Economic Growth Strategy Refresh

SWOT Analysis

Supporting Local Business

Strategic Locations

Employment & Skills

Supporting Local Businesses

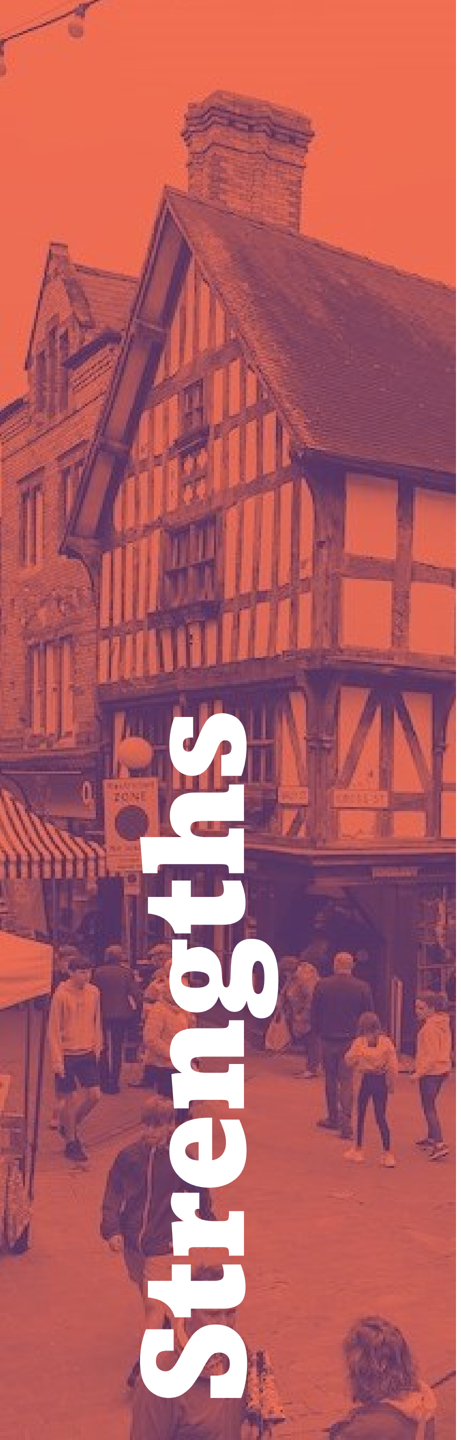
Thriving small business economy; distinct business demography:

- Higher than national average business start-up survival rates after 5 years 49.4% (42.5% nationally) and self-employment (14.2% of 16-64 yr olds; nationally 9.4%)
- 60 high-growth businesses
- 90.7% enterprises employ 0-9 people (14,280 enterprises)

(Sources: NOMIS 15/10/21 and ONS Business Demography 2019)

Business support and innovation assets/services, including the Chamber, FSB, University Centre Shrewsbury, MGH Shropshire

Targeted support for specific age groups (Silverpreneurs; Chamber 18-35 group)



Strategic Locations

Stakeholder engagement and collaborative approach to strategy development, e.g. Economic Task Force and links with WMCA and mid-Wales; River Severn Partnership

Natural assets: 23% of county designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty; part of two World Heritage Sites; (*Shropshire's Great Outdoors,* 2018)

Improved digital connectivity (since 2014 'superfast' broadband coverage has increased in Shropshire from only 24% to over 94% in 2020)

Work to date on specific sites/growth corridors, including innovation assets/networks

Tourism offer significant contributor to economy

Visitors to Shropshire are likely to visit multiple small towns in on one trip – this is unique

Shropshire is the second biggest producer of renewable energy in the UK

Libraries within local communities provide delivery point for new services

Skills & Employment

Higher than national average performance in a number of employment and skills demographics for 16-64 year olds:

- 14.2% self-employed (nationally 9.4%)
- 10.9% females self-employed (nationally 6.7%)
- Lower than national average number of residents with no qualifications (4.6% compared with 6.4% nationally)

(Source: NOMIS data available 15/10/21)

Gender pay gap closing more quickly in Shropshire than nationally

Education assets and skills offer, including MCMT and University Centre Shrewsbury

Top employment sectors include retail and health

Weaknesses

Supporting Local Businesses

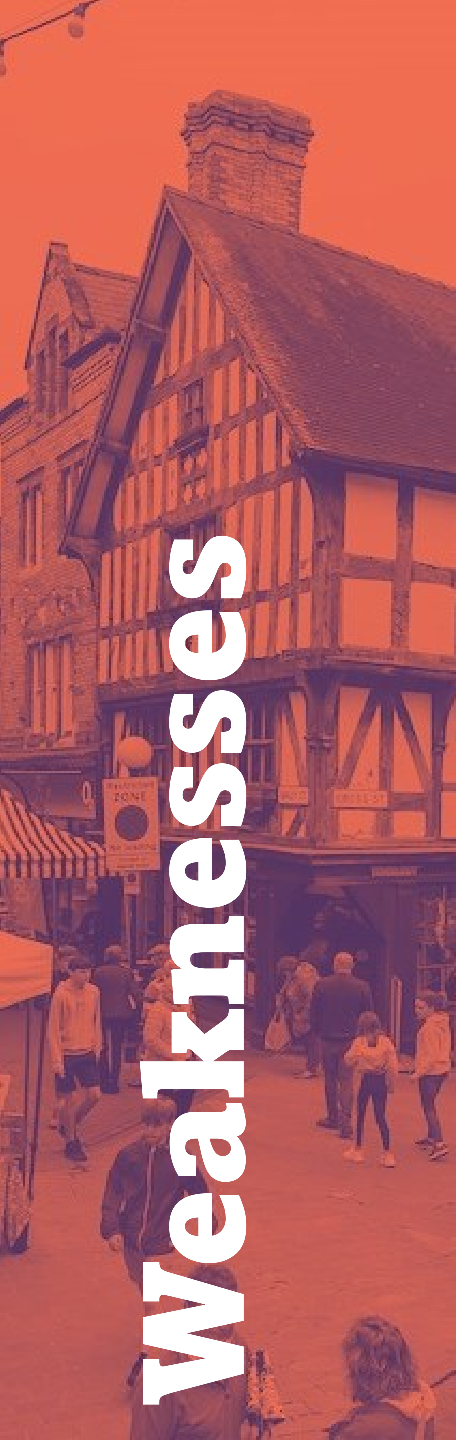
Post-Covid recruitment, retention and debt challenges

Perception of Shropshire’s business support landscape as complex; lack of awareness of Shropshire’s strengths and offer

Supply chain sustainability

Lower than national average GVA per head (2019): £19,737 (£27,555 nationally)

Planning process is too long



Strategic Locations

Poor transport links within the county; poor mobile phone coverage

Large county with multiple, disparate identities; social loneliness and isolation; deprivation relating to housing (IMD, 2019)

Perception that there is no place offer for young people (IPPR North, 2017)

Some demographics (e.g. elderly, unemployed) less likely to access/be near to greenspace (*Shropshire's Great Outdoors*, 2018)

Closure of small rural businesses, e.g. pubs (*Shropshire's Great Outdoors*, 2018)

Even pre-Covid, 90 % of tourist visits were day trips rather than higher yielding short breaks

Shropshire's strengths/assets not well known outside of the county

Parking availability in small towns/poor public transport access

Housing availability

Skills & Employment

Lower than national average performance in relation to:

- Worker and resident salaries are lower
- Fewer residents educated to NVQ4+ (NOMIS)
- Lower levels of workplace training (2019)

Digital exclusion affecting children

Perception that there is a lack of information available relating to skills opportunities; negative perceptions related to ‘ageing population’ (IPPR North, 2017)

Increase in out of work benefits claimants (but lower than national average)

High level of out-commuting amongst the top earners and, conversely, relatively high levels of in-commuting amongst the lowest paid (Shropshire Council Earnings Report, July 2021)

Post-16 skills/training offer outside of Shrewsbury is lacking and poor accessibility to what offer there is

Cross-cutting through all 3 Themes

Government funding, e.g. UK Shared Prosperity Fund – how can we influence this opportunity; what would it deliver?

Devolution and LEP reform/increased business involvement in placemaking – how do we influence/exploit this; what are our key messages?

Supporting Local Businesses

Support Shropshire's businesses to benefit directly from Government initiatives, e.g. Help to Grow: Digital

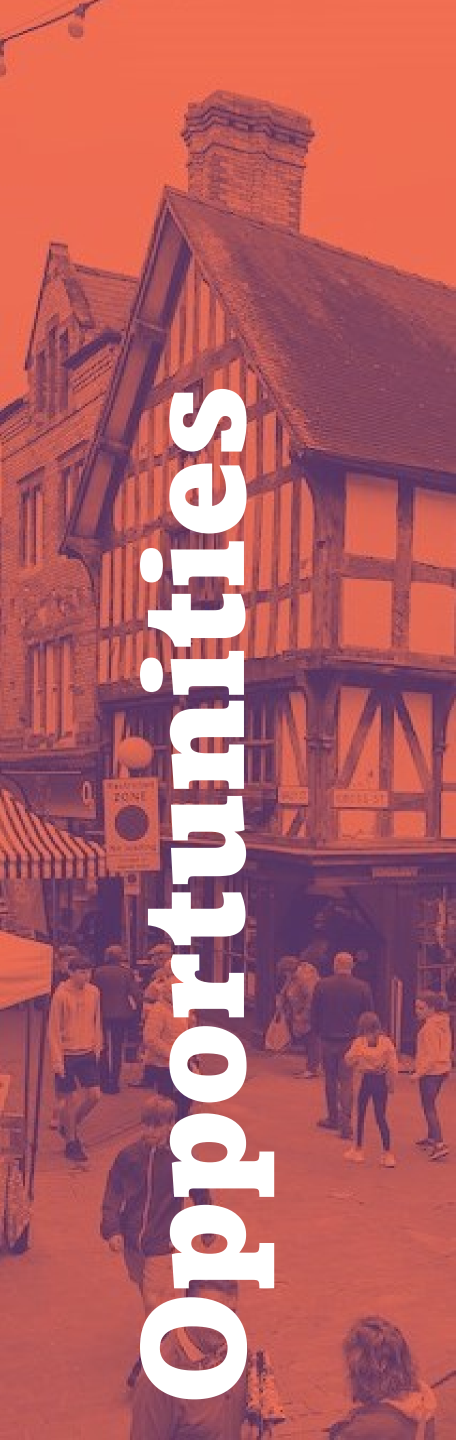
Align developments with 'technology families' outlined in the Government's UK Innovation Strategy (2021), Green Task Force Report, and WMCA's vision for the West Midlands as 'the best region in the UK to do business'

Increase targeted support for entrepreneurs, linking with skills agenda and emerging sector strengths; more peer-to-peer support; reverse mentoring; provide back office functions as a service for small businesses; establish a forum for microbusinesses to ask small, quick questions

How can our businesses work towards and benefit from COP26/Net Zero?

Consider businesses as members of their local communities

Share relevant data to help businesses make better-informed choices and decisions



Strategic Locations

British Commonwealth Games (Birmingham, 2022) – how do we exploit the potential for Shropshire?

Post-Covid working practices, i.e. more people working from home and able to live rurally – how do we promote this to support our strategic locations? 39% of businesses intend to continue to work remotely (Shropshire Business Impact Tracker, December 2020)

Further develop influence with neighbouring areas, e.g. WMCA and Mid-Wales – what are the priorities?

High Street regeneration – how can we use these spaces to support our plans for Shropshire?

Work closely with local planners; harness support of local volunteers – utilising the full network of expertise and support; consider design quality and sustainability

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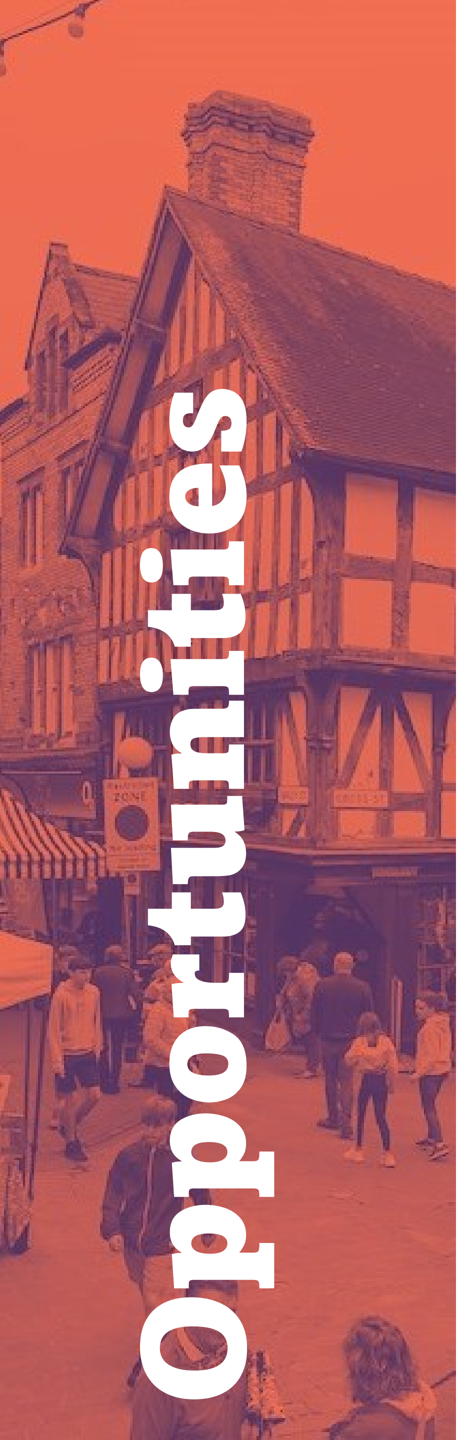

Strategic Locations

Climate Emergency response; develop environmental innovation cluster – how can we make this distinct in Shropshire?

How can we maximise Shropshire's 'staycation' potential?

Alignment with Smarter Shropshire developments; consider the virtual space as a strategic location

Establish hubs providing support to supply chains and individuals moving into the county to access and develop its strengths and opportunities

Build and better promote Shropshire's reputation for sustainability

Skills & Employment

Estimated 5,035 direct jobs in Shropshire's low carbon and renewable energy sector by 2050; West Midlands is expected to see highest job growth in: Low emission vehicles and infrastructure; Energy efficiency; and Low-carbon heat (LGA Inform) – do we recognise this demand; how can we prepare for/exploit it?

Promote free/subsidised skills opportunities, e.g. Help to Grow: Digital/Management and Institute of Coding courses to more businesses

'Technology Families' and Skills Value Chain outlined in the Government's UK Innovation Strategy (2021) – how could we exploit this; how well does it align with current activity?

Green Task Force Report – how do we reflect this in our employment and skills support, for individuals and industry?

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Skills & Employment

Collaborative working between businesses and skills providers for more short/flexible courses that respond to business and learner need; more apprenticeships and work-based skills; taster courses delivered in/to rural locations

Communication exercise to make trade careers more attractive to young people

Develop specific skills pathways, including for 16-24 yr olds and 55+ and those into and within businesses

Attract more undergraduates from across the country, not just the county

Better connect schools and businesses

Cross-cutting through all 3 Themes

On-going and immediate effects of Covid-19 (social and economic) force a short-termism approach to strategy/affects investment

Economic uncertainty nationally as a result of Brexit and Covid-19

National policy uncertainty, e.g. future role of LEPs

Uncertainty about what ‘the new normal’ will look like longer term, post-Covid-19, and what this means in terms of the infrastructure/facilities/support required

Decreasing public sector funding available; impact of comprehensive spending review

Supporting Local Businesses

Flood threat/response affects businesses

Maintaining workforce wellbeing in response to change

Uncertainties in the external environment impact on workforce/skills pipeline/succession planning

Strategic Locations

Environmental concerns: how to balance increased access to and protection of Shropshire's natural assets

How to balance wellbeing and the challenges of rurality/connected communities with the need for economic growth and response to change

Skills & Employment

Gap widens between skills provider supply and employer skills demand; skilled people leave the county/failure to secure a skills pipeline for succession planning

Post-Brexit and Covid, small businesses not able to prioritise skills/struggle to find an entry point to access support

Under-employment/low-value employment

Time required to develop and deliver new skills

Do we have the right networks/infrastructure in place to realise the opportunities?