Securing the Future we want to see

*The Shropshire Local Plan produced by Shropshire Council is the plan that will determine the character of Bishop’s Castle in the coming years*. To address the needs and aspirations of the community that were so clearly expressed in the existing Bishop’s Castle Town Plan[[1]](#footnote-1) we need to harness the Town Plan’s potential to influence the economic, social, environmental and housing strategies that are contained in Shropshire Council’s Local Plan and its associated Bishop’s Castle Place Plan and SAMDev Plan.

The Bishop’s Castle Town Plan was adopted by the Town Council in October 2016 and its Development Policy 1 in October 2018. These were two vital steps in influencing all three parts of Shropshire Council’s Local Plan as it is through the Town Council that representation is made to Shropshire Council. Should the Town Plan and any of its policies be referenced in the Shropshire Local Plan they could influence the implementation and prioritisation of several of the strategies, actions and policies contained within the Shropshire Local Plan and its associated Plans.

**Understanding Shropshire’s Local Plans**

**Shropshire Local Plan**

The Core Strategy & Policies for Economic and Housing development

**Shropshire B.C. Place Plan**

Infrastructure requirements and Priorities across the broad hinterland of B.C.

**Shropshire SAMDev Plan**

Site specific development and its management

**B.C. Town Plan**

**B.C. Neighbourhood Plan**

**The Shropshire Local Plan** is the document that governs growth and development throughout the county. It sets out the county-wide Core Strategy and Policies for economic, housing and infrastructure development.

* It defines the total demand for housing growth and employment land over a 20-year period and its distribution over settlements in the county.
* It includes various policies such as the affordable housing policy and policy PS5 which relates to Shropshire Council’s Bishop’s Castle Conservation Area Statement (last updated in 2012).
* It references planning policies that can be considered material planning matters when developments are being considered, such as policy S1 which defines the limit to development of a town.
* It also references various village and town plans such as the Worthen with Shelve Parish Council Local Implementation Plan which in 2015 was acknowledged by the Planning Inspector in his decision to refuse a planning appeal for a housing development[[2]](#footnote-2).

Within the Shropshire Local Plan are 18 Place Plans one for each of the key settlements that will take future growth. These define the detailed application of the core strategy within the settlement. **Bishop’s Castle Place Plan** is one of them.

**Bishop’s Castle Place Plan** covers an area stretching from Little Worthen and Aston Rogers in the north; Ratlinghope and Clungunford in the east; Bucknell in the south and Anchor and Chirbury in the West. Bishop’s Castle is the main centre for future growth. In addition, 4 villages are each defined as Community Hubs and a further 6 Community Clusters are identified, each comprising a group of dispersed villages.

* The Place Plan identifies and prioritises the infrastructure requirements that will be generated by the growth predicted in the Local Plan.
* It covers, amongst other things: education; transport; sports and leisure facilities; highway improvements; and traffic management and safety requirements.
* It also identifies the specific sites that have been selected to accommodate the share of the County’s proposed 20-year housing growth.
* In Bishop’s Castle the Review[[3]](#footnote-3) proposes 150 new dwellings in the period 2016 to 2036. This includes some dwellings which have already been completed or are in the process of completion; an existing site allocation on School House Lane and, straddling Welsh Street, a proposed new Preferred Site of 70 houses, 40 of which are envisaged as affordable.

The proposed housing growth is managed by the third Shropshire Council plan, the Site Allocation and Management of Development Plan commonly referred to as the **SAMDev Plan.** This explores the location and ramifications of both housing and employment growth that is predicted in the Local Plan and the Place Plans.

**The SAMdev** Plan is the tool to deliver and manage future growth. Whilst it covers a 20-year period, the statutory requirement to continuously maintain a 5-year supply of deliverable housing land means that it particularly concentrates on the first five years’ predictions within the current Local Plan. It is also reviewed periodically to ensure the integrity of the 5-year supply.

The SAMDev Plan is currently being reviewed and updated with public consultations being undertaken in Bishop’s Castle on proposed ‘Preferred Sites’ for housing in January 2019.

**The Bishop’s Castle Town Plan – Securing the future we want to see**

All three of the above Shropshire Council Plans can take account of local community needs and aspirations, not only in relation to planning matters but also to identify priorities for action on other issues. Priorities for action in Bishop’s Castle Town Plan include affordable housing, employment and traffic management, all of which are incorporated in the Place Plan. The Place Plan is reviewed annually in consultation with the Town Council, providing the opportunity to incorporate relevant priorities for action that are identified in the Town Plan.

The new Preferred Site currently being proposed in the SAMDev Plan review procedure lies in an area that is the subject of the **Town Plan’s Development Policy 1.** ***This area is defined as an area unsuitable for development unless vehicular access via the town centre is prevented****.*  If Development Policy 1 is to be effective, there are two opportunities to influence Shropshire Council’s decision: through the public consultation Review procedure during January 2019 and through the Town Council’s formal consultation response to Shropshire Council.

**Bishop’s Castle Neighbourhood Plan**

Whilst the Bishop’s Castle Town Plan covers a wide range of issues, the Town Council is currently undertaking a Neighbourhood Plan for the town. This is a statutory, planning policy document which only deals with land use and development matters and which must be approved by the Planning Inspectorate. Consequently, it will take a minimum of 2 years to complete. Once approved, it will be required to be included within the Shropshire Local Plan.

In the interim, relevant elements of the Town Plan, particularly Development Policy 1, can inform the content of the Neighbourhood Plan and until such time as a Neighbourhood Plan is approved by the Planning Inspector, can provide a basis for responses to planning applications and the periodic reviews of Preferred Sites for housing contained in the SAMDev Plan and Bishop’s Castle Place Plan.

The most frequently quoted responses by those answering the question ‘What do you value most about Bishop’s Castle’ in the survey undertaken in 2014 for the Bishop’s Castle Town Plan :

**WHAT WE VALUE**

**IN BISHOP’S CASTLE**

**“A special place”........”one of the great secrets of this country”**

This feeling was amplified by the following groups of comments:

**The Community Spirit** (referred to 38 times)

The most frequently stated qualities were: friendly (19); caring (10); Others included: welcoming; tolerant; courteous and trusting

**A great range of facilities for a town this size** (referred to 28 times)

The most frequently referenced facilities were: SpArC (19); pubs (15); shops and services (14); library (11); hospital (10); other medical services (9); ESWS (8); and good schools (7)

**A special town** (referred to 27 times)

The most frequently referenced reasons were: architecture (10); size (7); pace and quality of life (7); Others were quirkiness; a working town; and vibrant

**The beauty of the surrounding countryside** (referred to 23 times)

**A vibrant culture** (referred to 20 times)

The most frequent comments were: festivals and events (15); Others included: sports and arts opportunities, provided by SpArC and local groups; live music sessions; a range of activities for all ages; and the diversity and colour of available culture.

**A dynamic population** (referred to 9 times)

The most frequently stated qualities were: diverse age range; pragmatism; positivity; imaginative and creative; and happy people.

The most frequently quoted requirements in the responses to the survey undertaken in 2014 for the Bishop’s Castle Town Plan :

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **MOST FREQUENTLY QUOTED ISSUES** | **No. of Responses** | **% of all Responses** |
| The need for/lack of job opportunities other than low wage and the difficulties in attracting businesses/employers to the town. | 45 | 41% |
| The need for/lack of an affordable, low cost housing stock to ensure the retention of local, young adults and families. | 44 | 40% |
| The need for improvement to buildings, infrastructure and/or the streetscape and the opportunities for regeneration, including in the town centre and its immediate surroundings and also the impact of this on the economy and vitality of the town. | 37 | 33.6% |
| Historic changes in the retail provision and consumer behaviour and the need to address the impact this has had and potential threats to the viability of the town centre. | 33 | 30% |
| Need to address the threats to the continuing provision of statutory services and/or vital support facilities in order to sustain the rural economy and our quality of life. | 32 | 29.1% |
| The need to address the importance of the landscape both within the town and its environs and as the basis for the tourism economy. | 32 | 29.1% |
| The need to address the parking problems, including in the town centre. | 30 | 27.3% |
| The need to address the difficulties of access to the hinterland for work, leisure and services and the inadequacy of public or other voluntary transport schemes for those without a car. | 27 | 24.6% |
| The need to address town traffic and highways related problems, including in the town centre. | 25 | 22.7% |
| The need for new initiatives in response to climate change and technological developments to ensure a sustainable future, including energy efficiency, broadband facilities and food production. | 22 | 20% |
| To address an increasing demographic imbalance, resulting from the young leaving due to lack of suitable jobs and housing and an increasingly older, retired population that will make increasing demands on services that are currently being cut and lost. | 20 | 18.2% |
| The need to address the challenge of accommodating necessary changes and improvements without compromising the charm and vitality that is Bishop's Castle. | 16 | 14.6% |
| The provision of facilities to meet the needs of young people. | 14 | 12.7% |
| To address issues that recognise the importance of tourism to the economy of the town. | 11 | 10.% |
| Recognition of the vital place of volunteers in the fabric of the town and its activities. | 10 | 9.1% |

1. Reference the two pages at the end of this document “The Most frequently Quoted Requirements” and “What we value in Bishop’s Castle” [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Appeal Decision, February 2015. Ref: APP/L3245/A/14/2220992 Land at Worthen, Shropshire SY5 9HT [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Shropshire Local Plan Review: Consultation on Preferred Sites November 2018 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)