Bridgnorth Plan Steering Group

Bridgnorth Plan: 1st Edition

Issued 24th November 2020

1 Introduction

The Bridgnorth Plan Steering Group was formed in June 2019 with the support of local organisations and parish councils. It was asked to consider issues facing the town and to develop a plan for the settlement, building on the previous Bridgnorth Town Plan, published in 2012.

The Steering Group published a **Consultation Document** [1] in November 2019. Three public meetings to consider its recommendations were held in early 2020 and a survey was carried out. 155 people responded to the survey. Based on the consultation, the Steering Group published its **Phase 1 Report** [2].

In June 2020, Shropshire Council published a "Regulation 18 Pre-submission Draft of the Shropshire Local Plan: 2016 to 2038" (the 'draft Local Plan') [3]. The working groups which had produced our earlier reports were asked to comment on its implications and a response was made by the Steering Group to the Regulation 18 consultation [4].

In parallel to this, work on other topics has progressed during 2020.

This document is the first edition of the Bridgnorth Plan. It summarises our work and recommendations to date. See the above reports for more details and evidence leading to our recommendations. Further editions of the Bridgnorth Plan will be released as more work is completed and Shropshire Council's new Local Plan is finalised.

2 Bridgnorth

Bridgnorth is a historic market town to the west of the Midlands conurbation. It has interesting topography, quirky travel systems, narrow streets, and numerous listed buildings, all of which help to attract tourists. Its High Street has remained fairly vibrant, partly due to tourism, but has been impacted by COVID-19.

The town has had little or no unemployment, with skills shortages in some sectors. However, over half of the working population commutes to work outside the town, the two most popular workplaces being Telford and Wolverhampton.

Public services have been gradually withdrawn from the town over the last thirty years, since Bridgnorth District Council was disbanded. Much responsibility for local governance, and the associated employment, has been moved to Shrewsbury. The old council offices, at Westgate, have been closed and permission has been granted for the site to be used for housing. The Further Education college closed and has been replaced by a supermarket. Young people increasingly need to travel to neighbouring towns for ongoing education, with many choosing to do so for their sixth form.

Industrial sites that were within the town have steadily become disused, with companies in the electronics and carpet manufacturing industries closing many years ago. The sites have all been replaced by housing. There are few remaining brownfield sites available for development, with most new development being on small vacant pieces of land or in back gardens. The majority of new development is planned to be and will have to be on greenfield sites.

The road network around Bridgnorth, leading to adjacent settlements, consists of A-roads that are already close to their capacities, especially at peak times. There have been no improvements to the road network since the bypass was built in the early 1980s. Both Shropshire Council's Economic Growth Strategy [5] and the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership's Strategic Transport Strategy [6], plan for Strategic Transport Corridors elsewhere in the county and make no allowance for any improvement to the road network around Bridgnorth.

According to the 2011 census, there were about 12,300 people living in the Bridgnorth settlement with about 5,900 of them being economically active. 11.6% of the population in Bridgnorth were self-employed and 4.2% worked from home. We estimate that there were about 13,000 people living in the settlement in 2019 [1].

The approximate distribution of employment between sectors in 2017 is shown in Table 1.

Sector	**Bridg-north**	**Shrop-shire**
Retail, wholesale, accommodation and entertainment	34%	28%
Manufacturing, construction, motor trades and transport	26%	24%
Finance, business admin, IT, property, professional & technical	18%	16%
Health, education and public administration	19%	29%
Agriculture, fishing, quarrying and utilities	2%	2%

Table 1: Estimated distribution of employment between sectors in 2017 [7]

Employment in retail, hospitality and tourism is about one third of the total, which is a higher proportion that in Shropshire as a whole. It contributes a lot to the economy of Bridgnorth, but is not the only sector that requires support and that can contribute to prosperity.

Employment in manufacturing, construction, engineering and transport is about one quarter of the total. Professional and technical services account for a further 1/5 of the total. Both proportions are about the same as for the whole of Shropshire.

Employment in health, education and public administration has moved from Bridgnorth (presumably to Shrewsbury and Telford) since Bridgnorth District Council was disbanded and the Further Education college was closed. Employment in these sectors is now far lower than in the rest of Shropshire.

The remaining 2% of employment is in agriculture, extractive industries and utilities. However, some of the professional and technical services in the town serve this sector.

3 Environmental Sustainability

The UK Government, Shropshire Council and Bridgnorth Town Council have all recognised that a Climate Emergency exists. 76% of respondents to our survey agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that "Reduction in carbon dioxide emissions and other pollution is important and should be prioritised".

An Environmental Sustainability working group has being established, jointly with Sustainable Bridgnorth, to address this topic further. It has recommended short-term projects relating to mobility and transport (see section 8.2) and housing insulation (see section 4), which we are seeking to address alongside other groups and linking to government initiatives and funding.

4 Growth in housing and its location

We start by recommending that all new development must be, or be capable of becoming by 2030 at the very latest, net carbon neutral. In the short term, we support "DP12. Minimising Carbon Emissions" in the draft Local Plan.

We recommended in our Phase 1 Report was that up to 1,000 additional new dwellings be constructed around Bridgnorth between 2019 and 2036. Over 90% of the 155 respondents to our survey expressed a desire for housing growth to be below the higher of these figures. The draft Local Plan extends the period to be considered to 2038 and we now recommend [4] that up to 1,100 additional new dwellings be constructed between 2019 and 2038 as shown in Table 2. This is an additional 50 dwellings per year for each of the extra two years.

SAMDev dwellings 2006-2026	Dwellings built 2006-2019	Dwellings to build 2019-2038	Total new dwellings 2006-2038	Dwellings above SAMDev	Dwellings per annum 2019-2038
1400	757 [63 / year]	1,102	1,859	459	58

Table 2: Recommended construction of new dwellings around Bridgnorth

It is a growth of 18% over the number of dwellings in Bridgnorth in 2016, which is similar to the level of growth proposed for Ludlow and Oswestry in the draft Local Plan. It is significantly below the growth proposed for Bridgnorth in the draft Local Plan because [4]:

- We consider the growth proposed for Shropshire as a whole to be high.
- The level of growth proposed for Bridgnorth assumes that the town lies on one of the Strategic Transport Corridors being pursued by Shropshire Council. However, it does not and no plans for road improvements around Bridgnorth have been presented.
- The growth in housing is predicated on a high level of employment growth, but there is little evidence that the predicted level of employment growth can be attained. We consider that the longer-term growth in housing (beyond 2030) should be linked to the level of growth in employment that is achieved, being reviewed with the Local Plan.

Our survey asked where development should be located. 25% of respondents said there should be none. 42% of those giving an opinion on the location preferred it to be distributed (that is, not all in one location). In addition, people voted for development in Stanmore, Tasley, Oldbury and Astley Abbots in the ratio 2:2:1:1 (they could vote for more than one specific location or for distributed development).

We are opposed to the development of a single, vast housing development, either at Stanmore or Tasley. Rather, we recommend:

- The rapid completion of the housing already approved under SAMDev.
- The allocation of one or more smaller sites for additional dwellings to meet the housing need through to about 2032, if necessary. Land that could support additional dwellings in the period to 2038 should be identified next to one or more of these.
- The completion of a housing needs assessment and a new site assessment review over the next 5 years.
- That additional housing development be linked, in some way, to the provision of new jobs. Job creation and housing growth should be reviewed every 5 years and additional housing may be allowed for (in subsequent reviews of the Local Plan) if the creation of new jobs justifies it.

5 Business growth and employment

Bridgnorth has a few large employers, many smaller employers, a relatively vibrant town centre with a range of retail and service businesses, and a good day-time tourist and hospitality sector. It provides services to a large rural hinterland.

Our consultation indicated that there is local support for moderate growth in local employment and that sufficient employment land is available for growth through to 2036 [2].

Our aspiration is for sufficient new employment for the town to continue to thrive and for it not to become more of a commuter town. Unfortunately, this will require development on greenfield sites around the town. This should be limited as far as possible and, following government policy, brownfield land available in neighbouring towns should be fully developed, to minimise the number of greenfield sites required.

We remain concerned that the aspirational target proposed in the draft Local Plan of providing 1,500 new jobs by 2038 will be difficult to achieve because:

- The draft Local Plan states that Bridgnorth lies on a 'strategic transport corridor' when it does not. No plans have been published for road improvements around Bridgnorth and the draft Local Plan states that a strategic assessment of the highway network has not yet been undertaken. Funding has not been identified to support any improvements.
- The electricity distribution network to industrial sites is already at its limits, although plans are in place to address this for individual existing companies.
- The highest internet bandwidths, in total and for individual connections, are not available.
- Bridgnorth has no mainline railway station and has a poor public transport service.

We recommend that a more credible target to provide 900 to 1,100 new jobs by 2038 be adopted, with an aspirational goal of providing 1,500 new jobs if possible.

We consider that the employment land already available and allocated under SAMDev is sufficient to meet the objective for employment growth envisaged in the previous consultation under the Local Plan Review up to 2036 [2]. Given the extension to 2038 in the draft Local Plan, the amount of employment land it provides for, including additional employment land at Tasley and Stanmore Industrial Estate, will be far more than needed to meet the (ambitious) employment targets in the draft Local Plan through to 2038.

We recommend that the employment land already allocated under SAMDev be developed fairly quickly, but with due care.

The Local Economic Growth Strategy [8] needs further work and a number of issues need to be addressed if even 1,100 new jobs are to be provided. In addition to the above, we recommend:

1. A Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats analysis is carried out on the competitiveness of Bridgnorth as a location for firms operating in a range of sectors.
2. An analysis and costing of the necessary road improvements. Subsequent to our earlier recommendation, the draft Local Plan now provides for a future Highways Assessment for the Bridgnorth area.
3. A review of potential office-based industries, including defining ways in which Bridgnorth can be made attractive to them.
4. Relocating some government administration to Bridgnorth.
5. Provision for starter units for local people who wish to go into business and for small, light-industrial units.

Office-based businesses are least reliant on good transport links. We tentatively recommend that emphasis be given to providing modern office premises, with excellent telecommunications links and good parking, aimed at the digital economy, and related technology and service businesses. As the density of jobs (per hectare) is higher for office-based jobs than for other types of employment, the amount of greenfield land required to support a given level of employment would be reduced. In addition, we might expect knowledge-based companies to create employment opportunities for higher-skilled, higher-paid, and often younger individuals.

6 Infrastructure to support future development

Existing local infrastructure, transport links, public facilities and services are not capable of supporting much growth in population and business activity without significant investment. We agree with submissions made by other bodies and individuals, including Bridgnorth Town Council, that such investment should be identified, and ideally committed to, before further development occurs around the town.

In our Phase 1 Report we recommended that "*any growth in employment and housing should only proceed once commitment and funding for the necessary improvements to the local infrastructure, road network, transport links, public facilities and services has been confirmed.*"

Our previous consultation has indicated that residents main concern about future development is that the necessary infrastructure to support it will never be provided. With good planning, it should be provided when needed, rather than being left to be completed at a later date.

A complete assessment of the required infrastructure for any level of development should be completed, along with identifying available funding, and should cover at least:

- Appropriate (potentially major) improvements to the road network (see below).
- Investment in footpaths and cycleways.
- Public transport.
- Provision of high-speed broadband and mobile phone (data) services.
- Medical and healthcare facilities.
- Sports and leisure facilities.
- Education and training.

7 Retail, hospitality and tourism

As noted above, retail, hospitality and tourism account for about one third of local jobs and are responsible for much of the town centre's vibrancy, avoiding the depressing effect of a boarded-up town centre. All reasonable efforts should be made to encourage tourism into the town and investment be made in the required supporting infrastructure and amenities, whilst maintaining consideration for local residents.

High street retailing is under pressure from internet sales everywhere. The trend is for shopping to become an **experience** and this should be a strategic driver for retail in the town. This would be helped by ensuring that a range of shops are present and by making the town even more attractive to visitors.

A working group on the topic recommended [2]: a "unified marketing strategy"; promoting historic aspects of the town; aiming for "safe, clean and tidy"; attracting and supporting retailers; encouraging landlords to upgrade premises; working closely with Shropshire Council; providing adequate parking on Saturdays; reviewing the operation of the market

and events; considering whether to introduce a Business Improvement District (BID); and liaising with the police (see Crime and Safety below). The COVID-19 pandemic will have affected priorities and raised additional issues.

Bridgnorth High Street and surrounding streets are due for a major refurbishment to ensure the town centre remains attractive to residents and visitors, and to cope with increasing local population. Indeed, recommendations were made in an Urban Design Guide published by Bridgnorth District Council in 2005 [9]. Our initial findings and suggestions are that consideration be given to:

- A programme of works, including addressing the width and standard of pavements, paving under the Town Hall, adding a lift to the Town Hall and refurbishing the New Market Hall, possibly adding a 'colonnade'.
- Retaining traffic access to the High Street, but narrowing the traffic lane, widening the pavements and moving to a 'shared space' model. Traffic access might be limited to residents and the collection of goods for periods on market days.
- Improving parking, especially for Saturdays. Possible ways of providing additional parking space are presented in section 8.3.
- We do not consider that a park and ride scheme is a good way to provide additional parking for Bridgnorth, although it could serve as a back-up option for the busiest periods and possibly provide full day parking for people employed in the centre.
- Whether congestion in the High Street can be reduced by diverting some through traffic. In the short term, this may be achieved by changes to the one-way system. In the long term, this might be addressed by providing new routes for through traffic.
- Restricting allowed delivery hours, as occurs in many other towns. A central delivery point could be considered, with onward deliveries to the centre by electric vehicles.

We recommend that all these issues, along with others in this plan, are progressed by a "Future Bridgnorth" action group, as discussed below.

8 Mobility and Transport

Good communications are vital for any community to prosper. They support the ability of businesses to operate and allow people to travel to work, education and other services. They also bring visitors and tourists to the area. The road, cycling and pedestrian networks around Bridgnorth have not been improved significantly for more than 20 years and public transport is in decline. Many public services, including further education, have been moved to adjacent towns, yet transport to access them has not been kept pace.

Shropshire Council's Economic Growth Strategy [5] and the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership's Strategic Transport Strategy [6] envisage enhancing the transport corridor along the M54/A5 and the route along the A49 from Shrewsbury to Hereford. There appear to be no plans to make any strategic investments in the road network around Bridgnorth. It is the only market town in Shropshire for which strategic road improvements are not planned.

Huge changes will occur in transport over the next 2-3 decades, including the likely elimination of fossil fuel powered vehicles by the end of that period. This will help address issues, such as pollution, which may best be addressed by bringing forward the introduction of zero emission vehicles.

8.1 Long term strategy development

In our previous reports we analysed traffic flows along the major roads in and around Bridgnorth. We concluded that many were close to or at capacity. Hospital Street in Low Town (which carries both A442 and A454 traffic) and Hollybush Road (which carries all traffic that cannot use the bypass) were under most stress. Pinch points through villages on the A454 to Wolverhampton, A442 to Telford, A458 to Shrewsbury and A442 to Kidderminster will all need to be addressed if Bridgnorth is to grow.

The draft Local Plan acknowledges that a strategic highways assessment is required for the Bridgnorth area. We welcome this proposal and look forward to it being carried out.

Our previous reports included suggestions for:

- A junction from the existing bypass to the B4555 / B4363 to reduce traffic over the old bridge and remove heavy goods traffic which currently has to pass through the town.
- A link road between the A454 Green Lane and the A442 close to the bridge over the River Worfe. This link would reduce traffic along Hospital Street in Low Town and bypass the section of the A442 that floods.
- A link road between the A442 and the A458, to the south of Bridgnorth. One alternative would be to widen the minor road from outside Dudmaston Hall to the A458.
- These two link roads, taken together would provide a North-South bypass for the A442, reducing the load on the A442 through Hospital Street, which is already close to capacity.

8.2 Short term projects

A joint working group with Sustainable Bridgnorth has proposed the following projects:

8.2.1 Footpaths, cycle routes and personal mobility

Bridgnorth has a significant network of Public Rights of Way, step ways (The Donkey Steps) and cycleways. It is not a large town (even with future growth), and we should enable residents and visitors to move around the town on foot, by cycle and using other forms of personal mobility without resort to their cars.

In the short term, we propose a series of projects to:

- Map and document the state of the network. Widen, improve and resurface routes. Kerbs to be dropped and steps replaced by ramps where practicable, to allow more mixed use. Initial routes to improve / create for mixed-use might include:
    - Through Ropewalk Dingle, from Friar's Street to Love Lane and Bramble Ridge, to connect Low Town to High Town and reconnect NCR 45.
    - From Cricket Meadow to Richmond Gardens and across to Old Smithfield.
    - Alongside the bypass, from Oldbury Wells to Conduit Lane.
- Improve the section of Cartway from the junction with Riverside to Underhill Street and implement improvements, including enhanced traffic control. This is often busy with pedestrians and is just wide enough for two cars to pass.
- Identify routes to be upgraded to support cycling to and from Bridgnorth, such as: upgrading 0113/57/1 and 0113/UN1/1 to cycleways; providing a cycleway alongside the A442 from Low Town to the bridge over the River Worfe; and providing a short length of cycleway alongside the A454 from Roughton to the minor road to Burcote.

8.2.2 Pollution reduction and traffic flow improvement

The B4373 between the A442 in Low Town and the roundabout at the junction of Salop Street and Pound Street is heavily used and the flow of traffic often comes to a complete halt. Pollution along this route is frequently close to or exceeds statutory limits and action is needed to reduce it. Traffic to and from the B4555 to Highley and B4563 to Oldbury and Glazeley joins the B4373 at the junction with Hollybush Road and Underhill Street, thereby increasing the traffic on the route and across the old bridge.

Improvements can be made at relatively low cost, including: signage to divert traffic to alternative routes; optimisation of traffic lights and pedestrian crossings; change of priorities at the exit of St. John's Street onto Mill Lane; giving priority to traffic climbing Holybush Road and Pound Street; and reviewing delivery arrangement for businesses.

8.3 Parking

There is inadequate parking in the centre of Bridgnorth on Saturdays. Parking is currently just about adequate for the rest of the week although many employees park outside the town centre and walk in. The situation will get worse if new retail premises are built on the Smithfield car park and as population growth takes place. Possible options for increased parking include:

- Retaining the car parking adjacent to Sainsburys. One option may be for parking to be built under or over any new development so that the available parking is not reduced.
- Purchasing land adjacent to the Severn Valley Railway and converting it to a mix of public space and parking. An electric bus service could be provided to High Town, or a second link, such as a cable car or funicular, to Castle Walk.
- A multi-story car park on Innage Lane.

8.4 Electric and autonomous vehicles

We may wish to promote Bridgnorth as a Zero Emissions town. Central government provides grants towards the purchase of new EVs and the installation of residential charge points for dwellings with off-street parking, which we can promote.

Shropshire Council have recently obtained funding for on-street charge points and relevant groups intend to work with them and the Town Council to help identify the best locations.

9 Crime and Safety

The 2013 Bridgnorth Town Plan raised the following issues: a high level of anti-social behaviour; lack of 'visible' policing; difficulty in contacting the police at times; and a need for stronger enforcement of speed limits. These have been discussed periodically since the Town Plan was published.

Discussions are ongoing between the police and Town Council. The Bridgnorth Plan Steering Group has recommended the following:

- A regular liaison meeting between representatives of the Bridgnorth Safer Neighbourhood Policing Team, the Town Council, local parish councils, and local residents' groups. The meeting to be chaired by either a police inspector or the Mayor of Bridgnorth Town Council. This should provide a forum for feedback from the police and for discussion of relevant issues arising at any time.
- A regular police update on local crime statistics to parish councils and the liaison meeting. Some information is already available at https://www.police.uk/pu/your-area/west-mercia-police/bridgnorth.
- Occasional meetings between the Police and Crime Commissioner and local councils.

- That contact details for the Bridgnorth Safer Neighbourhood Policing Team are publicly available.
- That contact details for the Environment Health team at Shropshire Council are publicly available to allow noise pollution and other environmental issues to be reported and that a visible reporting and feedback mechanism is established.
- That contact details for the parking enforcement team are available to parish councillors and that a parking enforcement representative attends the police liaison meetings.
- That the Town Council and parish councils continue to monitor support from the Fire and Rescue services, and consider proposals arising.

10 Social Sustainability

Bridgnorth benefits from an extensive network of volunteer groups that help to support the young, old and vulnerable. We have facilitated a series of meetings of representatives of these groups. Attendees have agreed to continue to meet periodically, to focus on collaboration and publicity, and to maintain a list of relevant volunteer groups on the Bridgnorth Plan website.

Current concerns include:

- The impact of COVID-19 and the restrictions that have had to be imposed. Many support activities are not possible and some volunteers have had to withdraw. Providing early testing to vulnerable people and volunteers supporting them may help address this.
- Medical services – possibly a separate, but related, topic (see below).
- Activities for the young (also during lockdown/holidays). Shropshire Council is withdrawing its support for the Innage Lane Youth Club. Discussions are underway as to whether to reconstitute the Bridgnorth Youth Partnership, as a means of coordinating support for young people.
- Befriending services for the old / isolated.
- Public transport and local transport initiatives.
- Social housing – which may be considered alongside affordable housing (see below).

11 Sports and Leisure

There is a wide range of sports clubs in Bridgnorth. Many of them are members of Sporting Bridgnorth (sportingbridgnorth.co.uk), which facilitates collaboration between the clubs, in areas such as administration and finance, sourcing funding, coach training, health and safety requirements, and the sharing of facilities.

Bridgnorth Leisure Centre is well used by residents and many sports clubs. It has a short-based, artificial grass playing surface for hockey but this in not adequate for football or rugby, which require 3G artificial grass. Sporting Bridgnorth is liaising with promoters of potential developments around the town to identify a site for a 3G facility.

The overall requirement for leisure facilities needs to be assessed, in light of the proposed increase in population. Bridgnorth Rugby Club have applied for planning permission for a sports hall on Bandon Lane, which can be allowed for in the assessment.

12 “Future Bridgnorth”

Recommendations have been made in our previous reports, in the Local Economic Growth Strategy and in Bridgnorth Town Council submissions on the Local Plan that an action group be established to drive improvements for the town. Shropshire Council and Bridgnorth Town Council have provisionally agreed that such a group should be formed, with the working title “Future Bridgnorth”. We recommend that the action group should involve the Bridgnorth Plan Steering Group, Bridgnorth Chamber of Commerce, local retailer groups, the Marches LEP, Town and Shropshire Councillors and Shropshire Council officers.

13 Other topics

Other topics that may be addressed as part of our ongoing work include:

- Medical and Health.
- Education and Skills.
- Affordable and social housing.

14 A tentative vision for the Bridgnorth settlement

Bridgnorth aims to be a great place to live and work, as well as a destination for visitors seeking an ‘experience’.

Provision will be made for an additional 1,100 dwelling to be built in two or three areas around the town, which will be carefully ‘master planned’ in advance. This will include planning for the provision of the necessary infrastructure and facilities required (including schools, medical services, broadband, roads, footpaths and cycleways, and sports and leisure facilities).

The town centre will be enhanced, aiming to improve the ambiance for residents and visitors and further enhance its attractiveness to tourists. All the central area will, by 2030, be a pollution free, zero emission zone. Its shop frontages will be improved and the High Street will have been made more pedestrian friendly, whilst still allowing traffic access. Sufficient parking will be available in and close to the central area. Road improvements will be made to reduce pollution and limit congestion within the town. Pedestrian, mobility scooter, bike and e-bike routes will be improved.

Transport to neighbouring towns and villages will be enhanced by appropriate road improvements, public transport improvements and, in the longer term, through the use of autonomous vehicles.

Whilst not on major transport corridors and with main roads at or close to capacity, Bridgnorth will offer additional business opportunities for local people, with a focus on modern office space, with good communications, for skills-based businesses. Provision will be made to allow people to work from Bridgnorth, rather than having to commute every day to more expensive offices in other town and city centres.

Additional housing and employment land will be developed sustainably, as justified, provided that the necessary infrastructure is funded in advance. All development will be implemented to be carbon neutral, or capable of being so by 2030 at the latest.

15 Summary and conclusions

This is the First Edition of the Bridgnorth Plan. It captures a snapshot of progress, including proposals for future growth of the town. Our intent is that it should continue to evolve, in light of further work and evidence.

Our main recommendations are that:

- An action group ("Future Bridgnorth") be formed as rapidly as possible to coordinate support for Bridgnorth, attract funding and regional and government support, and progress many of the issues in this First Edition of the Bridgnorth Plan.
- COVID-19 will have implications for the future of the town which need to be considered in the short term and may impact on some of the work in this report. One pressing concern is that volunteers and others are being prevented from carrying out their work due to the ongoing restrictions. Priority testing for this group should be offered.
- Housing growth around Bridgnorth is limited to 1,100 new dwellings from 2019 to 2038, including those approved under SAMDev. There is significant support for this level of housing growth, although there is also opposition to any growth at all. We recommend that this limit should only be reviewed (at a subsequent review of the Local Plan) if the local employment growth target is achieved.
- Any growth in employment and housing should only proceed once commitment to and funding for the necessary improvements to the local infrastructure has been confirmed.
- We support the proposed provision of employment land in the draft Local Plan, although we have concerns that it may provide difficult to achieve the target for the number of jobs to be created. A pro-active approach and funding will be required to achieve the objective.
- The employment land already allocated under SAMDev should be sufficient to meet need through to about 2036. We tentatively support the allocation of additional employment land, probably around Stanmore and Tasley, for use if needed beyond that date.
- Additional housing development should be linked, in some way, to the provision of new jobs. We recommended that job creation and housing growth should be reviewed every 5 years and that additional housing only be allowed for (in subsequent reviews of the Local Plan) if the creation of new jobs justifies it.
- Employment growth should also be sought in a range of business sectors, but especially in those that require modern office facilities, which are less reliant on good road connections and can employ skilled local people.
- The hospitality, retail and tourism sector, which provides about a third of local jobs, should continue to be invested in and supported. Our focus should be to ensure that visiting and shopping in the town is a **destination experience**.
- Restoring some government services to Bridgnorth would be most helpful. We have not yet addressed Education and Training, but it is evident that the lack of Further Education and adult education in the town is an issue that needs to be addressed.

References

[1] “Consultation Document,” Bridgnorth Plan Steering Group, 2019.

[2] “Phase 1 Report,” Bridgnorth Plan Steering Group, 2020.

[3] “Regulation 1818: Pre-Submission Draft of the Shropshire Local Plan,” Shropshire Council, 2020.

[4] “Submission on Shropshire Council’s consultation on its Pre-submission draft of the Local Plan,” Bridgnorth Plan Steering Group, 2020.

[5] “Economic Growth Strategy for Shropshire 2017-2021,” Shropshire Council, 2017.

[6] “Investing in Strategic Transport Corridors in the Marches,” Marches Local Enterprise Partnership, 2016.

[7] “Business Register and Employment Survey,” Office of National Statistics, 2017.

[8] “Draft Bridgnorth Local Economic Growth Strategy 2020-2025,” Shropshire Council, 2020.

[9] Bridgnorth District Council, “Bridgnorth High Town Urban Design Guide, Supplementary Planning Guidance,” Bridgnorth District Council, 2005.

Versions

1.0 First draft for comment, October 2020.
1.1 Second draft for comment, 24th October 2020.
1.2 Third draft for approval, 10th November 2020.
1.3 Approved for release at BPSG meeting on 24th November 2020.