

# Bridgnorth Plan Steering Group

## Minutes of Meeting – 8<sup>th</sup> December 2020

Held as a Zoom videoconference commencing at 7 pm.

**Members present:** Henry Carver  
Clive Dyson – Steering Group Chairman & Bridgnorth Town Council  
George Edwards – Tasley Parish Council  
Mike Golding  
Darren Hodson  
Karen Sawbridge - Bridgnorth Town Council  
Gary Timmins – Worfield Parish Council

**Apologies:** David Cooper – Bridgnorth Town Council  
Julia Buckley – Bridgnorth Town Council  
Stephen Robbins – Chamber of Commerce

### 1. Minutes of and actions from the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 24<sup>th</sup> November were approved. The status of outstanding actions is:

- Action 20/6-3:** Clive to arrange for representation on “Future Bridgnorth”. **Ongoing**
- Action 20/6-7:** Sarah Barlow to consider who might be involved [in Education and Skills] and send Clive a list of individuals to involve in a working group. **Ongoing**
- Action 20/11-1:** David to provide an update on local job statistics and Clive to put information on our website. **Ongoing**
- Action 20/11-2:** Clive to put ONS submission on our website. **Ongoing**
- Action 20/11-3:** Clive to finalise the Bridgnorth Plan, distribute it and put it on our website. **Complete**
- Action 20/11-4:** Mike and Clive to contact Shropshire Council and seek to get us involved with the Highways Assessment. **Complete**
- Action 20/11-5:** David and Clive to circulate a list of policy holders and the main officers in Shropshire Council. **Complete**

### 2. Question to Shropshire Council’s Cabinet

As agreed at our last meeting, a meeting of Steering Group members was held on Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> December to consider whether to submit a question to agenda item 7 at Shropshire Council’s Cabinet meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> December. A question was drafted at the meeting, and refined and agreed by email on the following day. The question submitted was:

*“The Regulation 19 draft local plan includes an assertion that all comments made at the Regulation 18 stage have been considered in drafting it. This is reflected in the Cabinet report at 5.5, which states that “officers have reviewed and considered comments made” and that “A detailed summary of all the consultation responses is included as Appendix 4 to this report.”*

*Appendix 4 should evidence how the comments made have been reflected in the draft plan, but it has not so far been published and the Cabinet report gives the impression that it will be part of the evidence base for the proposed Regulation 19 consultation.*

*In its submission to the Regulation 18 consultation, Bridgnorth Plan Steering Group raised questions about the scale of proposed residential and employment development around Bridgnorth, its location, and the infrastructure needed to support it. It is not clear how these issues have been addressed in preparing the Pre-submission Draft of the Local Plan. It appears that few relevant changes have been made.*

*Paragraph 2.28 of the draft plan refers to an Infrastructure Plan, which might address some of our concerns. However, we are not aware that any such document has been published.*

*The Settlement Policy for the Bridgnorth Place Plan area states (para 5.62) that “a strategic assessment of the highway network will be undertaken.” We do not understand how a final recommendation on the scale of development around Bridgnorth can be made when such a critical assessment is still outstanding.*

*Given the absence of these supporting documents to inform their decision, how can members of the Cabinet be confident that the draft Local Plan is sound and that the scale and location of development proposed around Bridgnorth is sustainable?”*

We confirmed the Steering Group’s approval of this question.

At the Cabinet meeting, only the last paragraph was read out, and not the preamble. Robert Macey answered the question as follows:

*“Appendix 4 to the Cabinet report provides a comprehensive and detailed summary of the comments made as part of the Regulation 18 draft local plan consultation. This is intended to provide Cabinet and other interested parties an opportunity to identify the issues raised. Whilst there is no requirement for the council to provide detail of how these comments have been addressed, the Cabinet paper does specifically point to a number of significant changes made to the Plan in paragraphs 5.9-5.15 and the rationale for these. If approved, stakeholders will have the opportunity to comment on the soundness of the Plan as part of the consultation at Regulation 19.”*

We noted that this does not answer the question and evades the lack of a Highways Assessment and an Infrastructure Plan.

Significant opposition to approving the draft Local Plan for regulation 19 consultation was expressed by other questioners and by Shropshire councillors. However, the draft Local Plan was approved for consultation, apparently without a formal vote. The period for consultation will be from 16<sup>th</sup> December to 3<sup>rd</sup> February.

### **3. Regulation 19 draft Local Plan**

After some discussion, we agreed to pursue the following threads of activity:

1. To challenge the legal soundness of the process used to develop and approve the Local Plan. We consider there are valid grounds for doing so. We will prepare to make a submission on this to the regulation 19 consultation, for consideration by the examiner. We will also raise legal points with officers and consider if and how to take further legal action. George Edwards, Darren Hodson and Gary Timmins agreed to coordinate this thread, involving other Steering Group members and participants. Henry Carver agreed to seek legal advice.
2. To work with others around Bridgnorth and across the county to raise public awareness of the situation, in advance of the elections next May. Potential approaches included collaborating with other market towns and approaching Shropshire Councillors who have expressed their concerns. Karen Sawbridge and Henry Carver agreed to coordinate this thread, involving other Steering Group members and participants.
3. To continue to work constructively to get the best out of any final Local Plan, whatever it turns out to be. For example, we are already in contact with Shropshire Council officers

and staff with regard to the Highways Assessment and the installation of EV chargers. We have also identified a number of potential projects, including “Future Bridgnorth”, (as outlined in the minutes of the previous meeting) to pursue in collaboration with others. Mike Golding and Clive Dyson agreed to coordinate this thread, involving other Steering Group members and participants.

We took the following short-term actions:

- Action 20/12-1:** All Steering Group members and participants to send to George and Darren points where they consider the draft Local Plan, and the process used to develop it, to be unsound. George and Darren will collate a list of these points and coordinate production of draft text.
- Action 20/12-2:** Clive to write to local Shropshire Councillors (and possibly others) who have expressed concerns with regard to the draft Local Plan, thanking them for taking a stance and inviting them to participate in our work, in advance of the elections in May.

#### **4. Date of next meeting**

Given the upcoming consultation on the regulation 19 draft Local Plan, meetings to consider it will be arranged periodically during December and January. The next formal Steering Group meeting will be held towards the end of January, in time to approve a submission before the 3<sup>rd</sup> February. *(Note: A likely date is Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> January at 7pm.)*