

## **Report for Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group**

### **Town Park, Public Open Space (POS) and Greenbelt**

#### **Background**

In 2008, Shifnal Town Plan began lobbying Shropshire Council and potential developers for a Town Park and meaningful public open space on proposed development areas. In 2014, this work was taken over by the Community Wellbeing Action Group of Shifnal Forward.

This has involved liaison with Shropshire Council's Principal and Senior Planning Policy Officers, Community Recreation Team, Community Green Space Officers and Shifnal Town Council. Numerous meetings have been held with Lioncourt, Taylor Wimpey, Gallaghers and Redrow in order to secure the current situation.

#### **Consultation and Statistics**

##### **1 Shifnal Town Plan**

In April 2008, 2888 questionnaires were issued covering every household in Shifnal. 1312 individual responses were received. Widespread consultation also took place in the primary and secondary schools.

Over 1000 adult respondents said that they would use a new park with a third of those expecting to use it once a week or more. Young people's forums were almost unanimous about the need for a new park. The provision of formal gardens, a toddlers' play area and a seniors' activity area were all strongly supported as were facilities such as a skateboard park and kick-about area for young people.

Nearly 900 people considered that more green spaces should be provided for wildlife. An overwhelming majority said that the existing Green belt around Shifnal should be kept. The focus groups of Idsall School students identified loss of wildlife habitat as one of the major environmental consequences of the extent and type of housing development in the town. (Full quantitative return can be seen on the Shifnal Town Plan website under documents.)

##### **2 Shifnal's Recreational Deficiency**

Early in the process, Shifnal was described by a Shropshire Council Senior Policy Officer involved in Local Development Framework Planning as one of the most recreationally deficient settlements in Shropshire, a situation Shropshire Council would be seeking to improve. This was based on figures gathered for the Council's Open Space Open Space Interim Planning Guidance. See Annex A and B.

##### **3 Contribution to SAMDev Process**

A paper submitted by Shifnal Town Plan Steering Group (November 2010) as part of the SAMDev process to make planning permission contingent on the provision of a Town Park and meaningful open space. The principle was accepted by Shropshire Council that a new park/meaningful open space would be created through the development process. The concept secured the support of Shifnal Town Council.

#### **Dual Site Discussions for a Town Park**

From 2011, discussions have taken place on a dual site approach across the north (Redrow development at Aston Street, Taylor Wimpey/Gallagher's site) and south of the railway (Taylor Wimpey site) involving multiples developers to achieve a Town Park with access to all, creating new

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cycle and pathways and a circular route through Shifnal. Planning applications submitted by Redrow, Taylor Wimpey and Gallagher included provision for this objective.

### **Current Situation with Town Park**

Efforts are continuing by Shropshire Council to obtain a right of way through the railway arch which would link the two areas of land allocated for a park. Discussions continue with Taylor Wimpey/Gallaghers as to the exact location of the park prior to submission of reserved matters. Wording of finalised S106 agreement also awaited.

### **POS and Planning Applications**

Efforts have been made with each new major planning application to secure meaningful public space.

Shropshire Council's Open Space Interim Planning Guidance adopted on 11 January 2012 states at paragraph 3.5 and 3.6:

"In accordance with Core Strategy Policy CS6, development will be expected to be designed with adequate open space on site to meet the local quantity standard shown in Table A below. Occupancy of a development will be assumed to be on the basis of one person per bedroom.

**Table A: Shropshire Open Space Quantity Standard**

<b>Typology</b>	<b>Quantity Standard</b>
Open Space	3.00ha per 1000 population (equivalent to 30 square metres per person)

**The quantity standard of 3 hectares per 1000 population is the starting point for negotiations between the Council and developers and is the minimum requirement for the provision of open space."**

In addition at paragraph 4.9 it states:

"It is considered unacceptable to see small pockets of recreational open space as part of new housing developments especially where the contribution they make as places for play and other recreational uses is limited. Recreational open space should therefore be provided as one usable site. By taking this approach the Council aims to improve the overall quality and usability of provision. On very large sites, it may be appropriate to split the open space into more than one area in order to ensure good accessibility to open spaces for the community; however it is important to ensure that the areas are large enough to be functional."

The guidance also requires developers to satisfy the council that appropriate arrangements for maintenance in perpetuity are in place (paragraph 5.1) and section 5 provides detailed guidance on maintenance.

Developers do seek to include as POS swales, pools and penny pockets of land etc which are not usable in any meaningful sense.

### **List of Important Local Green Spaces**

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The following list proposes some of the green spaces in Shifnal which are of particular importance to the local community’:

- All the current designated greenbelt area
- Golf Club/ Cricket Pitch/Bowling Green/Lawn Tennis Courts/Cemetery area
- Football Ground
- All School Playing Fields and Recreational Areas (Wheatfield Rec, Jubilee Park, Curriers Lane play area etc)
- Walks around Shifnal – see Shifnal Pathfinders Guide – particularly Footpath 0141/11/1 Park Lane to Lodge Hill; 0141/12/ 1+2 George’s Steps to Bridgnorth Road via Manor Barns
- Area west of Haughton Village between the Priorslee Road and M54

This list is by no means comprehensive and additional submissions should be sought from Community Groups such as Shifnal Pathfinders and Shifnal Society.

Attention should also be paid to protecting the iconic views of Shifnal and St Andrew’s church on approaches to the town.

### **Conclusion**

It is essential for the general health and wellbeing of the community of Shifnal that particular attention is paid in the Neighbourhood Plan to the provision and maintenance of new and existing greenspaces in all their forms throughout a town that is currently deficient in this vital amenity.

### ATTACHMENTS

- A Extract from Shropshire Council’s Open Space Interim Planning Guidance
- B Recreational Deficiency Figures
- C Provision of Recreational Space in Shifnal SAMDev Submission

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Annex A: Extract from Shropshire Council’s Open Space Interim Planning Guidance

**Appendix 2: Open Space, Sport and Recreation (PPG17) Study Standards**

<b>Typology</b>	<b>Quantity Standard</b>	<b>Accessibility Standard</b>
Local Parks	0.23 ha per 1000 population – above the existing level of provision	10 minute walk time in settlements large enough to require a park (determined by the application of the quantity standard). 20 minute drive time in all other settlements.
Country Parks	No standard set	20 minute drive time
Natural and Semi Natural Open Space	2.00 ha per 1000 population, to be applied to new provision only	Shrewsbury – 5 minutes walk time (240m) Market Towns and Smaller Settlements – 10 minutes walk time (480m)
Amenity Green Space	0.66 ha per 1000 population (Shrewsbury) 0.45 hectares per 1000 population (Market Towns) and 0.35hectares (Smaller Settlements– an increase on the existing level of provision in all areas	10 minute walk time
Provision for Children	0.035 ha per 1000 population (Shrewsbury) 0.105 hectares per 1000 population (Market Towns) and 0.105 hectares (Smaller Settlements– an increase on the existing level of provision in all areas	10 minute walk time
Provision for young people	0.055ha per 1000 population – this represents an increase on existing levels of provision	10 minute walk time
Outdoor Sports Facilities	Shrewsbury - Four strategically located multi-pitch sites, providing for competition and training, with good quality on-site changing and toilet provision, appropriate for, and accessible to, all user types. A minimum of 1 multi pitch site per Market Town providing for competition and training At least one playing pitch site per large village / village cluster	20 minute drive time to each facility type
Allotments	0.22 ha per 1000 population Above existing level of provision	10 minute drive time
Cemeteries and Churchyards	N/A. Indicative standard of 0.16 ha per annum required for burials.	No standard set

## Annex B Recreational Deficiency Figures for Shifnal – PPG 17 Information

Quote from Senior Policy Officer, LDF Regional, Planning, Shropshire Council in August 2010

“Shifnal is one of the most recreationally deficient settlements in Shropshire”.

Type	SC Standard	Total amount (ha)	Provision Per 1000	Comment
1 Parks and Gardens	0.23ha per 1000. 1.2ha per 5,648	0.41		under supply of 0.79ha
2 Natural and Semi Natural	2ha per 1000. 11.2ha per 5,648	0		under supply of 11.2ha
4 amenity green space	0.33ha per 1000. 1.8ha per 5,648	0.77		under supply of 1.03
5 childrens play areas	0.075ha per 1000. 0.42ha per 5,648	0.29		under supply of 0.13ha
6 young people	0.055ha per 1000. 0.31ha per 5,648	0		under supply of 0.31ha
7 outdoor sports	minimum of one multi pitch site	18.75		
8 Allotments	0.22ha per 1000. 1.24ha per 5,648	0.77		under supply of 0.47ha

These population figures are based on the 2001 census.

The 2011 figures, provided by Shropshire Council’s Intelligence and Research Team, show a population of 6776 making the undersupply even more severe.

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Annex C

## Shifnal Town Plan Recreational Spaces Initiative

8 February 2011

Ms K Jones  
Senior Policy Officer, LDF  
Shropshire Council  
Shirehall  
Abbey Foregate  
Shrewsbury SY2 6ND

Dear Ms Jones

### **Provision of Recreational Space in Shifnal: Submission to Shropshire Site Allocations and Management of Development Document (SAMDev) and Shifnal Place Plan Document**

Further to the meeting held on Thursday, 13 January 2011 in Shifnal Town Council Offices between officers of Shropshire Council and representatives of Shifnal Town Councillors and Shifnal Town Plan, please find this submission from the Town Plan Group for consideration for inclusion into the above mentioned documents. By copy of this letter, I would be grateful if this submission could also be considered by Shifnal Town Council's Place Plan group for inclusion or support in its submissions to the documents.

The Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study audit (PPG 17) revealed that Shifnal has one of the highest recreational deficiency levels of all of the settlements in Shropshire. It is deprived in terms of all types of outdoor space with the exception of outdoor sports. The Shifnal Town Plan document also identified a clear desire across all age groups for provision of a park and wildlife areas in Shifnal.

In spring 2008, the Shifnal community was consulted on this issue as part of the wider Town Plan consultation process. A comprehensive questionnaire was delivered to the 2888 households in the Shifnal parish boundary and 850 were returned representing the views of 1312 residents. Focus group consultation took place at Idsall School with students of various ages. The children of Shifnal's two primary schools were consulted using hand held voting pods during a one-day event and with a drawing competition for the youngest pupils.

The questionnaire asked respondents how often they would use a 'new, more centralised park in Shifnal'. Over 1000 adult respondents said that they would use a new park with a third of those expecting to use it once a week or more. The young people's forums were almost unanimous about the need for a new/improved park. The provision of formal gardens, a toddler play area and a seniors' activity area were all strongly supported as were facilities like a skateboard park and a kick-about area.

An overwhelming majority of respondents said that the existing greenbelt around Shifnal should be kept and 900 people considered that more green spaces should be provided for wildlife. The focus groups of Idsall School students identified loss of wildlife habitat as one of the major environmental consequences of the extent and type of housing development in the town.

There are two eminently suitable sites to redress the deficiency, central to Shifnal and in close proximity to existing residential development. Both of these sites may be brought forward by developers in the future. They are:

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**Land to the North of the Railway Line and East of the Industrial Estate: Approximate grid reference OS Landranger 127: square 7607**

This is a very large area of land off Aston Street which adjoins the Taylor Wimpey optioned land (mentioned below) through a railway arch. If this land, which includes the Springhill Industrial Estate, is brought forward for development, a park or meaningful recreational space should be a condition of permission. This location is ideally situated to provide access to the community from both north and south of the railway line. Its potential is immense and it would be of a great value to the town, if a coherent vision could be evolved for the space.

**Next Phase of Taylor Wimpey Development:  
Residential Development Land East of Park Farm, Shifnal**

Taylor Wimpey currently has an option on the land adjoining its existing development which runs up to the railway line. As yet, they have not submitted any planning application for this land which lies fallow. Part of this land would also be an ideal location for a park and adjoins the land mentioned above. The current Taylor Wimpey Development (BR/APP/OUT/08/0869; 10/03184/REM) will increase housing numbers by nearly two hundred. There is limited allocated green space scattered piecemeal throughout. Any future development could be made contingent on the allocation of meaningful open space. This would be an excellent use of section 106 money and is in tune with Taylor Wimpey's corporate responsibility approach as outlined in their annual report.

When site allocation and future development is being considered, it is essential that thought is given to the wider needs of the town in the form of meaningful recreational space ie a centralised town park being a requirement of any future development. Unless a meaningful master plan is put in place, we are in danger of having lots of small areas of open space spread throughout a large residential area that are of very limited recreational use rather than one large continuous open space which could be put to a variety of purposes.

Shifnal Town Council has agreed to support investigations and plans in general terms and Shropshire Council's Parks and Countryside Sites Manager will consider in principle the concept of on-going maintenance/management should a park come to fruition although clearly much more information will be needed before a firm commitment could be given.

At the meeting on 13 January, it was agreed that what was required was a master plan for potential development land that established the principle of a new park for the town created through the development process. In light of current government policy with its preference for locality working and devolution to local decision making, this would be an excellent opportunity to achieve, through partnership working and community consultation, a vision everyone could sign up to in order to remedy the recreational deprivation which currently blights Shifnal.

Yours sincerely  
Jayne Owen (Mrs)  
Shifnal Town Plan Co-Ordinator

**Distribution**

Cllr Gordon Tonkinson, Shropshire Council                      Cllr Stuart West, Shropshire Council  
Cllr Alison Jackson, Shifnal Town Council                      Cllr Tony Stringfellow, Shifnal Town Council  
Mr Ian Kilby, Head of Development Management, Shropshire Council  
Mr Adrian Cooper, Team Leader, Environment Policy, Shropshire Council  
Mrs Carolyn Healy, Parks and Countryside Sites Manager, Shropshire Council  
Mr Rob Mills, Southern Area Manager for Development Management, Shropshire Council

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Ms Andrea McWilliams, Community Action Officer, South East, Shropshire Council  
Mr Richard Fortune, Principal Planning Officer, Shropshire Council  
Mrs K Rogers, Community Regeneration Officer (Southern Area), Shropshire Council  
Mr Robert Vincent, Shifnal Society and Shifnal Pathfinders