

12 January 2014

PRESS Release – NEWPORT TOWN PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

Since the formation of the Newport Town Plan Steering Group in Feb 2012, the group has been actively engaged in the process of producing a Town Plan. The process has been followed by you as witnessed by various articles in the Newport Advertiser. The contents of this document can influence the Town and Borough councils in their decision making processes, indeed we see the Plan being, without a doubt, the voice of the people, particularly after having had a 26% return rate from the questionnaire. The purpose of this letter is to update the Town on the findings of the questionnaire.

The final consultation of the views of the Townsfolk commenced in early November 2013 when 5,500 questionnaires were posted through the letterboxes of the residents of the Town. The response to the questionnaires was fantastic with 1403 returning their questionnaires, the information within these has been analysed and compiled by the Shropshire Rural Community Council. The Steering Group have reviewed this DRAFT report and from the response of the Townsfolk it is clear, from the wealth of data within the report, they care deeply about their town and what happens to it. From our review the following areas were highlighted as areas of interest to the town and therefore I have provided this release based upon the DRAFT report for inclusion in the paper.

A Wonderful Safe Place to Live. 80% of respondents to the questionnaire describe Newport as a friendly place with a strong community spirit. Facilities such as shops, schools were seen as good and people appreciated having everything within easy walking distance. The townsfolk also valued highly the green space within the town and surrounding area and wished to see these areas nurtured for all to enjoy. The town was also felt to be safe place to live with 99% of respondents feeling safe during the day; however at night this figure fell to 59%. Even given these encouraging statistics 72% still supported a greater police presence in the town.

Parking. Strong opinion was seen on parking, both within the town and in residential areas with 66% of the surveys returned stating that they wished to see short stay parking on the high street being enforced. However, there was little support for a multi-storey car park with only 33% supporting such an initiative.

Built Environment The question's associated with the built environment of Newport supported the provision of new houses; however, only 26% supporting more than 40 homes per year being built, with 63% wanting development to be in infill between existing properties or brown land. The most popular response to the type of new housing was for smaller dwellings for families, with 75% of the responses supporting these homes to be eco-friendly.

The emotive questions on retail outlets saw the majority of responses supporting the development of the towns' retail choice both in the high street and the fringes of the town. However, the response with regard to supermarkets overwhelmingly supported low cost supermarkets (28%); the next highest responses to this question were DIY stores 15%, Cafes 14% and Menswear 12%. The types of supermarket requested by name covered brands such as Aldi, Tesco, and Morrison's and of course Sainsbury; however, Sainsbury's only received 20 from 992 responses to this question, this equalled 2%! There was also some strong views on the need to smarter up the high street and in particular the need to improve the appearance of Central Square and the Market Hall.

Environment. The questions supporting the environmental issues within the town were well received, with the strongest opinion coming from the lack of a recycling centre for the town, to quote SRCC "Such a strong body of opinion towards a single issue is unusual. In fact, in 10yrs of carrying out the analysis of community questionnaire data we have seen very few issues dominating such an event." Of the 1349 respondents to the question on recycling 61% were not satisfied or very dissatisfied with current provision for recycling in the Town. There is also a staggering statistic from the YES/NO question "Would you wish to see on a community recycling centre" which saw **96%** of the respondents voting YES. There were also comments on the need to keep our streets clean and free from dog fouling.

Transport. The main mode of transport was no surprise, with the Car still being king. However, with regard to public transport 56% of respondents stated that they felt that the transport system was fair to good. With regard to a rail link with Stafford & Telford 78% of the respondents supported such an initiative. From the questions on travel and transport it was evident that in the main, journeys and commuting activities were to Telford.

From the outset in Feb 2012, it has always been the intent of The Newport Parish Plan Steering Group, that the Newport Parish Plan be a document that is produced after consultation with the local community. This consultation has now taken place and we now have the data and evidence on which to produce the plan. We are overwhelmed by the response and it is clear that the Townsfolk did take the time to complete the questionnaire, and they did indeed "Fill It in – Don't Bin It!"

The next step is for us to produce the Town Plan, which although it is not authoritative, will be very influential particularly as we have had such a strong response and hence it is the voice of the people, from our youngest to our oldest citizens. As a consequence it will have a gravitas that cannot be ignored. The Town Plan to be completed by the end of March 2014. Lastly, on behalf of the Steering Group please can I ask that a big thank you to those of who submitted their questionnaires be placed in the paper.

Yours Sincerely
L D BOARDMAN
Chairman Newport Town Plan Steering Group