



# NEWPORT (Shropshire) TOWN COUNCIL

The Guildhall, High St, Newport, Shropshire, TF10 7AR

Tel: 01952 814338 Fax: 01952 825353 Mobile: 07525335575

✉ [townclerk@newportsaloptowncouncil.co.uk](mailto:townclerk@newportsaloptowncouncil.co.uk)

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Telford & Wrekin Council

## **NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN – NEWPORT SHROPSHIRE – ‘FRONTRUNNER’**

### **Introduction**

Newport is a medium sized market town that has supported much of the rural hinterland since the middle ages. As a result of its historical content much of the central area of the Town is a registered conservation area.

The approximate population is circa 12,500, with an electorate of circa 8,500 and some 5500 residential properties.

Newport Town Council is keen to maximise its opportunity to shape the future planning/development needs of Newport that have relevance to both wider national and regional demands and sees the Neighbourhood Plan as an appropriate vehicle to articulate and deliver a pragmatic vision.

### **Defining the Purpose - Discussion**

Newport is the hub of a wider rural area and has a desire to provide a sustainable future for itself and the wider community it supports. There is an acknowledgement that there is a demand for additional housing (including that classed as affordable). Additional housing would require an increase in essential services (e.g. schooling, medical services, drainage, burial ground etc). The Town Council have commented on numerous planning applications in recent years in an attempt to provide a mixture of development which would include increased retail provision and job opportunities. As only a consultee there have been differing levels of success.

Over a number of years The Town Council has expressed desires such as: the development of an arts centre, some sporting/leisure components, increasing car parking capacity in the area of the High Street, coach/taxi/lorry parks. We have also recently engaged with local unitary authorities to encourage Newport's connection to a national cycle route (Millennium Way), which appears to be bearing some fruit. Furthermore, the Town Council has supported applications for multiple occupancy residences (e.g. care homes) that may reduce the demand on the current housing stock. There is also an acknowledgement of the requirement for large scale rented accommodation – Harper Adams Agricultural University is on our door step with a significant student population (circa 1500) and the largest employer in the area.

Parcels of land within the boundary have historical significance and/or considered of great social importance (e.g. the canal basin and playing fields) and defining their future role is considered essential to the development of the Town.

The Town Council is keen to help define the term 'sustainability' to include encouraging/enforcing constructions standards that can maximise longevity yet be able to encompass improving technology and prove to be energy efficient.

## **Defining the Purpose - Summary**

In general the idea is to revitalise Newport to be, a sustainable market town that allows an opportunity of through-life experiences to be achieved for a significant and wide-ranging, proportion of the Newport population. The production of a robust document that forms a part of the planning policy for the Local Planning Authority, articulating well reasoned, justifiable and realistic development for the Town that is in accord with the wishes of the population but mindful of the wider social and economical context.

## **Defining the Neighbourhood**

Our intention is to solely consider the Town of Newport – albeit Newport will consider comments from neighbouring parishes.

## **Resources**

The Town Council operates out of the Guildhall in the High Street (the main thoroughfare of the Town); there is sufficient office space to expand a little. This is currently available but would need some investment from the Town Council which they have resolved to account for.

The Newport Town Council Staff comprises 7 people and there is some capacity to take on additional short-term tasks to support the production of a development plan. However, the low staffing levels mean that we do not have any specific trained skills in planning legislation or practical elements of developing planning policy; as such we would require the assistance of the local unitary authority to provide guidance around a general framework that can complement the Local Development Framework and the access more sophisticated IT and statistical data.

Newport Town Council has 12 councillors and has a separate Planning Committee (comprising 7 members). The Town Council and Planning committee both meet on 11 occasions each year. The Town Councillors are active representatives on a wide range of community groups in the Town for example, the Cottage Care Trust, Cosy Hall (our grand community centre) - and the Newport Regeneration Partnership, as such they are close to a part of those groups that are shapers and movers and have access to volunteers. Furthermore, a few [councillors] are actively pursuing knowledge around the subject – we are funding 2 representatives to attend a National Conference (as part of the National Association of Local Councils [NALC] – Larger Councils Conference) in London at the end of November - a significant training expense on our part .

The Town Council has a budget of approximately £450k with a precept currently just shy of £400k, as such we have some expertise in managing large accounts and have a good understanding of compliance, openness, searching for value for money and documenting our decision making processes. We run a number of significant services such as Street Lighting, a cemetery and allotments and therefore have a reasonably versatile staff.

Neighbouring parishes are likely to be able to support (to a lesser degree) and the Newport Regeneration Partnership has a varied skill-set that can provide some foundation level knowledge and volunteers.

The Town Council recently undertook an exercise to help in providing consistent yet pragmatic comments to planning applications. The initial outcome was a set of planning principles that can inform developers of our general wishes. Issues covered include; a preference to infill brown field sites before Greenfield, that more subsidised (affordable housing is needed), supporting development that will bring employment, maintaining a viable High Street.

### **Delivering Projects**

The funding available for major projects in the Town has been made available in recent years through the Borough Towns Initiative (a Unitary Authority sponsored initiative designed to target investment in the regeneration of towns and town centres, enabling them to become more attractive and accessible to residents and visitors). Delivery required the involvement of the Newport Regeneration Partnership (of which the Town Council is a leading member), supported by the Town Council as a recognised statutory body. So it would be disingenuous of us (The Town Council) to claim sole ownership and delivery of any project.

We have however in the past 2 years:

Worked together to reinstate much of the canal tow path with the aid of Advantage West Midlands grant funding of circa £37k.

Undertaken major works with regard to relocating CCTV to compliment the High Street Regeneration programme (which was responsible for relaying almost all of the High Street paving and rationalising street furniture) and reconfigured our Christmas lighting display with a capital investment of £25k to take advantage of technological improvements (cheaper LED lighting).

Contributed to a major overhaul of the Town's central park area.

### **Summary**

Newport Town Council would request your strong support for our bid to be involved in the infancy of Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDP). As a medieval Market Town we have developed over hundreds of years an established mix of residential housing, retail outlets and employment opportunities. The defining of future sustainable development, that balances competing demands, is considered to be an essential obligation of the Town Council, especially now that resources are becoming more limited. The current Town Council acknowledge they are mere custodians of the Town and that the least they can do is hand it over to the next generation in as good a shape as they were handed it ( though there aspirations are much higher). The Town Council see NDP as an opportunity for the community to be engaged in its future at a grass roots level and a means of really contributing directly to policy.

### ***Electronically signed***

Lee Jakeman  
Town Clerk  
for Newport Town Council