

SHROPSHIRE GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY

Summary

1. Introduction

Shropshire Council's planning policy team will be commissioning a Green Infrastructure (GI) Strategy shortly. The Strategy will be an evidence base document for the Local Plan Review.

National planning policy requires local authorities to plan positively for the provision and use of open space and to make sufficient provision for green infrastructure. The planning policy team is taking the approach that open space provided through new housing development should support the county's green and blue* infrastructure such that it:

- Maintains, enhances and where possible, extends existing green infrastructure networks
- contributes to climate change adaptation and mitigation
- addresses identified local health and wellbeing needs
- improves or mitigates air and water quality
- increases opportunities for active travel, walking and cycling

** all references to green infrastructure should be taken to mean green and blue infrastructure.*

2. Planning context

Shropshire Council is in the process of reviewing its Local Plan. The current Local Plan comprises the Shropshire Core Strategy and the Site Allocations and Management of Development document (SAMDev). The Local Plan Review (LPR) will update the development management policies in the Core Strategy and SAMDev, including those requiring open space to be provided through new development (CS6, CS17, MD2 and MD12).

The LPR will also set out the number of new houses and amount of employment land required in Shropshire for the period 2016-2036. The distribution of this new development is determined by the Hierarchy of Settlements document. This identifies:

- Shrewsbury as the Strategic Centre,
- Bridgnorth, Ludlow, Market Drayton, Oswestry and Whitchurch as Principal Centres,
- another 11 smaller towns such as Shifnal as Key Centres
- a further 39 settlements as Community Hubs.

Additionally, the Council is proposing to allocate up to 4 Strategic Sites:

- Clive Barracks at Tern Hill near Market Drayton:
- the former Ironbridge Power Station:
- RAF Cosford
- (potentially) land off Junction 3 of the M54 motorway.

Strategic Sites are large sites of more than 25ha in size which are not associated with meeting the growth needs of any particular settlement and which contribute to achieving the aspirations of the Economic Growth Strategy for Shropshire. Three of the four Strategic Sites will have both housing and employment uses whilst there will be an intensification of the existing use at RAF Cosford.

Around 23% of Shropshire has been designated as the Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Although development in the AONB is limited, 5

settlements which are partly or wholly within the designated area are expected to provide some housing:

- Church Stretton (Key Centre)
- Bucknell, Clun, Clee Hill and Ditton Priors (Community Hubs)

Open space in these settlements should conserve and enhance the special qualities of the AONB. This should be reflected in the GI Strategy.

All settlements identified for housing growth and those settlements in the AONB are shown in Appendix A.

3. Definitions of open space and green infrastructure for planning purposes.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) defines open space as:

All open space of public value, including not just land, but also areas of water (such as rivers, canals, lakes and reservoirs) which offer important opportunities for sport and recreation and can act as a visual amenity

NPPF defines green infrastructure as:

A network of multi-functional green space, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities.

National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) says the following about open space:

Open space, which includes all open space of public value, can take many forms, from formal sports pitches to open areas within a development, linear corridors and country parks. It can provide health and recreation benefits to people living and working nearby; have an ecological value and contribute to green infrastructure as well as being an important part of the landscape and setting of built development, and an important component in the achievement of sustainable development

NPPG says the following about green infrastructure:

Green infrastructure can embrace a range of spaces and assets that provide environmental and wider benefits. It can, for example, include parks, playing fields, other areas of open space, woodland, allotments, private gardens, sustainable drainage features, green roofs and walls, street trees and 'blue infrastructure' such as streams, ponds, canals and other water bodies

4. National planning policy and guidance on open space and green infrastructure

Appendix B sets out the relevant paragraphs from NPPF and NPPG on the provision of open space and green infrastructure through the planning system. This national policy and guidance can be summarised as:

- Strategic Local Plan policies must make sufficient provision for GI
- GI should address identified local health and well-being needs
- GI should support adaptation and mitigation to climate change in areas that are vulnerable
- Networks of GI should be maintained and enhanced.
- GI provision should improve or mitigate air quality
- Planning authorities should prepare a county wide GI Strategy as an evidence base for Local Plan policies.
- A GI Strategy should

- Identify the location of existing GI networks. Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards (ANGSt) can be used for assessing current provision.
- Assess the quality of current GI
- Assess gaps in provision
- Identify the location of proposed GI networks
- Other national and local strategies can inform the GI Strategy e.g. trees and woodland.
- Local Authorities should collaborate with the following when preparing a GI Strategy
 - neighbouring local authorities
 - Local Nature Partnerships
 - Health and Wellbeing Boards
 - Local Enterprise Partnerships

5. The current situation

Since the adoption of the Core Strategy and SAMDev, individual residential developments in Shropshire have provided their own areas of open space, usually on-site. Whilst this meets current policy requirements, experience shows that the quality of such spaces and their connectivity to existing green infrastructure can be poor. The LPR offers an opportunity to address both issues and the Council would like LPR policy to provide for good quality open spaces within new development which connect to green infrastructure features in their wider surroundings. LPR policy should also set out when and how development could contribute to off-site measures to support existing green infrastructure networks. Both on- and off-site measures should; reduce the impact of climate change; support health and wellbeing; improve or mitigate air and water quality and provide routes for active travel, walking and cycling; as far as is practicably possible.

The GI Strategy will thus provide guidance on open space policy wording and identify opportunities for such open space to provide multiple benefits as part of a wider green infrastructure network.

The amount of open space required in new development is identified in the Shropshire Open Space Needs Assessment so does not form part of the GI Strategy. It currently stands at 30m² per bed space but may change subject to the Shropshire Viability and Deliverability Study (currently being commissioned).

6. Aim of the GI Strategy

To deliver good quality well connected new open spaces which contribute to existing green infrastructure through the planning system in ways that:

- conserve, maintain and enhance existing natural features and networks
- address identified health and well-being needs
- support adaptation to, and mitigation of, climate change in areas identified as being vulnerable
- improve air and water quality in areas where relevant limit values or national objectives are not being met.
- increase opportunities for active travel, walking and cycling

7. Expected outcomes

Phase 1

A report with recommendations for planning policies (both strategic and local as necessary) and advice on best practice, with examples of good strategic and local policies from recently adopted Local Plans covering large rural counties similar to Shropshire.

Phase 2

Information on existing GI around LPR settlements and the Strategic Sites plus a series of opportunity maps for new GI so that open space delivered through new residential development can make an appropriate contribution.

8. Other relevant information and liaison requirements

The Council's Natural Environment team has carried out an analysis of the accessibility of existing greenspace and mapped the majority of open spaces in Shropshire. The team has also defined an Environmental Network for the county which supports existing Local Plan policy CS17. A guidance note to support applicants for planning permission affecting the Network is available on the Council's website at

<https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/media/1872/guidance-note-11-environmental-networks-aug13.pdf>

The consultants will be expected to liaise with officers from the following Shropshire Council teams to determine which other documents/studies/data may be relevant to the GI Strategy.

- Outdoor recreation (including the Shropshire Hills AONB team)
- Highways and Transport
- Natural Environment
- Trees
- Flood and Water Management
- Research and Intelligence
- Public Health

The consultants will also be required to liaise with the following bodies to ensure the Shropshire GI Strategy fits with wider initiatives:

- Neighbouring local authorities
- The Marches (Local) Nature Partnership
- The Shropshire Health and Wellbeing Board
- The Marches Local Enterprise Partnership

9. Project Management and Timescales

Officers from the planning policy team at Shropshire Council will oversee the contract. The team is looking to appoint a suitable consultant to complete the work by spring 2020.

Appendix A: Settlements identified for housing growth in the LPR

Settlement Name	Type of Settlement
Albrighton	Key Centre
Alveley	Community Hub
Baschurch	Community Hub
Bayston Hill	Community Hub
Bicton	Community Hub
Bishop's Castle	Key Centre
Bomere Heath	Community Hub
Bridgnorth	Principal Centre
Broseley	Key Centre
Bucknell	Community Hub (AONB)
Burford	Community Hub
Chirbury	Community Hub
Church Stretton	Key Centre (AONB)
Clee Hill/The Knowle	Community Hub (AONB)
Cleobury Mortimer	Key Centre
Clive	Community Hub
Clive Barracks	Strategic Site
Clun	Community Hub (AONB)
Craven Arms	Key Centre
Cressage	Community Hub
Cross Houses	Community Hub
Ditton Priors	Community Hub (AONB)
Dorrington	Community Hub
Ellesmere	Key Centre
Ford	Community Hub
Gobowen	Community Hub
Hadnall	Community Hub
Hanwood	Community Hub
Highley	Key Centre
Hinstock	Community Hub
Hodnet	Community Hub
Ironbridge Power Station	Strategic Site
Junction 3 of the M54	Strategic Site
Kinnerley	Community Hub
Knockin	Community Hub
Llanymynech	Community Hub
Longden	Community Hub
Ludlow	Principal Centre
Market Drayton	Principal Centre
Minsterley	Community Hub
Much Wenlock	Key Centre
Nesscliffe	Community Hub
Oswestry	Principal Centre

Pant	Community Hub
Pontesbury	Community Hub
Prees	Community Hub
RAF Cosford	Strategic Site (Note: site proposed for removal from Green Belt to allow for intensification of existing use rather than to provide new housing to meet Shropshire's needs)
Ruyton XI Towns	Community Hub
Shawbury	Community Hub
Shifnal	Key Centre
Shrewsbury	Strategic Centre
St Martins	Community Hub
Trefonen	Community Hub
Wem	Key Centre
West Felton	Community Hub
Weston Rhyn	Community Hub
Whitchurch	Principal Centre
Whittington	Community Hub
Woore/Irelands Cross	Community Hub
Worthen and Brockton	Community Hub

Appendix B: NPPF requirements and NPPG advice on open space and green infrastructure.

1. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Paragraph 8

Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives):

b) a social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering a well-designed and safe built environment, with accessible services and **open spaces** that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being;

Paragraph 20

Strategic policies should set out an overall strategy for the pattern, scale and quality of development, and make sufficient provision (¹² In line with the presumption in favour of sustainable development) for.....

d) conservation and enhancement of the natural, built and historic environment, including landscapes and **green infrastructure**, and planning measures to address climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Paragraph 83

Planning policies and decisions should enable:

d) the retention and development of accessible local services and community facilities, such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, **open space**, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship.

Paragraph 91

Planning policies and decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which....

c) enable and support healthy lifestyles, especially where this would address identified local health and well-being needs – for example through the provision of safe and accessible **green infrastructure**, sports facilities, local shops, access to healthier food, allotments and layouts that encourage walking and cycling.

Paragraph 92

To provide the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs, planning policies and decisions should:

a) plan positively for the provision and use of shared spaces, community facilities (such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, **open space**, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship) and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments;

Paragraph 96

Access to a network of high-quality **open spaces** and opportunities for sport and physical activity is important for the health and well-being of communities. Planning policies should be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the need for **open space**, sport and recreation facilities (including quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses) and opportunities for new provision. Information gained from the assessments should be used

to determine what **open space**, sport and recreational provision is needed, which plans should then seek to accommodate

Paragraph 150

New development should be planned for in ways that:

- a) avoid increased vulnerability to the range of impacts arising from climate change. When new development is brought forward in areas which are vulnerable, care should be taken to ensure that risks can be managed through suitable adaptation measures, including through the planning of **green infrastructure**;

Paragraph 171

Plans should: distinguish between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites; allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework (⁵³ Where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, areas of poorer quality land should be preferred to those of a higher quality) ; take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and **green infrastructure**; and plan for the enhancement of natural capital at a catchment or landscape scale across local authority boundaries.

Paragraph 181

Planning policies and decisions should sustain and contribute towards compliance with relevant limit values or national objectives for pollutants, taking into account the presence of Air Quality Management Areas and Clean Air Zones, and the cumulative impacts from individual sites in local areas. Opportunities to improve air quality or mitigate impacts should be identified, such as through traffic and travel management, and **green infrastructure** provision and enhancement. So far as possible these opportunities should be considered at the plan-making stage, to ensure a strategic approach and limit the need for issues to be reconsidered when determining individual applications.

2. National Planning Practice Guidance.

Natural Environment: Green Infrastructure

Strategic policies can identify the location of existing and proposed green infrastructure networks and set out appropriate policies for their protection and enhancement. To inform these, and support their implementation, **infrastructure frameworks or strategies prepared at a district-wide scale (or wider) can be a useful tool**. These need to be evidence-based and include assessments of the quality of current green infrastructure and any gaps in provision. Existing national and local strategies – for example on tree and woodland provision – can inform the approach to green infrastructure; and standards such as the Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard can be applied when assessing provision.

The green infrastructure strategy can inform other plan policies, infrastructure delivery requirements and Community Infrastructure Levy schedules. In view of their potential scope and use, authorities need to collaborate with neighbouring authorities and stakeholders such as Local Nature Partnerships, Health and Wellbeing Boards and Local Enterprise Partnerships when developing green infrastructure strategies.

Paragraph: 007 Reference ID: 8-007-20190721

Open space, sports and recreation facilities

Open space should be taken into account in planning for new development and considering proposals that may affect existing **open space** (see National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 96). **Open space**, which includes all **open space** of public value,

can take many forms, from formal sports pitches to open areas within a development, linear corridors and country parks. It can provide health and recreation benefits to people living and working nearby; have an ecological value and contribute to **green infrastructure** (see National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 171, as well as being an important part of the landscape and setting of built development, and an important component in the achievement of sustainable development (see National Planning Policy Framework paragraphs 7-9)

Paragraph: 001 Reference ID: 37-001-20140306