



Committee and Date

Item

Public



Place Plans – Priority Infrastructure Needs

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Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder):	Chris Schofield, Planning and Regulatory Services		

1. Synopsis

This report seeks approval for the extent and prioritisation of infrastructure projects to be included in Shropshire’s 18 Place Plans.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. Place Plans are documents prepared by Shropshire Council which identify the current and forecast infrastructure needs of the County. Place Plans have been a core feature of Shropshire’s infrastructure planning for several years, and over the last 12 months there has been a comprehensive review of these documents.
- 2.2. There are 18 Place Plans across the County, focussing on a main town and its rural hinterland. These 18 Place Plan areas have remained consistent over a number of years and are considered to still represent a functional geography for the purposes of assessing infrastructure needs.
- 2.3. Place Plans are complementary to the Council’s Infrastructure Funding Statement (approved by Cabinet in December 2023) and the Strategic Infrastructure and Investment Plan (prepared as supporting evidence for the Shropshire Local Plan) and together these documents provide a comprehensive picture on the priority infrastructure needs of Shropshire’s communities. They support the delivery of the current and emerging Local Plan for the County, which sets out the scale and location of growth in the County to 2038. They also support the delivery of the Shropshire Plan by focussing on the evidenced needs of communities and providing a positive framework to allocate resources effectively, as well as complementing the role of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessments which provide information on health and wellbeing needs and opportunities in the County.

- 2.4. A central purpose of the Place Plans is to provide an evidence based approach to the identification and prioritisation of infrastructure projects. The identification of infrastructure allows the Council and other partner organisations to identify appropriate sources of funding to support delivery, which could include the Council's own capital investment programme; external funding sources, such as government grants; and the appropriate use of developer contributions, including Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds.
- 2.5. The infrastructure needs identified in the Place Plans represent a full range of infrastructure types, including: transport and accessibility; health; utilities; education; outdoor recreation and economic opportunities. Importantly, the Place Plans assign a priority status to the identified projects: 'Priority A'; 'Priority B'; and 'Neighbourhood'. Where a project or identified need is identified as either Priority A or Priority B, there is an acknowledgement that these schemes may be able to benefit from CIL funding allocated by Shropshire Council. Where an infrastructure need is identified as a 'Neighbourhood' priority level, there is a general acknowledgment CIL Neighbourhood Funds, administered by the relevant Parish and Town Councils, will be a priority source of funding.
- 2.6. The Place Plan updates have been informed by officers working with Parish and Town Councils, including the opportunity for them to nominate potential projects for inclusion. Council departments have also contributed extensively to this process, and in particular identifying highways, education and outdoor recreation requirements. Conversations with partner infrastructure providers, such as the Integrated Care System (ICS) and National Highways, continue to happen via the Strategic Infrastructure Network, and many of these organisations have also inputted into the Council's Local Plan process.
- 2.7. The 18 appendices to this report provide the substantive culmination of the Place Plan update. This shows the extent of: the infrastructure need; the proposed prioritisation; costings (where known); lead delivery organisation; and anticipated delivery timeframes.
- 2.8. Given the extensive nature of this Place Plan review, Cabinet are being asked to agree to the content and prioritisation of the projects on this list for the purpose of decision making on Council resources. However, recognising that this position is inevitably a 'picture in time' as updated information becomes available, in particular through the work of the Strategic Infrastructure Network, Cabinet are also being asked to delegate further incremental updates to the Assistant Director of Economy and Place in consultation with the Council's Internal Infrastructure Group and the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regulatory Services ahead of any future full review of the Place Plans.

3. Recommendations

3.1. Cabinet agrees:

- A) The extent and prioritisation of infrastructure needs identified in appendices 1-18 of this report as part of the full review of the Place Plans.

B) That the Place Plans are ‘live’ documents and that further incremental updates to them ahead of any future full review are delegated to the Assistant Director of Economy and Place, in consultation with the Internal Infrastructure Group (IIG) and the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regulatory Services.

Report

4. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

- 4.1. The key purpose of the Place Plans is to establish an up to date evidence base regarding the County’s infrastructure needs and their relative priority. Without such an up-to date position there is risk to the Council of taking decisions on infrastructure investment in the absence of a robust strategic framework. Establishing an up to date evidence base for the identification of new and enhanced infrastructure is therefore essential for ensuring that sound decisions are made on the allocation of resources and available funding.
- 4.2. It is important the Council seeks to use available and future CIL funds for the most appropriate infrastructure, recognising there is likely to be a need to prioritise projects to ensure critical infrastructure is delivered. The fact the Place Plans have benefitted from conversations with strategic providers, including the Council’s education and highways teams, as well as more locally through discussions with the Parish and Town Councils, reduces the risk of challenge to the Council on the inclusiveness of its decision making.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1. The Place Plans provide information on a range of infrastructure requirements, linked to the delivery of the Council’s Local Plan and wider development strategies. There is a clear expectation therefore that the Place Plans will provide a strategic framework to support the Council’s future investment decisions, both regarding future capital investment and the use of CIL funding. The priority assigned to these specific requirements in the Place Plans and shown in the information contained in appendices 1-18 will therefore support robust and reasoned financial decision making.
- 5.2. There are no additional financial burdens to the Council through the identification of infrastructure needs of areas. Rather, the evidence base provided by the Place Plans should support future updates to the Council’s capital strategy, but there is no expectation that it will add to the burden. Indeed, noting that one key element of the capital strategy is developer contributions (Section 106 and CIL) it is considered the establishment of clear priorities and indicative timeframes for requirements will allow the Council to focus these contributions in a more efficient and targeted manner.

- 5.3. By identifying a wide range of infrastructure needs of an area in a single document place, the Place Plans will support the potential for a more streamlined approach to future bids for external funding, whilst also potentially promoting opportunities for the joint funding of projects between organisations in order to mitigate any financial burden on the Council.

6. Climate Change Appraisal

- 6.1. The Place Plans identify a range of infrastructure requirements and potential areas where funds available to the Council should be most efficiently targeted. These include items to support active travel and wider sustainable transport provision which will help to reduce transport-related carbon emissions.

7. Background

- 7.1. The provision of sufficient infrastructure is essential to the provision of sustainable development. It is therefore important that the Council has an up to date evidence of the current and forecast infrastructure needs of communities, especially resulting from new development.
- 7.2. Place Plans are documents prepared by Shropshire Council which seek to identify infrastructure needs of the County. Place Plans have been a core feature of Shropshire's infrastructure planning for several years and are well established documents with both infrastructure partners, parish and town councils and internal council service areas.
- 7.3. There are 18 Place Plans across the County, focussing on a main town and its rural hinterland. These 18 Place Plan area geographies have remained consistent over a number of years and still considered to represent a functional geography for the purposes of assessing infrastructure needs.
- 7.4. The key objectives of the Place Plans are:
- To develop a clear picture and understanding of the infrastructure needs of a defined area;
 - To identify and prioritise infrastructure needs within the Place Plan area;
 - To identify lead partners, supporting partners and funding opportunities (where possible) to deliver those infrastructure needs;
 - To support the Strategic Infrastructure and Investment Plan for Shropshire as a whole; and
 - To inform wider corporate and service planning at the Council
- 7.5. Since their inception over a decade ago, Place Plans have been updated regularly, usually on a bi-annual basis. However, due to the need of the Council to divert resources to support the Covid 19 response, there has not been a review of the Place Plans since 2019. Whilst infrastructure planning work continued during this time, most notably through the evidence collected to support the emerging Local Plan, there was a clear need to undertake a comprehensive review of the Place Plans; a process which began in early 2023.
- 7.6. The process of updating the Place Plans has been informed by:

- Discussions with Parish and Town Councils in order to understand their views on local infrastructure needs, along with an opportunity for them to submit potential projects for consideration;
- Discussions with internal Council departments, including education, highways, outdoor recreation and leisure regarding their investment priorities;
- The Local Plan evidence base, including information from key strategic partners regarding their ongoing infrastructure requirements and investment programmes;
- Additional conversations with strategic infrastructure partners as part of the Council's Strategic Infrastructure Network, which includes partners from the Integrated Care System (ICS) and National Highways.

7.7. Place Plans are complementary to the Council's Infrastructure Funding Statement (approved by Cabinet in December 2023) and the Strategic Infrastructure and Investment Plan (prepared as supporting evidence for the Shropshire Local Plan) and together these documents provide comprehensive picture on the priority infrastructure needs of Shropshire's communities. Together these documents support the delivery of the current and emerging Local Plan for the County, which establishes the scale and location of growth in the County to 2038.

7.8. The Place Plans also support the delivery of the Shropshire Plan by focussing on the evidenced needs of communities and providing a positive framework to allocate resources effectively.

7.9. A central purpose of the Place Plans is to provide a prioritisation for infrastructure need in the county. This is more important now than ever before due to the increasing pressure being placed upon public sector resources. The clear expectation is the Council and its partners need to focus spending on the most critical infrastructure needs. The identification of necessary infrastructure allows the Council and other partner organisations to identify appropriate sources of funding to support delivery, which could include the Council's own capital investment programme; external funding sources, such as government grants; and the appropriate use of developer contributions, including Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds.

7.10. CIL income from new development can be spent on anything that constitutes "infrastructure" as defined by Regulation 216 of the 2008 Planning Act and the CIL Regulations (as amended). This includes but is not limited to roads and other transport facilities, flood defences, schools and other educational facilities, medical facilities, sporting and recreational facilities, and open spaces. Shropshire Council recognises that infrastructure needs vary from place to place and priorities vary over time in response to different development pressures

7.11. The infrastructure needs identified in the Place Plans represent a full range of infrastructure types, including transport and accessibility; health; utilities; education; outdoor recreation and economic opportunities. Importantly, the Place Plans assign a priority status to the identified projects: 'Priority A'; 'Priority B'; and 'Neighbourhood'.

- 7.12. Priority 'A' infrastructure is considered to be those items which are essential to the delivery of development, generally including additional utility provision, improvements to strategic highways, new and enhanced school provision, and new and enhanced medical provision. There is a general expectation that much of this necessary investment will result from capital investment by individual providers, although there will remain the need to prioritise developer contributions towards many of these items, notably improvements to school place provision.
- 7.13. Priority 'B' infrastructure is considered necessary to improve areas, in particular to support the growth expectations set out in the current and emerging Local Plans and other Council development strategies. As such, there is an expectation that the Council may need to use its CIL funding to support these projects where they are associated with the cumulative impact of new development.
- 7.14. 'Neighbourhood' infrastructure is considered important to a local community and the expectation is these will normally be led by partners in the local area, including the parish and town councils. As such, there is a general expectation that the CIL Neighbourhood Fund (i.e. the proportion of CIL which is maintained and allocated by the parish and town councils) will be the priority source of funding for these schemes, alongside any wider external grant support.
- 7.15. The 18 appendices to this report provide the substantive culmination of this full Place Plan update. This shows the extent of the infrastructure need; the proposed prioritisation; costings (where known); responsible Council department where appropriate; and anticipated delivery timeframes.
- 7.16. Given the extensive nature of this Place Plan review, Cabinet are being asked to agree to the content and prioritisation of the projects to be included in the 18 Place Plan documents. This will provide an up-to-date evidential basis for the Council to make decisions on Council resources, including future use of CIL funds. However, recognising that this position is inevitably a 'picture in time' and that more information becomes available, in particular through the work of the Strategic Infrastructure Network, Cabinet are also being asked to delegate further incremental updates to the Assistant Director of Economy and Place in consultation with the Council's Internal Infrastructure Group and the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regulatory Services.

8. Conclusion

- 8.1. This report seeks Cabinet approval for the content and prioritisation of infrastructure projects to be included in the 18 Place Plans covering Shropshire following the first full review of the Place Plans since 2019, and for delegated powers to provide incremental updates to the Place Plans ahead of any future full review.
- 8.2. The identification of infrastructure needs, and its prioritisation relative to other identified infrastructure, allows the Council and other partner organisations to identify appropriate sources of funding, including CIL funding, to support delivery.

- 8.3 Ongoing discussions with partner organisations through the Strategic Infrastructure Network will provide further opportunities to update the evidence base of infrastructure needs in the County.

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

Local Member:

Appendices

Place Plan Projects

Appendix 1 – Albrighton

Appendix 2 – Bishop’s Castle

Appendix 3 – Bridgnorth

Appendix 4 – Broseley

Appendix 5 – Church Stretton

Appendix 6 – Cleobury Mortimer

Appendix 7 – Craven Arms

Appendix 8 – Ellesmere

Appendix 9 – Highley

Appendix 10 – Ludlow

Appendix 11 – Market Drayton

Appendix 12 – Minsterley & Pontesbury

Appendix 13 – Much Wenlock

Appendix 14 – Oswestry

Appendix 15 – Shifnal

Appendix 16 – Wem

Appendix 17 – Shrewsbury

Appendix 18 - Witchurch

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