



Cabinet
15th April 2026

Item

Public



Shrewsbury Town Centre Design Code

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Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder):	Councillor David Walker		

1. Synopsis

1.1 To seek approval by Cabinet that the Shrewsbury Town Centre Design Code be adopted as a material consideration in the planning decision making process following a public consultation that took place between October 2025 to January 2026.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. The Shropshire Plan includes strategic objectives to “develop Shropshire as a safe, strong and vibrant destination to attract people to live in, work in, learn in and visit” and “maintain, protect, and enhance our outstanding natural and historic environment”. These will be reflected in decision making which “will be made using a strong evidence base which supports a better understanding of the likely impacts on Shropshire communities”.
- 2.2. The draft final Shrewsbury Town Centre Design Code (Appendix 1) (hereafter Design Code) will support the achievement of these Shropshire Plan strategic objectives by:

- Providing guidance to those progressing planning applications on the design expectations in the town centre. Resulting in greater certainty, enabling them to make efficient and effective use of their resources, and the achievement of a higher quality of design.
 - Planning officers determining planning applications in Shrewsbury town centre with further guidance to support their decision making.
- 2.3. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) views Design Codes as essential tools to:
- Deliver beautiful, well-designed, environmentally sustainable places
 - Provide developers with certainty and reduce ambiguity
 - Embed community-driven and locally distinctive design principles
 - Raise design quality nationally through the National Design Guide & NMDC
 - Strengthen the material weight of design considerations in planning
- 2.4. The public consultation ran from 17 October 2025 to 14 January 2026 (13 weeks in total), and responses were provided that were representative of the identified target user groups, were detailed and considered in their nature. Representations were made from statutory consultees, community groups, businesses, residents, and professionals. These responses have been analysed and changes made to the final draft Design Code as appropriate. A 'You Said: We Did' summary document is provided as Appendix 2.
- 2.5. Overall, stakeholders broadly support the ambition of the draft Design Code but identified key areas where the draft needs clarification, strengthening, or rebalancing.
- 2.6. There were consultation responses made across all 8 themes (these being movement, nature, built form, identity, public space, uses, homes and resources) and changes have been made, where relevant, to enhance the useability of the draft Design Code for all targeted user groups, particularly in supporting applicants and planning officers when considering the design and place-making credentials of proposed new development in Shrewsbury town centre.
- 2.7. The draft Design Code recognises the unique character of Shrewsbury town centre; influenced by its landform and topography; strong relationship to the River Severn; areas with a dense medieval street pattern; the scale, design and variety of built form; numerous landmark buildings; and open spaces. This section of the Design Code was referenced as a key element in accurately positioning how special Shrewsbury is and ensuring that all design decisions for a particular new development within the area were made with these 12 characteristics in mind.

- 2.8. It therefore still continues to set out an aspiration for high quality design throughout Shrewsbury town centre, establishing a new standard for place-making. To achieve this, it provides overarching design coding for new development (new buildings and spaces) in Shrewsbury town centre, thereby supporting the understanding and application of design policies in the adopted Development Plan for Shropshire.
- 2.9. The finalised draft Design Code reiterates the importance of discussions made earlier in the planning decision-making process, such as at the Pre-Application process (known as PPA) alongside wider engagement with the community to provide better design and place-making opportunities across the town centre area.
- 2.10. There were a number of responses to the Consultation made that were outside the remit of the public consultation, approved by Cabinet on 10 September 2025. These responses have been collated and shared with relevant project groups to inform their ongoing work given the valuable nature of public and stakeholder feedback but are not considered as part of the draft Design Code as they do not directly affect design issues.

3. Recommendations

That Cabinet agrees to:

- 3.1. To approve adoption of the Shrewsbury Town Centre Design Code as set out in Appendix 1, to provide guidance on the application of the Local Plan policies and form a material consideration in the planning decision-making process.

Report

4. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

- 4.1. Following the public consultation, a further Equality, Social Inclusion and Health Impact Assessment (ESHIA) has been undertaken and updated to reflect the views of the respondents and inform the outcomes of the finalised Shrewsbury Town Centre Design Code. This is provided as Appendix 3
- 4.2. The Design Code, following adoption, will be a material planning consideration during the determination of planning applications. It has followed a similar approach to engagement to that for Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD's). The recommendations in this report align with the approach to engagement on SPD's within the Council's Statement of Community Involvement, and as such it is considered there to be a reduced risk of challenge that the Council has not followed due process in the production of this Design Code.
- 4.3. The Design Code is intended to positively influence new development within Shrewsbury town centre by providing guidance to support the understanding and application of policies in the adopted Development Plan. Not adopting the Design

Code could result in the gradual erosion of the town centre's character and appearance through inappropriate new development, negatively affecting character and appearance and the heritage significance of the Shrewsbury Conservation Area (much of which is located within the Design Code area).

- 4.4. The Design Code is intended to support delivery of the Shrewsbury Big Town Plan and the Shrewsbury Movement and Public Space Strategy. Not bringing it forward could negatively affect the delivery of the aspirations of these documents
- 4.5. The updated ESHIA for the Design Code records that the anticipated equality impacts will be neutral to medium positive overall across the nine Protected Characteristic groupings defined by the Equality Act 2010. There is potential for low to medium positive equality impact for the groupings of Age, Disability, Pregnancy and Maternity, and Sex, in terms of mental and physical well-being opportunities arising for people living in and visiting a vibrant, well- designed and cared for environment in Shrewsbury town centre.
- 4.6. For such groupings, this includes people with caring responsibilities in regard to young families or to people with disabilities. Families with young children, wheelchair users, and older people who may consider themselves to be vulnerable are less likely to venture out without clear signage and lighting, and pavements that can be navigated safely by them and their carers. The enhancements proposed, through improved design will create a greater sense of place and aid in improving both health and wellbeing.
- 4.7. The ESHIA also records that there may be additional positive impacts of people within the wider grouping of Disability, including people with less visible disabilities or conditions, for example people with neurodiverse conditions, people with Crohn's disease, and people with visual impairments. By way of illustration, cluttered and poorly designed spaces can cause overstimulation for some people with autism. Additionally, sensitive use of appropriate lighting, as well as clear signage, will be anticipated to provide further benefits for people with neurodiverse conditions and for others including those with visual impairments. This then includes their families and carers, bringing in intersectionality with those in the groupings of Age and Sex.
- 4.8. The ESHIA finds that there would also be a projected neutral impact or low positive impact for those individuals and households that we may consider to be vulnerable by virtue of their circumstances by improving the area of the town centre for the benefit of all. Whilst these are not defined as Protected Characteristics within equality legislation, it has been a matter of good practice in Shropshire for us to consider their needs as well, within a tenth grouping termed Social Inclusion. This includes low-income households, households in rural areas, and individuals at risk of or experiencing homelessness. The Council also seeks to have due regard to the needs of veterans and serving members of the armed forces and their families, and to the needs of young people leaving care. The equality impacts ahead of consultation are again anticipated to be low positive.
- 4.9. The importance of the role good design and place making can have on public health is well documented, and the NHS has produced [Putting Health into Place Executive Summary](#) detailing 10 key principles including Connect, involve and empower people and communities, plan ahead collectively, maximise active travel and enable healthy play and leisure. Therefore, the adoption of the Shrewsbury

Town Centre Design Code will enable a positive impact in terms of health and wellbeing considerations.

4.10. Risk table

<i>Risk</i>	<i>Mitigation</i>	<i>Link to Strategic Risk</i>
Operational: Developers & applicants do not reference or comply with the Design Code	<p>The Shrewsbury Town Centre Design Code will be made available on the Planning Pages of shropshire.gov.uk as well as be featured on the Shrewsbury Big Town Plan website to raise awareness of the Design Code and the importance of good design within the town centre.</p> <p>Within the Design Code itself, there is reference to Pre-Application Advice and Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) services offered by the Council as the Local Planning Authority (LPA). Through these services, details of the Design Code can be shared with the applicant, and it can inform these conversations.</p> <p>Also within the Design Code is a section on 'Required Information for Planning Applications' which can support applicants in giving consideration to and achieving compliance with the Design Code.</p> <p>If adopted by the Council, the Design Code will form a material consideration and considered as such by Planning Officers in the Development Management service when determining planning applications. In doing so, compliance with its guidance will form a specific consideration</p>	No Direct linkage to the 9 strategic risks identified by Shropshire Council
Reputational: Content within the Design Code becomes obsolete or is perceived to no longer be relevant in the town centre context	<p>The content within the Design Code document will be periodically reviewed as resources allow and Shropshire Council as the Local Planning Authority will ensure that it remains compliant with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).</p> <p>The NPPF emphasises that design expectations must be clear at an early stage, and that visual tools (such as design codes) should be used to give maximum clarity to applicants, communities, and decisionmakers.</p>	No Direct linkage to the 9 strategic risks identified by Shropshire Council

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1. Shropshire Council continues to manage unprecedented financial demands and a financial emergency was declared by Cabinet on 10 September 2025. The overall financial position of the Council is set out in the monitoring position presented to Cabinet on a monthly basis. Significant management action has been instigated at all levels of the Council reducing spend to ensure the Council's financial survival. While all reports to Members provide the financial implications of decisions being taken, this may change as officers and/or Portfolio Holders review the overall financial situation and make decisions aligned to financial survivability. All non-essential spend will be stopped and all essential spend challenged. These actions may involve (this is not exhaustive):
- scaling down initiatives,
 - changing the scope of activities,
 - delaying implementation of agreed plans, or
 - extending delivery timescales.
- 5.2. The Design Code was produced as part of the MHCLG-funded Design Code Pathfinder Programme, using MHCLG grant funding. This was complemented by personnel resources from various teams at Shropshire Council. All incorporated changes to the Design Code following the public consultation have also been made utilising the MHCLG grant funding, at a zero cost to Shropshire Council.
- 5.3. The Shrewsbury Town Centre Design Code will assist the Council in continuing to make the most effective use of its resources and support decision making on planning applications in Shrewsbury town centre.
- 5.4. The value of the Design Code lies in its ability to support design quality in Shrewsbury town centre, which can help drive up visitor footfall and promotion of a strong local economy. The large proportion of independent retailers and food and beverage establishments in the town is in part linked to its character and has helped to establish Shrewsbury as an attractive place to visit, live, work, and invest with a strong visitor economy as a result.

6. Climate Change Appraisal

- 6.1. The Shrewsbury Town Centre Design Code seeks to promote sustainable new development that conserves and enhances the character and appearance of Shrewsbury town centre, through the provision of guidance to support the understanding and application of policies within the adopted Development Plan.
- 6.2. The Design Code is likely to enable energy and fuel consumption (buildings and/or travel) and renewable energy generation benefits through promotion of sustainable design that provides thermally efficient buildings that integrate renewable energy technologies that are appropriate to their context; and promotion of design principles that support active modes of travel.

- 6.3. Design Code is also likely to enable benefits in terms of climate change adaptation and carbon offsetting / mitigation through such mechanisms as promotion of a design that integrates green infrastructure and maximises biodiversity enhancement opportunities – contributing to a ‘green’ town centre; promotion of a design that is responsive to considerations such as ‘access’ to daylight and natural cooling to reduce risk of overheating; and promotion of design principles that support active modes of travel.
- 6.4. Following the appraisal of the consultation, there has been a strengthening of the details that support, Nature, Biodiversity and Trees. With the inclusion of brown roofs within green roof guidance and greater aspirations for tree canopy cover in the town centre.

7. Background

Shrewsbury Town Centre Design Code

- 7.1. Shrewsbury town centre is unique, influenced by its landform and topography; strong relationship to the River Severn; areas with a dense medieval street pattern; scale, design and variety of built form; numerous landmark buildings; and open spaces.
- 7.2. Recognising this, the Council in partnership with Shrewsbury Town Council and the Shrewsbury BID (as SBTP Partners) are taking a proactive approach to planning positively for the town centre, through preparation and adoption by Shropshire Council of the Shrewsbury Town Centre Design Code (Appendix 1).
- 7.3. The areas of Shrewsbury town centre covered by the Design Code align with the 6 character areas of the town centre defined by the Shrewsbury Big Town Plan. These are illustrated on the figure below in addition, following feedback from the public consultation, the Shrewsbury Conservation Area is also shown alongside the character areas to reiterate the need to ensure that special regard is paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing its character or appearance, as required under section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 .











This area falls predominately within the River Severn Loop but extends out to the north to include the station quarter and northern corridor areas; and over the river to the east to include the Abbey Foregate areas

- 7.4. The Design Code’s vision is *“Rooted in heritage, sights set firmly on the future, a one-off town.”* It considers that the design of new development in Shrewsbury town centre should be *“Characterful - Healthy - Connected - Green - Varied - Sustainable - Engaged”*.
- 7.5. It therefore sets out an aspiration for high quality design throughout Shrewsbury town centre, establishing a new standard for place-making. To achieve this, it provides overarching design coding for new development (new buildings and spaces) in Shrewsbury town centre, thereby supporting the understanding and application of design policies in the adopted Development Plan for Shropshire.
- 7.6. The design coding details how new development should positively contribute to the conservation and enhancement of these characteristics, together with the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. This design coding is structured around 8 themes, each of which includes an ‘expected design outcome’.

The expected design outcomes for Movement (adding the word wheeling to show greater inclusivity) and Uses (adding the importance of ensuring Shrewsbury works for commercial, residential, culture and communities) have been amended to better reflect the feedback from the Consultation.

Theme	Expected Design Outcome
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 Movement	A town centre where vehicular traffic has been significantly reduced and the focus of streets is on walking, wheeling, cycling and place.
 Nature	A 'green' town centre that maximises the potential for health and wellbeing, biodiversity and climate resilience through the design of new and improvements of existing green infrastructure.
 Built Form	A town centre that has a coherent form and new development responds appropriately to its context.
 Identity	A place that contributes to and enhances the positive character of Shrewsbury town centre. A place that feels distinctively local, new development responding to local building composition, roof form, materials and details in a sensitive contemporary way.
 Public Space	A town centre where the public spaces are well designed, robust, inclusive and safe.
 Uses	A town centre where a vibrant mix of uses support everyday activities and bring life and activity to Shrewsbury bustling streets. A place that works for commercial, residential, culture and communities.
 Homes	A town centre which is proud of the high design standard of all new buildings, which are of exemplar quality in terms of functionality, accessibility, inclusivity and sustainability.
 Resources	A town centre where new development is exemplar in the sustainable design of buildings, use of water, energy and materials

Summary of the Public Consultation undertaken

- 7.7. The public consultation was hosted through Shropshire Council's 'Have your say webpages' with additional links from the Shrewsbury Big Town Plan website. An online form was provided for respondents to complete and many organisations also sent their comments in via letter or emails.
- 7.8. Additionally, direct emails with links to the public consultation were also sent to all interested parties who had been involved over the course of the Design Code's development, such as attendees of the original workshops in 2023 and all agents, who are part of the Shropshire Council's Agents Forum were also emailed further raising awareness of the public consultation.
- 7.9. In-person meetings were also arranged for the project team to speak to a number of organisations. A presentation alongside direct discussion was held with
- Shrewsbury Town Council's Planning Committee
 - Shrewsbury Business Improvement District (BID) Board

- Shrewsbury Investment Forum (organised by Shrewsbury BID)
- Shrewsbury Civic Society
- Shropshire Association of Local Councils (SALC)

7.10. There were 25 responses received online to the Public Consultation for the Shrewsbury town centre design code, plus a number sent by email and letter that included statutory consultees, community groups, businesses, residents, and professionals. The split between members of the public and organisations was broadly equal.

8. Additional Information

The information provided below identifies how Design Codes sit within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), and the importance placed on their use by Local Planning Authorities. It also demonstrates that the content within the Shrewsbury Town Centre Design Code is compliant with their expectations.

8.1. *Design Codes are now a core expectation for Local Planning Authorities*

The NPPF is explicit that all local planning authorities should prepare design guides or design codes. These must align with the National Design Guide and the National Model Design Code (NMDC), and reflect local character and preferences. This marks a strong shift toward frontloading design clarity in the planning process

8.2. *Purpose: to provide early clarity and consistency*

The NPPF emphasises that design expectations must be clear at an early stage, and that visual tools (such as design codes) should be used to give maximum clarity to applicants, communities, and decisionmakers. This is meant to reduce disputes later in the planning process and raise design quality.

8.3. *Design Codes must be locally tailored*

The NPPF highlights that design codes should:

- Be locally specific
- Be based on effective community engagement
- Reflect a place's distinctive characteristics
- Allow a suitable degree of variety
- Be prepared at areawide, neighbourhood, or site specific scales

8.4. Design Codes carry weight in decision making

Design codes must be produced as part of a plan or a Supplementary Planning Document to carry weight. This gives councils greater authority to require compliance and reduces ambiguity for applicants.

8.5. The National Model Design Code reinforces the NPPF's requirements

The NMDC reiterates that:

- Design codes are key to creating high-quality, beautiful, well-designed places.
- They should set specific, illustrated and measurable design parameters.
- They expand on the 10 characteristics of good design in the National Design Guide.

This establishes a consistent national baseline while still allowing local distinctiveness.

8.6. Increasing national emphasis on design (as seen in revisions and consultations)

Recent updates and consultations on the NPPF show:

- A strengthened focus on design quality
- An increasing expectation that design codes are used widely
- A desire to make planning decisions more predictable by assessing schemes against set parameters

This is consistent with the wider government agenda that “good design can be codified,” pushing for greater certainty for developers while demanding higher quality.

9. Conclusions

- 9.1. The important role that Design Codes can have on influencing and promoting good quality design for the county town of Shropshire, notably within its town centre has been clearly demonstrated.
- 9.2. Importantly the draft Design Code created for Shrewsbury Town Centre is compliant with NPPF expectations as detailed within Section 8.
- 9.3. The public consultation undertaken as detailed within Appendix 2 and the activity undertaken show in Section 7 demonstrates that high levels of engagement have been undertaken and that changes have been made to the final, draft Design

Code that reflect the feedback provided by residents and stakeholders, all of whom are the targeted end users of the Design Code. created for the town centre.

- 9.4. By participating in the MHCLG-funded Design Code Pathfinder Programme, as one of only twenty five Local Authorities, Shropshire Council has been able to create a compliant, visually attractive Design Code establishing a new standard for placemaking.
- 9.5. The finalised, draft Design Code reiterates the importance of early engagement in the planning process, such as at the Pre-Application process, as well as through the use of Planning Performance Agreements (PPAs), alongside wider engagement with the community to provide better design and place-making opportunities across the town centre area.

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

Shropshire Council Core Strategy 2006-2026 –

<https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/media/8534/core-strategy.pdf>

Shropshire Council SAMDev Plan 2006-2026 –

<https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/media/8503/samdev-adopted-plan.pdf>

Shrewsbury Big Town Plan –

[Link](#)

Shrewsbury Movement and Public Space Strategy –

06042+-+Shrewsbury+Movement+and+Public+Realm+Strategy_V27+-+Digital.pdf

Local Member:	Cllr Alex Wagner
	Cllr David Vasmer
	Cllr Alan Mosley
	Cllr Jamie Daniels
	Cllr Julian Dean

Appendices

Appendix 1: Shrewsbury Town Centre Design Code (finalised version for adoption)

Appendix 2: You said: We did – summary report of Public Consultation feedback and how it has impacted on the Final version of the Design Code.

Appendix 3: Updated Equality, Social Inclusion and Health Impact Assessment (ESHIA) for the Shrewsbury Town Centre Design Code.

