

## **Neighbourhood Planning: the view of Droitwich Spa Town Council**

As a responsible council, the costs and benefits of Neighbourhood Planning have been extensively researched by councillors including attendance at conferences and visits to other councils pursuing Neighbourhood Plans. Discussions with officers at Wychavon District Council have also taken place and their advice has been followed.

A Neighbourhood Plan is ideal for small parishes where development land is available and there is broadly community agreement as to how that land and services are to be deployed.

For towns, achievement of a consensus is more difficult where the presence of groups with competing agendas makes overall acceptance of a Plan less likely. Note, at the final stage of the process, a referendum must obtain acceptance of at least 51% of the votes cast. Before this stage is reached an independent examiner must be satisfied that all criteria are in place. This stage can be expected to cost £20,000 this being the extent of the award for frontrunner status. Where technical surveys with contributions from consultants and specialists are a requirement there would be additional costs. Total costs have been estimated as up to £60,000. Most of this cost would have to be borne by the town's Council taxpayers.

A Neighbourhood Plan has to conform to the South Worcestershire Development Plan. Thus proposals cannot reduce development only add to it.

Firms, households and councils make decisions based on available information. High cost decisions are taken only where there is a strong probability of a positive outcome. High cost ventures with only a low probability of a successful outcome are generally inadvisable. Hesitation is essential where the costs are certain but the outcome isn't. Under the circumstances, therefore, Droitwich Town Council is adopting a cautious approach and will consider Neighbourhood Planning in due course as and when circumstances change.

Residents will have ample opportunity to air their views with the revision of the Town Plan.

It must be emphasised that as a responsible democratically elected council we intend to act in the best interests of the people of Droitwich.

*Cllr. Roy Murphy. Chairman of Planning Committee.*