



Picturing the Future

a town plan for Droitwich Spa

Guidance and recommendations for future planning in Droitwich Spa developed from local community consultation

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Introduction

Droitwich Spa is a multilayered town with a rich history of salt production, especially in the Roman, Mediaeval and Victorian periods. It provides a home for many generations of the same family, and for many others who have chosen to make their home here, whether as a commuter base, or for those who have settled here because of local work or family reasons. It provides a shopping, leisure and services hub for town residents and local villages, and easy access to the larger centres of Worcester and especially Birmingham. It has busy industry and pleasant green spaces, good road and rail access, with improved waterway access coming. It is a little bit of everything.

This diversity is appreciated by the majority, especially those who wish to make a long-term or permanent home in the town or area. Within the diversity, however, the most appreciated aspect of the town is its history as a spa, and respondents in our consultation have indicated strongly that they would like to see this preserved and developed, both in relation to spa and water features, and to spacious and pleasant parks and open air leisure opportunities.

This plan, reflecting that central appreciation of the town's diversity, has been developed over three years of public meetings and team research and discussion, which culminated in a week's public display and consultation in October 2008. The results of that consultation have been collated during 2009 to inform the writing of this Town Plan, together with feedback from conversations during the consultation, and comments made throughout the process.

This plan comes in nine main sections, each concluded by a set of recommendations. The text of these sections was the subject of the detailed consultation, as well as a range of preparatory meetings over the aforementioned three year period. There are also two supplementary sections reflecting preferences both for building design and land use which were put before people in photographic and cartographic displays during the consultation. These contain their own recommendations as statements of preference which need to be taken into account in the planning of future developments.

This summary document is supported by a longer and more detailed set of documents which flesh out some of the facts and figures. That longer document and its supporting papers are available from www.droitwichspa.com – look for the link to the town plan.

The executive committee would like to thank Community First, Droitwich Spa Town Council, and the Droitwich Area Local Strategic Partnership for funding in the development of this plan, and the Town Clerk's office and staff for administrative support.

A strong and healthy town: *community facilities*

A STRONG AND HEALTHY Droitwich Spa should be a town with good facilities for all who live in it. Community facilities need to be developed to be accessible to all, but there is a particular need for young people's facilities.

The town's facilities are relatively poor with regard to the size of the town, and its rural umbrella, with few modern and well-equipped community rooms and halls for public hire, almost no commercial leisure facilities, and limited evening public transport options to and from the town. It was recognised that although a wide range of facilities need to be encouraged accessible to all, there is a particular need for facilities for young people, outside the voluntary provision of organised activities and uniformed organisations.

Young people need to be involved in assessing the need for appropriate facilities, and encouraged to take an active role in the management of them. Existing youth organisations need to be encouraged both to make full use of their facilities, to share them as appropriate, and to work with Wychavon and others to secure future development of good community facilities. The development of the High Street Youth Zone is very much in line with this, and this and similar initiatives need to be encouraged as long-term stable provision.

The local authority needs to attract and encourage the development of private leisure facilities for the town, (such as a ten-pin bowling club, or a cinema as suggested in the proposed Kandahar development) and the community needs to be encouraged not just to think in terms of public and voluntary sector provision. Conversations with younger people suggest a need for further research into whether a night-club would be commercially viable, although the consultation revealed that older people would initially find such a development controversial. The late-teen and young adult age group is probably the least well-served by existing provision.

Existing community facilities such as the Lido and the Leisure Centre are appreciated. Generally, local sporting and facilities could be further developed and enlarged. There need to be appropriate local venues for all community activities. The local authority needs to continue to look at ways of providing encouragement, support and financial incentives to popular cultural and entertainment events. Transport, and in particular the provision of good bus services in the evenings and at weekends, is an essential part of enabling people to make use of all facilities.

Droitwich Spa is a town with many distinct and diverse sub-communities. People need to be encouraged to take responsibility for their own neighbourhoods. The continuance or formation of local community associations needs to be encouraged and supported by local authority bodies.

Public leisure parks and green space provision is not only an enhancement to the built environment, (particularly in creating the spa ambience desired by a large majority of the those consulted) but a significant encouragement to healthy living, by providing pleasant public areas for active lifestyles.

The acreage currently available compares badly with other spa towns, and so existing green spaces should not be taken for building if it means a reduction per capita of population. Current green spaces should be formally adopted as Public Open Spaces to prevent inappropriate development. The existing parks should be cherished and enhanced. The provision of further adequate space to meet the increased and still increasing population should be closely monitored, and additional green space provision should be addressed as part of the planning process. Consideration of designated and equipped play areas should form a part of this future planning.

Key recommendations

1. Planning for green space provision should be guided by the greater average for spa towns, rather than either the lowest or average provision for all towns.
2. The local authority should seek to attract commercial leisure providers to the town.
3. Improved youth facilities need to be provided on a secure long-term basis.
4. The Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) should seek partners to develop and add to the existing leisure provision in and around the town.

A strong and healthy town: *needs and provision*

A STRONG AND HEALTHY town is one where people have their basic needs met in the local community. Housing and health provision are essential basic provisions.

Affordable housing continues to be an essential priority for local and national government. People should be able to choose to live in the same community as their family and friends, and local residents should receive priority for housing needs. Many families in the town express both awareness of and regret for the fragmentation of community and family life. Affordable housing should be widely distributed in dispersed clusters, rather than placed in larger groupings and estates. This both serves social inclusion and helps build community coherence. A diverse range of housing of different sizes helps appropriate mobility up and down the housing market and allows people greater freedom in living in the community of their choice.

A proper housing provision includes assessing population levels for enlarged or additional health and educational facilities, as well as basic infrastructure. Large increases in the population have placed a strain on some existing facilities. Older people in particular signal concerns about easy access to health care provisions.

Health care providers need to be encouraged to continue their work with Leisure Services and voluntary community groups in promoting and developing opportunities for healthy living, including enhanced sporting facilities. Primary health care needs to be directed first at prevention. Health care providers need not only to be, but to be seen to be, engaged in the community, and willing partners with other organisations. Preventative health care, to be successful, needs to engage the voluntary sector in ongoing partnerships.

The provision of good levels of care needs to be carried out in the local community as much as possible. Home care plans for all who need them should be promoted and encouraged. The provision of advice needs to be targeted to the areas of greatest deprivation. Good transport remains essential for access.

Droitwich Spa is disadvantaged in its health care provision in comparison to Evesham and Pershore, both of which have community hospitals. There is considerable resentment in the town, especially among older residents, over the loss of a local hospital. A significant number of people thought that the need for a cottage hospital was something that should have been included in the town plan consultation. Partnership with local residential and nursing care homes may offer a way of providing local beds for convalescence or long term treatments of chronic conditions. Locally-based options, by lowering the stress of hospitalization, are generally accepted to improve recovery rates. The Primary Care Trust (PCT) and Health Service should be looking for better, more extensive local provision for convalescence and post-treatment assessment within the community.

Key recommendations

5. There is a continuing need for more affordable housing. Such housing should be distributed in every part of the town, and not grouped together in large numbers.
6. Planning developments needs to cater for an appropriate mix and diversity of housing provision.
7. The PCT needs to be looking at partnerships that prioritise health care at home, and in the locality.
8. The PCT should be looking with the local authority at partnerships that provide convalescent and step-down beds in the local community.

A strong and healthy town: *being safe*

A STRONG AND HEALTHY town is one where people are safe and feel safe. Droitwich Spa is a low crime area, yet many people do not feel safe, and this perception needs addressing alongside the few specific problems identified through the PACT (Police and Communities Together) process.

Safety needs to be considered by all of those involved in the planning process. Open areas and good lighting enhance safety. Nearly everyone who raised concerns about safety spoke about poorly-lit areas. A concern for good lighting should not only be part of the planning process, but an audit of the existing lighting to address safety needs, and plan for improvements should be carried out.

The various underpasses were singled out by many respondents for particular mention, because of lighting, litter, graffiti, lack of other adults around, and often large groups of young people loitering near or in them. All these combined to give many older people in particular a sense of the underpasses being unsafe and threatening. The police need to continue to pay attention to these areas on their patrols, but the lighting should be improved, and the possibility of a community art project to decorate the underpasses with murals should be considered.

Public awareness of and enlistment in “clean street” campaigns should be encouraged, with schools and community organisations being heavily involved. There needs to be both zero tolerance of littering and vandalism, and a rapid response to damage and mess. An adequate supply of litter bins is needed, supported by a more extensive programme of collection and disposal. A means of reporting bins in need of emptying should be publicised, and reports acted on. Particular attention should be given to providing more bins on the main routes in and out of town, and to and from the schools.

A sizeable majority of those who expressed a view on evening activity in the town centre felt that a vibrant well-lit town centre, with opportunities for individual, group and family leisure, eating-out and entertainment should contribute to the well-being and safety of the town. There is little apart from fast-food outlets and pubs to draw people into the town centre on most evenings, and the sense of deserted streets is experienced as unsafe.

The police should be encouraged to continue their programmes of working with the community to identify particular needs and the best methods to respond to them. The variety of views expressed about ways of increasing police presence shared in common a desire for highly visible policing and the PACT process should help identify ways and areas in which this can happen effectively.

Key Recommendations

9. The local authority should ensure that there are open areas and good lighting in all new developments.
10. The local authority, in consultation with the police and community, should look at the improvement of lighting and the refurbishment of dilapidated areas, especially the underpasses.
11. The local authority needs to provide for more waste bins, not least on approaches to schools. This needs to be partnered with police and community anti-littering programmes.
12. A priority for development should be to attract the kind of businesses to the town that will help bring the centre to life in the evening.
13. The police should respond through the PACT and other processes to the perceived need for highly visible policing.

A sustainable and viable town: *employment and training*

FOR DROITWICH SPA to be sustainable and viable, we should encourage greater self-sufficiency in the provision of employment opportunities and of local training for them.

There are currently no higher education classes or facilities provided in the town. To encourage their development, local businesses should be encouraged to work with the local schools, and the colleges of Bromsgrove and Worcester, to attract appropriate local classes to the town, and develop new initiatives. The lack of decent modern community rooms for hire hinders this development.

Industrial development outside the outer ring-road is to be encouraged. Inside the ring-road developments should be for offices, shopping, leisure and heritage in a non-industrial environment.

Generally, respondents to the consultation wanted to see a range of diverse business and employment opportunities in and around the town. However, within that diversity, forward looking innovative and high technology business developments need to be encouraged. We recommend that local and regional government see Droitwich Spa, because of its location, as part of the development of the high technology corridor, and plan local development accordingly.

Droitwich Spa is well located on the national transport network, and needs to take advantage of that to encourage local employment opportunities. Good public transport linking local housing areas to the industrial estates and other work-places is important, and the possibility of shuttle services to and from the station should be explored.

Key recommendations

14. Education services need to explore ways in which partnerships with colleges and Worcester University might develop some local provision for local adult education.
15. There is a need to encourage diversity in business, employment and training opportunities.
16. Droitwich Spa should be explicitly involved in the development of the high-technology corridor.
17. Further industrial development should be encouraged outside the ring-road, and not inside it.

A sustainable and viable town: *work and economy*

A SUSTAINABLE AND VIABLE town has facilities that both are attractive to visitors, and meet the needs of local residents, so that those who live in the town both benefit from and contribute towards a vibrant local economy.

New tourist opportunities from the canals redevelopment have the potential not only to create new leisure service jobs, but to create new commercial opportunities for new shopping developments, especially around the historic High Street. The tourist industry brings significant opportunities and challenges, not least in its seasonal nature, and local traders are encouraged to work with the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) in planning for these developments. The pedestrianisation or other improved forms of traffic management for the High Street needs to be considered in this light, as does giving priority to appealing retail opportunities.

The provision of leisure opportunities for residents and visitors needs to extend imaginatively beyond café provision, and might well include more cultural opportunities through an arts centre, museum or gallery. Improved public access to the Netherwich Canal Basin and from the basin to the town centre should be seen as essential to its development, and to the branding of the town as a tourist attraction.

The redevelopment of brown-field sites in and around the town centre for residential and mixed-use developments will increase the vibrancy of the centre. A more diverse range of shops and leisure provision would encourage both visitors, and also those for whom Droitwich Spa is a convenient base for commuting, to invest in the local economy and community.

Key recommendations

18. The LSP, working especially with the Town and District Councils tourism departments, should seek to develop the profile of Droitwich Spa as a tourist destination.
19. Local groups and commercial providers, working in partnership with the local authority, should seek to develop artistic and cultural opportunities and provision in the town.
20. The canal-side development should be used to encourage further business, leisure and civic development of the existing town centre.
21. The development of brown-field sites as they become available within the ring-road should be geared to mixed leisure, commercial and residential uses, and not further industrialisation.

A sustainable and viable town: *infrastructure*

A SUSTAINABLE AND VIABLE town is one which makes good and forward looking provision for all those who live in it, and which plans its infrastructure and facilities to meet the needs of its growing population.

There is considerable concern that the town's infrastructure is barely adequate for the existing, much enlarged population, and that with the large increases of housing planned as part of the Regional Spatial Strategy, it may prove insufficient unless questions of capacity are taken seriously at the earliest stages of planning.

School provision needs to be very closely monitored, in the light of the continuing growth of the town. For all the schools, there are now significant traffic problems created at the start and end of the school day.

A significant number of responses indicated a concern over the state of footpaths and road surfaces in the town.

Although the gas distribution mains are being upgraded, there are significant concerns about the electricity supply for the town. Housing growth has outstripped projected population growth, and this, combined with a far higher electricity consumption than was allowed for in the (1960s) expansion plans for the town. Power outages (which have occurred in relatively mild winters such as 2007/8, and even in summer months) have further raised concerns that the infrastructure needs a significant review. More than two thirds of those responding expressed concern about the electricity supply.

We encourage planners to have high expectation of energy-efficient designs in all new build.

The flooding of July 2007, and concomitant foul water pollution, has further heightened concerns about the adequacy of the water and sewage systems, designed for a time when patterns of water usage for laundry and personal hygiene were significantly lower per household than they are now. Continuing problems of bad smells in and around the High Street also raise local concern about sewage, pollution and a clean environment. We ask Wychavon and Severn Trent to make the monitoring of the situation, and the solving of problems a matter of priority.

Road noise from the M5, and increasingly the A38, causes concern to residents in a number of locations around the town close to the motorway. Attention needs to be given to ways of minimising, and ideally reducing, levels of traffic noise in the town, and Worcestershire County Council should explore this issue with the Highways agency.

Key recommendations

22. Electricity providers need to demonstrate to residents and businesses that the power supply is stable and sufficient, and that it takes account of current and future needs. This confidence is currently lacking.
23. In planning for major developments, the local community needs confidence in the infrastructure. We recommend that communication and review of infrastructure be part of public consultations.
24. We encourage planners to have high expectation of energy-efficient designs in all new build.
25. Worcestershire County Council should explore with the Highways methods of reducing traffic noise, especially in connection with the M5.

An attractive and accessible town: *access to and within the town*

THE TOWN OF Droitwich Spa needs to be attractive to and accessible for both residents and visitors, and so enhance the quality of life for all who live in, work in, or visit the town. This will also improve the sense of well-being of its residents, as well as enhance the economy of the town by attracting people into it.

Pedestrian access to the town centre needs to be improved, particularly in relation to crossing the Saltway safely and easily. This access includes the previously mentioned problem of poorly maintained footpaths. Some planned features of the town development were never completed, including a flyover bridge at the Westlands roundabout. Measures which improve pedestrian safety and access to and from Westlands should be implemented both to increase the social cohesion of the town, and to make access to the shopping area as easy and safe as possible for all residents.

There is no consistent or strong demand for any traffic-calming measures. The majority of those expressing concern in public meetings about safety do so in relation to parking problems. Areas around Witton Middle School, and the railway station are repeatedly and regularly singled out as badly obstructed. The police need to regularly monitor this concern for safety, and both the police and local councillors need to encourage greater responsiveness from Worcestershire County Council.

Footpath and cycleway provision for the town should be reviewed and improvements implemented that encourage walking and cycling. All approaches, footpaths and cycleways should be well publicised and their use encouraged. The current “cycle path” provision of simply marking out an area on the road surface is of very limited use, and regularly ignored by many car drivers. Specific new development and extension of existing cycleways, with proper enforcement, will all increase cyclists’ safety, and encourage greater use of cycles.

Footpath and pavement repairs and improvements need to take account of the far greater numbers of people now using motorised chairs. (These improvements are also needed by those with prams, pushchairs and ordinary wheelchairs.) In particular attention needs to be given to the proper placement and provision of drop kerbs far more extensively. Existing provision is frequently noted as inadequate or badly placed.

Tourism and organised visits to the town would be helped by the provision of more and better coach-parking, which is currently inadequate. The local authority should invest in consistent and clear signage and street furniture, that where possible builds on and enhances the town’s historic character. There is comparatively little provision at main points of access by road and rail. Better provision would create both a sense of welcome, and a better orientation to the town’s facilities.

All approaches to the town must be reviewed for their accessibility, and their power to create a welcoming first impression. Those arriving by train should have a pleasant, easy and well-signed access from the station to the town centre. The publication of a map showing footpaths and cycleways would help both visitors and residents.

Key recommendations

26. Safer and easier pedestrian and cycleway access to and from Westlands across the bypass should be a matter of priority for all.
27. The local authorities need to work co-operatively to ensure attractive, easy and well-signed access to the town centre, with priority given to access from the station and across the Saltway.
28. Worcestershire County Council needs to be responsive to local concerns raised through the PACT (Police and Communities Together) process and other public meetings about parking safety issues. The area around the station should be made a priority for parking enforcement and further restrictions in the cause of safety.
29. Footpath repairs and developments should be planned to take account of the increased number of motorised chairs in use.
30. The local authority should take account of the potential for tourist development brought by the canal renewal, invest in signage and look to the provision of more extensive coach parking facilities.

An attractive and accessible town: *the town centre*

THE TOWN CENTRE should be at the heart of plans to be both attractive and accessible, drawing both on the heritage of the past, and the needs of the present.

Street and footpath lighting should be reviewed and made adequate. Consideration should be given to planting trees in public spaces, and to avenues on wide roads with parking areas. More seating should be provided in public areas. Public space should be relaxing and pleasant space. The aesthetics of both approaches to the town and the central public areas should be considered; ways of improving the ambience and welcome by means of public art should be given serious thought.

Within the town centre, greater provision of dropped pavements between the car parks and the shopping areas is needed. Generally within the town centre, pedestrians should be given priority over traffic. Better provision of cycle racks is needed. Consideration needs to be given to the range of times offered for on-street parking, and to the location and balance of long-stay and short-stay car park places.

The place of pedestrianisation and the questions of traffic circulation should not be done piecemeal, but the whole town looked at, with the High Street at one end, and Victoria Square at the other, considered together. For the High Street, while careful consultation is needed, a small majority of respondents favour pedestrianisation, and there was a greater openness to a shared surface than expected. We encourage imaginative consultation on this. Public consultation should certainly include those currently trading there, but initial responses suggest residents and potential future businesses may see things differently.

The town centre is somewhat split. While it is appropriate to maintain the different character of the shopping precinct and the High Street, the town needs to be more unified. The development of the St Andrew's Church site offers a key location where this might be done. Development of this site would unify the town centre, and was supported by a majority of respondents. We recommend that the Parochial Church Council explore this in the first place with the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP).

The town centre is easily unnoticed and ignored from the A38, the Saltway or the railway. Signage should be clear and attractive. Any action that can be taken to improve the views of the town from the transport network should be encouraged. There is some support for a clear landmark to meet the lack of a visible centre once met by St Andrew's tower and the salt chimneys.

Key recommendations

31. In keeping with the character of a spa town, the town council in partnership with Wychavon should look to planting trees in public spaces and approach the Highways Agency to explore creating avenues in wider roads, especially at points of access.
32. The provision of public art, more public seating, and the enhancement of green spaces should be given greater priority both as an improvement for residents, and to boost the tourist economy.
33. In terms of planning, and attracting development, the highest possible consideration needs to be given, especially through the LSP, to the development of a unified town centre including St Andrew's Church and centre, that creates synergy between the disconnected High Street and St Andrew's Square.
34. Pedestrianisation remains a significant issue. We recommend that this be explored in relation to the needs of the town centre as a whole and not simply in relation to the High Street.

An attractive and accessible town: *history and heritage*

A SIGNIFICANT PART OF what makes Droitwich Spa attractive is its history and heritage, and our present use and future plans should aim to make this accessible to as many people as possible.

Residents value the heritage of the town. The medieval heritage, and the canal heritage are particularly singled out by many, although the whole spectrum of the town's history is appreciated. More work should be done to promote at least 2000 years of history and heritage in Droitwich Spa, and this should feed into contemporary tourist development around the canals, and in maintaining a role for brine in the present life of the town.

Existing mediaeval buildings continue in parts of the High Street, Friar Street and in the churches of St Andrew (Grade 1), St Augustine and St Peter de Witton (both Grade 2*). These should be promoted as part of the town's heritage. St Peter's offers opportunities for the town's promotion for American tourism as the family church of the Winslows. St Augustine's offers particular opportunities to tell the story of Droitwich Spa in the Civil War. The ongoing enhancement of the High Street should be continued and extended to nearby areas. More recent works of art, such as the splendid mosaics of the Sacred Heart church should also be promoted as part of the town's heritage.

Comparatively little archaeological work has been done on the Roman or medieval hospital sites at Dodderhill, and the County should be encouraged to support this. Local (non-statutory) listing of significant buildings and features would help protect and emphasise this historical inheritance.

Relatively small premises mean that museum facilities celebrating this heritage are very limited, and more could be done to showcase the town's history, not least in relation to the salt industry from the Iron Age through to the Victorian development of the Spa. The history of the Spa also offers ways of telling a significant part of the story of medical and health development. We believe the town should be prepared to look at ways of investing in the development of a museum that would attract tourism and build up the economy through maximising the benefits of our heritage.

The town centre should be treated holistically as a conservation area, not to prevent development, but to help unify it, and ensure consistent development. The official conservation area should be widened to include other historic areas of the town.

Key Recommendations

35. The Town Council should explore how its museum and visitor centre can be developed.
36. The LSP should look to extending the existing conservation area to include the whole of the historic town centre.
37. Work should be done by the various councils, the LSP and voluntary groups to develop and promote the varied history of the town, Roman, Mediaeval, Civil War and Victorian, for tourists and residents alike, and not simply focus on one aspect of it.
38. Wherever possible – canals, brine, historic buildings – the town's history should be a part of contemporary experience and not simply confined to museum displays.

Preferences

Building Design

DURING THE CONSULTATION process residents were asked to rate examples of design and appearance. The choices included local and regional developments and street scenes and some from award winning designs. A few others were included because the steering group thought they had merit.

These were divided into three categories, relevant to likely future developments in the town. They were:

- § Housing, since many more units are likely to be built in and around the town;
- § Canal and waterside developments, locations likely to be in demand given the restoration of the Droitwich canals;
- § Street scenes, given the importance of the historic, central area for commerce and tourism.

A summary of responses is provided in the web-page's supporting documentation.

Housing

Of the eight examples offered two received very positive responses. They were a local housing development, the New Worcestershire and small housing development in West Malling (see photo), commended in the Housing Design Awards in 2003.

The Worcestershire, a development of apartments, has become familiar to residents.

The commendation it now receives, given the very vocal criticism when the scheme was first mooted, is worth noting.

The West Malling example was described as 'equally unconventional, with double height spaces, living rooms on upper floors' and the estate design a 'welcome demonstration that breaking the conventions can reap rich rewards...'

One example, a scheme of affordable houses for key workers and families in Hammersmith and Fulham, received an overwhelmingly negative response. It was described as 'an imaginative interpretation of the traditional London Mews...' and the cantilevered blocks have timber cladding. The unfamiliar kind of building did not commend itself to locals!



West Malling housing development

Canal and Waterside Developments

The restoration of the Droitwich Canals will inevitably be accompanied by canal side developments and consideration needs to be given to the mixed use development of Netherwich basin. Residents were invited to rate thirteen examples, chosen to give a choice of different styles and content of developments. As with housing, preferences were emphatic. Two were rated very positively and five very negatively.

The two examples commanding most approval were a three storey domestic style development around the canal basin at Hemel Hempstead and the canal basin at Stratford: no development was shown in the representation of the latter. A photograph of the first example (Hemel Hempstead), is included below.

The examples that produced pronounced negative reactions were photographs of the Mail Box and Brindley Place, Birmingham, an award winning canal side dance school, and a modern industrial river side building in Berlin. Two other examples that did not impress (but not so emphatically) were of the Diglis Basin development in Worcester.



Hemel Hempstead canal basin

Street Scenes

The thirteen examples included very familiar places (more than half were from Droitwich itself), leavened by some from other English towns. The focus in the latter was more the finish of the road/square surfaces. Opinions on all examples were generally more positive.

The most positive were for photographs of Victoria Square (with a view of the Raven Hotel) the Town Hall area of the High Street, and the square in Keswick. The photograph here, focusing on the paving, is one of the latter.



Street paving in Keswick

General Observation

Unsurprisingly, the responses suggest preferences for the locally familiar (e.g. the Worcestershire, High Street) in design. There was also a lack of enthusiasm for nearby – in some cases highly regarded – designs (e.g. Brindley Place, The Mailbox, Diglis basin). However, those consulted did show some preference for the style of developments in Hemel Hempstead (canal side) and West Malling (housing). This suggests that some modern designs can and do find favour with local residents. People lend their support most readily to developments of traditional building styles. Initial responses may be coloured by unfamiliarity, and more imaginative and unusual designs may need more prolonged consultation – as with some of Kandahar’s proposals for development.

Preferences:

Planning and Development

THERE WILL INEVITABLY be future developments in and around the town, not least in significant increases in housing, although the scale and type will be a matter for debate.

The South Worcestershire Joint Core Strategy, currently in the course of preparation, posits an increase of 1000 plus housing units in the period 2011- 2024. If achieved, this will bring the population of the town up to 30,000 the numbers originally envisaged in the 1974 town expansion plan.

The numbers remain a matter for dispute: The likelihood is that **some** of this expansion will happen and the town plan consultation invited comment on preferred locations and types of development.

Eight brown field sites near the centre were selected, and eight around the town boundary. The criteria for selection were inclusion in previous plans, sites previously mooted for development, or already partially developed. Options for the type of preferred development were given, where appropriate including leaving the site as it is now.

Town Boundary Sites

A plan for all eight identified sites for development is included. The majority preferences for each of the sites were:

Site A. Between Tagwell road and M5 embankment, at the end of Pulley Lane.
The strong majority was for the area to remain undeveloped.

Site B. Yew Tree Hill.
Overwhelming preference was for the area to be a country park, or for informal recreation use.

Site C. West Yew Tree Hill, off Pulley Lane,
Overwhelming preference was for this plot to be left as open space for a country park or informal recreational use.

Site D. Copcut Lands, west of A38.
A strong preference was for the land to be used for employment, especially technological. A minority preferred housing use.

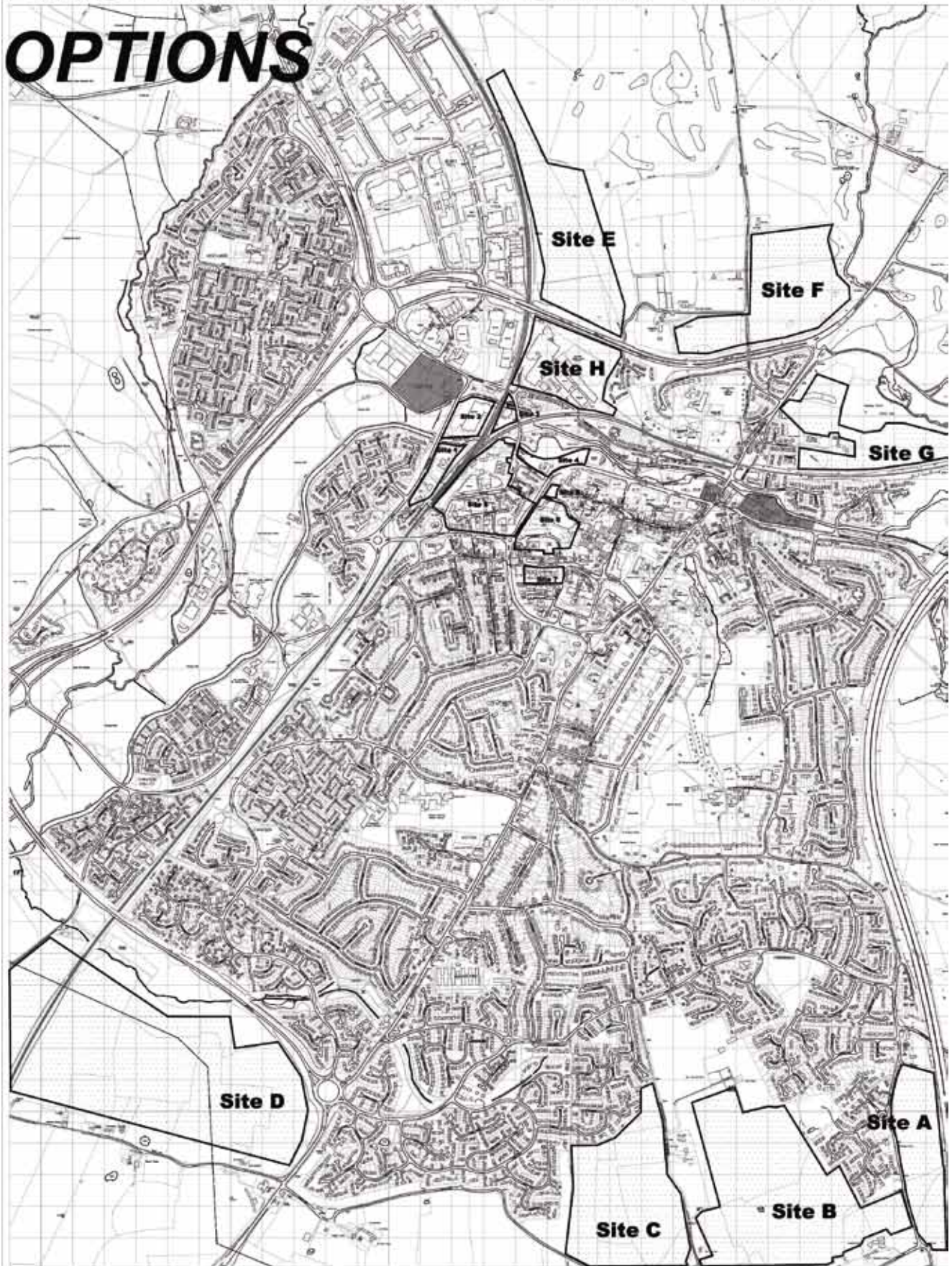
Site E. Berry Hill, North of town, abutting Railway line.
An overwhelming majority preferred this to be retained as farmland.

Site F. Crutch Lane.
An overwhelming majority preferred this to be retained as farmland.

Site G. Pridzor Hill.
An overwhelming majority preferred this plot to remain unused.

Site H. Bays Meadow, south of A38 Roman way
A large majority preferred this plot to be used for housing.

DROITWICH SPA TOWN PLAN OPTIONS



Town Centre Sites

A plan of the eight sites, all on the north east corner of the town, is included. The majority preferences for each of the sites were:

Site 1. Salwarpe Road, adjacent to the railway station, currently club and halls.
Overwhelming preference: leave it as it is.

Site 2. Pipe Works, bounded by railway line.
A mixed response, evenly split between housing/recreational, tourist feature.

Site 3. Rail Triangle.
Overwhelming preference was for employment/(principally) office uses.

Site 4. Netherwich Canal Basin.
Overwhelming preference was for recreation/tourist uses.

Site 5. Friar Street, currently brown field site adjacent to Priory House.
Very mixed response, evenly divided between office use/retail of a mix of both.

Site 6. Covercroft, currently car park day centre and supermarket.
Overwhelming preference was for a mixed retail and leisure use.

Site 7. Ombersley Street, currently car park, and residual area of old health centre.
A mixed response, evenly split between retail with housing above, and car parking.

Site 8. Union Lane, including industrial plant, and boxing club.
Overwhelming preference was for a mixed development: office/leisure/retail and housing

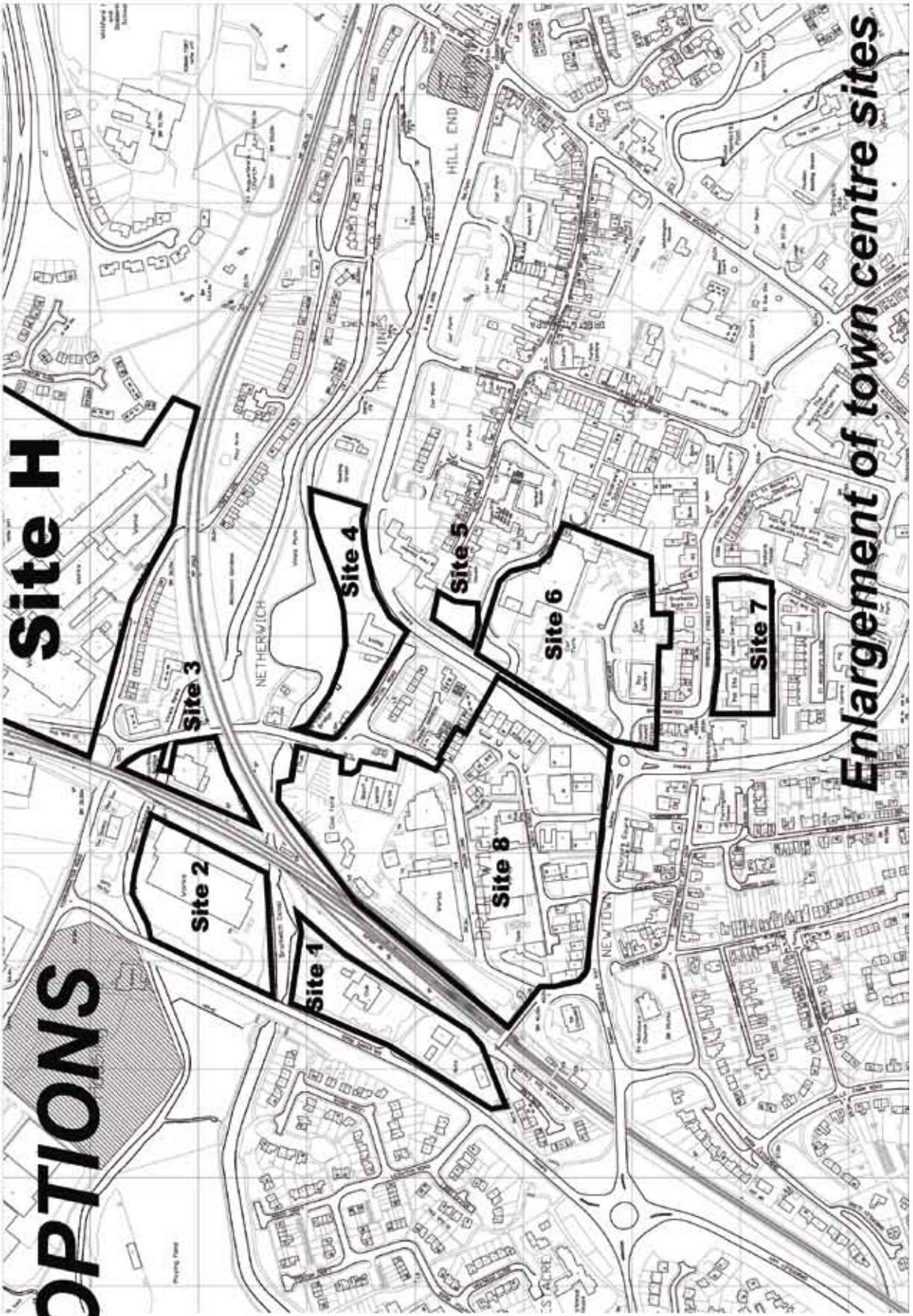
Conclusion

This consultation offered people not simply options about specific sites, but the opportunity to express their views about which sites were best suited to what sort of development. We recommend therefore that careful consideration is given to prioritising the types of development for which the community has signalled its support. The dislike of large scale development is apparent in the answers.

There is some support for:

- § **housing projects** on the Pipe Works site (site 2), Ombersley Street, above shops (site 7), Union Lane (site 3) and Copcut (site D);
- § **development for (principally office) employment uses** in the Railway Triangle (site 3), Union Lane (site 8) and Copcut (Site D);
- § **retail developments** in Friar Street, Covercroft, Ombersley Street, Union Lane, sites 5, 6, 7 and 8,
- § and more emphatically **recreational and tourist uses** in the centre (particularly Netherwich Basin, site 4) and Yew Tree Hill, (site B).

DROITWICH SPA TOWN CENTRE PLAN OPTIONS



Site H

Enlargement of town centre sites

A summary of recommendations

1. Planning for green space provision should be guided by the greater average for spa towns, rather than either the lowest or average provision for all towns.
2. The local authority should seek to attract commercial leisure providers to the town.
3. Improved youth facilities need to be provided on a secure long-term basis.
4. The Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) should seek partners to develop and add to the existing leisure provision in and around the town.
5. There is a continuing need for more affordable housing. Such housing should be distributed in every part of the town, and not grouped together in large numbers.
6. Planning developments needs to cater for an appropriate mix and diversity of housing provision.
7. The Primary Care Trust (PCT) needs to be looking at partnerships that prioritise health care at home, and in the locality.
8. The PCT should be looking with the local authority at partnerships that provide convalescent and step-down beds in the local community.
9. The local authority should ensure that there are open areas and good lighting in all new developments.
10. The local authority, in consultation with the police and community, should look at the improvement of lighting and the refurbishment of dilapidated areas, especially the underpasses.
11. The local authority needs to provide for more waste bins, not least on approaches to schools. This needs to be partnered with police and community anti-littering programmes.
12. A priority for development should be to attract the kind of businesses to the town that will help bring the centre to life in the evening.
13. The police should respond through the PACT (Police and Communities Together) and other processes to the perceived need for highly visible policing.
14. Education services need to explore ways in which partnerships with colleges and Worcester University might develop some local provision for local adult education.
15. There is a need to encourage diversity in business and employment and training opportunities.
16. Droitwich Spa should be explicitly involved in the development of the high-technology corridor.
17. Further industrial development should be encouraged outside the ring-road, and not inside it.
18. The LSP, working especially with the Town and District Councils tourism departments, should seek to develop the profile of Droitwich Spa as a tourist destination.
19. Local groups and commercial providers, working in partnership with the local authority, should seek to develop artistic and cultural opportunities and provision in the town.
20. The canal-side development should be used to encourage further business, leisure and civic development of the existing town centre.
21. The development of brown-field sites as they become available within the ring-road should be geared to mixed leisure, commercial and residential uses, and not further industrialisation.
22. Electricity providers need to demonstrate to residents and businesses that the power supply is stable and sufficient, and that it takes account of current and future needs. This confidence is currently lacking.
23. In planning for major developments, the local community needs confidence in the infrastructure. We recommend that communication and review of infrastructure be part of public consultations.

24. We encourage planners to have high expectation of energy-efficient designs in all new build.
25. Worcestershire County Council should explore with the Highways methods of reducing traffic noise, especially in connection with the M5.
26. Safer and easier pedestrian and cycleway access to and from Westlands across the bypass should be a matter of priority for all.
27. The local authorities need to work co-operatively to ensure attractive, easy and well-signed access to the town centre, with priority given to access from the station and across the Saltway.
28. Worcestershire County Council needs to be responsive to local concerns raised through the PACT process and other public meetings about parking safety issues. The area around the station should be made a priority for parking enforcement and further restrictions in the cause of safety.
29. Footpath repairs and developments should be planned to take account of the increased number of motorised chairs in use.
30. The local authority should take account of the potential for tourist development brought by the canal renewal, invest in signage, and look to the provision of more extensive coach parking facilities.
31. In keeping with the character of a spa town, the town council in partnership with Wychavon should look to planting trees in public spaces, and approach the Highways Agency to explore creating avenues in wider roads, especially at points of access.
32. The provision of public art, more public seating, and the enhancement of green spaces should be given greater priority both as an enhancement for residents, and to boost the tourist economy.
33. In terms of planning, and attracting development, the highest possible consideration needs to be given, especially through the LSP, to the development of a unified town centre including St Andrew's Church and centre, that creates synergy between the disconnected High Street and St Andrew's Square.
34. Pedestrianisation remains a significant issue. We recommend that this be explored in relation to the needs of the town centre as a whole, and not simply in relation to the High Street.
35. The Town Council should explore ways in which the museum and visitor centre can be developed.
36. The LSP should look to extending the existing conservation area to include the whole of the historic town centre.
37. Work should be done by the various councils, the LSP and voluntary groups to develop and promote the varied history of the town, Roman, Mediaeval, Civil War and Victorian, for tourists and residents, and not simply one aspect of it.
38. Wherever possible – canals, brine, historic buildings – the town's history should be a part of contemporary experience and not simply confined to museum displays.



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