



Committee and Date

Cabinet
10th September 2025

Item

Public



Application by West Felton Parish Council for West Felton Parish to be Considered as a Neighbourhood Area

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Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder):	Councillor David Walker		

1. Synopsis

- 1.1 This report seeks approval for the application by West Felton Parish Council for the Parish area of West Felton to be considered as a Neighbourhood Area for the purposes of preparing a Neighbourhood Development Plan.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. It is Shropshire Council's role to decide if the proposed Neighbourhood Area, in this case, the area covered by West Felton Parish Council, is an appropriate area for the purposes of preparing a Neighbourhood Development Plan (referred to in this report as Neighbourhood Plan). The recommendation focuses solely on the extent of the area to be used in the preparation of the proposed Neighbourhood Plan. This recommendation does not deal with the proposed content of the Neighbourhood Plan, which are issues to be considered by West Felton Parish Council in cooperation with Shropshire Council in due course. The application is attached as Appendix A, and the proposed area map as Appendix B. It is considered the identification of the West Felton Parish area as a Neighbourhood Area responds positively to the Shropshire Plan's objectives, in particular the meeting the ambition improve the health of Shropshire's economy and environment.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1. That Cabinet agree the designation of the proposed Neighbourhood Area identified on the map in Appendix B, covering the Parish of West Felton as an appropriate basis for the development of a Neighbourhood Development Plan and notifies West Felton Parish Council accordingly.

Report

4. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

- 4.1. The power to designate a Neighbourhood Area is exercisable under Section 61G of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 ("the Act"). Under Regulation 5(1) of The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 an Area Application must include a map that identifies the area to which the application relates and a statement to explain why the area is considered appropriate to be designated as a Neighbourhood Area and that the body is in fact a "relevant body" for the purposes of Section 61 G(2) of the Act. West Felton Parish Council is a relevant body for the purposes of the Act.
- 4.2. The relevant material (Area Application and Area Map included as Appendix A and B to this report) was received by Shropshire Council on 18 July 2025 and as stated under Regulation 5(1) of The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012, public consultation is not required as the area for designation relates to the full parish area.
- 4.3. In determining the application Shropshire Council must have regard to the desirability of designating the whole of the parish area as a Neighbourhood Area and the desirability of maintaining the existing boundaries of areas already designated as neighbourhood areas. In the event the designation is approved, it will be published on the Council's website. If the designation is refused under Section 61G (9) of the Act, reasons must be given and the decision publicised in accordance with Regulation 7 of the Regulations. It is considered there is significant risk to the Council of not agreeing to the West Felton Parish Area as a Neighbourhood Area without sound rationale.
- 4.4. The designation of an appropriate area for a Neighbourhood Plan is to confirm the geographic area the Plan will cover. This does not set policies to be contained in the Neighbourhood Plan, or the thematic scope of that Plan. Indeed, and importantly, the designation of a Neighbourhood Area does not commit the Parish or Town Council to producing or completing a Neighbourhood Plan. It is, however, a first important step in the process of preparing a Neighbourhood Plan as required by regulations.

4.5. When approved, Neighbourhood Plans form part of the statutory development plan for the area. The statutory framework covering the production of neighbourhood plans is therefore quite prescriptive and there is little risk for either Shropshire Council or West Felton Parish Council in following this carefully. However, it is important that a high degree of trust and cooperation between the Councils is maintained in order to reduce any risk of inconsistency and conflict between the Neighbourhood Plan and those other parts of the Development Plan prepared by Shropshire Council.

4.6. Shropshire's statutory Development Plan will be an important and ongoing consideration in the context of any Neighbourhood Plan prepared for the West Felton Parish Council area. At present the Core Strategy and Site Allocations and Management of Development (SAMDev) Plans (2006-2026) represent the Countywide adopted Development Plan. In response to the Inspectors' soundness concerns, the Draft Local Plan Review (2016-2036) was withdrawn from examination, a decision approved by Full Council on 17th July 2025. Shropshire Council have now been required to set out a timeframe for a further Local Plan review, with work commencing in January 2026 on a 30 month timetable, with adoption scheduled in mid 2028. The timeframe of the future Local Plan is likely to be 2025 to 2045.

4.7. A Neighbourhood Plan will, after passing through the relevant stages of consultation, submission, examination and the referendum, go on to become part of the statutory Development Plan for the area. By definition, the Neighbourhood Plan should be a product of the community and as such will contain policies that, whilst in general conformity with other elements of the Development Plan, should have their own distinct character. The degree of scrutiny to be applied to a Neighbourhood Plan through its examination process is dependent upon the scope of the plan, and it will continue to be particularly important for appropriate evidence to be produced to inform the Neighbourhood Plan. Statute provides that planning applications should be determined in accordance with the provisions of relevant Development Plan policies unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The weight given to the Plan thus remains to be balanced with other considerations when taken in the round by decision makers.

4.8. Risk table

<i>Risk</i>	<i>Mitigation</i>
Risk of non compliance with Regulations 5, 6 and 7 of The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012.	Complying with the regulations by: 1) including with the Area Application a map that identifies the area to which the application relates and a statement to explain why the area is considered appropriate to be designated as a Neighbourhood Area and that the body is in fact a "relevant body" for the purposes of Section 61 G(2) of the Act; 2) not carrying out a public consultation as this is not required as the area for designation relates to the full parish area; and having regard to the desirability of designating the whole of the parish area as a Neighbourhood

	Area and the desirability of maintaining the existing boundaries of areas already designated as neighbourhood areas.
Risk of inconsistency and conflict between the Neighbourhood Plan and those other parts of the Development Plan prepared by Shropshire Council.	Maintain a high degree of trust and cooperation between the Councils.

5. Financial Implications

5.1. Shropshire Council continues to manage unprecedented financial demands as budgeted for within the Medium Term Financial Strategy approved by Council on 27 February 2025 and subsequent updates. It is also addressed in our monitoring position presented to Cabinet on a monthly basis. Significant management action has and continues to be undertaken to ensure the Council's financial survival. While all reports provide the financial implications of decisions being taken, this may change as officers review the overall financial situation and make decisions aligned to financial survivability. Where non-essential spend is identified within the Council, this will be reduced. This may involve

- scaling down initiatives,
- changing the scope,
- delaying implementation, or
- extending delivery timescales.

5.2. The Localism Act and Regulations provide that the following costs would fall to Shropshire Council: delivering a supporting role particularly in the latter stages of the Plan's development, appointing an Examiner for the Plan, conducting an Examination and holding a Referendum. Current provisions allow an application for these additional costs to be met, and a reimbursement of costs will therefore be sought from Central Government. It is considered likely the robustness of the Neighbourhood Plan policies will be tested over time by independent Planning Inspectors on planning appeals made under Section 78 of the Act. Members are advised that the liability for future appeal costs rests with Shropshire Council as Local Planning Authority and as such the usability of such plans and their impact on local decision making will need to be carefully monitored.

6. Climate Change Appraisal

6.1. The designation of the West Felton Neighbourhood Area allows the important first step in the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan for the parish of West Felton. Whilst at this stage the contents of the Plan are not known and will be subject to the objectives led by West Felton Parish Council in consultation with their communities, it does present an opportunity to explore additional development management policies for the local area, which could respond to the ongoing need to reduce energy and fuel consumption, generate renewable energy, offset and mitigate carbon emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change. Any new development management policies would need to demonstrate they are deliverable and ensure development remains viable.

7. Background

- 7.1. Shropshire Council fully supports the principle of areas seeking to develop their own Neighbourhood Plans to supplement and complement the wider policies of the Development Plan. The Government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) supports the principle of Neighbourhood Plans and their status as part of the Development Plan. The NPPF states "Neighbourhood plans should support the delivery of strategic policies contained in local plans or spatial development strategies; and should shape and direct development that is outside of these strategic policies". It is also made clear that Neighbourhood Plans should not promote less development than set out in the strategic policies for the area or undermine those strategic policies.
- 7.2. The development of a Neighbourhood Plan must be facilitated by the Town or Parish Council and will, in most cases, proceed with support and assistance from volunteers across the community. It is recommended that West Felton Parish Council begin early consultation with their communities, including on how to finance the creation of the Neighbourhood Plan, including any supporting evidence which will be required.
- 7.3. In due course and as part of the Neighbourhood Plan preparation process, Shropshire Council will consider whether the West Felton Neighbourhood Plan conforms to the adopted strategic policies of the wider Development Plan as part of ongoing cooperation between the Councils and as part of formal consultation responses. Ultimately, the Neighbourhood Plan will be subject to an independent assessment and will need to meet a number of mandatory 'basic conditions' set out in legislation.

8. Additional Information

- 8.1. Shropshire Council officers have had early discussions with representatives from West Felton Parish Council, specifically to discuss the extent of the proposal and to further understand the rationale for the area proposed.
- 8.2. Having had these early discussions, it is considered the proposed area, which accords with the parish boundary, is appropriate for the purposes of preparing a Neighbourhood Plan and that the proposed Neighbourhood Plan can therefore offer the opportunity to deliver some additional value through the preparation of locally relevant planning policies to support the delivery of appropriate development, whilst continuing to be in conformity with the strategic policies of the Local Plan.
- 8.3. West Felton Parish Council must seek to ensure the future sustainable development of the settlement by providing detailed planning policies for their area. Whilst the exact scope and remit of the Neighbourhood Plan is to be discussed, at this stage it is clear there is an understanding from the Parish Council as to the general role of the Neighbourhood Plan and the type of policies it is likely to introduce. Further discussions will help to clarify this. In addition, it should be recognised that in line with national regulations on Community Infrastructure levy

(CIL), areas with adopted ('made') Neighbourhood Plans in place, receive 25% CIL Neighbourhood Funds (uncapped) from CIL liable development in its area after the Plan's adoption, compared with 15% (capped) in non-Neighbourhood Plan areas.

9. Conclusions

- 9.1. West Felton Parish Council has indicated they wish to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan for their whole Parish area. It is the officer recommendation to proceed with agreeing the parish as a Neighbourhood Area, and that there are no appropriate reasons not to do so.
- 9.2. This report only seeks to agree the Parish as a Neighbourhood Area. It does not cover any matters of content of a Neighbourhood Plan for the area, and it is fully acknowledged this is a responsibility of West Felton Parish Council to lead. However, it does identify the ongoing need for Council officers, where appropriate, to work collaboratively with West Felton Parish Council on the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan and sets out the regulatory requirements of Shropshire Council within this process.

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

None

Local Member: Councillor David Walker

Appendices [Please list the titles of Appendices]

Appendix A – Application from West Felton Parish Council

Appendix B – Map of designated area