

Newent

Introduction

- 4.1 Newent is one of the four towns of the Forest of Dean District. It is a principal settlement in Structure Plan terms. It is positioned on low lying ground within a high quality agricultural hinterland in the north of the Forest of Dean District. Newent is within easy reach of both the city of Gloucester and the towns of Cheltenham, Ross on Wye, Ledbury and Tewkesbury.
- 4.2 The population of Newent is approximately 4700 making it the smallest town within the Forest of Dean District. The town acts as a local service centre for a catchment area consisting of villages to the north of the A40. Within a radius of up to 7 km lies a resident population of around 8,000. Alongside its market town role as a service centre, the town of Newent acts as a focus for tourism within the Forest of Dean.
- 4.3 From Anglo-Saxon origins Newent became an important medieval town, developing around a priory. The layout of the medieval settlement is still well preserved in the existing town plan with its characteristic central market place and long thin burgage plots along the most important streets. Recently, evidence of Roman industrial activity has been found immediately to the east of the town centre on the site of the Business Park.
- 4.4 The north of the Forest of Dean District is an attractive location for commuters due to its accessibility by private car to the larger employment centres within Gloucestershire and neighbouring districts. One in three of the workforce of Newent commute out of the area to work each day.
- 4.5 The built environment of Newent is of a particularly high standard consisting of a medieval core which contains a large number of listed buildings of the 17th to 19th century. Much of the centre of the town retains its original market town character, based on a medieval street pattern.
- 4.6 Conservation Area designation was awarded to Newent in 1979 acknowledging the importance of the central area of the town which illustrates its early medieval form. The layout of the town, the listed and other historic buildings and areas of open space make for an attractive and high quality townscape.
- 4.7 Despite the existence of a tightly developed settlement pattern in Newent a range of public open spaces exist which are both important to the form and quality of the environment of Newent. Important public open spaces are located at the churchyard, Market Square, land to the rear of Lewall Street and Newent Lake. Around the town itself lies an attractive open agricultural landscape.

Development Strategy

- 4.8 There is a long established strategy of restraint upon the level of new development, specifically housing, in the north Forest. The Structure Plan (First Alteration) and the previous Local Plan (1996) have maintained this approach, which is continued by the Structure Plan (Second Review). The principal reasons for this strategy have been the need to control the potential for housing development in the many small rural settlements in the north Forest, all of which are accessible to surrounding employment and service centres, to control the unsustainable level of car travel from the area for work and for services, and to protect the high quality landscape, countryside and agricultural land of the area.
- 4.9 Strategic policy (R)F.Strategy 7 provides for a limitation on new housing development in the north Forest, and at Newent. However, the strategy also sets out to address the economic and social needs of communities, to assist with revitalisation.
- 4.10 Provision will be made for sufficient housing in Newent to meet the anticipated housing needs arising from the existing population. The strategy of providing for the economic needs of communities, and the

rural economy, means that additional employment land will be allocated at Newent to provide an increase in job opportunities, and to reduce the need for out commuting for work. Policies and proposals for the town centre will underpin and develop the important market town and service centre role of Newent. This approach will provide for increased jobs and services, in accessible locations, and also reduce the need for travel outside the area for services. The quality of the townscape of Newent town centre is an important asset for the town and the Plan will set out to maintain and enhance the environment of the town centre.

Tourism

- 4.11 Tourism has been developing in the North Forest, with Newent acting as an important focus for this important industry. Proposals in Newent for the further development of tourism will be supported with reference to policy(R)FTRL.1.

4.12 Groundwater Protection

The Environment Agency identifies Newent as lying over a major aquifer. Accordingly all proposals for development in Newent must provide for groundwater protection where necessary, in accordance with policy (R)FNE.12.

Town Centre

- 4.13 Newent town centre is in a good state of health, measured in terms of its vitality and viability. Vitality is reflected by how busy a centre is at various times and in various places, and viability refers to the ability of the centre to attract continuing investment to maintain the fabric, and allow for improvement and adaptation to changing needs. The indicators for Newent show that on balance the centre is performing well, with a strong mix of retail and other facilities, and that activity and confidence in future potential is strong.
- 4.14 Newent performs well as a locally orientated shopping centre, providing good 'top-up' shopping facilities for the north Forest. It is unlikely to attract significant new investment in comparison shopping, except in relation to tourism which is a valuable contribution to the town's trade. The quality of the built environment of the town centre is a significant attraction for both businesses and users. This should be enhanced by environmental improvement schemes and by traffic management, as vehicle intrusion is a negative feature of the centre. The recent planning consents for retailing, if implemented, would be likely to reduce the present level of outflow of convenience goods expenditure from the centre.
- 4.15 There is the opportunity within the Plan period to enhance the vitality and viability of Newent town centre, to reduce the outflow of expenditure from the catchment area and the number of associated trips to other centres, and to increase local employment opportunities. Sites will be allocated to enable retail and other commercial development to take place, and to provide for mixed development including new housing. The Plan will also provide for environmental improvements at key locations within and adjoining the town centre, including the issue of traffic management.

Mixed Use Allocation - Bennions Garage

(R)F.Newent 1

0.45 hectares of land at Bennions Garage will be allocated for approximately 30 dwellings, and for retail, commercial, and community uses. Development must provide for:

1. The retention of the listed buildings within the allocated site, fronting Broad Street, and Culver Street
2. An appropriate number of affordable housing units
3. An appropriate contribution to educational provision for the prospective occupiers of the site
4. An appropriate contribution to the provision or enhancement of community facilities within Newent
5. An appropriate contribution to youth/adult playspace provision within Newent
6. Substantially retaining or increasing commercial, retailing and community uses on the ground floor frontage to Broad Street.

- 4.16 Much of the above site has been under-used or vacant for some time. Its former established use was primarily as a garage and car show room. It is located in a prominent town centre position. This part of the site detracts from the townscape quality of Newent. Refurbishment and redevelopment of the existing site and buildings will be promoted through the above policy.
- 4.17 Within the historic centre of Newent there are relatively few opportunities for introducing significant new town centre developments. This is a key site therefore, and one that can provide an important number of dwellings within the town centre. Its development should provide for town centre retail commercial uses, and community uses particularly at ground floor level on its Broad Street Frontage. The site is an important mixed use allocation and can also provide for residential uses, particularly on upper floors and to the rear of the street frontage. The form of development must provide for substantially maintaining a continuous street frontage to Broad Street, to reflect the established pattern adjoining the site and elsewhere in Broad Street. It should also retain the buildings on Culver Street, though as with elsewhere on the site there may be scope for the addition of smaller flats. This should also ensure the retention of the significant listed buildings within the allocated site at 18 - 20 Broad Street and at 9, Culver Street which add to the historic townscape of this central part of Newent. It is accepted that a vehicular access to Broad Street may be required. Development proposals must incorporate provision for pedestrian and cycle access to the adjoining land to the north to facilitate the future development of that site.
- 4.18 A retail application on this site incorporating the retention of the listed building, has been favourably considered by the Council, subject to a Section 106 agreement. No consent has been issued. This subject application provided for 730 m² floorspace and 26 car parking spaces. It is however unlikely to proceed given the recently completed supermarket off the Market Square. The majority of the site is the subject of an application for residential development. A development brief has been prepared for the site as supplementary planning guidance.

Mixed Use Allocation - Broad Street

(R)F.Newent 2

Land comprising the frontage to Broad Street and associated land to the rear will be allocated for the provision of 15 dwellings, and retail, commercial, or community use. Development proposals will be required to:

1. Retain existing buildings fronting Broad Street
2. Provide vehicular access from Watery Lane
3. Provide for pedestrian access to Broad Street
4. Retain the original burgage plot layout of the site
5. Improve the existing car parking provision to the rear of the Library, and to an associated environmental improvement scheme
6. Provide an appropriate number of affordable housing units
7. Provide an appropriate contribution to educational provision for the prospective occupiers of the site.

4.19 The rear curtilages to the properties fronting Broad Street offer a limited development opportunity within the town centre for mixed uses. The major use will be residential, probably in the form of smaller units, including conversions. The allocated site is relatively small and in separate ownerships. The development potential is therefore somewhat restricted. It will be important for any development proposal to retain the existing buildings fronting Broad Street, which form part of the historic townscape of the Conservation Area, and the burgage plot layout of the land to the rear. This site lies within the medieval settlement and was evaluated in connection with a recent planning application. Further archaeological recording is recommended.

4.20 Vehicular access can potentially be gained from the existing car park to the rear of the Library, which itself is accessed from Watery Lane. The latter access has only limited capacity. Discussions with the highway authority will be required when preparing proposals for development, to ensure the traffic generation of the proposal is within the capacity of the Watery Lane access and the adjoining highway network.

4.21 In assessing highway issues the Council will have regard to the fact that the site is located within the town centre, and that pedestrian access to Broad Street will form part of any development proposal, including possible access through the Bennions Garage site. The overall scale of any proposal is also likely to be limited. In determining the parking requirement for uses proposed on the site the Council will take full account of other available town centre parking in assessing the need for on-site parking provision. The Council will seek to obtain contributions from any proposed development to improve the present sub-standard condition of the Library car park, in terms of surface condition and associated landscaping and amenity improvements. A development brief has been prepared for the site as supplementary planning guidance.

Town Centre Environment

4.22 The historic character and high quality built environment of Newent town centre is an undoubted asset to its viability and vitality. The Plan will seek to conserve and enhance these attributes. Other policies of the Plan set out the general principles for regulating development in Conservation Areas, for achieving quality in built development, for protecting Listed Buildings and for protecting important open areas. These will always be relevant considerations in assessing proposals for development in Newent town centre.

4.23 Within the town centre there are a number of locations where enhancement schemes would benefit the town centre environment. These include:

- Market Place
- Bennions Garage site

- The town centre “gateway” adjoining the Black Dog public house
- The High Street “gateway”
- The Watery Lane/Broad Street junction area

4.24 The District Council will seek the improvement of the Market place and the Bennions Garage site through the allocation of land for development as provided for in policies (R)F.Newent 1 and 2. The Council will itself draw up environmental improvement schemes for the other three locations identified above, and will seek to implement them over the Plan period. Where proposals for development come forward in these locations the Council will have regard to the opportunity to negotiate for the inclusion of features which will contribute to the improvement of the public environment.

4.25 Newent is fortunate in retaining important open spaces within and adjoining the town centre, primarily in the area to the rear of Lewall Street, St. Mary’s Church and around Newent Lake. The Plan identifies these areas for protection as important open spaces.

Town Centre Traffic Management

(R)F.Newent 3

Traffic management measures will be implemented to improve pedestrian amenity in Newent town centre.

4.26 The historic development of Newent has been in the form of lobes of primarily housing development which individually connect with the town centre through radial routes, but which do not interconnect between themselves. This places additional traffic onto the town centre highway network, which has a restricted capacity in places by virtue of the medieval street pattern, the narrow width of some roads and difficult junctions.

4.27 Moving traffic and on-street car parking detracts from pedestrian amenity, and the enjoyment of the quality of the built environment. The highway authority is developing proposals for additional traffic management measures with the aim of improving the safety and convenience of pedestrians. Off street parking provision in Newent has been increased recently by the extension of the Lewall Street car park. The new retail development of the land adjoining the Market Square has provided additional parking.

Amenity Open Space and Community Use - Lewall Street

(R)F.Newent 4

Land adjoining the Lewall Street car park will be allocated for public open space, recreational and community use. The development of buildings will only be permitted where they are ancillary to these uses, or they are for community use. Proposals for development must be compatible with the primary recreational and public open space use of the allocated site.

4.28 The above allocation encompasses an important open space within the centre of Newent. It lies adjacent to the principal off-street car park in the town, and connects with well-used pedestrian routes giving access to alternative parts of the town centre, to other important public amenity areas around Newent Lake and the Church, and to residential areas.

4.29 This site is therefore a most important feature of the town and the town centre. Part of the site has already been laid out as a public open space. The adjoining area is a former grazing paddock, now owned by the Town Council. The Plan allocation encompasses both areas of land, to emphasise the intention of the above policy that the entire area should be developed as open space for amenity or recreational purposes. The site lies within the area of the medieval town and abuts an earthwork on the eastern site which itself is thought to have been part of the boundary of the medieval town. This boundary is of archaeological importance and should be preserved and protected. The archaeological impact of any proposals affecting this area should be assessed.

- 4.30 The use of this land for public open space and recreation may give rise to the need for some development. Any buildings should be ancillary to the foregoing primary uses, and not detract from those uses.
- 4.31 The central location of this site, together with the adjacent car parking, offers the potential for the provision of a building for community use. The above policy would support such development, with the same proviso as in paragraph 4.30 above with respect to built development.

Employment

- 4.32 The Plan strategy will aim to increase the level of employment opportunity in Newent over the Plan period. This will assist the social and economic well-being of the community, and provide job opportunities for residents of the town and the surrounding area.
- 4.33 The population of Newent has grown quite rapidly over the previous two decades, outstripping the ability of the largely rural economy of the north Forest to provide matching jobs. Out-commuting for work from Newent is substantial. The Plan will aim to stabilise the growth of out-commuting, and potentially reduce the current level by providing additional job opportunities in excess of the anticipated change in the local labour force.
- 4.34 To achieve this the Plan will foster the potential for further development and jobs in the town centre, will support the development of tourism as an important contributor to jobs and to town centre trade, and will allocate land for employment use.

Newent Business Park - Extension

(R)F.Newent 5

4.2 hectares of land to the south of Newent Business Park will be allocated for employment use (B1, B2, B8). Development will be required to:

1. Have a single point of vehicular access from Gloucester Road to be obtained through the existing Newent Business Park
2. Provide for safe and convenient pedestrian and cycling links onto the adjoining public highway network and to the adjoining residential areas and for bus access and turning within the site
3. Provide for strategic landscaping to the site boundaries and within the site incorporating existing landscape features and hedgerows where appropriate
4. Restrict development to B1 use only within that part of the site which adjoins existing and proposed residential areas and community buildings
5. Make provision for the drainage of surface water from the development without exacerbating any drainage problems on adjacent land and without detriment to the nature conservation value of the watercourse along the southern boundary of the site.
6. Make an appropriate contribution to the improvement of the B.4125 Gloucester Road junction to provide for the additional traffic generated by the development.

- 4.35 Market towns like Newent have the ability to attract new business investment, in part because of the quality environment they can offer. It is important that opportunities for such investment should be provided however. The existing Newent Business Park employment site helps to illustrate this potential. Over 4 hectares of this 5.2 hectare site have been successfully developed to accommodate new and expanding businesses in the period 1992 - 1999. Only around 1 hectare remains undeveloped.
- 4.36 Further land will therefore be allocated adjoining this site to enable the continued provision of employment in Newent over the Plan period.

- 4.37 The above allocation will permit the continued successful development of the Newent Business Park, and provide opportunities for expanding local businesses to relocate and new businesses to establish. The site is well located in relation to existing and proposed residential areas of Newent. Pedestrian and cycling links to the adjoining highway network will provide for a choice of modes of access.
- 4.38 The site is relatively well contained within the landscape. Strategic landscaping will reinforce this containment, particularly with respect to boundary hedgerow enhancement and reinforcement. Some care will be required to restrict the form and type of development within the site where it adjoins existing and proposed residential areas, and an adjoining community building, to protect the amenity of these areas. Consultation will be required with the Environment Agency to provide suitable surface water drainage provision. This should also be planned in conjunction with the housing land allocation at Onslow Road.
- 4.39 The highway authority has indicated that the Gloucester Road junction with the B.4215 requires improvement to accommodate additional vehicle movements. An appropriate contribution will be sought from the above development to offset the additional use of this junction arising from the development.
- 4.40 A development brief has been prepared for the above site, as supplementary planning guidance.

Mixed Use Allocation - Ross Road

(R)F.Newent 6

2.6 hectares of land adjoining Ross Road will be allocated for mixed uses comprising about 27 dwellings, commercial, leisure and B1 employment. Proposals for development will need to make satisfactory provision for pedestrian, cycle and vehicle access and car parking. Where a proposal would lead to the loss of the existing community use within the site then an appropriate contribution will be sought to enable an alternative provision to be made elsewhere in Newent. The site should when developed:

1. Provide for an appropriate number of affordable housing units
2. Provide an appropriate contribution to educational provision for the prospective occupiers of the site
3. Provide an appropriate contribution to the provision or enhancement of community facilities within Newent
4. Provide for an appropriate contribution to youth/adult playspace provision within Newent.
5. Not include retail development that would harm the retail viability and vitality of the town centre.

- 4.41 The above site is currently occupied by a wide range of uses, including a large former school now used as a community centre, a public house, dwellings, several businesses and vacant land. A former railway line lies within the northern boundary of the site, and provides the access point for many of the uses. It is a private access which is not made up to adoptable standards. The site is close to the route of the former Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal. The road junction adjoining the south east corner of the site is now signal controlled. Provision for safe pedestrian and cycling access to the site will be required, particularly across Ross Road.
- 4.42 The allocated site is quite extensive in area and does offer opportunities for redevelopment. Housing use would be particularly appropriate given the proximity of the town centre. The site is not suitable for town centre uses and retail development will only be acceptable where it does not harm the viability and vitality of Newent town centre. It is probable that any retail use permitted will be ancillary to other commercial use of the site. If a proposal would lead to the loss of the current community use of the former school then negotiations would be undertaken to seek an appropriate contribution to the enhancement of existing community buildings in Newent, or the provision of a new building. A development brief has been prepared for the site as supplementary planning guidance.

Cleeve Mill Business Park

- 4.43 The above site extends to 1.5 hectares and has a planning consent for B1 employment use. Three small units have been completed on the site. However, there has been no further development for an extensive period and there is no active developer of the site.
- 4.44 The Plan policies emphasise the importance of retaining primarily employment use on allocated or developed employment sites. The Council will encourage further employment development on this site, in line with the current planning consent.

Tourism

- 4.45 Tourism is a growth industry, and is forecast to provide for new employment in the District. Visitor numbers to the north Forest appear to have been increasing in recent years. There has been significant investment in tourism attractions, particularly at the Birds of Prey Centre and Three Choirs Vineyard near to Newent, and in the Shambles Museum within the town centre. These attractions alone accommodated over 100,000 visitors in 1997. Visitor spending is estimated to contribute around 21% to the turnover of town centre businesses. The attractive countryside of the north Forest, the historic centre of Newent, and the investment in visitor attractions all combine to provide a strong basis for tourism development.
- 4.46 The principal constraint however, is the relative shortage of visitor accommodation to enable tourists to stay overnight and longer. At present Newent and the north Forest generally provides for touring visitors and for day visitors. The Council has recently provided supporting infrastructure for this visitor sector, through additional car parking and coach access and turning facilities. The Town Council has laid out amenity open space to extend and improve visitor enjoyment of Newent.
- 4.47 The Plan policies support the provision of further tourism investment, particularly visitor accommodation. Proposals for hotel, self-catering or other visitor accommodation and visitor attractions in Newent would be supported, within the terms of the appropriate plan policies.

Housing

- 4.48 The Plan strategy seeks to restrain development in the north Forest. However, the Plan must also provide for the social and economic needs of communities. It is proposed therefore to allocate sufficient housing land in Newent to broadly meet the anticipated housing needs of the existing population over the Plan period. Land allocations for about 195 dwellings will be made. Some 85 of these have been allocated on sites within the town centre. In addition there are outstanding consents for a further 68 dwellings (as at January 2000) which may come forward over the Plan period. The balance will be found on one site on the edge of the town.

Housing Allocation - Onslow Road

(R)F.Newent. 7

5.5ha of land at Onslow Road is allocated for around 170 dwellings. The development will be required to:

1. Provide for appropriate off-site highway improvements, and traffic calming to Onslow Road
2. Provide for strategic landscaping to the site boundaries and within the site to incorporate existing landscape features and hedgerows where appropriate
3. Provide for safe and convenient pedestrian links to the town centre and to the adjoining highway network, and for bus access and turning within the site
4. Provide for pedestrian access to footpaths adjoining the site
5. Provide for an appropriate number of affordable housing units
6. Make provision for the proper functioning of surface water drainage, including any watercourses receiving discharge from the site
7. Provide an appropriate contribution to educational provision for the prospective occupiers of the site
8. Provide an appropriate contribution to the provision or enhancement of community facilities within Newent
9. Provide for an appropriate contribution to youth/adult playspace provision within Newent including a contribution towards the development of land adjacent to the site and allocated for the purpose
10. Provide an appropriate contribution to off-site highway improvements at the junction of Gloucester Road and the B.4215
11. Provide an appropriate contribution to enhanced bus services to the town centre.

4.49 The above site is conveniently located in relation to Newent town centre. The development must provide for safe and convenient pedestrian and cycling movement to the town centre, and also via the existing highway network to the adjoining employment site at Town Farm. The Highway Authority advise that improvements and traffic calming to Onslow Road will be required, including the junction with Gloucester Road. The highway authority also advise that improvements are needed to the Gloucester Road / B.4215 junction to accommodate additional vehicle movements, and an appropriate contribution will be sought towards such improvements. The Environment Agency should be consulted on appropriate surface water drainage provision for the development, which should be planned in conjunction with the allocated employment site nearby.

4.50 There is a shortage of play space provision within Newent as a whole, and particularly in the southern part of the town. This site will be required to make an appropriate contribution towards such provision

4.51 A development brief has been prepared for the above site as supplementary planning guidance.

Recreation

4.52 There is a deficiency in sports field provision in Newent. The NPFA standard for the town amounts to 18 hectares. At present there are only 6.2 hectares within Newent, although this is supplemented by playing fields outside the town. The standard of the provision which exists is good, particularly at Newent school and the Sports Centre on the same site. The additional provision proposed at Bury Bar (off Onslow Road) and at Gloucester Road which will assist in making up the shortfall in playing pitches.

4.53 The Town Council own land adjoining Bradfords Lane and Watery Lane, opposite Newent School. This site was allocated in the adopted Local Plan for recreational use. It is part of an open and high quality landscape. An arboretum has been proposed as a suitable use of the site and is currently being implemented by the Town Council. The land therefore is not available for playing pitch development, and will no longer be allocated for this purpose. To rectify the overall playing pitch shortage in Newent it is proposed that land suitable for sports pitches should be allocated at Gloucester Road.

Recreation Land Allocation - Gloucester Road

(R)F.Newent. 8

4.6 hectares of land at Gloucester Road will be allocated for recreation use, principally in the form of outdoor sports pitches and associated buildings. The development of the site must:

- 1. Protect the amenity of the nearby residents**
- 2. Provide for strategic landscaping**
- 3. Provide for the archaeological investigation of the site and where necessary the protection of any part of it**

Only uses that are able to be accommodated in close proximity to the sewage works will be acceptable.

- 4.54 Within Newent there is a deficiency in terms of the provision of sports pitches. There are none within convenient reach of the residential uses in the vicinity of the proposed allocation. It is therefore appropriate to allocate additional land primarily for sports pitches.
- 4.55 The site is constrained by its location close to the sewage works and it is also prominent from a number of locations. There are a number of dwellings close to it and the amenity of these must be respected. It will therefore be necessary to provide a comprehensive landscaping scheme for the land and the same concerns which require this may also limit the range of uses and buildings which may be able to be permitted.
- 4.56 The site may contain important evidence of the former iron industry. It will therefore be important that the land is evaluated before any development takes place on this site, and it may be that the form of development is constrained by the nature of such remains.

Recreation Land Allocation - Bury Bar

(R)F.Newent 9

2.7 hectares of land off Bury Bar will be allocated for outdoor recreation, principally in the form of sports pitches.

- 4.57 There is a shortage of play space provision within Newent as a whole, and particularly in the southern part of the town. The site allocated above incorporates provision for outdoor recreational pitches and ancillary facilities suitable for youth/adult play. The design, layout and the type of recreation provision will be in accordance with the Play Area supplementary planning guidance prepared by the Council. The adjoining allocated housing site [(R)F.Newent 7] will be expected to contribute towards play provision in Newent, and such contribution is likely to be directed towards the early development of the land allocated for this purpose at Bury Bar.