
15	Victoria Road / Shrewsbury Road A458	The pedestrian crossing from the walkway to the old petrol station on Victoria Road has often been damaged by vehicles in the past.	*Needs more safety measures*	*The Keep Left signs have been renewed.*	MEDIUM Priority
16.	A4169 outside Lady Forester	There is no pedestrian refuge. Vulnerable residents and visitors to the care home find it difficult to cross the road	*Install pedestrian refuge outside care home and implement 20mph zone outside school*	*None*	MEDIUM Priority

4.95. The only accessible recreational footpath in the area is around the Linden Field. A second heritage trail could be developed by continuing this path from the Linden Field and along the disused railway line. Currently the railway line is only accessible to confident walkers, due to mud and tree roots etc. but a heritage walk with an accessible surface could include information boards on the history of the area. This route leads to the road to the Cavalier Centre, which provides horse-riding for the disabled.

4.96. In terms of access beyond the town itself, most recreational walks start in Much Wenlock and use the Public Rights of Way (PRoW) network. Given Much Wenlock's topography, current PRoWs demand a high level of mobility to clamber up and down steep banks.

4.97. The local settlements of Bourton, Homer, Farley, Callaughton etc. have no pavements. Roads in these areas are narrow, and speed limits range from 30mph to 50mph and 60mph. This can be confusing and is not conducive to walking or cycling. Users of these recreational routes using PRoW are, at times, required to use sections of these roads, creating hazards for walkers. The worst spots are as follows:

- The top of Harley Bank on the A458
- Bourton Road (B4378) Perkley route by Bourton Westwood Farm.
- Merrywell Lane, part of a popular circular walk round the town. This increasingly busy route is an HGV and bus route and has two-way traffic on a single carriageway with passing spaces.
- The Broseley ~~R~~road from the town boundary to Bellhole Cottage (a fast road with no pavement and poor visibility in places).
- The road to Homer ~~Road~~ from Much Wenlock, which is used by William Brookes School students, but is steep, dark, fast and narrow with no pavements.

4.98. To create better connectivity to and between settlements and to other walking routes, there are a number of 'missing links' in the PRoW network as follows:

- a connecting safe footpath is needed to link the two PRoWs at the top of Harley Bank on A458. This could be achieved by acquiring the 2-metre strip of land adjacent to highway for a distance of approximately 100 metres.

- designate an informal footpath from Edge Wood to Homer Road at Hillcrest as a PRoW to help address safety concerns of people walking on Homer Road.
- formally divert the PRoW through Farley Quarry from Sheinton Road to Severn Springs Farm, which has been closed by the landowner, and reroute using a path along Gleedon Hill on the west of the quarry.
- address the closure of the PRoW through Lea Quarry, which has been shut by the landowner and provide a new link to the east of the quarry as previously discussed which would benefit the local caravan site users.

Public Transport in Much Wenlock

4.99. In addition to the proposals set out above, there is a general desire locally to improve access to, frequency and reliability of public transport in the parish, in particular buses. The Community Surveys revealed that the community have concerns about the frequency of buses, particularly in the evenings and at weekends.

4.100. Whilst such improvements sit outside the scope of the neighbourhood plan itself, they are noted within the Non-Policy Actions section as activities for the Town Council and wider community to pursue with private operators and the highways authority.

4.101. In parallel to improving the active travel network, there are a series of factors that may help to improve the environment for walkers, cyclists and horse-riders. Many are beyond the scope of the Neighbourhood Plan but are considered in Section 7 (Non-Policy Actions). They include:

- Using design to slow-down traffic – for example through the introduction of tighter bends into side-roads, as opposed to wide openings; the creative use of planters to narrow lanes; use of modal filters, which allow the passage of some modes of transport but not others. The Much Wenlock Design Codes and Guidance addresses some of these points.
- Introducing slower speed limits in part or all of the town.
- In order to enhance the attractive heritage / conservation centre of Much Wenlock, a shared vehicle/pedestrian/cyclist space could be created in the High Street / The Square/ Barrow Street / Wilmore Street to reduce vehicle speeds and rat running thereby enhancing the safety of all users.
- Redirecting HGVs away from rural lanes – a dialogue with Shropshire Council and National Highways would help to consider ways to re-route vehicles, for instance by altering SatNav guidance provided to private companies.
- Working with Shropshire Council Highways and private operators to improve public transport provision in the parish, in terms of routes served, timings and punctuality.

Policy MW13: Publicly accessible parking

Purpose

4.102. The policy seeks to safeguard existing public car parking and support new parking in areas where parking is a challenge.

POLICY MW13: PUBLICLY ACCESSIBLE PARKING

A. Development proposals that would result in the loss of existing publicly available off-street car parking spaces will not be supported.

B. Proposals that enable the provision of additional, publicly accessible off-road car parking spaces will be supported subject to the policies of this Neighbourhood Plan. In particular proposals which:

i. provide parking that is accessible (by foot) to the High Street; and

ii. provision of parking spaces which are landscaped, ideally with native species, to minimise the visual impact of parked vehicles. They must also not exacerbate or cause additional surface-water runoff.

C. At existing locations and alongside any new public car parking provision, the following facilities will be strongly supported to be provided as part of that provision:

i. dedicated covered and secure bicycle parking facilities, preferably with e-bike charging points; and

ii. future-proofed four hour or faster electric vehicle charging points (or wireless charging facilities).

Conformity Reference: NP objectives: 3; Shropshire Core Strategy (2011): CS7; SAMDev Plan (2015): MD8; NPPF (2024): 109, 110, 112, 117

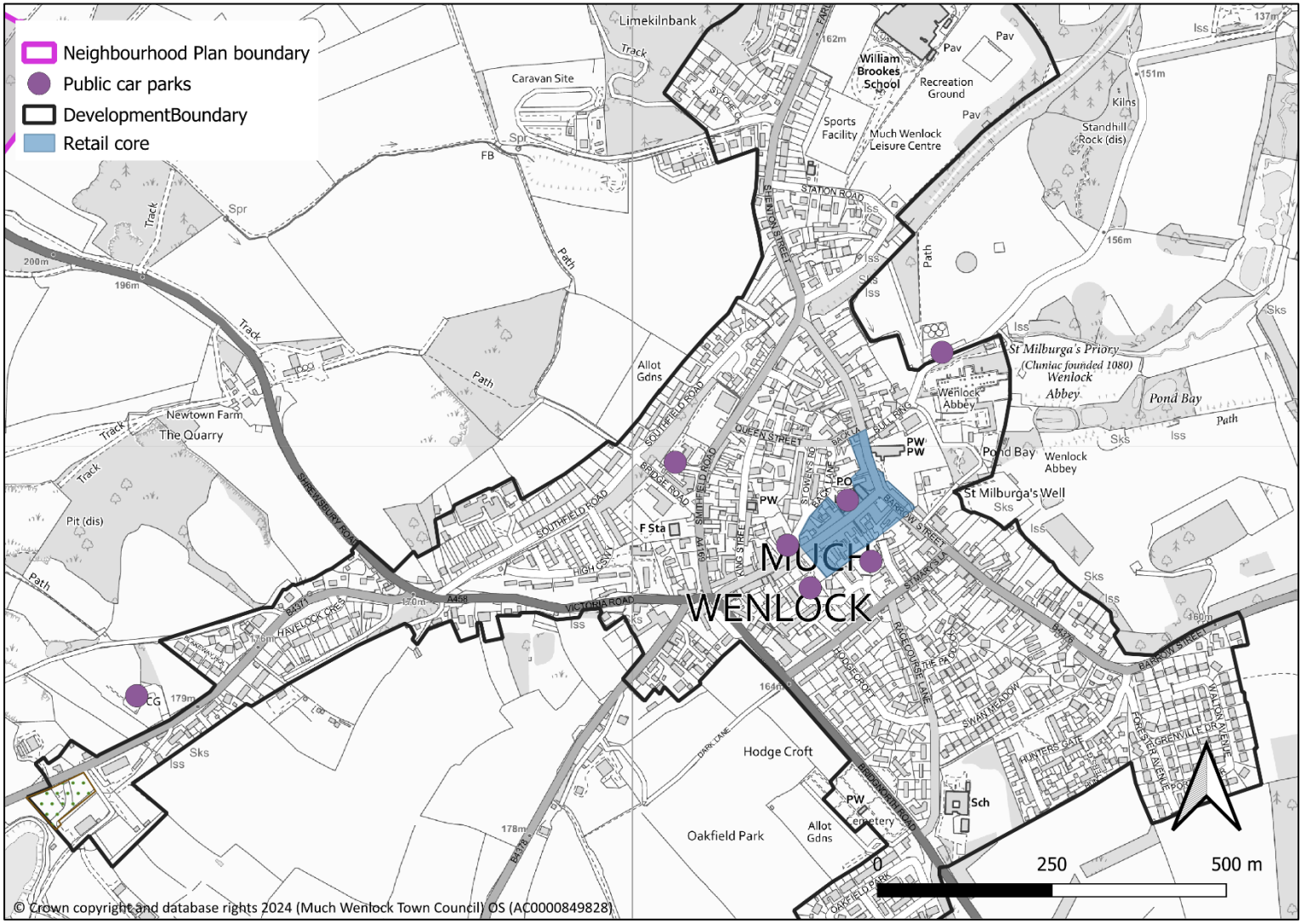
Justification

4.103. Whilst the MWNP promotes active travel (walking, cycling and equestrian), the rural location of Much Wenlock, combined with a lack of railway station and limited public transport provision, means that many residents are heavily car reliant. In addition, visitors to the town generally arrive by car, often as part of a larger journey.

4.104. There are only a few fully public car parks within the town itself (*Figure 13)*, in addition to some on-street parking along the High Street. Feedback from the community and local businesses revealed a desire to safeguard existing parking and, where possible, expand on this. All public car parking should be clearly signposted to aid visitors to the area.

4.105. The provision of publicly accessible electric vehicle charging points across the parish will be supported as will secure, covered cycle parking.

Figure 13: Public car parks in the town



Policy MW14: Mitigating vehicular impacts at junctions and pinchpoints

Purpose

4.106. This policy seeks to ensure that development proposals fully assess both their potential impact and their cumulative impact on the key roads and junctions in the parish that already experience congestion problems and actively seek ways to mitigate this.

POLICY MW14: MITIGATING VEHICULAR IMPACTS AT JUNCTIONS AND PINCHPOINTS

A. Development which provides new transport infrastructure or improves existing transport infrastructure should be supported and designed to maximise use by pedestrians, those with mobility impairments and cyclists.

B. Development proposals should ensure that they have no unacceptable direct or cumulative impact on the following junctions:

- **i. Sytche Close and the A4169 Farley Road**
- **ii. Sheinton Street junction with the A4169**
- **iii. B4371 with the A458 and Southfield Road**
- **iv. A458 with the A4169, the B4378 and the High Street (known as Gaskell Arms junction)**
- **v. A458 Bridgnorth Road and St Mary's Road**
- **vi. A458 Bridgnorth Road and Racecourse Lane**
- **vii. A458 Bridgnorth Road and Callaughton Lane**
- **viii. Barrow Street and the High Street**
- **ix. Barrow Street and St Mary's Lane**

C. Development proposals should be accompanied by Transport Assessments (for larger sites) or Transport Statements (for smaller sites) ('larger' and smaller' site size defined in the NPPF) and address the direct and cumulative transport impact on road junctions.

Conformity Reference: NP objectives: 3; Shropshire Core Strategy (2011): CS7; SAMDev Plan (2015): MD8; NPPF (2024): 96, 109, 110, 111, 115, 116, 117, 118

Justification

4.107. The town has a number of roads and junctions that experience regular congestion, particularly at peak periods. This not only delays journeys but increases emissions and associated air pollution. A particular issue is the large volumes of traffic, including heavy goods vehicles that travel through the Gaskell ~~Corner~~Arms junction leading to drivers choosing to rat-run through the Town to avoid the junction.

4.108. Approved major residential developments including in Ironbridge, Bridgnorth, Cressage and Shrewsbury will generate considerable additional traffic through the Gaskell Arms~~Corner~~ junction and this, in turn, will potentially increase the volume of rat-running through the town itself.

OBJECTIVE 5: COMMUNITY WELL-BEING

The Plan will protect existing community facilities and services considered important for a vibrant community and support the development of new ones which benefit local people and visitors by encouraging:

- ✓ creating new facilities for families, the elderly and young people.
- ✓ supporting developments or uses associated with a positive visitor experience.
- ✓ protecting existing community buildings and services.
- ✓ providing new public toilet provision to cater for local and visitor needs.

Policy MW15: Improving opportunities for community and cultural facilities, sport and recreation

Purpose

4.109. This policy seeks to ensure that those living in and moving to the parish are adequately served with a range of good quality facilities and activities and that there are opportunities for residents to shape this.

POLICY MW15: IMPROVING OPPORTUNITIES FOR COMMUNITY AND CULTURAL FACILITIES, SPORT AND RECREATION

A. Development proposals for new community, recreational, cultural and leisure facilities, or the improvement of existing facilities - in particular to serve the identified needs of the community as set out in this neighbourhood plan and in the Much Wenlock Place Plan - will be supported where:

i. the proposal contributes to the setting of the National Landscape; and
ii. the proposal would not have significant harmful impacts on the amenities of surrounding residents and the local environment; and
iii. the proposal would not have significant adverse impacts upon the local road network; and
iv. the proposal would not have harmful impacts on the heritage aspects, including the setting, of the facility; and
v. the proposal does not contribute to or exacerbate flood risk.

Applicants are encouraged to engage with the community at the earliest opportunity to determine need.

B. The provision of new and upgraded play areas to serve the needs of children of all ages, in accordance with Shropshire Council's Local Plan/Open Space Study standards will be supported. Where possible, these should incorporate areas for 'natural play' (defined as play provision with natural environments as opposed to 'man-made' ones).

C. Proposals that would result in the loss of community, leisure and recreational facilities will only be supported if either the facility is surplus to requirements and there is no longer a proven need for such a facility or alternative and equivalent facilities are proposed which demonstrate by comparison to the existing facility that:

i. **the replacement will be of at least an equivalent scale, specification and located in an accessible location to the community to be served;**
ii. **the reprovisioning of these facilities will incorporate adequate safeguards for delivery; and**
iii. **satisfy all other relevant policy expectations of this neighbourhood plan.**

Conformity Reference: NP objectives: 5; Shropshire Core Strategy (2011): CS8, CS9; SAMDev Plan (2015): MD8; NPPF (2024): 96, 98, 101, 103, 104

Justification

4.110. Considering its size, Much Wenlock is well served for community facilities. The parish has traditionally had an active voluntary sector, and the community is keen that this continues. Providing good quality facilities will serve to encourage and sustain the voluntary sector.

4.111. Nevertheless, Much Wenlock's leisure and cultural facilities serve an area and population far greater and wider than the town itself and this needs to be considered in relation to the safeguarding of existing facilities and notably the provision of new or enhanced ones. This will contribute positively to physical and mental wellbeing and commercial viability within the town and surrounding areas.

4.112. The NPPF provides a clear framework for the promotion, retention and development of local services and community facilities in towns, such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship. The Core Strategy also includes policies to protect and enhance existing facilities and resist any inappropriate loss. In the Neighbourhood Plan area, there is a thriving community with education, health, social and leisure facilities which contribute greatly to the local quality of life.

4.113. A review of existing provision and future need by facility is provided in *Table 7*, drawing on local feedback and the Much Wenlock Place Plan, which is updated regularly.

Table 7: Audit of local facilities

Map ref.	Local Facility	Commentary
1	Much Wenlock Primary School	The school has a net capacity of 168 pupils with an approved annual admission of 24 pupils. Football: One poor quality mini 7v7 pitch that has spare capacity discounted due to insecure tenure. Pitch is used by Wenlock Warriors FC. Action: Improve grass pitch quality through an enhanced maintenance regime Examining securing tenure for community users through a CUA.
2	William Brookes School Incorporating the Leisure Centre which is not available for public use during school hours, some evenings and public holidays.	The school has a net capacity of 948 students with an approved annual admission of 162. Provides a swimming pool, fitness suite and sports hall.

		"The Edge"; Adaptable and modern performance hall, used by the school and public, hosting many cultural and entertainment events. Football: One youth 9v9 pitch that has spare capacity discounted due to poor quality. Action: Improve pitch quality through an enhanced maintenance regime. Hockey: One standard quality full size, all-weather pitch which is not floodlit. Pitch was created in 2010. Action: Monitor pitch quality based on surface age and resurface as a hockey suitable surface when deemed necessary. Encourage use by public. Explore the feasibility of installing floodlights. Tennis/ Netball: Four good quality macadam courts which are floodlit. Action: Sustain court quality through appropriate levels of maintenance and seek to increase community use. Concerns have been raised about the possible closure of the Leisure Centre and this should be resisted.
4	Much Wenlock Medical Practice	Located in King Street.
5	Much Wenlock Parish Church of the Holy Trinity	The first church on this site was Anglo-Saxon, built probably about AD680. The present church dates from AD 1100. It is open for visitors during the day.
6	Holy Trinity Church, Bourton	A small but active congregation, which has recently spent much time and effort in refurbishing the interior.
7	Much Wenlock Methodist Church	The Church has a small but active congregation. A meeting room is available to hire for £10 an hour.
8	Gaskell Recreation Ground	Large, well maintained recreation area on the northern edge of the town, with good access providing a popular community space. Managed by a charitable trust. Used by several sports clubs and also William Brookes School. Football: large pitch that hosts Wenlock Warriors and occasional senior teams. Recently drained and supported by continual pitch improvements. Cricket: One good quality square with seven grass wickets and an NTP. Sustain square and outfield quality through appropriate levels of maintenance. Bowls: One standard quality bowling green rented by Much Wenlock Bowls Club. Explore opportunities to make

		continual improvements in order to sustain membership levels. Playground: Opportunities to improve the existing range of play equipment, including to meet the needs of those with disabilities should be sought. Additional undercover seating is supported. Continual demand for provision of public convenience and baby changing facilities. Identified as a town priority.
9	Much Wenlock Guildhall	Grade II* listed building dating from 1540 the Guildhall hosts meetings upstairs. A regular market takes place in the ground floor space. Plans are in development to refurbish the hall and bring it up to contemporary standards of comfort and accessibility There may be scope for it to be utilised more fully as a public space for meetings and events and also for occasions such as weddings and other celebrations. This is an asset with the highest level of community value. Priority to keep the Guildhall open and accessible to the public. Potential to weather-proof the ground floor.
10	Much Wenlock Museum	Housed in the Memorial Hall. Run by Shropshire Council, it is a priority to establish a long-term commitment to keep the museum properly resourced and open to the public.
11	Much Wenlock Allotments	Located on Bridgnorth Road, behind Much Wenlock Cemetery and off Southfield Road. Allotment space located by the cemetery is only temporary and subject to cemetery expansion. Explore availability of permanent allotment area. The Southfield Road Allotments are not all “taken” and there is no waiting list for them. However, some are steep and parking/access is very restricted.
12	Town Cemetery	Owned and run by Much Wenlock Town Council, is close to capacity and more land (currently allotments) will be required in the next few years.
13	Public toilets	These are owned and run by Much Wenlock Town Council and are available in two locations: St Mary’s Lane; modern, accessible and recently updated. Fees charged.

		Queen Street; functional, but dated. Access is limited. No fees charged. Town Council aspires to upgrade this facility. Public demand for provision of toilets on Gaskell Recreation Ground (see above).
14	The Corn Exchange	Grade II listed building and the Town Council's office and archive room. Mary Webb meeting room which can host up to eight participants.
15	Public Library	Run by Shropshire Council Library Services, funded by Much Wenlock Town Council. Priority to retain an essential community asset.
16	Scout Hut	Formerly a youth club, now home to Much Wenlock Scouts. Owned by Shropshire Council; the building and associated grass area should be retained as a community asset.
17	Public houses	There are a number of public houses in the parish, although some have closed over the last few years and The Raven has recently been sold.
18	Old Chapel	Feasibility Plan to establish sustainable future use. Identify as a Community Asset.
19	Priory Hall	Scope to upgrade facilities for those hard of hearing.
20	Pinefields Community Centre on the High Causeway	This is used by a number of groups for meetings and other activities.
21	Edge Arts Centre	A much-valued venue in the town.

4.114. Additional activities and facilities called for in the public engagement included:

- Facilities for youths/ young people: e.g. skate park, youth club/space
- Fitness trail along the former railway line
- A gym
- Undercover seating in the Gaskell play area
- Upgrade to the children's park

4.115. Notwithstanding Core Strategy policies, over the last decade, the town has seen the loss of a number of services and facilities, including the British Legion Hall, the Roman Catholic church and two banks. The community is concerned that there should be no further loss of facilities, in particular, health services, the Post Office and library, and there is strong support for the Neighbourhood Plan to seek the improvement and retention of these vital community assets in the interests of community wellbeing and sustainability.

4.116. Before granting planning permission for a change of use or redevelopment which would result in the loss of any of these facilities, therefore, Policy MW15 requires compelling evidence that the facility is both no longer needed by the local community and is no longer commercially viable in line with the guidance attached at Appendix A.

4.117. Much Wenlock itself also serves as a centre for a much wider rural catchment area and its facilities are of value to residents living well outside the parish boundaries. Through the safeguarding of local community facilities and services and the provision of new services the Plan aims to strengthen Much Wenlock's role as a Key Settlement in line with Shropshire policy.

Policy MW16: Protection of public houses

Purpose

4.118. This policy seeks to safeguard public houses from change of use. There are limited such facilities remaining in the parish. Planning applications to change the use of public houses will only be supported if they can no longer remain viable. Proposals to expand their use will be supported if it is to provide a similar community resource (e.g. restaurant).

POLICY MW16: PROTECTION OF PUBLIC HOUSES

A. Insofar as planning permission is required, proposals for the expansion of existing public houses in the neighbourhood area to develop appropriate community-based activities, such as a restaurant will be supported, subject to complying with other policies within the plan and provided the scale, design and materials are in keeping with the local character and reinforce the local distinctiveness of the surroundings and not having a detrimental impact on residential amenity.

B. Development proposals to change the use of public houses (Use Class sui generis) will only be supported if such a use is demonstrably unviable.

C. Development proposals which would result in the loss of a commercial use or facility will only be supported where the use is no longer viable and appropriate efforts have been made to secure an alternative commercial facility.

Conformity Reference: NP objectives: 5; Shropshire Core Strategy (2011): CS8, CS9; SAMDev Plan (2015): MD8; NPPF (2024): 88, 96, 98

Justification

4.119. Public houses have a significant positive impact, creating more community cohesion in rural areas, as recognised in the NPPF.). There are a number of public houses in the parish, including in the town itself and also the Wenlock Inn on the western boundary.

4.120. Recent years, however, have seen changes in the provision of public houses in the parish and others remain under threat of conversion.

4.121. Where a development proposal would result in the loss of a commercial use or facility such as a public house or local convenience shop, the application should be supported by a viability report, prepared by a relevant professional, including financial accounts and marketing information, illustrating that efforts to promote, improve, and market the facility/property, for sale or rent (for a minimum period of 18 months), at a reasonable value which reflects the existing use and condition of the building (a minimum of two independent valuations of the building will normally be required) have not been successful, and the use is no longer viable. For public houses, the CAMRA Public House Viability Test, or a similar objective evaluation method, is recommended to be employed to assess the viability of the business and the outcomes show that the public house is no longer economically viable.

Policy MW17: Provision of accessible public toilet facilities

Purpose

4.122. The policy supports the provision of adequate publicly accessible toilets to serve the town.

POLICY MW17: PROVISION OF ACCESSIBLE PUBLIC TOILET FACILITIES

Proposals which deliver a publicly accessible toilet facility and, where possible, a Changing Places facility, will be strongly supported. These should be designed in a way to reduce vandalism.

Conformity Reference: NP Objectives: 5; Shropshire Core Strategy (2011): CS8, CS9; SAMDev Plan (2015): MD8; NPPF (2024): 88, 96, 98

Justification

4.123. The need for accessible toilet facilities available for use by the public, which could ideally include a Changing Places facility, has been raised by residents, businesses and visitors to the area as a priority.

4.124. Current public toilet provision within Much Wenlock is considered inadequate and limited to facilities in St Mary's Road Car Park and at Queen Street. Provision at the Gaskell Recreation Ground was closed some years ago and many residents, via the community survey, have called for them to be reinstated. Locations identified as potentially useful for toilet provision include on the side of the town near the Linden Field or Bull Ring, or on the Stretton Road. Signage to public toilets should be in place.

4.125. A public toilet scheme, whereby local shops, restaurants and other facilities enable use of their facilities could be considered by the Town Council in partnership with local businesses, and where an existing community facility or business is able to provide an accessible public toilet facility (see Appendix B for definition of accessible toilets), this would be supported.

4.126. The design of such facilities should seek to minimise vandalism. It would be helpful to consider advice on this subject, for instance Designing Out Crime and Secured by Design.

OBJECTIVE 6: GOOD QUALITY DESIGN, LOCAL CHARACTER AND HERITAGE

All future development will be well designed with the aim of:

- ✓ respecting the scale, style and setting of the historic townscapes of Much Wenlock (in particular the unique characteristics of the 'bowl' setting) and Bourton.
- ✓ making sure that in Much Wenlock and Bourton, the use of building materials is in keeping with those used in their respective Conservation Areas. Elsewhere, new developments should use materials which respect their setting and rural environment.
- ✓ ensuring that any development or change be of the highest quality design.
- ✓ ensuring that new developments will include gardens of an appropriate scale to the property.

Policy MW18: Character and design of development

Purpose

4.127. Good quality housing design can improve social wellbeing and the quality of life by improving the built environment, reducing crime, improving public health, easing transport problems and providing supportive neighbourhoods. The policy seeks to encourage development proposals within Much Wenlock parish to comply with the highest design standards, support the principles set out for the Shropshire Hills National Landscape the locally specific Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Area Design Guidelines (Appendix C) prepared for the parish. Note that the Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Area Design Guidelines form part of formal policy for the MWNP.

4.128. The policy and its supporting text add greater detail to the Local Plan policies.

POLICY MW18: CHARACTER AND DESIGN OF DEVELOPMENT

A. Development proposals should incorporate a high quality of design, which responds and integrates well with its surroundings, meets the changing needs of residents and minimises the impact on the natural environment of the Shropshire Hills National Landscape and its setting. The scale, character, and siting of the proposal should respect the landscape and its features, valued views into and out of the settlement, the local streetscape and heritage assets. It should reflect the variety of architectural styles found locally, using materials that are in keeping with those used in existing buildings in the immediate locality. Innovation in design will be supported where this demonstrably enhances the quality of the built form in a local character area.

B. Where relevant, development proposals should demonstrate how they have sought to address the following matters as they are appropriate to their scale, nature and location:

i. conform to the Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Area Design Guidelines, the Shropshire Design Guide, the Shropshire Hills Design Guidance and the Much Wenlock and Bourton Conservation Area Appraisals;

ii. make a positive contribution to the visual appearance of the main highway approaches into Much Wenlock town (A4169, B4376, A458, B4371, B4378). Improvements and enhancements should include, where appropriate, additional tree planting, the

enhancement of roadside green spaces (for instance through planting), the reduction/consolidation of road signs and other street furniture and wider green infrastructure improvements that are identified as being necessary;

iii. **incorporate soft landscaping and other boundary treatments including the retention and enhancement of established trees and hedgerows, or the replacement of these if not possible;**

iv. **provide adequate vehicular access and space for cycle parking and vehicular off-road parking for residents, visitors and service vehicles, in accordance with Shropshire standards;**

v. **respect and protect the buildings and environment of the Conservation Areas, listed buildings and the other heritage assets (including non-designated assets) of the parish**;

vi. **ensure that there is no unacceptable loss of amenity for neighbouring uses through the loss of privacy loss of light or visual intrusion on the views and surroundings that create the backdrop to an area;**

vii. **ensure that traffic generation and parking does not adversely affect vehicular and pedestrian safety;**

viii. **provide off-road and off-footway bin storage areas for new and subdivided houses, facilitated by ensuring that access to any 'shut'/external passageways is retained when a dwelling is subdivided.**

C. **Where development sites abut open countryside, development on the rural boundary edge should mitigate any detrimental visual impacts on the countryside. This should be achieved through the siting of lower density development at the rural boundary of the site in order to provide a gradual transition from the built form to open countryside, or by other means such as through a layout that clearly minimises the visual impact of any larger buildings on both the open countryside and existing town-scape.**

Conformity references: NP objectives: 6; Shropshire Core Strategy (2011): CS6, CS17; SAMDev Plan (2015): MD12, MD13; NPPF (2024): 96, 109, 131-141

Justification

4.129. Past generations of people and development have created the features that give Much Wenlock its identity today. This process has been gradual, taking place over many centuries, and the settlement that exists today has a distinctiveness that derives from variety. The town and wider parish contain heritage assets of all kinds, including isolated farmsteads, characterful buildings, historic landmarks and archaeological features, both exposed and still beneath the ground.

4.130. The importance of good design has received renewed attention over recent years. In October 2019, a National Design Guide was launched, forming part of the Government's collection of Planning Practice Guidance. The document sets out the ten characteristics necessary for creating a well-designed place, contributing to its physical character, a sense of community and

addressing environmental issues affecting climate. The National Model Design Guide expands on the ten characteristics and was used in the creation of the Much Wenlock Design Guidance and Codes.

4.131. Furthermore, the guide Building for a Healthy Life 2020 is the Government-endorsed industry standard for the design of new housing developments. It is a tool for assessing the design quality of homes and neighbourhoods. The criteria also link to other standards for housing design, including Secured by Design. It should be used to inform development proposals along with other policies contained within this plan to achieve the industry standard's 'Building for a Healthy Life' commendation.

4.132. It is important that development is designed from a landscape-led perspective and the Shropshire Hills Management Plan provides overarching advice on how this can be achieved. The Shropshire Hills Agricultural Building Design Guide provides a comprehensive set of advice, specific to the continued use of farm buildings.

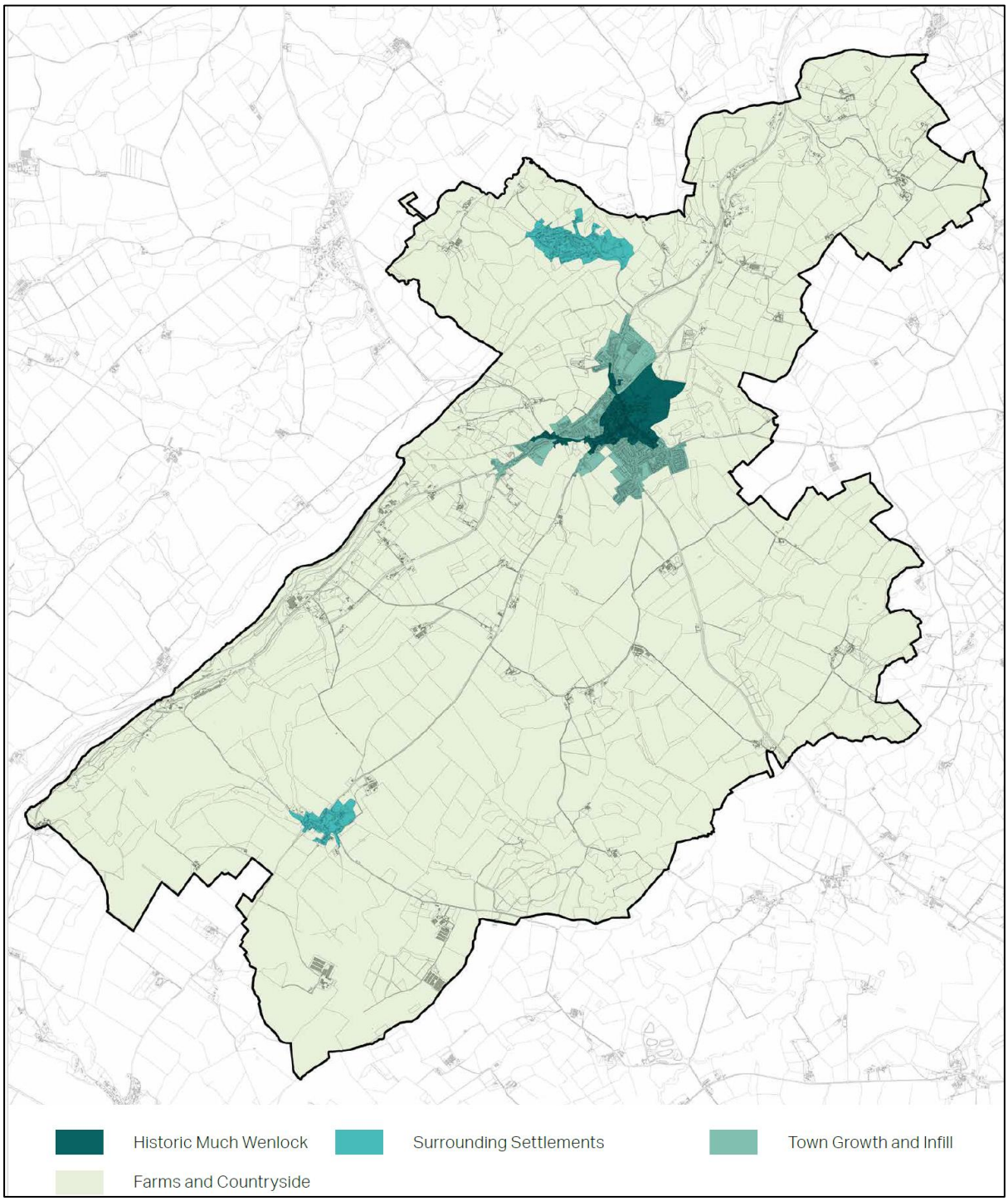
4.133. The Town Council commissioned consultants, AECOM, to develop a more localised set of design codes guiding future development in the town and wider parish.

4.134. The Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Area Design Guidelines form part of formal policy for the MWNP, to support the creation of distinctive places that are well-integrated with the existing settlement in Much Wenlock and to promote high-quality and popular built forms. The guidance draws on the other guidance available at the national, regional, and county level, and that which exists at the local level, such as the Much Wenlock and Bourton Conservation Area Appraisals. It was informed by local engagement in the form of a series of 'walkabouts' and feedback drawn from the community surveys and workshops.

4.135. The design guidance identifies four Character Areas *(Figure 14)* in the parish and defines the key characteristics of these in terms of factors such as prevailing buildings heights, architectural features, materials and use of space.

4.136. It should be applied to all development proposals in the parish including strategic site allocations.

Figure 14: Character Areas



Policy MW19: Energy efficiency and mitigating climate change

Purpose

4.137. This policy seeks to ensure that development meets the highest environmental standards in terms of its construction, materials and energy use. This will help to mitigate against climate change and contribute to achieving the national target of zero net carbon by 2050.

POLICY MW19: ENERGY EFFICENCY AND MITIGATING CLIMATE CHANGE

A. Proposals which incorporate design and environmental performance measures and standards to reduce energy consumption, to reduce carbon emissions and climate effects will be supported, subject to compliance with other policies in this Plan.

B. As appropriate to their scale, nature and location, proposals which incorporate the following sustainable design features will be strongly supported, where measures will not have a detrimental impact on character, landscape and views:

- **i. siting and orientation to optimise passive solar gain.**
- **ii. the use of high quality, thermally efficient building materials.**
- **iii. installation of energy efficiency measures such as loft and wall insulation and double glazing.**
- **iv. incorporating on-site energy generation from renewable sources such as solar panels/tiles/glass, ground source heating and energy generation etc.**
- **v. reducing water consumption using water re-use measures including rainwater harvesting, surface water harvesting and/or grey water recycling systems.**
- **vi. all new dwellings will be designed to have a predicted water discharge of no more than 80 litres of water per person per day.**
- **vii. providing low carbon sustainable design and avoiding or mitigating all regulated emissions using a combination of on-site energy efficiency measures (such as insulation and low energy heating systems), on-site zero carbon technologies (such as solar panels) and, only where necessary, off-site measures to deal with any remaining emissions.**

C. Proposals for the retrofitting of historic buildings, including listed buildings and non-designated heritage assets, to reduce energy demand and to generate renewable energy will be supported where they safeguard the character, appearance, features, interest, and setting of the building concerned.

D. Proposals for community-scale renewable energy schemes, for instance the installation of solar panels on community and public sector buildings, will be supported subject to the following criteria:

- **i. the siting and scale of the proposed development is appropriate to its setting and position in the wider landscape; and**
- **ii. the proposed development does not create an unacceptable impact on the amenities of neighbouring residents; and**
- **iii. the proposed development does not have an unacceptable impact on a feature of natural or biodiversity importance, or create/exacerbate flood risk.**

Conformity references: NP Objectives: 6; Shropshire Core Strategy (2011): CS6; SAMDev Plan (2015): MD2; NPPF (2024): 161-169

Justification

4.138. On 12 June 2019 the Government voted to amend the Climate Change Act 2008 by introducing a new target for at least a 100% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions (compared to 1990 levels) in the UK by 2050. This is otherwise known as a net zero target. This is a demanding target, which will require everyone to be engaged, from households and communities to businesses and local and national government. As part of this, the government has set an interim target to cut the country's greenhouse gas emissions by 78% by 2035 compared to 1990 levels.

4.139. Being '2050 ready' means that new development will be required to have minimal energy use and net carbon emissions. Unlike Local Plans, Neighbourhood Plans are more limited in what they can dictate in terms of environmental standards, as they must confirm to the minimum requirements as set out by national policy and building regulations. The MWNP can, however, strongly encourage the design and layout of new development to maximise its potential to be as energy efficient as possible and to encourage the use of renewable energy.

4.140. The Future Homes Standard from 2025 will require CO_2 emissions produced by new homes to be 75-80% lower than those built to current standards. Homes will need to be 'zero carbon ready'. Fossil fuel heating (such as gas boilers) will be banned in new homes, with an expected shift to reliance on heat pumps and heat networks.

Examples of discreet solar panels (source: Historic England)

4.141. SC recognised the UK climate emergency in 2019 as a response to the need to act locally and in the context of climate change impacts being observed at the local level: dry riverbeds, reduced water supply, intense weather events, localised flooding and loss of habitats and species. It supports a range of projects designed to help adapt to climate change and these have informed the Neighbourhood Plan.

4.142. At the local level, feedback from the community has strongly supported measures that would contribute to mitigating the impacts of climate change. Opportunities to improve and promote sustainability in the parish, which would help to deliver the government's climate change targets, include:

- following basic Passivhaus (net zero) environmental design including use of efficient and insulative materials;
- integrating renewable energy systems into new development (including existing and new public buildings) such as photovoltaics, air and ground source heat pumps;

- reducing the risk of overheating in warmer months by designing in features such as trees and shutters for shading, appropriate fenestration, orientation of development and ventilation;
- reducing water consumption including through grey water systems – the 'made' neighbourhood plan policy stating that 'all new dwellings will be designed to have a predicted water discharge of no more than 80 litres of water per person per day' has been retained. This will contribute to the delivery of Severn Trent's Strategic Direction Statement to 2050 and reflects the Shropshire Council Water Cycle Study (2020), which seeks to embed policies for low-water consumption design in new buildings into spatial plans.
- promoting sustainable forms of transport through priority systems for pedestrians and cyclists;
- supporting individual and community scale energy schemes; and
- supporting the retrofitting of historic buildings to Historic England's Adapting Historic Buildings for Energy and Carbon Efficiency: Historic England Advice Note 18 provides advice on how to reduce carbon emissions and improve the energy efficiency of historic buildings whilst conserving their significance and ensuring they remain viable places to live in the future.

Policy MW20: Conserving heritage assets

Purpose

4.143. This policy recognises the important contribution that heritage assets – designated and non-designated – make to the local character and distinctiveness of Much Wenlock parish, both individually and collectively. Where possible, they should be conserved, enhanced and celebrated.

POLICY MW20: CONSERVING HERITAGE ASSETS

A. Designated Heritage Assets: Development proposals affecting designated heritage assets, either directly or indirectly, should conserve or enhance the significance of the asset and those elements of the setting that contribute to the significance. This could include, where appropriate, the delivery of development that will make a positive contribution to, or better reveal the significance of, the heritage asset, or reflect and enhance local character and distinctiveness with specific focus on the prevailing styles of design and use of materials in a local area. These details should be explained in a Heritage Statement.

In addition, development proposals should demonstrate that they have considered the potential impact on above and below ground archaeological deposits. Where a scheme has a potential impact on archaeological remains (below or above the ground) a Heritage Statement or similar should be prepared to address how archaeological deposits will be safeguarded.

B. Non-designated Heritage Assets: The following buildings and structures as shown on *Figure 16* are identified as non-designated heritage assets:

1. **Pavi~~l~~lion on the Bowling Green on Gaskell Recreation Ground~~Field~~**
2. **Much Wenlock Railway Station House**
3. **Gate Piers at the end of Station Road**
4. **Railway Abutment, Sheinton Street**
5. **Railway Goods Building, Station Wharf**
6. **Priory Hall**
7. **The Museum**
8. **Clock in the Square**
9. **Bus Shelter by Abbey Well House**
10. **Whymperis Well**
11. **Victorian Letterbox at Gaskell ~~Corner~~Arms junction**
12. **Victoria Road Railway Abutment**
13. **Railway Bridge off Stretton Road**
14. **Havelock Well**
15. **Birchfield Garage**
16. **The Cemetery Chapel**
17. **Gasworks House on Barrow Street**
18. **Railway Cottages, Stretton Road**
19. **Toll House on Stretton Road**
20. **Bridge on Bridge Road**
21. **Gaskell Ground Lodge at the entrance to the Gaskell Recreation Ground**

Proposals affecting the non-designated heritage assets will be determined based on national planning policy.

C. Conservation Areas: Development proposals in the Much Wenlock Conservation Area (*Figure 16*) and in the Bourton Conservation Area (*Figure 15*) should ensure that alterations and new developments contribute to the enhancement of the historic environment. Development within these areas and their settings should:

~~**be guided by the relevant Conservation Area Management Plan; and**~~

i. be designed to a high quality and preserve and enhance the character of the Conservation Areas and their settings; and

ii. retain those buildings and other features, including trees and hedges, which make a significant contribution to the character of the Conservation Areas; and

iii. protect open spaces and vistas important to the character and setting of the Conservation Areas; and

iv. where appropriate, make provision for the enhancement measures.

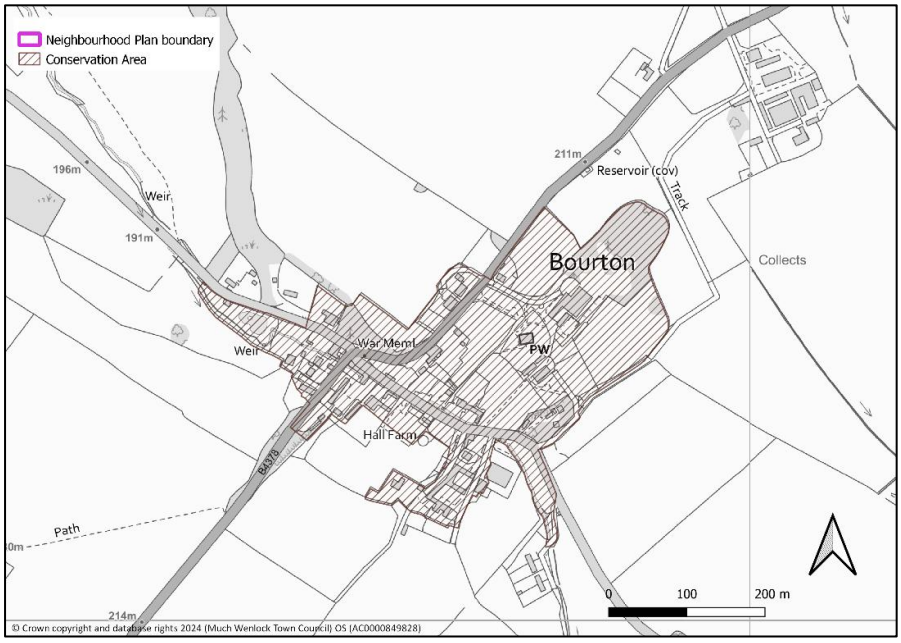
Conformity references: NP Objectives: 6; Shropshire Core Strategy (2011): CS17; SAMDev Plan (2015): MD13; NPPF (2024): 135, 202, 203, 207, 208, 121-216, 219

Justification

Designated heritage assets

4.144. The parish is home to a wealth of designated heritage assets (*Figure 15)* including: Wenlock Priory Scheduled Monument; 104 nationally listed assets in Much Wenlock: Three of these - Church Of Holy Trinity, Wenlock Abbey and the Priory Of St Milburga (Ruins) – are Grade I listed; Two Conservation Areas: The Much Wenlock Conservation Area (*shown on Figure 16*)was designated in May 1970 and covers a large percentage of Much Wenlock town. The Bourton Conservation Area (*Figure 15)* is located south-west of Much Wenlock town along the B4378. It was designated in October 1994 and includes six Listed Buildings.

Figure 15: Bourton Conservation Area



Non-designated heritage assets

4.145. The National Planning Practice Guidance supports the identification of non-designated heritage assets through the neighbourhood planning process (Paragraph 18a-005-20190723). These are buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas or landscapes identified by plan-making bodies as having a degree of heritage significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, but which do not meet the criteria for designated heritage assets.

4.146. Such assets can be recorded by a Local Authority within their 'Local List'. As Shropshire does not yet have a Local List, in combination with a local audit, the Steering Group invited local people to nominate buildings and assets they considered to be important locally from a heritage angle. The Steering Group drew on the advice contained in Historic England's Advice Note 7: Local Heritage Listing: Identifying and Conserving Local Heritage to review the nominated assets and decide which had merit to become a non-designated heritage asset. The 21 assets are listed in Policy MW20, shown on *Figure 16*, with descriptions and photographs provided in Appendix ~~D~~E.

4.147. In addition, Shropshire's Historic Environment Record contains details of additional assets, some of which are not nationally listed. The record should be consulted by prospective developers.

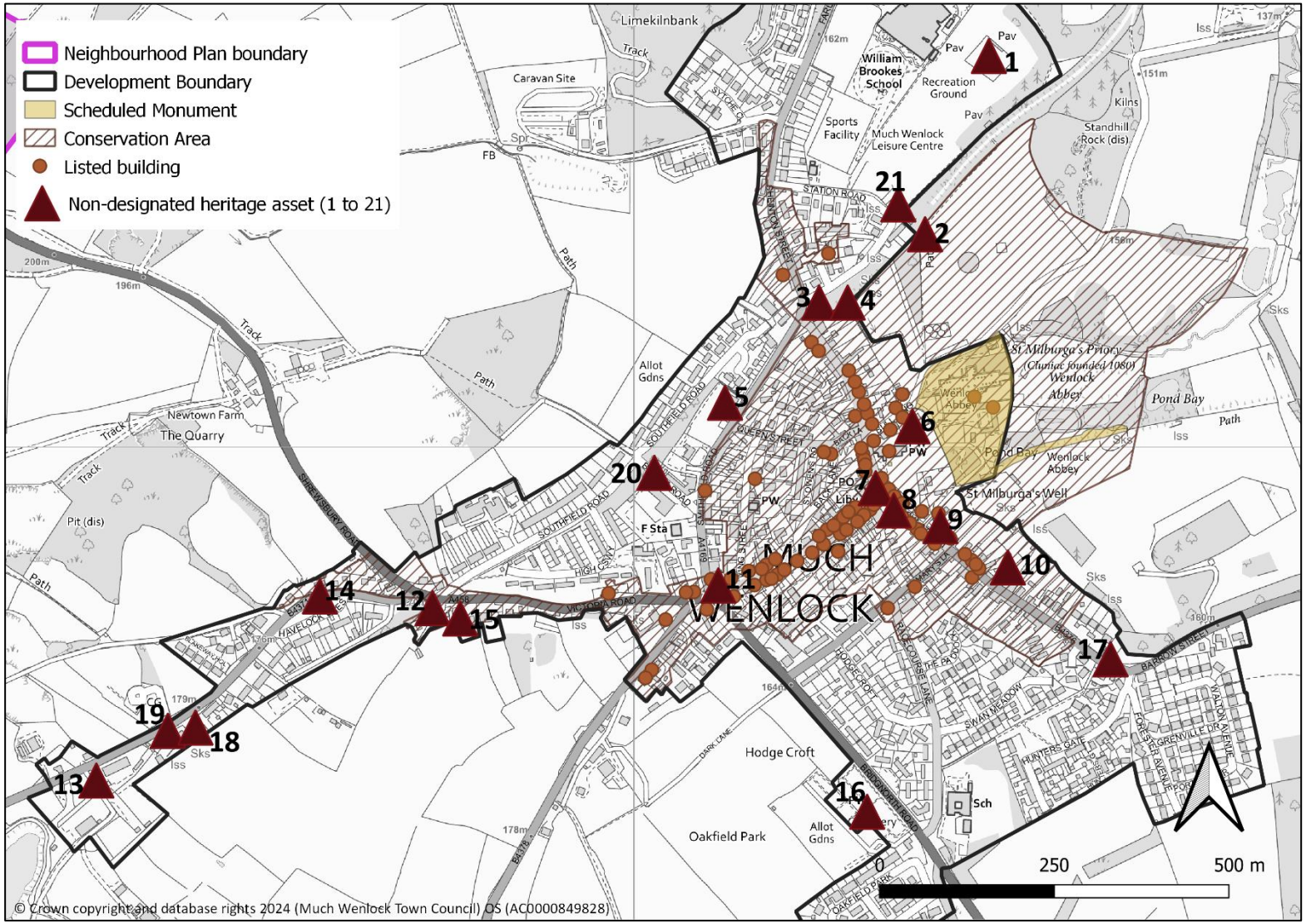
4.148. In parallel with this policy, it is proposed that the identified non-designated heritage assets are considered by Shropshire Council for inclusion on their list of local heritage assets. However, the inclusion of any building or structure on such a register is not necessary for the application of this policy.

Local Heritage at Risk

4.149. Historic England produces an annual Register of Heritage at Risk. Outside of London it does not include Grade II listings, apart from churches. There is one building in the parish on this list: the Prior's Lodging and infirmary, part of the Wenlock Priory.

4.150. Opportunities to restore assets should be taken when they arise, in partnership with the owner.

Figure 16: Heritage assets in Much Wenlock (NDHA numbering as per the policy)



OBJECTIVE 7: GREEN AND OPEN SPACES, LOCAL LANDSCAPE AND WILDLIFE

The Plan will make sure that:

- ✓ protecting the existing areas of green space within the parish and ensuring that their quality and or multi-functionality is improved. It is important that existing spaces be considered for retrofitting in adaptation for climate change.
- ✓ creating extra areas of high-quality green space ~~are created~~ within new developments.
- ✓ taking opportunities taken to create linkages between sites, address green and pedestrian gaps in existing networks, create of new foot and cycle routes, and wildlife biodiversity corridors.
- ✓ ensuring that new accessible and inclusive green space should exceed or at least meet Shropshire Council's standards for green open spaces, play spaces and allotments. New designated spaces will be welcomed if they meet the required standards.
- ✓ identifying opportunities to increase potential new green and open spaces for enjoyment of the local landscape and countryside are identified.
- ✓ undertaking sympathetic management of the countryside and natural outdoor environment in and around the parish is undertaken to enhance the quality of the landscape, improve local biodiversity and provide other benefits to the community's quality of life.

Policy MW21: Local Green Space

Purpose

4.151. The policy designates Local Green Spaces within Much Wenlock, that are demonstrably special to the local community.

POLICY MW21: LOCAL GREEN SPACE

The following are designated as local green space as shown on *Figure 17*:

1. **The Railway Walk**
2. **Windmill Hill**
3. **Gaskell Recreation Ground**
4. **Southfield Road green space**
5. **Havelock Crescent green space**
6. **Hunters Gate**
7. **Cemetery on Bridgnorth Road**
8. **Allotments on Southfield Road**

Conformity references: NP Objectives: 7; Shropshire Core Strategy (2011): CS17; SAMDev Plan (2015): MD12; NPPF (2024): 106-108, 153-160

Justification

4.152. Open space, including gardens, allotments, recreational space, open fields, woodlands and pathways are important to us all helping to ensure physical and mental wellbeing and to mitigate the effects of climate change. Natural and semi-natural open space is highly valued by local residents not just for its recreational value but also for its landscape character, quiet enjoyment and biodiversity.

4.153. Under the NPPF, Neighbourhood Plans can designate such spaces that are of particular importance to the community as local green spaces, protecting them from inappropriate development. The NPPF says that the Local Green Space designation should only be used where the green space is:

- in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;
- demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife; and
- local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.

4.154. Of the areas identified as open space in the previous MWNP, those assessed as suitable for designation as Local Green Space are:

1. **The Railway Line green space** (Railway Walks which are designated as Open Space under the Open Spaces Act. The Railway Walk has the additional designation of a QE2 field which means that it must remain a public open space in perpetuity)

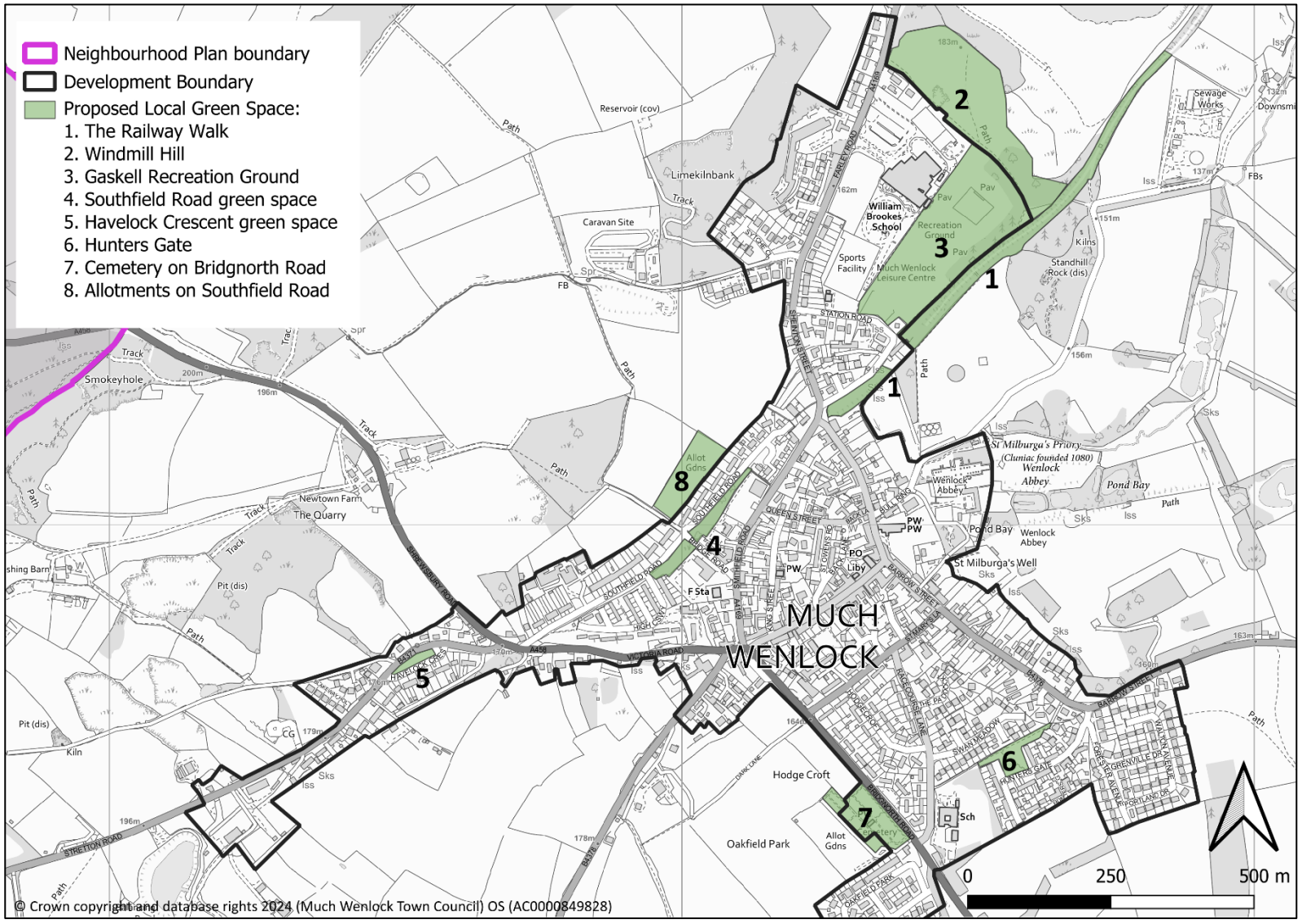
2. **The Windmill Hill** (is now a designated Local Nature Reserve under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949)
3. **Gaskell Recreation Ground~~Fields~~**
4. **Southfield Road green space**
5. **Havelock Crescent green space**
6. **Hunter's Gate**

4.155. The following further areas are proposed for local green space designation:

7. Cemetery on Bridgnorth Road
8. Allotments on Southfield Road

4.156. *Figure 17* shows the location of each of the Local Green Spaces. Detailed maps of each space are shown in Appendix E along with details as to how they each meet the NPPF criteria.

Figure 17: Local Green Spaces



Policy MW22: Recreational open and play space

Purpose

4.157. This policy seeks to ensure that adequate provision of recreational open space is provided within development proposals as appropriate.

POLICY MW22: RECREATIONAL OPEN AND PLAY SPACE

Subject to its scale, nature and location, development proposals should include or contribute to ensuring delivery of and future maintenance of the provision of recreational open space, in line with or above the standards set out by Shropshire Council, that is:

i. **in usable parcels of land;**
ii. **safe, easily accessible and natural barriers would be preferred, where it is necessary for the space;**
iii. **accessible to the general public;**
iv. **creates a safe environment considering lighting and layout; and**
v. **where appropriate, complemented by high quality landscaping schemes.**

The provision/upgrading of additional play areas to serve the needs of children of all ages, in line with the Shropshire Council's Quantity Standard will be particularly supported. Where possible, this should incorporate areas for 'natural play'.

Conformity references: NP Objectives: 7; Shropshire Core Strategy (2011): CS8; SAMDev Plan (2015): MD8, MD12; NPPF (2024): 96, 98, 103, 104

Justification

4.158. Despite the rural setting of the settlements of Much Wenlock, Homer and Bourton, the parish is not well served by open space provision. Adding to the list of designated local green spaces (Policy MW21) in the town will extend the opportunity for play and outdoor activities. But more is needed.

4.159. A quantitative shortfall of play provision has been identified *(Figure 18)* in Much Wenlock and Policy MW22 seeks to address this. In particular, the MWNP endorses Shropshire Council's Open Space Interim Planning Guidance and is keen to make sure that residents, and notably children, have access to high quality outdoor space to suit all ages and abilities. Natural play space is supported, which comprises play space is that, instead of the standard, cookie-cutter metal and plastic structures that make up the bulk of today's playgrounds, incorporates the surrounding landscape and vegetation to bring nature to children's daily outdoor play and learning environments.

4.160. Where developers are not able to make provision for play provision on site, financial contributions to off-site play space may be used to meet local needs, with priority given to additional provision to the south of the town.

4.161. There is a need to ensure that the MWNP can be used to support better designed play provision whilst remembering that play is not just for children. To add new equipment that provides

greater variety of play experience, to make a space more inclusive or accessible – whether that is wheeled access friendly or suitable for neurodiverse users.

4.162. The location of play areas next to spaces like allotments, can develop into social hubs and promote natural surveillance, particularly for different age ranges, inclusion and accessibility for all.

Figure 18: Shortfall of open space in Much Wenlock (source: Shropshire Council Open Space Needs Assessment) (note this is extracted directly from the Open Space Needs Assessment. There are three spelling errors: Allbrighton should read "Albrighton", Bridgenorth should read "Bridgnorth", and Elllesmere should read "Ellesmere")

Provision (all typologies) relating to population by place plan compared with County Average

Place Plan	Provision (Hectares) per 1000 population	County Average	Surplus/deficit
Allbrighton	2.1038	6.842498	-4.738698
Bishops Castle	4.4075	6.842498	-2.434998
Bridgenorth	5.8417	6.842498	-1.000798
Broseley	11.0375	6.842498	4.195002
Church Stretton	5.4927	6.842498	-1.349798
Cleobury Mortimer	2.4772	6.842498	-4.365298
Craven Arms	2.9892	6.842498	-3.853298
Elllesmere	10.3367	6.842498	3.494202
Highley	14.2512	6.842498	7.408702
Ludlow	4.5564	6.842498	-2.286098
Market Drayton	3.8012	6.842498	-3.041298
Much Wenlock	4.351	6.842498	-2.491498
Oswestry	7.9636	6.842498	1.121102
Pontesbury and Minsterley	8.098	6.842498	1.255502
Shifnal	2.8382	6.842498	-4.004298
Shrewsbury	11.2159	6.842498	4.373402
Wem	10.2527	6.842498	3.410202
Whitchurch	11.1503	6.842498	4.307802

Policy MW23: Green and blue infrastructure and delivering biodiversity net gain

Purpose

4.163. This policy seeks to ensure that the multiple benefits of Much Wenlock's green and blue spaces – including their importance in combating pressure on wildlife, habitats, biodiversity and geodiversity and in off-setting the effects of air pollution - are recognised and enhanced. This applies particularly where individual spaces have a greater collective value as part of wider chains of green infrastructure. This will serve to support the requirement to conserve and, where possible, provide a net gain in biodiversity through planning policy whilst accommodating sustainable development.

POLICY MW23: GREEN AND BLUE INFRASTRUCTURE AND DELIVERING BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN

A. Proposals should be designed to create, conserve, enhance and manage green and blue spaces. They should connect chains of green and blue infrastructure, as identified on the Policies Maps, with the aim of delivering a measurable biodiversity net gain of 20%, where possible, but at a minimum, a net gain of at least 10%. Where biodiversity net gain units cannot be delivered on site, they should be prioritised for use within the parish, focusing on maintaining and improving the identified biodiversity opportunity areas.

B. Measures to achieve biodiversity net gain, mitigation or compensation involving the creation of habitat and/or relocation of species, should include sufficient funding to support at least 30 years of post-development habitat management or land use change.

C. Proposals that seek to improve the connectivity between wildlife areas and green spaces will be supported. Proposals that support the enhancement and management of identified Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (*Figures 20 and 21)* will be supported, including linking these to the wildlife corridors. Proposals which cause unacceptable harm to such connectivity will not be supported.

D. Insofar as planning permission is required, proposals for the planting of additional native, climate resilient trees and/or continuous hedgerows along streets to provide wildlife corridors and to offset the effects of air pollution and to provide cooling and shelter for people as well as habitat for wildlife will be supported.

E. Subject to their scale, nature and location, proposals that respond positively to the Building with Nature 12 Standards will be supported.

F. Disused quarry workings: Proposals for the restoration and the implementation of aftercare proposals for former quarries will be permitted where they deliver restoration for wildlife, biodiversity and public access and are consistent with other Plan policies. In particular, proposals for biodiversity restoration combined with commercial/leisure use and public access will be supported at the Lea North/Hayes/Coates quarry complex and at the Shadwell quarry.

G. New industrial and commercial uses will not normally be supported at Lilleshall, Coates, Westwood and Farley quarries as shown on *Figure 22*.

Conformity references: NP Objectives: 7; Shropshire Core Strategy (2011): CS5, CS17; SAMDev Plan (2015): MD12; NPPF (2024): 135, 136, 187-195

Justification

4.164. The parish is important from a landscape value, biodiversity interest and geology perspective.

4.165. The northern west boundary of the parish lies within the Shropshire Hills National Landscape with the prominent escarpment of Wenlock Edge providing both an important landscape feature but also affording stunning views northwards to the Wrekin and westwards to the Welsh Hills. Outside the designated National Landscape, landscape value is still high, demonstrating classic scarp and vale topography supporting traditional agriculture and woodland.

4.166. The Shropshire Landscape Typology document recognises three landscape types in Much Wenlock parish:

- **Principal Wooded Hills**, which includes the scarp slope of Wenlock Edge.
- **Wooded Hills and Estatelands**, which typically comprises medium to large scale agricultural enterprises mixed with blocks of semi-natural woodland and game coverts, as found on the dip slopes of Wenlock Edge.
- **Estate Farmlands**, which occupy the lowland valley floors.

4.167. Collectively, these provide a classic rural scene of high landscape value and an important backdrop to the settlements of the parish.

4.168. The area's importance for biodiversity is reflected by the designation of four Sites of Special Interest in the parish, notified for nationally important stands of mixed broadleaved woodland, neutral grassland and calcareous grassland. The woodlands support several species of national or regional rarity including Large-leaved and Small-leaved lime, Wild service tree, Fingered Sedge, Wood Barley and Violet Helleborine. Areas of limestone grassland are now rare along Wenlock Edge and many of the best remaining examples are found in the Much Wenlock area where they support many scarce lime-loving plants including Quaking grass, Pyramidal Orchid and Yellow-wort. The disused quarries are particularly important for grassland and scrub communities, supporting plants such as Autumn Gentian and Common Gromwell, scarce butterflies including Dingy Skipper and Wall Brown and providing breeding sites for Peregrine Falcon.

4.169. Overall, the MWNP area supports at least 25 animal and plant species that are designated as Species of Principal Importance in England under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 (see Appendix F).

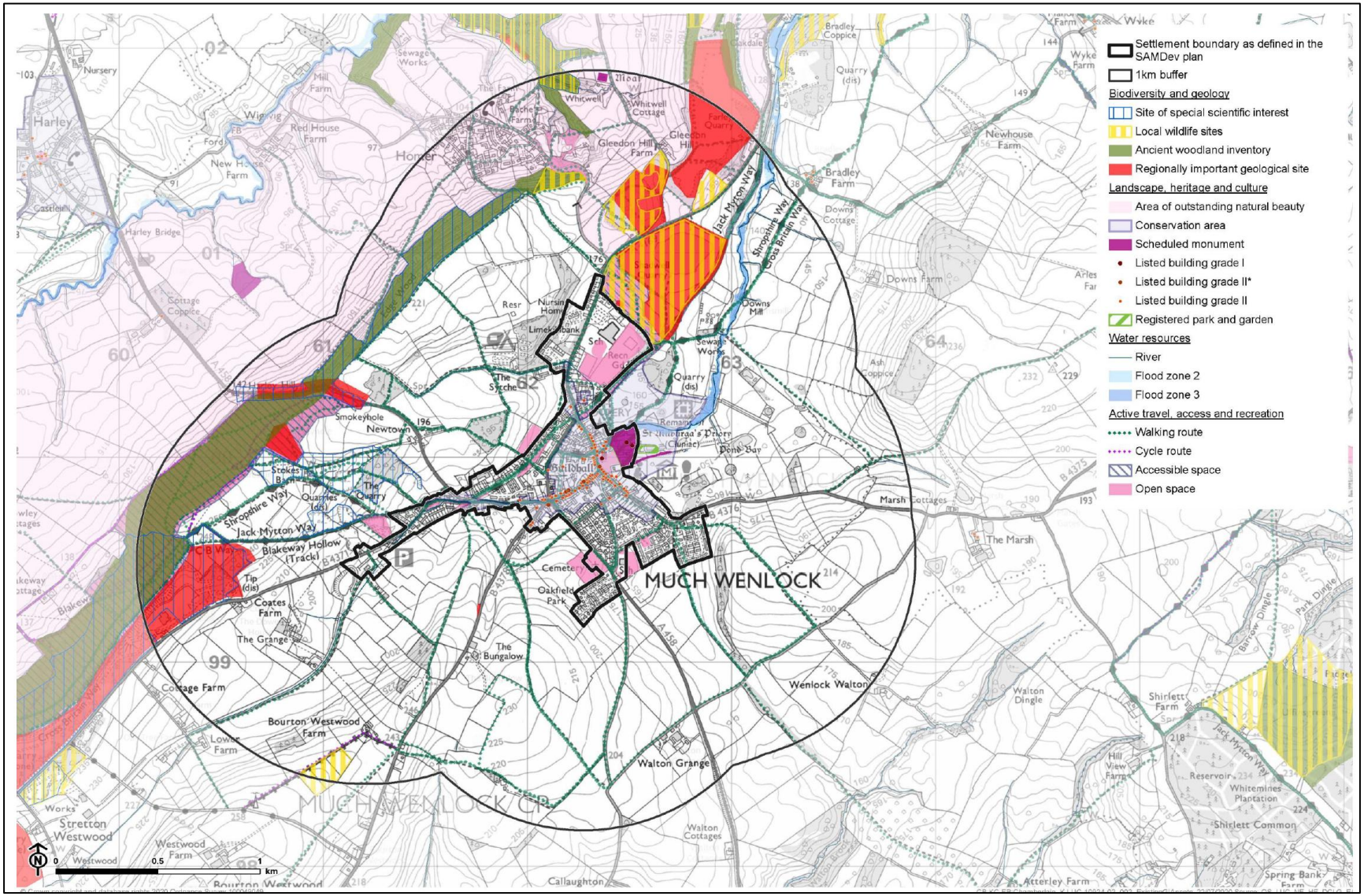
4.170. Surface water bodies include the Shyte/Farley brook, Sheinton brook and a number of ponds, many located in the old quarries, which support populations of Great Crested Newt.

4.171. The Much Wenlock area is internationally important for its geology, being the Type Locality for rocks of the Wenlock Series, i.e. these rock types were first described here and all rocks of the same age across the planet are referred to as being of Wenlockian age. The rocks which underlie the Parish are generally limestones and shales formed from sediments deposited in a warm, tropical sea approximately 430 million years ago in a period of geological time, known as the Silurian Period. They are rich in fossils of sea creatures which lived at that time, including corals, crinoids and trilobites. Three of the four SSSIs in the plan are also notified for their

geological importance. These provide good representation of the varying rock types and are all included in the Geological Conservation Review, a document which identifies all earth science sites of national or international importance in Britain.

4.172. The existing green and blue infrastructure assets of the Parish are shown on *Figure 19*. This is take from SC's Green Infrastructure Strategy for Much Wenlock.

Figure 19: Existing Green Infrastructure Assets and Key Constraints



4.173. **Biodiversity opportunity areas (BOAs):** The MWNP encourages development proposals to deliver in excess of the minimum 10% Biodiversity net gain requirement , as endorsed by the Wildlife Trusts. Whilst developments are encouraged to deliver their biodiversity net gain on site, this is not always possible; equally there may be opportunities to enhance other parts of the Parish in need of attention. It is therefore useful to consider where Biodiversity Opportunity Areas might exist locally.

4.174. *Figure 20* is an extract from the Green Infrastructure Strategy for Much Wenlock identifying the following opportunities for improving and enhancing biodiversity in the parish. This is illustrated on the map at *Figure 21*.

Figure 20: Opportunities for biodiversity improvements in Much Wenlock

Summary of key opportunities	Biodiversity & Geology	Landscape, Heritage and Culture	Water Resources	Active Travel, Access & Recreation	Health & Wellbeing	Climate Change
SSSI management improvements at Whitewell Coppice to improve condition	✓	✓				✓
Link key habitats to create more contiguous network around Wenlock Edge	✓	✓				✓
Habitat creation / enhancement around Farley Quarry	✓	✓				✓
Retain and enhance visual links towards AONB (National Landscape)	✓	✓			✓	
Increase local accessibility to Much Wenlock Priory				✓	✓	✓
Include new open space (children's / teenager facilities) within proposed allocation				✓	✓	
Improve infrastructure along the long-distance footpaths to create sustainable, greened corridors through Much Wenlock	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Reinforce existing GI habitat surrounding Muck Wenlock Priory with a particular emphasis on flood risk mitigation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Extension and / or enhancement of existing allotment site				✓	✓	✓
Provision of a new circular walk around the attenuation pond at Stretton Road				✓	✓	✓
Enhancements to Gaskell Park, including a new perimeter path, outdoor exercise equipment and a new pavilion				✓	✓	✓
Enhanced habitats along key transport routes including the B4371 and B4378	✓	✓	✓			✓

4.175. In addition, the consultation on the MWNP revealed the following additional opportunity areas for improving biodiversity:

- Protection of existing sites of biodiversity and geodiversity interest, as shown on *Figure 20.*
- Encouragement of new initiatives to improve biodiversity in the following locations:
  - Old cemetery
  - Whitwell Coppice, Gaskell Recreation Ground~~field~~
  - Other areas of existing green space within the town
  - Green space created as part of new developments
- Appropriate management of road verges.
- Creation of a bee corridor through the town and into the wider countryside, encouraging flowering plants along footways and within public spaces.
- Offering marginal farmland for BNG which could be used to create new areas of woodland, limestone grassland and scrub, complementing existing high biodiversity areas but also assisting with soil protection, carbon storage and flood prevention.

- Encouragement of regenerative farming to protect groundwater, improve soil health (with implications for water and carbon storage)
- The planting of trees to contribute to tree canopy coverage of a minimum of 20% of the parish.
- Identification of new corridors which could potentially provide both public access and wildlife, in dialogue with local landowners.
- Reviewing and revising guidance on future management/uses of quarries.

4.176. **Disused quarry workings:** The policy offers special protection from re-use to older disused small quarry workings where no commercial activity has taken place for more than 15 years and also to Lilleshall, Westwood and Farley quarries (*Figure 22*) because of the richness of their habitats.

4.177. The aim is to improve and enhance local biodiversity and encourage improved access to allow more local people and visitors to enjoy the unique landscape and natural environment of Wenlock Edge. This biodiversity reflects the length of time since these quarries were last worked and the natural regeneration already underway.

4.178. Note that part of the Plan area falls within an Environment Agency Surface Water Nitrate Issues Priority Area. Sub-surface water resources are also important, and part of the Plan area falls within the Shropshire Severn, Tern and Roden Drinking Water Safeguard Zone. Both have a bearing on the type of permissions allowed for quarry infilling as the porous nature of the substrate means than groundwater could easily become contaminated.

Figure 21: Green Infrastructure Opportunities

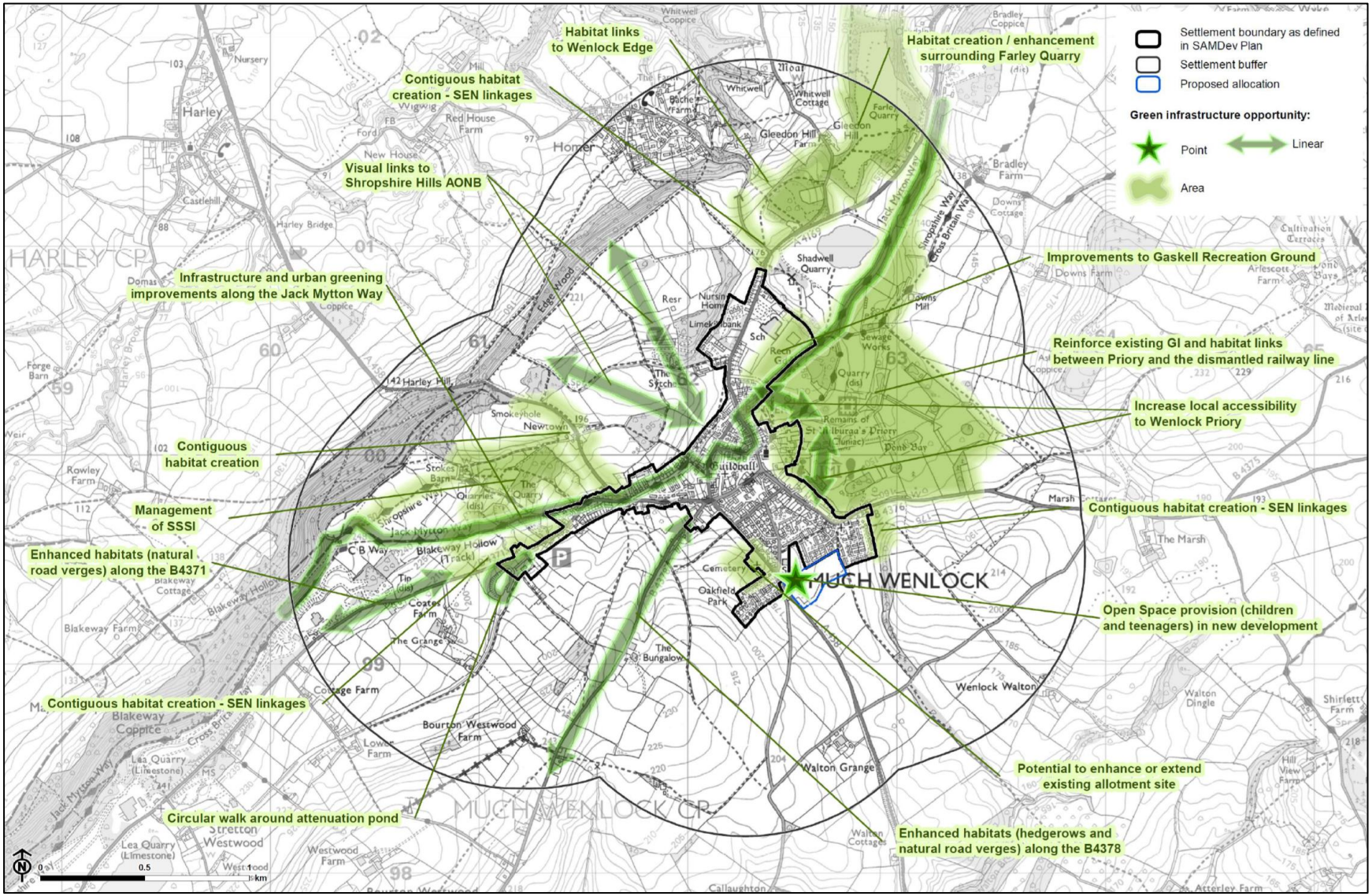
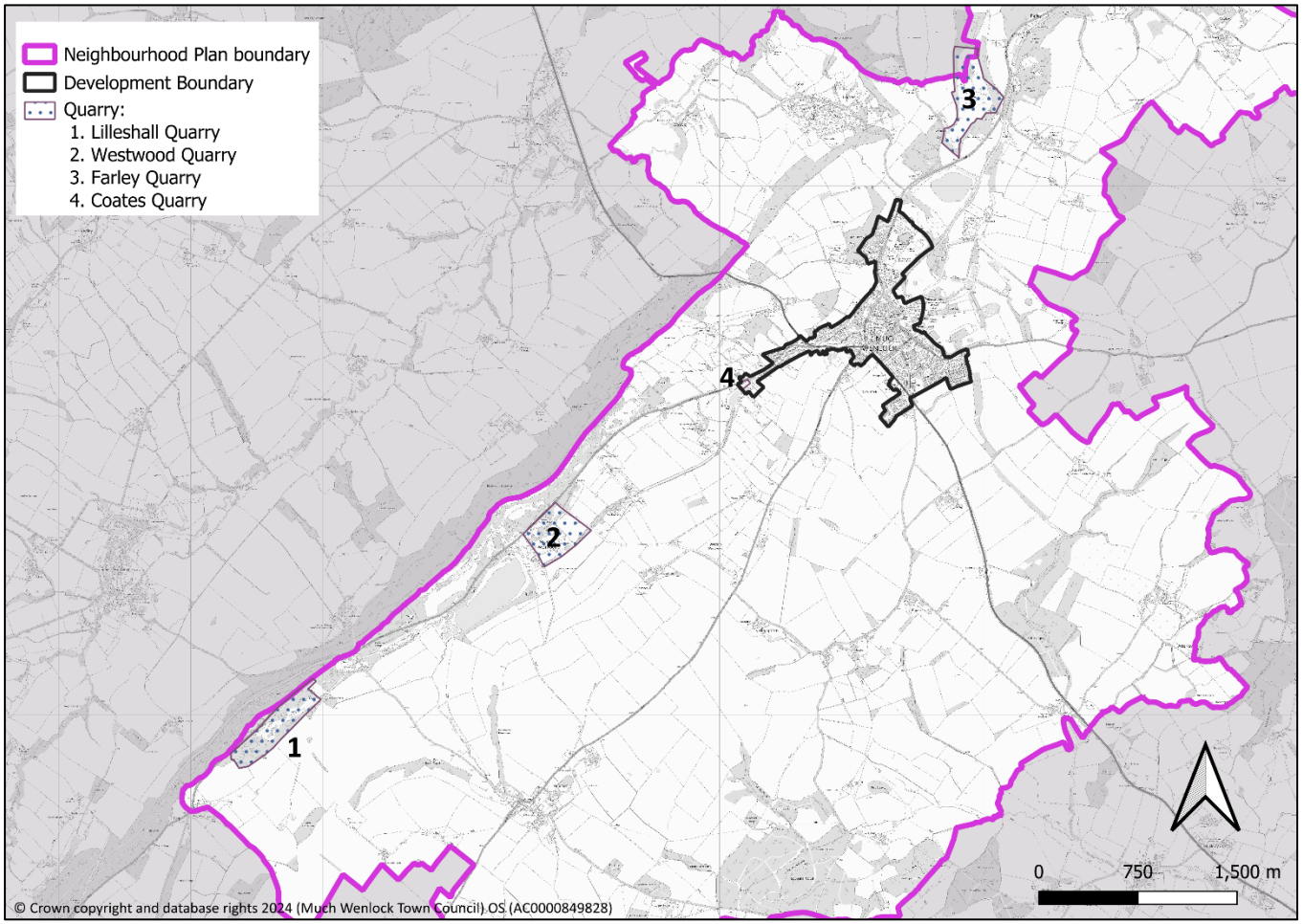


Figure 22: Map showing quarries subject to Clause G of Policy MW23



Policy MW24: Landscape and environment

Purpose

4.179. This policy seeks to ensure that development proposals have considered how they can enhance the natural environment – both flora and fauna – including the features of it that are particularly distinctive to Much Wenlock. It also seeks to ensure that development proposals contribute to the provision of wildlife friendly features within development.

POLICY MW24: LANDSCAPE AND ENVIRONMENT

A. Development proposals should maintain, enhance the natural environment, landscape features and the rural character and setting of the neighbourhood area. Where possible, development proposals should seek to incorporate natural features typical of the parish, for instance ponds, hedgerows and trees.

B. As appropriate to their scale, nature and location, development proposals should demonstrate that they have addressed the following matters:

Trees and woodland:

- **i. contribute to the provision of a Much Wenlock town-wide minimum 20% tree canopy, with the planting of additional native trees, with a specific focus in areas with public access.**
- **ii. there should be no unacceptable loss of, or damage to, existing trees or woodlands during or as a result of development. If notable trees must be removed, they should be replaced with trees of a similar potential size and native species elsewhere on the site, unless this is clearly not possible.**
- **iii. where trees and/or shrubs are replaced with new plantings, native or locally appropriate varieties attractive to insects, birds and other wildlife must be used.**
- **iv. all priority habitats and mature trees must have a minimum buffer of complimentary habitat of 10m, and more if required (for instance ancient woodland or veteran trees require a minimum buffer of 15m).**
- **v. appropriate management measures will be required to be implemented to protect newly planted and existing trees, woodlands and/ or hedgerows.**
- **vi. where arboricultural work is required to a veteran/mature/notable tree (as defined by the Woodland Trust), the tree should be safeguarded and maintained in a way which responds positively to the condition of the trees and its location within the overall development.**

Hedgerows

- **i natural boundaries (i.e. hedgerows in preference to fencing) are supported.**
- **ii avoid the loss of, or deterioration in the quality of, hedgerows. Where access points to new developments involve the loss of a section of hedgerow, the access should include trees at either end of the retained hedgerow to aid wildlife to cross overhead from crown to crown.**

Wildlife-friendly features:

- **iii provide suitable wildlife-friendly features (such as hedgehog holes in new residential fencing and bird and bat nesting boxes).**

Conformity references: NP Objectives: 7; Shropshire Core Strategy (2011): CS5, CS17; SAMDev Plan (2015): MD12; NPPF (2024): 135, 136, 187-195

Justification

4.180. The NPPF stresses that planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural environment including requiring net gain in biodiversity. The local community too place a high importance on this, with a majority agreeing that the natural environment and its features should be protected. Natural assets afforded a level of protection in the Parish (*Figure 19*) are:

Table 8: Environmental designations in the parish

Designation	Sites
Shropshire Hills National Landscape	Wenlock Edge
Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	Wenlock Edge: Biological & Geological Whitwell Coppice: Biological & Geological Farley Dingle: Geological Tickwood and Benthall Edge: Biological & Geological
Geological Conservation Review sites (GCR)	Wenlock Edge Whitwell Coppice Farley Dingle
Local Wildlife Sites (LWS)	Details available from Shropshire Council/ Local Wildlife Trust
Local Nature Reserves	Windmill Hill
Ancient woodland	Areas of Ancient Woodland
Local Green Spaces	As set out in Policy MW21 (Local Green Space)

4.181. There are other distinctive natural features particular to Much Wenlock that, whilst not protected through statutory designations, provide vital habitats for flora and fauna. This includes veteran and mature trees and established woodland, hedgerows, fruit orchards, ponds and streams, mature planted gardens, and green verges alongside roads. Such features form vital corridors for many animals and birds, especially those migrating, to safely navigate around their domains. In addition, they support a wide range of small mammals, amphibians, insects, and birds that make their homes in this area.

4.182. These habitats, and the species they house, have evolved in response to local geology and land use, and can take many hundreds of years to establish. As such they are difficult, often impossible, to replace in any meaningful way. Although they have no statutory protection, they need to be considered in the planning process. Notable features in Much Wenlock are shown below.

4.183. Development proposals are expected to retain, protect, and enhance these and, where appropriate, include a landscape and ecological management plan including a list of trees and native shrubs to be planted to ensure the rural and green character of the parish is enhanced and which should involve the planting of new trees and hedgerows of native species in gardens, communal areas or on roadsides where practical.

Policy MW25: Dark skies

Purpose

4.184. Parts of Much Wenlock parish provide ideal locations from which to enjoy dark skies and stargazing. These dark skies also support both nocturnal and diurnal wildlife. This policy seeks to ensure that development does not encroach on this valued aspect of parish.

POLICY MW25: DARK SKIES

Proposals for development will be supported where it is demonstrated that, if external lighting is required, it protects the night sky from light pollution, where:

i. **the lighting is necessary for operational, safety or security reasons;**
ii. **any light spillage beyond the application site is eliminated, or reduced by measures such as timing and proximity controls, orientation, screening, shielding or glazing;**
iii. **impact on nearby residential properties, wildlife, local heritage assets or the wider landscape is minimised; and**
iv. **the guidance on lighting provided in the Institution of Lighting Professionals (ILP) Guidance Note GN01: The Reduction of Obtrusive Light (and any subsequent revisions) is adhered to. Proposals should consider carefully, and provide details of, the light source and intensity being used, the luminaire design, height, and angle, adding baffles and cut-off shields where required, and details of control mechanisms to dim or switch off lighting schemes when not required. Where appropriate, lights should be controlled by passive infrared detectors so that they only come on when needed.**

Conformity references: NP Objectives: 7; Shropshire Core Strategy (2011): CS17; SAMDev Plan (2015): MD12; NPPF: 96, 131, 135, 187, 198

Justification

4.185. Pockets of the parish remain largely unlit (*Figure 23*) for instance the significant areas of woodland away from the town. The dark night skies in these areas are predominantly unspoilt, and it is important that they are kept that way.

4.186. The benefits derived from the prevention of light pollution include:

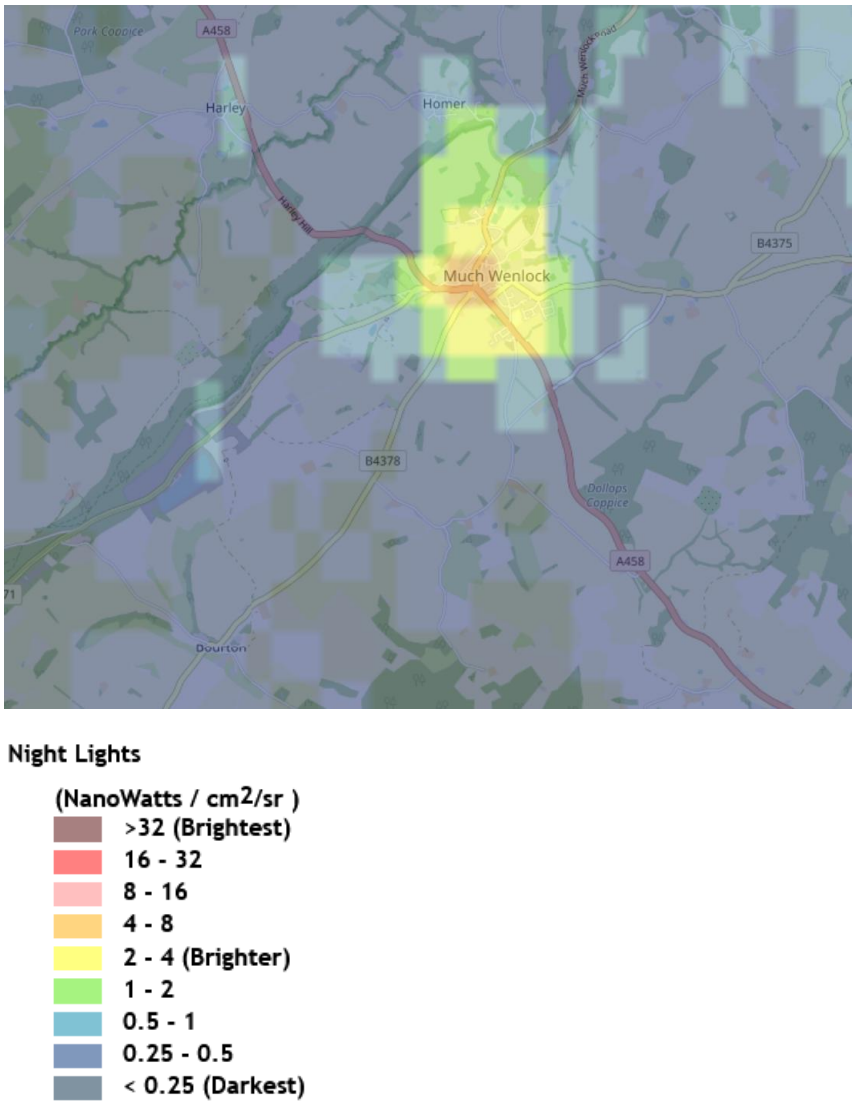
- Enjoyment and appreciation – improving quality of life and providing creative inspiration
- Health – promoting better sleep patterns and reducing stress
- Wildlife – supporting a more natural environment for both nocturnal and diurnal animals
- Energy efficiency – reducing wastage from unnecessary or excessive lighting, thus reducing the parish's carbon footprint

4.187. The impact of light pollution is particularly harmful in the open countryside where rural character is eroded. Light pollution can also compromise the architectural and historical character of conservation areas and listed buildings or their settings. Artificial lighting has an impact on biodiversity especially for nocturnal animals and invertebrates can be seriously

affected by artificial light at even very low levels, adversely affecting their ability to feed and reproduce.

4.188. The Institution of Lighting Professionals (ILP) produces guidance on light pollution, and this should be consulted when preparing development proposals. In particular the Guidance Note 01 The Reduction of Obtrusive Light, and Guidance Note 08 Bats and artificial lighting in the UK, which was updated in 2023. This guidance is summarised in criterion iv of Policy MW25.

Figure 23: Dark Skies map for the Parish and surrounding areas (Source: CPRE)



Policy MW26: Renewable and community energy

Purpose

4.189. This policy sets out the criteria against which proposals for renewable energy projects should be considered.

POLICY MW26: RENEWABLE AND COMMUNITY ENERGY

A. Development proposals to generate energy from renewable and low carbon sources at a medium to large scale will only be supported where it meets the requirements of the adopted Local Plan and:

- **i. the applicant can demonstrate that any harm to the local landscape (including the setting of the Shropshire Hills National Landscape) and heritage (including the Conservation Areas and their settings) will be minimised and, where necessary, mitigated. Applicants should use the relevant landscape descriptions contained within the Shropshire Landscape Typology to inform their landscape and visual impact assessment; and**
- **ii. the applicant can demonstrate that the proposals do not adversely affect residential amenity through noise generation or overbearing visual impact. Proposals should seek to screen installations naturally, taking into account the setting of Much Wenlock and smaller settlements within the landscape and long-distance views of Wenlock Edge and Dales, in particular the Corved ~~-D~~ale; and**
- **iii. existing rights of way are retained. Where not possible, redirection within the site will be considered. Opportunities will be sought to enhance access for walking, cycling and equestrianism within and across the site to provide linkages to local amenities and neighbouring settlements; and**
- **iv. there are opportunities to provide a net gain in biodiversity in accordance with Policy MW13; and**
- **v. the benefits of renewable energy can be proven to outweigh the landscape and environmental impacts; and**
- **vi. it demonstrates in particular how land beneath or surrounding the panels will be managed and how the applicant has avoided land with high potential for agriculture ('Best and Most Versatile Land'). Proposals should prioritise low yield agricultural land and rooftops, where appropriate.**

B. Proposals for individual and community-scale energy from hydroelectricity, solar PV panels, local biomass facilities, anaerobic digestion and wood fuel products will be supported subject to the following criteria:

- **i. the siting and scale of the proposed development is appropriate to its setting and position in the wider landscape; and**
- **ii. there is suitable road access, and traffic generated is appropriate for the rural setting; and**
- **iii. the proposed development does not create an unacceptable impact on the amenity of local residents; and**
- **iv. the proposed development does not have an unacceptable impact on a feature of natural or biodiversity importance.**

Conformity Reference: NP objectives: 7; Shropshire Core Strategy (2011): CS1, CS6, CS17; SAMDev Plan (2015): MD8; NPPF (2024): 105, 161–169, 187

Justification

Renewable energy

4.190. Renewable energy is a source of power that comes from clean and natural resources. This means that it does not harm the environment around it, nor will it ever run dry. The parish is starting to attract interest from renewable schemes.

4.191. The parish is located partially within the Shropshire Hills National Landscape. It is important that the scale of any proposed renewable energy developments does not detract from nor negatively impact the setting of the villages and expansive views towards Wenlock Edge, the Dales and wider landscape.

4.192. From a solar perspective, the Shropshire Hills Landscape Management Plan provides broad guidance. Particular attention will need to be paid to proposals for field-scale renewable and low carbon initiatives such as solar farms in order to prevent a significant adverse effect on this designated landscape. From wind power, generally speaking, large scale wind turbine developments will be unacceptable in the National Landscape and its setting.

4.193. The challenge for larger schemes is that not all will be decided using the policies of the local development plan. Above a threshold (set out in Section 15 of the *Planning Act 2008*) of more than 50MW for onshore and more than 100MW for offshore generation, solar installations will be treated as Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (these thresholds are under consultation), for which a DCO must be sought from the Secretary of State. Below this threshold, schemes are determined by local plan policies.

4.194. Regardless of which planning route is used to determine such schemes, the following (where relevant) should be considered in parallel with the advice contained in the Shropshire Hills National Landscape Management Plan and the Shropshire Landscape Typology:

- The local community should be fully engaged to assist in shaping proposals.
- Schemes that offer direct community benefits, for instance community energy schemes or contributions to electric bus schemes, would be welcomed.
- The height, scale, orientation, and density of the panels should be designed to optimise solar gain while minimising impacts on the grazing capacity within a site, on biodiversity (if for instance less light can filter through) and on the visual impact from neighbouring properties and viewpoints further afield.
- Natural screening should be used to minimise visual and noise impacts. This could include the planting of trees and hedgerows and also the provision of green buffers to the edges of installations. Consideration should be given to how the site will be viewed from all parts of the parish, notably within the landscape and long-distance views of Wenlock Edge and Dales (in particular the Corve ~~D~~dale). If fencing is to be used, it should be camouflaged with natural planting to blend into the natural environment, where possible using natural materials and suitable colours if man-made. Industrial fencing will not be acceptable.
- Public Rights of Way (PRoW) are the responsibility of SC. Where they cross proposed sites, they must be safeguarded. Rerouting of PRoWs (suitable for use by those on foot,

bicycle or horseback) or the creation of additional new PRoWs (ideally as bridleways) would be supported where this offers benefits in reaching community facilities, nearby villages and the wider countryside. SC's Countryside Access Improvement Plan provides an opportunity to enshrine these routes in policy and ensure that they are safeguarded and well maintained.

- Opportunities to improve biodiversity must be taken and, where possible, to create and improve connectivity of habitats. Improvements should be accompanied by a management plan for the lifespan of the scheme and a system to measure that the improvements have happened over that period.
- Renewable schemes which involve the loss or degradation of productive agricultural land (BMV) should be avoided in preference to long-term local food security.

Community energy

4.195. Community energy refers to the delivery of community-led renewable energy, energy demand reduction and energy supply projects, whether wholly owned and/or controlled by communities or through partnership with commercial or public sector partners. Community energy puts people at the heart of the energy system.

4.196. There could be scope for some community renewable energy projects, for example utilising waste from farming and land management together with local food waste to power an anaerobic digester, producing gas to power a community heat facility. This would be most cost-effective when a residential or small industrial development is being designed and built. Exemplar renewable energy projects in the neighbourhood area, which would benefit the community, relate well to its character and complement existing economic activities, would be supported.

5. IMPLEMENTATION AND PLAN REVIEW

5.1. Much Wenlock Town Council is the qualifying body responsible for the Neighbourhood Plan.

5.2. Once the Plan has been 'made', there will be a series of actions that need to be undertaken to ensure that the policies within the MWNP are being interpreted and used in the way intended. It will also be necessary to maintain a watching brief on changes to the planning policy landscape, both at the national and local planning authority levels, which may have an impact on the Plan's policies. Finally, any non-planning-related projects and activities that were identified will need to be prioritised for delivery, in partnership with other organisations.

5.3. Specific actions to be undertaken are as follows:

- Pursuing the projects and activities that are not policy-based, but nevertheless contribute to the delivery of the Plan - these are set out in Section 7, divided into priorities towards which developer contributions may be directed and broader, community projects, which have been collated throughout the process, but which sit beyond planning policy. A range of organisations may be involved in delivering these projects and there will be a need for a co-ordinated approach. Many will require funding and therefore it would be helpful to consult with the community to understand the potential costs and achievability of each. Funding may be sourced from developer contributions or tailored funds, such as the Big Lottery Fund.
- Commenting on planning applications or consultations relating to the neighbourhood plan area – the Town Council has a role in ensuring that the MWNP policies are being adequately considered, where relevant, in decisions to determine the outcome of planning applications in the Parish. A meeting between local councillors, planning committee members and the supporting planning officers at SC would be a useful step in ensuring that the purpose and application of the policies is fully understood by all parties. This will assist in ensuring that policies are interpreted and applied in the way intended.
- Monitoring the application of the MWNP policies to ensure they have been applied consistently and interpreted correctly in response to planning applications – there is scope to identify indicators to measure the effect that each policy is having and the extent to which this is delivering against the associated objective. As a minimum, the Town Council would wish to maintain a log of planning applications relating to the neighbourhood area, detailing which Neighbourhood Plan policies have informed the Town Council response and the outcome of the decision. This will assist in understanding whether the policies have been used in the manner intended or whether changes may be required, for instance in any future review of the Neighbourhood Plan.
- Maintaining a dialogue with SC regarding the timing and content of the new Local Plan – it will be important to consider the policies in the emerging document and how these may impact the MWNP policies. The adoption of a new Local Plan may trigger a light-touch review of the MWNP.
- Maintaining a dialogue with SC and the promoter/developers of the strategically allocated sites.

5.4. Maintaining a watching brief on the national policy landscape – changes at the national level may impact on the policies contained in the Development Plan and the Neighbourhood Plan. It is therefore important to keep abreast of this, as this could also provide a trigger to undertake a light-touch review of the Neighbourhood Plan.

- Maintaining a dialogue with neighbouring parishes on cross-boundary projects.
- Maintaining a dialogue with the local community on the plan implementation – ensuring that all records of how the plan has been used should be made public. It is also recommended that a regular update – for instance at the Annual Town Meeting – is provided, to feed back to the community on progress about both the effectiveness of the policies and the pursing of the projects.

5.5. Considering gaps in the Neighbourhood Plan – local issues, concerns or opportunities may arise during the lifespan of the Plan that trigger the need for the inclusion of a new policy. Such issues can be most effectively understood by maintaining open dialogue with the community and other partners.

5.6. Whilst it is not a legislative requirement to review a Neighbourhood Plan, it is good practice to do so periodically. This may be because of any of the points noted above. A light-touch review will enable the Town Council to keep the Neighbourhood Plan up to date in general terms, and to ensure that it remains in general conformity with the wider development plan. Any review should be undertaken in partnership with and ensuring the engagement of the wider community.

5.7. The Town Council will consider how best to progress these actions.

6. INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS AND PROVISION

6.1. The Town Council is keen to influence the way in which developer contributions are spent in the neighbourhood area to the full extent of their powers under national legislation and planning guidance.

6.2. There are different types of contributions arising from section 106 agreements, section 278 agreements and the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL):

- A section 106 agreement (based on that section of the 1990 Town & Country Planning Act) or planning obligation is a private agreement made between local authorities and developers and can be attached to a planning permission to make acceptable development which would otherwise be unacceptable in planning terms.
- A section 278 agreement refers to a section of the Highways Act 1980 that allows developers to enter into a legal agreement with the local authority to make alterations or improvements to a public highway as part of a planning application.
- The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), if adopted by SC, would be a non-negotiable charge on development based on a fixed rate per square metre of net additional development on a site, and levied by the Borough Council. Different charge rates would apply for different types of uses and in different areas. The levy is intended to fund the provision, improvement, replacement or maintenance of infrastructure required to support development in an area as set out in its local plan. With a 'made' (adopted) Neighbourhood Plan, the local community would benefit from an uplift in the level of CIL received, from 15% (capped at £100 per existing property) to an uncapped 25% of CIL receipts from neighbourhood area.

6.3. Spending and infrastructure priorities for Much Wenlock Parish are included within the SC Infrastructure Delivery Plan, and within the emerging SC Local Plan.

6.4. The Town Council intends to regularly review its spending priorities. Any proposed changes to spending principles or priorities will be published for comment by the community and other interested parties. Once finalised, any updated list will be published on the Town Council website and in relevant literature.

7. NON POLICY ACTIONS

Ref.	Issue	Possible Actions	Lead agencies / partners
	Spatial Strategy and Housing		
1.	Understanding local housing need	• Commit to undertaking a regular review of the Housing Needs Assessment prepared for the parish. This provides a long-term perspective on likely housing needs.	MWTC
2.	The need for additional affordable homes	• Consider commissioning a Housing Needs Survey, which provides a 'snapshot' of housing need, including those seeking affordable homes locally. • Pursue a rural exception site. • Explore merits of setting up a Community Land Trust.	MWTC, local community, landowners
	The economy and jobs		
3.	Supporting sustainable tourism	• Develop a visitor strategy and marketing plan for the town and wider parish. • Initiate a local Welcome Host scheme to improve visitor skills and customer service. • Establish a local guide scheme to provide local tours and advice to visitors.	MWTC, SC, visitor attractions, accommodation, retailers, residents, regional tourist board
4.	Communications infrastructure	• Work with providers to ensure good coverage (mobile, broadband) across the parish.	MWTC, providers
	Reducing flood risk		
5.	Monitoring risk	• Prepare update to the Integrated Urban Drainage Management Plan.	MWTC, Flood Action Group
6.	Natural solutions	• Work with landowners to identify ways to deliver activities suggested in *Table 5.*	MWTC, SC, Severn Trent Water, landowners

Ref.	Issue	Possible Actions	Lead agencies / partners
	Transport and Movement		
7.	Traffic management in the town centre	• Explore the pros and cons of designing a shared space/ traffic calming measures within the High Street. Seek funding as appropriate.	MWTC, SC, local businesses
8.	Traffic speed	• Encouraging any major schemes to use design to slow-down traffic, for example through the introduction of tighter bends into side-roads, as opposed to wide openings; the creative use of planters to narrow lanes; use of modal filters, which allow the passage of some modes of transport but not others. • Introducing slower speed limits in part or all of the town. • Redirecting HGVs away from rural lanes.	SC, Satnav providers
9.	Public transport	• Work with SC Highways and public transport providers to explore ways to improve the overall provision.	MWTC, SC, private operators, schools
10.	Pavement safety for school children	• Carry out audits for the Primary and Secondary Safe Routes to School, in terms of provision of footpaths, crossing points, safe parking provision for drop-off, lighting etc.	MWTC, SC, schools
11.	Dropped kerbs	• Undertake a review of dropped kerbs in the town, which enable disabled access.	MWTC
12.	Pavement quality	• Repair uneven surfaces and pavements.	SC
13.	Inconsiderate car parking	• Work with SC to ensure that adequate parking enforcement is in place.	SC
14.	Wayfinding	• Undertake a local signage audit to ensure that local facilities and key routes (walking) are well-marked and easy to find.	MWTC
	Community well-being		
15.	Additional youth facilities	• Work with youth groups locally to understand specific needs that might be delivered, for instance, through a strategic allocation or funded via developer contributions	MWTC, schools, youth groups
16.	Utilities traffic	• Work with SC to explore ways to minimise impacts (noise) from utilities traffic, for instance refuse lorries.	MWTC, SC

Ref.	Issue	Possible Actions	Lead agencies / partners
17.	Support local community events and activities	• Identify relevant community facilities as "Assets of Community Value". • Encourage successful businesses to continue to "give back" to community. • Promotion of additional events/ markets.	MWTC, businesses, residents
	Design, Character, heritage		
18.	Celebrating local heritage	• Explore funding available to those with heritage at risk. • Extend the Olympianes Trail to include disabled access.	MWTC, SC, Historic England
19.	Supporting high quality design	• Establish a Local Design Panel to advise the Town Council on the 'technical' aspects of planning applications of all types, using the Design Guidance for Much Wenlock. • Provide advice to parishioners about lighting of homes and how this can be achieved without compromising dark skies or impacting neighbour amenity.	MWTC, residents
	Wildlife and environment		
20.	Biodiversity opportunity areas	• Work with landowners and SC to identify potential areas to 'bank' as biodiversity opportunity areas within the parish. • Supporting and inputting into the work of the Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin Nature Recovery Network.	MWTC, SC, landowners, residents
21.	Wildflower planting	• Encourage homeowners and others to plant wildflowers to attract pollinators.	Residents, landowners, MWTC
22.	Tree canopy	• Identify the locations for tree planting to enhance the road scenes throughout the Parish. • Consider an 'Adopt a Tree' scheme.	MWTC
23.	Supporting local producers	• Explore opportunities to set up a Community Supported Agriculture Scheme in the Parish.	MWTC, agricultural businesses

8. POLICIES MAPS

Key to Policies map:

Figure 24: Policies Map - parish-wide

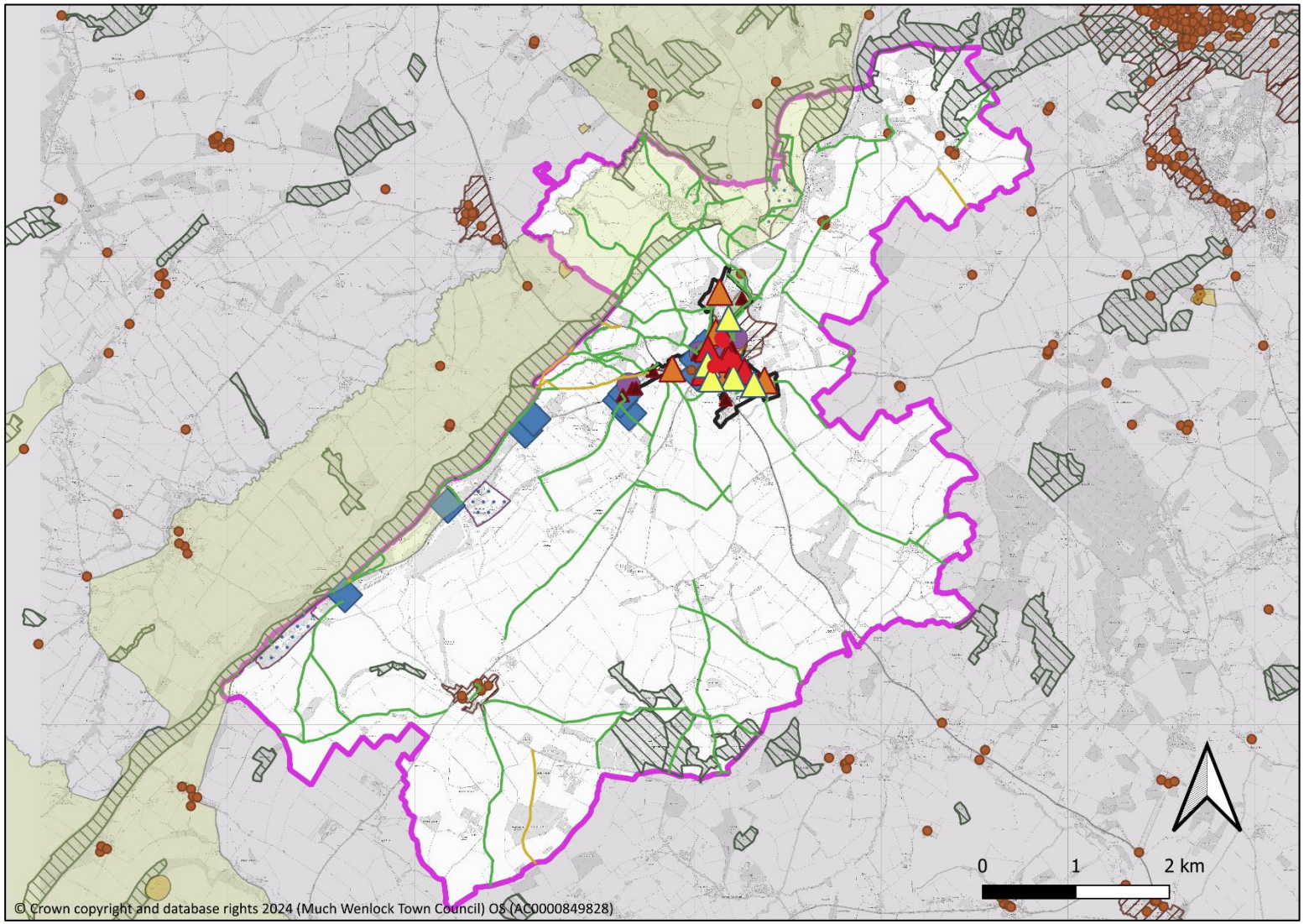


Figure 25: Policies Map - Much Wenlock town

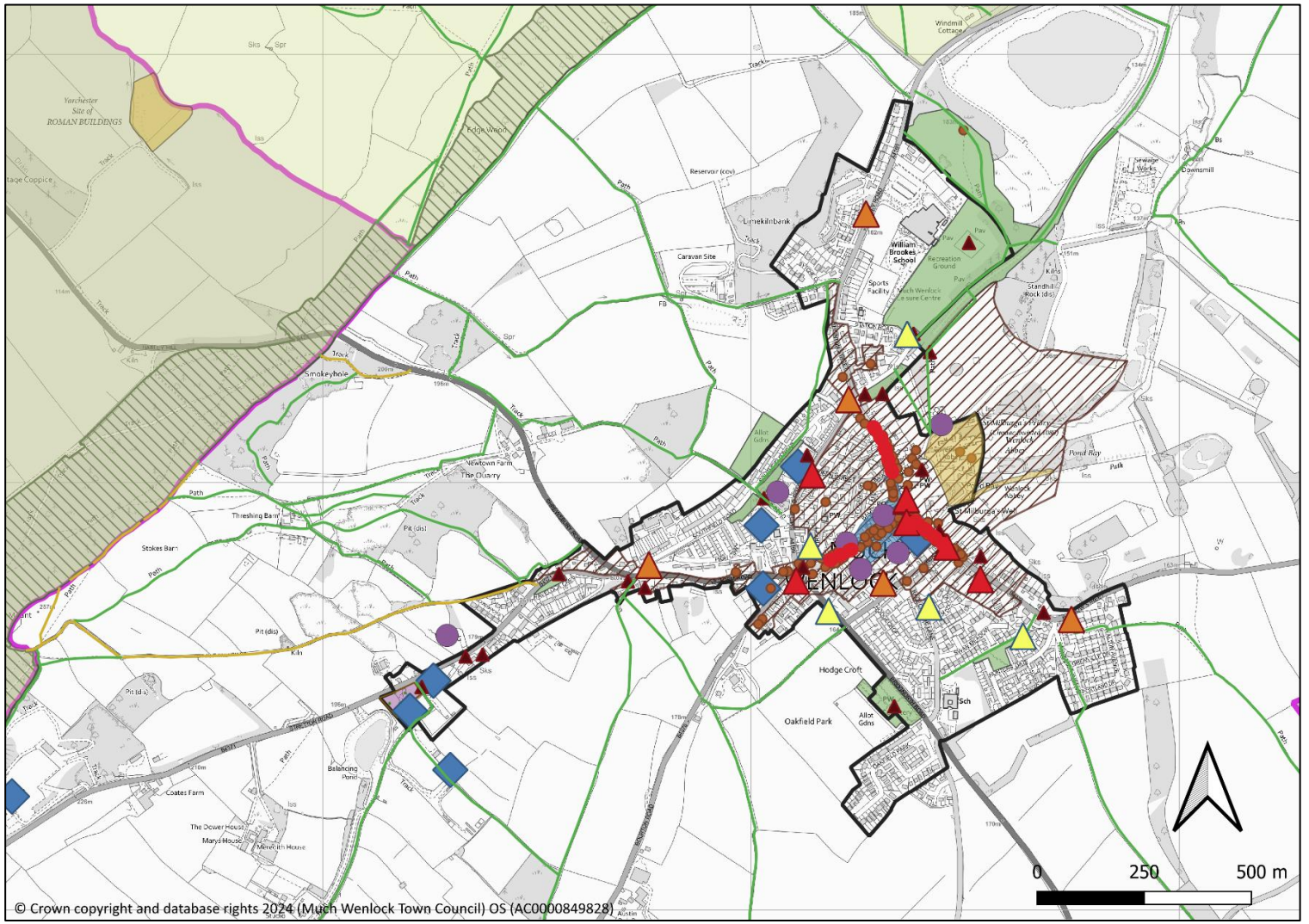


Figure 26: Policies Map - centre of Much Wenlock

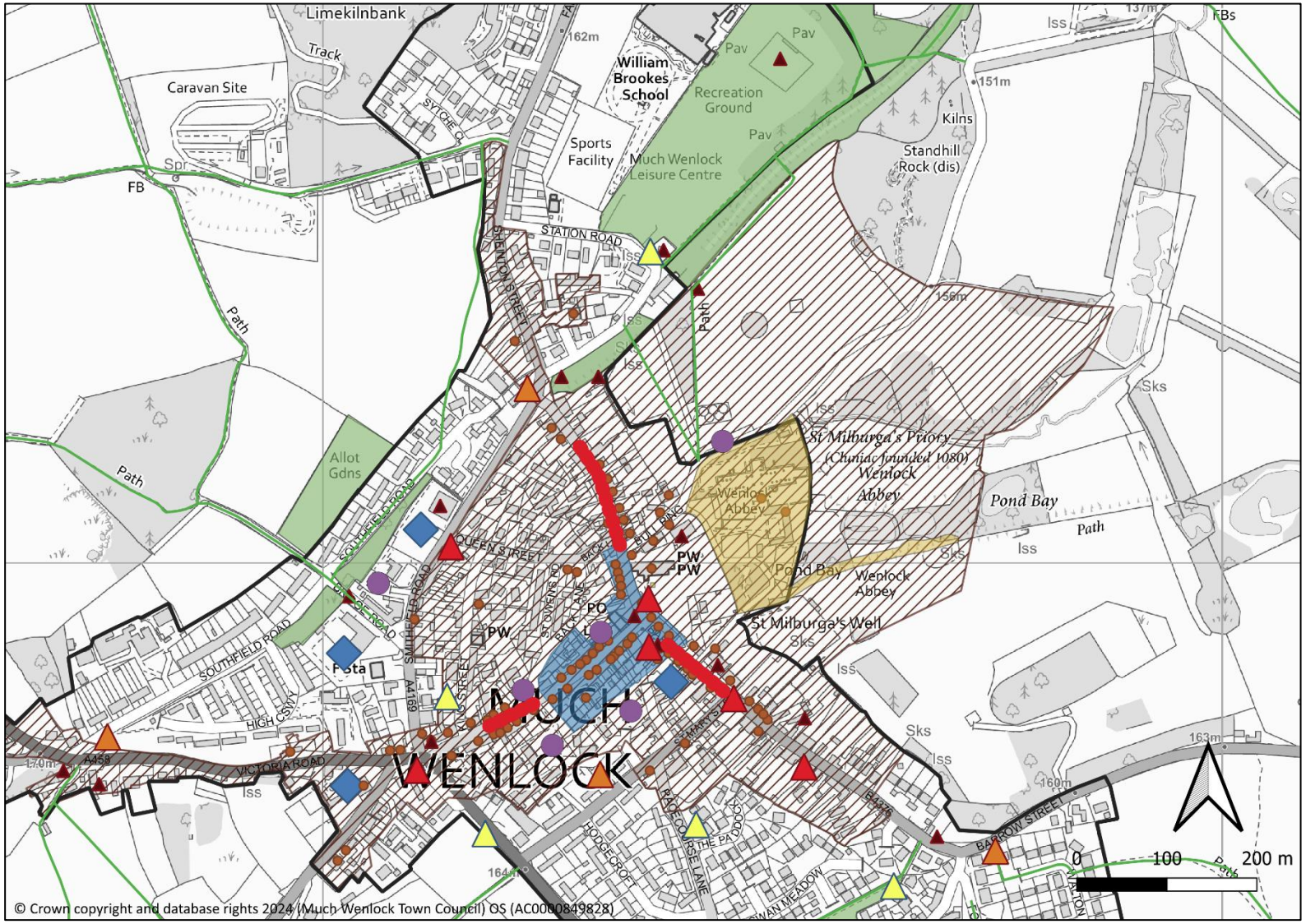


Figure 27: Policies Map - south Much Wenlock

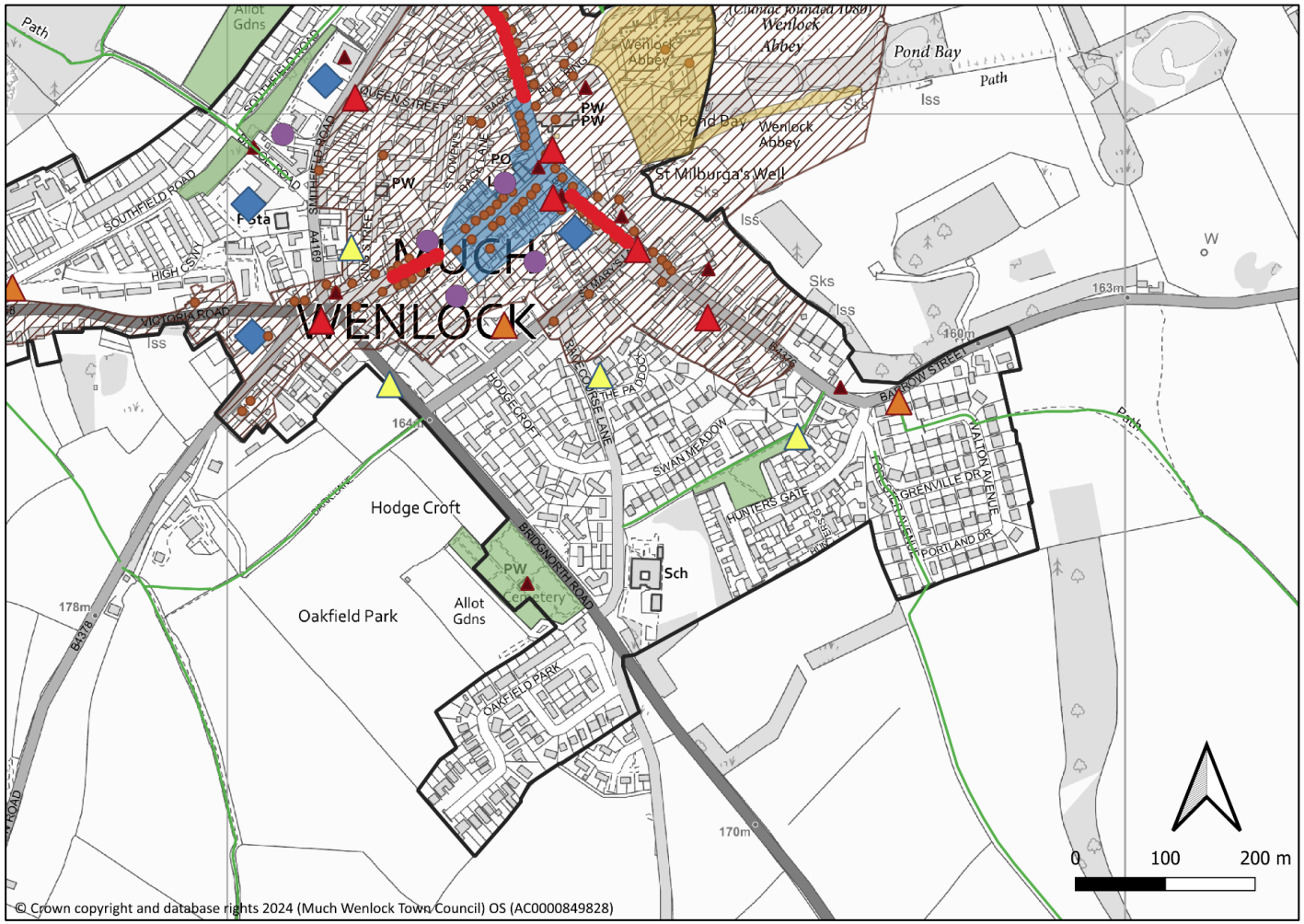
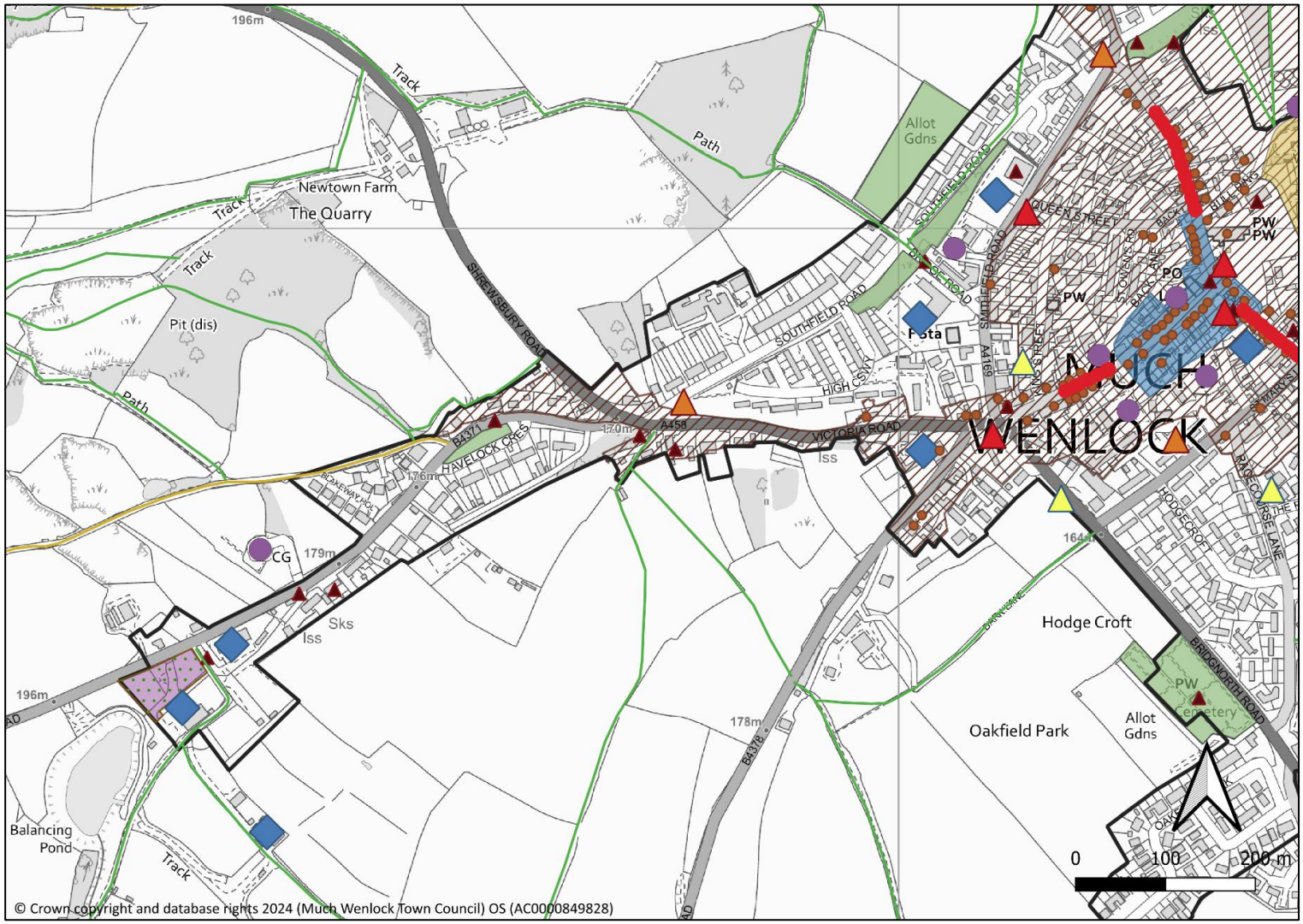


Figure 28: Policies Map - west Much Wenlock



9. GLOSSARY

- **Active travel:** Walking or cycling as a means of transport, in order to get to a particular destination such as work, the shops or to visit friends. It does not cover walking and cycling done purely for pleasure, for health reasons, or simply walking the dog (Welsh Government (2014) Active Travel: Walking and Cycling www.gov.uk.government/statistics/ active-travel-financial-year-ending-march-2015)
- **Affordable housing:** housing for sale or rent, for those whose needs are not met by the market (including housing that provides a subsidised route to home ownership and/or is for essential local workers); and which complies with one or more of the following definitions:
    a) **Affordable housing for rent**: meets all of the following conditions: (a) the rent is set in accordance with the Government's rent policy for Social Rent or Affordable Rent, or is at least 20% below local market rents (including service charges where applicable); the landlord is a registered provider, except where it is included as part of a Build to Rent scheme (in which case the landlord need not be a registered provider); and (c) it includes provisions to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households, or for the subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision. For Build to Rent schemes affordable housing for rent is expected to be the normal form of affordable housing provision (and, in this context, is known as Affordable Private Rent).
    b) **Starter homes**: is as specified in Sections 2 and 3 of the Housing and Planning Act 2016 and any secondary legislation made under these sections. The definition of a starter home should reflect the meaning set out in statute and any such secondary legislation at the time of plan-preparation or decision-making. Where secondary legislation has the effect of limiting a household's eligibility to purchase a starter home to those with a particular maximum level of household income, those restrictions should be used.
    c) **Discounted market sales housing**: is that sold at a discount of at least 20% below local market value. Eligibility is determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices. Provisions should be in place to ensure housing remains at a discount for future eligible households.
    d) **Other affordable routes to home ownership**: is housing provided for sale that provides a route to ownership for those who could not achieve home ownership through the market. It includes shared ownership, relevant equity loans, other low cost homes for sale (at a price equivalent to at least 20% below local market value) and rent to buy (which includes a period of intermediate rent). Where public grant funding is provided, there should be provisions for the homes to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households, or for any receipts to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision, or refunded to Government or the relevant authority specified in the funding agreement.
- **Ancient or veteran tree/tree of arboricultural value:** A tree which, because of its age, size and condition, is of exceptional biodiversity, cultural or heritage value. All ancient trees are veteran trees. Not all veteran trees are old enough to be ancient but are old relative to other trees of the same species. Very few trees of any species reach the ancient life-stage.
- **Archaeological interest:** There will be archaeological interest in a heritage asset if it holds, or potentially holds, evidence of past human activity worthy of expert investigation at some point.
- **Blue infrastructure:** Blue infrastructure refers to water elements, like rivers, canals, ponds, wetlands, floodplains, water treatment facilities, etc. Green infrastructure refers to trees, lawns, hedgerows, parks, fields, forests, etc. These terms come from urban planning and land-use planning.
- **Change of Use:** A change in the way that land or buildings are used (see Use Classes Order). Planning permission is usually necessary to change a "use class".

- **Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL):** a fixed, non-negotiable contribution that must be made by new development. It is chargeable on each net additional square metre of development built and would
- **Conservation area**: an area of notable environmental or historical interest or importance which is protected by law against undesirable changes.
- **Designated heritage asset:** A World Heritage Site, Scheduled Monument, Listed Building, Protected Wreck Site, Registered Park and Garden, Registered Battlefield or Conservation Area designated under the relevant legislation.
- **Development boundary:** These identify the areas of primarily built form, rather than countryside. They identify areas within which development of brownfield land may normally be appropriate, including infilling, redevelopment and conversions in accordance with Government Policy and Guidance (NPPF and NPPG). They do not include a presumption for the development of greenfield land such as playing fields and other open space. Identified built-up area boundaries do not necessarily include all existing developed areas.
- **Disability:** There is no single definition for 'disability'. Under the Equality Act 2010, a person is defined as disabled if they have a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative effect on their ability to do normal daily activities.
- **Grampian Condition**: A Grampian condition prohibits development from commencing until a specified action is taken on other land.
- **Green and blue infrastructure:** A network of multi-functional green (land) and blue (rivers, ponds, streams etc.) space, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities.
- **Heritage asset:** A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. It includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).
- **Local connection:** For the purposes of allocating affordable homes, housing shall be occupied in accordance with Shropshire Council's standard allocation procedures with priority given to applicants who can demonstrate that they have a local connection to the parish of Much Wenlock at the time of occupation.
- **Local housing need:** The number of homes identified as being needed through the application of the standard method set out in national planning guidance.
- **Local Plan:** Local Plans set out a vision and a framework for the future development of the area, addressing needs and opportunities in relation to housing, the economy, community facilities and infrastructure – as well as a basis for safeguarding the environment, adapting to climate change and securing good design for the area they cover. They are a critical tool in guiding decisions about individual development proposals, as Local Plans (together with any Neighbourhood Development Plans that have been made) are the starting point for considering whether applications can be approved. It is important for all areas to put an up-to-date Local Plan in place to positively guide development decisions.
- **Major Development:** For housing, development where 10 or more homes will be provided, or the site has an area of 0.5 hectares or more. For non-residential development it means additional floorspace of 1,000m^2 or more, or a site of 1 hectare or more, or as otherwise provided in the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015.
- **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)**: the national planning policy document which sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied.
- **Nature Recovery Network:** An expanding, increasingly connected, network of wildlife-rich habitats supporting species recovery, alongside wider benefits such as carbon capture, water quality improvements, natural flood risk management and recreation. It includes the existing

network of protected sites and other wildlife rich habitats as well as and landscape or catchment scale recovery areas where there is coordinated action for species and habitats.

- **Non-strategic policies:** Policies contained in a neighbourhood plan, or those policies in a local plan that are not strategic policies.
- **Older people:** People over or approaching retirement age, including the active, newly retired through to the very frail elderly; and whose housing needs can encompass accessible, adaptable general needs housing through to the full range of retirement and specialised housing for those with support or care needs.
- **Permitted development:** Permitted development rights are an automatic grant of planning permission which allow certain building works and changes of use to be carried out without having to make a planning application. Most houses have permitted development rights, but flats and maisonettes do not, so planning permission is required. A further example is the conversion of offices, for instance to flats, without the need for planning permission.
- **Previously developed land/ brownfield land:** Land which is or was occupied by a permanent structure, including the curtilage of the developed land (although it should not be assumed that the whole of the curtilage should be developed) and any associated fixed surface infrastructure.
- **Section 106 agreement**: A mechanism under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 which makes a development proposal acceptable in planning terms that would not otherwise be acceptable.
  Shropshire Council: The county-wide authority has responsibility for strategic matters including waste and minerals planning, maintaining the public rights of way network, education, libraries and roads.
- **SMEs (Small to medium-sized enterprises):** The UK definition of SME is generally a small or medium-sized enterprise with fewer than 250 employees. While the SME meaning defined by the EU is also business with fewer than 250 employees, and a turnover of less than €50 million, or a balance sheet total of less than €43 million. Within this umbrella there are three different categories: medium-sized, small, and micro-businesses. These categories are defined by turnover and number of employees.
- **Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD):** Supplementary Planning Documents may cover a range of issues, both topic and site specific, which may expand policy or provide further detail to policies contained in a Development Plan Document, where they can help applicants make successful applications or aid infrastructure delivery.
- **Use Classes Order**: The Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (As amended in 1995, 2005 and 2013) puts uses of land and buildings into various categories. Planning permission is not needed for changes of use within the same use class.

10. LIST OF EVIDENCE DOCUMENTS

All links correct at November 2024. Evidence documents relating to the engagement activities that took place are also available on the Much Wenlock Town Council website.

Document/ Evidence	Author	Year
The 20 Minute Neighbourhood	Town and Country Planning Association	ongoing
Adapting Historic Buildings for Energy and Carbon Efficiency: Historic England Advice Note 18	Historic England	2024
Advice Note 7: Local Heritage Listing: Identifying and Conserving Local Heritage	Historic England	2021
Ancient tree guide 4: What are ancient, veteran and other trees of special interest?	Woodland Trust	2008
Agricultural Building Design Guide	Shropshire Hills National Landscape	2010
Allocations Policy and Scheme	Shropshire Council	2023
Biodiversity metric	Defra	2021
Building for a Healthy Life 2020	Design for Homes	2020
Building with Nature	Building with Nature	ongoing
CAMRA Public House Viability Test	Campaign for Real Ale	2019
Census	Office for National Statistics	2011
Climate Change Act 2008	HM Government	2008
Designing Out Crime: A Designer's Guide	Design and Technology Against Crime	2011
Environment Act 2021	HM Government	2021
Green Infrastructure Strategy	Shropshire Council	2020
Heritage at Risk Register	Historic England	ongoing
Historic Environment Record	Historic England in partnership with ALGAO and IHBC	ongoing
Housing our Ageing Population Panel for Innovation (HAPPI)	Housing LIN	2012
Housing Standards Review	HM Government	2012 (and amended)
Integrated Urban Drainage Management Plan	Shropshire Council	2010
Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill: reforms to national planning policy (Consultation)	Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities	Published December 2022
Localism Act 2011	HM Government	2011
Much Wenlock and surrounding area Place Plan	Shropshire Council	2019
Much Wenlock Housing Needs Assessment	Much Wenlock Town Council	2024
National Design Guide	Department for Levelling Up, Housing &	2021

Document/ Evidence	Author	Year
	Communities and Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government	
National Heritage List for England (NHLE)	Historic England	ongoing
National Model Design Code	Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities and Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government	2021
National Planning Policy Framework (amended July 2021)	HM Government	Amended 2021
Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act	HM Government	2006
Neighbourhood Development Planning Regulations 2012 (as amended)	HM Government	2012
Much Wenlock Local Housing Needs Assessment	AECOM	2024
Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004	HM Government	2004
Secured by Design	UK Police Service	various
Shropshire Core Strategy Development Plan Document (DPD)	Shropshire Council	2011
Shropshire Council's Strategic Housing Market Assessment: Part 1 and Part 2	Shropshire Council	2020
Shropshire Hills Management Plan 2019-2024	Shropshire Hills National Landscape	2019
Shropshire Council Water Cycle Study (2020)	Shropshire Council	2020
Shropshire Landscape Typology	Shropshire Council	2006
Shropshire Destination Management Plan	Shropshire Council	2022
Site Allocations and Management of Development (SAMDev) Plan	Shropshire Council	2015
Strategic Direction Statement to 2050	Severn Trent	No date
Streets for All: Advice for Highway and Public Realm Works in Historic Places	Historic England	2018
Submission Local Plan 2020 to 2038	Shropshire Council	Submitted October 2021
Town and Country Planning Act 1990	HM Government	1990
Type and Affordability of Housing Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)	Shropshire Council	2012
Urban Air Quality	Woodland Trust	2012
Use Classes	Planning Portal	2021

Appendix A - Demonstrating Viability

Viability: Community facilities

The release of any community facilities to other uses must be fully justified in terms of their contribution and viability. Shropshire Council will require any application involving the loss of a facility to be supported by written evidence that the facility is no longer needed and/or no longer viable.

The level of evidence required to be submitted will vary according to the level of access to alternative facilities in the area and the extent to which the facility contributes towards sustainable communities, but would be expected to include such evidence as:

- The current and projected patterns of community use;
- The nature and condition of the building and the cost of repairs, renovations
- or improvements needed to allow the facility to continue in operation;
- The extent of the local catchment including the location of the premises in
- relation to the local settlement pattern and accessibility;
- The nature and location of comparable facilities;
- The potential to relocate the use into other premises in the community;
- Evidence of the marketing of a site should include sales literature, details of approaches and details of offers and show that it has been offered as a whole and that parts have not been identified for separate sale;
- Evidence that the local community has been notified of the intention to close the facility and has not, within a period of one year come forward with a realistic proposal to assume operation of the facility, including proposals to finance and operate the facility.

The importance of particular facilities will vary, and it is essential that the community is involved in considering the merits of any facility and the suitability of any proposals for alternative forms of community use should their continued viability of operation be in doubt. Applicants proposing to redevelop or convert facilities valued by the community will be expected to consult local communities about the relative importance of the facilities which could be lost.

Not all facilities satisfactorily meet the needs of local communities, and it may be that combining or rationalising facilities might be more appropriate.

Support will be given to the provision of new facilities where these will enhance the sustainability of community life and will meet the needs of an existing or growing and changing population.

Viability of employment sites and retail premises: Evidencing non-viability

It is important that the potential for all employment uses is considered on the site before planning applications are made for non-employment uses. Where a business is coming to the end of its economic life or has ceased trading altogether, applicants will be expected to submit a Viability Statement as part of the planning application. The Viability Statement should provide proof of marketing and demonstrate that there is no realistic prospect of retaining or re-using the site in its current use. The viability case will be considered along with other policy considerations. Proof of marketing should include all of the following criteria:

i. The land/premises has/have been widely marketed through an agent or surveyor at a price that reflects its current market or rental value for employment purposes, and no reasonable offer has been refused. The period of marketing should be 18 months for commercial / industrial, 6 months for retail.
ii. The land/premises has been regularly advertised in the local press and regional press, property press, specialist trade papers and any free papers covering relevant areas. This should initially be weekly advertising for the first month, followed by monthly advertising for the remainder of the marketing period. Advertisements should be targeted at the appropriate target audience.
iii. The land/premises has been continuously included on the agent's website, the agent's own papers and lists of commercial/business premises for the marketing period.
iv. There has been an agent's advertisement board on each site frontage to the highway throughout the marketing period.
v. Evidence that local property agents, specialist commercial agents and local businesses have been contacted and sent mail shots or hard copies of particulars to explore whether they can make use of the premises.

The Viability Statement should also detail the following information:

i. Details of current occupation of the buildings and where this function would be relocated;
ii. Details as to why the site location makes it unsuitable for existing uses.
iii. Any physical constraints making the site difficult to accommodate existing uses;
iv. Environmental considerations/amenity issues; and
v. Consideration, firstly, for a mixed-use scheme involving the existing use and other compatible uses, secondly, for other employment generating uses such as those relating to tourism, leisure, retail and residential institutions and, thirdly, of the viability of providing affordable housing on the site, which could meet a specific local need, before consideration of market housing.

In certain cases, for example, where a significant departure from policy is proposed, the Council may seek to independently verify the Viability Statement, and the applicant will be required to bear the cost of independent verification.

APPENDIX B – Definitions of accessible toilets

Definitions taken from: https://www.independentliving.co.uk

Changing Places are designed so that they are completely accessible and provide sufficient space and equipment for people who are not able to use the toilet independently. They must be an extra facility, in addition to the accessible toilets for independent use.

To start, there must be adequate space in a Changing Places: three metres by four metres is the recommended minimum, with a ceiling height of at least 2.4 metres.

Equipment that should be included:

• **Changing bench**, adult sized (minimum 1800 mm long by 800 mm wide). This should be height adjustable and can either be freestanding or wall-mounted.

• **Hoist** providing access between changing bench, basin and toilet. Ideally, ceiling or wall mounted, but a mobile hoist is acceptable if a track-mounted lifter is not possible. Hoist should comply with BS EN ISO 10535.

• **Toilet** must be a peninsular installation, with at least one metre of clear space on each side. It can be an automatic wash and dry toilet or a standard manual one, and in either case, the seat height should be 480 mm.

• **Washbasin**, which can be a standard model, or height adjustable. If it can't be adjusted in height, it should be fitted at between 720 and 740 mm from the floor.

• **Curtain or screen** to provide privacy for the user and carer(s)

• **Non-slip flooring**

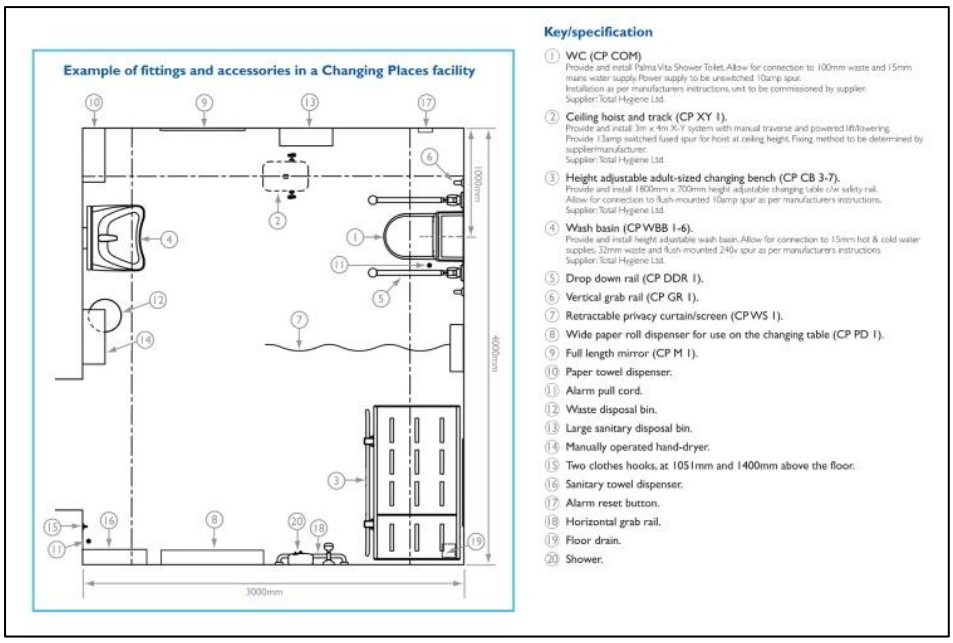
• Wide tear-off **paper roll** in a dispenser close to the changing bench

• Large **waste bin** for disposing of pads, etc

These features are to be included with those of a standard accessible toilet:

• **Grab rails** where appropriate to provide necessary support

• **Emergency alarm** to summon help if necessary. Make sure that the red cord always hangs loose so that it can be used immediately.



Relevant British Standard for Changing Places: Update July 2020: Changing Places to be compulsory, rather than simply desirable

Building Regs and British standards updated at the beginning of 2018

A Changing Places toilet is 'desirable' under Building Regulations Approved Document M and BS8300:2009 for all new build and refurbishment projects involving buildings to which numbers of the public have access.

A new clause has been added to the guidance, concerning the types of buildings that should include these facilities. This specifies visitor attractions, such as theme parks, monitored beaches and parks. Faith centres have been added, and the retail clause has been extended to include large commercial retail premises. The standards say that "Changing Places toilets should be provided in larger buildings and complexes, such as:

a. major transport termini or interchanges, e.g. large railway stations and airports
b. motorway services
c. sport and leisure facilities, including large hotels
d. cultural centres, such as museums, concert halls and art galleries and faith centres
e. stadia and large auditoria
f. large commercial retail premises and shopping centres
g. key buildings within town centres, e.g. town halls, civic centres and main public libraries
h. educational establishments
i. health facilities, such as hospitals, health centres and community practices
j. other visitor attractions, such as theme parks, monitored beaches and parks"

The Changing Places Standard is based on the BS8300:2009. The requirements listed above should not be regarded as a substitute for the comprehensive information included in the British Standard.

Information on standard features needed in an accessible toilet is published in Approved Document M (England), Document T (Scotland), Document R (Northern Ireland) of the Building Regulations.

Appendix C – Much Wenlock Design Guidance and Codes

The Design Guidance and Codes for Much Wenlock form an integral part of the MWNP Neighbourhood Plan, underpinning a number of the policies.

Due to its size, the document is in a separate appendix and can be accessed on the Town Council website.

Appendix D - Non-Designated Heritage Assets

The following buildings and structures are identified as non-designated heritage assets.

Ref	Name and why important
1	**PAVILION ON THE BOWLING GREEN - ORIGINAL TEMPORARY RAILWAY STATION TICKET OFFICE BOWLING GREEN CLUB HOUSE** **Address**: Linden Field, Much Wenlock **Ownership:** Much Wenlock Bowling Club **Age:** 1860s **Type**: Public building **Description:** Decorated wooden single-story building. **Historic Significance:** Original temporary Railway Station ticket office from the Much Wenlock Railway Company Goods Yard resited onto the Linden Field for the use of Much Wenlock Bowling Club **Architectural Significance:** **Social and Economic Significance:** Community asset for sport and recreation. **Townscape Significance:** Landmark on the Linden Field.

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Ref	Name and why important
2	**MUCH WENLOCK RAILWAY STATION HOUSE** **Address**: Station Road, Much Wenlock **Ownership:** private **Age:** 1864/66 **Type**: private dwellings **Description:** Private dwellings previously the Station Building for the Much Wenlock and Severn Junction Railway Company and Much Wenlock Railway Company. **Historic Significance:** The Railway Station for the town of Much Wenlock for 100 years until the line closure in 1963. Spectators and competitors alighted to attend the historic Wenlock Olympian Games on the nearby Linden Field. **Architectural Significance:** Victorian building housing the "WEN" inside a lock logo, the only one on the external facade of a building in the town. Designed by engineer Joseph Fogerty CE in Gothic Revival style. In an article published in The Engineer January 1868 it was extolled for its attractiveness, adaptability and comparatively low cost. **Social and Economic Significance:** **Townscape Significance:** A marker for the existence of a railway in the town and the public footpath on the nearby redundant railway track.

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Ref	Name and why important
3	**PAIR OF GATE PILLARS** **Address**: Station Road, Much Wenlock **Ownership:** unknown **Age:** 1860s-70s **Type**: Street furniture **Description:** Pair of brick pillars marking the entrance to Station Road leading to the Station Building for the Much Wenlock and Severn Junction Railway Company and Much Wenlock Railway Company. **Historic / Townscape Significance:** Mark the approach to the Railway Station of the town of Much Wenlock.

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Ref	Name and why important
4	**RAILWAY ABUTMENT SHEINTON STREET** **Address**: Corner of Sheinton Street and Station Road **Ownership:** Highways **Age:** 160 years old **Type**: Remaining abutment of railway viaduct with inscriptions

	Description: Large machine cut limestone retaining wall built at the end of a raised section of the former railway line. It was built as the East side of the viaduct carrying the railway over Sheinton Street between the later passenger station and the goods yard. **Historic Significance:** 23rd OCTOBER 1861 the first unofficial passenger train ran over this abutment to the temporary platform in what became the goods yard between New Road and Southfield Road. On the same occasion Miss Wayne and others assembled NW of the temporary platform to cut the first sods of the extension of the railway to Craven Arms. The passengers had come to the Olympian Games held on the Linden Field. The railway opened officially on 11th February 1862. **Architectural Significance:** It defines the entrance to the town from the Telford direction **Social and Economic Significance:** Stone now indistinct on top left corner laid by Lt Col. Benjamin Edwards 4th November 1860. "SUCCESS TO THE RAILROAD AND STRENGTH TO THE BRIDGE MAY MONEY PASS OVER HEAVILY TIME LIGHTLY AND MEN AND WOMEN SAFELY". **Townscape Significance:** Prominent landmark at the entrance to the central area of the town

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Ref	Name and why important
5	**RAILWAY GOODS TRANSHIPMENT BUILDING** **Address**: Flats Station Wharf Southfield Road Much Wenlock **Ownership:** Housing Association **Age:** 160 years. It was built between the building of the first part of the line from Buildwas to Much Wenlock in 1860 and the completion of the adjacent Engine Shed, now demolished, and the permanent passenger Station by the Linden Field in 1866 **Type**: Building – now flats - belonging to housing association.

Description: Railway goods transshipment building now flats. Rectangular limestone building with brown painted bricked in entrance to each end. Prominent lintel. Four windows set in a square. Formerly this was the route a section of rail track in the goods yard took through the building. See below

Historic Significance: Dr William Penny Brookes and his brother Andrew were closely involved in bringing the railway to Much Wenlock in an effort to boost the local economy. The goods platform began in front of this building and continued inside it. A section of track went straight through the building so that trucks could be easily accessed from the internal platform aided by a 30cwt crane. Local businesses like coal merchants, animal feed suppliers and builders' merchants would have had wharves in the goods yard. The exterior platform as it continued to the west of the building was the location of the temporary wooden waiting room and ticket office used when the railway first opened. After the brick station was built in 1866 the temporary waiting room was relocated to the Gaskell Recreation Ground~~Field~~ and finally to the Bowling Green. Large amounts of bark for the local tanning industry was offloaded at the wharves.

Architectural Significance: Good example of reuse rather than demolition and rebuild of an industrial building. Original openings respected in the conversion to indicate previous use.

Townscape Significance: A lone reminder in the town of the economic importance of the railway to the commercial rather than passenger traffic carried on the Wellington, Much Wenlock and Craven Arms Railway.

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Ref	Name and why important
6	**PRIORY HALL** **Address**: Bull Ring, Much Wenlock **Ownership:** The building is owned by Wenlock Estates. The building is managed by the charity. **Age:** 1847 **Type**: Public building **Description:** Stone Victorian School originally **Historic Significance:** Built to house Much Wenlock National School 1847. Linked to the work of Dr William Penny Brookes on the benefits of physical education for children. **Architectural Significance:** ARCHITECT: S. Pountney Smith. **Social and Economic Significance:** Much Wenlock Community Centre hosting a variety of meetings and events. **Townscape Significance:** Sits in the curtilage of Much Wenlock Priory behind the remaining 13c gate tower.

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Ref.	Name and why important
7	**MUCH WENLOCK MUSEUM AND TOURIST INFORMATION** **Address**: High Street, Much Wenlock **Ownership:** Much Wenlock Town Council **Age:** 150 years (1870s) **Type**: Building, publicly owned **Description:** Built in limestone with a prominent central mock timber framed dormer window, 2 smaller dormers with open front below, originally used as market hall. Later extended to the front and closed in as 1914-1918 war memorial. Ground floor windows and door are arched with hood moulds above. **Architectural Significance:** "Market Hall (now tourist information) 1879 by S. Pountney Smith as the Guildhall's little brother" (Newman J Pevsner N (2006) The Buildings of England Shropshire, p.430). One of several buildings commissioned by the then Borough to provide improvements in the public realm. (The Corn Exchange and former School also by Pountney Smith are Listed Buildings). **Historic Significance:** Built as Market Hall, extended and dedicated as a War Memorial, later used as Cinema and then used as a museum. **Social and Economic Significance:** Museum exhibiting the connection of the town with the reestablishment of the Olympic Games as well as the geologically significant Wenlock Edge. Part of the tourist offer in the town. **Townscape Significance:** Prominent position opposite the town square and the Guildhall.

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Ref	Name and why important
8	**CLOCK IN THE SQUARE** **Address**: The Square, Much Wenlock **Ownership:** Much Wenlock Town Council **Age:** 125 years old **Type**: Street furniture **Description:** Small rusticated limestone clocktower approximately 3.5 meters high. Clock faces on three sides. Clock in painted black and gold metal topped by delicate gold crown and small orb finial. Includes polished marble drinking fountain, two niches at ground level maybe drinking stations for small animals - defunct. Several stone plaques. Small door under blank face to access the mechanism – now electrified **Historic Significance:** Given by Mayor Thomas Cooke who had the shop opposite – now Spar. Plaques below the clockface commemorate the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria in 1897 and the clocks restoration for the 40th anniversary of the succession of Queen Elizabeth in 1993 **Architectural Significance:** Prominent structure at the centre of the town **Townscape Significance:** Very prominent position on corner of the square facing the Museum and the Guildhall.

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Ref	Name and why important
9	**BUS SHELTER** **Address**: Next to Abbey Well House Barrow Street, Much Wenlock **Ownership:** Ownership not yet clarified. (If it belongs to Abbey Well House might be more suitable registered with SCC as asset of community value). Age: Approx. 50 years (1970s) **Type**: Building. Built as part of the planning conditions when Abbey Well House was built so that an adjacent bus shelter could be demolished.

	Description: A square pavilion built in the local vernacular coursed rubble limestone, tile roof with finial. Open on two adjacent sides, slatted wooden seat. The asset is still in use. **Architectural Significance:** Built as part of the prominent architect designed Abbey Well House in the 1980s. A modern building of its time but built from traditional local materials. **Social and Economic Significance:** Built as a bus shelter but now rarely used for that purpose. It provides an attractive shelter with a seat for visitors to the town as well as townsfolk taking a rest. **Townscape Significance:** A small attractive pavilion which enhances its site. St. Milburga's Well is immediately behind it. The driveway beside it leads to the entrance to the Priors Lodging.

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Ref.	Name and why important
10	**WHYMPERIS WELL** **Address**: St Milburga Row, Off Barrow Street Much Wenlock (between the road and the front of a private house). **Ownership:** Not known **Age:** 150 years plus (1870s or earlier) **Type**: Well and superstructure above it **Description:** It is a small stone structure covering a well. The walls and roof are built in stone. It has a wooden door set in an pointed/two-centre arched surround. **Architectural Significance:** Distinctive freestone rather than course rubble limestone building

	with two-centre arched doorway. **Historic Significance:** It is one of a number of wells in the town, apparently the one with the most complete superstructure. **Social and Economic Significance:** Wells provided water before it was piped to the town. An adequate water supply facilitated an active tanning industry in the 19th century. **Townscape Significance:** St Milburga Row is an attractive small cul de sac off Barrow Street. There is a converted building on one side used as a factory during WWII. A terrace of brick cottages on the other. At the end the well features in front of the final house.

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Ref	Name and why important
11	**VICTORIAN LETTERBOX** **Address**: Gaskell Arms ~~J~~junction, top of High Street **Ownership:** Royal Mail **Age:** Pre-1900 **Type**: street furniture **Description:** Victorian letterbox encased in wall of No 42 High St **Historic Significance:** The only letterbox of this age in the town **Social and Economic Significance:** As above **Townscape Significance:** Contributes to streetscape character

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Ref	Name and why important
12	**RAILWAY VIADUCT ABUTMENTS** **Address**: Junction of Victoria Road (A458) and Southfield Road **Ownership:** Shropshire Highways **Age:** c1865 **Type**: former infrastructure **Description:** Large machine cut limestone retaining walls built at the end of the facing raised sections of the former railway line. They carried the railway line from the end of Southfield Road towards Church Stretton. **Historic Significance:** It marks the final stage of the railway to be built towards Craven Arms in 1865. **Architectural Significance:** It defines the entrance to the town from the Shrewsbury direction. **Social and Economic Significance:** The main function of the final section of the railway was to carry goods traffic. There was a goods yard at Longville in the Dale which continued in use after passenger traffic ceased. **Townscape Significance:** Prominent feature at the entrance to the town.

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Ref	Name and why important
13	**RAILWAY BRIDGE** **Address**: Off Stretton Road by industrial units **Ownership:** unknown **Age:** 1860s **Type**: Bridge carrying unmade but well-used road over former railway **Description:** The arched limestone structure carries vehicular access to an industrial unit, the attenuation pond, Cuan Wildlife Rescue and residential properties. The underside of the arch is blocked by a metal fence and the structure itself is almost entirely covered by ivy. **Historic Significance:** Railway relic. **Architectural Significance:** The bridge is of a type widely used in the midlands and elsewhere to carry road traffic over railways. **Social and Economic Significance:** The railway formed part of the critical infrastructure of Wenlock in the 19th century. **Townscape Significance:** Lying on the very edge of the town this attractive structure still performs an essential function.

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Ref	Name and why important
14	**HAVELOCK WELL** **Address**: Set in retaining wall at No 3 Stretton Road. **Ownership:** unknown **Age:** Thought to be 17th century. **Type**: Ancient structure embedded in wall **Description:** The well-head is constructed within a limestone retaining wall and has an covering arch with keystone. **Historic Significance:** The location of Much Wenlock in a bowl surrounded by hills creates outlets for water runoff. In pagan times wells were considered sacred and therefore spiritual significance has accrued to several of these springs **Social and Economic Significance:** Linked to the social history of the town as a water source. **Townscape Significance:** Contributes to and emphasizes the historic limestone infrastructure of the town.

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Ref	Name and why important
15	**BIRCHFIELD GARAGE** **Address**: Victoria Road **Ownership:** private **Age:** thought to be 1950s **Type**: Extant 1950s petrol pumps outside former garage. **Description:** The petrol pumps have recently been cleaned and re-painted by the owners. **Historic Significance:** This assemblage, at what remains the entrance to the town, is a charming remnant of mid-20th century motoring. **Townscape Significance:** As above.

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Ref.	Name and why important
16	**THE CEMETERY CHAPEL** **Address**: Bridgnorth Road, Much Wenlock **Ownership:** Much Wenlock Town Council **Age:** 150 years (1870s) **Type**: Building, publicly owned. **Description:** Chapel built out of Much Wenlock Limestone, tile roof, with pairs of two light shallow ogee leaded light windows, pointed arch entrance door. Stone trefoil arch on roof line for bell (not present) the arch has castellated finials. Elaborate stone and timber porch with gabled roof. Well-built stone and tile lean to at the rear.

	Architectural Significance: Stone built mortuary chapel with prominent porch in the Arts and Crafts style. Architect well known Shrewsbury Architect Lloyd Oswell. From article in Wellington Journal about Bishop of Hereford consecrating the Burial Ground. **Historic Significance:** One of several buildings commissioned by the then Borough to provide improvements in the public realm. **Social and Economic Significance:** The chapel is the centrepiece of a typical 19th century town cemetery. Publicly accessible open space is limited in the town (Report Appendix C by LUC 2020 for Shropshire Council). The now closed cemetery is looked after by a small group, who seek to improve its biodiversity whilst keeping it tidy and attractive to people who still visit family graves or sit and enjoy the view over the town. **Townscape Significance:** It has a prominent position on the Bridgnorth Road.

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Ref	Name and why important
17	**MANAGERS HOUSE GASWORKS** **Address**: Barrow Street, Much Wenlock **Ownership:** Private **Age:** Gasworks est. 1856 **Type**: Private building **Description:** Brick built house on site of the Much Wenlock Gas Works **Historic Significance:** Only remaining structure on the site of the town's Gas Works since 1856.

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Ref	Name and why important
18	**BLOCK OF FOUR HOUSES BUILT FOR RAILWAY STAFF** **Address**: Nos 20 -23 Stretton Road Much Wenlock **Ownership:** Private **Age:** 1860 **Type**: Private houses **Description:** The four houses are built of brick with yellow brick dressings, the two end ones facing away from each other and projecting slightly. **Historic Significance:** Built for employees of the railway, which until the 1960s ran on raised ground to the rear of the houses **Architectural Significance:** The block is comparable to other groups of houses built for public officials. It has some architectural pretension with yellow brick quoins and corbel table under the eaves. All four retain their sash windows. **Social and Economic Significance:** Connection to the railway.

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Ref	Name and why important
19	**TOLL HOUSE** **Address**: 26 Stretton Road **Ownership:** Private **Age:** 1800 **Type**: private house. **Description:** The limestone cottage faces east and has a 'gothick' style window **Historic Significance:** Much Wenlock has several remaining toll houses located on routes out of/into the town. They date from the end of the nineteenth century when Shropshire roads were 'turnpiked'. **Architectural Significance:** This cottage represents a type found elsewhere in the county from a period when the Picturesque Movement favoured revival of gothic features. Like the others it faces oncoming traffic and would have controlled a barrier. **Social and Economic Significance:** Tolls were collected to cover costs of highway maintenance. **Townscape Significance:** This building forms part of a group of late eighteenth-century early nineteenth century limestone cottages at the western edge of the town.

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Ref	Name and why important
20	**BRIDGE OVER THE FORMER RAILWAY** **Address**: Bridge Road **Ownership:** Highways. **Age:** c. 1865 **Type**: Infrastructure **Description:** Bridge over the course of the former railway. Abutments in stone, brick parapet on iron lintel carries the road up to Southfield Road. **Historic Significance:** Some years ago, there was a proposal to demolish it. Dr Mark Horton a resident and an archaeologist much involved with Coast and Time Team (The first episodes were made around Wenlock) made a case to the Council to keep it. The viaducts at the top of Sheinton Street and across the A458 had already been demolished. He argued it was the last bridge over the railway in the town itself and one of the last remaining remnants of The Wellington Much Wenlock and Craven Arms Railway. From the former viaduct across Sheinton Street to the houses below this bridge was the goods yard and the site of the first passenger platform. **Social and Economic Significance:** Once a short cut to Southfield Road from the town. **Townscape Significance:** It adds context to the long narrow grass strip which runs along the south side of Southfield Road. It is a reminder this neatly mown stretch of grass and trees was once a railway line running immediately opposite the houses.

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Ref	Name and why important
21	**GASKELL RECREATION GROUND~~FIELD~~ LODGE** **Address**: Station Road, Much Wenlock **Ownership:** Much Wenlock Town Council as Trustees of the Playing Field **Age:** c.1935 **Type**: House belonging to the Gaskell Recreation Ground~~Ground Playing Fields~~ **Description:** Double fronted brick and tile one and a half storey lodge with a prominent central dormer and lead roofed porch the latter resting on decorative wooden supports. Brick relieving arches over the ground floor windows. A commemorative plaque towards the top of the dormer.

Historic Significance: The plaque on the house records the gift of the playing fields to the town. Playing Fields Presented by Mrs Mary Ward~~Lady Catherine Milnes Gaskel~~l To Commemorate The Silver Jubilee of HM George V 1935.

Architectural Significance: Small house with architectural detail to reflect its location and purpose.

Social and Economic Significance: Rent contributes to Town Council income including for the upkeep of the playing field.

Townscape Significance: Prominent position at the entrance to the Gaskell Location of the Much Wenlock Olympian Games and opposite the former Railway Station building.

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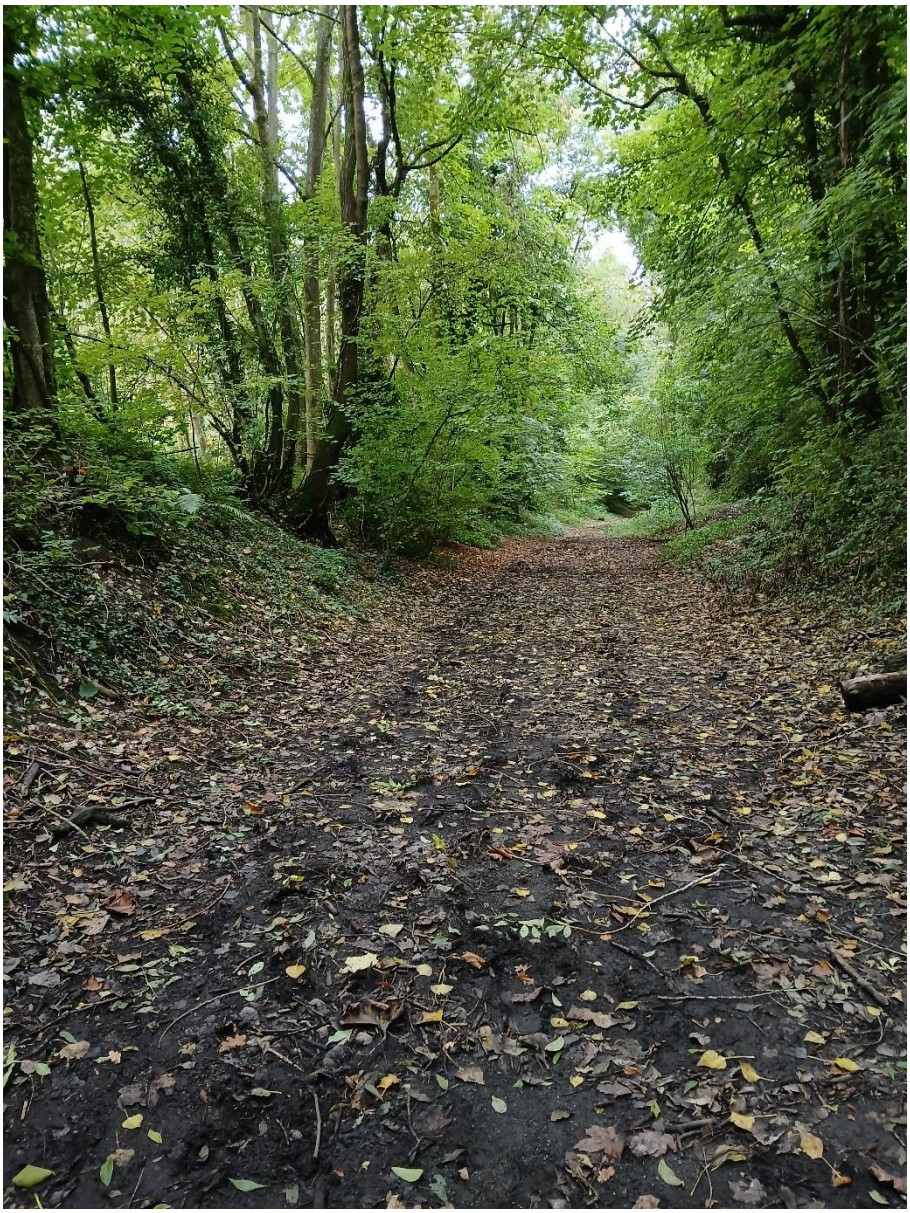
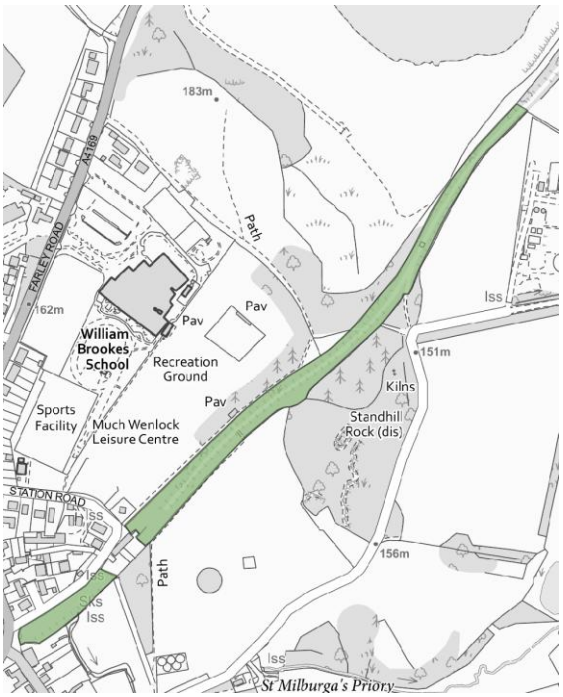
APPENDIX E~~F~~ – Local Green Spaces

The list of Local Green Spaces (LGS) has been developed and tested following the Locality guidance "Making local green space designations in your neighbourhood plan".

LGS1: Railway Walk

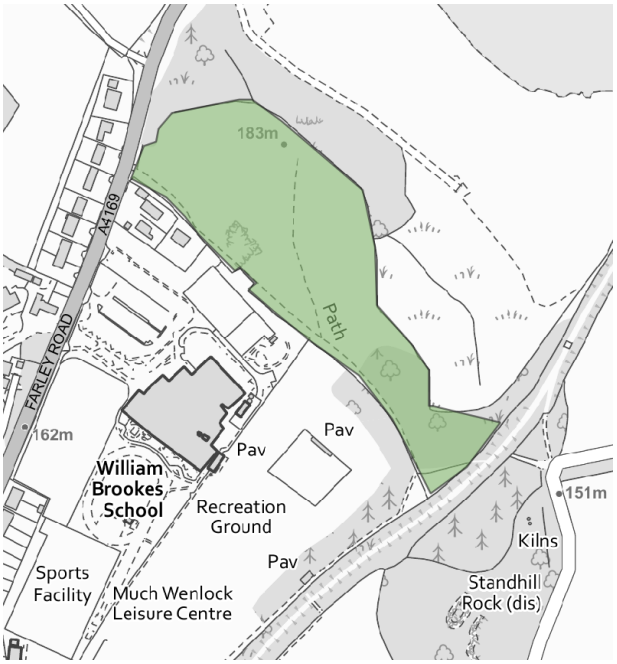
Address and location	Railway Walk. Beginning Station Road, South West of the Gaskell Recreation Ground ending some 200 yards along the old railway line.
Ownership details	Shropshire Council
Description and purpose / current use	Part of the old railway line which ran from Much Wenlock to Ironbridge. It is a flat tree lined walk which cuts through rocky out crops. It is well used by local residents as it also forms part of a circular walk with the Windmill Hill and the Gaskell Recreation Ground. It is a disabled access space with benches for resting.
Any designations	It is designated as Open Space under the Open Spaces Act. The Railway Walk has the additional designation of a QE2 field which means that it must remain a public open space in perpetuity, it also forms part of the Jack Mytton Way.
Site allocations in Local Plan	The location forms part of the Green Infrastructure strategy within the Key Centre of Much Wenlock.
Planning permissions?	No
Access & proximity including how close to the community it serves	There is public access at several points from the base of the Windmill Hill and the Gaskell Recreation Ground Linden Walk. Station Road is situated at the northwest end of the conservation area and is in close proximity to those who live in or around the town centre but less so to residents in the south of the town.
Demonstrably Special?	**Recreation:** Quiet, flat walking and used by disabled carriages and push chairs, dense surrounding woodland habitat with mosses on rocky outcrops. **Wildlife:** Habitat which attracts many species of bird with the attendant birdsong in spring.
Local in character?	Yes, part of the old railway line.

Photo	

Location map	

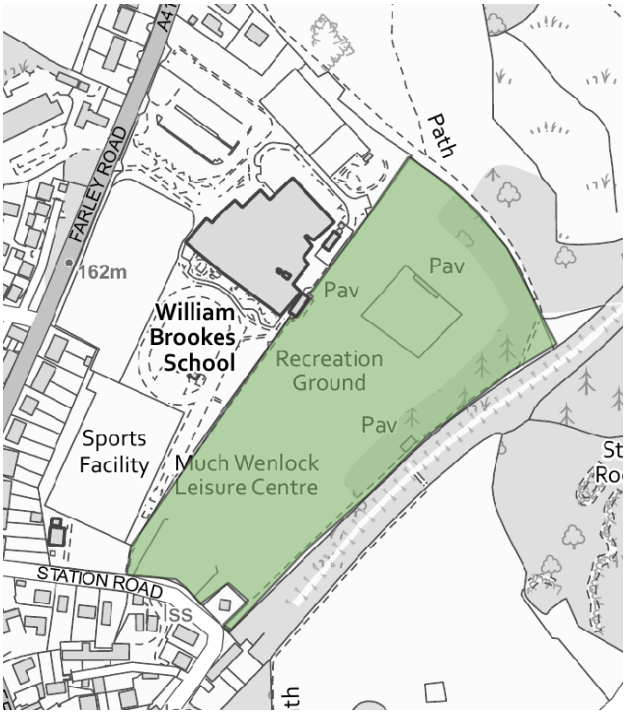
LGS2: Windmill Hill

Address and location	Windmill Hill, North end of the Gaskell Recreation Ground with access from the Farley Road, the Railway Walk, the Gaskell Recreation Ground and the Railway Walk.
Ownership details	Leased by the Windmill Hill Trust from Wenlock Estates.
Description and purpose / current use	Limestone hill with Victorian windmill at summit, surrounded by grass land formed as the final rise of Wenlock Edge. Woodland habitat at base. Open space for walking.
Any designations	Designated Local Nature Reserve under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949.
Site allocations in Local Plan	The space is identified as an Open Space Green in the infrastructure strategy within the key centre of Much Wenlock
Planning permissions?	No
Access & proximity including how close to the community it serves	There is access at several points from the Gaskell Recreation Ground and Railway Walk. Station Road is situated at the northwest end of the town and is in close proximity to those who live in or around the town centre but less so to residents in the south of the town.

Demonstrably Special?	**Wildlife:** Nationally important geology and fossil record. Limestone wildflower and grassland area with several species of orchid.
Local in character?	Yes. Locally part of the historic quarrying for limestone in the area.
Photo	
Location map	

LGS3: Gaskell Recreation Ground

Address and location	Gaskell Recreation Ground, Station Rd.
Ownership details	Much Wenlock Town Council
Description and purpose / current use	Large open green space with bowling green, football and cricket pitches, and children's play area. Surrounded by trees including the Linden Walk which are nationally rare in public spaces. Picnic areas at the north end. Regularly used by many people in the town. Is the home of the Wenlock Olympian Games which are staged every year and go back to the 1860s and William ~~p~~Penny Brookes, internationally important because of this link.
Any designations	Tree Protection Orders on all trees. Given in trust to the Much Wenlock Town Council for the people of the town in perpetuity by Mrs Mary Ward~~Lady Milnes Gaskell.~~
Site allocations in Local Plan	The space is identified as Open Space Green in the infrastructure strategy in the key centre of Much Wenlock.
Planning permissions?	No
Access & proximity including how close to the community it serves	There is access at several points from the Windmill Hill and Railway Walk. Station Road is situated at the northwest end of the town and is in close proximity to those who live in or around the town centre. It is the only recreation ground in the town and is farther than the recommended walking distance from residents at the south side of the town.
Demonstrably Special?	**Historic**: Is the home of the Wenlock Olympian Games and go back to the 1860s and William P~~p~~enny Brookes, internationally important because of this link. Many historically important trees planted for or by William Penny Brookes. **Recreation:** For informal and formal play.
Local in character?	Yes, the ground provides something for everyone in the town.

Photo	
Location map	

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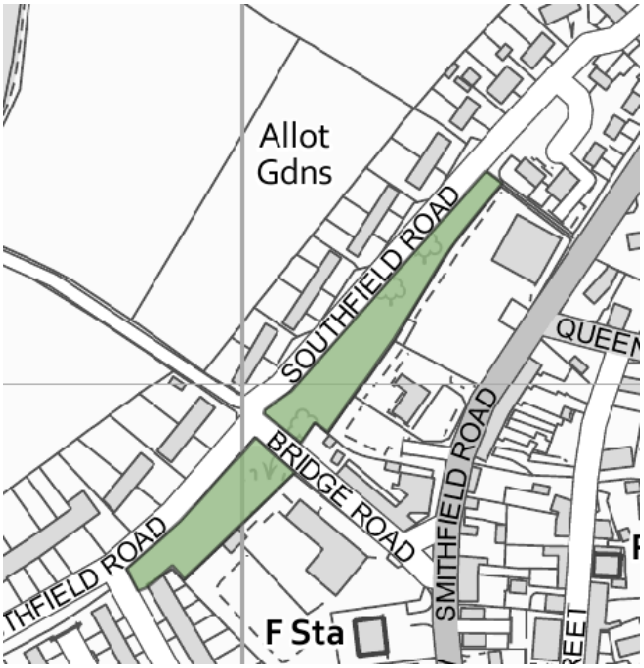
LGS4: Southfield Road Green Space

Address and location	Southfield Road
Ownership details	Shropshire Council
Description and purpose / current use	Long strip of green running the length of Southfield Road on the North side of town, in some areas it is a narrow strip in others it widens out to become suitable for play by young residents. It is the home to the community orchard.
Any designations	None
Site allocations in Local Plan	Included in the Green infrastructure strategy in the key centre of Much Wenlock.
Planning permissions?	None
Access & proximity including how close to the community it serves	Access from any point along Southfield Road, serves all residents along Southfield Road but not used much by other residents.
Demonstrably Special?	**Recreation:** The space is used for informal play by nearby residents. **Wildlife:** The space houses the community orchard. Overall, the space is an important part of the local green infrastructure network.
Local in character?	Yes, it is formed from the embankment of the old railway line.

Photo	
Location map	

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LGS5: Havelock Crescent Green Space

Address and location	Havelock Crescent, west~~east~~ of the town centre
Ownership details	Shropshire Council
Description and purpose / current use	Green space in front of housing forming a crescent with some trees.
Any designations	None
Site allocations in Local Plan	Features in the Green infrastructure strategy in the key centre of Much Wenlock.
Planning permissions?	None
Access & proximity including how close to the community it serves	Open access to all, close proximity to Havelock Crescent residents.
Demonstrably Special?	**Recreation:** The space is used informally by local residents.
Local in character?	Yes.

Photo	
Location map	

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LGS6: Hunters Gate

Address and location	Hunters Gate, south of Town Centre
Ownership details	Shropshire Council
Description and purpose / current use	Open space with trees shrubs and benches in centre of housing development. Used primarily by residents of Hunters Gate, sometimes for social occasions.

Any designations	None
Site allocations in Local Plan	Yes, Green infrastructure strategy key centre Much Wenlock
Planning permissions?	None
Access & proximity including how close to the community it serves	Access from all properties on the housing estate.
Demonstrably Special?	**Recreation:** The space is used by local residents in Hunters Gate as a space for informal recreation and social gatherings.
Local in character?	Yes
Photo	

Location map	

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LGS7: Cemetery on Bridgnorth Road

Address and location	Old Cemetery, Bridgnorth Road
Ownership details	Much Wenlock Town Council
Description and purpose / current use	Large open space for burials with headstones dating from 1868, no new burials. Wildlife and ecology friendly management, mature and new tree planting. Open space for visiting and walking the paths. Quiet and tranquil with benches to look at the view or contemplation. War graves with small peace garden planting. Chapel currently used for storage.
Any designations	None
Site allocations in Local Plan	Identified within the Green infrastructure strategy in the key centre of Much Wenlock
Planning permissions?	None
Access & proximity including how close to the	Open access to all, close only to south side of the town, one of only two open spaces in that part of the town the other being Hunters Gate.

community it serves	
Demonstrably Special?	**Historic:** The space contributes to the social and community history of the town. **Wildlife:** The space provides an important habitat supporting a range of flora and fauna. **Tranquillity:** A quiet space for reflection away from the more built up areas of the town.
Local in character?	Yes
Photo	

Location map	

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LGS8: Allotments on Southfield Road

Address and location	North of Southfield Road
Ownership details	Wenlock Estates
Description and purpose / current use	Community use land used for allotments by consent of owner. Not open access, open only to allotmenteers.
Any designations	None

Site allocations in Local Plan	Yes - Green infrastructure strategy key centre Much Wenlock
Planning permissions?	None
Access & proximity including how close to the community it serves	One access behind Southfield Road, users can be resident anywhere in the town
Demonstrably Special?	**Recreation:** The allotment provides an important space for those wishing to grow food and other plants. It can also be a sociable space. **Wildlife:** The space has been used as an allotment for some years and as such provides an important habitat for a range of flora and fauna.
Local in character?	Yes
Photo	

Location map	

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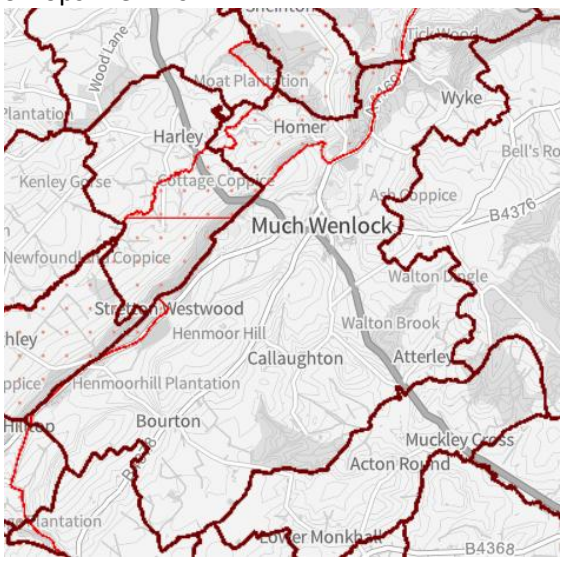
APPENDIX ~~F~~G - Landscape, Biodiversity and Earth Science Designations

National Landscape

Shropshire Hills



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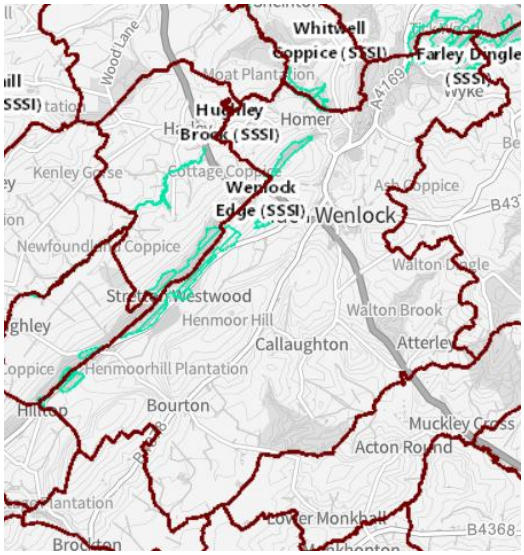

Wenlock Edge SSSI (pt)
Total area: 139 ha
SSSI Features: Broadleaved, mixed & yew woodland; calcareous grassland; earth heritage
Whitwell Coppice SSSI (pt)
Total area: 15.44 ha
SSSI Features: Broadleaved, mixed & yew woodland; earth heritage
Farley Dingle SSSI
Total area 0.24 ha
SSSI Features: Earth heritage
Tick Wood & Benthall Edge SSSI (pt)
Total area: 145.3 ha
SSSI Features: Broadleaved, mixed & yew woodland; neutral grassland

Nature Conservation Review sites
Tick Wood & Benthall Edge
Geological Conservation Review sites
Wenlock Edge SSSI
Whitwell Coppice SSSI
Farley Dingle SSSI
Ancient Woodland Inventory sites
Novers Coppice, Bourton
Blakeway Coppice
Spoonhill Woods
Wigwig Wood
Whitwell Coppice
Traps Coppice
Farley Coppice
Tick Wood
Benthall Edge Wood
Local Nature Reserves
Windmill Hill

Local Wildlife Sites
These are held by the Local Wildlife Trust. Their boundaries can change so please contact the Wildlife Trust for further information

Drinking Water Safeguard Zone
Shropshire Severn Tern & Roden

Species of Principal Importance in England
As designated under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act.

Species of Principal Importance in England
As designated under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act.

Common Toad	Bufo bufo	
Great Crested Newt	Triturus cristatus	
Sky Lark	Alauda arvensis	
Common Cuckoo	Cuculus canorus	Not recent
Yellowhammer	Emberiza citrinella	
Reed Bunting	Emberiza schoeniclus	
House Sparrow	Passer domesticus	
Tree Sparrow	Passer montanus	
Dunnock (Hedge Accentor)	Prunella modularis occidentalis	
Bullfinch	Pyrrhula pyrrhula pileata	
Starling	Sturnus vulgaris vulgaris	
Song Thrush	Turdus philomelos clarkei	
Dingy Skipper butterfly	Erynnis tages	
Wall butterfly	Lasiommata megera	
Hedgehog	Erinaceus europaeus	
Brown Hare	Lepus europaeus	

Otter	Lutra lutra	
Dormouse	Muscardinus avellanarius	
Noctule bat	Nyctalus noctula	
Soprano Pipistrelle bat	Pipistrellus pygmaeus	
Brown Long-eared bat	Plecotus auritus	
Ghost Moth	Hepialus humuli	
Cinnabar Moth	Tyria jacobaeae	
Slow-worm	Anguis fragilis	
Common Lizard	Zootoca vivipara	

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Cabinet 21st January 2026

Cabinet

Public

Healthy People | Healthy Economy | Healthy Environment | Healthy Organisation

Provider Services Redesign (in-house)

Responsible Officer:	Natalie McFall		
email	Natalie.Mcfall@shropshire.gov.uk	Tel	01743 253719
Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder):	Ruth Houghton		

1. Synopsis

1.1 This report presents a proposal regarding the future direction of Shropshire Council's In house Day Services, inviting Cabinet to consider the recommendations set out. While the Council is committed to achieving improved outcomes for residents and ensuring value for money, the provision of such services through in-house arrangements is not a statutory requirement; rather, it is one available approach to delivering support to residents.

1.2 Following the financial emergency declared in September 2025, it has been essential to reassess all services, especially those with high costs or that are potentially not financially viable. In light of that financial review, as explained in more detail below, Cabinet is asked to approve: a consultation on a proposal to fully close Helena Lane Day Centre and a consultation on a proposal to close the Aquamira site and relocating its Day Service to another location. In addition, Cabinet is asked to approve a broader engagement about reshaping In-House Day Services. This engagement is distinct from, yet related to, the recent broader consultations regarding externally provided Day Care services.

2. Executive Summary

2.1 In line with Shropshire Council's Improvement Plan, a thorough review of In-House Day Service provision is essential to ensure the Council remains financially sustainable, focused on clear priorities, and able to deliver best value for

residents. The Improvement Plan sets out the need for immediate action to address significant financial pressures, strengthen governance, and align resources with strategic objectives. Reviewing In-House Day Services will enable the Council to assess quality, efficiency, and alignment with the Council's future direction, ensuring that provision is both effective and affordable. This approach supports the Council's ambition to be a modern, responsive, and high-performing organisation, as well as meeting its statutory duty to deliver services in the most efficient, economical, and sustainable way.

2.2 On 10th September 2025, Cabinet declared a financial emergency prompting a comprehensive review of all non-statutory services to ensure financial sustainability and alignment with strategic priorities. This report presents a proposal for the future direction of the Council's In-House Provider Services, with a particular focus on the sustainability and suitability of current day service provision for adults with learning disabilities and older people.

2.3 It is not a statutory requirement to provide services to meet Care Act assessed needs through In-House arrangements. Financial analysis, set out in more detail below, demonstrates that two centres in particular, Helena Lane Day Centre and Aquamira Day Centre, in their current forms have high operational costs, and reduced demand. Specifically, Aquamira's high costs are driven by the maintenance of a hydrotherapy pool, while Helena Lane operates at a substantial deficit due to a significant lack of demand for the service.

2.4 Whilst this financial analysis suggests that neither Helena Lane or Aquamira Day Centres are viable, no final decisions have been taken on them. The report emphasises the need for robust, transparent consultation and engagement with all stakeholders, including service users, families, staff, and unions, to provide an opportunity for alternative options to be raised and reduce adverse impacts on vulnerable groups. An Equalities, Social Inclusion and Health Impact Assessments (ESHIA) has been completed to inform decision-making. In line with the Council's statutory duties, the report recommends an eight-week public consultation on the potential closure of Helena Lane Day Centre and the relocation of the Aquamira Day Service to an alternative venue. As stated above, no final decision has yet been taken on either day centre, and the Council remains receptive to solutions which could keep them open in a financially sustainable manner.

2.5 If following the period of consultation, the proposed closure of the Helena Lane Day Centre and the closure of the Aquamira site are approved then the closures are expected to deliver an approximate saving of £222,380 per year, supporting the Council's commitment to fiscal responsibility and the development of a modern, sustainable model of care. Transition planning and proactive engagement will be essential to safeguard continuity of care and support for affected individuals.

2.6 While it wouldn't necessarily bring further savings, the council still needs to further modernise day services by focusing on more flexible, person-centred support. Alongside traditional day care, individuals will have access to employment,

supported work, and volunteering through partnerships like the 'Enable' team. Taking a tiered approach, matches support to individual needs and aims to improve independence, social inclusion, and well-being, while ensuring efficient resource use and statutory compliance. As such, this report also recommends that cabinet endorse an eight-week public engagement on the reprovision of the remaining In-House Day Services.

2.7 This report invites Cabinet to agree the commencement of the recommended consultations and engagement processes, with the overall aim of ensuring that future provision is both effective and affordable, and that the Council continues to meet its statutory obligations in the most efficient and equitable manner.

3. Recommendations

3.1. Cabinet is asked to:

(i) agree public consultation for 8 weeks on the future of Helena Lane Day Service, including the potential option to close the service. New admissions should be paused during the consultation period to avoid further impact.

(ii) agree public consultation for 8 weeks on the potential transfer of the Aquamira day service to the Abbots Wood site.

(iii) endorse public engagement for 8 weeks on the reprovision of the remaining In-House Day Services Provision.

3.2 Following the period of consultation, final recommendations will be presented to cabinet for determination.

Report

4. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

4.1 The council has declared a financial emergency and the external auditors (Grant Thornton) recommendation calls for urgent action, including a thorough review of all services to identify the costs of delivering statutory responsibilities. Therefore, In-House provision should be reviewed in this light.

4.2 In the past twenty years, the approach to care provision has evolved significantly, moving from a 'care' model toward one focused on 'support'. The Care Act 2014 acknowledged this change, shifting care planning from simply specifying the 'provision of services' to articulating 'how eligible needs will be met'. Meeting these needs may involve informal support, universal services, community networks, direct payments, and if needed, traditional services.

4.3 In the late 20th Century, there was a programme of deinstitutionalisation that saw changes in policies promoting integration and normalisation, moving away from large institutions toward community care services. Day services were the focal

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points for social inclusion, offering structured activities, education, and sometimes supported employment. The Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 and later the Care Act 2014 reinforced rights-based, person-centred approaches, emphasising independence and choice. The 1990's saw traditional building-based day centres redesigned to take a more person-centred approach, offering more flexible, community-based activities rather than fixed attendance at a day centre.

4.4 Day Services for Older People has transformed over recent years, moving away from passive, building-based provision towards active, personalised support that enhances quality of life. For older adults, this change means greater choice and control, opportunities to maintain independence, and access to stimulating activities that reduce loneliness and cognitive decline. Community-based hubs and flexible outreach models enable social connections, promote physical activity, and foster a sense of purpose through volunteering or learning. This shift aligns with the Care Act's emphasis on prevention and wellbeing, ensuring older people can age with dignity, remain active citizens, and feel valued within their communities.

4.5 For People with a Learning Disability, Valuing People 2001 and Valuing People Now 2009 were pivotal strategies that set out the vision for people with a Learning Disability, challenging traditional building-based centres, promoting social inclusion, employment and lifelong learning. This saw a move away from large day centres, to services creating community-based opportunities, enabling friendship through natural connections in jobs, college and leisure activities, rather than through attendance at a single Day Centre.

4.6 With the introduction of direct payments, personal budgets, personalisation and self-directed support, people were empowered to access support in different ways, maximising the use of community activities and employing personal assistants to access them. In Shropshire there are 439 people accessing day centres across 29 facilities that offer support to people with a learning disability. 178 of those people access In-House Day services.

4.7 There are eight In-House Day Centres and one Voluntary Service:

Abbots Wood	Aquamira	Albert Road	Avalon	Wild Teams
Greenacres Farm	Wayfarers	Helena Lane	Maesbury Metals	

4.8 As part of the council's aim of modernising day services, the reprovision of remaining in-house services should focus on delivering more flexible, person-centred support that aligns with contemporary models. This approach would ensure that, alongside traditional day care and day activities, individuals have clear pathways to access employment, supported employment, and volunteering opportunities. By fostering collaboration with employment support services such as the council's 'Enable' team, the reprovision aims to enhance outcomes for people with additional needs, supporting them to achieve greater independence, social

inclusion, and well-being. A future model should recognise that while some individuals will always require structured day care, others can benefit from supported or independent work, and the service will be redesigned to provide a tiered approach that matches support to individual capabilities and aspirations. This will enable the council to deliver statutory duties efficiently, maximise value for money, and ensure that resources are allocated to services that deliver the greatest benefit to service users and the wider community.

4.9 An initial Equality, Social Inclusion and Health Impact Assessment (ESHIA) has been completed to identify the likely impact of any proposed change across the Protected Characteristics as set out in the Equality Act 2010, ahead of the proposed consultation.

4.10 At this stage the impacts are considered to be neutral to low negative across groupings with a potential to be low to medium negative for those in the grouping of Age and Disability. Proposals for mitigation will be scoped and informed by the results of the consultation.

4.11 The impacts in terms of health and wellbeing for the individuals likely to be affected will also need to be informed by the results of the consultation.

Risk	Mitigation
Failure to properly consult on potential changes to In-House provision could result in legal challenge, particularly under the requirements of the Care Act 2014 and public law principles	Ensure a robust, transparent, and inclusive public consultation process is undertaken, with all affected stakeholders given the opportunity to contribute. Document all engagement activities and outcomes and update impact assessments accordingly.
Changes to services may disproportionately affect vulnerable groups, leading to adverse outcomes in health, wellbeing, or social inclusion.	Complete and regularly update an Equalities, Social Inclusion and Health Impact Assessment (ESHIA). Use findings to inform decision-making and develop targeted support or transition plans for those most affected
Failure to achieve planned savings or to deliver services within budget could undermine the council's financial position.	Undertake detailed financial modelling and scenario planning. Monitor costs and savings throughout implementation, and adjust plans as necessary to ensure financial objectives are met

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Service changes may lead to a reduction in quality or interruptions in care.	Develop robust transition plans and maintain clear communication with service users and families
Changes may result in workforce instability or insufficient market capacity to meet needs, especially if services are outsourced or reconfigured.	Engage early with staff and unions. Develop workforce retention and redeployment strategies, and conduct market engagement to ensure sufficient, quality provision.
Poorly managed changes could damage the council's reputation with the public, partners, and regulators.	Communicate openly and proactively with all stakeholders, providing clear rationales for decisions and demonstrating commitment to quality and fairness.

5. Financial Implications

5.1. Shropshire Council continues to manage unprecedented financial demands and a financial emergency was declared by Cabinet on 10 September 2025. The overall financial position of the Council is set out in the monitoring position presented to Cabinet on a monthly basis. Significant management action has been instigated at all levels of the Council reducing spend to ensure the Council's financial survival. While all reports to Members provide the financial implications of decisions being taken, this may change as officers and/or Portfolio Holders review the overall financial situation and make decisions aligned to financial survivability. All non-essential spend will be stopped and all essential spend challenged. These actions may involve (this is not exhaustive):

- scaling down initiatives,
- changing the scope of activities,
- delaying implementation of agreed plans, or
- extending delivery timescales.

5.2. The financial review for Aquamira demonstrates that the building costs are disproportionately high, primarily due to the operation and maintenance of the hydrotherapy pool. Excluding internal market recharges, the total annual cost of operating Aquamira stands at £374,325 minus income of £19,200, with an average cost of £211 per person per day. This is substantially above the market benchmark of approximately £170 per day for comparable services. While Aquamira has a hydro pool that has been valued by some individuals who attended the service, it should be recognised that the council does not have a statutory duty to provide such a facility, and its maintenance represents an unnecessary additional financial burden. Councils operate leisure services under discretionary powers rather than a legal duty.

5.3. There is a strong network of alternative support available locally to Aquamira, including alternative day services, direct payments, personal assistants, and various community and voluntary sector services. Day Service to an alternative venue such as Abbots Wood would reduce the costs of running the day service by £85,920, minus £25,620 of projected income from external income, making an overall projected reduction of £60,300 per year. As this site is council owned, a further savings calculation would be required to establish how much would be saved overall by the council, as this will depend heavily on the future use of the site.

5.4. The financial analysis for Helena Lane demonstrates that, despite the absence of accommodation costs in the reported figures, the service is not financially sustainable in its current format. The annual cost of running the service stands at £180,190, minus a projected income of £18,110, which gives an average running cost of £244 per person, per half day. It is important to note that the true cost of running the service is even higher, as building costs are not incorporated due to the centre's location within a larger council facility. Generally people are now using alternative provision. Seven out of the eight attendees pay privately for the service at an agreed fee, but this has been heavily subsidised. Fees and charges are currently under review for 26-27. People's needs could continue to be met in an alternative way. If the service were to close, it would generate an annual saving for the council of £162,080.

5.5. A range of alternative support options is available locally, including direct payments, personal assistants, and a diverse selection of community and voluntary sector services. The nearest equivalent Day Service is approximately 10 miles away, with a daily charge of £50. While there are no other local day centres within Ludlow itself, an increasingly community-inclusive approach has led to the development of various local services. Examples include luncheon groups supporting individuals with additional needs, such as Hands Together Ludlow, which provides befriending services, Men's Shed, digital inclusion initiatives, community lunches, Food Hub, and Community Fridge.

5.6. Ludlow Assembly Rooms offer not only theatre and film but also a wide variety of community classes, complemented by other services , providing assorted meal options. Community services in Church Stretton deliver additional services, such as 'meet and eat' programmes. Ludlow Library acts as a vibrant community hub, delivering a broad spectrum of social and wellbeing activities aimed at reducing isolation and promoting inclusion. Regular sessions include Knit and Natter, Rhyme Time for families, Sitting Ballet for gentle movement, and Ludlow Gaymers for LGBTQ+ engagement, alongside learning opportunities like digital support drop-ins, creative writing groups, and the Community Clay Club. Furthermore, monthly poetry socials, Citizens Advice sessions, and councillor surgeries enhance access to support and foster community engagement.

5.7. All other spending is continually monitored on other days services, ensuring efficiency in operations. It is not suggested that a reprovision/ redesign of the remaining services would generate any further additional savings. However, this will provide better value for Shropshire residents accessing services.

5.8. While In-House services may be exempt from public procurement rules, the council must still ensure fairness and transparency with consideration of the Best Value duty under the Local Government Act 1999.

5.9. Based on financial analysis of the potential changes, reduction in costs could be significant:

Financial Year	Quarter	Projected savings
26-27 - Q1	£0 (redundancy costs)	£111,190
26-27 - Q2	£0	
26-27 - Q3	£55,595	
26-27 - Q4	£55,595	
27-28	-	£222,380
28-29	-	£222,380
29-30	-	£222,380

6. Climate Change Appraisal

6.1 While the aim is to provide services locally to where people live, changes to service provision could result in people having to travel further afield to access suitable facilities that could increase vehicle emissions.

7. Background

7.1 The Council has offered In-House services for many years. Prior to 'Compulsory Competitive Tendering', most care was delivered internally, guided by public sector principles. While not legally required, Councils use In-House provision to meet obligations under the Care Act 2014 to address or prevent care needs. Operated directly by the council, these services are strictly non-profit.

7.2 There are eight Day Services and a volunteer service.

i. Abbots Wood is a progressive day centre in Shrewsbury for adults with learning disabilities. The service offers a wide range of activities, including arts and crafts, quizzes, exercise (with a small gym), gardening, cooking, music, and computer sessions. There are also outdoor activities such as cycling and gardening, and regular community outings. Abbots Wood operates a person-

centred approach, supporting independence and individual outcomes, and works closely with the Wild Teams for nature-based activities.

ii. Albert Road Day Service, also in Shrewsbury, is a smaller centre supporting around 27 adults with learning disabilities. It provides both onsite and offsite activities, such as gardening, arts and crafts, group cooking, travel training, and community engagement. The service is known for its supportive environment, flexible approach, and involvement in local projects like LovelyLand and the Wild Team, promoting health, wellbeing, and outdoor adventure.

iii. Aquamira, based in Sutton Park, Shrewsbury, specialises in supporting adults with profound and multiple learning disabilities. The centre offers a holistic and therapeutic approach, multi-sensory experiences, gardening, arts and crafts, cookery, and digital activities. The service is highly person-centred, with keyworkers supporting everyone's health, wellbeing, and independence. The service has onsite access to a hydrotherapy pool and Sensory Room.

iv. Avalon Day Opportunities in Oswestry provides a broad range of activities for adults with learning disabilities, including gardening, crafts, sensory room sessions, bingo, karaoke, photography, and shop-and-cook groups. The service also supports offsite voluntary work and community projects, aiming to promote independence, social inclusion, and personal development in a relaxed and supportive environment.

v. Greenacres Farm, near Baschurch, is a 16-acre working farm offering day opportunities for adults with learning disabilities. Attendees learn skills in horticulture, agriculture, animal care, catering, woodwork, and concrete production. The farm also features a sensory garden, outdoor gym, and accessible cycle path. Greenacres promotes independence, social inclusion, and community engagement, and provides opportunities for recreation and skill-building in a safe, supportive setting. There also a house on site that is currently not used.

vi. Helena Lane Day Service is specifically designed to support older people. The service offers a range of daytime activities and support, aiming to promote independence, social engagement, and wellbeing for its attendees. More recently due to a lack of demand, the service has reduced its offer to half days, three times a week.

vii. Maesbury Metals in Oswestry is a specialist day service focused on upcycling, metalwork, and woodwork for adults with learning disabilities. Service users develop skills in welding, woodworking, arts and crafts, and mosaicking, producing items for sale at craft markets and community events. The centre also supports social skills, community access, and self-advocacy, fostering independence and creativity in a workshop environment.

viii. Wayfarers Day Centre in Market Drayton provides a variety of meaningful activities for adults with learning disabilities, including independent living skills,

physical and leisure activities, gardening, arts and crafts, and sensory sessions. The centre emphasises inclusion, choice, and community participation, offering regular outings, fundraising events, and opportunities to develop life skills and independence.

ix. The Shropshire Wild Teams are volunteer conservation groups for adults with learning disabilities and/or mental health needs. Participants engage in countryside management tasks such as habitat management, ground clearance, hedge laying, and wildlife surveys. The programme promotes physical activity, wellbeing, confidence, and social skills, using Shropshire's natural environments as a therapeutic and educational resource. Sessions rotate between day centres and are tailored to participants' interests and abilities.

8. Additional Information

8.1. A broader review of all other in-house provisions will be conducted. If additional changes are suggested that need cabinet approval, they will be presented in future cabinet reports.

9. Conclusions

9.1. The financial analysis suggests that both Helena Lane and Aquamira have excessive running costs that could be mitigated. Helena Lane operates at a substantial financial deficit. Similarly, Aquamira's running costs are hampered by excessive building costs, particularly those linked to the hydro-pool, further compounding its financial unsustainability. Declining attendance and reduced demand for these services underscore a potential need for future change.

9.2. No decision has yet been made about the future of the In-House Day services. The council is open to alternative suggestions. To thoroughly assess these services, a consultation will be required to consider potential changes, such as possibly closing Helena Lane Day Centre and moving Aquamira Day Service to another location. Careful transition planning and proactive involvement with service users and their families are crucial to ensure continuity of care and support. The focus remains on the council meeting people's eligible needs through relocation and reprovision, while maintaining financial sustainability.

9.3. There are 23 individuals who access the two services that could be mostly affected. A social work assessment would be offered to all affected individuals, with a focus on a strengths-based approach to promote independence and facilitate access to community-based activities as appropriate.

9.4. If there were any changes that would affect the overall use of the pool by private users, individual discussions will take place.

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9.5. The total reduction in spend from the potential changes is approximately £222,380 per year.

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

Local Member:	**All**

Appendices

Appendix 1- Equality, Social Inclusion and Health impact Assessment (ESHIA)

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Shropshire Council
Equality, Social Inclusion and Health Impact Assessment (ESHIA)
Stage One Screening Record 2026

Please note that part A and part B of this document should be completed.

A. Summary Sheet on Accountability and Actions

Name of potential service change
Provider Services Redesign (In-House)

Name of the officer carrying out the screening
Daniel Powner

Decision, review, and monitoring

Decision	**Yes**	**No**
Initial (Stage One) ESHIA Only?	Yes	
Proceed to Stage Two Full ESHIA or HIA (part two) Report?		No

If completion of a Stage One screening assessment is an appropriate and proportionate action at this stage, please use the boxes above, and complete both part A and part B of of this template. If a Full or Stage Two report is required, please move on to full report stage once you have completed this initial screening assessment as a record of the considerations which you have given to this matter.

Assessment of likely neutral, negative impact or positive impact of the service change in terms of equality and social inclusion considerations
Cabinet is being asked to approve: a consultation on a proposal to close Helena Lane Day Centre and a consultation on a proposal to close the Aquamira site and relocating its Day Service to another location. In addition, Cabinet is asked to approve a broader engagement about reshaping In-House At this initial stage ahead of the proposed consultation, the potential changes to In-House Provider Day Services would have a direct impact on a diverse group of individuals, many of whom fall within the Protected Characteristic groupings defined by the Equality Act 2010, specifically Age, Disability, and Sex. There is also notable intersectionality, particularly among those with complex needs and neurodiverse conditions. To mitigate potential negative impacts and enhance positive outcomes, the Council is committed to the following actions: Robust and Inclusive Consultation: An eight-week public consultation and engagement process will be undertaken, ensuring that all affected individuals, families, staff, and representative groups have the opportunity to contribute their

views. This process will be designed to reach underrepresented and vulnerable groups, including those in rural areas, veterans, care leavers, and households on low incomes.

Promotion of Social Inclusion: The Council will continue to prioritise social inclusion by supporting access to community-based alternatives, employment, volunteering, and supported work opportunities through partnerships such as the Enable team. This approach aims to reduce isolation and promote independence, particularly for those who may be at risk of exclusion due to rurality or other barriers. This then takes into account those in the additional local grouping of people for whom Shropshire Council seeks to take due regard, due to their circumstances including those identified as vulnerable for what may be a range fo reasons.

By taking these actions, the Council aims to ensure that the transition to new models of support does not disadvantage those who already face barriers to participation or access, and that the rights and dignity of all affected individuals are upheld throughout the process.

Assessment of likely neutral, negative or positive impact of the service change in terms of health and wellbeing considerations

The potential redesign is underpinned by a commitment to safeguarding and enhancing the health and wellbeing of all affected individuals and the wider community. The Council recognises its statutory duties under the Care Act 2014 and the Equality Act 2010, and is committed to ensuring that any changes are implemented in a manner that upholds the rights, dignity, and wellbeing of service users.

Each individual affected by the potential changes will receive a review and transition plan where necessary, developed in partnership with the Social Work Team where appropriate. This action sets out to ensure that alternative provision is accessible, appropriate, and sensitive to the needs of all genders, backgrounds, and health conditions.

Facilities audits and individual reviews will be conducted to ensure reasonable adjustments are made, particularly for those with complex needs, neurodiverse conditions, or other vulnerabilities.

It is recognised that any change to routine and service provision is likely to have an initial impact in negative terms upon people with neurodiverse conditions, with regard to their mental well being.

The Council will work proactively with service users and their families, including self-funders, to assess needs and facilitate access to suitable alternative provision,

such as alternative day services, direct payments, personal assistants, and community or voluntary sector services.

The impact of the service changes will be regularly reviewed through feedback from service users, families, and the wider community. Where consultation feedback indicates that certain groupings have been underrepresented, targeted actions will be taken to improve engagement and representation. The Council will benchmark its approach against good practice and share learning with other rural authorities, recognising common challenges such as ageing demographic profiles and access to facilities and services.

Comprehensive transition planning and proactive engagement with service users and their families will be essential to safeguard continuity of care and support through this period of change. The Council will ensure that any changes do not disadvantage those who already face barriers to participation or access, and that the rights and dignity of all affected individuals are upheld throughout the process.

All actions will be taken in accordance with the Council's statutory duties under the Care Act 2014, the Equality Act 2010, and the Public Sector Equality Duty, ensuring that the three equality aims, eliminating discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity, and fostering good relations, are integral to decision-making processes.

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

The Council will implement a comprehensive approach to reviewing and monitoring the impacts of the potential service changes, ensuring that equality, social inclusion, and health considerations remain central throughout the transition and beyond. All individuals affected by the changes will participate in reviews of their support with members of the Social Care Team prior to any adjustments being made. Options and choices will be fully explained and discussed with each person, ensuring that decisions are informed by their needs, strengths, and wishes.

Arrangements will be put in place to continue collecting evidence and data on the experiences and outcomes of all groups affected by the service change. This will include regular feedback from service users, families, carers, staff, and the wider community, as well as ongoing engagement opportunities with local Shropshire Council councillors and relevant portfolio holders. Where consultation feedback indicates that certain groupings have been underrepresented, targeted actions will be taken to improve engagement and representation.

The Council will benchmark its approach against comparator good practice and will share learning with other rural authorities, recognising common challenges such as ageing demographic profiles and access to facilities and services.

Monitoring will be ongoing, with arrangements in place to review the overall impacts at regular intervals, ensuring that any negative impacts are mitigated and positive outcomes are maximised over time. This approach will support transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement in service delivery.

Associated ESHIAs

This is an initial stocktake ESHIA; a further ESHIA will be carried out after the proposed consultation, which will also set out to draw upon learning from a previous relocation of services from Ditton Priors Farm by an external provider.

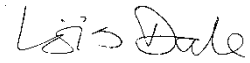
Assessment of likely neutral, negative or positive impact, and actions to review and monitor overall impacts, with regard to climate change impacts and with regard to economic and societal impacts

Climate Change:
The potential redesign of In-House Provider Services may result in some service users needing to travel further to access alternative provision, which could increase vehicle emissions. To mitigate this, the Council will prioritise the use of local facilities wherever possible and encourage the development of community-based alternatives that minimise travel distances. Where relocation is necessary, transport arrangements will be reviewed to ensure efficiency and to explore opportunities for shared or sustainable travel options. The Council will also consider the potential for repurposing or redeveloping vacated sites in a manner that supports environmental objectives, such as energy efficiency or biodiversity enhancement.

Economic and Societal/Wider Community:
The potential closure and reprovision of day centres will be managed to minimise disruption to service users, staff, and the wider community. The Council would work closely with affected staff to identify redeployment opportunities and support workforce stability. Where facilities are withdrawn, efforts will be made to support local economic resilience, for example by exploring alternative community uses for vacated buildings or by facilitating access to employment and volunteering opportunities for service users through partnerships such as the Enable team.

The Council would monitor the impact on local businesses and community groups and will seek to enhance place-shaping approaches that promote economic growth and social inclusion. Any potential human rights impacts will be reviewed through ongoing engagement and feedback mechanisms, ensuring that the rights and dignity of all affected individuals are upheld throughout the transition process.

Scrutiny at Stage One screening stage

People involved	Signatures	Date
Lead officer for the potential service change	D R Powner	06-01-26
Officer carrying out the screening	D R Powner	06-01-26
*External support** **Senior Insights and Research EDI Specialist**		07-01-26

This refers to support external to the service and within the Council, e.g., the Senior Insights and Research EDI specialist, the Integration & Inequalities Officer – Public Health, other Insights and Research or Public Health colleagues, the Feedback and Insight Team, Climate Change specialists, etc.

Sign off at Stage One screening stage

Name	Signatures	Date
Lead officer's name	Daniel Powner	06-01-26
Service manager's name	Daniel Powner	06-01-26

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

B. Detailed Screening Assessment

Aims of the service change and description
The aim of the potential service change is to ensure that Shropshire Council's In-House Provider Services remain financially sustainable, legally compliant, and aligned with best practice in adult social care. In response to the financial emergency declared by Cabinet in September 2025, the Council has undertaken a comprehensive review of non-statutory services, with a particular focus on the sustainability and suitability of current day service provision for adults with learning disabilities and older people. The potential changes include the closure of Helena Lane Day Centre, the closure and relocation of Aquamira Day Centre, and the wider reprovision of in-house day opportunities. The purpose of these changes is to modernise day services by shifting from traditional, building-based models to more flexible, person-centred support that promotes independence, social inclusion, and access to employment and volunteering opportunities where appropriate. This approach is underpinned by the Council's statutory duties under the Care Act 2014, as well as national policy drivers such as Valuing People and the move towards personalisation and community-based care. The redesign seeks to ensure that resources are allocated

efficiently, delivering best value for money while safeguarding the rights and wellbeing of service users.

The service change is also intended to address declining attendance and rising costs at specific centres, particularly where facilities are underutilised or financially unsustainable. By reproviding services in alternative settings and strengthening partnerships with organisations such as the Enable team, the Council aims to offer a broader range of opportunities tailored to individual needs and aspirations. The process will be informed by robust consultation and engagement with all stakeholders, ensuring that the voices of service users, families, carers, and the wider community are central to decision-making.

Intended audiences and target groups for the service change

The intended audiences and target groups for the potential redesign of Shropshire Council's In-House Provider Services are broad and encompass a range of individuals and organisations. The primary groups affected are adults with learning disabilities and older people who currently access in-house day services, including those attending Helena Lane Day Centre and Aquamira Day Centre. These individuals represent a diverse cohort, with varying levels of need, including people with profound and multiple learning disabilities, neurodiverse conditions, and complex health or social care requirements.

Families and carers of service users are also a key audience, as changes to service provision will directly impact their support arrangements and wellbeing. Staff employed within the in-house day services, including those at risk of redeployment or redundancy, are another significant group, as are trade unions and professional bodies representing the workforce. Where necessary, further consultation with staff will take place.

The wider community is also an intended audience, particularly local residents, community groups, and voluntary sector organisations that may be involved in providing alternative support or community-based activities. Strategic partners, such as the Enable team, local businesses, and other service providers, will play a role in facilitating access to employment, volunteering, and social inclusion opportunities for affected individuals.

In addition, the Council recognises the importance of engaging with local elected councillors, portfolio holders, and neighbouring local authorities.

Evidence used for screening of the service change

The screening of the potential service change has been informed by a robust and multi-faceted evidence base, including:

Financial Analysis: Detailed costings and financial modelling for each in-house day centre, with particular attention to the operational deficits at Helena Lane and Aquamira Day Centres. This includes market rates for comparable services and analysis of cost drivers such as staffing, building maintenance, and utility costs. The financial emergency declared by Cabinet in September 2025 and the Council's Improvement Plan have also shaped the approach.

Service Utilisation Data: Attendance figures and trends for all in-house day services, highlighting declining demand and underutilisation at specific centres. Demographic forecasts have been used to assess the likelihood of future demand for traditional day centre provision.

Policy and Legislative Context: The review has been guided by statutory duties under the Care Act 2014, as well as national policy drivers such as Valuing People and the move towards personalisation and community-based care.

Consultation and Engagement: Feedback from previous consultations with service users, families, carers, staff, and representative groups has been considered, alongside planned robust and inclusive engagement processes for the current proposals.

Comparator and Best Practice Evidence: The Council has reviewed alternative models of provision, including community-based alternatives, supported employment, and volunteering pathways, and has compared its approach against good practice in other rural authorities.

This evidence base has enabled the Council to identify the need for change, assess the likely impacts on different groups, and develop targeted actions to mitigate negative effects and enhance positive outcomes. The approach ensures that the service change is grounded in robust analysis, transparency, and a commitment to equality, social inclusion, and continuous improvement.

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

The aim is now to gather information prior to any decisions being taken. Shropshire Council asks those who attend In-House Day Services and a wide range of other stakeholders to provide feedback to help determine what support might look like in the future, wherever that is offered.

This consultation aims to explore options, gather feedback from members of the public and stakeholders to inform future decision making. The outcome of the consultation will also need to consider relative costs of services for individuals to ensure best value for money and financial sustainability ongoing.

The consultation is currently scheduled to commence 1st February 2026 and run for a period of 8 weeks, with the results then due to be shared with key stakeholders in the Spring 2026.

Initial equality impact assessment by grouping (Initial health impact assessment is included below this table)

Please rate the impact that you perceive the service change is likely to have for a grouping, through stating this in the relevant column, including if it is anticipated to be neutral (no impact).

Please also record in here your headline rationale for the ratings you have given.

Protected Characteristic groupings and other groupings locally identified in Shropshire	**High negative impact** *Stage Two ESHIA required*	**High positive impact** *Stage One ESHIA required*	**Medium positive or negative impact** *Stage One ESHIA required*	**Low positive, negative, or neutral impact (please specify)** *Stage One ESHIA required*
Age (please include children, young people, young carers, young people leaving care, people of working age, older people. Some people may belong to more than one group e.g., a child or young person for whom there are safeguarding concerns e.g., an older person with a disability)				Neutral to low negative: Most supported individuals are in the 30-50 age range. A small number of individuals are in the age range 50-69. All will be supported to review their present and future support arrangements
Disability (please include cancer; HIV/AIDS; learning disabilities; mental health conditions and syndromes; multiple sclerosis; neurodiverse conditions such as autism; hidden disabilities such as Crohn's disease; physical and/or sensory disabilities or impairments)				Neutral to low negative. The majority of individuals present with a range of

				learning disabilities and neurodiverse conditions. All will be supported as individuals to review their present and future support arrangements. Some individuals have dementia and will be supported to review the current and future needs.
Gender re-assignment (please include associated aspects: safety, caring responsibility, potential for bullying and harassment)				Neutral. All considered options will ensure that individuals receive support to review their present and future support arrangements.
Marriage and Civil Partnership (please include associated aspects: caring responsibility, potential for bullying and harassment)				Neutral. All considered options will ensure that individuals receive support to review their present and future support arrangements.

Pregnancy and Maternity (please include associated aspects: safety, caring responsibility, potential for bullying and harassment)				Neutral. All considered options will ensure that individuals receive support to review their present and future support arrangements
Race (please include ethnicity, nationality, culture, language, Gypsy, Roma, Traveller)				Neutral. All considered options will ensure that individuals receive support to review their present and future support arrangements
Religion or Belief (please include Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, Judaism, Nonconformists; Rastafarianism; Shinto, Sikhism, Taoism, Veganism, Zoroastrianism, and any others)				Neutral. All considered options will ensure that individuals receive support to review their present and future support arrangements
Sex (please include associated aspects: safety, caring responsibility, potential for bullying and harassment)				Neutral. All considered options will ensure that individuals receive support to review their present and

				future support arrangements
Sexual Orientation (please include associated aspects: safety; caring responsibility; potential for bullying and harassment)				Neutral. All considered options will ensure that individuals receive support to review their present and future support arrangements
Other: Social Inclusion (please include households in poverty or on low incomes; people for whom there are safeguarding concerns; people you consider to be vulnerable; people with health inequalities; refugees and asylum seekers; rough sleepers and those at risk of homelessness; and rural communities)				Neutral to low negative given intersecting vulnerabilities.
Other: Carers (please include families and friends with caring responsibilities)				Neutral. All considered options will ensure that individuals receive support to review their present and future support arrangements
Other: Veterans and serving members of the armed forces and their families (as per Armed Forces Act 2023)				Neutral. All considered options will ensure that individuals receive support to review their present and

				future support arrangements
Other: Young people leaving care				Neutral. All considered options will ensure that individuals receive support to review their present and future support arrangements

Initial health and wellbeing impact assessment by category

Please rate the impact that you perceive the service change is likely to have with regard to health and wellbeing, through stating this in the relevant column, including if it is anticipated to be neutral (no impact).
Please also record in here your headline rationale for the ratings you have given.

Health and wellbeing: individuals and communities in Shropshire	**High negative impact** *Part Two HIA required*	**High positive impact**	**Medium positive or negative impact**	**Low positive negative or neutral impact (please specify)**
Will the proposal have a *direct impact* on an individual's health, mental health and wellbeing? For example, would it cause ill health, affecting social inclusion, independence and participation? .				Neutral to low negative. All options being considered will make arrangement for ongoing preferred support for individuals. Day Opportunities support across Shropshire plays a key role in enhancing each supported

				person's ability to live their best life.
Will the proposal *indirectly impact* an individual's ability to improve their own health and wellbeing? For example, will it affect their ability to be physically active, choose healthy food, reduce drinking and smoking? .				Neutral: All options being considered will make arrangement for ongoing preferred support for individuals. Day Opportunities support across Shropshire plays a key role in enhancing each supported person's ability to access health services and make informed decisions about their own wellbeing.
Will the policy have a *direct impact* on the community - social, economic and environmental living conditions that would impact health? For example, would it affect housing, transport, child development, education,				Neutral: All options being considered will make arrangement for ongoing preferred support for

employment opportunities, availability of green space or climate change mitigation? .				individuals. Day Opportunities support across Shropshire plays a key role in enhancing each supported person's ability to live their best life and involve themselves in their chosen and local communities.
Will there be a likely change in *demand* for or access to health and social care services? For example: Primary Care, Hospital Care, Community Services, Mental Health, Local Authority services including Social Services? .				Neutral: All options being considered will make arrangement for ongoing preferred support for individuals. Day Opportunities support across Shropshire plays a key role in enhancing each supported person's ability to access health

				services and make informed decisions about their own wellbeing.

Initial health equity assessment	
For the following categories, please complete with the expected impacts of this service change on wider inequalities, not just those that are health-related (whether positive, negative, or neutral) – include any additional information you feel is pertinent or useful. **Consider and record which you can control, which you can influence, and which may be out of your control**.	
Which population groups/demographics will face health impacts as a result of this change (if any)? • Socio-Economically Deprived • Geographic Deprivation (inc. Rurality) – *if so, where?* • Inclusion Health & Vulnerable Groups[1] • Other	**Socio-Economically Deprived** Individuals and households on low incomes, those experiencing poverty, and people facing health inequalities are likely to be affected. These groups may have limited access to alternative services, digital resources, or transport, increasing their vulnerability to service changes. **Geographic Deprivation (Including Rurality)** Residents in rural areas of Shropshire may face additional barriers due to distance from alternative provision, limited public transport, and potential social isolation. The impact may be more pronounced in specific localities where day centres are closing or relocating. **Inclusion Health & Vulnerable Groups** This includes people who are socially excluded and experience multiple overlapping risk factors for poor health, such as: People with learning disabilities, neurodiverse conditions, and complex health or social care needs Older adults, especially those with dementia Carers and families with caring responsibilities Veterans, care leavers, and those at risk of homelessness Refugees, asylum seekers, and other vulnerable or marginalised groups. **Nature and Extent of Impacts** **Health-Related and Wider Inequalities** *Direct health impacts:* Changes may affect individuals' ability to access support, maintain independence, and

	participate in community life. For some, this could increase risks of isolation, mental health decline, or reduced wellbeing. *Indirect impacts:* There may be effects on access to employment, volunteering, and social inclusion opportunities, particularly for those with fewer resources or living in remote areas. Wider inequalities: The potential outcomes may exacerbate existing inequalities if not carefully managed, especially for those already facing multiple disadvantages. **Specific Geographical Locations** The assessment highlights that rural communities across Ludlow and Shrewsbury are particularly at risk. Specific locations are linked to the closure or relocation of Helena Lane Day Centre and Aquamira Day Centre. **Control, Influence, and Limitations** What the Council Can Control • The design and delivery of robust, inclusive consultation and engagement processes • The development of individual transition plans and reasonable adjustments for affected individuals • The provision of alternative support options (e.g., community-based services, direct payments, personal assistants) • Ongoing review and monitoring of impacts, with targeted actions to address underrepresentation or negative outcomes. **What the Council Can Influence** • Partnerships with voluntary sector organisations, local businesses, and the Enable team to enhance social inclusion and employment opportunities. • The development of sustainable transport solutions and minimisation of travel distances for service users. • The repurposing of vacated sites to support environmental and community objectives. **What May Be Out of the Council's Control** • Broader socio-economic trends, such as rising costs of living or changes in national policy • Individual choices regarding uptake of alternative provision • Wider demographic changes and their impact on demand for services. **Additional Pertinent Information**

	The Council is committed to upholding statutory duties under the Care Act 2014, the Equality Act 2010, and the Public Sector Equality Duty, ensuring that equality, social inclusion, and health considerations are integral to decision-making. The approach includes benchmarking against good practice, sharing learning with other rural authorities, and maintaining transparency and accountability throughout the process.
What mitigations/enhancements are already in place, or what mitigations/enhancements do you plan to include for the foreseeable consequences of these changes?	**Robust and Inclusive Consultation** An eight-week public consultation and engagement process is planned, designed to reach all affected individuals, families, staff, and representative groups—including underrepresented and vulnerable groups such as those in rural areas, veterans, care leavers, and low-income households. This ensures that all voices are heard and considered in the decision-making process. **Individual Reviews and Transition Planning** Each individual affected by the changes will receive a review and, where necessary, a transition plan developed in partnership with the Social Work Team. This ensures that alternative provision is accessible, appropriate, and sensitive to the needs of all genders, backgrounds, and health conditions. **Alternative Support Options** The Council will support access to community-based alternatives, employment, volunteering, and supported work opportunities through partnerships such as the Enable team. This approach aims to reduce isolation and promote independence, particularly for those at risk of exclusion due to rurality or other barriers. **Facilities Audits and Reasonable Adjustments** Facilities audits and individual reviews will be conducted to ensure reasonable adjustments are made, especially for those with complex needs, neurodiverse conditions, or other vulnerabilities. **Ongoing Review and Monitoring** The Council will implement a comprehensive approach to reviewing and monitoring the impacts of the service changes. This includes regular feedback from service users, families, carers, staff, and the wider community, as well as ongoing engagement with local councillors and portfolio holders. Where consultation feedback indicates underrepresentation, targeted actions will be taken to improve engagement and representation.

	Benchmarking and Sharing Good Practice The Council will benchmark its approach against comparator good practice and share learning with other rural authorities, recognising common challenges such as ageing demographic profiles and access to facilities and services. **Economic and Societal Mitigations** The Council will work closely with affected staff to identify redeployment opportunities and support workforce stability. Where facilities are withdrawn, efforts will be made to support local economic resilience, for example by exploring alternative community uses for vacated buildings or facilitating access to employment and volunteering opportunities for service users. **Climate Change and Transport** To mitigate increased travel and emissions, the Council will prioritise the use of local facilities and encourage community-based alternatives that minimise travel distances. Transport arrangements will be reviewed for efficiency and sustainability, and the potential for repurposing vacated sites to support environmental objectives will be considered. **Digital and Alternative Access** Where possible, alternatives such as digital access to services or travel to other amenities will be considered and facilitated, to ensure continuity of support for those unable to access traditional services. **Control, Influence, and Limitations** **What the Council Can Control** • The design and delivery of consultation and engagement processes. • Development of individual transition plans and reasonable adjustments • Provision of alternative support options (community-based services, direct payments, personal assistants) • Ongoing review and monitoring, with targeted actions to address underrepresentation or negative outcomes **What the Council Can Influence** • Partnerships with voluntary sector organisations, local businesses, and the Enable team • Development of sustainable transport solutions and minimisation of travel distances

	• Repurposing of vacated sites for environmental and community objectives **What May Be Out of the Council's Control** • Broader socio-economic trends (e.g., rising costs of living, changes in national policy) • Individual choices regarding uptake of alternative provision • Wider demographic changes and their impact on demand for services

1- *Inclusion health is an umbrella term used to describe people who are socially excluded, who typically experience multiple overlapping risk factors for poor health, such as poverty, violence, and complex trauma. This includes people who experience homelessness, drug and alcohol dependence, vulnerable migrants, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, sex workers, people in contact with the justice system and victims of modern slavery. Health impacts for this wide grouping will therefore potentially be the same as those recorded under the Social Inclusion category in the equality impact table.*

Guidance Notes

1. Legal Context

It is a legal requirement for local authorities to assess the equality and human rights impact of changes potential or made to services. It is up to us as an authority to decide what form our equality impact assessment may take. By way of illustration, some local authorities focus more overtly upon human rights; some include safeguarding. It is about what is considered to be needed in a local authority's area, in line with local factors such as demography and strategic objectives as well as with the national legislative imperatives.

Carrying out these impact assessments 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.

These screening assessments for any potential service change go to Cabinet as part of the committee report, or occasionally direct to Full Council, unless they are ones to do with Licensing, in which case they go to Strategic Licensing Committee.

Service areas would ordinarily carry out a screening assessment, or Stage 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.

These screening assessments are recommended to be undertaken at timely points in the development and implementation of the potential service change.

For example, a Stage One ESHIA would be a recommended course of action before a consultation. This would draw upon the evidence available at that time, and identify the target audiences, and assess at that initial stage what the likely impact of the service change could be across the national Protected Characteristic groupings and our additional local categories. This ESHIA would set out intended actions to engage with the groupings, particularly those who are historically less likely to engage in public consultation eg young people, as otherwise we would not know their specific needs.

A second Stage One ESHIA would then be carried out after the consultation, to say what the feedback was, to set out changes potential as a result of the feedback, and to say where responses were low and what the plans are to engage with groupings who did not really respond. This ESHIA would also draw more upon actions to review impacts in order to mitigate the negative and accentuate the positive.

Meeting our Public Sector Equality Duty through carrying out these ESHIAs is very much about using them as an opportunity to demonstrate ongoing engagement across groupings and to thus visibly show we are taking what is called 'due regard' of the needs of people in Protected Characteristic groupings.

If the screening indicates that there are likely to be high negative impacts for groupings within the community, the service area would need to take advice on whether or not to carry out a full report, or Stage Two assessment. This is resource intensive but will enable more evidence to be collected that will help the service area to reach an informed opinion.

In practice, Stage Two or Full Screening Assessments have only been recommended twice since 2014, as the ongoing mitigation of negative equality impacts should serve to keep them below the threshold for triggering a Full Screening Assessment. The expectation is that Full Screening Assessments in regard to Health Impacts may occasionally need to be undertaken, but this would be very much the exception rather than the rule.

2. Council Wide and Service Area Policy and Practice on Equality, Social Inclusion and Health

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, Social Inclusion and Health Impact Assessments (ESHIAs) come in. Where you carry out an ESHIA 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 or to Strategic Licensing Committee.
- What target groups and audiences you have worked with to date.

- What actions will you take in order to mitigate any likely negative impact upon a group or groupings, and enhance any likely positive effects for a group or groupings; and
- What actions you are planning to monitor and 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.

There are nine Protected Characteristic groupings defined in the Equality Act 2010. The full list of groupings is: Age; Disability; Gender Reassignment; Marriage and Civil Partnership; Pregnancy and Maternity; Race; Religion or Belief; Sex; and Sexual Orientation.

There is also intersectionality between these. Eg a young person with a disability would be in the groupings of Age and Disability, and if they described themselves as having a faith they would then also be in the grouping of Religion or Belief. 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.

For the individuals and groupings who may be affected, ask yourself what impact do you think is likely and what actions will you currently anticipate taking, to mitigate or enhance likely impact of the service change? If you are reducing a service, for example, there may be further use you could make of awareness raising through social media and other channels to reach more people who may be affected.

Social inclusion is then a wider additional local category we use in Shropshire, in order to help us to go beyond the equality legislation in also considering impacts for individuals and households with regard to the circumstances in which they may find themselves across their life stages. This could be households on low incomes, or households facing challenges in accessing services, such as households in rural areas, or people that we might consider to be vulnerable, such as refugee families or rough sleepers.

Please note that veterans and serving members of the armed forces and their families are a grouping to whom we are required to give due regard under Armed Forces legislation, although in practice we have been doing so for a number of years now.

We also identify two further distinct separate local groupings due to their circumstances: care leavers, as vulnerable individuals, and carers, due to the support they give and the support they need.

When you are not carrying out an ESHIA, you still need to demonstrate and record 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 ESHIA, 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.

Carry out an ESHIA:

- If you are building or reconfiguring a building.
- If you are planning to reduce or remove or reconfigure 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

Carry out and record your 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 that 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, we need to demonstrate a community leadership approach

3. Council wide and service area policy and practice on health and wellbeing

This is an area to record within our overall assessments of impacts, for which we ask service area leads to consider health and wellbeing impacts, and to look at these in the context of direct and indirect impacts for individuals and for communities.

A better understanding across the Council of these impacts will also better enable the Public Health colleagues to prioritise activities to reduce health inequalities in ways that are evidence based and that link effectively with equality impact considerations and climate change mitigation.

Health in All Policies – Health Impact Assessment

Health in All Policies is an upstream approach for health and wellbeing promotion and prevention, and to reduce health inequalities. The Health Impact Assessment (HIA) is the supporting mechanism

- Health Impact Assessment (HIA) is the technical name for a process that considers the wider effects of local policies, strategies and initiatives and how they, in turn, may affect people's health and wellbeing.
- Health Impact Assessment is a means of assessing both the positive and negative health impacts of a policy. It is also a means of developing good evidence-based policy and strategy using a structured process to review the impact.
- A Health Impact Assessment seeks to determine how to maximise health benefits and reduce health inequalities. It identifies any unintended health consequences. These consequences may support policy and strategy or may lead to suggestions for improvements.
- An agreed framework will set out a clear pathway through which a policy or strategy can be assessed and impacts with outcomes identified. It also sets out the support mechanisms for maximising health benefits.

The embedding of a Health in All Policies approach will support Shropshire Council through evidence-based practice and a whole systems approach, in achieving our corporate and partnership strategic priorities. This will assist the Council and partners in promoting, enabling and sustaining the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities whilst reducing health inequalities.

Individuals

Will the proposal have a *direct impact* on health, mental health and wellbeing?

For example, would it cause ill health, affecting social inclusion, independence and participation?

Will the proposal directly affect an individual's ability to improve their own health and wellbeing?

This could include the following: their ability to be physically active e.g., being able to use a cycle route; to access food more easily; to change lifestyle in ways that are of positive impact for their health.

Provision or change to a service that allows greater reach to those most in need, this can involve relocation, pooling of resource/efficiency changes, or digitisation of some provision. It may also involve greater opportunities for employment, decreasing socio-economic inequality. Physical alternatives to be made available (where practical) to be offered wherever possible to avoid digital exclusion and reduce social isolation. These changes can be either positive or negative depending on the proposal.

An example of this could be that you may be involved in proposals for the establishment of safer walking and cycling routes (e.g., green highways), and changes to public transport that could encourage people away from car usage. and increase the number of journeys that they make on public transport, by foot or on bicycle or scooter. This could improve lives. It could also involve virtual support sessions/appointments to avoid unnecessary travel and provide greater flexibility

with individuals work schedules. It may involve greater internet connectivity, to improve remote working opportunities and air pollution concerns, or improved communications coverage through closer partnership working – targeting those most in need of specific information.

Will the proposal *indirectly impact* an individual's ability to improve their own health and wellbeing?

This could include the following: their ability to access local facilities e.g., to access food more easily, or to access a means of mobility to local services and amenities? (e.g. change to bus route)

Similarly to the above, an example of this could be that you may be involved in proposals for the establishment of safer walking and cycling routes (e.g. pedestrianisation of town centres), and changes to public transport that could encourage people away from car usage, and increase the number of journeys that they make on public transport, by foot or on bicycle or scooter. This could improve their health and wellbeing.

Communities

Will the proposal directly or indirectly affect the physical health, mental health, and wellbeing of the wider community**?**

A *direct impact* could include either the causing of ill health, affecting social inclusion, independence and participation, or the promotion of better health.

An example of this could be that safer walking and cycling routes could help the wider community, as more people across groupings may be encouraged to walk or engage in active travel. Increasing physical activity and minimising the time spent sitting down helps to maintain a healthy weight and reduces the risk of cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, cancer, and depression. The UK Chief Medical Officers recommend that adults should do at least 150 minutes of moderate activity, or 75 minutes of vigorous activity, each week. At a wider level, reductions in vehicular emission lead to better air quality, and a reduction in NO_2 in the atmosphere.

An *indirect impact* could mean that a service change could indirectly affect living and working conditions and therefore the health and wellbeing of the wider community.

An example of this could be: an increase in the availability of warm homes would improve the quality of the housing offer in Shropshire and reduce the costs for households of having a warm home in Shropshire. This can reduce the risks of cold related health effects, as well as reduce the financial burden on the population, whose ability to shoulder these costs can vary. Often a health promoting approach also supports our agenda to reduce the level of Carbon Dioxide emissions and to reduce the impact of climate change.

Please record whether at this stage you consider the potential service change to have a direct or an indirect impact upon communities.

Demand

Will there be a change in demand for or access to health, local authority and social care services?

For example: Primary Care, Hospital Care, Community Services, Mental Health and Social Services?

An example of this could be: a new housing development in an area would affect demand for primary care and local authority facilities and services in that location and surrounding areas. If the housing development does not factor in consideration of availability of green space and safety within the public realm, further down the line there could be an increased demand upon health and social care services as a result of the lack of opportunities for physical recreation, and reluctance of some groupings to venture outside if they do not perceive it to be safe.

For further advice: please contact
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or
Phil Northfield via email Phillip.Northfield@shropshire.gov.uk

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