



Committee and Date

Cabinet

25th July 2018

**SHREWSBURY BIG TOWN PLAN
BIG TOWN PLAN VISION AND FRAMEWORK**

Responsible Officer Gemma Davies, Head of Economic Growth
e-mail: Gemma.davies@shropshire.gov.uk Tel: (01743) 258985

1. Summary

- 1.1 The Shrewsbury Big Town Plan (SBTP) is the outcome of a collaborative process that has successfully brought together business representatives, elected Members, educational establishments and public sector officers to create a collective vision and strategy, to help guide Shrewsbury's future. It sets the aims, aspirations and vision for Shrewsbury now and for the future.
- 1.2 Its purpose is to become an investment prospectus where individuals and organisations looking to invest in Shrewsbury have a clear idea of the town's vision, aspirations and development opportunities – and how they can be part of that. It also provides a strong statement for residents, employers and visitors to Shrewsbury of how they can expect their town to develop over time, and how that growth and change is being planned, coordinated and communicated.
- 1.3 This report summarises the plan's content and provides background information on the levels of extensive public engagement undertaken to date, alongside Shropshire Council's elected Member engagement. It also explains the context of the SBTP within the statutory development plan to ensure that delivery of the subsequent activity is achievable and aligned with statutory requirements and identified adopted policies.
- 1.4 This defined approach and the subsequent successful joint working between Shropshire Council, Shrewsbury Town Council and Shrewsbury Business Improvement District (BID) operating as the "Big Town Plan Team" has resulted in the co-creation of the Shrewsbury Big Town Plan Final Draft (refer to Appendix 1).
- 1.5 LDA Design, urban designers and masterplanning experts, were appointed on behalf of Shropshire Council, Shrewsbury Town Council and Shrewsbury BID on 26th January 2018 following a joint tendering process. Their brief was to provide an illustrative masterplan and opportunities, creating a visual representation from the insights obtained from the extensive public consultation and engagement that has taken place to date.

- 1.6 The creation of a framework plan provides flexibility to reflect changing market demands, and 'windfall' opportunities whilst providing a set of key principles that draw on adopted Council Development Plan policies and underpin the future development of Shrewsbury.
- 1.7 The Big Town Plan and its vision and framework in its current format seeks to layout key themes and principles that will see positive and considered change in the development and subsequent vitality of Shrewsbury, the county town of Shropshire over the next two decades.
- 1.8 Shrewsbury BID Board proposes to endorse the Plan in its current format on 19th July 2018 and it will also be discussed at Shrewsbury Town Council's Finance and General Purpose Committee on 30th July 2018.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Cabinet agrees that Shropshire Council continue to be an active, lead partner in the Big Town Plan alongside Shrewsbury Town Council and Shrewsbury BID to coordinate the action planning and implementation of the development opportunities detailed within the Big Town Plan (Appendix 1). This aligns with Shropshire Council's direct involvement in the delivery of development opportunities, subject to the necessary financial appraisals, due diligence and necessary approvals.**
- 2.2 Cabinet agrees that the Shrewsbury Big Town Plan – Final Draft be made available for public consultation for a period of three weeks. A summary of this consultation along with the final version of the Big Town Plan will be brought back to a future Cabinet.**
- 2.3 Cabinet agrees that the final version of the Big Town Plan (post public consultation) will form part of the evidence base to inform the emerging review of the Local Plan; and, the principal of using the Big Town Plan as a material consideration in decision making on relevant planning applications can be established.**

REPORT

3. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

- 3.1 The Shrewsbury Big Town Plan incorporated the views obtained from residents, visitors and businesses during the broad Public Consultation that took place in September 2017. There has been additional engagement with public sector parties, business representatives and a number of organisations with specific interest in Shrewsbury through a series of workshops, a 'masterplanning week' and an on-going Big Town Plan Team (Steering Group). The on-going support and

commitment of these stakeholders will play an important role in taking the Big Town Plan forward and its subsequent delivery.

- 3.2 Given the nature and scale of proposed development opportunities within the Big Town Plan a high level Equality and Social Inclusion Impact Assessment (ESIIA) will be undertaken to align with the consultation due to take place over the summer and form part of the final document that comes back to Cabinet. Further, more detailed, assessments will be made for individual projects forming part of the subsequent action and delivery plans.
- 3.3 Evidence to date from the public consultation that took place in September 2017 has been collated, and analysed by Shropshire Council's Feedback and Insights Team and used to inform the Big Town Plan Framework Plan. Having this data ensures that we are showing 'due regard' to the needs and views of our population groups when developing and implementing policy and strategy and when commissioning, procuring, arranging or delivering services.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 It is anticipated that through the collaborative approach that has been taken so far future costs incurred in the creation of further action and delivery plans will be met by the three lead partners, ensuring financial responsibility does not lie solely with Shropshire Council.
- 4.2 Upon Shropshire Council identifying a commercial opportunity through the Big Town Plan Framework, or anticipating the need to be directly involved in the delivery of a scheme or project a full financial appraisal will be undertaken and subject to the governance and approval processes of the Council.

5. Background

5.1 The key themes and principles (with associated spatial plans) within the Big Town Plan and detailed in Section 6, have been developed following extensive consultation which has included:

- An initial workshop in July 2016 to identify and shape key themes, attended by 30 stakeholders;
- An intensive public consultation over 3 weeks from 8th September to 29th September 2017 in a 'Pop-up shop' at 80 Wyle Cop in the town centre to capture residents, visitors, public interest groups and businesses views that would ultimately shape the illustrative masterplanning process. Over 5,000 visited the consultation and 2900 views, desires, concerns and aspirations were captured. An Insights Report summarised the findings and was utilised by LDA Design in the creation of the Big Town Plan.
- LDA Design facilitated a 'Masterplanning Week' from 19th March to 23rd March 2018 that involved 50 plus organisations and stakeholders that identified

priorities and provided insights, and knowledge to shape the spatial principles. Attendees were representatives of Councils, developers and agents, business and voluntary groups. Example attendees were the Environment Agency, Shrewsbury Colleges Group, Help the Aged and the Wildlife Trust.

5.2 In addition, there has been significant elected Member involvement including:

- The Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth has been actively involved and engaged throughout the process and co-chaired the Steering Group, which has now evolved to become the Big Town Plan Team.
- Active engagement with Place Overview Committee who undertook a walking tour of the town and held a workshop on 19th March 2018 with the Director of LDA Design during the masterplanning week.
- To ensure their ongoing involvement and support Place Overview Committee will also consider the Big Town Plan Framework – Final Draft (in its current format) at their meeting on 12th July 2018 and their comments will be considered and fed in appropriately.
- At the final presentation of the Masterplanning Week in March 2018 the Portfolio Holders for Economic Growth, Highways and Transport, Culture and Leisure and Planning and Housing were present alongside the Leader and Chief Executive of Shropshire Council, and Shrewsbury and Atcham MP Daniel Kawczynski.
- Member visioning sessions have been organised to consider both the Big Town Plan and the Shrewsbury Shopping Centres in early July 2018, again comments will be considered and fed in appropriately.

5.3 Taking on board the engagement activity detailed in 5.1 and 5.2 Shropshire Council's economic growth function will co-ordinate with Shrewsbury BID and Shrewsbury Town Council to undertake the 3 week public consultation exercise as a collective. It will take place over the summer and will provide a physical presence in the town centre over a number of days, notably in one of the council-owned shopping centres alongside a presence on Shropshire Council's consultation web portal. It will encourage partners to also publicise the consultation via their engagement channels, and all parties who were involved in the LDA Design facilitated 'masterplan week' will be re-engaged and encouraged to comment and endorse the content that will appear in the finalised plan.

5.4 The original intention of the Shrewsbury Big Town Plan was to provide a refresh of the Shrewsbury Vision Regeneration Framework as agreed by Cabinet on 19th October 2011. This was felt necessary in light of significant developments that had taken place since that time such as the establishment of the Shrewsbury BID and University Centre Shrewsbury and the effect they have had on Shrewsbury alongside wider economic drivers that reflected both the changing town environment and social and technological advances.

5.5 More importantly, it identified an opportunity to create a new plan that had renewed relevance, engagement and stakeholder buy-in. Starting from the point that successful towns and cities need strong leadership and active stewardship the collaborative

approach undertaken by Shropshire Council has created co-ownership of a vision for Shrewsbury with a number of parties that will steer its future direction.

5.6 The Big Town Plan provides further guidance on achieving a number of strategic policy objectives set out in the adopted Local Plan. It is derived from the Shrewsbury Vision, a masterplan vision for the town that informed policy in the Local Plan (The Core Strategy and SAMDev Plan). In particular, Policy C2 of the Core Strategy specifically references the Shrewsbury Vision and draws key policy elements of the integrated approach and to ensure the balance and co-ordination required. These are detailed below:

4.23 The importance of economic development and employment growth in Shrewsbury is integral to the strategy for the town... It is accepted that the town centre is constrained by the loop of the River Severn, which means that some of the commercial development requirements may need to be accommodated outside of the centre, but there are major town centre redevelopment opportunities, particularly in the West End and the Riverside areas, which need to be prioritised in order to achieve the Shrewsbury Vision.

4.24 A further priority is the regeneration of the Shrewsbury Northern Corridor, with the aims of the Regeneration Framework for that area, including the site of the Ditherington Flaxmill, being taken forward through the Shrewsbury Vision.

4.27 The implementation of the Shrewsbury Integrated Transport Strategy, with a combination of sustainable transport promotion measures including the Park and Ride facilities, quality bus routes and enhanced walking and cycling facilities provision, is key to the sustainable development of the town given the challenges of the constrained access to and through the town centre and the demand for crosstown traffic.

4.28 Other major infrastructure requirements in Shrewsbury, including for improving health and education facilities, are identified in the LDF Implementation Plan. Policies CS8 and CS9 set out the approach to infrastructure provision, including the role of developer contributions.

4.29 The protection and enhancement of the town's historic character and heritage assets, notably the extensive Shrewsbury conservation area focussed on the town centre, the historic battlefield on the northern edge of the town and the town's green infrastructure, including green corridors associated with the River Severn and its tributaries, will also be a priority issue to be addressed.

In addition, Policy S16 of the adopted SAMDev Plan identifies key areas of change in the town. These include: the 'Heart of Shrewsbury' encompassing the aspiration to renew areas within and on the edge of the town centre, including Riverside and the West End, enhancing the role of the river and access to it, and celebrating gateways and arrival points; and the Northern Corridor, including the restoration of the Ditherington Flaxmill and improving the environmental quality of the corridor. The Big Town Plan has responded to and built upon these policy aspirations.

5.7 The Big Town Plan is therefore considered to be in conformity with the objectives and policies of the Local Plan, and whilst the Big Town Plan itself does not form part of the statutory Development Plan for the area, it does provide important guidance on the

implementation of policies CS2 and S16. Further to the proposed consultation on the final version of the Big Town Plan and the subsequent agreement of Cabinet, the principal of using the Big Town Plan as a material consideration in decision making on relevant planning applications can be established. The degree of weight that can be attached to the Big Town Plan will depend on the individual circumstances.

6. Additional Information – Content of the Big Town Plan

The Big Town Plan is made-up of two parts. The first part is a vision which charts the course ahead for the Town and sets the level of ambition. The second part is a framework plan which shows how and where we want change to happen in the town.

To follow is summary information and extracts from each of the sections within the Big Town Plan, the full content is provided within the report in Appendix 1.

6.1 Vision

The aim is to put people at the heart of the town, and considered in our plan-making and place-making and we want to achieve this in four ways:

- Rethinking movement and place;
- Supporting, creating and nurturing vitality, life and a mix of uses;
- Create a place for enterprise;
- Nurture natural Shrewsbury.

Our Big Town Vision supports the Local Plan to provide balanced growth and development over the next two decades in a way that is centred on people and place, with more attention directed to encouraging life in the town centre and those places on the edge of the town centre that are in need of new life and new purpose. We also want to make those places on the edge of town better connected, giving them identity and character that makes them better places and feel a greater part of Shrewsbury.

By 2036, we picture a Shrewsbury where in amongst the familiar landmarks and the timeless streets are exciting new and re-used buildings and new spaces where new life and new activities have taken hold.

6.2 10 Goals and Aspirations of the Big Town Plan

1. We want to make it much better for the pedestrian and cyclist, especially in the town centre. This means shifting the balance of priority given to movement across the town from the private car to walking and cycling and greater use of rail and bus.
2. We recognise the rapid changes in working patterns and working practice. We want to create new, flexible workspace environments built around buzzy, active places, both in and around the town centre and out on the edge of town.
3. We want to plan for future sustainable growth that fully utilises development opportunities on a mix of sites, including land in and on the edge of the town, as

well as development on the periphery of the town.

4. We want to build strong physical and virtual networks connecting education, healthcare, business start-ups, new industries and sports provision across the town to improve mobility and to form new alliances. The importance of well-being in Shrewsbury is key.
5. We want to open up the housing market in the town through increasing choice and improving affordability. This means increasing town centre living and introducing different housing models and tenures.
6. We are very proud of our education establishments. We want to retain more of our best young talent in the town and attract new talent from outside. We want to support innovation and start-ups in exciting new places.
7. We want to strengthen the all-round appeal of the town centre based around better place-making and the visitor experience. We want to strengthen independent shopping whilst continuing to attract destination brands. We want to inject greater diversity of use into the centre, housing, leisure, entertainment, culture and the arts.
8. We want to make this green town greener still, by connecting existing green spaces across the town, making new links and new parks where we can and making much more of the River corridor. We want to make strong connections from the town centre, through the suburbs and out into the wider countryside and improve the health and well-being for everyone
9. We want to raise the quality of design across the town, particularly for new housing. We will develop what we may call “The Shrewsbury Test” to raise standards for all new development.
10. We want to encourage new development, infrastructure and investment by taking a much more holistic and integrated approach making it more joined-up in line with the Vision and the Big Town Plan.

6.3 Big Town Framework Plan

The purpose of the Big Town Framework Plan is to establish a clear set of spatial principles, a physical town-wide plan that connects those part of town where we want change to happen. The framework is built-up of layers that overlay the town:

- Making Movement Better
- Balancing Growth
- The Big Network
- The Shrewsbury Green Network
- The Big Connection

The final principle is Raising Design Quality. This will be a town-wide principle rather than a plan that forms part of the framework principles.

6.4 The Big Connection – West End : Riverside : Station : Northern Corridor : Flaxmill

The Big Connection is an illustration of how all these principles can come together in the Big Town Plan. The Big Connection is the biggest regeneration opportunity in Shrewsbury. Each area is different and each has its own character, but taken together, these areas form a large corridor of opportunity running from the West End up to the Flaxmill. Our plans are ambitious and transformative. The individual projects in the individual areas need to be developed and tested at the next stage, but the Big Town Vision is established and the framework is being created. Our proposals include:

- A balance of new mixed use development and high quality public realm in and around the West End;
- Improvements to the walkability and public realm on Mardol;
- The redirection of traffic along Smithfield to Raven Meadows, opening up the Smithfield as a pedestrian priority promenade;
- The re-configuration over time of the Riverside shopping centre and better integration and complementary activities with Darwin and Pride Hill centres with the introduction of new uses that could include leisure, food and drink, residential and commercial spaces. Including new pedestrian links from Pride Hill down to the Riverside;
- The redefining of the area around the multi storey car park and the bus station;
- New development on both sides of the Station, including new public realm/a piazza in front of the station and the removal of through traffic to create a better environment;
- New development opportunities on under-used sites in the Northern Corridor for new workspaces and housing;
- Improving the lighting and quality of the public realm and under the railway bridge;
- A green movement corridor connecting the Flaxmill with other improvements to the northern corridor.

6.5 Priorities and Next Steps

The Big Town Plan is ambitious. Two things must happen to make it successful. The first is the identification of priority projects and initiatives, the second is shaping the way that investment decisions are made to ensure that they are aligned with the Big Town Plan and principles it sets out.

The Big Connection is the most ambitious area-wide regeneration and redevelopment opportunity in the Town and within the Big Connection there are at least 5 major projects.

These are:

1. Shrewsbury Station – new public realm outside the station, re-use of vacant space within the station building, traffic management changes;

2. Northern Corridor Land Assembly – Identification and assembly of land immediately north of the station to deliver a number of mixed development opportunities and public realm initiatives;
3. The Shrewsbury Low Line (green connection – walkway and cycleway) and the Flaxmill connection – a public realm project focussed on connecting the Flaxmill into the Northern Corridor and into the Station;
4. Riverside Shopping Centre – the redevelopment of the Shopping Centre and the wider redevelopment opportunities to connect with the River, including a review of transport connections via Smithfield Road and Raven Meadows to enhance the experience for pedestrians and cyclists;
5. West End Creative Hub – the re-use of existing buildings and spaces for creative workspace including the reinvigoration of Rowleys Building and public realm improvements.

Development proposals, infrastructure funding and development opportunities are unlikely to arrive in order of priority or in the sequence that we would want to see but by clearly setting out the aspirations and framework plan Shrewsbury can respond in a cohesive and considered way.

The Action Plan in the short to medium term is as follows:

- Prioritise projects 1, 2 and 3 of the Big Connection, in terms of phasing. This means development of a masterplan and a business and delivery plan at the next stage. This will include a programme and investment plan.
- Draw up a design charter, incorporating the ‘Shrewsbury Test’, (a simple set of entry requirement for developing in the town) and embed it in the development planning process through the Local Plan Review.

This town wide principle is intended to drive better quality development right across the town in the future. In particular, we want to see better place-making and the design of new housing that is much more distinctive and tailored to Shrewsbury’s special qualities. We want to see that new development reflects our ambition as set out in the Big Town Plan. The design charter will clearly set out our expectations on design quality.

7. Conclusions

7.1 Shropshire Council’s Economic Growth Strategy 2017-2021 has three key objectives of supporting and growing new and existing businesses, attracting inward investment and developing and retaining talent and skills. Shrewsbury is well-placed with its assets, development opportunities and its outstanding quality of life to deliver on all of these. The aspirations of the Big Town Plan align with the Economic Growth Strategy.

7.2 The Big Town Plan provides further guidance on achieving a number of strategic policy objectives set out in the adopted Local Plan. It is derived from the Shrewsbury Vision, a masterplan vision for the town that informed policy in the Local Plan (The Core Strategy and SAMDev Plan). In particular, Policy C2 specifically references the Shrewsbury Vision and draws key policy elements of the integrated approach and to ensure the balance and co-ordination required.

- 7.3 The Big Town Plan is therefore considered to be in conformity with the objectives and policies of the Local Plan, and whilst the Big Town Plan itself does not form part of the statutory Development Plan for the area, it does provide important guidance on the implementation of policies CS2 and S16. Further to the proposed consultation on the final version of the Big Town Plan and the subsequent agreement of Cabinet, the principal of using the Big Town Plan as a material consideration in decision making on relevant planning applications can be established. The degree of weight that can be attached to the Big Town Plan will depend on the individual circumstances.
- 7.4 Shropshire Council, through its economic growth function will continue to be an active, lead partner in the Big Town Plan, alongside Shrewsbury Town Council and Shrewsbury BID to coordinate the action planning and implementation of the development opportunities detailed with the Big Town Plan (Appendix 1).
- 7.5 Economic growth function will also co-ordinate and continue to disseminate the Shrewsbury Big Town Plan to all areas of the Council who have a key involvement in the development of Shrewsbury, ensuring a collaborative council-wide approach.
- 7.6 Economic growth function will co-ordinate with Shrewsbury BID and Shrewsbury Town Council to undertake the 3 week public consultation exercise as a collective. It will take place over the summer and will provide a physical presence in the town centre over a number of days, notably in one of the council-owned shopping centres alongside a presence on Shropshire Council's consultation web portal. It will encourage partners to also publicise the consultation via their engagement channels, and all parties who were involved in the LDA Design facilitated masterplan week will be re-engaged and encouraged to comment, further endorsing the finalised plan.
- 7.7 In taking forward the Big Town Plan the action and delivery plans will be developed alongside the Local Plan Review, the Local Transport Plan and the Shrewsbury Place Plan. Further integration between these documents will be maintained alongside Health and Wellbeing, and Culture and Leisure services to embed the principles of the Big Town Plan to develop Shrewsbury and put people at the heart of our town.

<p>List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)</p> <p>Shrewsbury Vision Regeneration Framework 2011</p>
<p>Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder) Cllr Nic Laurens</p>
<p>Local Members Peter Adams, Dean Carroll, Nat Green, Kevin Pardy, Ioan Jones, Julian Dean, Ted Clarke, Pam Moseley, Hannah Fraser, David Vasmer, Alan Mosley, Peter Nutting, Nic Laurens, Jane McKenzie, Keith Roberts, Tony Parsons, Harry Taylor</p>
<p>Appendices Appendix 1: Shrewsbury Big Town Plan Final Draft</p>