First, we show that every $\Pi^0_1$ Medvedev degree contains a $\Pi^0_1$ subshift. This answers a question of Steve Simpson, who proved that every $\Pi^0_1$ Medvedev degree contains a 2-dimensional subshift of finite type, i.e., one for which the set of forbidden 2-dimensional words is finite. It also relates to recent work of Cenzer, Dashti and King, who studied $\Pi^0_1$ subshifts. Second, we give a condition on a set of forbidden words that is sufficient to guarantee that the corresponding subshift is nonempty. (Received September 14, 2008)