



Much Wenlock Town Council



*Our plan – Our future*

# APPLICATION FOR DESIGNATION OF A NEIGHBOURHOOD AREA

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# Executive Summary

## Introduction

Much Wenlock is a small rural town located in Shropshire, midway between Shrewsbury and Bridgnorth on the A458 and a few miles south of the New Town of Telford. It lies in a narrow valley close to Wenlock Edge, a place of much geological interest. Much Wenlock has a population of 3,041 and 2,336 electors, and parts of the parish are in conservation areas with many listed buildings.

The town is an historic settlement, famous for its association with Dr William Penny Brookes, the inspiration for the modern Olympic Movement. The town is also the home of the ruins of Wenlock Priory, an Anglo-Saxon monastery founded circa 680 by King Merewalh of Mercia. His daughter Milburge was an abbess and hailed as a saint.

The Much Wenlock Town and Parish Plan was published in March 2006, and since it is due for review, an ideal opportunity exists for the Town Council to work with Shropshire Council (the principal authority for the area), and the local community, to replace it with a Neighbourhood Plan. The town also has a Village Design Statement which was published in 2000.

In February 2011 the Town Council agreed to work with Shropshire Council and submit a bid to become a national 'Front Runner' for Neighbourhood Plans. The bid was successful and Much Wenlock was designated by the Government as one of seventeen communities chosen to be a 'Front Runner' to develop a Neighbourhood Plan.

Given the substantial progress made on the Neighbourhood Plan in Much Wenlock, it is entirely logical to make a formal application for Neighbourhood Plan designation.

## Objective

The development of a Neighbourhood Plan for Much Wenlock is being facilitated by Much Wenlock Town Council with help from volunteers across the community. The Town Council believes that this is a real opportunity for the community to have some ownership on future planning policy for the parish.

Through the creation of the Plan, local people will have the opportunity to help shape future policies for land use and the scale of development; such as where new homes, shops and offices should be built, and what they should look like.

The Neighbourhood Plan for Much Wenlock will cover the parish of Much Wenlock and, subject to passing the formal tests, a local referendum and assessment, it will become part of the local planning framework. Its policies will apply until 2026.

## **Process**

By July 2011 the Town Council had agreed a governance process to oversee the creation of the Plan and ensure democratic accountability. A Neighbourhood Plan Committee was established with delegated authority to develop a Neighbourhood Plan for Much Wenlock.

In August 2011 the Neighbourhood Plan Committee subsequently established a Steering Group whose members include all members of the Neighbourhood Plan Committee, and members of the community, some of whom helped with the development of the Town and Parish Plan. The Steering Group is also attended by officers of Shropshire Council and the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG). This arrangement is to help ensure that the whole community has real opportunities to engage in the Plan and that the Plan is developed in conformity with strategic and national planning policy. The DCLG is also keen to learn from the work to inform the national programme of Neighbourhood Plans.

The Committee meets monthly, or thereabouts, and the Steering Group has met at fortnightly intervals. All meetings of both the Committee and the Steering Group are open to the public and their agendas and minutes are made available on the Neighbourhood Plan website and through the Town Council's formal procedures.

## **Community engagement**

The NP was launched in November 2011 and there was a subsequent extensive round of community engagement events where local people, including landowners, have had the opportunity to find out the purpose of the Neighbourhood Plan and how they can get involved with its development.

Five themes emerged from the community consultation and subsequently, information and evidence have been gathered, to help develop the Neighbourhood Plan. The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group has recognised the opportunity for successful co-operation on a number of issues, in particular infrastructure provision through the Place Plan for Much Wenlock and the Community Infrastructure Levy proposals. The Neighbourhood Plan process is running parallel with, but separate from, Shropshire Council's emerging Site Allocations and Management of Development DPD (SAMDev)

To fulfil its commitment to openness, transparency and community involvement, the Steering Group has undertaken a parish-wide residents survey of all households, and is asking local businesses to complete a separate survey in order to gather local views on the needs of the community and their aspirations for development. The results of these will inform the proposed sets of meetings and events by which the community will help draft the content of the Plan (see attached diagram).

## Outcome

The intention is that the Neighbourhood Plan will be substantially drafted by the end of the calendar year of 2012, although some aspects of the formal processes remain unclear to the Steering Group. Shropshire Council will consider whether the Neighbourhood Plan for Much Wenlock conforms to its adopted strategic policies and, in agreement with Much Wenlock, will put it forward for independent assessment.

Subject to a successful referendum, Shropshire Council will have a legal duty to 'make' the Neighbourhood Plan for Much Wenlock and bring it into force.

# Application





The following are included with Much Wenlock's application for designation as a neighbourhood area:

1. a map which identifies the area to which the area application relates (appendix 1)
2. a methodology diagram (appendix 2)
3. a statement explaining why this area is considered appropriate to be designated as a neighbourhood area
4. a statement that the body making the area application is a relevant body for the purposes of 61G of the 1990 Town and Country Planning Act

## **1 - see appendix 1**

## **2 - Statement to be designated as a neighbourhood area**

The parish of Much Wenlock is considered appropriate to be designated as a neighbourhood area for the following reasons:

-  The Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan is being developed to help deliver the local community's ambitions and needs for the plan period; 2012 - 2026.
-  The Plan will provide a vehicle to guide, promote and enable balanced and sustainable change and growth within the designated area.
-  The designated area includes Bourton, Homer and the rural hinterland/environs i.e. the whole of the civil parish of Much Wenlock.
-  Formal designation would secure the work undertaken as a national 'front runner' designated by Government.

## **3 - Statement to be designated as a neighbourhood area**

In accordance with Section 61G of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, the body making the application to designate Much Wenlock as a neighbourhood area is a parish council (Much Wenlock Town Council) established in pursuance of the Local Government Act 1972.

The application for designation includes all of the area covered by the Town Council.