

NEWPORT (Shropshire) TOWN COUNCIL

**NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN
2017 – 2031**



REGULATION 15 CONSULTATION STATEMENT

NOVEMBER 2017

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INTRODUCTION

This Consultation Statement supports the Newport Neighbourhood Development Plan submission in compliance with Section 15(2) of Part 5 of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012. This Consultation Statement contains:

- *Details of the persons and bodies that were consulted about the proposed Neighbourhood Development Plan*
- *An explanation of how the general public, agencies and stakeholders were consulted*
- *A summary of main matters and concerns that arose through the consultation process*
- *A description of how the matters raised and representations made have been considered and where relevant addressed in the Neighbourhood Plan.*

THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (Localism Act 2011) require the preparation of a Consultation Statement to set out the consultation undertaken. In compliance with these Regulations and with the advice of the Local planning Authority the Newport Neighbourhood Development Plan has engaged with, and involved residents, local community groups, and other organisations with an interest in the Town and in the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan.

This Statement sets out the stages of consultation and engagement in which local people and interested groups and organisations have been involved. The aim of the consultation was to ensure from the outset that there was as much understanding as possible of the reasons for preparing the Plan and its contents. This Statement explains the range of techniques used to gather information and people's views and how this was used to produce a Neighbourhood Plan to manage future development and conserve the qualities and character of Newport.

The Neighbourhood Development Plan sets out how land should be used to meet the needs of the community.

This Statement demonstrates that there has been extensive community engagement that has informed the content and Policies of the Plan and that the information gathered has been openly shared with local people and the consultees. Newport Town Council has achieved openness and transparency throughout the consultation process and the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan by:

- *making information available to the community;*
- *gathering and assessing the views expressed by individuals and groups and responding to the matters raised;*
- *obtaining information on current or proposed development in the Neighbourhood Area;*
- *making sure that all information, views and comments readily accessible to the public through paper and online means;*

- *gathering a wide range of baseline evidence and information using a range of consultation methods;*
- *Being able to demonstrate that from the outset the Plan preparation process the Town Council has fully engaged with its local community to produce the Plan as required prior to independent examination.*

1. DESIGNATION OF THE NEIGHBOURHOOD AREA

On 12th December 2012 Newport Town Council resolved under Minute number 177/12-13, to produce a Neighbourhood Plan with the Neighbourhood Area consisting of the whole of the administrative area of the Town Council. The Town Council considered the area to be appropriate because it is entirely covered by the Town Council. The Town Council was approved as a “front runner” by government following its application in November 2011. The Town Council consulted Neighbouring Parishes (within Telford & Wrekin) who all expressed the desire not to be included in the designated area. The Town Council formed a Steering Group comprising Council Members and representatives from local community groups to lead the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan. The Town Council submitted its application for designation of its Neighbourhood Area to Telford & Wrekin Council on 14th January 2013.

After a six weeks consultation period that ended on 5th April 2013, Telford & Wrekin Council resolved at the Cabinet meeting on 30th May 2013 to support the Neighbourhood Area application and approve the designation of the Newport Neighbourhood Area. No responses were received during the consultation period and a formal notice was issued on 15th July 2013.

Following the decision to produce a Neighbourhood Plan the first meeting of the Steering Group took place on 5th November 2013 and since then the Steering Group has continued to meet recurrently. *(A list of Steering Group meetings is included at Appendix 7 and can be viewed on the Town Council's website).* Notes of the meetings were made available on the Town Council's website as well as the consultation evidence gathered by the Steering Group *(listed at Appendix 8).*

2. PRE-REGULATION 14 CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

In their lead role the NDP Steering Group adopted a number of principles in relation to community and stakeholder engagement. These principles are set out below:

- *all information collected to support the preparation of the Plan was openly available*
- *all communications and approaches to the community were open and transparent*
- *all consultation events were open to the public and promoted and publicised in the most appropriate and effective manner*
- *regular press releases and public notices were issued by the Town Council to provide up dates*
- *progress reports on the preparation of the NDP were regularly presented to and discussed at Town Council meetings that were open to the public*

The Steering Group's aim was to consult as widely as possible to capture the mood of the community and their aspirations for their Town. The Steering Group sought to gather the opinions of those not normally engaged in such a process or development issues. The Steering Group agreed on a broad programme of planned consultation and evidence gathering.

Consultation events were held at the Guildhall, the Town Library and other well-known and accessible locations such as the Pheasant Public House (*The Phez*) and the Cosy Hall. The events were widely publicised and well attended. This engagement with the local community provided the Steering Group with the essential information necessary to prepare the Neighbourhood Plan. The information gathered is summarised in the Evidence review document published in December 2016 and forms the basis of the NDP Policies.

During 2013 and 2014 a Town Plan for Newport was prepared. The Town Plan was based on a survey that gathered a broad range of information about housing, jobs and employment, open spaces, recreation, community services and facilities, schools, transport and accessibility, shopping, community safety, sustainability and the environment.

This information was gathered by means of a household questionnaire sent to some 5500 households in November 2013. 1403 replies were received, a response rate of 26%. This was considered a high rate of return and consequently the results were considered to be a reliable and accurate indication of the views of local people. The questionnaire was compiled with the assistance of the Shropshire Community Council (SRCC). The Community Council also assisted with processing the data to provide a clear picture of current issues and the matters of great importance to local people.

The information and evidence from this survey provided important base line data for the NDP.

At the same time Telford & Wrekin Council was preparing a new Local Plan for the Borough as a whole. The preparation of the Local Plan involved numerous surveys and consultation exercises that provided the Steering Group with the most up to date information and evidence in key areas that guided and informed the preparation of the NDP.

The process of consultation and engagement was undertaken with the active support of Steering Group members and participation of other Council members, Town Council staff, local volunteers, consultant advisors and Telford & Wrekin Council officers.

In 2015 the Town Council commissioned the consultants AECOM to gather and evaluate the available evidence from documentary sources and workshops. AECOM used the outputs from Neighbourhood Plan Policy Workshop facilitated by URS on 8th. September 2014 held at the Cosy Hall in Newport town centre.

Attendees were drawn from the:

- Town Council
- Newport 21
- The Shrewsbury and Newport Canal Trust
- Newport and District Allotments Society
- Newport Cricket Club
- Newport Civic Society
- Newport Centre (visitor information)
- Harper Adams University
- Telford & Wrekin Council

The workshop mapped constraints and opportunities, identified areas and matters of concern and matters to be included in the NDP.

The workshop used a number of techniques including a visioning exercise to create a picture of Newport in 2030. This was followed by an exercise to identify objectives for the Plan leading to list of potential policies for the NDP. The findings and conclusions of the workshop contributed on the published Evidence Review and helped form the basis of the Plan's Policies and the draft NDP that was published for consultation at the Regulation 14 stage.

AECOM identified relevant documentary sources and highlighted the matters and issues considered to be important for the preparation of the NDP. The evidence was derived from several sources:

- The relevant statutory planning documents
- The Town Plan
- The survey evidence gathered for the emerging Telford & Wrekin Local Plan
- National planning policy and guidance documents and statements
- The 2011 Census
- The 2016 Telford & Wrekin Annual Monitoring Report
- A Town profile prepared by Telford & Wrekin Council in 2016
- The results and outcomes from community engagement and consultation

AECOM identified a number of key issues

- Housing
- Open space and the environment
- Jobs and the local economy
- Community infrastructure

This allowed the Steering Group to highlight four critical themes that they used to form the basis of policy options for the NDP. These were:

- Houses in multiple occupation
- Protection of green spaces
- Building sustainable properties of good quality
- The regeneration of land at Water Lane

The range of documents considered and the information gathered provided the basis of objectives, policy options for the NDP and the reasons and justification for the selection of policies for inclusion in the Plan.

This enabled the NDP to reflect the communities' aspirations for Newport over the Plan period and allowed the Steering Group to determine the most suitable and effective Policies for Newport and its residents to achieve a Neighbourhood Plan that makes a positive contribution to sustainable development as required at Examination.

The links between the evidence gathered, the objectives defined and the Policies selected make sure that the NDP reflects the needs, aspiration and expectations of local people as expressed through consultation and engagement.

In particular residents views on:

- housing
- jobs and the economy
- supporting the High Street
- conserving the Town's historic character and buildings
- green spaces and play areas
- The Shrewsbury and Newport Canal
- Water Lane
- accessibility
- the landscape and wildlife
- community facilities

This has provided strategic areas that have been translated into the Policies that make up the NDP. The responses and representations received from residents, the business community, community groups and local organisations that allowed a draft NDP to be produced together with supporting evidence, Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitat Regulation Assessment (HRA) Screening Statements for Regulation 14 Pre-Submission Consultation.

3. REGULATION 14 PRE-SUBMISSION CONSULTATION

The Pre-Submission Regulation 14 Consultation was held between 2nd May and 5.00 pm on 16th June 2017. The Neighbourhood Development Plan and the accompanying Strategic Environmental assessment (SEA) and Habitat Regulations Assessment Screening Statements were made available on the Town Council's website and copies were emailed to residents and other interested parties on request. The document was also available on the Telford & Wrekin Council website. Paper copies could be viewed at the Guildhall and the Newport Library. The following statutory bodies were also consulted at this stage:

- Telford & Wrekin Council;
- Natural England;
- The Environment Agency
- Historic England.

This Regulation 15 Consultation Statement summarises the statutory and non-statutory consultation undertaken with the local community and other relevant bodies and stakeholders. It describes how concerns have been addressed and the changes and amendments that have been made in response to the consultation.

There were 89 formal written responses taking a variety of forms; questionnaires, letters and emails that expressed a range of views. The vast majority of comments were supportive of the Policies within the NDP. The long-term aim of the Town Council to improve and protect green space was strongly supported by many residents, particularly to the south of the Town. In response to this, additional Local Green Spaces have been added to the NDP at Broadway, Meadow View Road, Shuker Close, Hawkstone Drive, Broomfield Place and the proposed green space at Gravelly Drive was removed for alternative community use. In general respondents considered that there was little need to amend the proposed Policies other than minor alterations to provide consistency, clarity and completeness.

Separate representations were received from Telford & Wrekin Council, Natural England, The Environment Agency, Historic England and RPS Consultants on behalf of their client St. Modwen Developments Ltd.

An interim statement on representations received during the Regulation 14 consultation was published on 10th July 2017 and presented to the Town Council.

Of the 89 individual representations received a number were from the same person or interest group and some repeated the same comment a number of times. The majority of comments refer to land off Station Road Newport, known locally as Baddely's Wells. The land at this location within the NDP is part of a larger site owned by Telford & Wrekin Council and allocated by them in their emerging Local Plan for housing as site H13 at the time that the Regulation 14 Consultation document was published. This matter made up well over half of the comments received, with respondents wanting the land left open. However since the Regulation 14 Consultation site H13 has been removed from the emerging Local Plan, as recommended by the Planning Inspector following the examination in public and the issue of the Local Plan proposed modifications, and the site in question has been granted planning permission for housing development. In these circumstances no change to the NDP is required.

This site was also the subject of the representation from RPS on behalf of St. Modwen Developments LTD. Now that the land has planning permission their concern is resolved.

The next largest number of responses relates to the Shrewsbury and Newport Canal that part of which runs through the centre of the Town. Its preservation, enhancement and restoration with the aim of restoring it to navigation and leisure use was supported by residents. Comments and advice from Telford & Wrekin Council also refers to the canal and this together with emerging Local Plan Inspector's proposed modifications have been incorporated into the NDP. The result of this is that the alignment of the canal is protected as residents have requested and its enhancement for wildlife and conservation supported. A particular issue raised by Telford & Wrekin Council and the emerging Local Plan Modifications is the protection of the Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) that is designated around part of the canal. The NDP has been amended to incorporate the wording of the emerging Local Plan Modifications, the representations received from Natural England and the advice from Telford & Wrekin Council. The NDP therefore supports the protection of the canal alignment with any work to restore the waterway being supported as long as it can be demonstrated that appropriate and careful consideration will be given to the protection of the SSSI to conserve and enhance the natural qualities for which it was notified.

A small number comments relate to new housing and developments in general, but as no additional sites above those with existing planning permission are proposed in the NDP no changes are required.

A representation providing additional wording for the NDP was received from Harper Adams University and this has been incorporated into the Plan.

4. THE STATUTORY CONSULTEES

Telford & Wrekin Council does not have any fundamental objections to the NDP. A detailed schedule of comments was attached to the letter from the Council and these were also the subject of a meeting with Council officers on 25th. August 2017. Following the meeting all of the amendments required by Telford & Wrekin Council have been incorporated into the NDP.

Natural England referred to Water Lane, the Canal and Green Infrastructure and their advice has been incorporated into the Plan. Natural England confirmed the NDP to be screened out of the SEA process.

The Environment Agency raised no concerns in respect of Regulation 9 of the Environmental assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (SEA) Screening Statement. The Town Council should therefore consider the NDP to be screened out.

Overall the Regulation 14 Pre-Submission Consultation demonstrates considerable interest in and support for the Newport Neighbourhood Development Plan. The concerns about land off Station Road have been resolved by the granting of planning permission. The representations concerning the Shrewsbury and Newport Canal, the SSSI and open spaces have been resolved by amendments to the NDP. The comments received from Telford & Wrekin Council as Local Planning Authority have been addressed and accommodated by amendments to the NDP in order to make sure that the Plan is in general conformity with the strategic policies in the Development Plan for the local area.

It can be concluded that the representations received during the Regulation 14 consultation and the amendments to the NDP in response to them have resulted in a Neighbourhood Plan that addresses the matters and issues of concern that residents expressed at the beginning of the process. The NDP provides a Plan that fulfills their aspirations and meets the development needs of the residents for their Town.

5. APPENDICES

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- C. TELFORD & WREKIN DECISION to designate Newport town council area as a neighbourhood area**
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 - v. RPS CONSULTANCY on behalf of St. Modwen Developments Ltd.**
- L. LIST OF PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS**
 - Application for designation NDP boundary**
 - Early Evidence Gathering and Review – AECOM and URS Report – February 2015**
 - Newport Town Plan – February 2016**
 - Newport Town Council Evidence Review – December 2016**
 - Strategic Environmental assessment (SEA) Screening Statement**
 - Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening Statement**
 - Regulation 14 Pre - Submission Consultation – May 2017**