



The countryside charity
Shropshire

Autumn newsletter

November 2020



Welcome to the Autumn 2020 newsletter for CPRE Shropshire Members

We hope that during these difficult times you have been keeping well, connecting with nature and staying safe.

One thing the pandemic has certainly underlined - and many have already acknowledged - is the fundamental importance of nature and the countryside to many of us. From the simple beauty of autumnal trees on a local walk to the flutter of wild birds on our garden feeders, being close to the natural world helps us to de-stress and take 'time out' from our day to day concerns.

Thank you to everyone who responded to our Strategic Plan membership survey which has given us plenty to think about as we move into the next 5 years as a charity.

We will soon be publishing the plan on our website and the key points through the next Shropshire Voice and we hope that together, we can succeed in protecting Shropshire's beautiful countryside.

Photo: The Lane to Menutton (c) Sarah Jameson

This autumn newsletter includes our regular column on local planning matters from our Planning Spokesperson, Charles Green who has been working extremely hard most of the summer on CPRE Shropshire response to Shropshire's Local Plan Review.

Carole Ryan-Ridout our Heritage Adviser has contributed an article on the retro-fitting of traditional buildings and the problems and issues that can arise when this is not done correctly.

We are delighted to introduce Zoe Turner, our new Media/ Communications volunteer and look forward to working with her.

If you would like to contact us about the newsletter or anything else, please do so. Our contact details are on the back page.

Connor Furnival
Chair, CPRE Shropshire



Autumn Planning Update

Local Plan Review/s

Shropshire Council's Local Plan Review will soon be entering its final, but protracted, stage after the close on 30 September of the consultation on a full draft of the Plan.

We gather that it's now all hands on deck for Council planning staff as they work their way through some 2,600 consultation responses, with large numbers of responses from the Bridgnorth, Church Stretton, Clive, Much Wenlock and Shifnal areas. Even though last time it took outside consultants some four months to produce a consultation report, Council spokespeople think their own hard-pressed staff will be able to capture the comments from all responses, summarise them, decide what changes if any to make to the Draft Plan, and take a report on it to Cabinet by the end of November in order to keep to the timetable. Watch this space on that score!

CPRE Shropshire has consistently argued throughout this process, and plan to continue to do so, that the plan:

- is suffused with a model for growth well in excess of demographic need, which is not truly sustainable, because it is at odds with both the climate emergency and the ecological emergency;
- has targets for both housing and employment land that are too high, based on figures that are questionable;
- won't get the right sort of houses, particularly affordable houses, built in the right places; and
- has a flawed consultation process, which is undemocratic.

That first point is the one that is increasingly recognised by more and more people. It was very much the theme of the recent Shropshire Wildlife Trust AGM, and is being trumpeted by Climate Action groups across the county.

But Shropshire Council continues to want a 'step change' in economic growth, seemingly oblivious to the fact that continued development will make the problem worse, not better, until zero-carbon building is achieved. What is needed is a step change in thinking, particularly in view of the new world that is emerging from the Covid19 crisis.

And now Telford & Wrekin Council is reviewing its own Local Plan, even though the current one was adopted only in January 2018. Government policy requires local plan policies to be reviewed at least every five years from the date of adoption, so it looks as though three years out of that five are to be spent carrying out a review. So T&W have just launched an eight-week consultation on their 'Issues and Options Paper' which closes on 4th December. The documents can be accessed via https://www.telford.gov.uk/info/20451/development_plans, and they ask a total of 61 questions for respondents to answer!

'What is needed is a step change in thinking, particularly in view of the new world that is emerging from the Covid19 crisis.'

Planning White Paper

You may well have seen Boris Johnson's Build, Build, Build statements, followed by the Planning White Paper and more recently the newspaper headlines involving national CPRE's opposition to some of these plans. Planning's current role has been described as a licensing scheme for private development gain, and this Planning White Paper certainly isn't going to change that.

Shrewsbury North

West Relief Road

Shropshire Council is gearing up to make a planning application to itself about the controversial Shrewsbury North West Road, as it is referred to by those who believe it won't actually relieve much.

But they are holding fire for the moment because a scheme has now been dreamt up by the River Severn Partnership to piggy-back on the NWRR with a flood barrier where it crosses the Severn.

The idea is to further protect Shrewsbury from flooding by letting more land upstream flood, to a greater depth than even in the recent devastating February floods, and to help climate change to boot by creating permanent wetlands. The worry is that all this is being jumped on to help drive through the NWRR itself. Hard information about the scheme is scant at the moment, and the people who would be flooded have yet to be consulted about it all.

The White Paper does make noises about embedding better design, and protecting AONBs and the Green belt, but its worst aspects are the plans for zones, and the proposed new standard method for calculating housing numbers.

In the 'Growth area' zones, development would be allowed willy-nilly following the initial consultation on the overall plan; there would be no second stab at commenting once the detailed planning application came in. These growth areas would be areas like the various present so called 'Sustainable Urban Extensions', of which there are several in Shrewsbury, and now a new one outside Bridgnorth.

But it is the revised 'standard method' and its dodgy algorithm that is getting the greatest opprobrium at the moment, now that it is seen what effect it could have in Shropshire and many other shire counties. Our briefing paper, which went to all Shropshire MPs and Town and Parish Councils via the SALC network included the following charts. The increase in the standard method (the top of the yellow sections) would be over 80% for both Councils!

Community and Rural Strategy 2020

Another consultation that should resonate with CPRE is the Community and Rural Strategy 2020 consultation that closes on 6 December. It can be accessed via

<https://shropshire.gov.uk/get-involved/community-and-rural-strategy-2020/>. Disappointingly though, the relatively short document is rather bland and indeterminate, but do let us know if you want us to feed anything back to Shropshire Council.

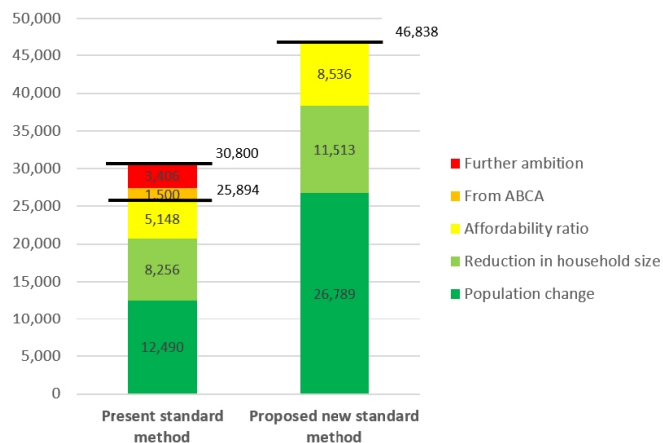
Large farm vehicles on rural roads

Shropshire Council has recognised the difficulties of large agricultural vehicles manoeuvring around Shropshire's horse-and-cart-age roads safely and without causing damage to the rural road network. They have discussed this at some length in committee and the issue will now be jointly considered by the Council at quarterly meetings with West Mercia Police and the National Farmers Union.

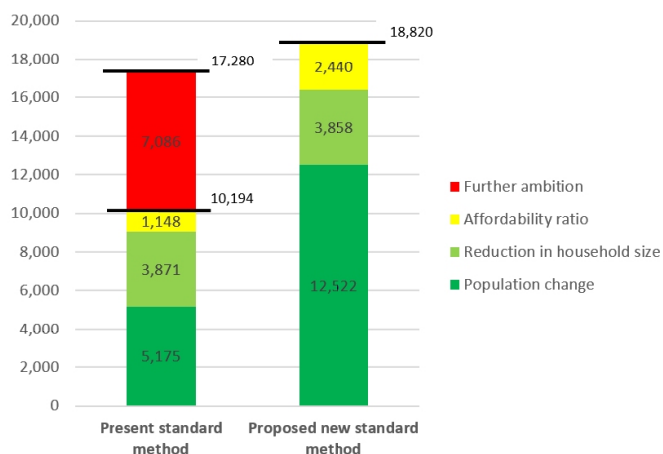


Charles Green Planning Spokesman
CPRE Shropshire

Shropshire Council - present and new standard methods for housing numbers 2016-2038



Telford & Wrekin Council - present and new standard methods for housing numbers 2011 - 2031



A building site in full swing in Telford
(c) Greg Sinclair

Concerns about the Treatment of Traditional Buildings in the Era of Climate Change

Traditional buildings, constructed of stone, brick or timber and with stone, slate, thatch or tile roofs, are frequently given the derogatory term of 'hard to treat buildings'.

In one sense this is quite correct but that is because they do not need the sort of blanket treatment regarding energy conservation accorded to modern lightweight construction, not because they should be treated as potentially disastrous. More pertinently they behave entirely differently to 'climate'. Our ancestors knew and understood about this, giving windows a pentice hood to protect the joinery from decay, providing long, low sweeping roofs instead of walls facing down exposed valleys, and providing roofs with a vast overhang to protect walls from the elements. The latter is a typical feature of a thatched roof which is why they are so successful in producing dry walls, as well as insulation gains from a thick coating to the roof. Such walls, whether stone or brick, were deep, for a host of reasons regarding stability but also because they acted as a thermal store if they were provided with a constant low level of gentle heat, generated often day and night, summer and winter, by a centrally placed ingle, itself acting as a central heat store, and their individual components, be it mortar or building block was gifted with a variable pore structure and size which could wick away internal moisture to the outside. Open fires encouraged at least four air changes an hour so mould spores never got the chance to form.

What is always missed when dealing with upgrading the energy conservation capability of traditional buildings, is not only how they were designed to function (and should be allowed to continue to do so) but their state of repair. It is no good wrapping up the building by rushing headlong into all the latest insulation technology as this will only exacerbate the repair problems and lead to greater problems in the future in the form of condensation on cold walls and mould spores

What is lacking is an understanding of the pathology of these buildings. Damp buildings are cold buildings and water penetration is their greatest enemy. It is more important to deal with leaking gutters, raised ground levels and blocked grids etc. Digging up a floor and laying an impermeable polythene membrane will only drive damp up the walls unless it is accompanied by an external French Drain. This is a narrow, geo-textile lined, pea gravel filled, trench around the outside, falling down to one corner and thence to a soakaway some distance from the building.

'What is always missed when dealing with upgrading the energy conservation capability of traditional buildings, is not only how they were designed to function ... but their state of repair'

Heat does not mysteriously disappear through thick external walls to the outside as is often erroneously stated. Solid walls can suffer from a layer of 'interstitial condensation' near the external face because the interior is being loaded with warm moist air by the constant use of showers and boiling kettles (in previous eras such moisture went straight up the chimney). The solution is obviously to keep lids on pans and shower rooms well ventilated. In other words it is the behaviour of the occupants which needs to be modified, not the building. Having sorted this and if a low level of gentle heat is constantly maintained then the walls will act as a giant heat store, reflecting heat back into the rooms.



A typical traditional stone building

Even more beneficially they will wick away moist air to the outside so that the internal moist air loading does not 'rain out' on cold surfaces, making them damp and cold, and forming black mould. On and off central heating systems are also something of a problem. Owners do not understand why they do not get immediately warm. In reality the walls are trying to heat up but fail to do so because then the heating is switched off. In the same vein owners of weekend cottages do not understand why they do not get warm. All fail to understand that the solution is a low constant gentle heat which takes about a week to manifest itself in the wall structure.

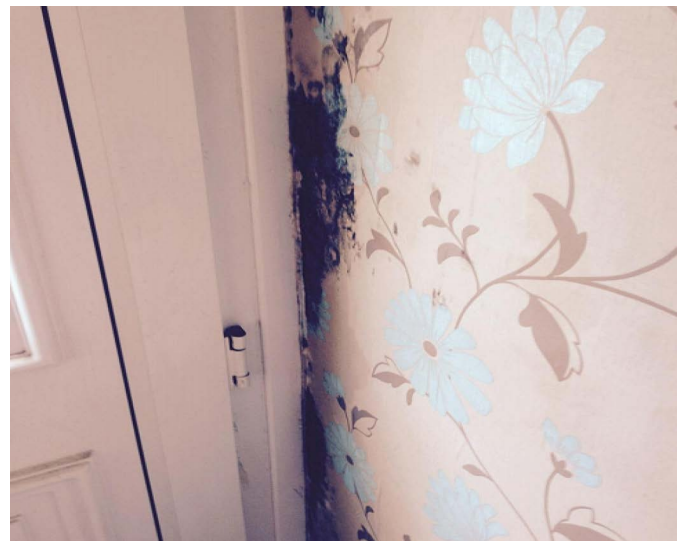
Wrapping such buildings in impermeable overcoats of urethane foam is a recipe for disaster. Difficult zones such as projecting dormers and very exposed walls facing down a valley, and timber framed walls, can be internally insulated with sheep's wool, which is both moisture permeable allowing 'wicking' outwards but is also insulating. No better insulation product has ever been invented as is evidenced by nature and sheep out all winter.

Blanket treatment of every wall is not necessary and neither is stripping walls of their lime plaster coating. There is no better material for having a variable pore structure than can both hold heat and wick moisture outwards, thus dealing with a degree of rising damp. Replacing it with cement coatings covered with gypsum plaster (a standard builder's ploy when dealing with internal traditional walls) is an unfortunate treatment designed to only make the walls colder. In addition gypsum is water soluble and will rapidly fail, should the cement layer crack, as it frequently does.

Readers will gather this is a big subject. The above can only provide a few nuggets of wisdom when dealing with traditional buildings. Interested parties should read

"Traditional Construction for a Sustainable Future", by Carole Ryan, a SPON publication in 2011.

Carole Ryan-Ridout,
Heritage Adviser, CPRE Shropshire



Top: Failed insulation at Fishwick in Preston (a Local Authority scheme). Water ingress behind the insulation due to poor detailing at eaves and inability of the walls to breathe out warm moist air. Note loss of character.

Bottom: The result internally, vast areas of black mould.

Photos on this page (c) <http://www.katedeselincourt.co.uk>

A wasted resource?



After Northumberland, Shropshire is the second highest producer of sheep in England with an estimated 742,378 animals in the county in 2016.

Three quarters of a million sheep means a massive number of fleeces sheared each summer on farm. Once a valuable resource, natural wool has fallen out of favour for clothing with the growth of synthetic fibres (although the environmental costs of the latter are now well accepted). In the UK, wool is also used for carpets, soft furnishings ... and of course, house insulation.

With reports this summer of Shropshire fleeces being composted, burned or left to rot due to a further reduction in prices paid for them (yet another casualty of the Covid pandemic), we are doing some research into the potential for fleeces to be used in all new-build insulation. We hope to write something further about this in the next issue, but if you have any comments, thoughts, ideas or experiences on this topic, do email us on admin@cpreshropshire.org.uk - we would like to hear from you!

Climate Change action in Shropshire

Both our Local Authorities have declared Climate Emergencies and say they aim for zero carbon by 2030, which is a hugely ambitious target which many think is unattainable with our current economic model of relentless growth.

CPRE Shropshire is now signed up to the [Shropshire Climate Action Partnership \(SCAP\)](#) which seeks to bring about this zero carbon in Shropshire.

SCAP is a newly established partnership of the businesses and communities of Shropshire, including Shropshire Council, Telford & Wrekin Council, public sector and voluntary sector bodies and enterprises large and small.

Do look at its website and see what you can do to help: <https://zerocarbonshropshire.org>

Meanwhile, in the far South of the county, the [South Shropshire Climate Action Group](#) held an online conference on Zoom in September attracting over 120 delegates.

Covid19 had put paid to their original plans to have a physical conference in Ludlow in May of this year.

There were three main areas of discussion: Land & Biodiversity, Energy and Buildings and Transport with breakout groups looking at each of these topics in more detail.

The Action Group is now inviting Shropshire residents to join one of the three working groups to take practical ideas and solutions forward.

To join up or watch any of the presentations or afternoon discussions, go to <https://shropshireclimateaction.co.uk>



Leaf fall (c) Sarah Jameson



Shropshire meadow bought for wildlife

CPRE Shropshire was delighted to hear that the Middle Marches Community Land Trust, Stretton Wetlands Interest Group and Strettons Area Community Wildlife Group have successfully raised funding to purchase Cudwell Meadow in Church Stretton.

The meadow is being purchased as a community-owned asset to enhance its biodiversity and pass it on to future generations as a species-diverse wetland meadow. Being adjacent to the Long Mynd SSSI, the meadow will form a useful connecting wildlife 'corridor'. Surveys done in 2020 indicate very good existing diversity – 141 flora species (1½ times the national average for rich hay meadows), 67 invertebrate species and 34 bird species. Initial priorities for the meadow will be to initiate management as a hay meadow, clear some areas of rough scrub and facilitate access to the brook.



More information at: <https://middlemarchescommunitylandtrust.org.uk/land/cudwell-meadow/>

Around the Districts

Telford & Wrekin



Holmer Lake, Telford, in Autumn (c) Bazz Wheeler

The Dawley Development Corporation preceded Telford. It had a life span of 27 years. During that time, it built some outstanding housing estates, and the developers planned it as a New Town in a forest.

Unfortunately, for several reasons, mostly the lack of funds and a total lack of imagination the “Town in a forest” design did not continue after the early 1990’s.

It could be said these original estates lacked foresight. Now we have major problems with car parking and fly tipping. Parts of these estates have the most deprived communities in the whole of the UK. What a sad heritage.

But that’s not the end of it: history is repeating itself. The current building of estates, Lawley to name but one, is devoid of a green infrastructure, some parts have narrow, almost Dickensian residential roads. Parking is a nightmare. I cannot tell if the Telford planning authorities and the planning committee are compliant in the land grab to build in such high density, or if they are powerless, maybe reluctant, to insist on a more user friendly and greener development.

There are designated building lands across Telford; they have been collecting dust for decades. At the time, it was agreed how many houses they would contain.

Now the dust is starting to blow away, the housing density has increased. There have been, and currently are protests to turn the tide and open the eyes of those concerned. It is falling on deaf ears. The endless march of development continues to devour green fields, trees, hedges, wildlife, in the name of profit and rates.

All this extra housing is creating a massive burden on services and facilities. Schools, doctors’ surgeries, hospitals are at full capacity now: there are no plans to expand them. Telford is in the process of becoming carbon neutral. Not much point in Telford bureaucracy being green when thousands more vehicles move in and make all those school runs out of Lawley because the powers omitted to include a secondary school in a development of 10,000 homes.

On the positive side, there are some outstanding developments: parts of old towns and villages in Telford. Homes here rarely come onto the market, rightly so. Who would want to move out of them?

Greg Sinclair
Chair, Telford & Wrekin CPRE district

A new District Group for the South?

Sarah Bury, who stood down as CPRE Shropshire Chair in June, will be writing to Members in the South of the county inviting them to consider joining a new District Group for this part of the county. A significant proportion of our total membership lives in the South (Church Stretton, Craven Arms, Ludlow area) and although the pressures on the countryside are different to those in other parts of Shropshire, they can still be serious.

If you live in the South of Shropshire and would like to join the new District Group for the area, or learn more please contact Sarah Jameson on 01547 528 546 or email admin@cpreshropshire.org.uk



Welcome to Zoe!



We are really delighted to welcome Zoe Turner onboard at CPRE Shropshire. Zoe will be helping us with our social media accounts and communications.

Zoe comes with a lot of media experience having worked in radio for over 20 years as a travel and sports reporter on breakfast shows as well as with outside broadcast teams.

Originally from Wolverhampton, Zoe and her family moved to Shifnal in Shropshire just over two years ago. She really enjoys being closer to the countryside and the great outdoors. She is a keen walker and believes this should be available for everyone to enjoy.

Zoe became involved in local community group, Shifnal Matters, and has been working with them to ensure that the right development is completed for the town and surrounding areas, without losing vital Green Belt. As well as pulling together reports and evidence for Shropshire Council's consultations, she looks after the group's social media and PR output.

Zoe says: "CPRE Shropshire has provided Shifnal Matters with a wealth of knowledge and expertise that has been invaluable in the consultation process so far and to be able now to spread the word of the work that they do and help the group grow is an exciting challenge that I'm really looking forward to."



Hawthorn berries in a roadside hedgerow
(c) Sarah Jameson

Join in:
cpre.org.uk (national charity website)

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