



Committee and Date

Council – 14th May 2026

Item

Public



Adoption of Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan Review

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Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder):	Councillor David Walker		

1. Synopsis

This report provides the Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan Review referendum result and allows the Council to bring the Plan into force by ‘making’ (adopting) it as part of the statutory development plan under the provisions of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended).

2. Executive Summary

2.1. The purpose of this report is to seek Cabinet approval for the Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan Review (‘the Plan’) to be brought into force by ‘making’ (adopting) it as part of the statutory development plan for the neighbourhood area and therefore be used in the determination of planning applications in that neighbourhood area. If made, the reviewed Plan should replace the made Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan (2013-2026).

2.2. The Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan Review has been produced by the Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan Review Steering Group, with Much Wenlock Review Town Council as the ‘Qualifying Body’. Work on the Neighbourhood Plan Review

began in 2023 and has been produced in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended) (referred to in this report as ‘the Regulations’). The final draft Plan was submitted to an Independent Examiner in August 2025. Following the Examination, the Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan Review was brought to local referendum on 19th March 2026. The result was, of those who voted, 90% were in favour of Shropshire Council using the reviewed Neighbourhood Plan for Much Wenlock to help it decide planning applications in the neighbourhood area.

- 2.3. The Shropshire Plan recognises the importance of creating a Healthy Environment with a strategy objective to ‘maintain, protect and enhance our outstanding natural and historic environment, promoting positive behaviours and greater biodiversity and environmental sustainability.’ The Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan Review contains policies which strive to encourage development to achieve these objectives alongside those contained within the wider development plan for Shropshire.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1. That Shropshire Council, as the Local Planning Authority ‘makes’ (i.e. adopts) the Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan Review (as set out in Appendices 1 and 2) and brings it into force with immediate effect as part of the development plan for Shropshire.

Report

4. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

- 4.1. The Localism Act and regulations covering neighbourhood development plans (referred to in this report as ‘neighbourhood plans’) provide the framework for their production and adoption. Whilst the preparation of neighbourhood plans is led locally by a qualifying body, usually the relevant town or parish council, Shropshire Council has key involvement at various stages of the process. Most notably this includes: formally agreeing the Neighbourhood Area to be covered by the Plan; administering public consultation on a submission version of the Plan, appointing an independent assessor to examine the submission version of the Plan, agreeing any changes required to ensure the Plan meets a set of basic conditions, administering and reporting back of the referendum and ‘making’ (adopting) the Plan.
- 4.2. Both Much Wenlock Town Council and Shropshire Council have followed a set of clearly defined national regulations set out in the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 in the preparation and consultation of the Plan. This regulatory process is covered in more detail in Section 7 of this Report. The risk of a legal challenge to the ‘making’ of the Plan has been significantly reduced by both Much Wenlock Town Council and Shropshire Council following these regulations closely.

- 4.3. The Plan was prepared by a steering group which included representatives from the Town Council along with other local volunteers. Shropshire Council acted as a statutory consultee during the preparation phase of the Plan, which allowed input at key stages. It is considered this collaborative process has helped to ensure the final version of the Plan is in general conformity with the strategic policies of Shropshire's adopted development plan.
- 4.4. The steering group undertook community consultation which culminated in a consultation on a draft version of the Plan during June and July in 2025. The Plan was then submitted to Shropshire Council in August 2025 who undertook the statutory consultation into the submission version of the Plan and appointed an independent assessor to examine the Plan.
- 4.5. The purpose of the independent examination process is to ensure neighbourhood plans meet the following set of nationally prescribed 'Basic Conditions':
- Having regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issues by the Secretary of State it is appropriate to make the neighbourhood plan;
 - The making of the neighbourhood plan contributes to the achievement of sustainable development;
 - The making of the neighbourhood plan is in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan for the area of the authority (or any part of that area);
 - The making of the neighbourhood plan does not breach, and is otherwise compatible, with retained EU obligations; and
 - Prescribed conditions are met (in relation to the neighbourhood plan) and prescribed matters have been completed with in connection with the proposal for the neighbourhood plan.
- 4.6. The Examiner reported back in November 2025 concluding that the Plan could proceed to referendum, subject to a number of modifications to the Plan. The Examiner's Report is included as Appendix 3 of this report. The Examiner's conclusions are not binding on the authority, however in this case all of the recommendations were incorporated into the Plan and agreed by Cabinet on 21st January 2026.
- 4.7. The referendum on the Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan Review took place on 19th March 2026 within the area defined as the Neighbourhood Area (Much Wenlock parish), where the following question was asked "Do you want Shropshire Council to use the Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan Review to help it decide planning applications in the neighbourhood area." Paragraph 38A(4)(a) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 as amended requires that the Council must 'make' (adopt) the Plan if more than half of those voting have voted in favour of the plan. In this case out of 747 who voted, 90% were in favour of the Plan being used to help decide planning applications. The turnout was 30%. Appendix 4 to this report provides the referendums full 'Declaration of Result Poll'. All necessary requirements relating to the administration of the referendum were carried out. Given this robust process it is considered there is minimal risk to the Council.
- 4.8. Subject to the Council's decision, the Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan Review will become part of the statutory planning framework applied in Shropshire. The Plan contains a range of locally produced policies which the community have expressly asked to be brought into play to help guide the decision-making process. Statute

provides that planning applications should be determined in accordance with the provision of the Plan policies unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

4.9. The plan has been prepared positively and in its final format is considered to meet the basic conditions. Following the successful referendum result it is considered there is also clear public support for the Plan. It is therefore considered that there would be a very significant risk of challenge if the Plan were not to be 'made' by the Council.

4.10. Shropshire Council has assessed that the Plan, including its preparation, does not breach, and would not otherwise be incompatible with, any retained EU obligation or any of the Convention rights (within the meaning of the Human Rights Act 1998).

4.11. Risk table

<i>Risk</i>	<i>Mitigation</i>	<i>Link to Strategic Risk</i>
Legal challenge to the process of 'making' (adoption) of the Neighbourhood Plan Review	This risk is significantly reduced by both Much Wenlock Town Council and Shropshire Council following the regulations set out within Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended).	Failure of Officers and Members to adhere to Governance arrangements.
Legal challenge if the Plan were not 'made' (adopted) by the Council	The referendum result of 90% of those who voted were in favour of the use of the Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan Review as a decision-making tool for planning applications. This is clear and overwhelming public support for the Plan and it is recommended that the Council as the Local Planning Authority 'make' (adopt) this Plan.	Failure of Officers and Members to adhere to Governance arrangements.

5. Financial Implications

5.1. The costs of undertaking the Examination and Referendum are met by Government Funding. The robustness of the Plan policies will be tested over time by independent Planning Inspectors on appeal. Members are advised that the liability for future appeal costs rests with Shropshire Council as Local Planning Authority and as such the usability of the plan and its impact on local decision making needs to be carefully monitored.

6. Climate Change Appraisal

6.1. The Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan Review includes positively prepared policies seeking to achieve sustainable development and respond to climate change. Specifically, Policy MW19 'Energy efficiency and mitigating climate change' seeks to maximise opportunities to increase energy efficiency and reduce carbon emissions. Policy MW26 'Renewable and community energy' encourages the use of renewable energy. Objective 7 of the Plan, 'Green and open spaces, local landscape and wildlife' identifies opportunities for green space in adaptation for climate change. The inclusion Policy MW10 'Flood prevention' and Policy MW11 'Sustainable drainage and design management' acknowledges future flood risk threat due to climate change. The Plan is also in general conformity with the current adopted development plan which includes a positive policy framework for mitigating and adapting to the impacts of climate change.

7. Background

7.1. Shropshire Council supports neighbourhood plans being brought forward under the Localism Act and the 2012 Neighbourhood Planning Regulations, indeed, the Council is legally obliged to do so. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) also explicitly supports the principle of neighbourhood plans and their status as part of the development plan, stating: 'Neighbourhood plans should support the delivery of strategic policies contained in local plans or spatial development strategies; and should shape and direct development that is outside of these strategic policies'. It is also made clear that neighbourhood plans should not promote less development than set out in the strategic policies for the area or undermine those strategic policies.

7.2. Neighbourhood plans must follow a defined regulatory process in both their preparation and adoption. The Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan Review has completed the following regulatory stages of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012:

- The formal designation of the Neighbourhood Area (Regulation 6), September 2012;
- Consultation on a draft version of the Plan (Regulation 14), carried out by Much Wenlock Town Council between 11th November 2024 to 6th January 2025;
- Submission of the draft Plan by Much Wenlock Town Council to the Local Planning Authority (Regulation 15), August 2025;
- Consultation on final draft version of the Plan (Regulation 16), carried out by Shropshire Council between 13th June to 25th July 2025;
- Examination on the Final Draft Version of the Plan (Regulation 17), August to November 2025; and
- Publication of the Examiner's Report, November 2025, and decision to progress to referendum (Regulation 18), (21st January 2025).

7.3. Following the successful referendum in March 2026, the Council is now being asked to 'make' (adopt) the Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan Review to form part of the development plan for the area.

7.4. In accordance with the Regulations, once adopted, planning applications in the area covered by the plan must be considered against the Plan, as well as existing Local

Plan policies in the adopted Core Strategy and Site Allocations and Management of Development (SAMDev) Plan as well as other material planning considerations, such as the National Planning Policy Framework.

- 7.5. It is considered the final version of the Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan Review, which covers the whole parish of Much Wenlock, provides an effective and positive planning framework for taking decisions on planning applications. Councillor Dan Thomas, Shropshire Council Member for Much Wenlock and Member of Much Wenlock Town Council, is in full support of the Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan Review and its adoption into the local development plan for Shropshire.
- 7.6. The Plan provides a range of local objectives and policies to supplement the strategic policies of Shropshire's Local Plan, which largely reflect the priorities of the area and the outcomes of the plan preparation process, which included local community consultation. The Plan contains policies relating to housing design in Much Wenlock and protection of the natural, built and historic environment. The final version of the Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan is attached to this report at Appendices 1 and 2.

8. Additional Information

- 8.1. Whilst Shropshire Council has helped to support the Plan through its statutory role as consultee and administrator, the Plan's inception and preparation has been led by Much Wenlock Town Council with support of their Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group. These bodies are to be commended for their dedication and skill in bringing this Plan through to fruition.
- 8.2. The appendices to this report provide a copy of the final version of the Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan Review which went to referendum, the Examiner's report and results of the referendum.

9. Conclusions

- 9.1. Following a positive referendum result, this report seeks to 'make' (adopt) the Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan Review.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)

[Recommendation for the Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan Review to Proceed to Referendum](#) – 21st January 2026

Application by Much Wenlock to be considered as a Neighbourhood Area – 12th September 2012

Local Member: Cllr Dan Thomas

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan Review

Appendix 2 - Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan Review Design Guidelines

Appendix 3 - Examiner's report

Appendix 4 - Declaration of referendum results
