

THE SHREWSBURY NWRR: NOT NEEDED, VERY EXPENSIVE AND HIGHLY DAMAGING



Evidence from the No Way! Coalition of Residents and
Environmental Groups Opposed to the NWRR

April 2010



www.nowaygroup.org.uk

Five Reasons the NWRR Should Not Be Funded

1. The NWRR is not needed: the level of congestion in Shrewsbury does not justify this level of expense
2. The road would cause significant damage to landscape and ecosystems
3. Alternatives are cheaper and more sustainable
4. The Highways Agency's own data shows that bypasses create traffic.
5. The Carbon Impact of the NWRR undermines the West Midlands commitment to reduce climate change impact

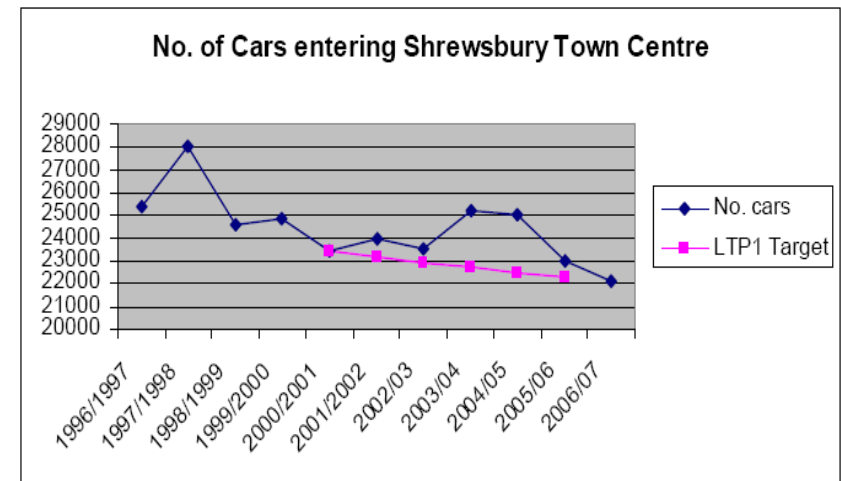
1. Congestion in Shrewsbury does not merit this level of expense

The road is not needed. Congestion in Shrewsbury is minor compared to other towns and is reducing. A recent pilot traffic scheme in the town showed great potential to reduce it further, without the NWRR - even with Shrewsbury's role as a growth point. Please see *Notes* for more details.

- 1.1 According to the Council the primary purpose of the NWRR is to reduce traffic in the town centre, however, in reality it would only impact on one route close to the centre (Smithfield Road) and even there would only reduce current levels by 1 car in 6. The Council could and should seek to reduce congestion by better traffic management and demand management which would benefit the whole town centre.
- 1.2 Congestion is not a problem in Shrewsbury compared to other areas in the region. At off-peak times it takes 7 minutes to cross town, and 17 minutes at peak, a delay of only ten minutes in a town with a population of more than 95,000. Moreover, the Council claim that "all traffic between areas to the North and West of Shrewsbury has to pass through the town centre as there is no acceptable alternative route". **This is false.** See attached maps showing the perfectly acceptable existing routes.

- 1.3 The Council's latest data shows that traffic has reduced by 21% since 1997/8, meeting the Local Transport Plan 1 target (see Figure 1 below), without the need for the NWRR. Moreover, a recent Shrewsbury Traffic Reduction Trial demonstrated the potential for further reductions by switching to cycling, bus and walking.

Figure 1: Reduction in Town Centre Traffic in Shrewsbury



From Shropshire Local Development Framework Core Strategy, Transport and Accessibility Topic Paper, July 2008

- 1.4 New developments due to Shrewsbury's role as a growth point need not generate congestion provided that development is planned in line with the Government's Planning Policy Statement on Climate Change which is designed to minimise carbon emissions including those from transport needs of new developments. Moreover, from a development perspective the road neither releases new housing land nor provides better access to a major housing area.

2 The road would cause significant damage to landscape and ecosystems.

The NWRR would cut through high ground overshadowing the historic centre of Shrewsbury. It would carve a swathe through beautiful and historic countryside, which the Council has otherwise always viewed as Shrewsbury's 'green wedge' in its Local Plan and which is an asset for local people and visitors alike. Shropshire Council's Environmental Impact Assessment shows that the NWRR would do severe damage to valuable and unique landscapes and have "significant adverse impact on biodiversity and earth heritage"¹. Although the EIA shows some limited potential for air quality benefits, these would only be realised in a small area of the town's newly extended town centre Air Quality Management Area, and would only be short term unless tied to demand management measures such as congestion charging.

3 Alternatives to the NWRR are effective and sustainable

3.1 Shropshire County Council have done a lot of good work on transport in Shrewsbury which is already showing benefits in reduced traffic and increased cycling, walking and bus use. We support these schemes and think that they should be continued and expanded. We particularly welcome the cycling demonstration town successful bid. In particular we would like to see:

- Individual sustainable travel planning.
- Better promotion of park and ride with improved facilities,
- More crossings for pedestrians,
- Improvements to the traffic flows around Chester St.
- Better public transport between the north and south of the town.
- Fewer parking spaces in the town centre.
- Signing and education to steer through drivers away from the town centre

3.2 As demonstrated by Shrewsbury's recent traffic trial, there is real potential for a shift to cycling, walking and bus. This could be achieved

¹ para 9.5.12 of the Environmental Assessment

through the proven TravelSmart approach, which reduces car use by 10-14% through personalised travel planning. This approach motivates people to switch from using their cars and has been shown by the Department of Transport to be cost effective and to provide long lasting reductions in car traffic.² Cycling and walking have been identified by Department of Health as key ways of tackling obesity. The Councils own assessment shows that traffic levels in the lanes to the North west of the town don't justify building the road.

4 The Highways Agency's own data shows that bypasses create traffic.

The Highways Agency carry-out post-opening evaluation reports on major road building projects. These show that road developers have trouble modelling traffic growth and road costs accurately, that bypasses often don't reduce journey times, instead they shift the problem a few miles and pull in traffic from other areas. They can also remove trade from town centres.³

5 The Carbon Impact of the NWRR undermines the West Midlands commitment to reduce climate change impact

The NWRR would encourage an unacceptable increase in carbon emissions through an increase in traffic. The figures provided by Shropshire County Council (July 07) show an estimated rise in CO2 emissions from road traffic in the town of 13% if the scheme is built and we consider this to be a conservative estimate. This is contrary to local and national commitments to reduce carbon emissions. Surely if we're to spend millions on transport for the town it should make some contribution to CO2 reduction targets, in line with the West Midlands commitment to a low carbon economy and reduction in its climate change impact.

² March 2010 Evaluation of the 14 Travel Smart Pilots in England
<http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/sustainable/smarterchoices/programmes/>

³ 'Investing In Road Building: The Highways Agency's billion pound traffic gamble' Campaign for Better Transport 2010

Notes

1.1 The Council have still to make a clear case that the damaging, expensive NWRR is needed. In the last set of transport modelling which has been made public, (Shropshire County Council's second round TIF bid November 2006), the Council claimed that "There is a significant current or emerging congestion problem and that the [TIF] package has the potential to tackle it effectively". In support of this it claimed that "the traffic model estimated that on average it takes twice as long to travel through the town in the peak times than the inter peak periods". They didn't say that this delay was just 7 minutes! In the Appendix their bid says:

- the biggest average delay at a traffic "hotspot" is 4 minutes (Chester St/Cross St).
- crossing town from Heath Gates to Bridge Street/Claremont Street takes an average 7.38 minutes in "freeflow traffic conditions" and 15.57 minutes at peak afternoon rush hour.

We note that latest estimates in the Council's current bid are slightly higher at 17 minutes to cross town, compared to 15.57 minutes in the 2006 modelling, but infer that it does not change the predictions significantly.

The Council's claim that there is no acceptable alternative route is patently false as shown by the map. It is possible to go from the west to north and vice versa using either the outer (A5) or inner ring road systems, avoiding the town centre. The segment without roads to the north-west of the town is an area of outstanding landscape beauty with areas of SSSI status. This is readily seen by comparing the map with the study of landscape character carried out by CPRE.

1.2 a. Re the LTP target, the number of cars entering Shrewsbury Town Centre has decreased from 29,000 per day in 1997/8 to 23,000 per day in 2006/7 meeting the LTP1 target. Shropshire Local Development Framework Core Strategy, Transport and Accessibility Topic Paper, July '08 <http://www.shropshire.gov.uk/onecouncil.nsf/open/9F27FFF920EFF05C802574330056A6D2>

b. The trial re-routed traffic within the town centre and showed an 8% increase in total numbers of people coming into the town but a 16% reduction in car traffic. There was a 52% increase in the number of cyclists, a 17% increase in pedestrians and a 4-5% increase in use of park and ride.

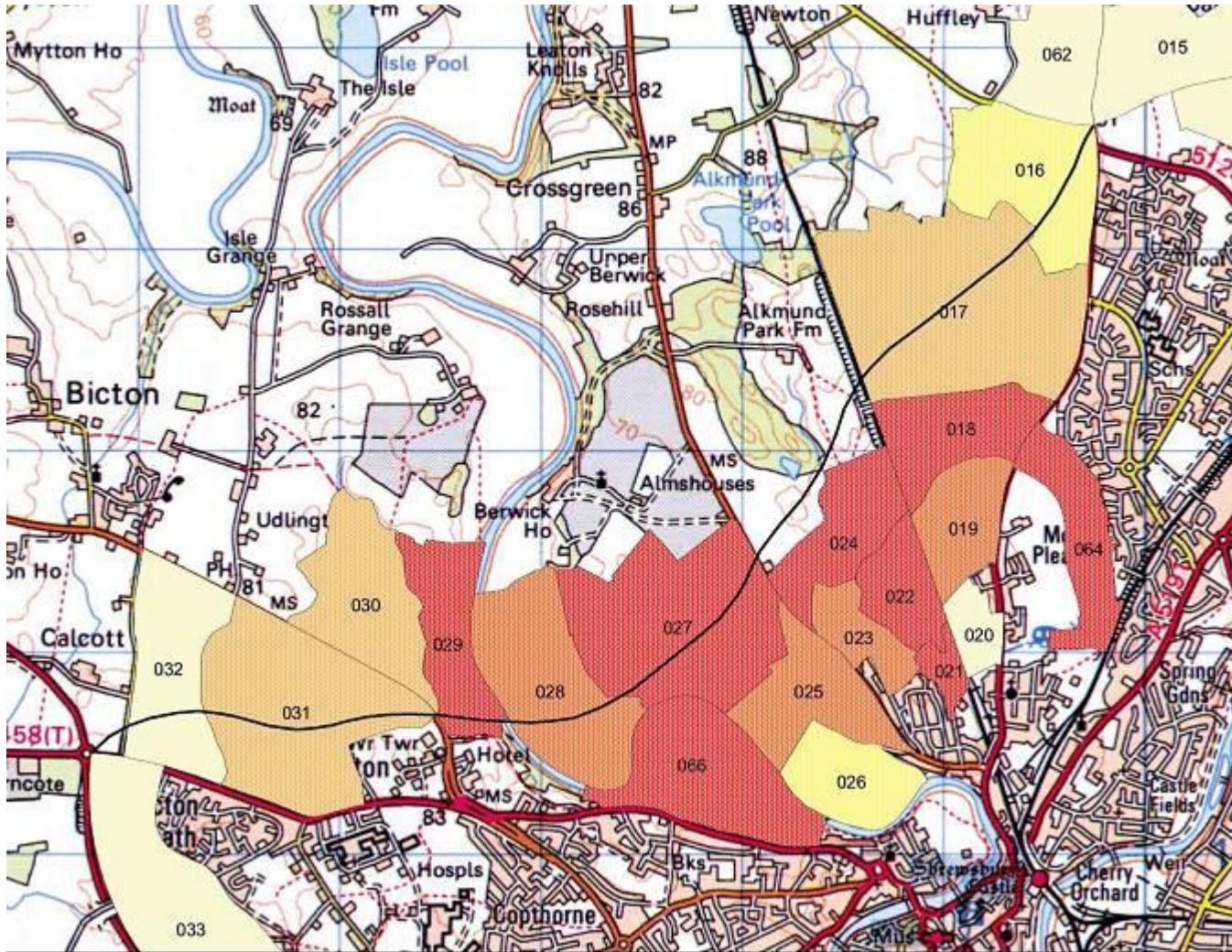
1.3 the Shropshire draft Core Strategy indicates a 12% increase in population for the county between 2008 and 2026 (a total of 36,800 people). However the number of over 65s in the county will increase by 43,500 which indicates that the numbers in work and full time education will actually decrease. There is also likely to be much more home and flexible working and less commuting so it shouldn't be difficult to keep peak hour traffic under control without a NWRR.

1.4 The Department Communities and Local Government have introduced a Planning Policy Statement on Climate Change, which puts climate change at the heart of the planning system - by ensuring that new communities are located and designed in a way which reduces the need to travel and makes best use of low carbon and renewable energy. The PPS will apply to all development, not just homes and makes clear references to the Code for Sustainable Homes. <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/ppsclimatechange>

The No Way! Group has the support of the Shropshire Campaign to Protect Rural England, the Shropshire Wildlife Trust, Shrewsbury Friends of the Earth, Shrewsbury Civic Society, HCF Residents Group, Coton Hill Residents Group and the Mount Residents Group.

None of the candidates in the 2005 election supported the NWRR.

Map of Landscape Character of Town and the north-west green wedge



Shrewsbury CPRE did a comprehensive landscape study of the land around the town over 4 years. The 2,500 hectares studied was split into 66 parcels, each parcel was graded according to objective criteria. Only 14 of the 66 parcels were graded as Category 1, of these 14 parcels 8 are in the NW segment along the proposed route of the NWRR. Most of the rest are along the River Severn at Belvidere. The map right shows the NW area of the town with the category 1 areas in red, category 2 in dark orange and so on down to pale yellow with the proposed black route NWRR shown.

Stop the NWRR - it's not needed, it's expensive and it would destroy forever valuable landscapes

