

## **”Building an economic vision for Shropshire”, a research report by IPPR North for Shropshire Council dated November 2016, and a summary report dated February 2017**

### **A review by CPRE Shropshire, December 2017**

#### **Background**

1. The IPPR North reports are put forward as the main evidence supporting Shropshire Council’s Economic Growth Strategy for Shropshire 2017-2021 (EGS). This EGS was launched for a 6-week consultation in March 2017. Page 3 of the EGS refers to the IPPR North report dated February 2017. That is a Summary report (as explained by Gemma Davies, Head of Economic Growth, in an e-mail dated 24 November 2017), available on the [Invest in Shropshire website](#) only from 24 November 2017. Also available on the Invest in Shropshire website from that date is the IPPR North Research Report, a more detailed report on which the Summary Report is based. On the Shropshire Council and Invest in Shropshire websites two earlier versions of that Research report are also available. These various versions are summarised in Annex 1. The versions we review here are those linked from the foot of the home page of the Invest in Shropshire website.
2. The Summary report repeats detail from the longer Research report, namely its first two pages (with a changed final 2-line paragraph), and section 4.2.1 to 4.2.4. It then adds a summary page (not included in the Research report), which lists the 13 recommendations referred to on page 3 of the Economic Growth Strategy. We repeat that this Summary report, although referred to in the Economic Growth Strategy published in July 2017, was not available on the Council’s websites until 24 November 2017.
3. Both reports state at their outset that:

*IPPR North was commissioned by Shropshire Council and the University of Chester to develop a new economic vision for Shropshire’s economy in the future. Our study has involved some new economic analysis; it has considered some of the existing strategies of Shropshire Council and the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership; and we have held a series of roundtables with key stakeholders from around the county.*
4. At the foot of the same page both reports say “Further details of our analysis are available in a separate report”. It has been clarified (by Gemma Davies, Head of Economic Growth, in an e-mail dated 3 December 2017) that there are in fact no further reports; this reference is because the Summary report is the first section of the Research report - it refers to the Research report itself. The Research report does also say at the foot of page 4 “Details of this vision and the subsequent recommendations are set out in a separate report. This report sets out the background analysis that underpins this vision”. This presumably refers to the Summary report.
5. The IPPR North reports were not mentioned in the papers for the 8-week consultation on the Local Plan Partial Review (LPPR), which was still underway when the EGS consultation was launched. This was despite the fact that the IPPR North Research report had presumably been available since November 2016, and the fact that the LPPR contained a section on Economic Growth.

## Unprofessional production

6. The IPPR North Research report (as originally downloadable from the Shropshire Council website<sup>1</sup>) was unfortunately incomplete, in that some of its figures did not download properly (e.g. figures 8 and 9). A later version, marked as FINAL, has subsequently been downloaded, which does reproduce figures 8 and 9<sup>2</sup>. The third version of the Research report, downloadable from the Invest in Shropshire website, has a revised index, revised page numbering, and correction of at least one proof-reading error. Of more concern however, is that the report is still riddled with proof-reading errors (a few of them carried over to the Summary report), including inaccuracies in some of its tables and figures, which have in at least one instance led to incorrect conclusions. This gives the impression that the report has been sloppily and negligently compiled, and is not the work of a fully professional organisation. We have identified over 50 such errors, as itemised in Annex 2 below.

## Category errors

7. Many of its conclusions on economic measures are of the type “Shropshire’s xxx is less than the UK average”. It makes these statements without any attempt to show the statistical significance of such a deviation from the UK average. It is of course the nature of a set of data giving rise to an average that almost every member of that set will differ from that actual average. The true significance of such a difference is not the physical amount of the difference (which is all that the IPPR North report focuses on) but how that difference relates to the overall spread of differences within the complete data set. The IPPR North report gives no indication whatsoever of such significance.
8. Furthermore, the implication that if “Shropshire’s xxx is less than the UK average” then Shropshire should strive to make its “xxx” greater than the UK average, or even top of the league, is a nonsense. That implies a perpetual game of leap-frog between Local Authorities, in a never-ending game of escalation. That is another reason why it is important to have an appreciation of the significance, and reasons for, any deviation of Shropshire’s “xxx” from the UK, or English, average.
9. It might have been more instructive, instead of comparing Shropshire’s figures with the UK average, to have compared them with the average for other shire counties.

## Independent review?

10. The factual errors and category errors identified in paragraphs 6 and 7 above lead to two questions:
  - a) Has the IPPR North report been subject to any internal review process, or other review process, by peer organisations, other economists etc?
  - b) Has Shropshire Council noticed these errors?
11. Without such critical review procedures, the validity of the IPPR North report must surely be questionable.

## Unsupported conclusions

12. The bulk of the Research report is concerned with the analysis of statistical data. It might be thought that this analysis would be the basis of the evidence base that this report purports to be. However, section 4, the actual stage of “*Developing an economic vision for Shropshire*” begins with the statement “*During the discussion groups, participants were asked to outline their views on what a future vision for Shropshire might look like*”.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://shropshire.gov.uk/media/7564/shropshire-economic-analysis-report-ippr.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.investinshropshire.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Shropshire-Economic-Analysis-Report-FINAL-170308.pdf>

13. It transpires that the report's conclusions are based not on the analysis of data, but rather on what emerged from discussion groups. Appendix 1 to the IPPR North report lists a number of round-table discussions, several of which were internal to Shropshire Council itself. It is not revealed who was at those discussions, how often they occurred, whether there was an agenda, or whether a member of IPPR North was present at those discussions to present the analysis of the data contained in the bulk of their report. It has been confirmed that they were consultations that were not open to the public.
14. It therefore appears that the conclusions and thrust of the IPPR North report have emerged from discussions amongst un-named individuals around a table or tables, rather than from evidence. Although the Research report does contain evidence (although as noted above, that itself contains gross errors), such evidence has apparently not itself been used in supporting the conclusions of anonymous individuals around a table or tables.
15. The conclusions from section 4 of the Research report have been carried over to the Summary report, and so the Summary report also bears no apparent relationship to the evidence in Sections 2 and 3 of the Research report.
16. The opening statement of the IPPR North report of November 2016 is "*By 2030 Shropshire can be a world-leading rural economy*". This hyperbolic statement is nowhere supported in the body of the reports either by the evidence, or by the round-table discussions, or by the 13 recommendations at the close of the Summary report.

### Sustainability?

17. Shropshire Council's Economic Growth Strategy (as finalised) was launched to the business community at an event in the Walker Theatre (at Theatre Severn) in Shrewsbury on 26 October 2017. At that event, Ed Cox, the Director of IPPR North, admitted with some embarrassment that no calculations whatsoever had been done to assess the carbon balance of the proposals within the IPPR North report or the Economic Growth Strategy.
18. The Preferred Options report has at least been supported by a Sustainability Appraisal. However, the Oswestry and District Civic Society has reappraised this SA through a critical review of it and has concluded that overall the SA gives a negative assessment rather than the positive one claimed by Shropshire Council. The conclusion is that the Preferred Options Strategy does not represent sustainable development. This is also supported by the Council's admission that "*The SA is not an evidence based exercise, it is a matter of professional judgement, based on the consideration of the three pillars of sustainability social, environmental and economic*".
19. The Economic Growth Strategy has not been supported by any such Sustainability Appraisal even a flawed one. Without such an Appraisal, the conclusion must be that the Economic Growth Strategy, as underpinned by the IPPR North report, does not represent sustainable development.

CPRE Shropshire

December 2017

## Versions of IPPR North reports

| Title on title page             | Date on title page | Author          | Date and time pdf created | Website reference   | Identifying characteristics                         |
|---------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------|---------------------------|---|---|
| A research report by IPPR North | November 2016      | Sarah Longlands | 13/03/2017<br>09:22:29    | <a href="https://shropshire.gov.uk/media/7564/shropshire-economic-analysis-report-ippr.pdf">https://shropshire.gov.uk/media/7564/shropshire-economic-analysis-report-ippr.pdf</a>   | Error message in index: Tables 8 and 9 not included |
| A research report by IPPR North | November 2016      | Sarah Longlands | 09/03/2017<br>09:46:53    | <a href="http://www.investinshropshire.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Shropshire-Economic-Analysis-Report-FINAL-170308.pdf">http://www.investinshropshire.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Shropshire-Economic-Analysis-Report-FINAL-170308.pdf</a>                           | Error message in index                              |
| A research report by IPPR North | November 2016      | Sarah Longlands | 24/11/17<br>11:28:15      | <a href="http://www.investinshropshire.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Shropshire-Economic-Analysis-Report-FINAL-171124.pdf">http://www.investinshropshire.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Shropshire-Economic-Analysis-Report-FINAL-171124.pdf</a>                           | Revised index                                       |
| A report by IPPR North          | February 2017      | Sarah Longlands | 20/11/17<br>11:07:38      | <a href="http://www.investinshropshire.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Building-an-Economic-Vision-for-Shropshire-summary-IPPR-North.pdf">http://www.investinshropshire.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Building-an-Economic-Vision-for-Shropshire-summary-IPPR-North.pdf</a> | Summary report                                      |

## Proof reading and other errors in IPPR North research report

| Error no | Page | Nature |
|----------|------|--------|
|----------|------|--------|

### Significant errors

|    |    |   |
|----|----|---|
| 1. | 25 | i) Table 3: The percentages are wrong, in the “Workplace of Residents” table. They are based on the Total of 116,706 for the “Residence of Workers” table.  |
| 2. |    | ii) Table 3: The two totals quoted, of 111,425 and 116,706 are not consistent with the totals of about 147,600 for Shropshire’s employees (the total derived from the Table 4 figures)  |
| 3. | 27 | i) Table 4: the column headed “% Change” is incorrect. The numbers shown are the actual change, not the percentage change   |
| 4. | 29 | Table 5: the conclusions for Opportunities are unsound because of the selection of sectors that are growing by employment of 0.5%+. This 0.5%+ has been identified from the figures in Table 3. Error no 1 above identifies that the relevant figures were not percentages. The conclusions for “Wholesale/ retail trade/repair of motors” and for “Human health and social work” are therefore invalid |

### Minor errors that should have been corrected

|     |  |  |   |
|-----|--|--|---|
| 1.  | 3  | Final sentence. There is apparently no “separate report” other than this Research report.  |   |
| 2.  | 6  | Penultimate paragraph: Shropshire, whether the ceremonial county or the Shropshire Council area, does not completely encircle the Telford and Wrekin area. T&W’s eastern border is with Staffordshire, as shown in Figure 2. |   |
| 3.  | 14   | i) The reference to figure 6 at line 2 should be a reference to figure 5   |   |
| 4.  |  | ii) The reference to figure 3 at line 1 of paragraph 2 should be a reference to figure 5   |   |
| 5.  |  | iii) The reference to figure 4 at the end of paragraph 2 is incorrect. Figure 4 shows the position in 2015, not a future trend.  |   |
| 6.  |  | iv) Footnote 15. There is no longer a “Shropshire County Council”. They mean Shropshire Council, the client that commissioned their report.  |   |
| 7.  |  | v) Footnote 16 refers to “Luke’s data”. There is no indication what this might be.   |   |
| 8.  |  | 15   | Figure 6 gives no indication what the units are on the vertical axis.   |
| 9.  |  | 18   | i) Under 3.3, 1 <sup>st</sup> paragraph, line 3: the reference to figures 6 and 7 should be a reference to figures 7, 8 and 9 |
| 10. | ii) Under 3.3, 1 <sup>st</sup> paragraph, line 5: The reference to figure 6 should be a reference to figure 7  |  |   |
| 11. | iii) Under 3.3, 2 <sup>nd</sup> paragraph, line 1: The reference to figure 8 should be a reference to figure 9 |  |   |
| 12. | iv) Footnote 26: The reference to figures 6 and 8 should be a reference to figures 7 and 9                     |  |   |

## Proof reading and other errors in IPPR North research report

| Error no | Page | Nature   |
|----------|------|--|
| 13.      | 19   | i) Figure 7: The chart exaggerates the appearance of difference between the UK and Shropshire figures by starting the vertical axis at £15.00 rather than at zero.   |
| 14.      |      | ii) Figure 7: It should be "Shropshire C" not "Shropshire CC"  |
| 15.      |      | iii) Figure 8: The chart exaggerates the appearance of difference between the lines on the graph by starting the vertical axis at 90 rather than at zero   |
| 16.      |      | iv) Figure 9: As Shropshire's productivity is shown as being almost identical to that of the West Midlands region as a whole, it would be instructive to know which regions had a higher productivity than the UK average. |
| 17.      |      | v) Figure 9: It should be "Shropshire C" not "Shropshire CC"   |
| 18.      | 20   | i) The reference to figure 9 at line 5 should be a reference to figure 10  |
| 19.      |      | ii) Figure 10: The chart exaggerates the appearance of difference between the lines on the graph by starting the vertical axis at 64.0 rather than at zero   |
| 20.      |      | iii) The reference to figure 10 in the pre-penultimate line should be a reference to figure 11   |
| 21.      | 21   | i) Figure 11: The chart exaggerates the appearance of difference between the lines on the graph by starting the vertical axis at 10,000 rather than at zero  |
| 22.      |      | ii) Figure 11: It should be "Shropshire C" not "Shropshire CC"   |
| 23.      | 22   | The reference to figures 11 and 12 on the penultimate line should be a reference to figures 12 and 13  |
| 24.      | 23   | i) The reference to figure 13 on the 1st line should be a reference to figure 14   |
| 25.      |      | ii) The reference to figure 13 on the 1st line of paragraph 3 should be a reference to figure 14   |
| 26.      | 25   | i) Penultimate line: word "who" is missing   |
| 27.      |      | ii) Figure 15 heading: inconsistent font used  |
| 28.      | 27   | i) Table 4 heading: the period should be 2016-2026, not 2006-2036  |
| 29.      |      | ii) Table 4: there is no statement of what the units are for "Employment by sector" or for "GVA by sector"   |
| 30.      |      | iii) Table 4: it would have been helpful to have shown the column totals   |
| 31.      | 28   | i) The reference to figure 14 on the 2nd line should be a reference to figure 16   |
| 32.      |      | ii) The reference to figure 15 on the 4th line should be a reference to figure 17  |
| 33.      |      | iii) Figure 17 heading: inconsistent font used   |
| 34.      | 29   | i) The reference to figures 14 and 15 on the 1st line should be a reference to figures 16 and 17   |
| 35.      |      | ii) "indicates" on the 1 <sup>st</sup> line should be "indicate"   |

## Proof reading and other errors in IPPR North research report

| Error no | Page | Nature  |
|----------|------|---|
| 36.      | 30   | Pre-penultimate line of main text: Harper Adams is in the Telford & Wrekin Council area, not the Shropshire Council area                                      |
| 37.      | 31   | Figure 18 heading: the heading is placed below the chart to which it refers, as are subsequent headings. This is inconsistent with the previous presentation. |
| 38.      | 32   | Figure 21: the wrong chart type has been used. A graph is not appropriate. The data should be represented by columns  |
| 39.      | 33   | i) Figure 22: the term "SSV" is not explained   |
| 40.      |      | ii) Figure 23: the wrong chart type has been used. A graph is not appropriate. The data should be represented by columns                                      |
| 41.      | 35   | Figure 25: The chart exaggerates the appearance of difference between the bars on by starting the horizontal axis at 45 rather than at zero                   |
| 42.      | 37   | 1st line, 2 <sup>nd</sup> paragraph under 3.7.1: "of" should be "off"   |
| 43.      | 39   | i) The reference to figure 17 in the 3 <sup>rd</sup> sentence should be a reference to figure 29  |
| 44.      |      | ii) The reference to figure 18 in the penultimate line of the main text should be a reference to figure 29  |
| 45.      | 43   | i) 2 <sup>nd</sup> line under "Vision": "it" should be "its"  |
| 46.      |      | ii) Under "Actions", 1 <sup>st</sup> bullet point, 2 <sup>nd</sup> sub-bullet point, last line: in "workforce is a proven", remove the word "a".              |
| 47.      |      | iii) Under "Actions", 2 <sup>nd</sup> bullet point: The term "VCS" is not defined   |
| 48.      | 45   | Under <i>Food, Drink and Tourism</i> , 1 <sup>st</sup> bullet point, 6 <sup>th</sup> line; Remove one of the full stops.                                      |
| 49.      | 47   | Pre-penultimate bullet point: again, Harper Adams University is in the Telford & Wrekin Council area, not the Shropshire Council area                         |