

PROPOSED SHREWSBURY NORTH WEST RELIEF ROAD – BENEFITS OF THE SCHEME.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This note has been prepared by Shropshire Council (SC) as the Applicant for the Shrewsbury North West Relief Road (NWRR) in order to clearly demonstrate the benefits of the Scheme which are as follows:

- Journey time savings, enhanced resilience, reduced congestion and improved safety of the existing Strategy Road Network (SRN).
- The average daily flow on the A528 northbound is predicted to reduce by 22% at the PM peak with the Scheme in place and 23% in the AM peak.
- The Proposed Scheme could significantly reduce the journey time for the last 3-4 miles into Shrewsbury Town Centre which would make bus travel more attractive.
- The Proposed Scheme would also increase resilience of the network during traffic incidents, planned maintenance and flood events.
- Traffic reductions along the entry points to the town centre at Welsh Bridge and Castle Gates.
- A route through the town centre via The Mount, Smithfield Road and Chester Street, shows up to a potential 64% reduction in traffic flows in the PM peak compared to without the Scheme eastbound and potential for a 50% reduction in a westbound direction in the 2023 modelled year.
- A peak hour journey from A5 Churncote to A49 Battlefield would take about 7-8 minutes using the NWRR, instead of about 20 minutes through the town centre or 15 minutes on the bypass.
- A permanent improvement in severance on Oxon Pool and Pool Wood is anticipated.
- The Scheme provides the critical highway infrastructure necessary to facilitate development of 750 dwellings and up to 12ha of employment land included in Shrewsbury West Sustainable Urban Extension (SUE) Masterplan via the Oxon Link Road part of the Scheme.
- The Scheme would reduce traffic from Welshpool Road, changing its function and character, and would provide an improved environment for Non-Motorised Users (NMUs).
- The Scheme would provide a high standard route between locations to the west of the town and employment areas to the north of Shrewsbury and beyond.



- The Scheme would enhance the town's public transport network, particularly for direct journeys between destinations in the north and west of the town, such as the Royal Shrewsbury Hospital, which will make journeys for emergency vehicles faster and more reliable.
- The reallocation of traffic onto the higher standard NWRR and away from the more urban environment, would improve road safety by reducing the potential for conflicts points while providing improved visibility and segregation for NMUs.
- Those dwellings fronting roads that currently experience high road noise levels would reduce in number to 287 dwellings (132 fewer dwellings).
- With the Proposed Scheme, the reduction in emissions will be larger than without it (a difference of 6.6µg/m³).
- Throughout the Scheme, adjacent to the southside of the carriageway for 6.9km, a shared 3m wide footway/cycleway facility will be provided, with additional 0.5m buffer zones to the carriageway and any vertical feature.
- Projected construction employment is likely to be 50 to 100 gross construction employees during the two-year construction period.
- 18% reduction in traffic flows during the morning and evening peak hours on A458 Welshpool Road which can be seen from Christ Church and Rose Villa Listed Buildings, and also the Conservation Area. This would lead to reduced noise and improved air quality, as well as improving views of the road from these heritage assets.

INTRODUCTION

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), Paragraph 180(c) requires that development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists. This note has been prepared by WSP on behalf of Shropshire Council (SC) as the Applicant for the Shrewsbury North West Relief Road (NWRR) in order to clearly demonstrate the benefits of the Scheme when weighed in the planning balance and therefore there are 'wholly exceptional circumstances' justifying the granting planning permission in the public interest.

BENEFITS OF THE SCHEME

Following the combination of the NWRR and the Oxon Link Road (OLR) elements of the Scheme in December 2019, a set of common objectives for the joint scheme were agreed by SC's Full Council in February 2020. The OLR was a highways improvement scheme that pre-dates (2018) the NWRR and comprised improvements from Churncote Roundabout to the B4380, approximately a third of the NWRR Scheme. The Scheme objectives are:



- *To improve regional and local access and connectivity by enhancing the resilience of the strategic and local network, reducing traffic congestion and improving journey time reliability for all modes of transport;*
- *To provide the infrastructure needed to facilitate Shrewsbury’s development strategy for the Shrewsbury West SUE under Policy CS2 of the adopted Core Strategy, by enabling the provision of an existing housing allocation for 700 new dwellings and the improvement of the Local Centre on Welshpool Road;*
- *To support the economic growth and competitiveness of Shrewsbury and Shropshire by enabling the provision of an additional 9 – 12 hectares of employment land, to be used for the potential expansion of Oxon Business Park, a business campus and a gateway commercial area;*
- *To enhance the benefits of other current and anticipated transport investment schemes, including the A49/A5 Dobbies Island junction, the Preston Boats junction, the Emstrey roundabout and the Shrewsbury Integrated Transport Package (“SITP”);*
- *To improve road safety and reduce road casualties and accidents, in part by reducing heavy traffic from unsuitable routes and rat-running on unsuitable rural roads;*
- *To protect and enhance Shrewsbury’s built and natural environment by reducing emissions of CO₂ and other greenhouse gases and minimising the environmental impact of the Proposed Scheme; and*
- *To support sustainable modes of transport, particularly by altering the form and function of Welshpool Road and by the inclusion of the combined footpath / cycle way along the Proposed Scheme route.*

The objectives specifically for the Scheme are achieved as set out in the following sections.

IMPROVE REGIONAL AND LOCAL ACCESS AND CONNECTIVITY

The Transport Assessment (**Document Reference 70056211-WSP-TTM-AS-RP-TR-00001**) submitted with the planning application for the Proposed Scheme and subsequent supporting information (Technical Notes) set out the journey time savings, enhanced resilience, reduced congestion and improved safety of the existing Strategy Road Network (SRN) which will be achieved by implementation of the Proposed Scheme through providing an alternative route and reducing the burden on the existing SRN.

Chapter 3 of the Transport Assessment describes the existing conditions on the road network. It notes that road links between the north and west of Shrewsbury are presently very poor. The most direct route passes through the “river loop” and consists entirely of single carriageway, all-purpose roads, including residential and shopping streets. Congestion on these routes, particularly the A458 and A528 in Shrewsbury Town Centre, causes delays of up to ten minutes and makes journeys unreliable. For example, the existing average daily flow (measured in 2017) northbound on the A528 was 7024 vehicles and southbound was 5710 vehicles (see Table 5-2 of the Transport Assessment).

Chapter 5 of the Transport Assessment sets out what the impacts will be of the Proposed Scheme. Continuing the example set out above, the average daily flow on the A528 northbound is predicted to reduce by 22% at the PM peak with the Scheme in place and 23% in the AM peak (see Figure 5-3 and 5-4 in the Transport Assessment).



Current congestion (identified through surveys undertaken and collecting Traffic Master data, see Chapter 3 of the Transport Assessment) means that some of the traffic between north and west uses other, longer routes to avoid the town centre. Extra traffic on the distributor ring road and the outer bypass adds to the congestion on these important routes and reduces the resilience of the network overall. The Proposed Scheme will be particularly beneficial for direct journeys between destinations in the north and west of the town, such as the Royal Shrewsbury Hospital, which will make journeys for emergency vehicles faster and more reliable (see page 232 of the Transport Assessment).

The Proposed Scheme could significantly reduce the journey time for the last 3-4 miles into the Town Centre which would make bus travel more attractive, including Park and Ride as part of the planned enhancements to the offer. This will in turn promote and encourage travel by bus, and the SC Passenger Transport Group Manager has indicated the Proposed Scheme, coupled with other bus priority interventions, could be extremely beneficial for public transport in Shrewsbury. An assessment of journey times on routes currently served by buses (see page 232 of the Transport Assessment) reveals that a number of significant time savings would be likely to accrue as a result of the Scheme.

The Scheme would significantly enhance the resilience of the SRN (the SRN includes all motorways and some major 'A' roads), which includes the A5 and A49, particularly when incidents or planned maintenance occurs on either the SRN or the local highway network. Currently, in the event of congestion, perhaps due to an incident or planned maintenance, traffic between the Woodcote and Battlefield roundabouts may be forced to divert onto local roads through the town centre to reach destinations to the north and northeast of the town. The Proposed Scheme would also increase resilience of the network during a flood event as it is noted the town centre roads were closed during the last major flood event from the River Severn in February 2020.

Similarly, congestion within the town centre may cause traffic which may have otherwise used local roads to reroute onto the SRN to reach their destination. The Transport Assessment (Table 5-17 and 5-18) shows traffic reductions along the entry points to the town centre at Welsh Bridge and Castle Gates as a result of the Proposed Scheme. These reductions in town centre traffic assists to reduce congestion and delays in the town centre and frees up capacity to facilitate other potential enhancements.

A route that traffic takes through the town centre via The Mount, Smithfield Road and Chester Street, which is the specific route that is anticipated traffic would most likely reassign from to the Proposed Scheme, shows up to a potential 64% reduction in traffic flows in the PM peak compared to without the Scheme eastbound and potential for a 50% reduction in a westbound direction in the 2023 modelled year (Table 5-19 of the Transport Assessment).



The NWRR will provide a new, high standard, direct route between the north and west of Shrewsbury, offering big time savings for road users. For example, a peak hour journey from A5 Churncote to A49 Battlefield would take about 7-8 minutes using the NWRR, instead of about 20 minutes through the town centre or 15 minutes on the bypass (paragraph 5.4.37 of the Transport Assessment). Traffic will therefore transfer from the existing routes, reducing congestion and making them more efficient. These benefits will be felt over a wide area, including the outer bypasses and rural lanes, as well as the roads leading into and through the town centre.

The Scheme would provide an alternative and reliable route that would reduce the burden on both the SRN and the local highway network. It would also allow for temporary diversions to be implemented should either maintenance or improvement works need to be carried out on the SRN or where there are planned events or utility works in the town centre. Currently, if incidents occur on the SRN around Shrewsbury (i.e. A5 and A49) then traffic diverts and finds alternative routes across and through Shrewsbury on roads not intended for strategic traffic. The Scheme creates a route which connects A5 at Churncote Roundabout with A528 and A5124 at Ellesmere Road Roundabout and provides a high standard direct route between the north and west of Shrewsbury as an alternative route around Shrewsbury offering time savings for road users which avoids the town centre and residential areas, and therefore avoids the need for rat running.

A permanent improvement in severance on Oxon Pool and Pool Wood is anticipated. This is due to the additional or improved access provision provided along the Proposed Scheme, including a new Public Right of Way (PRoW) and shared footway and cycleway. The provision of new shared footway and cycleway along the length of the Proposed Scheme would benefit the connection between the north and west of Shrewsbury and communities along the Proposed Scheme including Bicton, Rosehill, Coton Hill, Mount Pleasant, Battlefield, and Bowbrook where access to the community facilities is likely to be improved. Access to Oxon Business Park is also expected to be improved.

PROVIDE THE INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDED TO FACILITATE SHREWSBURY'S DEVELOPMENT

The Scheme provides the critical highway infrastructure necessary to facilitate residential (750 dwellings) and up to 12ha of employment land (to be used for the potential expansion of Oxon Business Park, a business campus and a gateway commercial area) included in Shrewsbury West Sustainable Urban Extension (SUE) Masterplan (see Policy S16 of the SAMDev Adopted Plan) via the Oxon Link Road part of the Scheme. Development of the Shrewsbury West SUE is already underway (296 dwellings with planning permission), and the Proposed Scheme will need to be in place for this first phase to be completed by providing access to open space for example (see Section 3.6 of the Shrewsbury West SUE Masterplan [shrewsbury-west-sue-masterplan-february-2014.pdf \(shropshire.gov.uk\)](#)).

The Scheme would reduce traffic from Welshpool Road, changing its function and character to serve new and existing developments, Shrewsbury West in particular, and would provide an improved environment for Non-Motorised Users (NMUs) with enhanced connections to the existing PRoW network. This will complement the emerging Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWiP) and Local Transport Plan (LTP) 4 proposed schemes.



SUPPORT THE ECONOMIC GROWTH AND COMPETITIVENESS OF SHREWSBURY AND SHROPSHIRE

As Shrewsbury continues to develop and grow, the problems caused by congestion are expected to get worse, affecting the town's economy and local people's quality of life. Policy CS1 of the Shropshire Local Development Framework: Adopted Core Strategy aims to deliver 27,500 homes and 290ha of employment land between 2006 and 2026. SC is able to demonstrate it has more than a five year housing land supply and therefore it is delivering on its aims (it has 5.64 years against the requirement within the adopted Core Strategy (Adopted Local Plan Five Year Housing Supply Statement, March 2022)).

The Marches Local Enterprise Partnership Growth Deal Round 1 states *"In addition to being an enabling project, the key outcomes for the OLR over its lifetime include 1,090 jobs being created, 835 new dwellings delivered, and additional employment land being unlocked"* when referring to the Oxon Link Road part of the Proposed Scheme.

The Scheme would provide a high standard route between locations to the west of the town and employment areas to the north of Shrewsbury (including Battlefield Enterprise Park) and beyond. Similar benefits would also apply to business users wishing to travel between employment locations within Shrewsbury, such as the Oxon Business Park and Battlefield Enterprise Park.

The analysis undertaken as part of the Outline Business Case (OBC) for the Scheme concluded that transport user benefits expected to accrue over the 60-year appraisal period were 'significant' and related to travel time savings (as described in the Transport Assessment) and reductions in vehicle operating costs for both businesses and commuters.

Journeys to work and for business can be slow and unreliable, adding to the cost of transport (including public transport) and discouraging investment. The Proposed Scheme will facilitate more reliable bus services, primarily through reduced congestion on existing roads. The Scheme will therefore provide improved accessibility for local people.

The Shrewsbury Business Chamber has submitted a letter of support (dated 18 July 2023) indicating they perceive the following benefits:

"1. It will reduce vehicular traffic from the town centre and approach roads, as well as from the villages of Forton, Fitz, Leaton, Bomere Heath, etc.

2. The new link between Shrewsbury's employment areas of Oxon and Battlefield business parks, and from Oswestry and Mid-Wales to north Shrewsbury and the A41/A49 will help to maintain the town's historic position as a commercial centre serving the wider Border Counties area.

3. It will expand Shrewsbury's capacity to capture more employment within the Town and its surrounds by providing an additional link between the West Midlands/Staffordshire conurbations and North Wales.

4. Shrewsbury has an ageing population increasingly dependent on social services. It is important that there is a strong local employment base to fund this. Employment areas require appropriate support infrastructure.



5. Moreover, changing employment and retailing trends – accelerated by the effects of the Covid-19 Pandemic – have resulted in a large increase in demand for light industrial and storage and distribution space to accommodate the requirements of home working and shopping. The Relief Road will help to manage traffic around the town and into/from Mid Wales by courier companies and similar concerns.

6. Construction of the road may give long term opportunities for environmentally important infrastructure projects including railway halt stations at Battlefield and Baschurch, and flood alleviation works in the Berwick and Alkmund Park areas. Immediate objectives could include a more pleasant pedestrian and cycling access into the town centre as a result of less cross town car traffic, and greater use of Park & Ride. This should lead to a much better town centre experience to aid tourism, and greater use of its facilities by the catchment population which will maintain and increase the local economy.

7. Reducing the tailbacks in and around the Town Centre will result in much greater flexibility to implement improvements in the Smithfield Road area, taking into account the Big Town Plan.”

In addition, ABPUK operate and significantly develop two major manufacturing sites within Shropshire and work with other major service providers in the county e.g. Penton’s Oswestry, MJ Refrigeration, Coldmove Oswestry, CML/MMF Telford and Americold Whitchurch. Traffic movements involve transport of raw materials to factories, distribution of goods from factories to storage and dispatch of those goods to customers in the UK and overseas. Staff also travel between sites in Shrewsbury/Ellesmere and Oswestry. In the opinion of ABPUK, “a major northern link road between Oswestry and Shrewsbury which would negate the need to pass below Shrewsbury which would save time, fuel and no doubt take commercial traffic away from the current A road system.”

As stated above, the Proposed Scheme could significantly reduce the journey time for the last 3-4 miles into the Town Centre which would make bus travel more attractive. This will in turn promote and encourage travel by bus, and the SC Passenger Transport Group Manager has indicated the Proposed Scheme, coupled with other bus priority interventions, could be extremely beneficial for public transport in Shrewsbury.

Reduction to congestion and delays in the town centre would also free up capacity to facilitate other completing and potential enhancements. These include the Shrewsbury Integrated transport Package and the LUF2 Package 2 public realm and active travel project adjacent to the Station.

ENHANCE THE BENEFITS OF OTHER CURRENT AND ANTICIPATED TRANSPORT INVESTMENT SCHEMES

The Scheme would create capacity, reduce delays, and improve journey times both in the town centre and on the SRN thus integrating with, and enhancing the benefits of, other current and anticipated transport investment schemes, including the A49/A5 Dobbies Island junction, the Preston Boats junction, the Emstrey roundabout, the SITP and the Levelling Up Fund (LUF) 2 Package 2 Shrewsbury Programme.



The Scheme also presents an opportunity to enhance the town's public transport network, particularly for direct journeys between destinations in the north and west of the town, such as the Royal Shrewsbury Hospital, which will make journeys for emergency vehicles faster and more reliable. An assessment of journey times on routes currently served by buses reveals that a number of significant time savings would be likely to accrue as a result of the Scheme (page 232, Transport Assessment).

The Proposed Scheme would significantly enhance the resilience of the SRN, particularly when incidents occur on either the SRN or the local highway network. Currently, in the event of congestion, perhaps due to an incident, planned maintenance, utility works or town centre planned events, traffic between the Woodcote and Battlefield roundabouts may be forced to divert onto local roads through the town centre in order to reach destinations to the north and northeast of the town. Similarly, congestion within the town centre may cause traffic which may have otherwise used local roads to reroute onto the SRN in order to reach their destination. In both instances, the Proposed Scheme provides an alternative which reduces the burden on both the SRN and the local highway network. It would also allow for temporary diversions to be implemented should maintenance or improvement works need to be carried out on the SRN.

IMPROVE ROAD SAFETY

Accident rates are higher on roads not designed to modern standards. This is particularly due to design to reduce speeds which therefore reduce pedestrian casualties (Strategic Framework for Road Safety, DfT, 2011). In total, 38 road traffic collisions took place in the vicinity of the Scheme, resulting in 54 casualties between 2014 and 2019 (see Table 3-13 of the Transport Assessment).

The Scheme will involve introducing road safety measures to reduce accidents, including signing and lining improvements plus Vehicle Activated Sign (VAS) technology. As part of the Scheme, a Road Safety Audit including a decision log outlining 15 safety measures proposed has been provided (**Document Reference 70056211-WSP-HGN-AS-RP-CH-00002**).

Some traffic uses the network of small lanes to the north-west of Shrewsbury as rat-runs to avoid the town altogether. For example, there were 10 collisions (3 serious) resulting in 14 casualties in Huffley Lane between 2014 and 2019 (Table 3-31 of the Transport Assessment), which is where the biggest impact has been. However, the majority of collisions appear to be caused by driver error rather than highway design (para.3.7.16, Transport Assessment). To the north of Shrewsbury, rat running routes do not pass any schools, but do pass through village centres that could be affected by issues resulting from rat running such as increased noise, congestion and safety concerns.

In addition to the road safety measures, the reallocation of traffic onto the higher standard NWRR and away from the more urban environment, would improve road safety by reducing the potential for conflicts points (e.g. at junctions, property frontages) while providing improved visibility and segregation for NMUs.



A reduction in driver stress is also anticipated (see paragraph 51 of Chapter 16: Population and Health of the Environmental Statement (ES)) due to the provision of a relief road connecting the north and south of Shrewsbury, which is likely to reduce congestion, fear of accidents and increase the reliability of journey times on the local road network. Safer road conditions, and a lower rate of accidents, is likely to reduce the level of driver fear.

PROTECT AND ENHANCE SHREWSBURY'S BUILT AND NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Other problems arise directly from this fundamental weakness in Shrewsbury's transport network. Noise, visual intrusion and poor air quality affect people in residential areas and the town centre, as well as people walking and cycling.

419 dwellings would experience high traffic noise (above Significant Observed Adverse Effect Level (SOAEL)) which have facades directly exposed to the most trafficked roads in the 'no Scheme' or 'Do Nothing' scenario in 2023 (Table 15-20, Chapter 15: Noise and Vibration of the ES). Those dwellings fronting roads alleviated by the proposed Scheme that currently experience above SOAEL (B4386, B4380, B458 and A528) would therefore reduce in number to 287 dwellings (132 fewer dwellings). Conversely, those living close to the proposed Scheme where there is not currently a busy road may experience an increase in noise levels as the baseline is currently low, but these are much smaller in number (51 predicted to experience major impacts, see para.15.10.34 of Chapter 15 of the ES).

Shrewsbury Town Centre is currently designated as an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA). Monitoring results show that air quality in Shrewsbury is generally good but like most urban areas there are exceedances of the annual mean NO₂ objective (40µg/m³) in heavily trafficked areas in the town centre and along major roads. Monitoring within the vicinity of the Proposed Scheme shows NO₂ concentrations well below the objective, however further away from the Proposed Scheme concentrations are elevated and exceed the objective in the AQMA. The exceedances in the town centre are predicted to reduce in 2023 even without the Proposed Scheme, but with the Proposed Scheme the reduction will be larger (a difference of 6.6µg/m³) (see Table 6-14, Chapter 6: Air Quality of the ES). LUF2 Package 2 schemes have been identified for this AQMA which would further address these issues.

CARBON

During the development of the NWRR Project, Shropshire Council declared a 'climate emergency'. This has focused attention onto reducing carbon emissions from the construction of the Project. The carbon management assessment of the NWRR Project aims to demonstrate any savings of carbon emissions will be delivered for the project wherever possible within the design. To achieve this, the design will continue to seek to reduce the carbon associated with the Project in accordance with PAS 2080 Carbon management in infrastructure verification.



The NWRR has also undertaken a comprehensive Carbon Assessment as part of its impact assessment, covering both the build phase and future use impacts. This has been validated and endorsed by independent peer review at Birmingham University. Within the future costings model for the NWRR there is now a quantified Carbon reduction valuation, which offers the potential to place the NWRR at carbon neutrality within its operational lifetime.

Options are currently being explored by Shropshire Council to use the NWRR as a catalyst for the commencement of active carbon management processes (local biochar production). The opportunity now exists to use the NWRR quantified carbon costs of £1.4m (budget allocations for the management of this have now been made within the overall project costs), in order to seed and develop this initiative to initially manage down the carbon legacy of the road, potentially to neutrality in due course, and also to leave an established local processing capability that can assist with the mitigation of wider Council carbon impacts.

In a wider context, the current development of the Local Transport Plan 4 by the Council will be fully aligned with the Carbon Mandate and modelling requirements within DfT guidance to be published shortly. As such, this will put carbon assessment and management at the heart of future transport, infrastructure and project delivery. The LTP4 is due to be published within the next 12 months, pending the publication of the relevant national guidance.

SUPPORT SUSTAINABLE MODES OF TRANSPORT

The Scheme is projected to reduce through-traffic travelling via Shrewsbury Town Centre and this presents an opportunity to focus on redistributing road space to other, more sustainable modes of travel; including focussing on pedestrian priority in the town centre. The Scheme will also introduce a new shared footway/cycleway along its length, with connectivity to existing routes where practical, thus contributing to the enhancement of the cycle and pedestrian network in Shrewsbury.

It should be noted that the Scheme's ability to improve road safety is linked to its goal to promote sustainable modes of transport. At present both Calcott Lane and Shepherd's Lane possess low pedestrian numbers (paragraph 3.5.104, Transport Assessment) which reflects the lack of dedicated footways, with pedestrians instead having to walk in the carriageway / grassed verge to avoid conflict with vehicular traffic flow.

Throughout the Scheme, adjacent to the southside of the carriageway for 6.9km, a shared 3m wide footway/cycleway facility will be provided, with additional 0.5m buffer zones to the carriageway and any vertical feature. The Scheme will provide a new west-north route for pedestrians and cyclists, with accompanying links to existing non-motorised user routes.



For cyclists, the Scheme provides a dedicated route from the existing shared footway/cycleway alongside Battlefield Link Road to A5 Churncote Roundabout. At B4380 Holyhead Road, the Scheme intersects and connects with National Cycle Route 81. The Scheme will provide a direct route between the north and west of Shrewsbury and will allow residents in the north of the town to access services in the west more directly, including the Royal Shrewsbury Hospital.

The Scheme will include four junctions: Churncote Roundabout; B4380 Holyhead Road / NWRR Roundabout; B5067 Berwick Road / NWRR Roundabout; and Ellesmere Road Roundabout. All of these junction works will include considerations for pedestrians and cyclists, through a series of dropped kerbs with tactile paving at appropriate crossing points. Where applicable uncontrolled crossing points will be provided as well as existing NMU lanes preserved to encourage use.

Based on Section 5 of the Transport Assessment, public transport will benefit as a result of the Scheme due to the reduction in congestion and traffic delay. The Scheme could significantly reduce the journey time for the last 3-4 miles into the Town Centre which would make bus travel more attractive. This will in turn promote and encourage travel by bus, and the SC Passenger Transport Group Manager has indicated the Scheme, coupled with other bus priority interventions proposed by SC but which do not form part of the Proposed Scheme, could be extremely beneficial for public transport in Shrewsbury. These additional interventions are highlighted in the Big Town Plan ([Shrewsbury Big Town Plan • Shrewsbury Big Town Plan](#)).

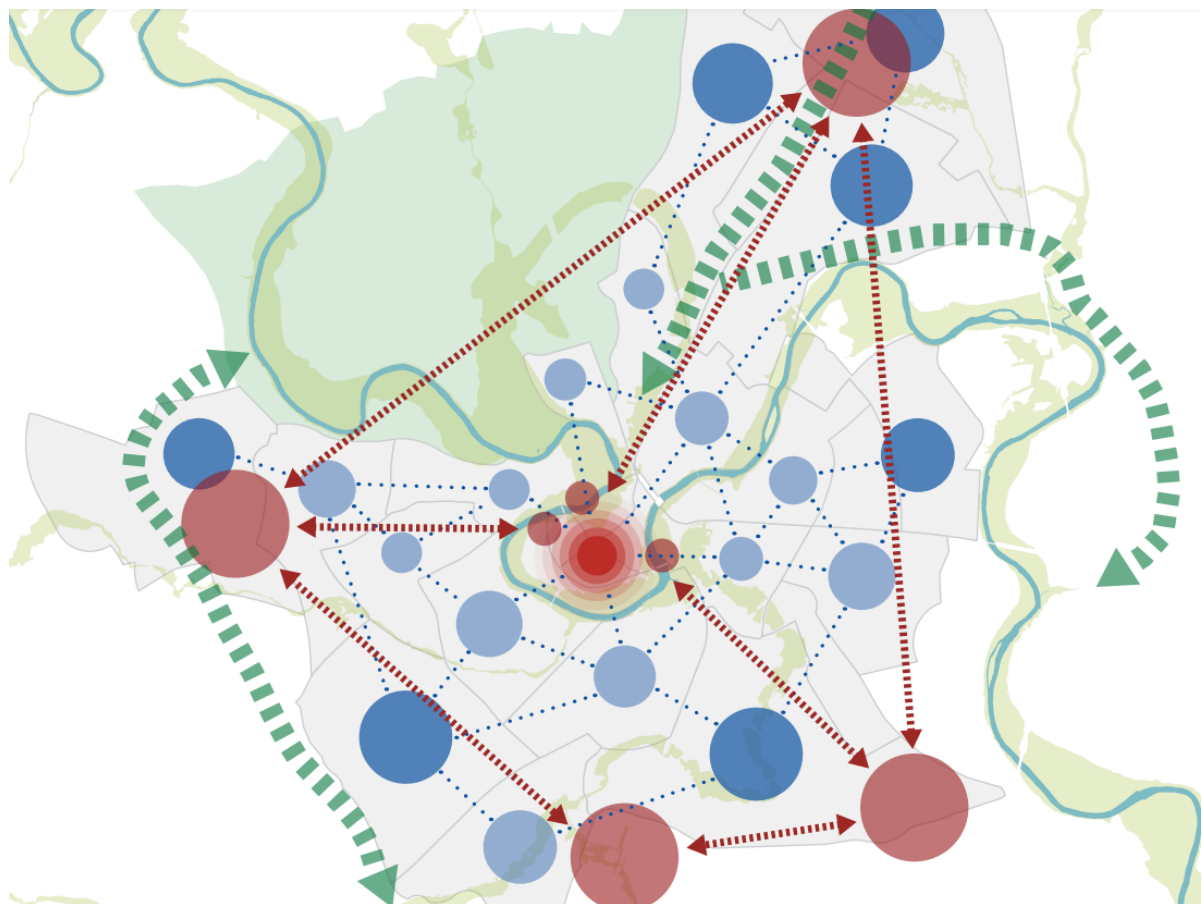


FIGURE 1 – THE BIG NETWORK, SBTP 2018

The Shrewsbury Big Town Plan Masterplan Vision (Glen Howells Architects, January 2021) Consultation Draft shows the physical and virtual networks required to sustain Shrewsbury's further growth and Shrewsbury NWRR is a key element of that network.

CONCLUSION

The assessment provided in Section 5 in the Planning Statement (**Document Reference 70056211-WSP-GEN-AS-RP-ZM-00005**) considers the success of the Scheme in meeting these objectives. The extent and magnitude of benefits and disbenefits resulting from the Scheme are set out in the Transport Assessment and the ES as summarised above.

CONSTRUCTION EMPLOYMENT AND SUPPLY CHAIN BENEFITS

Projected construction employment is likely to be 50 to 100 gross construction employees during the two-year construction period. These employment gains should result in beneficial health outcomes such as improved mental and physical health and provide opportunities for social contact, therefore a positive effect on health outcomes has been identified (see paragraph 16.8.27 to 31 of Chapter 16: Population and Health of the ES. The local supply chain would also benefit and would lead to enhanced social value outcomes.

LOCAL PLAN REVIEW

The Shropshire Local Plan is currently subject to review, although this carries limited weight in the context of planning applications as it is currently in Examination and has not yet been adopted. The latest version is the Draft Shropshire Local Plan (2015-2038) submitted to the Secretary of State for Examination in July 2021.

Although it only has limited weight, the draft Local Plan demonstrates Shropshire Council's continued commitment to delivering the Proposed Scheme in the following policies.

DP28 Communications and Transport

Paragraph 4.257 states: *“Shropshire will support improvements to the Strategic and Local Highway Networks particularly to support the growth of our local economy. The subregional role of Shrewsbury is to be enhanced by the delivery of the North West Relief Road to extend the A53 around the north and west of Shrewsbury. This will complete the existing by-passes to reduce journey times around the town and to increase the connectivity of Shrewsbury in the strategic road network. The Outline Business Case for the Shrewsbury North West Relief Road sets out the case for the construction of this new highway to complete a circular by-pass of Shrewsbury.”*



The paragraph goes on to quote the OBC as follows:

‘Shrewsbury lies at the intersection of the A5 with the A49 on the Strategic Road Network which by-passes Shrewsbury to the south and east of the town. Within Shrewsbury, a partial ring of local distributor roads also serves the developed areas of the town but again, only to the south and east. The connectivity of Shrewsbury and the built areas of the town are therefore affected by the lack of equivalent road connections serving the north and west of the town. This lack of direct links between the northern and western areas has been a major source of traffic problems for many decades. Consequently, the northern and western approaches to Shrewsbury become heavily congested at peak times.

This traffic has to either pass through the town centre or take the longer, alternative route around the A5 and A49 by-passes, adding to congestion within the town centre or on the Strategic Road Network particularly at key by-pass junctions. The existing traffic routes within and around the town are therefore not suitable for managing northern and western traffic and there are no practical alternative routes for most trips other than the provision of a new North West Relief Road to complete a circular by-pass around the town of Shrewsbury’.

Paragraph 4.258 states “Shropshire recognises its sub-regional role in the movement of freight through the rail network and the A5 / A49 between the English regions, Wales and the seaports serving Ireland. Improvements to freight movements will be facilitated where possible particularly through the direction of commercial traffic to appropriate highway routes and more importantly through the transfer of freight to the rail network. This significant modal shift will be supported to combat climate change and to reduce the impacts on the strategic road network.”

S16 – Shrewsbury Place Plan Area

Item 7 under this policy states: *The delivery of the North West Relief Road (NWRR) is supported in principle, and as such the proposed line of the road is identified on the Policies Map. Development opportunities between the proposed NWRR and the Development Boundary will be guided by Policy SP10. In this area it is recognised that windfall employment proposals on appropriate sites adjoining the development boundary will be supported in principle where they meet the requirements of Policies SP13 and SP14 and where suitable vehicular access can be provided.*

Land west of Ellesmere Road, Shrewsbury (SHR173) (450 dwellings) – Schedule 16 (allocations)

The Allocation of this site for housing includes reference to the need for the Proposed Scheme “To ensure suitable access arrangements are achieved as well as protecting local amenity value on Ellesmere Road, the delivery of this development is directly dependent on the approval and construction of the North West Relief Road. Development on the site will not commence until such time as the North West Relief Road is operational.”



Explanation

Paragraph 5.225 explains why the Proposed Scheme is required in support of the allocation and states *“The strategy also reflects the potential development opportunities presented by the delivery of the North West Relief Road (NWRR). The NWRR is proposed to deliver a new single carriageway road linking the northern and western parts of the town between the Ellesmere Road and Churncote roundabouts. The NWRR will be subject to a planning application in 2021, and whilst the Local Plan does not pre-determine the outcome of these considerations, it is appropriate for the NWRR to provide important context regarding the delivery of development given the extent of the plan period to 2038. Of most direct consequence, development allocated at Ellesmere Road (SHR173) will only commence when the NWRR is operational, in light of the direct traffic mitigation the proposed NWRR is forecast to achieve as a result of the reduction in cross town movements. Policy S16 also identifies the potential for additional windfall commercial development between the development boundary and the NWRR once constructed, where an appropriate access can be achieved. In looking at commercial windfall opportunities in this area particular regard will be had to the objectives of relevant Whole Estate Plans where they have been endorsed by the Council as a material planning consideration in line with Policy SP15. It is also recognised given the role of the town as a strategic centre, there may be other commercial opportunities arising during the lifetime of the Plan on land not allocated for this purpose. In these circumstances the Plan supports commercial windfall development where this is in line with policies SP12 and SP13.”*

As stated above, the Local Plan Partial Review can only be afforded limited weight. Notwithstanding this, it is worth noting that the Proposed Scheme has the potential to unlock or improve access to employment sites included in the Strategic Land Availability Assessment (SLAA) which has been produced as part of the evidence base for the Shropshire Council Local Plan review. There are three accepted SLAA employment sites that are bounded by the Proposed Scheme (each forming part of the Shrewsbury West SUE). They include:

- SHR208 (north east of Churncote Roundabout);
- SHR206 (west of the B4380); and
- SHR207 (west of the B4380).

In addition, there are nine long term potential SLAA employment sites would be crossed by the Proposed Scheme. The identified sites are listed below:

- SHR209 (north east of Churncote Roundabout);
- SHR162 (north west of the B4380);
- SHR216 (north east of the B4380);
- SHR100 (west of River Severn);
- SHR174 (south west of Ellesmere Road Roundabout);
- SHR163 (west of the A528);
- SHR181 (south west of Ellesmere Road Roundabout);
- SHR023 (north west of Ellesmere Road Roundabout); and



- SHR186 (north east of Ellesmere Road Roundabout).

Employment Land Review, December 2019 (Avison Young) – Evidence Base for Local Plan Review

The Employment Land Review recognises the importance of the Proposed Scheme in unlocking employment growth and supporting other major infrastructure improvements that are already subject to consent. It states *“The potential dualling of the A5 would also raise the significance of the A5/A483 corridor, continuing from the M54, through Shrewsbury and linking to Oswestry on the commercial transport route to west coast ports. This would be assisted by the anticipated delivery of the Shrewsbury North-West Relief Road. This corridor is also supported by the significance of the A49 as the principal north-south corridor through Shropshire and assisting transport movements through Wales. The strategic highway network through Shrewsbury and Oswestry also offers faster linkages with the national motorway network into the north-west region.*

Key Recommendation - Appropriate support should be sought to bolster economic, viability and deliverability. This should build on the arguments presented in support of the exceptional circumstances case for Green Belt land release, the business case for the Shrewsbury North West Relief Road and any relevant information in relation to the strategy for the growth of the West Midlands conurbation and the development of the HS2 network.”

HERITAGE

Paragraph 202 of the NPPF requires that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. In the case of the NWRR, the harm to heritage assets has been identified and categorised as ‘less than substantial’ where adverse impacts have been identified. However, to meet the test in the NPPF the harm needs to be weighed against the public benefits.

The public benefits of the Proposed Scheme are described in detail above, but in addition, long term beneficial effects on heritage assets are predicted (see Chapter 11: Historic Environment of the ES). These assets include Shrewsbury Conservation Area, and Christ Church and Rose Villa Grade II Listed Buildings. These beneficial impacts would result from an 18% reduction in traffic flows during the morning and evening peak hours on A458 Welshpool Road which can be seen from Christ Church and Rose Villa, and also the Conservation Area. This would lead to reduced noise and improved air quality, as well as improving views of the road, and therefore visual impacts on these assets which would therefore result in public benefits from enjoyment of the assets.

