

Devolution options appraisal

September 2025

Executive summary

HM Government's devolution agenda

Recent moves to expand devolution have accelerated, with the Government's Devolution White Paper (December 2024) proposing new Strategic Authorities to cover all areas of England.

Shropshire Council is not on the current Devolution Priority Programme, but forthcoming reforms mean it will likely still become part of a Strategic Authority. By engaging early, the Council can help shape the partnerships around it, aligning with areas that share its ambitions and maximising the benefits of new powers and resources.

Without this early involvement, there is a risk that partners are chosen by default, leaving less scope to advance local priorities.

Purpose of this document

This report provides an evidence-based starting point for Shropshire Council to consider how best to position itself within forthcoming devolution arrangements. It sets out an initial review of possible options, focusing on different combinations of neighbouring areas.

The appraisal is not designed to provide a single

“answer.” Instead, it aims to:

- Prompt discussion among Members and officers about the trade-offs, opportunities, and strategic choices involved.
- Support early conversations with potential partner councils by giving Shropshire a clear, evidence-based position.
- Strengthen future engagement with central government by showing that the Council's proposals are well considered, evidence-led, and aligned with the expectations of the Devolution White Paper.

Key findings

The review highlights three central questions:

- 1. Who to partner with?** – Should Shropshire work with councils facing similar challenges, which could strengthen joint working but risk reinforcing existing pressures, or seek partners with different strengths, offering greater balance but potentially less alignment?
- 2. What scale is right?** – Larger groupings generally perform better across outcomes such

as economic growth, infrastructure, and service delivery, suggesting that going beyond the minimum population threshold may help maximise Shropshire's ambitions.

- 3. What *kind* of authority to pursue?** – While Government seeks consistency, existing upper tier authorities vary widely. Some, like Greater Manchester, hold significant powers, funding, and influence. Others, such as the West of England, play a lighter coordinating role. A more flexible model may suit Shropshire better, particularly given the importance of cross-border collaboration through the Marches Forward Partnership.

Early engagement with neighbouring councils will be essential to test appetite for different models.

If Shropshire wishes to pursue a light-touch, flexible approach, it will likely need to build a coalition of likeminded authorities and co-develop a shared strategy for engagement with Government. This means being on the front foot – shaping the agenda rather than responding to it – and ensuring Shropshire is well-positioned to influence outcomes that reflect its local priorities.

Introduction

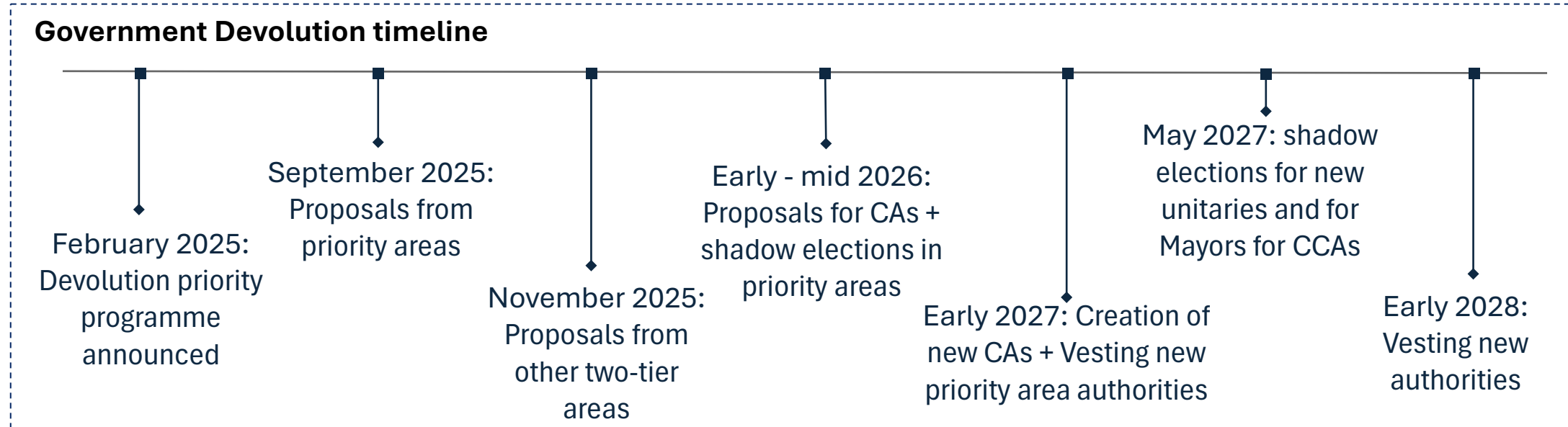
Recent efforts to expand devolution and reform local government across England have gained momentum. The Government's Devolution White Paper (December 2024), signals a significant shift in how powers and funding are distributed, outlining a vision for all areas of England to join new regional Strategic Authorities with greater control over local decisions and budgets.

In response, Shropshire Council has commissioned external advice to assess the implications of the White Paper for the local authority. This paper summarises an options appraisal focused on identifying the most promising opportunities for Shropshire, while also addressing key risks, challenges, and barriers to growth and resilience.

Rather than recommending a single course of action, the paper aims to open dialogue on what devolution could look like for Shropshire. It explores a range of possible approaches aligned with the Council's priorities and long-term ambitions.

Laying this groundwork ensures that future discussions are evidence-based and focused on securing the best outcomes for Shropshire's communities.

Devolution timeline



Recent devolution activity among potential partners

Telford & Wrekin has been operating largely through the Marches partnership architecture rather than promoting a standalone devolution bid. The transfer of LEP functions into local councils has reinforced joint-working with Shropshire and Herefordshire around investment, housing and business support.

Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent have advanced their LGR work in spring/summer 2025. Staffordshire published an interim LGR plan after the May elections, while Stoke has been highlighted as part of the Government's devolution/LGR programme. Public debate has focused on unitarisation options and how best to reach the population thresholds implied in the Devolution White Paper.

Herefordshire Council has stressed member-led reflection on the implications of devolution, while advancing the Marches Forward Partnership as a vehicle for

securing investment. Leaders have emphasised rural priorities and cross-border collaboration, suggesting openness to coalition models that preserve the Marches identity.

Worcestershire has developed LGR proposals, with options ranging from a single county unitary to multiple new unitaries. Leaders have made clear that reorganisation will directly influence the scale and geography of future devolution options.

Gloucestershire councils launched a summer 2025 public engagement exercise on potential reorganisation, including a "Greater Gloucester" option. The process is testing boundaries and scale in line with the White Paper's criteria. This creates scope for early dialogue with Shropshire, particularly on cross-border issues affecting the Forest of Dean.

Warwickshire submitted an interim LGR proposal in March 2025 and is progressing statutory engagement. Its approach is process-led and focused on testing unitary options within the government timetable, signalling caution and an emphasis on robust evidence before committing to wider partnerships.

Cheshire East, Cheshire West & Chester and Warrington councils have collectively advanced to the next stage of a devolution deal. The Government confirmed in July 2025 that the area may proceed towards a Mayoral Combined Authority, with public consultation under way and mayoral elections expected in 2027. This positions Cheshire & Warrington as one of the fastest-moving neighbouring devolution projects.

Initial option generation and sifting

Our process for generating the long list

We have generated an initial long-list for discussion using a three-stage process:



Stage 1: define 'red-lines'

We began by identifying key policy constraints and non-negotiables from HM Government's White Paper. These red lines set the boundaries for what is considered viable.



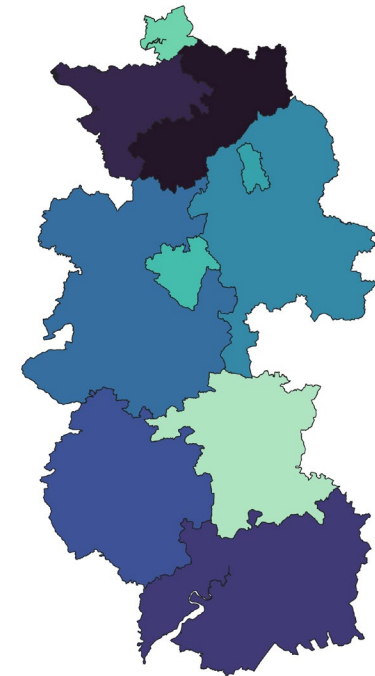
Stage 2: broad generation of options

With those parameters in mind, we cast the net wide – exploring a diverse range of combinations of neighbouring authorities to ensure a comprehensive long list.



Stage 3: sift against red lines

We then applied the red lines to the long list, filtering out options that do not meet the essential criteria, resulting in a refined and policy-compliant shortlist.



**All local authorities
considered**

Defining ‘red lines’

HM Government’s White Paper sets out a series of principles for establishing new strategic authorities. While many are open to interpretation, three are clear, binary ‘red lines’ that all proposals must meet. We adopted these red lines as non-negotiable criteria to sift our initial long list of options.

Criteria	Description	Red line?
1  Scale	The combined population of the proposed area must be at least 1.5 million. Precedent from LGR suggests 20% flexibility so we are drawing the red line at 1.2 million.	
2  Functional economies	The area should reflect real-world economic patterns, such as commuting flows and business links.	
3  Contiguity	The area must be geographically continuous, with no gaps between participating councils.	
4  No ‘devolution islands’	The proposal must not leave small, isolated authorities outside the arrangement, unable to join a viable alternative.	
5  Effective delivery	The new authority must be capable of delivering key functions like transport planning and development strategies.	
6  Boundary alignment	The proposed area should align, where possible, with existing public sector boundaries (e.g. health, policing).	
7  Local identity & accountability	Residents should be able to identify with the new authority and feel they can hold it to account.	

We did not include any options in the initial long-list which are not geographically contiguous.

Broad generation of options

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We identified 13 devolution options for Shropshire in the following table based on combinations of neighbouring areas. Applying the red lines sifts this to a final long-list of nine options.

Option	Constituent local authorities	Population	Short-list
1 Core Marches	 Shropshire, T&W, Herefordshire	0.7 million	 Population lower than red line threshold
2 Align to local policing boundaries	 Shropshire, T&W, Herefordshire, Worcestershire	1.3 million	 Potential to create 'devolution island' for Gloucestershire
3 Western edge	 Shropshire, Herefordshire, Gloucestershire	1.8 million	 Potential to create 'devolution island' for Worcestershire
4 South west border group	 Shropshire, Herefordshire, Worcestershire, Gloucestershire	1.8 million	 Meets red line criteria
5 Expanded south west border group	 Shropshire, T&W, Herefordshire, Worcestershire, Gloucestershire	1.9 million	 Meets red line criteria
6 Eastern border group	 Shropshire, T&W, Staffordshire, Stoke-on-Trent	1.6 million	 Meets red line criteria

Broad generation of options

2/2

Option	Constituent local authorities	Population	Short-list
7 Eastern group plus WMCA	 Shropshire, T&W, Staffordshire, Stoke-on-Trent, WMCA	4.6 million	 Meets red line criteria
8 Marches –Midlands Link	 Shropshire, T&W, Staffordshire, Stoke-on-Trent, Herefordshire	1.8 million	 Meets red line criteria
9 Eastern group and local policing boundary	 Shropshire, T&W, Staffordshire, Stoke-on-Trent, Herefordshire, Worcestershire	2.4 million	 Meets red line criteria
10 East and south	 Shropshire, T&W, Staffordshire, Stoke-on-Trent, Herefordshire, Worcestershire, Gloucestershire	3.1 million	 Meets red line criteria
11 North	 Shropshire, T&W, Herefordshire, Worcestershire, Gloucestershire	1.3 million	 Meets red line criteria
12 North and Telford	 Shropshire, T&W, Warrington and the Cheshires	1.5 million	 Meets red line criteria
13 Rural Doughnut	 Shropshire, Telford, Staffordshire, Stoke-on-Trent, Worcestershire, Warwickshire	2.8 million	 Meets red line criteria

Appraisal themes

Appraisal themes: White Paper

Key themes provided the high-level framework for assessing each short-listed option. These cover two areas: HM Government's White Paper and Shropshire's local priorities.

The themes arising from the White Paper include:

Theme		Description
1		Functional economies How well does the option reflect real-world economic geographies, such as commuting and business links?
2		Effective delivery How capable is the proposed authority of delivering key strategic functions and seeking out commercial opportunities and efficiencies?
3		Boundary alignment To what extent does the option align with existing public sector boundaries to support coherent service delivery?
4		Local identity and accountability How well does the option support inclusive, sustainable economic growth and development in key sectors?

Appraisal themes: local priorities

The local priorities considered include:

Theme		Description
1		Economic growth How well does the option support inclusive, sustainable economic growth and development in key sectors?
2		Housing How effectively does the option enable the delivery of affordable, energy-efficient housing that meets local needs?
3		Infrastructure How well does the option improve and future-proof transport, digital, and utility infrastructure, especially in rural areas?
4		Climate resilience How effectively does the option strengthen resilience to climate change through sustainable infrastructure and land use?
5		Healthcare access How well does the option support improved health outcomes and equitable access to services and opportunities?

Policy baselining to inform local priorities

To support the devolution options appraisal, a structured policy baselining process was undertaken to identify and evidence Shropshire's strategic priorities – referred to as appraisal themes. This process ensured that the criteria used to assess options were grounded in the county's existing policy landscape and long-term ambitions.

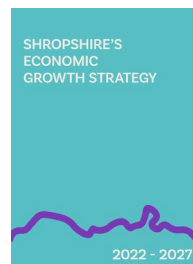
The baselining exercise aimed to extract shared priorities from across Shropshire's strategic documents, providing a clear rationale for the themes selected for appraisal. The approach involved:

- Reviewing key policy documents, including the Economic Growth Strategy, Core Strategy Development Plan, Draft Housing Strategy, Strategic Infrastructure Plan, Integrated Care Strategy, and the Marches Forward Proposition.
- Mapping recurring themes across these documents to identify areas of strategic alignment.
- Synthesising findings into a consolidated matrix, which was used to validate the relevance and consistency of the proposed appraisal themes.

The baselining process led to the identification of six strategic priorities that were consistently reflected across the policy evidence base. These priorities formed the basis of the appraisal criteria, ensuring that all options considered were assessed against themes that are locally grounded, strategically important, and supported by existing policy commitments.

Policy baselining: what we looked at

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Economic Growth Strategy

- Contains a mission statement and vision for Shropshire
- Adopts a logic model approach to identifying interventions and outcomes
- Establishes a set of KPIs to track progress



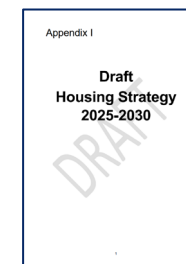
Core Strategy Development Plan

- Contains a spatial vision and strategic objectives for sustainable development, housing, employment, infrastructure, and the environment
- Identified the scale and distribution of growth, including key development areas and priorities



Draft Local Plan (withdrawn)

- Translates the spatial vision into site-specific proposals and development management policies.
- Identifies where and how development will take place, including specific sites for housing and economic growth.

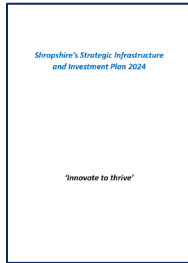


Draft Housing Strategy 2025 – 2030

- Sets out the housing requirement for Shropshire and past key achievements
- Identifies six priority areas for meeting Shropshire's diverse housing requirements sustainably
- Accompanied by action plans with timescales for each priority

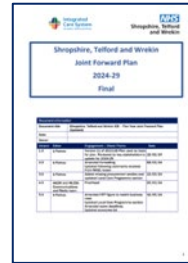
Policy baselining: what we looked at

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Strategic Infrastructure / Investment Plan

- Categorises and describes strategic investment and infrastructure requirements.
- Lists specific interventions which are being progressed by the Council and other strategic infrastructure providers.



Integrated Care Strategy / Joint Forward Plan

- Presents an overview of the integrated care system, vision, objectives and purpose
- Outlines the care strategy priorities for population health, inequalities and health and care.
- Sets out outcomes for performance monitoring



Marches Forward proposition

- A shared evidence based is developed to identify ways for the areas to co-work and interventions to accelerate growth
- Sets out three themes of interventions
- Sets out the priority programmes that sit within the interventions

Summary of policies reviewed

Policy	Synopsis
Economic Growth Strategy	This strategy identifies that Shropshire's economy faces persistent challenges, including low productivity, limited infrastructure, skills shortages, and an ageing population. It highlights stark rural inequalities in access to jobs, broadband, and services, and notes that many communities are not fully benefiting from growth. Despite these issues, it finds that Shropshire has untapped strengths in sectors like agri-tech, tourism, and green energy. The strategy emphasises that future growth must be more inclusive, locally grounded, and environmentally sustainable.
Core Strategy Development Plan	The Core Strategy acknowledges the pressure for development across Shropshire's rural and urban areas and the need to carefully manage that growth. It identifies that market towns and key service centres play a critical role in delivering housing, employment, and services. The document also finds that rural isolation, environmental sensitivity, and infrastructure constraints are key challenges. It stresses the importance of shaping development in a way that protects Shropshire's landscape, heritage, and sense of place, while meeting growing demand.
Draft Local Plan (withdrawn)	The withdrawn Draft Local Plan reflects a need to accommodate significant housing and employment growth across the county, particularly in and around Shrewsbury. It highlights the growing affordability gap and the need to provide a mix of housing types. The evidence base pointed to infrastructure deficits, environmental constraints, and a need for clearer delivery mechanisms. Its withdrawal indicates challenges in aligning strategic ambitions with legal, procedural, and local consensus requirements.
Draft Housing Strategy 2025 – 2030	This strategy finds that Shropshire has rising levels of housing need, aggravated by an ageing population, affordability pressures, and energy inefficiency in older homes. It also identifies a mismatch between the types of housing available and the needs of lower-income and vulnerable households. The strategy stresses the importance of housing as a determinant of health and wellbeing and highlights that housing quality in the private rented sector is an area of concern. It reflects a broad consensus that housing outcomes are uneven and require more targeted, place-based responses.
Strategic Infrastructure / Investment Plan	The plan highlights a long-standing underinvestment in infrastructure across Shropshire, especially in transport, digital connectivity, and energy networks. It finds that infrastructure delivery is often fragmented and reactive, limiting the county's ability to support new development or address climate challenges. It also notes the vulnerability of rural communities to climate change and infrastructure failure. The plan identifies specific infrastructure pinch points and sets out priority areas that must be addressed to unlock sustainable, inclusive growth.
Integrated Care Strategy / Joint Forward Plan	This strategy reveals deep-rooted health inequalities across the Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin area, with some communities experiencing significantly worse health outcomes and life expectancy. It identifies fragmented service delivery and limited access to prevention and early intervention as major system weaknesses. The strategy also acknowledges workforce shortages and rising demand as key pressures. It presents a strong case for more integrated, locality-based care that addresses the wider determinants of health – such as housing, social connection, and economic opportunity.
Marches Forward proposition	The Marches Forward Proposition identifies that the region underperforms economically compared to national averages and lacks the investment, infrastructure, and autonomy needed to address its unique rural challenges. It highlights issues such as poor transport connectivity, low wages, and demographic pressures. At the same time, it finds that the region has significant assets – including a skilled local workforce, strong community networks, and a low-carbon economy opportunity – that could be harnessed more effectively through greater local decision-making and funding flexibility.

Strategic priorities identified

We identified six strategic priorities through policy baselining by analysing shared aims and recurring themes, grouping them into broad focus areas, and refining them into a coherent set aligned with the Council's long-term ambitions and desired outcomes:

1		Foster inclusive, sustainable economic growth	Support economic development that benefits all communities, encourages innovation and enterprise, strengthens rural and urban economies, and aligns with environmental goals. This includes growing key sectors like agri-tech, renewable energy, and tourism.
2		Deliver quality homes in the right places	Provide well-designed, energy-efficient, and affordable housing that meets local needs and supports community wellbeing. This involves a plan-led approach that connects housing to infrastructure, services, and sustainable growth.
3		Invest in resilient infrastructure and connectivity	Upgrade and expand transport, digital, and utility infrastructure to improve access, enable growth, and connect people and businesses – especially in rural areas. Emphasises future-proof, green solutions.
4		Harness Shropshire's strengths in agriculture, food, and tourism	Leverage Shropshire's assets – such as agriculture, food production, and tourism – to drive local prosperity and innovation. Supports place-based growth by celebrating what makes the region unique.
5		Champion a green, sustainable economy	Lead the transition to net zero by supporting clean energy, reducing emissions, protecting natural resources, and embedding environmental sustainability into all policies and investments.
6		Improve health and reduce inequalities	Work in partnership to create healthier communities, tackle the root causes of poor health, and ensure everyone has fair access to services, housing, and opportunities – especially those facing disadvantage.

Mapping priorities across policy documents

This matrix consolidates key priorities identified across Shropshire’s strategy documents, forming the basis for our appraisal criteria.

Strategic priorities	Economic strategy	CSDP	LDP	Housing strategy	Infrastructure investment plan	Integrated care strategy	Marches Forward proposition
Foster inclusive, sustainable economic growth	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Deliver quality homes in the right places	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Invest in resilient infrastructure and connectivity	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓
Harness Shropshire’s strengths in agriculture, food, and tourism		✓	✓				✓
Champion a green, sustainable economy	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Tackle health inequalities and promote wellbeing for all			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Appraisal criteria

Scoring criteria overview

Under each theme, we have defined a set of scoring criteria. These are specific measures used to assess how well each option performs in relation to the theme.

Each criterion is scored on a consistent scale (1 to 4), allowing for comparative evaluation across options. An example is provided below for the theme ‘functional economies’.

Example scoring criteria – 1 to 4 scale

Theme

Scoring criteria

1 	Functional economies	Job weighted share of Shropshire’s total commuter flows (in + out) that go to and from each option (%) • 1: Significantly low job weighted share of total Shropshire commuter flows – at or below 4% (or less) • 2: Between 4% - 6% job weighted share of total Shropshire commuter flows • 3: Between 6% - 8% of all commuter flows to and from Shropshire • 4: Significantly high job weighted share of total Shropshire commuter flows – at or over 8%
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Quantitative and qualitative scoring criteria

Our appraisal framework drew on two complementary forms of evidence:

1. Objective indicators

Quantifiable metrics from trusted sources such as ONS datasets, local performance data, and planning figures. They enabled consistent, evidence-based comparison across options.

Examples:

- Number of commuters
- Housing targets and net additions to dwellings

2. Subjective assessments

Informed assessments based on professional judgement, Shropshire Council officer input, and policy alignment. These captured critical factors not easily measured by data.

Examples:

- Identifiability of residents with new strategic authority
- Strength of existing partnerships

Scoring methodology

1/2

We adopted a consistent 1 – 4 scale across all criteria, but with different approaches depending on the type of evidence:

- **Objective scoring**

Based on performance against national or regional benchmarks. Where benchmarks were unavailable or unhelpful, scores were based on relative performance across options.

Score	Performance against benchmark
4	Significantly above benchmark / top quartile nationally
3	Above benchmark
2	Below benchmark
1	Significantly below benchmark / bottom quartile nationally

Benchmarking compared local performance to a broader context and avoid overemphasising small differences.

If:

- benchmark data is unavailable or limited; or
- all options fall within the same benchmark band; or
- a national comparator is not meaningful (e.g., commuting levels)

....then scores were adjusted based on relative performance across the options.

Scoring methodology

2/2

We adopted a consistent 1 – 4 scale across all criteria, but with different approaches depending on the type of evidence:

- **Subjective scoring**

Based on the strength of alignment with themes, informed by professional judgement and supporting evidence.

Score	Alignment with theme
4	Clear, well-evidenced alignment with the theme. Strong rationale or consensus supports the assessment.
3	Good overall alignment with the theme, with some supporting evidence. Some uncertainty or variability in strength.
2	Partial or inconsistent alignment. Evidence is weak, unclear, or not well developed.
1	Little or no alignment with the theme. Lacks supporting evidence or presents notable challenges.

We performed an initial scoring informed by our professional judgement and document and evidence review, before testing and refining these scores with Shropshire Council officers.

The detailed scoring criteria include:

1/2

Theme			Criteria	Metrics	Type
1		Functional economies	A Economic geography alignment: captures how closely each option reflects travel-to-work and business linkages with Shropshire	Job weighted share of Shropshire’s total commuter flows (in + out) that go to and from each option (%)	Objective
2		Effective delivery	A Existing partnerships: captures how closely each options have worked together and the past / potential commercial opportunities they provide	Subjective assessment, informed by research into existing and emerging partnerships	Subjective
			B Potential partnerships: captures combined attitude of each option to seek out opportunities and efficiencies	Subjective assessment, informed by expert opinion into LA attitudes towards commercial opportunities	Subjective
3		Boundary alignment	A Public service boundary alignment captures how closely each option reflects public service provision linkages with Shropshire	Alignment with public service boundaries (policing, health, resilience, fire and rescue) shared within the option	Objective
4		Local identity and accountability	A Council-resident alignment: captures how closely each option identifies with the new strategic authority	Subjective assessment, informed by expert opinion into resident perception	Subjective
			B Socio-economic profile: captures the extent to which the social and economic environment mirrors that of Shropshire.	Similarity index based on ONS output area classifications (%)	Objective
5		Economic growth	A Priority sector presence: captures how strongly each option supports Shropshire’s key growth sectors: agri-tech, tourism, and green energy	Share of total jobs in priority sectors (%)	Objective
			B Growth strategy alignment: captures the extent to which the economic policy mirrors that of Shropshire.	Subjective assessment, informed by a policy comparison exercise	Subjective

The detailed scoring criteria include:

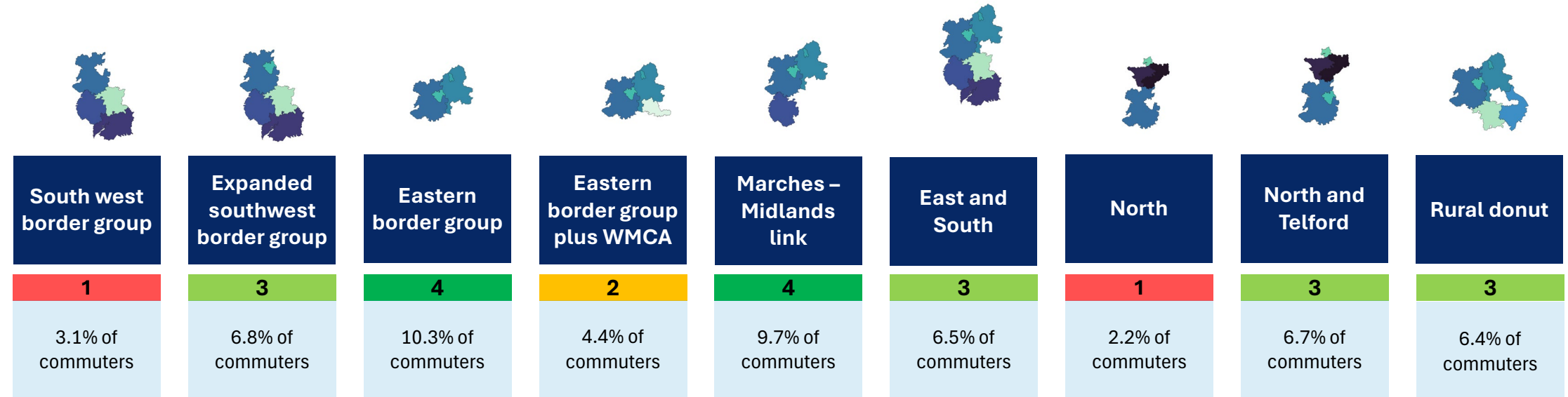
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Theme		Criteria		Metrics	Type	
6		Housing	A	Housing pressure: assesses the likelihood that housing need from under-delivering neighbours could fall on Shropshire	Ratio of housing need targets to average net additions (%)	Objective
			B	Housing affordability: captures affordability of new housing being delivered	Median house price of new dwellings (£)	Objective
7		Infrastructure	A	Capacity to deliver: captures the ability to raise, attract or manage infrastructure funding	Local and central government capital infrastructure investment per capita	Objective
			B	Rural investment need: captures the degree to which rural infrastructure may be prioritised	Share of population living in rural areas (%)	Objective
			C	Transport connectivity: captures the extent to which transport issues and policy mirrors that of Shropshire.	Travel time to employment centre by public transport and walking (minutes)	Objective
8		Climate resilience	A	Green growth alignment: captures the strength of existing and emerging collaborations that support investment in environmental infrastructure, nature recovery, and land use transformation.	Subjective assessment, informed by research into existing and emerging partnerships on sustainability	Subjective
			B	Commitment to climate adaptation: assesses the strength and currency of climate adaptation strategies and local policies	Council Climate Action Scorecard score (%)	Objective
9		Health	A	Demographic demand: captures the additional strain or mitigation effect each option has on health and care services, based on population age profile.	Old age dependency ratio (population 65+ / working-age population)	Objective
			B	Rural access risk: captures the level of importance likely to be placed on improving healthcare access in rural areas	Share of population more than 30 minutes by public transport from a major hospital (%)	Objective

Unweighted scores

1. Functional economies

How well does the option reflect real-world economic geographies, such as commuting and business links?



Metric

Share of Shropshire's total commuter flows (in + out) that go to and from each option (%)

Scoring criteria – objective

1	Significantly low share of total Shropshire commuter flows – at or below 4% (or less)
2	Between 4% - 6% share of total Shropshire commuter flows
3	Between 6% - 8% of all commuter flows to and from Shropshire (%)
4	Significantly high share of total Shropshire commuter flows – at or over 8%

2A. Effective delivery: existing partnerships

How well does the option reflect real-world economic geographies, such as commuting and business links?

								
South west border group	Expanded southwest border group	Eastern border group	Eastern border group plus WMCA	Marches – Midlands link	East and South	North	North and Telford	Rural donut
2	3	3	2	3	3	1	2	1
Strong partnership only with Herefordshire	Marches ties	Some collaboration in infra projects + disaster mgmt.	Minimal benefits from WMCA partnership	Builds on the Marches area	Builds on the Marches area	Minimal partnerships	Partnerships mostly with Telford	Minimal partnerships with Warwickshire

Metric

Informed by quality of existing partnerships in terms of benefits to Shropshire

Scoring criteria – subjective

1	No existing partnerships
2	Existing partnership(s) with no or little evidence of benefits to Shropshire
3	Existing partnership(s) with indications of some evidence of benefits to Shropshire
4	Existing partnership(s) with good evidence of or strong consensus on benefits to Shropshire

2B. Effective delivery: potential partnerships

How capable is the proposed authority in seeking out commercial opportunities and efficiencies?

								
South west border group	Expanded southwest border group	Eastern border group	Eastern border group plus WMCA	Marches – Midlands link	East and South	North	North and Telford	Rural donut
2	2	3	4	4	3	3	3	3
Potentially fewer opportunities owing to local pressures	Potentially fewer opportunities owing to local pressures	County Deal and commercial mindset e.g. EZ	WMCA is an advanced and ambitious CA	Opportunities from the Marches Partnership	Balance of different authorities	Strong commercial mindset in Warrington	Strong commercial mindset in Warrington	Economic diversity may present many opportunities

Rationale

Informed by judgement of LA attitudes towards commercial opportunities

Scoring criteria

Subjective assessment	
1	No likelihood of potential commercial opportunities
2	Potential partnership(s) with no or little evidence of commercial opportunities
3	Potential partnership(s) with some evidence of commercial opportunities
4	Potential partnership(s) with good evidence of or strong consensus on commercial opportunities

3. Boundary alignment

How well do the options align with existing public sector boundaries to support coherent service delivery?

								
South west border group	Expanded southwest border group	Eastern border group	Eastern border group plus WMCA	Marches – Midlands link	East and South	North	North and Telford	Rural donut
2	3	3	3	3	3	1	2	3
Policing: 2 Resilience: 2 F&R: 1 Health: 1	Policing: 3 Resilience: 3 F&R: 3 Health: 2	Policing: 2 Resilience: 2 F&R: 3 Health: 4	Policing: 2 Resilience: 2 F&R: 3 Health: 3	Policing: 2 Resilience: 2 F&R: 3 Health: 3	Policing: 3 Resilience: 3 F&R: 3 Health: 3	Policing: 1 Resilience: 1 F&R: 1 Health: 1	Policing: 2 Resilience: 2 F&R: 1 Health: 2	Policing: 2 Resilience: 2 F&R: 2 Health: 2

Metric

Alignment of public service boundaries (policing, health, resilience, fire and rescue) shared within the option

Scoring criteria

Objective assessment

- 1 No shared public service boundary
- 2 Option leaves out partner(s) of public service boundary
- 3 Option contains additional areas not included in the public service boundary
- 4 Option is perfectly aligned with public service boundary

4A. Local identity and accountability

How well will Shropshire residents identify with the new strategic authority?

								
South west border group	Expanded southwest border group	Eastern border group	Eastern border group plus WMCA	Marches – Midlands link	East and South	North	North and Telford	Rural donut
3	4	3	1	3	2	2	2	1
Common geography around Marches + River S	Common geography around Marches + River S	Not typical grouping but precedents exist	WMCA likely to be viewed as vastly different	Not typical grouping but precedents exist	May be viewed as too large for fair representation	May be challenging given perception of this area as the NW	May be challenging given perception of this area as the NW	May be seen as artificial by residents

Rationale

Informed by expert opinion into resident perception

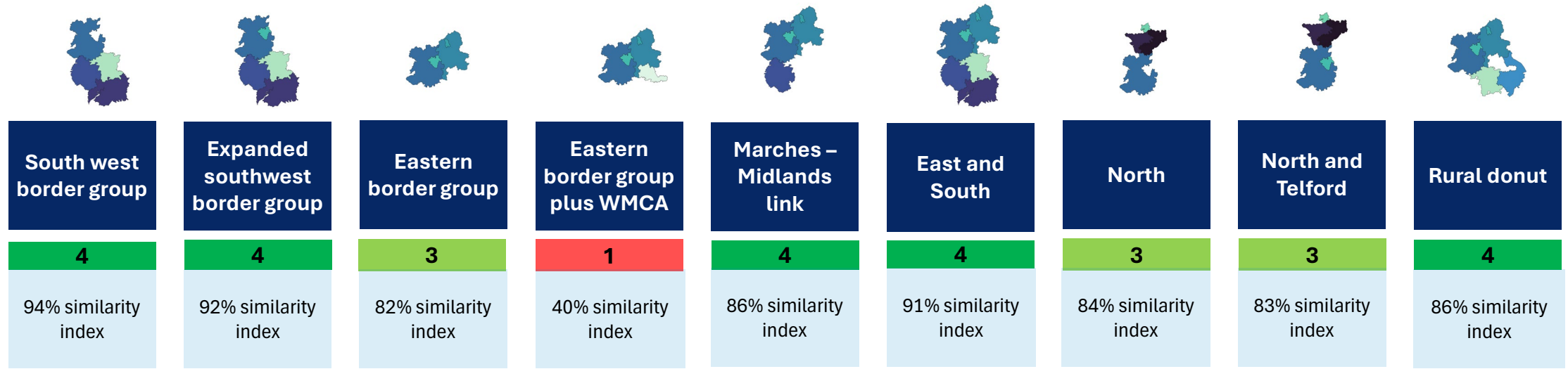
Scoring criteria

Subjective assessment

- 1** Evidence or consensus of no council-resident alignment
- 2** Little evidence of council-resident alignment
- 3** Indications of some evidence of council-resident alignment
- 4** Good evidence of or strong consensus of council-resident alignment

4B. Local identity and accountability

How does the social and economic environment mirrors that of Shropshire?



Metric

Similarity index based on ONS output area classifications (%)

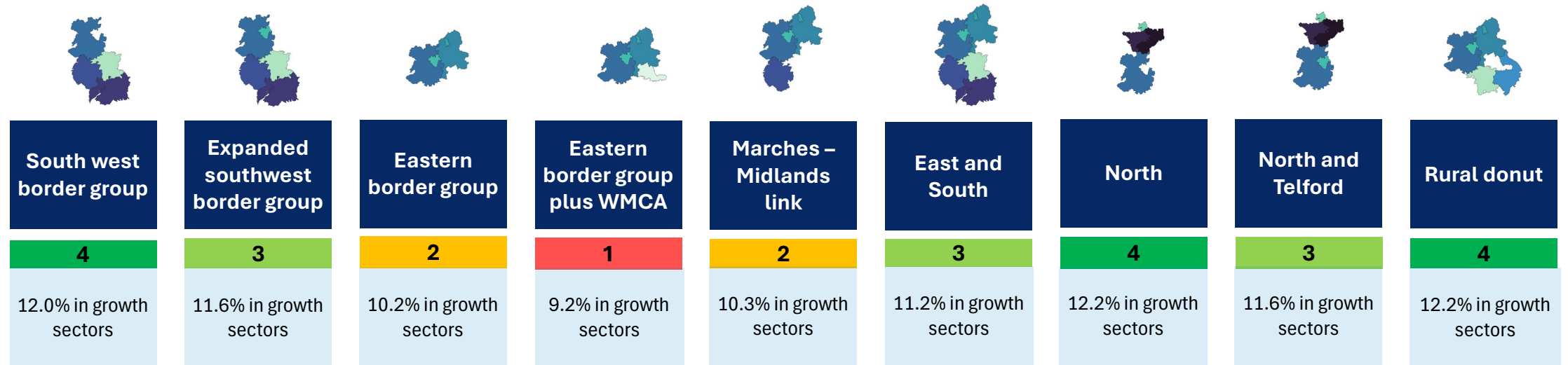
Scoring criteria

Objective assessment

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 | Significantly poor similarity index with Shropshire (less than 60%) |
| 2 | Low similarity index with Shropshire (60%-70%) |
| 3 | Good similarity index with Shropshire (70%-85%) |
| 4 | Significantly high similarity index with Shropshire (over 85%) |

5A. Economic growth: priority sector presence

How strongly does each option support Shropshire's key growth sectors: agri-tech, tourism, and green energy



Metric

Share of total jobs in priority sectors (%)

Scoring criteria

Objective assessment

- 1** Significantly poor Shropshire priority sector presence in option partners (less than 10%)
- 2** Low priority sector presence (10%-11%)
- 3** Good priority sector presence (11%-12%)
- 4** Significantly high priority sector presence (over 12%)

5B. Economic growth: growth alignment

The table below provides scoring for each option against the ‘economic growth’ appraisal theme, which captures the extent to which the economic policy mirrors that of Shropshire.

								
South west border group	Expanded southwest border group	Eastern border group	Eastern border group plus WMCA	Marches – Midlands link	East and South	North	North and Telford	Rural donut
4	4	3	1	3	2	2	2	3
Similar rural challenges and growth objectives	Similar rural challenges and growth objectives	Relatively similar challenges with some disparities to either side	Disparities in challenges and growth objectives with WMCA	Relatively similar challenges with some disparities to either side	Area likely to be too large to align growth objectives	Mismatch in most core growth areas	Mismatch in most core growth areas	Relatively similar challenges but disparate economy

Rationale

Informed by a comparative analysis of Shropshire and option partner policies

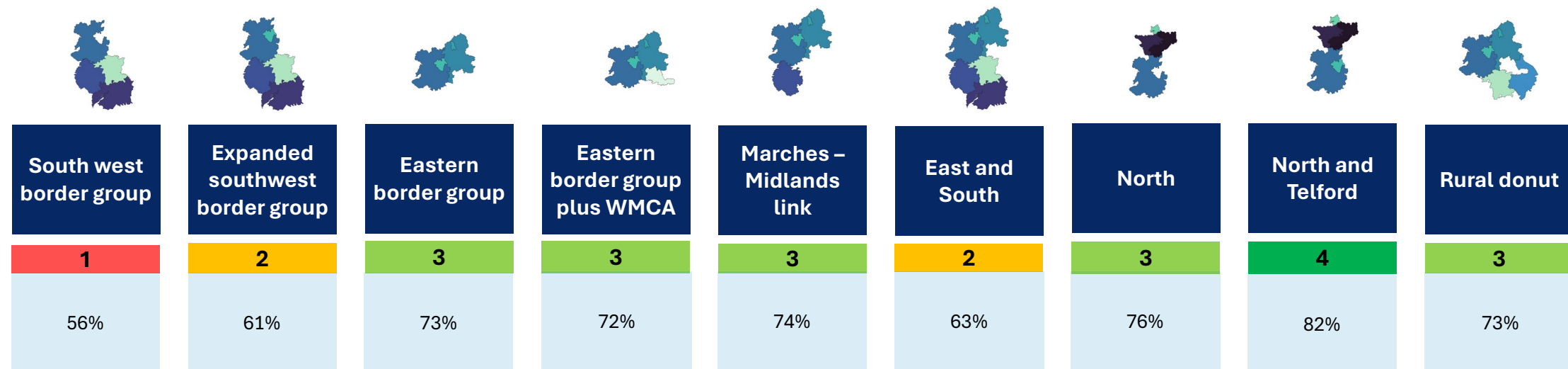
Scoring criteria

Subjective assessment

- 1** Evidence of or consensus of no growth strategy alignment
- 2** Option has little evidence of growth strategy alignment
- 3** Option has some evidence of growth strategy alignment
- 4** Option has strong evidence or consensus of growth strategy alignment

6. Housing: pressures

What is the likelihood that housing need from under-delivering neighbours could fall on Shropshire?



Metric

Ratio of average net additional dwellings to housing need targets (%)

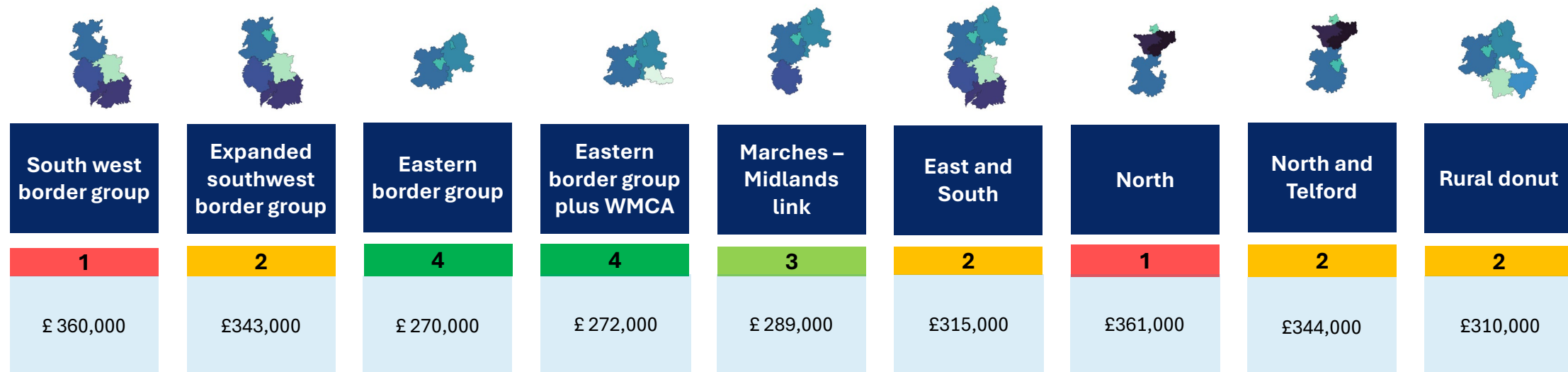
Scoring criteria

Objective assessment

- 1 Significantly poor similarity index with Shropshire (less than 60%)
- 2 Low similarity index with Shropshire (60%-70%)
- 3 Good similarity index with Shropshire (70%-85%)
- 4 Significantly high similarity index with Shropshire (over 85%)

6B. Housing: affordability

What is the affordability of new housing being delivered?



Metric

Median price of new built dwellings

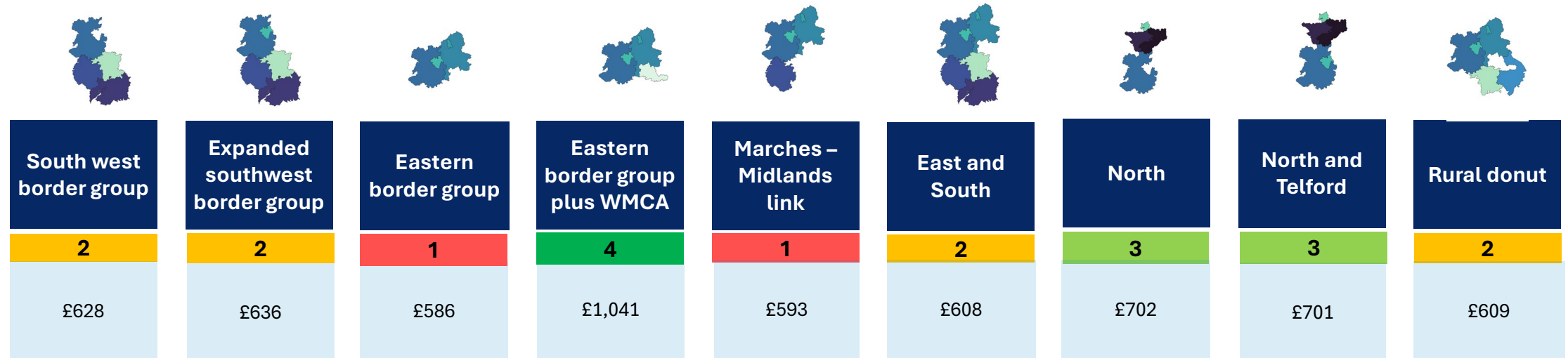
Scoring criteria

Objective assessment

- 1 Relatively poor affordability of housing in the area (over £350,000)
- 2 Low affordability of housing in the area (£300,000 - £350,000)
- 3 Good affordability of housing in the area (£275,000 - £300,000)
- 4 Relatively high affordability of housing in the area (below £275,000)

7A. Infrastructure: capacity to deliver

What is the ability to raise, attract or manage infrastructure funding?



Metric

Local and central government capital infrastructure investment per capita

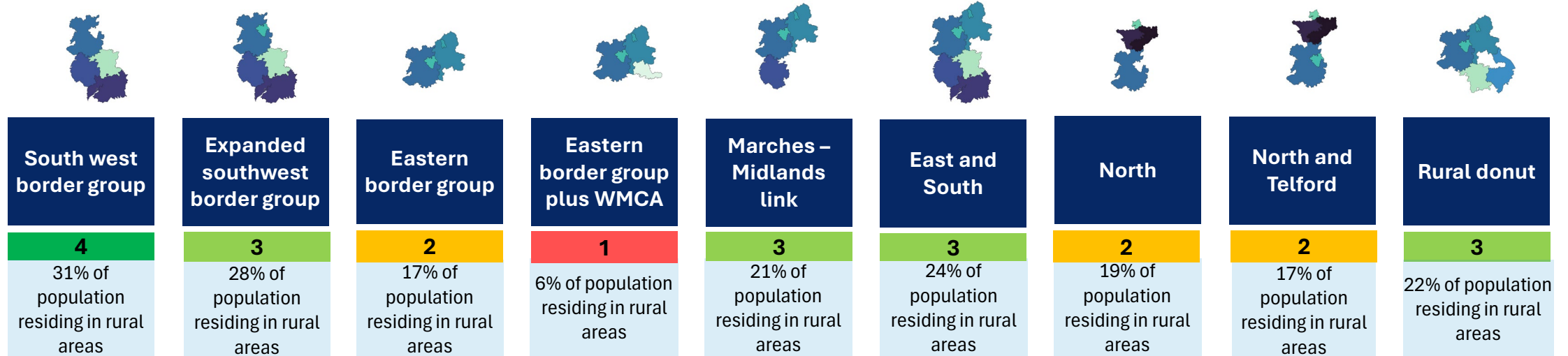
Scoring criteria

Objective assessment

- 1** Significantly low local and central government capital infrastructure investment per capita (below £600)
- 2** Low local and central government capital infrastructure investment per capita (£600-£700)
- 3** Good local and central government capital infrastructure investment per capita (£700 - £800)
- 4** Significantly high local and central government capital infrastructure investment per capita (over £800)

7B. Infrastructure: rural investment need

How likely is it that rural infrastructure will be prioritised?



Metric

Share of population living in rural areas (%)

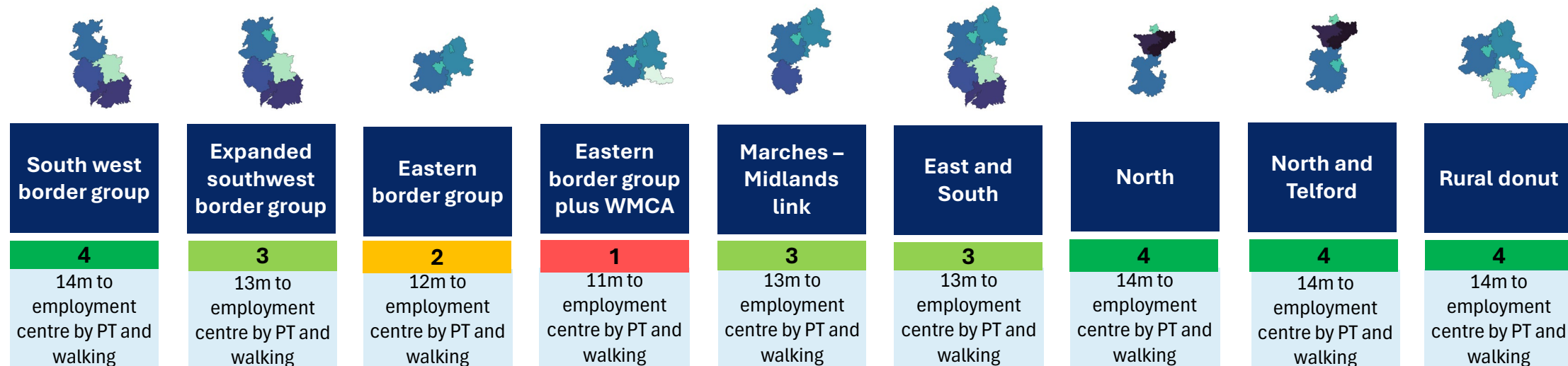
Scoring criteria

Objective assessment

- 1 Significantly low share of rural population (lower than 10%)
- 2 Low share of rural population (10% - 20%)
- 3 High share of rural population (20% - 30%)
- 4 Significantly high share of rural population (over 30%)

7C. Infrastructure: transport connectivity

What is the extent to which transport issues and policy mirrors that of Shropshire?



Metric

Population weighted travel time to nearest employment centre (with 500-4,999 jobs) by public transport (PT) and walking (minutes)

Scoring criteria

Objective assessment

- 1** Significantly shorter time taken to travel to employment centre (under 12m)
- 2** Reasonable amount of time taken to travel to employment centre (12m – 13m)
- 3** Long time taken to travel to employment centre (13m-14m)
- 4** Significantly long time taken to travel to employment centre (over 14m).

8A. Climate resilience: green growth alignment

What is the strength of existing and emerging collaborations that support investment in environmental infrastructure, nature recovery, and land use transformation?

								
South west border group	Expanded southwest border group	Eastern border group	Eastern border group plus WMCA	Marches – Midlands link	East and South	North	North and Telford	Rural donut
3	4	3	2	4	3	2	2	2
LAs members of River Severn Partnership	Existing partnerships on environmental infrastructure	Existing partnership on environmental infrastructure	Not well aligned with WMCA	Existing partnerships on environmental infrastructure	Partnerships with some areas but likely too large for alignment	Green Growth a focus area for Cheshire East	Green Growth a focus area for Cheshire East	Limited evidence that this is a focus area

Rationale

Informed by research into existing and emerging partnerships on sustainability

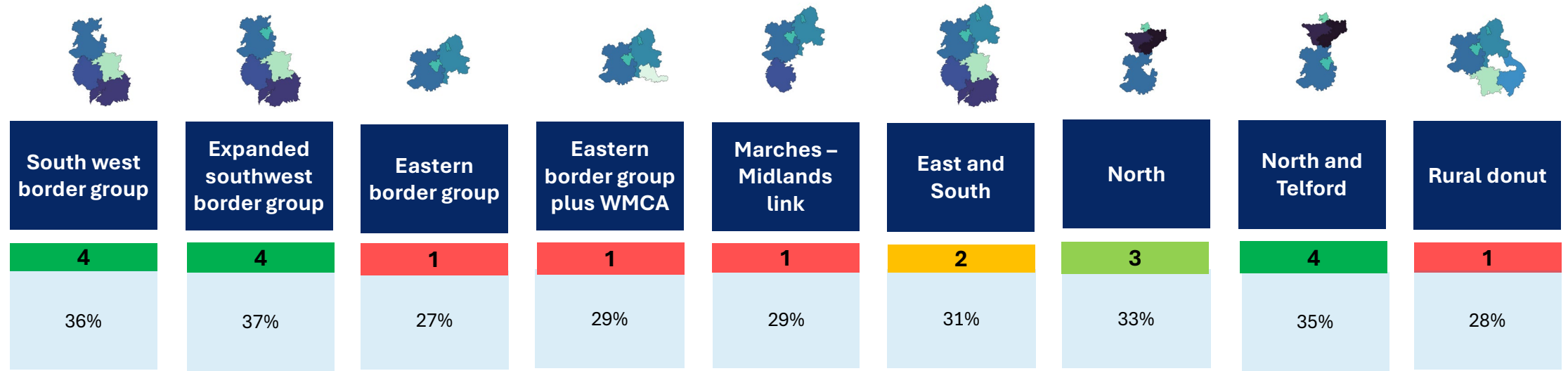
Scoring criteria

Subjective assessment

- 1** Evidence or consensus of no green growth alignment
- 2** Option has little evidence of green growth alignment
- 3** Option has some evidence of green growth alignment
- 4** Option has strong evidence or consensus of green growth alignment

8B. Climate resilience: climate adaptation

What is the strength and currency of climate adaptation strategies and local policies?



Metric

Population weighted Council
Climate Action Scorecard score
(%)

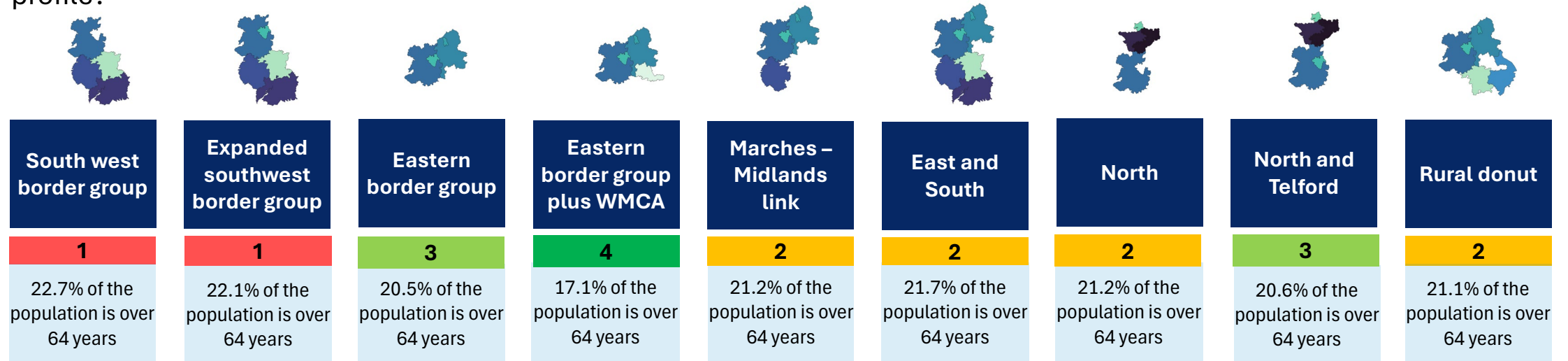
Scoring criteria

Objective assessment

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 | Significantly low action taken towards net zero (below 30%) |
| 2 | Low action taken towards net zero (30% - 32%) |
| 3 | Reasonable action taken towards net zero (32% - 34%) |
| 4 | Significant action taken towards net zero (over 34%) |

9A. Health: demographic demand

What is the additional strain or mitigation effect each option has on health and care services, based on population age profile?



Metric

Old age dependency ratio
(population 65+ / working-age population)

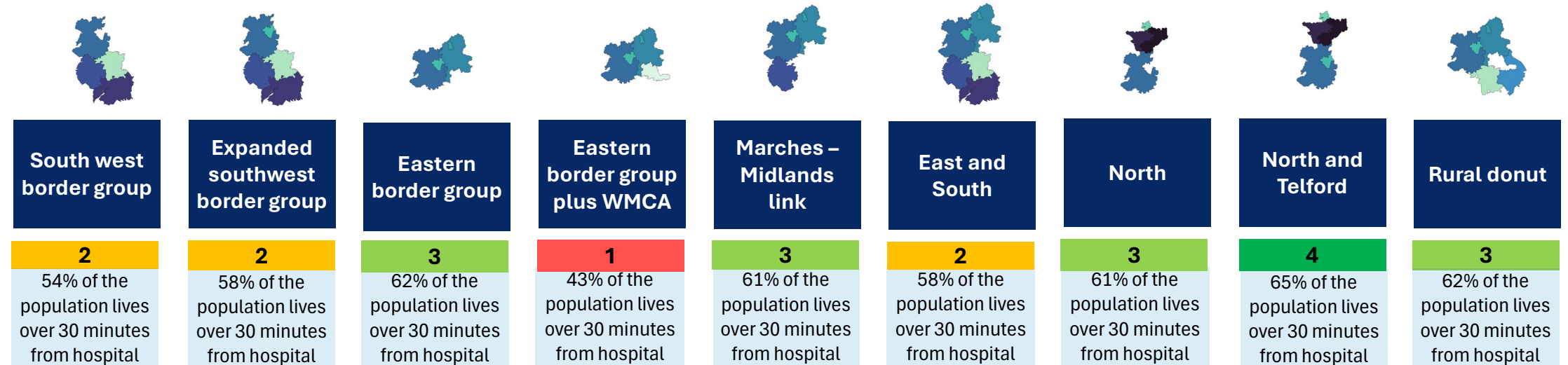
Scoring criteria

Objective assessment

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 | Significantly high proportion of older population (over 22%) |
| 2 | High proportion of older population (21%-22%) |
| 3 | Low proportion of older population (20%-21%) |
| 4 | Significantly high proportion of older population (below 20%) |

9B. Health: rural access risk

What is the level of importance likely to be placed on improving healthcare access in rural areas?



Metric

Share of population more than 30 minutes by public transport from a major hospital (%)

Scoring criteria

Objective assessment

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 | Significantly low proportion of population living 30m from hospital (below 50%) |
| 2 | Low proportion of population living 30m from hospital (50% - 60%) |
| 3 | High proportion of population living 30m from hospital (60% - 63%) |
| 4 | Significantly high proportion of population living 30m from hospital (over 63%) |

Summary: scores by individual criteria

1/2

Themes:	Functional Economies	Effective Delivery		Boundary alignment	Local identity and accountability		Economic Growth	
Scoring criteria:		Existing partnerships	Potential partnerships		Council resident alignment	Socio-economic profile	Priority sector presence	Growth strategy alignment
1 South west border group	1	2	2	2	3	4	4	4
2 Expanded south west border group	3	3	2	3	4	4	3	4
3 Eastern border group	4	3	3	3	3	3	2	3
4 Eastern group plus WMCA	2	2	4	3	1	1	1	1
5 Marches - Midlands link	4	3	4	3	2	4	2	3
6 East and South	3	3	3	3	2	4	3	2
7 North	1	1	3	1	2	3	4	2
8 North and Telford	3	2	3	2	2	3	3	2
9 Rural doughnut	3	2	3	2	1	4	4	3

Summary: scores by individual criteria

2/2

Themes:	Housing		Infrastructure			Climate resilience		Health	
Scoring criteria:	Housing pressure	Housing affordability	Capacity to deliver	Rural investment need	Transport connectivity	Green growth alignment	Climate adaptation	Demog. demand	Rural access risk
1 South west border group	1	1	2	4	4	3	4	1	2
2 Expanded south west border group	2	2	2	3	3	4	4	1	2
3 Eastern border group	3	4	1	2	2	3	1	3	3
4 Eastern group plus WMCA	3	4	4	1	1	2	1	4	1
5 Marches - Midlands link	3	3	1	3	3	4	1	2	3
6 East and South	2	2	2	3	3	3	2	2	2
7 North	3	1	3	2	4	2	3	2	3
8 North and Telford	4	2	3	2	4	2	4	3	4
9 Rural doughnut	3	2	2	3	4	2	1	2	3

Approach to weighting and interpretation

Devolution pathways overview

The appraisal provides an evidence-based assessment of how each shortlisted option performs against the key themes. However, the most suitable option depends on the Council's strategic priorities and its appetite for risk.

To reflect different priorities and trade-offs, the appraisal defines three distinct *devolution pathways*.

Devolution pathways are strategic scenarios that reflect different priorities and value judgments about what matters most for Shropshire. Each pathway applies a different weighting to the appraisal themes, highlighting how alternative options perform when certain outcomes – such as economic growth, service delivery, or local identity – are prioritised over others.

Each pathway assigns different weightings to the themes, meaning that options are ranked differently depending on which outcomes are prioritised. This approach allows the Council to explore how different strategic choices influence the relative attractiveness of each option.

These devolution pathways are defined below, alongside commentary on key risks and opportunities.

Devolution pathway definitions

1/3

Pathway	Description	Opportunities	Risks	Themes prioritised
Shared challenges, shared solutions	Focuses on partnering with authorities that face similar social and economic challenges – such as poor transport connectivity, unequal access to healthcare, and rural service delivery. This pathway emphasises collaboration to address common issues through shared strategies and resources.	• Strong potential for shared learning and joint problem-solving • Greater alignment in service delivery models and rural priorities • Builds resilience through collaboration with like-minded authorities	• May limit economic ambition by focusing on authorities with similar constraints • Risk of slower progress due to shared capacity limitations • Potential difficulty in demonstrating strong economic growth potential to Government	• Local identity and accountability • Green growth • Infrastructure • Health • Climate resilience

Devolution pathway definitions

2/3

Pathway	Description	Opportunities	Risks	Themes prioritised
Growth-oriented & commercially ambitious	Prioritises bold, entrepreneurial partnerships aimed at unlocking economic potential. This pathway seeks alignment with authorities that are commercially minded and supportive of innovation, transformation, and scaling up Shropshire's economic programmes.	• Potential to accelerate economic development and innovation • Access to new investment and HMG funding opportunities • Stronger positioning for regional competitiveness and transformation	• Risk of misalignment in priorities or pace between Shropshire and more commercially driven partners • Potential for unequal influence or benefit-sharing in partnerships	• Effective delivery • Housing • Infrastructure

Devolution pathway definitions

3/3

Pathway	Description	Opportunities	Risks	Themes prioritised
Aligned with Government priorities	Centres on forming arrangements that closely reflect the criteria set out in the Government's Devolution White Paper. This pathway represents the most straightforward and low-friction route to securing devolution approval from central government.	• Clear alignment with national policy objectives and funding streams • Lower risk of delays or negotiation setbacks during the devolution process	• May prioritise ease of approval over local fit or ambition • Risk of reduced flexibility to shape arrangements around Shropshire's unique needs • Risk of limited community buy-in if arrangements feel imposed or externally driven	• Functional economies • Effective delivery • Boundary alignment • Local identity and accountability • Economic growth

Weighted scoring

Weighted score by devolution pathway

Themes:		Shared challenges, shared solutions		Growth-oriented & commercially ambitious		Aligned with Government priorities	
Scoring criteria:		Weighted score	Rank	Weighted score	Rank	Weighted score	Rank
1	South west border group	68	5	48	9	50	7
2	Expanded south west border group	72	2	54	5	65	2
3	Eastern border group	65	7	57	3	65	3
4	Eastern group plus WMCA	49	9	50	7	47	8
5	Marches - Midlands link	69	4	60	2	69	1
6	East and South	65	6	53	6	65	4
7	North	64	8	50	8	44	9
8	North and Telford	73	1	61	1	59	6
9	Rural doughnut	69	3	55	4	60	5

High performing options by devolution pathway

Some options – such as the expanded south west border group and Marches to Midlands – perform strongly across more than one pathway. This is explored in more detail below.

Devolution option	Option partners	Number of pathways	Population
Marches to Midlands	Shropshire, Telford, Staffordshire, Stoke-on-Trent, Herefordshire	2 (growth-oriented, government-aligned)	1.8 million
Expanded south west border group	Shropshire, Telford, Herefordshire, Worcestershire, Gloucestershire	2 (shared challenges, government-aligned)	1.9 million
Eastern border group	Shropshire, Telford, Staffordshire, Stoke-on-Trent	2 (growth-oriented, government-aligned)	1.6 million
North and Telford	Shropshire, Telford, the Cheshires, Warrington	2 (shared challenges, growth-oriented)	1.5 million
Rural doughnut	Shropshire, Telford, Staffordshire, Stoke-on-Trent, Worcestershire, Warwickshire	1 (shared challenges)	2.8 million

This suggests they offer a degree of flexibility and could be shaped to support different strategic directions.

Interpretation of results

There is no single ‘best’ option

The appraisal confirms that there is no universally optimal devolution option. Instead, the most suitable arrangement for Shropshire depends on the Council’s strategic priorities – whether the focus is on shared service challenges, economic growth, or alignment with Government expectations.

All viable options include Telford

Every high-performing option includes Telford, and in all cases, options that include Telford score better than those without it across all pathways. This highlights the strategic importance of building a strong, collaborative relationship with Telford & Wrekin Council.

Larger options tend to perform better

While the appraisal allowed for some flexibility below the 1.5 million population threshold, the higher-scoring options are generally those with larger populations. This suggests that greater scale – beyond just meeting the minimum threshold – is important for achieving Shropshire’s ambitions. Larger groupings appear to offer stronger performance across multiple themes, including infrastructure, economic growth, and effective delivery.

Annex: Detailed data tables

1: Individual local authority populations

Authority	Population
Birmingham	1,144,919
Cheshire East	398,772
Cheshire West and Chester	357,150
Coventry	345,324
Dudley	323,488
Gloucestershire	645,076
Herefordshire	187,034
Monmouthshire	92,957
Powys	133,169
Sandwell	341,832

Authority	Population
Shropshire	323,606
Solihull	216,240
Staffordshire	876,104
Stoke-on-Trent	258,369
Telford and Wrekin	185,541
Walsall	284,124
Warrington	210,974
Warwickshire	596,772
Wolverhampton	263,727
Worcestershire	603,676

2: Population by broad age ranges

Option	0 - 14	15 - 64	64+	Total
Shropshire only	47,918	193,601	82,088	323,607
South west border group	231,449	878,013	326,320	1,435,782
Expanded south west border group	266,022	996,264	359,038	1,621,324
Eastern border group	224,341	824,557	271,117	1,320,015
Eastern group plus WMCA	804,984	2,708,658	726,023	4,239,665
Marches - Midlands link	252,368	935,091	319,589	1,507,048
East and South	455,790	1,702,570	597,437	2,755,797
North	158,538	603,231	205,133	966,902
North and Telford	193,111	721,482	237,851	1,152,444
Rural doughnut	421,517	1,567,181	531,766	2,520,464
National comparator	9,838,977	36,249,768	10,401,303	56,490,048

3: Population by broad age ranges

Option	0 - 14	15 - 64	64+
Shropshire only	14.81%	59.83%	25.37%
South west border group	16.12%	61.15%	22.73%
Expanded south west border group	16.41%	61.45%	22.14%
Eastern border group	17.00%	62.47%	20.54%
Eastern group plus WMCA	18.99%	63.89%	17.12%
Marches - Midlands link	16.75%	62.05%	21.21%
East and South	16.54%	61.78%	21.68%
North	16.40%	62.39%	21.22%
North and Telford	16.76%	62.60%	20.64%
Rural doughnut	16.72%	62.18%	21.10%
National comparator	17.42%	64.17%	18.41%

4: Population by rural / urban split

Option	Rural population	Population	Rural share
Shropshire only	185,426	323,606	57.3%
South west border group	444,741	1,435,786	31.0%
Expanded south west border group	455,874	1,621,327	28.1%
Eastern border group	217,508	1,320,014	16.5%
Eastern group plus WMCA	244,864	4,239,668	5.8%
Marches - Midlands link	318,506	1,507,048	21.1%
East and South	662,249	2,755,800	24.0%
North	181,353	966,896	18.8%
North and Telford	192,486	1,152,437	16.7%
Rural doughnut	554,421	2,520,462	22.0%
National comparator	9,740,371	49,857,376	19.5%

5: Commuting flows

Option	Inflows from	Outflows to	Total flows	Share of jobs
Shropshire only	-	-		
South west border group	3,335	2,741	6,076	3.1%
Expanded south west border group	12,280	10,377	22,657	6.8%
Eastern border group	11,204	9,959	21,163	10.3%
Eastern group plus WMCA	15,222	12,658	27,880	4.4%
Marches - Midlands link	12,875	11,478	24,353	9.7%
East and South	14,539	12,700	27,239	6.5%
North	1,608	1,495	3,103	2.2%
North and Telford	10,553	9,131	19,684	6.7%
Rural doughnut	12,871	11,194	24,065	6.4%

6: Infrastructure investment

Option	Land improvements	LG excl. transport	LG transport	Other
Shropshire only	£106m	£29m	£52m	£266m
South west border group	£677m	£124m	£204m	£1,677m
Expanded south west border group	£729m	£160m	£223m	£1,863m
Eastern border group	£372m	£114m	£132m	£1,504m
Eastern group plus WMCA	£1,112m	£460m	£563m	£5,608m
Marches - Midlands link	£465m	£133m	£158m	£1,664m
East and South	£1,049m	£238m	£336m	£3,181m
North	£405m	£178m	£114m	£2,133m
North and Telford	£457m	£214m	£133m	£2,319m
Rural doughnut	£882m	£229m	£297m	£3,254m

7: Infrastructure investment per capita

Option	Total	Population	LG £ / capita
Shropshire only	£81m	323,607	£250
South west border group	£328m	1,435,782	£228
Expanded south west border group	£383m	1,621,324	£236
Eastern border group	£246m	1,320,015	£186
Eastern group plus WMCA	£1,023m	4,239,665	£241
Marches - Midlands link	£291m	1,507,048	£193
East and South	£574m	2,755,797	£208
North	£292m	966,902	£302
North and Telford	£347m	1,152,444	£301
Rural doughnut	£526m	2,520,464	£209

8: Travel times to key assets

Option	Time to emp centre by public transport (m)	Time to emp centre by public transport (m)
Shropshire only	20	20.5
South west border group	17	14.1
Expanded south west border group	16	13.9
Eastern border group	12	12.2
Eastern group plus WMCA	12	11.5
Marches - Midlands link	15	13.8
East and South	14	13.2
North	14	14.3
North and Telford	14	14.0
Rural doughnut	14	14.1

9: Climate action scorecards (population weighted)

Option	Score
Shropshire only	33.0%
South west border group	28.2%
Expanded south west border group	46.0%
Eastern border group	Score
Eastern group plus WMCA	33.0%
Marches - Midlands link	28.2%
East and South	46.0%
North	Score
North and Telford	33.0%
Rural doughnut	28.2%

10: Jobs in key growth sectors

Option	Energy (incl. renewables)	Tourism	Agri-tech
Shropshire only	1,430	13,350	3,080
South west border group	5,350	58,855	15,375
Expanded south west border group	5,925	64,380	17,185
Eastern border group	4,095	45,395	11,060
Eastern group plus WMCA	16,305	126,050	36,190
Marches - Midlands link	4,595	52,935	13,050
East and South	9,445	104,250	26,435
North	10,020	41,360	14,925
North and Telford	10,595	46,885	16,735
Rural doughnut	14,030	95,560	35,275

11: Share of jobs in key growth sectors

Option	Energy (incl. renewables)	Tourism	Agri-tech
Shropshire only	1.0%	9.4%	2.2%
South west border group	0.8%	8.9%	2.3%
Expanded south west border group	0.8%	8.5%	2.3%
Eastern border group	0.7%	7.7%	1.9%
Eastern group plus WMCA	0.8%	6.5%	1.9%
Marches - Midlands link	0.7%	7.7%	1.9%
East and South	0.8%	8.3%	2.1%
North	1.8%	7.6%	2.7%
North and Telford	1.7%	7.3%	2.6%
Rural doughnut	1.2%	8.1%	3.0%

12: Approx. population share by social classification

Description	Shropshire only	South west border group	Expanded south west border group	Eastern border group	Eastern group plus WMCA	Marches - Midlands link	East and South	North	North and Telford	Rural doughnut
Spacious Rural Living	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Small Town Suburbia	9.7%	8.3%	8.3%	14.1%	6.3%	13.3%	11.2%	13.7%	12.7%	11.2%
Established Mature Families	4.7%	7.8%	7.6%	8.1%	3.5%	7.6%	7.9%	14.4%	13.1%	8.5%
Inner Suburbs and Small Town Living	7.7%	9.1%	8.6%	6.7%	3.4%	6.9%	7.9%	9.0%	8.3%	7.2%
Rural Amenity	29.9%	20.4%	19.0%	11.7%	4.2%	13.3%	16.1%	13.7%	13.0%	13.9%
Ageing Communities	12.5%	12.1%	11.3%	7.2%	3.4%	8.0%	9.7%	9.2%	8.6%	8.2%
Student Living and Professional Footholds	0.2%	0.7%	0.6%	0.3%	1.3%	0.3%	0.5%	0.7%	0.6%	0.4%
Ethnically Diverse Young Families	-	0.4%	0.3%	0.1%	1.1%	0.1%	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%	0.2%
Diverse Educated Urban Singles	-	0.3%	0.3%	0.1%	0.6%	0.1%	0.2%	0.3%	0.3%	0.2%
Ethnically Diverse Families in Less Connected Locations	-	0.4%	0.5%	1.3%	7.2%	1.2%	0.8%	0.2%	0.4%	0.8%
Established Multi- Ethnic Communities	0.1%	1.1%	1.3%	2.5%	10.2%	2.2%	1.8%	0.4%	0.8%	2.2%
Challenged Multicultural Communities and Students	-	0.5%	0.7%	2.8%	11.8%	2.5%	1.6%	-	0.3%	1.7%
Outer Suburbs	1.1%	3.0%	2.9%	1.7%	4.8%	1.5%	2.3%	2.6%	2.5%	3.6%
Suburban Professionals	2.8%	3.1%	4.3%	6.0%	13.4%	5.4%	4.5%	3.3%	4.9%	7.3%
Challenged Communities	0.7%	6.5%	8.9%	9.9%	13.2%	9.1%	8.2%	3.7%	7.4%	8.6%
Legacy Industrial and Coastal Communities	4.5%	7.5%	7.0%	5.3%	2.8%	5.9%	6.4%	8.9%	8.1%	6.3%
Multicultural Inner Suburbs	0.8%	2.8%	2.6%	1.0%	2.3%	1.0%	1.9%	2.1%	1.9%	2.0%
Established but Challenged	11.4%	8.3%	7.8%	9.2%	4.0%	9.5%	8.7%	7.0%	6.5%	8.0%
Young Families in Industrial Towns	11.2%	5.4%	5.6%	9.8%	5.1%	9.8%	7.6%	8.5%	8.3%	7.7%
Routine Occupations or Retirement	0.1%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%
Legacy and Demographically Mixed Communities	2.6%	2.2%	2.1%	1.8%	1.0%	2.1%	2.0%	2.0%	1.9%	1.8%
Similarity index (using cosine similarity)	1.00	0.94	0.92	0.82	0.40	0.86	0.91	0.84	0.83	0.86

13: Housing targets and net additions

Option	Target	Net additions	Ratio
Shropshire only	1,994	1,514	76%
South west border group	9,899	5,591	56%
Expanded south west border group	10,756	6,591	61%
Eastern border group	6,516	4,738	73%
Eastern group plus WMCA	18,717	13,528	72%
Marches - Midlands link	7,879	5,798	74%
East and South	16,415	10,329	63%
North	5,439	4,142	76%
North and Telford	6,296	5,142	82%
Rural doughnut	14,380	10,429	73%

14: Housing affordability

Option	Median house price	Median house price to median gross annual workplace earnings ratio
Shropshire only	£299,983	10
South west border group	£359,716	11
Expanded south west border group	£342,786	11
Eastern border group	£270,135	9
Eastern group plus WMCA	£271,979	8
Marches - Midlands link	£288,663	9
East and South	£314,925	10
North	£361,269	10
North and Telford	£343,951	10
Rural doughnut	£309,747	10

