

## **Place Overview Committee**

**08 April 2021**

### **Public Questions and Responses**

#### **From: Charles Green, acting for CPRE Shropshire**

The importance of proper scrutiny of the Local Plan was confirmed by the fact that the work programme presented at the latest meeting of the Place Overview Committee on 2 March continued to list the Local Plan as a topic for consideration this municipal year, with the intended outcomes to (1) Understand the Local Plan seeking to respond to the Climate Change emergency and (2) Comment on the draft plan before its presentation to Council. However, at that meeting on 2 March, it was decided not to include consideration of the Local Plan for the final meeting in April.

The scrutiny function has been characterised as being that of the Council's critical friend. The scrutiny function might therefore be expected to give some measure of independent scrutiny to the work of hard pressed officers on the Local Plan before that Plan gets to the stage of being submitted for public examination, particularly scrutiny in relation to the Climate Change emergency.

In view of the above reasons why independent scrutiny of the Local Plan should take place can you therefore please say whether it is still intended that a Place Overview Committee will be commenting on the Draft Local Plan before its presentation to Council, and list:

- on what occasions the Local Plan has come before Place Overview Committees for Scrutiny since the start of the Local Plan Review process in January 2017;
- the outcomes of such scrutiny by Place Overview Committees, including any outcomes relating to Climate Change;
- on what occasions the Local Plan has come before the Local Plan Member Group for Scrutiny since the start of the Local Plan Review process in January 2017; and
- the outcomes of such scrutiny by the Local Plan Member Group including any outcomes relating to Climate Change?

#### **Response:**

The Local Plan Member Group has met on several occasions since the commencement of the Local Plan Review.

#### **15 November 2018:**

Public question time regarding the Local Plan's hierarchy of settlements; members agreed to consider the hierarchy as part of any agreed scrutiny of the draft local plan.

#### **18 July 2019:**

Public question regarding scrutiny of the draft local plan. No recommendations made.

#### **5 September 2019:**

Public question regarding scrutiny of the draft local plan. No recommendations made.

Public question time regarding the Local Plan's hierarchy of settlements. No recommendations made. Agenda item on Local Plan. No recommendations made, although a committee member was invited to participate in the member reference group.

The cross party Local Plan Member Group is not a formally constituted committee or sub-committee, and as such there is no committee support or formal recording of minutes. Its purpose is not to provide decision making or formal scrutiny, but instead provides a suitable space to deliver an informal platform for officer/member interface on key issues, and at appropriate times in the process. As such there is no formal outcome of this Group relating to its scrutiny of the Local Plan's response to climate change.

**From: Peta Sams**

As a county we seem to be well behind what many other authorities are achieving in terms of provision for biodiversity so what targets does this council have in place to genuinely improve biodiversity across Shropshire?

**Response:**

In 2012 Shropshire Council founded the Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin Local Nature Partnership (now the Marches Nature Partnership - MNP) as part of a nationwide network of LNPs and commissioned an assessment of the areas' Natural Capital, one of the first Local Authority area to do so. It has also facilitated many other projects including the Freshwater First project led by Shropshire Wildlife Trust – another key partner in the Marches Nature Partnership.

Shropshire Council is in the early stages of working with partners to begin to deliver the objectives of the emerging Nature Recovery Network for England, a key part of the Environment Bill, which aims to expand, improve and connect wildlife-rich places across our towns, cities and countryside, with specific targets for delivery which will filter down to county areas.

Under the Environment Bill, Shropshire Council will be responsible for compiling and reporting on the delivering of a Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Shropshire which will identify priorities for nature's recovery and target action and investment to deliver the NRN in Shropshire. A wide range of stakeholders will need to be involved, through a local NRN delivery partnership.

In 2019 Shropshire Council adopted a tree planting target of 345,000 new trees by 2050 (later revised to 2030); one for each resident of the county. In the 2020 to 2021 tree planting season we allocated 28,500 trees for planting.

Shropshire Council is one of five Local Authorities engaged in a £2.5m Defra and Tree Council led pilot project seeking the best approaches to encouraging planting trees outside of woodland. We have £390,000 over the next 2 years to help test approaches. A large proportion of these funds will be spent directly on trees and their protective infrastructure. We have a focus on agro-forestry, community tree nurseries, and subsidised tree schemes for the public.

Shropshire Council was a founder member of the Shropshire Climate Action Partnership providing a financial boost to its establishment. We are still an active member and contribute to several sub-groups including the Land & Biodiversity Group. We are currently drafting a paper on biodiversity on behalf of the group and would welcome feedback when this is available. The current biodiversity targets set by the group are aspirational and we are working with the partners on alternative or additional targets that can be effectively measured.

Also what policies does it have in place to ensure net biodiversity gain on new developments and ensuring developers are working to the latest best practice and guidance eg Living with Beauty?

**Response:**

The Ecology Team at Shropshire Council respond to planning consultations, ensuring that protection and enhancement of the environment are secured as part of planning proposals.

In line with national planning policy (NPPF) and local plan policies (made up of the adopted Core Strategy and SamDEV) enhancement for biodiversity is recommended on all relevant developments.

Shropshire Council was an early adopter of environmental network maps to help guide policy. Over the period of the current Local Plan we have used the Shropshire Environmental Network mapping to help assess planning applications.

The council is currently in the early stages of exploring with partners the mechanisms that will be required to enable a 10% net gain for biodiversity to be delivered across Shropshire (as required by the Environment Bill) when it receives royal assent, likely Autumn 2021. The Government has indicated that a three- year lead in time will allow systems to be set up to enable the implementation of biodiversity net gain.

The new Local Plan for Shropshire is currently in the late stages of development and is due to be subject to public examination this summer. Several policies regarding the natural environment, and particularly enhancement of biodiversity are included in the plan, of particular note are the following:

- Strategic Policy 6: Health and Well-Being – Ensuring new developments deliver effective facilities, layout, design etc to promote health and well-being.
- Development Policy 12 – Natural Environment – includes requirement for development to deliver a minimum 10% net gain for biodiversity.
- Development Policy 13 – Green Infrastructure – development should avoid the loss of, or harm to, existing green infrastructure assets (including the Shropshire environmental and ecological network - details of which are available here: <https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/environment/biodiversity-ecology-and-planning/shropshire-environmental-network/>) and enhance and extend the green infrastructure network.

On adoption, these policies will replace existing Core Strategy and SamDev policies and make up the policy context against which development proposals will be decided,

leading to measurable net gains in biodiversity through development and improved health and well-being.

**From: Laura Hoskison**

I hear a lot of complaints about traffic in my local area, which is the Battlefield ward. While I understand that it is one of the main roads into the town centre, I was wondering if two ideas could be considered:

1. A 20mph speed limit along Featherbed Lane, which would mean safer crossing for the children at Harlescott Junior.
2. An 'except for access' lorry ban along Featherbed Lane and Harlescott Lane. Lorries would still be able to access the Battlefield Industrial Estate via the A49 and it could cut down on the traffic attempting to cross the Harlescott Crossing as a shortcut from the Telford direction.

**Response:**

The funding and staffing resources for implementing road safety schemes is limited and as such needs to be considered alongside other priorities across the county to ensure that the available budgets are targeted at those sites where they can make the most difference. Last year Council agreed to the development of a Safer Streets programme around all schools in the county and officers and assessments are being undertaken to develop the programme of works which will include 20mph zones where appropriate. It is likely to take approximately 3 years to implement measures across all schools and those with existing accident problems will be of course targeted as a priority. A full programme of implementation will be available soon.

With regards to a Lorry ban, the request will be logged onto the councils systems for the traffic team to investigate alongside other similar requests, and if considered a priority when compared to other areas of concern, will be put forward for funding in future works programmes. Mrs Hoskison will be advised of the outcome. It should be noted however that teams are currently focussed on social distancing measures to allow Shropshire businesses to open up in line with the governments roadmap and therefore it may take several weeks for this review to be undertaken.

**From: Rita Baker**

It is evident all around us that our county is being denuded of biodiversity through the increasing mechanisation of farming and housing and other developments. What plans does the council have in place ensure that biodiversity across Shropshire will increase over the next decade and what biodiversity targets is it hoping to achieve?

**Response:**

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network of LNPs and commissioned an assessment of the areas' Natural Capital, one of the first Local Authority area to do so. It has also facilitated many other projects including the Freshwater First project led by Shropshire Wildlife Trust – another key partner in the Marches Nature Partnership.

Shropshire Council is in the early stages of working with partners to begin to deliver the objectives of the emerging Nature Recovery Network for England, a key part of the Environment Bill, which aims to expand, improve and connect wildlife-rich places across our towns, cities and countryside, with specific targets for delivery which will filter down to county areas.

Under the Environment Bill, Shropshire Council will be responsible for compiling and reporting on the delivering of a Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Shropshire which will identify priorities for nature's recovery and target action and investment to deliver the NRN in Shropshire. A wide range of stakeholders will need to be involved, through a local NRN delivery partnership.

Current strategies that will feed into this work include the Shropshire Green Infrastructure Strategy, Zero Carbon Shropshire Plan, Shropshire Hills Management Plan, to name but a few.

In 2019 Shropshire Council adopted a tree planting target of 345,000 new trees by 2050 (later revised to 2030); one for each resident of the county. In the 2020 to 2021 tree planting season we allocated 28,500 trees for planting.

Shropshire Council was a founder member of the Shropshire Climate Action Partnership providing a financial boost to its establishment. We are still an active member and contribute to several sub-groups including the Land & Biodiversity Group. We are currently drafting a paper on biodiversity on behalf of the group and would welcome feedback when this is available. The current biodiversity targets set by the group are aspirational and we are working with the partners on alternative or additional targets that can be effectively measured.

In terms of development management, and the promotion of biodiversity, the Ecology Team at Shropshire Council respond to planning consultations, ensuring that protection and enhancement of the environment are secured as part of planning proposals.

In line with national policy (NPPF) and local plan policies (made up of the adopted Core Strategy and SamDEV) enhancement for biodiversity is recommended on all relevant developments.

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