

1. The Shropshire Local Plan currently comprises the Core Strategy (adopted 2011); the Site Allocations and Management of Development (SAMDev) Plan (adopted 2015); and any adopted formal Neighbourhood Plans in Shropshire (such as that for Much Wenlock). These documents set out proposals for the use of land and policies to guide future development in order to help to deliver the sustainable growth in Shropshire for the period up to 2026.
2. As the Local Planning Authority, Shropshire Council is required to keep under review any matters that may affect the development of its area. There is a requirement to objectively assess the development needs of the County and this also allow us to take a longer term view for the period to 2036. In addition, there continue to be significant national policy and procedural changes along with opportunities and challenges at the national and regional level which will impact, to varying degrees, on Shropshire. The Council is keen to maintain a robust and defensible Local Plan for Shropshire and the partial review will help to ensure that there is an up to date and deliverable Plan which will help to ensure that local, rather than national policies act as the principal benchmark for planning decisions. Shropshire proposes to address these issues through a partial review of the Local Plan to help to ensure its continuing conformity with national policy.
3. It is important to note that only a 'partial' review is required. The overall strategic approach of focusing growth in Shropshire's county town; market towns; and key centres, whilst enabling some controlled development in rural areas to maintain local sustainability, will remain as the preferred development strategy. Many of the existing policies in the Core Strategy & SAMDev do not need to be amended and will be carried forward as part of the new Plan. The scope of the partial review which is required was identified by the Planning Inspector for the SAMDev Plan in 2015, and will include strategic housing requirements, employment land requirements, the distribution of development and a review of Green Belt boundaries for a revised plan period 2016-2036. Given time and resource limitations, the new Local Plan will be less geographically specific in its approach than the SAMDev Plan, with specific sites identified only in Shrewsbury, the market towns and key centres and at major redevelopment locations. In smaller rural settlements that are classified as Community Hubs or Clusters, development is proposed to be managed in future through criteria-based policies using a consistent set of guidelines to help deliver sustainable development. The existing Core Strategy & SAMDev Plan will remain in force until any new Plan is adopted which is anticipated around 2019. The product of the review will be a new Local Plan document which merges the Core Strategy and SAMDev Plans and contains both strategic policies and more applied policies which primarily inform planning decisions, together with existing (unimplemented) sites and new site allocations.

4. Shropshire Council proposes to publish a consultation document setting out issues and strategic options for the Local Plan Review for in January / February 2017. Parish Councils and individuals and organisations who have registered an interest will be notified of the consultation arrangements by email prior to the consultation period. The comments received will be used to inform the further development of the partial review of the Local Plan and there will be a further opportunity to comment on a full draft of the revised draft Local Plan during 2017-18.
5. In light of the proposed partial review, it would be sensible for parish and town councils to start to consider their own aspirations / objectives, in particular:
 - i. What are the potential benefits and opportunities of future growth?
 - ii. Are there significant infrastructure investment objectives (e.g. in the current Place Plan) which will require developer contributions from new development to help deliver?
 - iii. In light of this, is the local community likely to support more, less or about the same level of development as that received in recent years? We may be able to help by providing an indication of average growth per year since 2006;
 - iv. Is there up to date evidence indicating community views about future development, e.g. from the preparation of a parish plan / community led plan / Neighbourhood Plan which will help to inform a representative view?

The answers to these queries will help town and parish councils to prepare a consultation response to Shropshire Council in January 2017 and help to inform the development of the Plan review process.

6. It is also really important that town and parish councils recognise that the Local Plan provides policy guidelines, rather than an absolute limit on the number and distribution of new housing. The actual outcome for a specific planning application will always be a product of the relative weight of the different planning considerations, including Local Plan policies and the content of any community-led or Parish Plan, which may apply in a specific instance.

Adrian Cooper
Planning Policy & Strategy Manager
Shropshire Council