

A Green Infrastructure Strategy for Shrewsbury & Atcham Preliminary comments from CPRE

The Campaign to Protect Rural; England (CPRE) are grateful for the opportunity to read this draft. As we have suggested before (Mr Carlyle's comments) we find it unduly long and verbose, but it is comprehensive. We support the concepts justifying the Action Plans. In this response we offer comment on the main report and the Local Green Infrastructure Action Plans

Main report

This part is divided into nine chapters. It is very long and leaves one to wonder by how many people it will be read. However, its thoroughness is welcome support for the recommendations on the provision of green open space. The report is not just a matter of identifying green space; it analyses deficiencies; considers its relevance to the needs of local people and suggests ways of improving accessibility through footpaths and cycle ways. We can welcome this and congratulate the consultants on the thoroughness of their work.

A few points to emerge from the introductory chapters:

Page 8. “Thus green infrastructure is much more than a re-badging of greenspace strategy. It is about identifying, protecting, conserving, enhancing and extending healthy environments, and is an essential element in planning for the sustainable development of Shrewsbury & Atcham. It is also a technique for planning greenspace alongside planning for housing, transport and other infrastructure throughout an area of change, ensuring that developments include new open spaces and that these are linked to existing and enhanced greenspaces and greenways.” – this is a useful definition.

Page 10 – the role of New Growth Points (top of page). We are not clear why New Growth Points should enjoy particular Greenspace benefits. The principles outlined in the report should apply to all settlements. There is conflict between the map on page 28 and the GI plan on page 67. (We have not seen the SABC Growth Delivery Plan and will be asking for a sight of it.)

Page 46 – map. We repeat our objection to the area of the Old River Bed west of Herongate being described as of medium housing capacity. In the CPRE survey, it was found to be of high landscape value. The same applies to the large area east of the town at Weir Hill and Robertsford. The historic and landscape importance of the Old River Bed appears to have been overlooked — indeed, the Old River Bed is not mentioned as such, yet it is one of the town's most important greenspace assets.

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In our view, **Chapter 7, page 67** marks the beginning of the most important sections of the report, with specific proposals. The maps on pages 63 and 67 are particularly important and deserve warm support, as do the projects listed on pages 66, 68 – 70.

We could find no mention in the report of **allotments** – surely these need to be considered, their number assessed against demand and provision made.

Appendix 5 – Local Green Infrastructure Action Plans

This divides the town into 9 areas, each of which is the subject of an action plan. There is one reservation over Plan B, but the rest protect and enhance areas over which we have had concerns in the past. It is interesting to note that the areas and proposals fit in with the policies of the Shrewsbury Countryside Strategy, which oddly is not included in the list of significant local strategies mentioned on page 10.

Area A – Column Ward. As mentioned above, we object to the inclusion of all the land around Weir Hill and Robertsford being included as a large housing site. We surveyed this carefully and concluded that the river valley here is extremely important, the value of which would be damaged by excessive housing. Some housing could be accommodated further back from the valley. We welcome the extension of the intervention area beyond the river up to the A5. The protection of this area is integral to the river valley. Also, we are interested in the concept of the Arboretum, originally proposed by the Civic Society as a memorial area adjoining the crematorium.

Area B – North West Rural Edge. This is perhaps the most important landscape and wildlife area round Shrewsbury, its value lying in its proximity to the town yet remaining undeveloped. One reason is the Old River Bed and flooding of low land; another, the wish of the owners of the Berwick Estate to preserve its integrity. We believe that a North-West Relief Road would inflict serious and irreversible damage on this valuable landscape and are campaigning against it. We note that TEP also accept that the new road would have a serious impact. It is unrealistic to believe that an NWRR would enable improvements in the natural environment; LA policy so far has been to fund the road through housing development.

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We also add a note of caution regarding the Shrewsbury River Journey report. The programme that led to the report by Pleydell Smithyman is being driven by narrow commercial interests who want to see more boats, including motorised boats, on the river Severn. This would threaten the river corridor's tranquillity and adversely affect the interests of existing river users, of which there are hundreds – rowers, canoeists, fishermen, walkers etc.

Area C – Northern Corridor. We agree with the conclusions and recommendations. This is a difficult area needing much better greenspace provision and accessibility.

Area D – River East. The importance of this area lies in its footpaths and cycleways and the canal. We are puzzled by the inclusion of the open land on each side of the A49 as an Intervention area. It is open, flat agricultural land and unlikely to change.

Area E – Southern Urban-rural Fringe. We are glad to see that the report recognises the intrinsic historic, landscape and wildlife qualities of the area and we particularly welcome the idea of an extensive Country Park from Bayston Hill to the A488. This would unite the different countryside elements of the area.. The Conduit Head well heads could form a significant feature within the park.

Area F – Town Centre. We agree with this section of the report but repeat our warning about the likely consequences if use of the river is not carefully controlled by an independent authority, rather than by commercial interests.

Area G – Urban North. We agree that improvements can best be achieved through better accessibility between predominantly residential areas and the significant greenspace assets around them. The Battlefield site (1403) is an important feature of the area, particularly since the new Battlefield Centre opened earlier this year.

Area H – Western Central. Two aspects of the report stand out for commendation. The first is flood management of the Rad Brook. This stream produces flash floods at times of storm because it takes surface water from a large number of developments in the hospital area as well as from about a mile of the dual-carriageway A5 by-pass.

The second is the use of green land surrounding the hospital as a local recreation amenity for residents and hospital patients. (It has its origins in a farm specially planned in the 19th century for the welfare of patients at Shelton Hospital. The

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author of these notes has been campaigning since 1995 to prevent it being used for residential development.)

Area I – River south to Rea Brook. Again we support the views and proposals set out in this report. A seminar at the Wildlife Trust a couple of years ago identified the land here shown “high capacity and low historic value” as being the least damaging of various options considered. We particularly support the retention of the golf course for public open space/recreation.

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