

Draft Whitchurch Local Economic Growth Strategy 2020 -2025

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Foreword

Shropshire Council is delighted to present the Whitchurch Economic Growth Strategy, the development of which was a key action from the wider Economic Growth Strategy for Shropshire. This document will provide an economic focus for the town and surrounding areas and outlines the key actions that we will collectively be looking to deliver during this timeframe.

These strategies will help the Council to achieve its objectives and deliver the economic vision for Shropshire. This local economic growth strategy is fully aligned with the Local Plan Review 2019 and other key documents such as the Place Plans. The Local Economic Growth Strategy is an external investment document for the local area, which focuses on how economic growth is tailored in Whitchurch.

Whitchurch and its surrounding area provides a unique opportunity for businesses looking to invest and grow. As well as informing and guiding delivery, this strategy is seen as having a key role in encouraging growth, attracting new businesses and investment into not just the town, but also the surrounding area.



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1. Economic Growth Strategy for Shropshire 2017-2021

Our Economic Growth vision for Shropshire...


To be the best place to do business and invest, renowned for its pool of local talent and expertise. We will strive to maximise our economic potential and increase productivity by fully utilising the benefits of our special environment and high-quality assets.

Shropshire Council has 3 objectives for Economic growth:

- supporting the growth of new and existing businesses
- attracting inward investment
- developing and retaining talent and skills

There are five priority actions and targets to help deliver the vision from a local perspective:


1. Target actions and resources where there are economic opportunities
2. Enable businesses to start, grow and succeed
3. Deliver infrastructure to support growth
4. Meet skills needs of business and people's aspirations for work
5. Promote Whitchurch to investors



Shropshire Council's values and approach to growth will influence this strategy and effective engagement is necessary to communicate growth ambitions and the methods proposed to achieve them. Shropshire Council understands the need to work closely locally in the production of this strategy and to understand the local perspective of the needs and ambitions of Whitchurch. This will help the collective delivery of a strategy in a commercial, enterprising and innovative way. However, it is recognised that Shropshire Council and local councils do not have control over all actions and activities that have been outlined in this strategy. Shropshire Council will therefore take a collaborative approach to working across the public and private sectors locally to open communication channels to enable discussions for the benefit of Whitchurch's economy, businesses and residents.

Climate Change

Shropshire Council has declared a Climate Emergency and is taking active steps to develop a Climate Change Strategy to reduce its own carbon footprint and to adapt the services for which it is directly responsible. Shropshire Council will also use its direct influence through its regulatory and procurement roles to encourage others to adopt a rapid transition to net zero carbon. Finally, the Council will work with businesses and residents in Shropshire to support their efforts to tackle Climate Change by encouraging behavioural changes that will help reduce carbon emissions and build resilience to climate change.





2. **Whitchurch – A Local Profile**

The town's strategic location combined with being home to some of our largest employers opens up many opportunities for stimulating economic growth both in and around the town. Supply chain businesses, accommodation investments and independent retailers will all add and enhance the value of this thriving town.

Whitchurch is a major economic centre of business and jobs in the north of the county with approximately 500 businesses choosing to base themselves here. Whitchurch is in an excellent strategic location, with good transport links to major conurbations. AGRO Merchants Group (Formerly known as Grocontinental Limited) which operates in the food transport and storage sector, is one of the county's biggest employers and benefits from the location and infrastructure and good connectivity within Shropshire and beyond.

Employment is rising in Whitchurch, with a real opportunity for job creation, particularly around investment opportunities, which are tailored towards attracting higher skilled jobs. This will help to develop and retain talent and skills in Whitchurch, as well attracting further skills and employers into the area.

There is a real drive within the town to act on their economic ambitions with specific scope to attract new businesses, retain their young people with the provision of higher skilled jobs, support their independent retailers, boost the night time economy, and provide accommodation to encourage both visitors to spend and businesses to invest.

The historic market town of Whitchurch has much to offer to its many businesses, residents and visitors. There are a variety of independent shops, cafes and restaurants, along with the town's museums.

Whitchurch – High Street Survey

An audit of businesses operating in Whitchurch's main shopping streets was undertaken in July 2019 as part of a piece of research reviewing the vibrancy of Shropshire's main market towns and key settlements. The objective of this audit was to provide a snapshot of the vitality of the town.

A total of 122 businesses operate in the survey area, primarily in Green End (58), High Street (55) with a small number (9) in Watergate Street. Some non-consumer facing businesses based in offices above ground floor level businesses may be excluded from this count. Gross floor space allocated to these businesses is almost 16,000m².

The highest proportion of businesses operating in the town are comparison retailers¹, accounting for 31% of units and 30% of gross floor space. Within the comparison retail category, there are 5 clothes shops, 4 charity shops and 4 florists – other classifications tend to be represented by just 1 or 2 outlets.

Retail services² account for the 2nd highest proportion of outlets at 21% (albeit for just 13% of floor space). Well represented in this category are hair and beauty salons (7 units), barbers (4 units) and opticians (3 units).

There are 17 restaurants and takeaways in Whitchurch town centre, which is the equivalent of 14% of all units in the town (12% of gross floor space). 11% of both units and floor space is occupied by financial and business service providers. There are 3 banks and 3 estate agents. In the tourism and leisure category, there is 1 hotel and 4 public houses.

¹ Defined as stores selling non-food/drink/tobacco products

² Defined as stores selling a service rather than a product

Representing a relatively small proportion of units and floor space in Whitchurch town centre is the convenience retail category. The 7 outlets in this category comprise butchers (2 units), discounters (2 units) and a delicatessen, a newsagent and off licence. It should be noted that the town's main supermarkets – Sainsbury, Tesco, Lidl and Iceland – are all located a short distance from the main town centre shopping streets.

12% of Whitchurch town centre outlets are vacant (14% of gross floor space). There are 7 vacant units on Green End, 5 on the High Street (including the former National Westminster and HSBC banks) and 2 on Watergate Street (former premises of Argos and Store 21).



3. An Economic Vision for Whitchurch

The vision for Whitchurch has been formed collaboratively and informed by engagement with the town and parishes.

The vision for Whitchurch is one of sustainable growth, capitalising on its assets and being open to development opportunities to rebalance the economy and reduce out commuting. To be a place renowned for its high skilled jobs and its ability to attract investment for large scale infrastructure projects, whilst also supporting the vibrancy of its thriving town centre.

A number of key themes were raised as part of the engagement with local stakeholders and all will be addressed within the appropriate priority sections of this strategy. A summary of the key themes is included below:

- Provision of more accommodation to attract visitors
- Maintain the unique feel to the town centre and promote it as a community hub.
- Improvements to infrastructure, particularly around the railway and access to the southbound platform
- Aspiration for a digital/innovation business park
- Explore viability of a Business Improvement District and associated 'shop local' campaigns
- Capitalising on strategic location and good transport links
- Making Whitchurch attractive to business
- Opportunities to promote the town as a destination
- Looking at car parking provision and viability
- Ensuring the future sustainability and viability of the town through succession planning with businesses and community leaders
- Rebalancing the higher than average commute out with more employment opportunities



4. Case Study – AGRO Merchants Group

AGRO Merchants Group is one of the UK's leading storage and distribution companies. Operating from a purpose-built 35-acre site in Whitchurch, the company provides distribution and storage services to the food industry, together with a range of specialist services. Warehousing capacity is 197,000 pallets with multi-temperature storage ranging from -28°C to +12°C.

The company has a fleet of 60 tractor units and 120 temperature-controlled and curtain-sided trailers which operate throughout Europe.

A family-owned business with a 75-year heritage, AGRO Merchants Group is committed to on-going investment in facilities, vehicles and systems development. AGRO Merchants Group employ 381 people at the Whitchurch site.



AGRO Merchants Group services include chilled storage, frozen storage, ambient storage, cheese cutting, ingredient sorting, co-packing and blast freezing capacity of up to 360 tonnes. It is a 24/7 state of the art purpose-built site with great connections with all major distribution hubs.

AGRO Merchants Group is certified with BRC Global food standard, BRC storage and distribution, Soil Association Organic Accreditation and Custom and Excise Approved Warehousing.



5. Performance and Monitoring

The action plan contained within this document will be reviewed regularly and updated annually by Shropshire Council for the duration of this strategy.

6. References and Links

[Economic Growth Strategy for Shropshire 2017-2021](#)

[European Structural Investment Fund \(ESIF\) Strategy](#)

[Marches Strategic Economic Plan \(SEP\).](#)

[Marches Skills Plan 2017 - 2020](#)

[Site Allocations and Management of Development \(SAMDev\)](#)

[Shropshire Council Core Strategy \(2011\)](#)

[Local Plan Review 2016-2036](#)

[Shropshire Growth Barometer 2019](#)

[Whitchurch Market Town Profile](#)

[Place Plans](#)

[The Marches LEP Visitor Economy Strategy](#)



Annexe 1: Action Plans

The Local Economic Growth Strategies are a key action contained within the strategy. Delivering the vision from a local perspective will be managed through action plans contained within the strategy to:

1. Target actions and resources where there are economic opportunities
2. Enable businesses to start, grow and succeed
3. Deliver infrastructure to support growth
4. Meet skills needs of business and people's aspirations for work
5. Promote Whitchurch to investors

Target actions and resources where there are economic opportunities

There are several key opportunities, which have been identified through the preparation of this strategy. These include maximising the potential for supporting the retail and food sector in the town, alongside agriculture. Increasing Whitchurch's tourism potential will provide the focus for future Whitchurch activity and guide the key actions to ensure that Shropshire Council maximises and promotes these opportunities for economic growth.

All development will need to take account of known infrastructure constraints and requirements as identified in the place plan and Local Development Framework implementation plan.

Major employment sites and growth corridors

There will be opportunities to bring forward new employment land to meet our economic needs and Shropshire Council will continue to work with developers and partners to identify and prioritise deliverable future sites. The Local Plan Review is currently taking place, and this provides the framework for housing and economic delivery ensuring that Shropshire Council have a plan-led approach to achieving sustainable development.

Ambition	Action/Delivery	Partners	Timescale	Progress
<p>Innovation Business Park - To offer high skill, high pay jobs to retain key worker and young people in the town and also to attract a workforce</p>	<p>Town Council to scope out potential for a business park and look at land allocations working closely with Shropshire Council. Land at Heath Lane is identified in the SAMDev to form a new 'gateway' business.</p>	<p>Town Council lead with support from Shropshire Council</p>	<p>Short/Medium</p>	
<p>A hotel to attract visitors to stay overnight and also provide business accommodation</p>	<p>Shropshire Council Economic Growth Team are looking to undertake a need and demand survey, together with a site options study for suitable hotel sites. The Prees Road site within Whitchurch will be part of this work. It may also be beneficial to look at potential sites within the town centre.</p>	<p>Shropshire Council</p>	<p>Short/Medium</p>	
<p>Identification of key employment sites. Around 26 hectares* of employment land is in the SAMDEV plan period 2006-2026. Those in SAMDEV already identified need promoting.</p> <p>Potential development land within the bypass</p>	<p>Shropshire Council Economic Growth Team is producing an investment proposition for key employment sites where all sites will be promoted.</p> <p>Allocated employment sites in the SAMDev include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land at Oaklands Farm • Land at Heath Road <p>Allocations for Prees, Prees Higher Heath, Whitchurch Rural & Ightfield and Calverhall can be found in the SAMDev.</p>	<p>Shropshire Council Economic Growth Team Planning Policy Team</p>	<p>Short/Medium</p>	

with to create a growth corridor				
Strategic corridor North East Shropshire and the A41 growth corridor linking to the M54 – related to the HS2 hub at Crewe and links to the North West to Cheshire and beyond	Shropshire Council and The Marches LEP are actively engaged with Midlands connect at Board level. The Marches LEP has also produced a Strategic Corridors Study which is informing the Midlands Connect Programme.	Shropshire Council	Short/Medium	

Target growing and under-represented sectors

There are a number of sectors in Shropshire which are performing well. The largest employment sectors in Whitchurch are retail, health and transport & storage. Whitchurch is home to one of our largest employers AGRO Merchants Group who provide transport solutions to our thriving food sector and nationally keeps the UK food industry on the move.

Six existing sectors have been identified in the Economic Growth Strategy as having specific growth potential, with an emphasis on technologies and innovation.

<http://www.investinshropshire.co.uk/key-shropshire-sectors/>

- Advanced Manufacturing including Engineering and Agri-tech
- Food and Drink Processing
- Health and Social Care
- Visitor Economy (and heritage-based business)
- Environmental Science and Technologies
- Creative and Digital Industries

Shropshire Council has also identified a number of under-represented sectors that link well with our sectoral strengths in Shropshire, which are Professional, Business Services and Construction.

Ambition	Action / Delivery	Partners	Timescale	Progress
To identify and support existing sectors and identify cluster opportunities and define sectoral strengths	To prepare sectoral propositions aligned to identify target and growing sectors in the Economic Growth Strategy. http://www.investinshropshire.co.uk/key-shropshire-sectors/	Shropshire Council Business Growth and Investment Team	Immediate	
Produce a Cultural Strategy for Shropshire	Shropshire Council is producing a new Cultural Strategy for Shropshire will be published by Sept 2020	Shropshire Council	Immediate	
Work with the Marches LEP to produce a Visitor Economy Strategy	Shropshire Council is exploring ways of assisting the Local Enterprise Partnership with the production of a Marches Visitor Economy Strategy 2020. The Marches LEP Visitor Economy Strategy	Marches LEP Shropshire Council	Immediate	
Work with the Marches LEP to produce a Local Industrial Strategy.	The Marches LEP has produced a Strategic Economic Plan. Aspirations of key market towns in Shropshire will form part of this Plan. Local Industrial Strategy for the Marches area is being produced looking at sector strengths within the LEP. https://www.marcheslep.org.uk/what-we-do/economic-plan/	Marches LEP Shropshire Council	Short/Medium	

Identifying External Funding Opportunities

This Strategy looks to outline Whitchurch's aspiration for Economic Growth helping to identify appropriate funding opportunities, which may be suitable to support this.

Investment provided through the UK Government, European and other funding bodies, including the Growth Deal, are already being utilised positively to deliver Economic Growth across the County. This strategy outlines several projects, which Shropshire Council can begin to map against different funding sources, fully utilising funding secured for economic growth projects for the benefit of Whitchurch. Shropshire Council is working with the Marches LEP to understand the opportunities for funding post Brexit.³

Working in partnership with the Town Council and the surrounding areas, we can collectively look at exploring suitable external funding and private sector investment into the area.

For further up to date information on funding and grants, please contact the Marches Growth Hub.

<https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/about-us/shropshire/>

³ As the implications of Brexit become clear, Shropshire Council will work across the sector profile of Whitchurch to fully understand opportunities and issues that can specifically benefit businesses in Whitchurch. This will include implications for the agricultural sector in particular and Shropshire Council will engage with both local and national organisations to capture their full input, information and intelligence

Enable Businesses to Start, Grow and Succeed

Business support is now delivered across the Marches through the Marches Growth Hub which supports businesses across Shropshire; helping them to start, grow and succeed, whilst also helping our county to stimulate, energise and celebrate the enterprise, innovation and successes of our business community. Shropshire benefits from having its own Growth Hub located at the Shropshire Food Enterprise Centre, Shrewsbury.

Continuing effective engagement and collaboration through our key account management with larger businesses in Whitchurch is a key focus for the Economic Growth team and the Business Growth and Investment Team. This includes identifying supply chain opportunities whilst also supporting the growth potential of existing Small Medium Enterprises (SME's) to enable expansion to larger business status.

Ambition	Action / Delivery	Partners	Timescale	Progress
Provision of outreach business support	Develop the hub's outreach programme of business support provision. Explore outreach delivery options in Whitchurch and agree a plan of activities and events for the town, which will include one-to-one surgeries in libraries.	Shropshire Council Business Growth and Investment Team	Short/Medium	
	The Shropshire Growth Hub is visiting Industrial/Enterprise Parks based on feedback from businesses that the outreach aspect of the Growth Hub support prompted their engagement.	Shropshire Council Business Growth and Investment Team	Short/Medium	
	Shropshire Council Economic Growth Team is in discussion with the Shropshire Chamber of Commerce for a joint outreach programme where all partners visit market towns on a Roadshow basis. Currently the option of utilising any redundant mobile libraries to re-configure and repurpose is being explored.	Shropshire Council Business Growth and Investment Team	Short/Medium	

	Continue to support the Marches LEP in the delivery of the Growth Hub.	Shropshire Council Business Growth and Investment Team	Short/Medium	
Support for existing businesses alongside new businesses	The Growth Hub will engage with Town Councils and meetings will be arranged with each town clerk to discuss local business support provision.	Shropshire Council Business Growth and Investment Team	Short/Medium	
	To identify fast growing companies and to develop and tailor the business support offer to the Whitchurch economic profile.	Shropshire Council Business Growth and Investment Team	Short/Medium	
Succession Planning with new business and community leaders to ensure a vibrant town centre	The Growth Hub is working with HR Shropshire and Shropshire Youth Support Trust (SYST) on an agreed outreach programme of events and activities and will look at how to incorporate succession planning themed events into the programme.	Shropshire Council Business Growth and Investment Team	Short/Medium	
Provision of Incubation Units	There is demand for workshops / office space with limited provision. Supporting incubation and grow on provision within market towns remains a strategic objective.	Shropshire Council Business Growth and Investment Team	Short/Medium	
Business Board	To continue to work with the Shropshire Business Board as a key partner in delivering our growth agenda.	Shropshire Council	Immediate	

Deliver Infrastructure to Support Growth

Shropshire Council's Strategic Infrastructure Forum maintains an overview of all the economic growth and infrastructure projects which are led by the council or where the council can enable partners to deliver.

This strategy will be supported by the Whitchurch and surrounding area Place Plan. The purpose of the Place Plan is to help Shropshire Council to deliver its Local Development Framework and its Economic Growth Strategy. To do this, Place Plans identify and prioritise infrastructure needs within their local area and identify partners and funding sources to support delivery. There are many facilities and assets that contribute to a place and the Council's role in place shaping is an important one as it creates the conditions and environment that attracts people and businesses to the area. The Whitchurch Place Plan is an intrinsic part of helping us to achieve growth within the local economy, through the provision of public services and use of public assets.

Transport Infrastructure

Transport infrastructure in the north of the county is of particular regional importance. Shropshire Council will continue working closely with statutory bodies such as Highways England and Network Rail to improve and secure funding for strategic road networks that are key for supporting growth in Whitchurch.

Ambition	Action / Delivery	Partners	Timescale	Progress
There are opportunities around the train station HS2. Whitchurch to Crewe is only 15 minutes. Whitchurch could become a hub with links to London	Shropshire Council and the Marches LEP are actively engaged with Midlands Connect at Board Level.	Shropshire Council Marches LEP	Short/Medium	

<p>Development of a community rail partnership to improve station/access/parking</p> <p>There needs to be access to the southbound platform and parking is also limited at the station</p>	<p>The council is working with the Road Rail Partnership, a statutory body with Network Rail, and Highways England, which is enabling conversations about linking improvements to railways infrastructure to growth opportunities.</p>	<p>Shropshire Council Network Rail</p>	<p>Medium</p>	
<p>Install lifts at the train station</p>	<p>Discussion required with Network Rail</p>	<p>Town Council Shropshire Council Network Rail</p>	<p>Short/Medium</p>	
<p>Improvements to public transport including transport provision to help access training opportunities – potential link with training centre</p>	<p>Local Transport Plan</p>	<p>Shropshire Council Town Council</p>	<p>Short/Medium</p>	

Digital Connectivity

Digital connectivity is now fundamental for business. Provision and reliability of the digital network will enable all aspects of business to operate and grow in Whitchurch and the surrounding rural area.

Ambition	Action / Delivery	Partners	Timescale	Progress
<p>High-speed broadband outside of town to support businesses operating in the rural hinterland</p>	<p>The connecting Shropshire programme will continue to put forward the case for greater investment in mobile and broadband coverage.</p> <p>Shropshire Council area now has around 90% coverage of superfast broadband, and 98% of premises could have access to superfast broadband by the end of all current contracts (with Airband and BT/Openreach) in 2021.</p> <p>There is a need to identify key corridors that will require ultrafast/ full fibre/ 5G requirements beyond superfast contract delivery.</p> <p>The Marches and Gloucestershire Business Broadband Grant Scheme provides up to £25,000 for local eligible businesses to fund the installation of superfast broadband connections. The funding is designed to support qualifying businesses that cannot access superfast broadband currently and are not within any clearly defined roll out plans to receive superfast broadband.</p> <p>The grant will fund the associated capital costs of delivery and installation of the solution to premises. Applicants are responsible for paying the monthly cost through the contract term.</p>	<p>Shropshire Council Connecting Shropshire Team</p>	<p>Short/Medium</p>	

Utilities Capacity

Understanding capacity constraints and exploring ways of addressing these where possible will be key to improving infrastructure to support growth.

Ambition	Action / Delivery	Lead	Timescale	Progress
Improvements to power supply at Waymills Industrial Estate	Shropshire Council will continue to liaise with utility providers to address issues with supply. Shropshire Council will continue engagement with Scottish Power Energy networks in helping to secure significant investment proposals in the north of the county. There is now a Scottish power scheme to upgrade the supply and an application is going to the National Grid.	Shropshire Council Marches LEP Utility Partners	Short/Medium Improvements to electricity infrastructure by 2021	
Addressing utilities infrastructure, particularly foul and surface water Drainage issues need to be resolved in order to unlock further development	All development in Whitchurch will need to take account of utility issues. This includes wastewater infrastructure capacity. The scale of development is such that hydraulic modelling is needed for the catchment as a whole. There are also known electricity supply issues, which will require significant capital investment. Development should therefore be phased appropriately to take account of critical infrastructure delivery.	Utility Partners	Short/Medium	
Improvements to waste water	Welsh Water to install sewerage to support growth of the town.	Town Council to continue discussion on this with Welsh Water	Short/Medium	

Housing

The availability of housing of the right type, quality and cost to meet the needs of Whitchurch is an important consideration for businesses so that employees are able to secure the housing they need. The level of development outlined in the SAMDev is ambitious but is considered consistent with the local growth aspirations and the environmental and physical capacity of the town.

Ambition	Action / Delivery	Lead	Timescale	Progress
<p>Whitchurch has aspirations for housing growth. Whitchurch is a focus of significant development with 1200 houses* identified in the SAMDEV (900 for the remaining period of the plan). Identification of Further housing sites e.g. Tilstock Road and “pockets” with a mix of houses/flats/bungalows to buy and rent</p>	<p>Shropshire Council will support the supply of housing through a plan led approach and allocation of strategic sites for sustainable development (SAMDev)</p> <p>Allocated housing sites in the SAMdev include;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land at Tilstock Road • Land at Mount Farm • Land at Alport Road • Land West of Oaklands Farm • Land North of Mill Farm <p>There will be a coordinated approach to the delivery of this scheme alongside other sites to ensure development contributes appropriately to the delivery of necessary highway improvements around the town.</p> <p>Allocations for Prees, Prees Higher Heath, Whitchurch Rural & Ightfield and Calverhall can be found in the SAMDev.</p> <p>All sites coming forward need to have full fibre broadband infrastructure installed at build stage.</p>	<p>Shropshire Council Local Plan delivery framework.</p>	<p>Medium</p>	

Local Place Infrastructure – Economic Growth Opportunities

The Council's role in place shaping is important to achieving economic growth opportunities as it helps create the conditions to attract people and businesses to an area.

Ambition	Action / Delivery	Lead	Timescale	Progress
Explore viability of a Business Improvement District to ensure a vibrant and resilient town centre and delivery of services over and above those delivered	Shropshire Council to facilitate talks with other BID areas and provide appropriate support if the Town Council wish to proceed with a BID.	Town Council with support from Shropshire Council	Short/Medium	
To improve signage to promote the town	Town Council Business plan and explore possible neighbourhood funding.	Town Council	Short/Medium	
More 'shop local' campaigns	Town Council to coordinate.		Short/Medium	
Passport – possibly linked to BID to offer incentives through local shops	Town Council, with support from Shropshire Council, to explore BID aspirations.	Town Council	Short/Medium	
Welcome pack to Whitchurch included with new house builds	Town Council to deliver – possibly a delivery option through the BID.	Town Council	Short/Medium	
Improve the market offer - more variety – themed to add to the towns offer	Town Council to undertake further research in the town on need and demand.	Town Council	Short/Medium	
Utilise empty shops/units - Pop up shops in empty units.	Develop imaginative schemes to use empty properties.	Town Council	Short/Medium	
Developments around the Shropshire Union Canal Potential	To explore potential funding options - possibly community funding.	Town Council with support	Short/Medium	

to exploit the canal and possible expansion of marina.	Whitchurch Waterways Trust is putting a project plan together and investigating funding options to move the work forward.	from Shropshire Council		
Improving links to/from Crewe and to/from HS2 – to be led by Highways England, supported by Shropshire Council as part of work with partners of Northern Gateway e.g. Cheshire East and Staffs	Project is currently under discussion. Highways England is committed to support the delivery of HS2 and recognises this as a priority within its North West region.	Highways England, all affected authorities, Constellation partnership, Transport for Wales	Short/Medium	
Progress potential development of Digital Innovation and Enterprise Park – potentially to be sited at either Waymills or Heath Road within SAMDev	Shropshire Council will scope out potential for a business park and look at land allocations, working closely with Town Council.	Town Council, Shropshire Council, developers	Short/Medium	

Meet Skills Needs and People's Aspirations for Work

As referenced in the Economic Growth Strategy for Shropshire 2017-2021 Shropshire Council will need to support potential across all segments of the working age population to maximise the full economic output. A skills strategy has been produced which aligns with the Marches LEP skills strategy and Shropshire Council's own action plan.

Ambition	Action / Delivery	Lead	Timescale	Progress
Higher skilled jobs to not only attract a workforce but also to retain young people	To work closely with local schools and colleges to facilitate relationships and foster entrepreneurship so that young people in Whitchurch are aware of future opportunities within Shropshire. A skills strategy has been produced which aligns with the Marches LEP skills strategy and our own action plan.	Shropshire Council Enterprise Coordinator	Short/Medium	
Retention of young people within the town and support with skills	Whitchurch Secondary School has been matched with an Enterprise Adviser volunteer at a senior level in business who advises the school on their career's guidance strategy and plans, and who assists with business engagement in careers activities in schools. Careers activities have been expanded in school.	Shropshire Council – Enterprise Coordinator	Short/Medium	
Training facility linked to adult education – apprenticeships/local youth opportunities	To meet the aspiration of increasing jobs, retaining young people and attracting high skill labour there is the aspiration for a specific adult training facility.	Town Council and Shropshire Council to look at future opportunities	Short/Medium	

Promote Whitchurch to Investors

This strategy represents the opportunity for Whitchurch and its surrounding area to present a clear identity and outlines a prospectus for investors, identifying areas of constraints where intervention can help unlock growth and capitalise on opportunities.

Shropshire Council is preparing an investment proposition which will outline key investment sites, sector propositions and development potential. This will give potential investors and businesses the information they need to show why they should invest/locate/work in our county. This strategy will form an important part of this investment proposition.

Ambition	Action / Delivery	Partners	Timescale	Progress
Promote Whitchurch, both as destination and an investment	Production of a locally produced Invest in Whitchurch proposition/destination management plan. Invest in Shropshire	Shropshire Council	Immediate	
	Produce a new Cultural Strategy for Shropshire – September 2020	Shropshire Council	Short/Medium	
	Support the production of the Marches Visitor Economy Strategy 2020 The Marches LEP Visitor Economy Strategy	Marches LEP Shropshire Council	Immediate	

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Supporting information

For more information on Shropshire Council's Economic Growth Strategy, please go to:

<http://www.investinshropshire.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Economic-Growth-Strategy-for-Shropshire-2017-2021.pdf>

For more information on Shropshire Council Growth Hub please go to:

<https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/about-us/shropshire/>

For more information on Shropshire Council Investment Propositions, please go to:

<http://www.investinshropshire.co.uk/>

For information on Marches LEP, please go to:

<https://www.marcheslep.org.uk/what-we-do/economic-plan/>

For more information on Shropshire Council's planning policies, please go to:

<https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/planning-policy/>

For more information on Place Plans, please go to:

<http://www.shropshire.gov.uk/place-plans>

or contact your Place Plan Officer via PlacePlans@shropshire.gov.uk