

Developing the Shifnal Neighbourhood Plan

This is not just another paper exercise! This is the first time that a plan, developed by the local community and approved by a referendum of all residents, will have legal status and will be used by Shropshire Council when they consider planning applications. This plan will have 'clout'. The Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government is already giving weight to policies expressed by local communities in Neighbourhood Plans in his decisions on planning applications.

The Neighbourhood Plan is a community-led plan which will say what the community wants in terms of any future development of Shifnal.

A Neighbourhood Plan will talk about the use and development of land and associated social, economic and environmental issues. The Plan will include policies which cover a wide range of issues; housing, employment, transport, and traffic and community wellbeing.

However there is not a free for all in drawing up the plan. The basic conditions for Neighbourhood Plans are specified by law. They must have regard to national policy, they must contribute to the achievement of sustainable development and most significantly they must be in general conformity with the strategic policies in the development plan for the local area, which in Shifnal's case is the Shropshire Council's Site Allocations and Management Development plan (SAMDEV) which is likely to be approved within the next few months.

The Neighbourhood Plan is being developed through the Town Council's Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group which is made up of the Mayor and Deputy Mayor of the Council and 5 residents. Its role is to gather issues, comments and concerns from the local community and to build the plan from this information. The job of the Steering Group is to reflect the views of Shifnal residents.

There was a good response to the Residents Questionnaire which was distributed in November and this is currently being analysed. Feedback from residents has also been gathered at Drop-in Sessions and discussions have been held with groups of young people. This information will be brought together to identify the key issues for the future of the town, looking ahead to the next 10-15 years.

It is clear that the main issues are dominated by the need for a new medical centre, traffic, car parking and improving the town centre and introducing facilities for young people. Protecting the green belt is also seen as important. There is also a clear view that residents want to protect Shifnal as a small market town and developments beyond those currently approved are not wanted. There is an identified need to improve the town's facilities to meet the needs of the increased population and then to have a period of stability.

For up to date news on Neighbourhood Plan progress please check our new website - www.shifnalplan.co.uk . You can comment via the site or email the Steering Group at: shifnalplan@hotmail.com There will be a monthly article on progress with the plan in this magazine.

Chris Raine (Chair) and Tim Day (member) of the Shifnal Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group