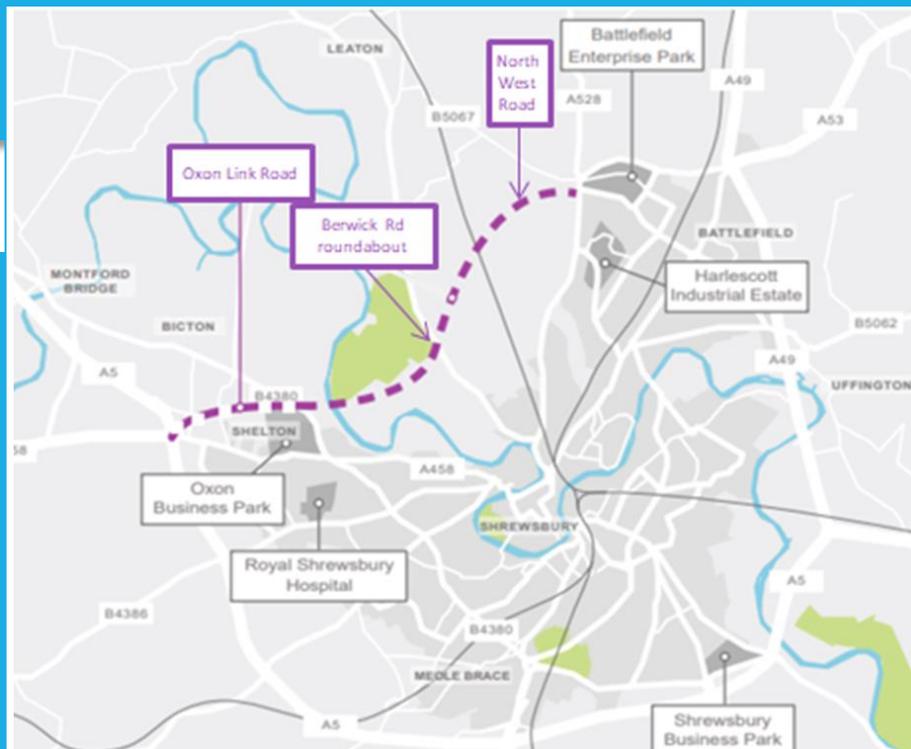


SHREWSBURY'S NORTH WEST ROAD: A 21st CENTURY SOLUTION?

A BRIEFING GUIDE FOR COUNCILLORS



Compiled by
Better Shrewsbury Transport ([BeST](#))
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Better Shrewsbury Transport (BeST) is an alliance of local organisations and individuals who seek to solve Shrewsbury's traffic and air quality problems in an efficient, cost effective and sustainable manner suitable for the 21st century.

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INTRODUCTION

The Shrewsbury North West Road (NWR) is a four-decades-old project. Since it was first conceived, our world has changed in unimaginable ways.

We are now in an unprecedented climate and biodiversity emergency, facing the existential threat of catastrophic warming that threatens to be beyond human adaptation. To help to tackle this, the UK has made a legally binding commitment to reach net zero emissions of greenhouse gases by 2050. En-route to net zero the government has proposed reducing emissions by over two thirds (from 1990 levels) by 2030 – only 10 years away.

Transport is now the biggest single source of the UK's emissions and the only sector to have made no progress in reducing its emissions in recent years. It represents 37% of Shropshire's direct emissions.

The government has recognised that there must be a shift from the car to more efficient forms of transport (1). The exact amount of reduction in mileage depends on what cuts in greenhouse gases are made elsewhere in the economy, but a need to reduce mileage by between 3% and 40% has been widely reported. The business case for the proposed new road in Shrewsbury relies on outdated projections that car mileage will continue to increase inexorably.

BeST believes there is a clear case for cancelling the proposed road due to the climate emergency and instead making low carbon, sustainable and active travel the council's first priority.

However, there is also a very convincing financial argument against the road. After 10 years of austerity and, in the devastating aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic, Shropshire Council faces a perilous financial future, with the prospect of essential services being cut across the county.

Risking spending millions of pounds of Shropshire's money on a few miles of single carriage road for Shrewsbury while other county towns see services and investment slashed is not an equitable proposition. A true green recovery would invest across Shropshire, prioritising public transport and active travel solutions in order to encourage the needed reduction in car use.

Other councils, including our neighbours in Herefordshire, have already recognised the shift that has happened and cancelled their major road expansion projects. The Welsh Government has worked out that it will be cheaper and more effective to invest in other measures to reduce congestion around Newport than to build a hugely expensive extension to the M4. We are calling on Shropshire Council to recognise that the plans for the NWR are no longer fit for purpose. Building it would represent a monumental and costly error that will have huge implications both for the county's finances and the fight against the climate crisis.

The world has changed immeasurably since the NWR was first conceived.

We ask Shropshire Council to recognise this... and change with it.

FINANCES

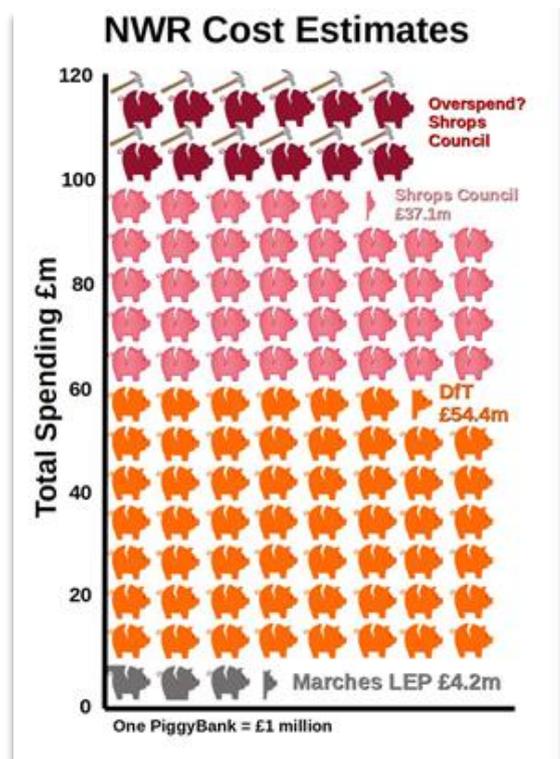
The Shropshire Council business plan says: **It's value for money!**

BUT IS IT?

- Whilst Government has pledged £54 million and the LEP £4 million, **Shropshire Council would be responsible for the other £29 million**
- Shropshire Council would also be responsible for all of the inevitable overspend. The council **recently admitted that the overspend could be £8.5M**
- A significant amount of the council's contribution will be spent before planning approval is reached and any physical work is started. It is therefore spent at risk if the road doesn't progress. For the year 2019-2020 Shropshire Council has spent £7657 a day(1).

The Council's published Local Transport Plan (LTP3) says 'New road building will be restricted to where all other options have been fully considered', yet the council hasn't looked at alternatives since 2007 and that review didn't fully explore all the options.

As the Welsh Government has shown with the cancelled M4 extension, there are other much cheaper and more effective alternatives than road building!



- Much of the money is expected to come from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) paid by housebuilders which is supposed to be allocated to facilities for local people such as new school places etc.
- The council leader has said that there are 100 acres of council owned land that will be opened up for development by the road and sale of this will pay for the road. However, we have looked at this in detail and believe that it is wildly misleading.
- The business case also says that road will lead to economic growth, but the council cannot identify any new jobs or opportunities that will be created by the road. Recent studies show that roads rarely, if ever, deliver the promised economic benefits (2)

You have a duty to be very careful how you spend taxpayers money.

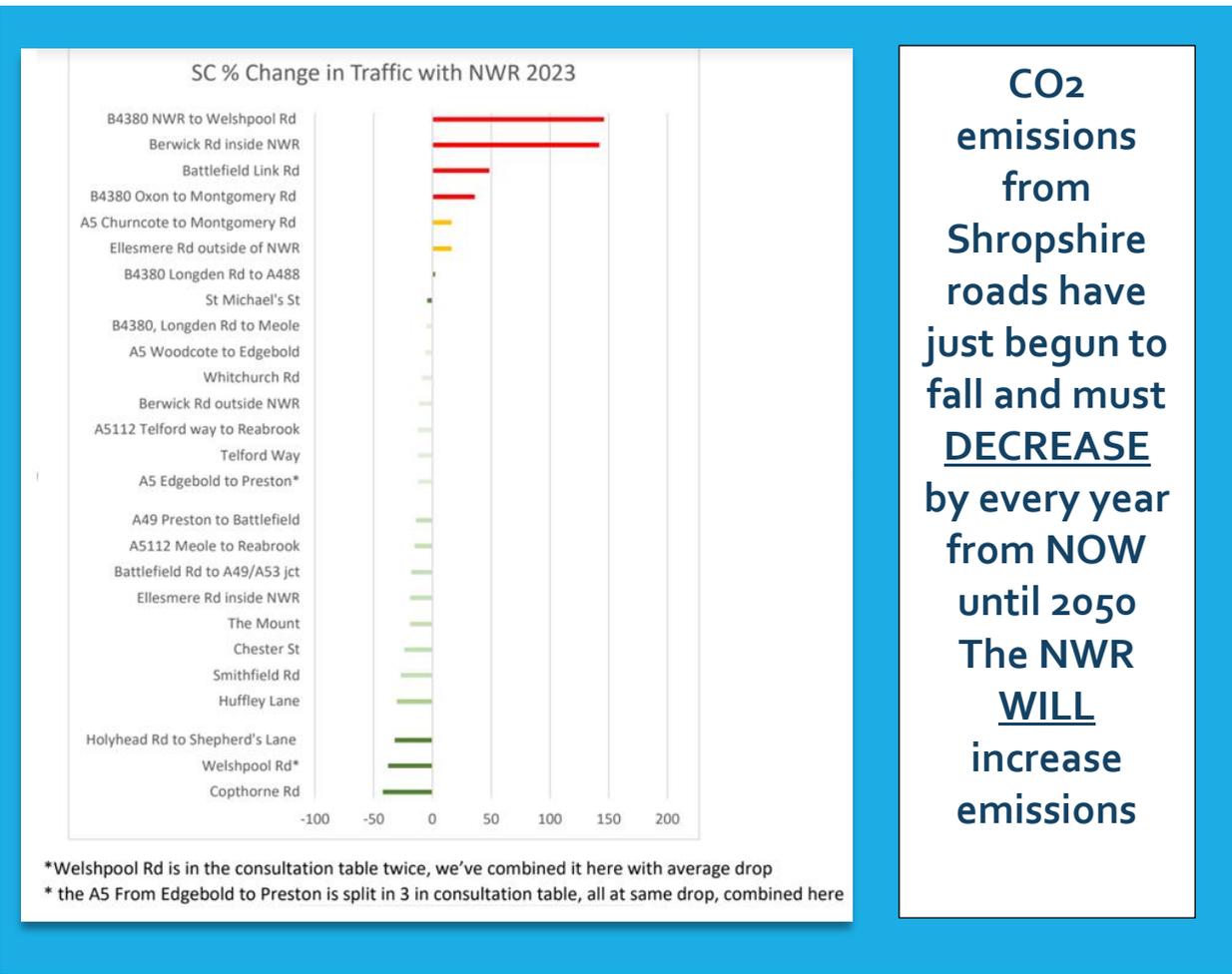
So think again on this ROAD TO RUIN

CONGESTION

The Shropshire Council business plan says traffic levels will fall 'substantially' and it will 'reduce congestion'

BUT WILL IT?

- Even Shropshire Council’s own latest modelled estimates (from March 2020, see table below) suggest only three roads in the whole town will see traffic levels fall by more than 30% if the NWR is built.
- Smithfield Road is listed as seeing a 27% drop, (one car in four).
- Other town centre roads were included in the 'outline business case' as seeing “no change”
- The country roads to the north west of the town where 'rat running' is said to be a problem are not mentioned at all. There is no evidence that the problem here is worse than other areas.
- Berwick Road, parts of the old A5 and new A5 will see significantly more traffic.
- The business case for the NWR and the figures widely quoted by Shropshire Council for the degree of traffic reduction are based on the assumption that if we 'do nothing' traffic levels would continue to increase.
- Forecast reductions are undoubtedly optimistic and will be short lived. Studies show that new roads generate more traffic than predicted (1)



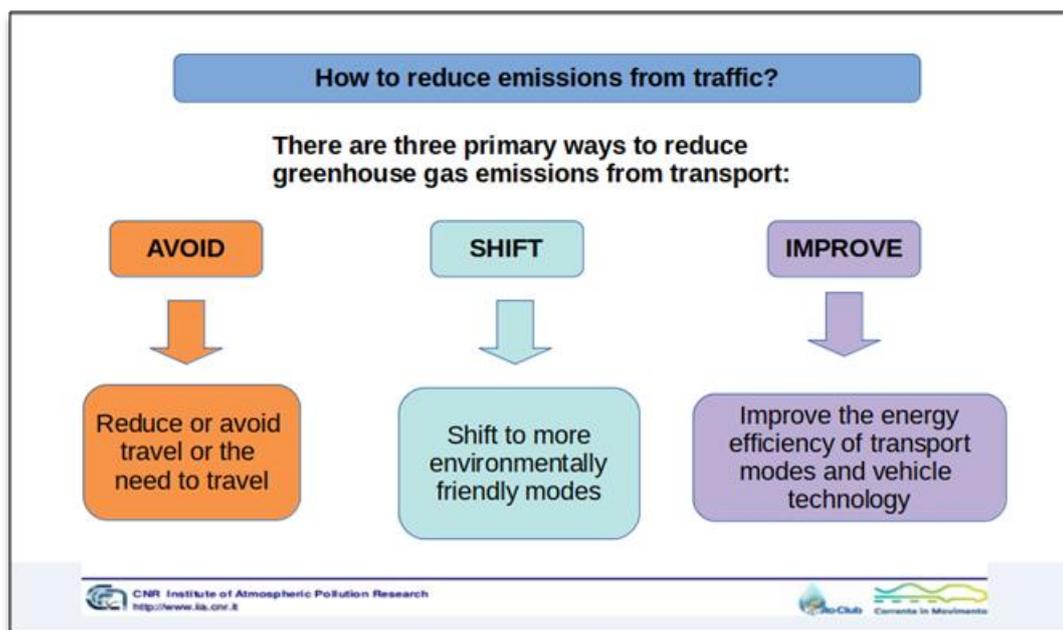
CLIMATE

The business plan for the road says that it will lower green house gas emissions

BUT WILL THEY?

- UK transport accounts for 27% of the country's CO₂ emissions; in Shropshire transport is responsible for 37% of the county's direct CO₂ emissions.(1)
- Meeting climate responsibilities under the Paris Agreement, requires every sector to reduce carbon emissions. More roads = more cars = more carbon.
- Policies that increase carbon are open to legal challenge under the Climate Act and the Paris Agreement. Given a total budget of 17.2 MtCO₂e, this means Shropshire has **only 2 years and 8 months left** at current 6.1MtCO₂e burn rate before we reach the Paris Agreement limit (2).
- Meeting the government's 2050 target of net zero carbon emissions means that, even with widespread conversion to electric cars, car mileage will need to reduce significantly to meet the UK's climate commitments: the government's advisors, the Committee on Climate Change, propose that total car miles will need to fall by 6% by 2030 (17% by 2050) in order for the UK to meet its climate targets (3).

De-carbonising transport requires an AVOID / SHIFT / IMPROVE policy.



CO₂ emissions from Shropshire's roads must DECREASE every year from NOW until 2050

Inequality in Shropshire

A 'FAIR DEAL' for the whole county?

Hardly!

A quarter of Shropshire residents do not have access to a car. These people are mainly the young, the very old, the socially deprived and other vulnerable groups. In deprived areas the ratio is much higher.

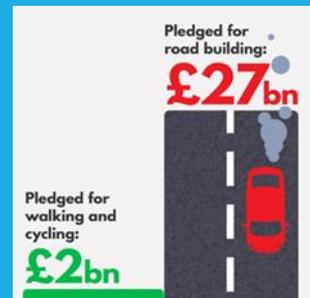
A report published in 2011(1) found:

- The richest 10 % of the population receive four times as much public spending on transport as the poorest 10%
- For 5-14 year olds the most common cause of death is being hit by a car - with the poorest children up to 28 times more likely to be killed on the roads than the richest

The Council and Government are diverting funds away from active transport modes and towards car users.

CIL money is collected to support local community's services; a press release(2) from the council has revealed that recently over 50% of CIL money has been spent on roads with £4.7m allocated for the NWR.

Any arguments that the scheme will ultimately benefit local communities by attracting commerce is countered by the large amount of research into similar schemes (3). This research unanimously shows no causal link between roads such as this and an improvement in business.



When he was appointed as council leader, Peter Nutting was quoted in the Shropshire Star(4) saying:

"We probably need to invest in business parks around the market towns. On the whole, Shrewsbury does look after itself quite well because the size of its business drives it forward. The other market towns sometimes need more help and I think we need to go around there"

Yes, Councillor Nutting, you do need to support the other market towns!

The NWR is (already) NOT FAIR on those who need investment the most

The disputed 'benefits' would apply only to Shrewsbury, leaving the rest of the county with NOTHING

ENVIRONMENT

The Shropshire Council business plan says this scheme will mitigate environmental impacts!

BUT WILL IT?

1. Air quality

There are no safe levels for air pollution

- Dangers of air pollution are much worse than previously thought.
- NO₂ exposure at any level has a lasting effect.
- 40,000(1) deaths annually from air pollution in the UK. A recent landmark legal case has established air pollution as a cause of a child's death and this will have important implications for Shropshire Council.
- Saving in healthcare from reductions in air pollution would pay for the reductions in air pollution many times over (2)

The NWR is predicted to reduce air pollution, **BUT**:

- The Council's own figures show little (if any) reduction in through traffic.
- There are already hotspots in Coton Hill and by the station.
- Council figures show increases in traffic at these hot spots, so more air pollution.

Where are the assessments of air pollution levels for an accurate base line?

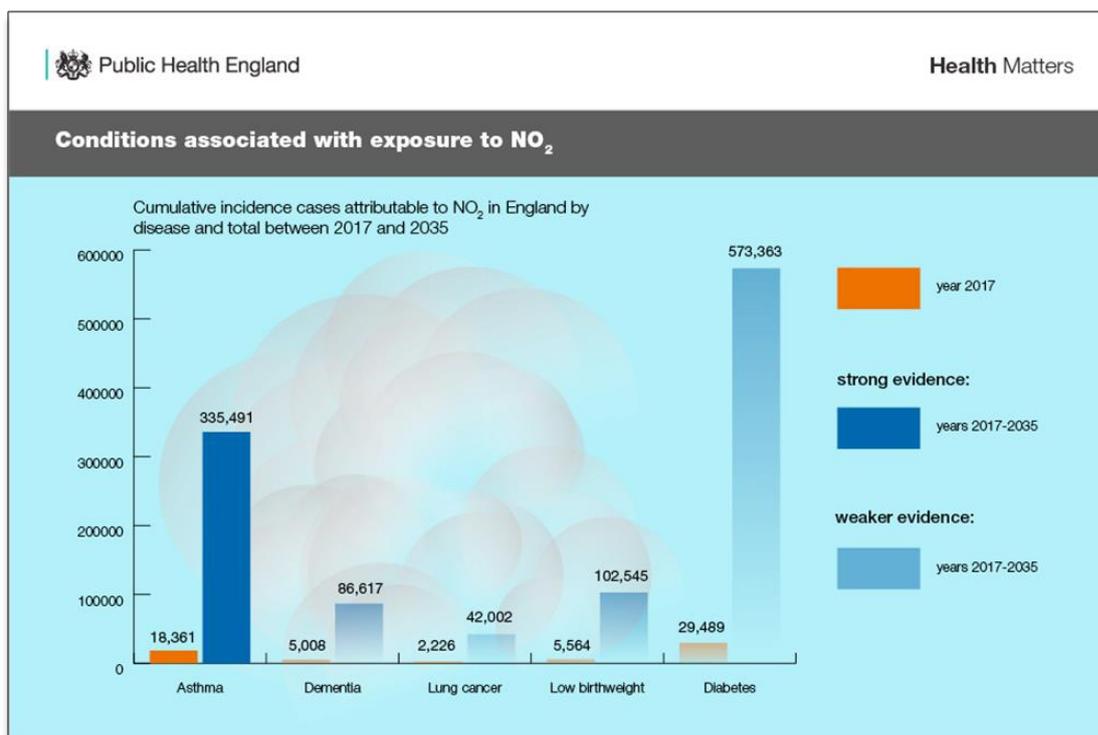
We've been told by council staff:

Hotspots: *"I am not aware of what the air quality impact is likely to be ..."*

- **So has it been modelled?**
- *"... the specific level of air quality impact is not known although as far as I am aware the actual level of reductions has not been quantified. Mitigation measures are available should increases in air pollution to above national objective levels be found in future".*

So only take action when pollution levels are above the legal limits?

Where is the assessment, the planning, the proactive approach?



2. Water quality

- The NWR is planned to be built over the Source Protection Zone 1 for Severn Trent Water's Shelton boreholes
- **IT'S A MAJOR RISK!** A pollution incident on the road could affect the town's water supply.
- It's contrary to the council's own policy! DP20 of the draft Local Plan states that "Proposals in Source Protection Zone 1 are not encouraged"

Are Severn Trent Water and the Environment Agency accepting the risk?

- Environment Agency: "We were not formally consulted on the Options Assessment Report dated December 2017".
- This is likely to result in a Public Inquiry; the council against the water company and the Environment Agency.

Moving the water supply would cost tens of millions of pounds so that's not an option!

3. Wildlife

We are facing a climate AND ecological emergency. They are linked.

- The road would be built through Shrewsbury's 'Green Wedge', a unique feature that brings nature into the heart of the town.
- Shropshire Wildlife Trust says that the road would "have guaranteed enormous environmental costs".
- It would also open up large parts of the green wedge for house building.

The 'Big Town Plan', 7th March 2019, states "The town is blessed with extraordinary greenspaces, courtesy of the River Severn corridor and a superb landscape setting. ... we want to make greenspace much more accessible for people and to make it richer and more biodiverse" (1).

According to Shropshire Wildlife Trust, within 500 m of the proposed route there are:

- 860 + animal species, including 12 nationally scarce species of invertebrates, 3 species of bat and 7 other species of national importance
- 100 + bird species including 19 on the red list, 34 on the amber list
- 4 Local Wildlife Sites
- Alkmond Park Coppice (Ancient Woodland)
- Hencott Pool (SSSI and RAMSAR)

The River Severn is an important ecological corridor for the county and a Local Wildlife Site. The impact of a dam on wildlife will be significant.



**People CARE about the environment.
People UNDERSTAND the link between environmental
destruction and the unfolding climate crisis.**

4. Noise

- Bicton, Shelton, The Mount and Coton Hill areas will suffer most with increased noise from the proposed road, but other properties such as the Severn Hospice would also be affected.
- The speed limit for the road has been increased to 60 mph from 50 mph and studies have shown noise increases significantly with speed.
- The level of disturbance would depend upon distance from the road, wind direction and amount of traffic. The effect of noise pollution would spread far and wide, as homes previously unaffected by road noise would become affected (1).
- Shropshire Star 05/09/2019 noted that chartered surveyors and property owners had raised concerns that noise and visual modelling had been insufficient when it came to the Newtown by pass.

The problems caused by noise that would come from traffic on the NWR are likely to be underestimated

5. Landscape

After spending many thousands of pounds, the Council has now decided to abandon its plan to include an embankment/dam as part of the river crossing. As a result, the design now involves raising the road on pillars across the floodplain. There has been **NO** consultation about this massive visual intrusion which would dominate the landscape of Shrewsbury's unique 'Green Wedge' and make noise impacts worse. It would also be **HUGELY** more expensive



THERE ARE ALTERNATIVES

The Council says

“Alternatives to building a relief road have been considered” (1).

If you’ve considered them, then show us the evidence!

- Publish the full results of your alternative considerations. The only document currently available dates from 2007 and that wasn’t comprehensive.

For the past ten years Shropshire Council has:

- reduced or eliminated many bus services,
- Reduced Park & Ride (and still hasn’t restored Oxon Park & Ride).
- Promoted painted cycle lanes which according to Department for Transport (2) and user groups are ineffective and unsafe.

43% of drivers
say they would drive
less if there was
better public
transport (3)

By comparison:

- Conservative Essex completed their Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan and are now receiving £7.3m from the DfT’s Active Travel Fund to make it happen (4).
- Cornwall Council is piloting a county-wide bus partnership with the council stipulating the routes and through ticketing.
- Oxford is getting quiet e-buses part paid by DfT following a successful bid. While across the country employers are preparing for more flexibility and less commuting to offices.



Shrewsbury High St.

Shropshire needs:

- **MORE not less buses!**
- A bus station fit for the 21st century close to the railway station and an easy walk into town.
- Reliable bus services, with priority over cars, cheap fares, integrated ticketing and connections, seven days a week with services 6 am to midnight.
- A bus partnership organised by Shropshire Council to stipulate routes and frequencies.



Cuts in bus services isolate people

Shropshire needs:

- **to make walking (rather than driving) easier**
- Low traffic neighbourhoods for safe, pleasant and healthy living
- 20 mph to replace 30 mph as the default speed limit in residential areas - it's seven times safer (4). In addition, a 20 mph default speed limit on streets and roads where pedestrians, bikes and vehicles mix will reduce carbon (5).
- Footways free from obstructions and wide enough for two double buggies to pass and gritted in winter.
- Walking routes that don't involve too much waiting for cars to pass, with the 'green phase' turning green quicker and staying green for longer in places where waiting is necessary.



**Less traffic and slower traffic
is better for people and environment**

Shropshire needs:

- **better facilities for cycling:**
- Fixed armadillos/wands to separate heavy vehicles from cycles.
- Secure bike parking provided at all reasonable destinations.
- E-bike loans to be provided by Shropshire Council.



38% of people agree with the following (6):

“Many of the journeys of less than two miles that I now make by car I could just as easily cycle”

Don't forget the visitors!

- Encourage visitors to arrive by train, coach or bus.
- A welcoming bus station would be a great start!
- Car visitors to be offered Park & Ride buses at short and regular intervals.
- E-bikes on hire.

**Shropshire Needs to lose its 'road tinted spectacles'
and fully SUPPORT ACTIVE TRAVEL
Roads do nothing to reverse Shropshire's above average
levels of obesity and overweight (7)**

References:

Introduction

- (1) <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-52064509>

Finances:

- (1) Freedom of information request
- (2) CPRE 2017 <https://www.cpre.org.uk/resources/the-end-of-the-road-challenging-the-road-building-consensus/>

Congestion

- (1) CPRE 2017 <https://www.cpre.org.uk/resources/the-end-of-the-road-challenging-the-road-building-consensus/>

Climate:

- (1) BEIS statistics <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/uk-local-authority-and-regional-carbon-dioxide-emissions-national-statistics-2005-to-2018> - excluding trains and motorways
- (2) Zero Carbon Shropshire <https://zerocarbonshropshire.org/about-us/>
- (3) BBC News <https://www.theccc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Sector-summary-Surface-transport.pdf>

Inequality:

- (1) <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/uk-local-authority-and-regional-carbon-dioxide-emissions-national-statistics-2005-to-2018> - excluding trains and motorways
- (2) <https://newsroom.shropshire.gov.uk/2020/10/communities-benefitting-funding/>
- (3) Exploring the economic benefits of strategic roads, DfT, 2017
- (4) <https://www.shropshirestar.com/news/politics/2017/05/16/new-shropshire-council-leader-peter-nutting-handed-poisoned-chalice-says-labour-group-leader>

Environment

Air quality:

- (1) <https://www.rcplondon.ac.uk/projects/outputs/every-breath-we-take-lifelong-impact-air-pollution>
- (2) the best of times the worst of times Paul Behrens

Wildlife:

- (1) <https://shrewsburybigtownplan.org/projects/the-shrewsbury-green-network/>

Noise:

Traffic Noise in Rural Areas - personal experiences of people affected
(Transport for Quality of Life and The Noise Association)

There are alternatives:

- (1) Shropshire Council <https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/media/14550/shrewsbury-north-west-relief-road-faqs-2020-v8.pdf>
- (2) Department for Transport LTN 1/20
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/906344/cycle-infrastructure-design-ltn-1-20.pdf
- (3) Will Quince MP <https://www.willquince.com/news/essex-receive-ps7358700-boost-cycling-and-walking>
- (4) 20s Plenty For Us <http://www.20splenty.org/>
- (5) This was agreed at the 3rd global ministerial conference in Stockholm in February this year (2020)
- (6) Department for Transport Walking and Cycling Statistics 2017
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/736909/walking-and-cycling-statistics-england-2017.pdf
- (7) Public Health England
<https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/search/obesity#page/0/gid/1/pat/6/par/E12000005/ati/202/cid/4/page-options/ovw-do-o>

