

**STOUR AREA COMMUNITY COMMITTEE****25 MARCH 2008**

**Subject:** Shipston Town Plan  
**Lead Officer:** Karen Johnstone  
*Contact on 01789 260332*  
**Lead Member/  
Portfolio Holder:** Councillor S Thirlwell

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**Summary**

This report sets out the assessment of the Shipston Town Plan. Shipston Town Council adopted the Plan on 11 February 2008.

**Recommendation**

- (1) That the Town Plan is adopted as a local information source to offer advice to the relevant departments of Stratford-on-Avon District Council.**
  - (2) That the Town Plan is adopted as a material consideration in processing planning applications, in accordance with Policy COM.1 of the Local Plan Review.**
  - (3) That the Town Plan steering group, Town Council and the residents of Shipston-on-Stour Parish be commended for preparing their Town Plan and that they are encouraged to implement and review their Action Plan.**
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**1 Background/Information**

- 1.1 Town and Parish Plans are community-led projects identifying and surveying the assets, needs, opportunities, problems and solutions of a community. Through 'capacity' and 'consensus building', Parish Plans provide communities with a framework to take stock of the present and to plan for the future.
  - 1.2 The momentum for Parish Plans is continually increasing, with many of the communities in the district having completed or in the process of undertaking detailed Parish Plans or Appraisals with associated recommendations and Action Plans. Further background information on the process is included in Appendix B.
  - 1.3 **Background to the submitted Shipston Town Plan**
    - 1.3.1 Shipston-on-Stour Town Council decided to update its Town Plan at the end of 2006 and set up a Steering Group of local volunteers. The Plan was funded by a community grant from the Stour Area Community Committee of Stratford District Council, funding from the Shipston Town
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Council, and contributions in kind from many volunteers. Throughout the process the Shipston Forum and Online Website, posters, and briefings at Town Council meetings were used to advertise events and report back on progress.

- 1.3.2 Initial information on what issues should be included in the questionnaire was gathered by reviewing existing research materials such as the Stour Power Healthcheck and the Shipston Community Facilities survey, and consulting with residents' organisations and groups. This informed the design of a questionnaire sent to all households in the parish, and a business questionnaire designed by Stour United Businesses sent to every business in the parish. The Town Council website also provided an opportunity for residents and businesses to respond through the internet. An Open Day was held in the town at which residents could view the early results of the questionnaire and contribute further.
- 1.3.3 The questionnaire was delivered to all 2255 households in the parish, and 850 completed questionnaires were returned, giving a response rate of 38%, which is statistically very sound for a community of this size. 30 responses were also received to the business survey. The responses were analysed by a professional market research consultancy and a summary report produced to show key findings.
- 1.3.4 The Steering group drafted a report highlighting the key findings and recommending a series of outcomes. This in turn informed the preparation of an Action Plan, with reference to the Vision for Stour Action Plan and the Stratford District Council draft Corporate Strategy.
- 1.3.5 The Town Council adopted the Town Plan on 11 February 2008. A working group will be established to implement the Action Plan, working with the Town Council and its partners. It is considered preferable for the community to have an opportunity to view and comment on the full results and action plan before the Town Plan is adopted by Stratford District Council. The Steering Group hopes to hold an Open Day for this purpose on 15 March, and feedback from the event will be presented at the committee meeting. It should also be noted that the community has had an opportunity to comment at a slightly earlier stage at an Open Day so it was not considered essential for this event to take place before recommending the Plan for adoption.

#### 1.4 **Shipston Town Plan findings**

- 1.4.1 The findings of the Town Plan, which have informed the Action Plan, cover:
  - Community, recreation and leisure
  - Crime, disorder and security
  - Economy and employment
  - Education and training
  - The environment
  - Healthcare
  - Housing
  - Public services
  - Retail

- Road Infrastructure
- Tourism
- Transportation

The Parish Plan has been prepared employing a range of community participation techniques including questionnaire surveys, public forums and a transparent process of reporting back to the community on progress. The process has generated a range of statistical and qualitative data that has informed the Action Plan and is a useful information source.

- 1.4.2 Suggested response: Endorse – that the findings of the Shipston Town Plan be endorsed as a true representation of the topics addressed by the Town Plan questionnaire.

## 1.5 Shipston Town Action Plan

- 1.5.1 Analysis and responses to the Action Plan are provided in Appendix C, and the following analysis and comments should be read in conjunction with the Shipston Town Action Plan.

- 1.5.2 The policy position of the Local Plan Review is generally supportive of the Action Plan points relating to planning, the environment and land use. Many of the actions in the Plan would contribute to the priorities identified in the Vision for Stour, although they do not always identify the same specific projects.

- 1.5.3 The Local Vision Delivery Group will be identifying priority projects to be taken forward and it very possible that projects that feature in both the Town Plan and the Vision for Stour may be most efficiently carried out in partnership with other agencies and bodies such as Shipston Town Council or the Town Plan working party. The Stour Area Coordinator is pleased to see SDC identified as a potential partner, however at this stage it is too early to say how this will work in practice, and it will be necessary to keep the channels of communication open to ensure such opportunities can be taken where appropriate.

- 1.5.4 The commitment to take forward delivery of housing to meet local needs is welcomed, and the District Housing Enabler and SDC Housing Services will work with the Town Council and other partners.

## 2 Options available to the Committee

- 2.1 A) Adopt the Town Plan fully: This is a good, well-prepared Town Plan that would be a valuable local information source and material consideration.
- 2.2 B) Adopt parts of the Town Plan: If there are any concerns with certain aspects of the Town Plan, this option would allow the District Council to use selected aspects of the Plan in its decision making and as a local information source. No reasons have so far been identified to make this option necessary.
- 2.3 C) Not adopt the Town Plan: The District Council would miss the opportunity to adopt a useful source of local information, and a material consideration to aid planning decision-making.

### **3 Implications of the proposal**

#### **3.1 *Legal/Human Rights Implications***

3.1.1 If adopted, the Town Plan will become a material consideration to be taken into account when determining planning applications. The Plan does not conflict with the District Council's policies.

#### **3.2 *Financial***

3.2.1 Projects developed through this Town Plan may need funding to take them forward and the recommendations contained in this report should be contained within existing budgets. The District Council operates a Community Grants Scheme aimed at funding these types of projects, and the Community Grants team may be able to help search for appropriate funding sources. It is hoped that the Parish Council and local residents will consider and pursue funding in order to develop their identified action points.

#### **3.3 *Environmental***

3.3.1 Many of the actions within this Town Plan aim to increase the sustainability of life within the town by reducing the need to travel to access activities and services, promoting walking and cycling, and by supporting the use of renewable energy.

#### **3.4 *Corporate Strategy***

3.4.1 The Town Plan is a useful source of information about local community perception of their locality. The Community Plan and Corporate Strategy support the range of topic areas and policies in the Action Plan. The Town Plan also complements and helps move forward the District Council's Agenda 21.

#### **3.5 *Equality Assessment***

3.5.1 The consultation for the plan provided everyone within the community to contribute.

### **4 Risk assessment**

4.1 The actions recommended within this report are to commend those involved in the preparation of the Town Plan, adopt the Town Plan as a local information source and adopt it as a material consideration. There are no identified major risks associated with these actions.

4.2 Choosing to not adopt the Town Plan would risk losing the chance to adopt a valuable source of local information and a useful material consideration to aid planning decision-making.

### **5 Conclusion**

5.1 The Town Plan Steering Group, the Town Council and residents of Shipston-on-Stour should be commended and congratulated on completing their Town Plan, and are encouraged by Stratford District Council to implement and periodically review the Action Plan.

5.2 The Shipston Town Plan is a good example of how a community can prepare a Plan that is both a good source of local information and provides a sound basis through the Action Plan to address the needs and aspirations of the community.

Pat Reid  
HEAD OF PLANNING SERVICES

Background papers:

*Shipston-on-Stour Town Plan and Action Plan 2008-13*

*Shipston Town Plan survey summary results 2007 (by 'The Research Solution' consultancy)*

*Stratford District Community Plan; the future to 2015*

*Stratford-on-Avon Local Plan Review 2006*

*Stratford-on-Avon District Council Corporate Strategy 2005-8*

*Stratford-on-Avon District Council draft Corporate Strategy 2008-12*

*Officers Consulted*

*Head of Service: 03/03/2008*

*Monitoring Officer: xx/xx/xxxx (date of report consultation)*

*Chief Executive: xx/xx/xxxx (date of report consultation)*

## Appendix A - Guidance for the Assessment of Parish/Town Plans

- 1.1 In assessing Parish Plans, the following considerations should be taken into account:

**Evidence and extent of research work to justify conclusions.**

**Evidence and extent of analysis related to conclusions.**

**Public involvement and endorsement at local level.**

**Level of implementation available to District Council services, (e.g. the District Council Planning Authority, Leisure and Arts etc.).**

**Conformity with District Council's policies, (e.g. Planning policies etc.).**

- 1.2 The above five criteria will enable the production of recommendations regarding the acceptance of each of the Parish Plan's detailed conclusions and Action Points.

- 1.3 A response to each of the detailed conclusions and Action Points will be one of the following:

**(A) ENDORSE**

The specific recommendation will be accepted and taken into account on the decision making of the District Council. (For example, "Small scale development with a 'craft' emphasis should be looked at sympathetically").

**(B) ACTION**

The specific recommendation will be accepted in principle and, subject to financial, procedural and legal constraints, implemented by or with the support of the District Council. (For example, "A social housing scheme of ten units on land next to the Green should be provided").

**(C) INVESTIGATE**

Further information to be obtained by the Parish/Town Council or other agency may be required in order that the District Council may establish if the specific recommendation can be supported. (For example, "An existing Conservation Area should be extended").

**(D) SUPPORT**

The specific recommendation relates to a matter which is not the responsibility of the District Council. However, the proposal is supported and will be forwarded to the appropriate authority. (For example, "Traffic calming measures are required and the County Highway Authority should prepare a scheme").

**(E) NOT SUPPORTED**

The specific recommendation relates to a matter which is in contrary to the policy of the District Council or is beyond the powers of the authority or that insufficient and/or unsatisfactory information has been submitted to substantiate their commendation. (For example, "No development of any kind should take place within the settlement").

## **Appendix B – Further Background Information**

- 2.1. Communities produce Parish Plans for a number of reasons:
  - To increase the awareness of community issues, foster community spirit and encourage a sense of pride;
  - To act as a strong basis for local action (the Action Plan);
  - To collectively represent the views of residents, to positively influence others to the benefit of the community.
- 2.2. In the 1980s the concept and practice of Village Appraisals first emanated nationally from the Rural Development Commission in conjunction with the Countryside Commission.
- 2.3. Nationally, Parish Plans have a role to play within the 'modernising Local Government' agenda, for example, shaping local services, public participation, decision-making and greater democratic legitimacy.
- 2.4. One of the aims within Chapter 12 of the Rural White Paper (Our Countryside: the future – A fair deal for rural England) includes involving people living in rural areas in developing their community, safeguarding its valued features and shaping the decisions that affect them – developing a vision for the future. Parish Plans are a recognised method of achieving this aim.
- 2.5. In line with guidance from the Countryside Agency issued in August 2000 ('Planning tomorrow's countryside', advice to local planning authorities, government and developers on how the planning system should operate and evolve), Parish Plans are a recognised community planning method to help achieve key objectives. In March 2003 the Countryside Agency produced detailed guidance for parish and town councils on the preparation of Parish and Town Plans.
- 2.6. Policy RA3 in the Warwickshire Structure Plan 1996-2011 encourages local planning authorities to use 'Appraisals' when establishing the views of local communities and when identifying local housing and industrial development need.
- 2.7. Stratford-on-Avon District Council is committed to the encouragement of Parish Plans as a means of identifying local issues and will respond to them positively. Much faith has been placed by the Government, the County Council and the District Council on local appraisals and their role in assisting the formulation of strategic policy.
- 2.8. Parish Plans can now play a broader role within the production of the statutory Community Plan for Stratford District.
- 2.9. The recommendations and Action Plans can both inform and help deliver the Rural Strategy for the Stratford-on-Avon District.
- 2.10. Policy COM.1 of the Stratford-on-Avon District Local Plan Review 2006 states:

“The views of the local community as expressed preferably in a Parish Plan (or equivalent) or in its absence an alternative source of reliable evidence, will be fully taken into account in the planning process. In particular they will be used:

  - To help assess the merits of schemes promoted by communities to meet needs which they have identified;

- As a material consideration in the determination of planning applications and to assist in identifying the scope and nature of associated planning obligations which might be sought; and
- To identify opportunities for environmental and other forms of enhancement.

In the case of Main Rural Centres and Local Centre Villages only, as defined in Policy STR1, small scale schemes which meet housing (particularly affordable housing) and employment needs will be encouraged in this way...”

- 2.11. Nationally, Parish Plans are broad, holistic documents addressing local issues at a local level. Whilst in this District ‘appraisals’ have had a close association with planning, they are no longer ‘planning-led’. Parish Plans address both planning and non-planning related matters and this is reflected in their assessment at Committee.
- 2.12. Parish Plans can and do act as a tool to assist in giving many of the services provided by the District Council greater community focus. Vice versa, many of the services provided by the District Council can and do feed into the Parish Plan process creating more informed Action Plans.

## Appendix C

### Summary of key action points

Abbreviations

SDC= Stratford District Council

WCC= Warwickshire County Council

Recommended Action	SDC Proposed Response
<b>Community Recreation and Leisure</b>	
Commission a feasibility study into requirements for additional/ alternative sport and leisure facilities, making use of new and existing research.	<b>Support</b> – This action point can be supported as it works towards the Community Plan aim to increase the number of people playing sport and participating in leisure activities. We strongly advise that the management and ongoing revenue costs of a facility will need to be included in any study.
To evaluate the opportunity to refurbish/ enhance the Townsend Hall or the development of a replacement for the hall	<b>Support</b> – the action point can be supported as the Community Plan seeks to maximise the use of existing community facilities.
To investigate the need and provision of improved Adult Education in the town and the benefits this would provide.	<b>Support</b> – the action point can be supported as the Community Plan seeks to increase the number of adults taking part in learning activities.
<b>Crime and disorder</b>	
To continue to lobby the police Authority to reinstate an effective Police presence in the town to ensure the continuance of an effective crime reduction strategy.	<b>Support</b> – SDC are keen to work with the police to support effective policing of Shipston. The Community Plan seeks to reduce crime and increase public confidence.
To develop a communications strategy to improve communication to distribute information to the local population to give assurances as to the safety of the community and to improve reporting of policing matters and the effectiveness of policing in Shipston.  To develop community involvement in the policing of the community in support of the local policing team.	<b>Support</b> – These action points should help achieve the Community Plans aim to increase public confidence. The Vision for Stour project action to 'support communication networks and projects that can reduce fear of crime' develops this theme.
<b>Economy and Employment</b>	
To initiate a survey aimed at providing a better understanding of the types of business that are compatible for Shipston and the requirements of these and existing businesses.	<b>Support</b> – this action point can be supported.

<b>Recommended Action</b>	<b>SDC Proposed Response</b>
To develop a pro-active commercial marketing plan for Shipston, emphasising the benefits to businesses of locating to and remaining in the town, and actively promote the town for this purpose.	<b>Support</b> – this action point can be supported.
To promote the development of affordable facilities for small businesses	<b>Endorse</b> – planning policies in the adopted District Local Plan support development to meet an identified local need. The Planning Service is currently working on the early stages of a new Core Strategy which will set out a broad vision for planning and development in the district for the next 20 years. It is intended to use documents such as the Town Plan to inform the preparation of this document.
To encourage improvements to the provision and promotion of business support services.	<b>Support</b> – this action point can be supported. The Vision for Stour project action which seeks to secure succession for the Shipston Business Centre develops this theme.
<b>Education and training</b>	
To consider the provision of a Sixth Form at Shipston High School. To investigate the provision of additional facilities for learning and skills opportunities in Shipston.	<b>Support</b> – these action points can be supported as they will contribute information to the Community Plan aims to make sure people have the chance to learn near where they live or work. The Vision for Stour project action to 'Research uptake of further education current situation and develop action plan' explores this theme.
To provide additional facilities for extended and new nursery provision.	<b>Support</b> – this action point can be supported.
<b>The Environment</b>	
To undertake an audit of all vacant land and buildings to determine potential usage.	<b>Support</b> – it is suggested that this could form part of the preparation for a Town Design Statement as discussed further below.
To work with the planning authorities to develop strategies which support the aspirations of the community, and which reflect the broader economic, business and social needs of the community.	<b>Action</b> – the Planning Service is currently working on the early stages of a new Core Strategy which will set out a broad vision for planning and development in the district for the next 20 years. The Planning Policy team met the Shipston Town Council at the

Recommended Action	SDC Proposed Response
	beginning of this process and intends to return to discuss issues at each stage. They intend to use documents such as the Town Plan to inform the preparation of this document.
To enhance environmental awareness, and increase everyday use of recycling facilities, and to consider the effect of the provision of an effective public transport system to reduce the use of cars and carbon emissions.	<b>Support</b> – this action point should help achieve the Community Plan aim to increase recycling. The Vision for Stour action project to ‘Support communication of recycling and composting message’ develops this theme.
To continue to develop and promote environmentally friendly leisure and recreational pursuits in the town, such as the ongoing Riverside project.	<b>Action</b> – the Vision for Stour action project to implement the Local Biodiversity Plan, through projects such as the Stour River corridor enhancements, complements this theme.
To address, as a matter of urgency, flood defences of the town.	<b>Action and support</b> – SDC Environment Services has offered to establish a Drainage Forum for Shipston bringing partners together, and also to carry out maintenance works on certain drains. Decisions over installation of physical flood defences are taken by the Environment Agency.
<b>Healthcare</b>	
<p>To increase provision of health services locally including the development of existing out-of-hours GP services.</p> <p>To increase provision of services for elderly and disabled, particularly with regard to nursing and residential care.</p> <p>To improve the physical premises of the Ellen Badger Hospital and the Medical Centre, particularly the need for larger premises for the Medical centre and improved parking facilities at both locations.</p>	<b>Support</b> –the Vision for Stour project actions to ‘Carry out an audit of statutory and private healthcare in Stour area’ and to ‘Seek opportunities for enhanced facilities’ develop this theme. However an increase in provision will require the engagement of the Primary Care Trust.
To improve public transport to and from larger hospitals outside Shipston.	<b>Support and action</b> – this action point can be supported as the Community Plan aims to improve access to health care. Residents may be interested in the Community Links and Volunteer Centre’s Medical Journeys schemes which help people with transport needs. For further information phone Clarissa

Recommended Action	SDC Proposed Response
	Roberts on 01789 262886.
<b>Housing</b>	
<p>To develop a "Town Design Statement" which can be used by developers seeking to build, or upgrade, properties in the town and by the planning authority when assessing applications to ensure that new development meet guidelines for design and materials.</p> <p>To seek the support of SDC to the use of the Town Plan and Design Strategy is setting policy affecting the town, its housing and planning needs and in determining applications in the town.</p>	<p><b>Endorse</b> – Warwickshire Rural Community Council may be able to offer their support if the community decides to produce a Town Design Statement. Such a statement should be prepared with community involvement and address all aspects of the town environment.</p> <p>Once adopted, the Town Plan, and any Design Statement which is prepared, and the community views expressed within them will be used by SDC as a material consideration when determining planning applications, as laid out in Policies COM.1 and PR.1 of the Local Plan Review. SDC Planning Services will continue to consult the Town Council on all planning applications within the parish, and it is considered a very helpful approach for the Town Council to base their views on these community prepared documents.</p>
<p>To support proposals through the planning process that deliver solutions identified above.</p> <p>To identify sites for the delivery of social housing and other housing to satisfy the needs of local people.</p>	<p><b>Action</b> – through the Core Strategy and other planning documents, the Planning Service will seek to manage development to meet the needs of local people.</p> <p>The intention to progress the development of affordable housing to meet an identified local need is welcomed and the District Housing Enabler and SDC Housing and Planning Services offer support in this process.</p>
<b>Public Services</b>	
<p>To deliver a strategic overview of the services provided by the Town Council in order to ensure that these match the expectation of residents and businesses and are provided in the most timely and efficient manner.</p> <p>To reduce the public confusion regarding council service providers.</p> <p>To monitor the services provided by both District and County Councils.</p>	<p><b>Support</b> – these action points can be supported and are welcomed by SDC.</p>

<b>Recommended Action</b>	<b>SDC Proposed Response</b>
To work with other agencies whose responsibilities cover public services, e.g. Environment Agency, Severn Trent Water, etc to ensure that their services reflect the actual needs of the community.	<b>Support</b> – this action point can be supported.
<b>Retail</b>	
To undertake an assessment of traffic, parking and congestion in the High Street and surrounding areas, to review the broader need for parking facilities in the town, including the safety aspects for pedestrians. This outcome is also relevant for the Road Infrastructure Section.	<b>Support</b> – This action point can be supported, however it is strongly recommended that the Town Plan steering group discuss this action with the WCC Traffic Projects Team before commencing any work on a study. It also should be noted that it is normally considered more effective to manage parking demand rather than increase provision.
To develop a programme for wider promotion of the diverse and quality nature of retail businesses in Shipston.	<b>Support</b> – this action point can be supported.
To resist the loss of any existing retail premises and their conversion to residential use.	<b>Endorse</b> – Stratford District Local Plan Policies seek to resist the loss of existing employment premises to residential use.
<b>Road Infrastructure</b>	
To undertake a survey of the state of roads in Shipston for submission to relevant authorities so that repairs and maintenance can be undertaken.  To ensure that laws pertaining to the reinstatement of road conditions by utility contractors are enforced.	<b>Support</b> – WCC advise that the state of the roads is continually surveyed and monitored and repairs are undertaken as necessary and according to priority order. Supervision of road reinstatement is also carried out. However, this action point can be supported as it may provide further information to inform authorities when making difficult decisions about how to allocate resources.
To consider the additional provision that can be made for cyclists.	<b>Support</b> – there may be potential opportunities arising from any development schemes and District Local Plan Policy COM.9 requires that development proposals incorporate facilities for walking and cycling. WCC advise that unfortunately Local Transport Policies prioritise urban areas for the spending of the limited resources available.

<b>Recommended Action</b>	<b>SDC Proposed Response</b>
<b>Tourism</b>	
To provide support to existing and potential retailers, leisure businesses and others engaged in the visitor sector.	<b>Support</b> – SDC can be viewed as a potential partner to support the visitor economy, within the Visioning process.
To review the existing tourism orientated facilities provided by the town and local visitor facing businesses for the public and recommend a programme of improvement and/or development of new alternatives.	<b>Support</b> – SDC can be viewed as a potential partner to support the visitor economy, within the Visioning process.
To promote the town and encourage visitors through hosting events and festivals for the town.	<b>Support</b> – SDC can be viewed as a potential partner to support the visitor economy, within the Visioning process.
To initiate a feasibility study into the development of a Tourist Information Centre in Shipston.	<b>Support</b> – Whilst we have no current plans to directly support this through the Visioning process, we are supportive of partners. SDC and South Warwickshire Tourism will be reviewing the strategy and role for Tourist Information Centres which may have an impact on this issue.
<b>Transportation</b>	
To carry out an in-depth survey of public transport usage in order to develop an operational plan which better meets the demands of passengers and increases usage.	<b>Support</b> – it is advised that a wider study covering accessibility to services, of which public transport is one factor, can be supported in principle. The Steering Group is strongly advised to contact the WCC Transport Planning Group before commencing this action.
To review the passenger requirements for bus services and to see if there are opportunities to improve these for the town through liaison with the various operators.	<b>Support</b> – this action point can be supported.