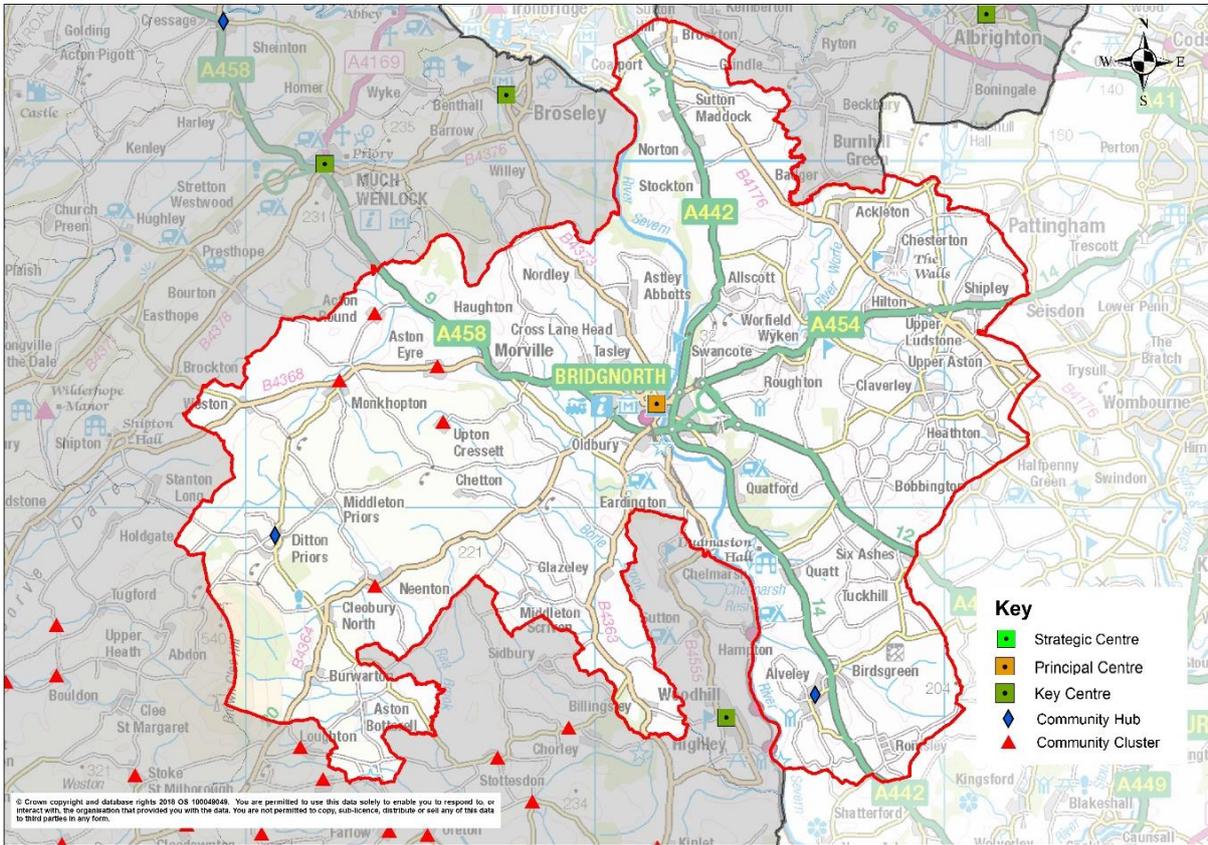


6. Bridgnorth Place Plan Area

6.1. The Bridgnorth Place Plan Area is located in east Shropshire. The Place Plan area contains the Principal Centre of Bridgnorth; the proposed Community Hubs of Alveley and Ditton Priors; and numerous other small villages and hamlets.



Settlement Type	Settlement Name
Principal Centre:	Bridgnorth
Community Hubs:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alveley Ditton Priors
Community Clusters:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acton Round, Aston Eyre, Monkhopton and Upton Cressett Neenton

6.2. If your village is not included in the list of Community Hubs or Community Clusters above, then this means that it will be 'countryside' for planning policy purposes, where new development is strictly controlled in accordance with national and local planning policies.

Principal Centre: Bridgnorth

- 6.3. Bridgnorth (2016 population 12,260) is the third largest town in Shropshire and acts as a principal service centre not just for the town, but for a sizeable area of eastern Shropshire. Located at the junction of the A458 and the A442, it is within relatively easy commuting distance of Telford, Shrewsbury, Kidderminster, Wolverhampton and the Black Country.
- 6.4. The town straddles the River Severn, and comprises a Low Town and a High Town perched on cliffs 100ft above. The combination of medieval street pattern and many fine old buildings has created a unique town of considerable charm which, together with its steam railway, helps to support a thriving tourist economy.
- 6.5. There are strong environmental constraints in Bridgnorth, mainly due to the river and its floodplain, natural topography and areas of high landscape value to the south and north of the town. It is also bounded on its eastern side by the metropolitan Green Belt.
- 6.6. There are also some significant planning challenges and key planning issues for Bridgnorth including:
 - The need to provide more affordable housing;
 - Addressing the current imbalance between housing and employment by making additional employment land available for local business growth and for inward investment;
 - Improving access to community facilities, open space and the surrounding countryside.
- 6.7. A local economic growth strategy is being prepared for Bridgnorth which will set out Shropshire Council's local economic delivery plan in this area, helping the Council to address priorities outlined in the overarching Economic Growth Strategy at a local level. This strategy will also have a key role in supporting existing business growth and attracting new business and investment into not just the town but also the surrounding areas.
- 6.8. A detailed profile of the market town of Bridgnorth which provides more detailed information about key local characteristics and issues is available here: <https://shropshire.gov.uk/media/9682/bridgnorth.pdf>
- 6.9. Identified infrastructure priorities for Bridgnorth include:
 - Local and strategic highway improvements.
 - Waste water treatment and sewerage capacity.
 - Assessment of local flood risks in and around the town.
 - Reinforcement of electricity supply capacity to existing employment areas.
 - Further provision of significant accessed and serviced employment land.
 - Provision of additional leisure, recreation, amenity and cemetery facilities.
 - Further information on existing infrastructure constraints and priorities are available within the Bridgnorth Place Plan.
- 6.10. As the Local Plan Review progresses additional infrastructure requirements are likely to become apparent.

Development Strategy

- 6.11. Bridgnorth will act as a Principal Centre and contribute towards the strategic growth objectives in the east of the County. It is expected that Bridgnorth will continue to explore ways in which it can effectively fulfil its role as the second largest principal centre in Shropshire.
- 6.12. The Local Plan will help to secure a better balance between housing and employment by providing for around 1,500 dwellings and at least 16 hectares of employment development between 2016 and 2036. In the period 2016-17, 23 dwellings were completed and there are a further 565 dwellings committed through planning permission, prior approval or site allocation. Therefore, a further 912 dwellings will need to be identified on new housing sites to support the housing growth objectives of the Local Plan Review.
- 6.13. Between 2006/07 and 2016/17 the average housing delivery rate was some 66 dwellings per year. The delivery of the preferred level of growth for the Local Plan Review period will require an annual build rate of 75 dwellings per year. Although the preferred level of growth is higher than the established completion rate, which has been constrained by exceptional circumstances associated with the commencement of development on the allocated sites, it is only slightly higher than the SAMDev Plan requirement to deliver 70 dwellings per year and this is considered to be achievable. A significant mixed use development at Tasley was allocated in the existing Local Plan. Delivery of this site was delayed by particular exceptional circumstances but development is anticipated during the early part of the Local Plan Review period.
- 6.14. To assist delivery of a level of employment growth which is balanced with the level of proposed housing, a minimum of 16 hectares of employment land will be required in Bridgnorth over the revised Plan period. At 1st April 2016, there were around 12 hectares of land committed through planning permission or as a site allocation. At least 4 hectares of additional floorspace will therefore need to be identified to achieve a balanced approach. However, one of the key challenges for Bridgnorth includes the urgent need to address an existing structural imbalance between housing and employment and to provide for additional growth by existing businesses, and this, in turn, generates a need for the identification of significant additional employment land. This issue was recognised in the Examination Report on the SAMDev Plan which stated that, "Bridgnorth is the second largest of 5 market towns in Shropshire and is located on the western edge of the West Midland conurbation. It therefore offers considerable potential to attract investment into Shropshire and to trade into these larger urban markets" and so "to accommodate the long term future of the town it is necessary to open up new areas". This is also supported by key market signals in the local economy following the departure of some key local employers from the Bridgnorth area. In response to these issues, Shropshire Council therefore proposes to identify additional employment land capable of delivering a further 12 hectares of employment floorspace.
- 6.15. The proposed pattern of future development sites in Bridgnorth recognises existing topographical and landscape constraints, together with the impact of unimplemented development at Tasley and the relationship of the A458 Bridgnorth by-pass and available sites relative to existing services and facilities. Much of the potential for larger infill development and small additions to the town has already been captured through the SAMDev Plan and the previous development of large brownfield sites. However, the Local Plan Review process

incorporates a strategic Green Belt Review which provides the potential for the release of Green Belt land in 'exceptional circumstances'. The Local Plan Review therefore provides an opportunity to plan for the long term sustainable development of the town through the planned release of Green Belt land.

Summary of residential requirements

	Number of Dwellings
Preferred dwelling guideline 2016-2036	1,500
Dwellings completed in 2016-17*	23
Dwellings committed as at 31 st March 2017*	565
Remaining dwelling requirement to be identified	912
Dwellings to be allocated	850
Balance/Windfall allowance**	62

**Analysis of Housing Supply as at 31st March 2018 will be provided towards the end of 2018.*

***Local Plan policies will allow flexibility for appropriate windfall, rural exception and cross-subsidy development.*

Summary of employment land requirements

	Employment Land (Ha)
Preferred employment land guideline 2016-2036	16
Additional provision to address local circumstances	12
Commitments and allocations as at 31 st March 2017*	12
Employment land shortfall	16
Employment land to be allocated	16
Balance/Windfall allowance**	0

**Analysis of Employment Supply at 31st March 2018 will be provided towards the end of 2018.*

***Local Plan policies will allow flexibility for appropriate windfall development.*

6.16. In light of the issues and challenges identified above, Shropshire Council considers that there is sufficient evidence of 'exceptional circumstances' in Bridgnorth to justify building on the existing urban fabric of the former RAF Stanmore to create a new community as a mixed use 'garden settlement' which would:

- improve local access to community facilities and infrastructure for existing residents;
- help improve access to employment, provide expansion space for existing businesses and support inward investment;
- provide a range of housing opportunities to help meet local needs;
- result in a significant net gain in the quantity, quality and connectivity of public open space;
- significantly improve access to extensive recreational open space and the countryside for existing and future residents;
- create new employment areas on greenfield land within the proposed development area and around Stanmore Industrial Estate complimenting the employment opportunities in the town; and

- deliver a new area of publicly accessible woodland and open space to include Hermitage ridge providing:
 - informal managed footpaths creating functional and recreational linkages between Lower Town and the country park;
 - interpretation boards on the woodland and ecological features; and
 - interpretation boards on The Hermitage caves scheduled monument.
- 6.17. Delivery of the planned growth would take place over an extended period with some development beyond the current Plan period to 2036. For this reason, in addition to the land being released for development, additional land is safeguarded to provide for Bridgnorth's longer term growth needs.
- 6.18. The majority of the Green Belt parcels involved have been individually assessed in the Green Belt Review as causing only moderate or moderate - high harm to the Green Belt if released. Although the combined impacts of release are greater, it is considered that justifiable exceptional circumstances exist and that there will be scope to offset potential adverse impacts by achieving improvements to the 'environmental quality and accessibility' of remaining Green Belt as required by national policy. Opportunities to develop alternative approaches which would provide equivalent outcomes without the release of Green Belt land have been carefully examined but are considered to be less appropriate due to a range of factors including:
- Flood risk;
 - Impacts on areas of high landscape value;
 - Accessibility constraints; and
 - The creation of new housing areas on greenfield land remote from, but dependent on, local facilities, services and employment in the town.
- 6.19. This means that, even though the preferred option would involve the development or safeguarding of a significant area of Green Belt land, the available alternatives are not considered to compare favourably to the creation of a large, mixed use scheme which is able to provide sufficient economies of scale to deliver the benefits highlighted above.

