

Oswestry Place Plan Briefing to Members and suggested response.

There are some 40 projects listed in the Oswestry Place Plan (already distributed to Members)

What are Place Plans?

Place plans are part of the Local Development Plan and are documents which focus on local infrastructure needs in communities across the county.

Infrastructure includes Shropshire Council infrastructure such as roads, schools, open spaces, and leisure, as well as infrastructure provided by partner organisations such as health facilities, water, electric and gas utilities, broadband and flood defences.

There are 18 place plan areas in Shropshire, each plan has a town at its centre and a rural hinterland around it.

Place Plans are primarily aimed at delivering Shropshire Council priorities, but they also provide a mechanism for Parish and Town Councils to feed in proposed '*neighbourhood projects*' primarily to be funded through CIL Neighbourhood Fund or other appropriate funds.

The majority of CIL will continue to be spent locally (the Place Plan area) for the benefit of local communities.

Place Plan Officers

Oswestry and Ellesmere Place Plans – Rosie Corner

Why are Place Plans important?

Infrastructure is key to securing sustainable growth in Shropshire. Place Plans provide an evidence base that support a range of council plans and help the Council allocate resources. These include:

- Local Plan;
- Economic Growth Strategy;
- Local Cycling and Walking Implementation Plan;
- Local Transport Plan;
- Shrewsbury Big Town Plan

How is infrastructure funded?

The Place Plans are also used to help allocate funding for infrastructure, and to secure external funds for infrastructure. These include:-

- Developer funded schemes
- S106 contributions
- **Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)**
- External funding (Capital investment programmes)
- Government grants (LUF, HIF)

Infrastructure includes:

- Community Infrastructure
- Education
- Health
- Housing
- Economic
- Utilities
- Environment
- Transport and Accessibility

Engagement with Town and Parish Councils

Place Plans are Shropshire Council documents, and primarily are focused on strategic infrastructure it is important that local infrastructure requirements are reflected. The current engagement process was supposed to help town and parish councils:-

- Learn more about Shropshire Council led infrastructure projects in their area, and when they are being delivered
- To nominate local infrastructure projects from their area
- Engage with your Place Plan officer for advice and support on local infrastructure issues in their area.

For the Council to nominate projects to be included on the Place Plan: -

- These should be local **infrastructure** projects which have been **identified** in our area.
- They could include items such as community buildings; play areas; community green spaces; sport and leisure facilities; footpaths and community energy schemes
- Projects should be clearly defined, have local support, and **evidenced why they are required**
- Community led projects should be nominated through the parish council by the Parish clerk
- A dedicated web form for nomination of projects has been created.

When engagement with Town and Parish Councils has completed (August 12th 2023) and Neighbourhood Projects added to the Plans, they will be adopted by Shropshire Council in the summer. Updates on projects on the plans will take place throughout the year, and details of completed projects will also be listed on the website, to help Town and Parish Councils see how infrastructure projects in their area is progressing. An annual review process will be built into the Place Plan process to make sure the strategic documents highlighted in the presentation are kept up to date and agreed annually by Shropshire Councils Cabinet

Meeting of Clerks and Chairs held 20th June 2023

The Chair and Clerk attended the meeting for the Oswestry Area with Rosie Corner and Eddie West (Shropshire Council). The meeting was not particularly well attended with only about 3 or 4 councils represented.

We were advised that over the whole of Shropshire of the total CIL funding already received only some **£24million** remains for the 18 place plan areas, and that funding will be based on vital strategic need identified by projected development (e.g., housing targets set in the local development plan) and that these will be further prioritized.

There was much discussion and questioning of the process and dissatisfaction with the suggested process for example projects must be evidenced, but much of the evidence of need (please refer to the Joint Needs Assessment sent to members) will be with Shropshire Council which often seems reluctant to share such information with Parish Councils. The need for greater clarity from Shropshire when projects nominated from parishes are not included in the place plan, and reasons for this need to be communicated back to the Parish.

Similarly, the need to be able to specify costs for projects may lie beyond the experience and ability of some parish councils.

There was some criticism of Shropshire Council and the current Oswestry Area Plan which is very heavily weighted in favour of Highway projects, and given the nature of some of these, for example:

254 [*Install and upgrade of pedestrian crossing point on English Walls in Oswestry to a pelican crossing*],

255 [*Install and upgrade of pedestrian crossing on Salop Road in Oswestry to a pelican crossing*] and

339 [*TRO required for suitable road safety works required at Oswestry School*],

it is difficult to see how these can be classified as strategic infrastructure projects vital to support future development, and raises concerns that these represent initiatives which cannot be funded from the usual Highways budgets.

It was agreed that further meetings – perhaps two each year – should be in place to enable greater liaison between Shropshire and the Parishes as the Plan progresses. The need for better communication between Shropshire and the Parishes – and the Parishes between each other was also underlined. Parishes need to be able to work together on issues and source expertise to enable them to better plan, respond, and carry out actions for the benefit of their areas, arising from the opportunities of the Place Plan and not least the potential sources of funding apart from CIL funding to pay for improvements to infrastructure.

Response to the Place Plan – General

The following issues were highlighted in an email from the Town Clerk to the Place Plan Officer earlier in the month.

- No reference to cemetery land.
- With the JSNA highlighting key challenges in the area around obesity and mental health there is no reference to play, green, open space, or public amenities, or tree planting.
- No reference to the public transport network or infrastructure including the railway.
- Improving infrastructure to support the need for new employment opportunities is focused on the innovation park.
- The energy crisis highlighted the importance of community resilience, and therefore the need for community energy schemes. These will only come forward if the right infrastructure is in place and the ability to connect key sites to the grid.
- Health infrastructure, schools' investment.
- Some parts of the area still do not have a mobile phone signal and improvements are needed to the broadband network.
- Community buildings and facilities will be essential if we are going to sustainably support the growth we expect in the area. Some of this will be recreation land but our towns and village centres need some investment to keep them relevant and viable.

Response to the Place Plan – ORPC

The following is a suggested response from the Council in respect of the general engagement exercise and the request to identify areas not otherwise included.

Oswestry Rural Parish Council has considered the Oswestry Area Place Plan and wishes to make the following response.

(1) Misplaced Project's

Shropshire Council has included the following projects to Oswestry TOWN Council.

627 [Business Park Oswestry Innovation Park Delivery of Strategic employment land to drive long term sustainability in Oswestry and create the conditions and growth. As development take place appropriate infrastructure must be provided], and

628 [Business Park Strategic Road Net Work at Mile End Strategic road network at Mile End - discussion with National Highways regarding future investment to improve the road network to unlock planned and future housing and employment development opportunities. Housing Infrastructure fund HIF applied for to progress works at Mile End roundabout].

These are outside the boundary of Oswestry Town and in fact are part of the ORPC area. The Council wishes to see these redesignated to reflect the boundaries.

(2) Mile End Service Area

The Council would wish to have the Mile End Service Area and associated businesses included in the Place Plan for improvement and development to provide an inviting and attractive area for travellers to stop, with additional electric charging points and space developed for Tourist Information/showcasing the attractions of this area. Shropshire is reminded that Highways England signs along the road advise motorists to take a break.

(3) Missing Elements

The Council believes the following matters of infrastructure development are missing from the Place Plan.

- Health infrastructure

The place plan must be further refined (or the website developed) to show the actual plans for development from the partners – this must include the Integrated Health Board, and plans to improve access to GP surgeries, NHS dentistry, pharmacies, and hospital services. This must also include the West Midlands Ambulance Service. It is not only the expected increase in population caused by development which will impact on provision, but the sparsity factor, highlighted by the nature of Shropshire and the ORPC area (25 miles across)

- Police Infrastructure

There appear to be no references to how the police infrastructure can and will be linked into the place plan. Not only are more police needed, rather than CSO's, but the communications and support infrastructure across the area needs to be improved. The time taken to ferry persons to holding cells in Shrewsbury is a case in point, which reduced personnel actually in the town and rural areas for response to calls.

- Education.

The Council notes that some development is proposed for West Felton and Whittington, and reminds Shropshire that although Morda school has apparently a static population of around 108 children and predicted for the immediate future, there are demountable classrooms which should be replaced with purpose built accommodation.

- Community Buildings

The Council would wish to explore ways of securing and improving the current Village Hall in Morda as part of the Community Buildings theme if there was sufficient public support for this.

- IT Infrastructure

Some parts of the area still do not have a mobile phone signal and improvements to the broadband network will be essential to encourage and support the creation of sustainable businesses in the rural areas.

Shropshire Council is asked to ensure as part of this, security of communications in the event of flooding or other disruption to power supplies. The current copper wire telephony is not affected by power outages whereas mobile phone masts are, and mobile phones need to be recharged.

- Energy

The Council believes that as part of energy security, forms of local community generation using renewable should be developed with access to and from the Grid for the power generated/required. Schools and community buildings should aim to generate usable power wherever possible.

- Transport – public, walking, cycling, bridleways.

Shropshire and transport operators should include any initiatives to improve public transport and encourage the use of public transport. Further some reference needs to be made to the development of alternative safe routes for walking, cycling and bridleways.

- Canals

There is no reference to the extensive canal network in the area and efforts to restore the Montgomery Canal, for leisure, tourism and possible economic uses should be included. This should be integrated into the place plan.

- Flooding & Environment

Flooding can and does affect both established development and may impact on future development. The Plan should reference the Severn Valley Water Management Scheme, which aims not only to manage water flows along the Severn, but to do this in ways which help to develop natural solutions and create nature reserves.

The Council wishes to draw attention of Shropshire Council to the potential negative impact of development on the environment – for example run-off from industrial scale farming and the damage created to verges and water course/ditches by large agricultural vehicles. More attention should be given the environmental infrastructure with the aim of reducing/ameliorating this damage. There is no point in facilitating development at the cost of concomitant damage to the environment.

- Water Security

The Council notes project 503 [*Mile Oak Wastewater Treatment Works WwTW Planned upgrade scheme. Capacity pressures already identified on WwTW. Impacts to Oswestry, Morda, Weston, Trefonen, Treflach, Maesbury Marsh. New consent parameters to negotiated with EA to increase capacity.*]

However, the Council suggests that more attention needs to be given across not only in the place plan area, but Shropshire/North Wales and the West Midlands and indeed the Country to securing adequate supplies of potable water for current and future needs. This is highlighted by the regular

introduction of hosepipe bans such as that now in the South-East, where it is claimed that both working from home AND reduced rainfall requires this. **To support this view, the Council advises that it is estimated that UK needs to build 340,000 new homes a year until 2031. (source: Commons Library)**

- New Employment

The Council suggests that the focus for new employment opportunities in the rural areas should be the policies developed in the Local Development Plan with the potential for a relaxation of the 100m² development limit for new or adapted buildings (or greater flexibility in its application) to allow for the increased accommodation necessary for working from home. The inclusion of other infrastructure elements (e.g., IT, Energy, Water and Sewerage, Transport Education and Health) would themselves support new employment opportunities.

(4) Local Infrastructure/Neighbourhood projects.

The ORPC on its part, will undertake a review of its Strategic Plan, to better identify local infrastructure needs and possible neighbourhood projects, assess the levels of need, community support and costings, and will submit these to Shropshire Council in line with the guidance as part of the ongoing Place Plan. In doing so the Council acknowledges that this may not meet the current deadline and Cabinet sign-off for this year but is confident that an informed and comprehensive set of projects can and will be proposed for future iterations.