

SWDP 2: Development Strategy and Settlement Hierarchy

A. The Development Strategy comprises the following principles:

- i. Provide accessible, attractive employment sites and positive generic policies to deliver job creation opportunities.
- ii. ~~Provide for and facilitate the delivery of sufficient housing to meet the objectively assessed locally identified needs to 2030. Phase development to maintain a rolling 5-year housing land supply to 2030.~~
- iii. Safeguard and (wherever possible) enhance the open countryside.
- iii. ~~Encourage the effective use and re-use of accessible, available and environmentally acceptable brownfield land where practicable ahead of greenfield land. Re-use accessible, available brownfield land prior to the release of greenfield land.~~
- iv. Maintain the openness of the ~~green-Green Belt and Significant Gaps~~ (as shown on the ~~Proposals-Policies~~ Map).
- v. Focus most development on the urban areas, where both housing needs and accessibility to lower-cost public services are greatest.
- vi. ~~With respect to scale and type, development will need to be commensurate with and appropriate to the size and characteristics of the host settlement. A location's capacity to assimilate change will be taken into account. Development should be of an appropriate scale and type (see part E below) and be informed by the Settlement Hierarchy set out below.~~
- vii. Windfall development proposals will be assessed in accordance with the settlement hierarchy below:

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Table 2 - South Worcestershire Settlement Hierarchy (also see Annex D)

Category	Retail Hierarchy Position / Role	Settlements Included	Role	Policy Implementation Implications for the SWDP
Urban areas - City	First (city centre)	Worcester	Worcester is the administrative centre of the county and provides the greatest range of services. It is the main employment destination for people from Malvern Hills and Wychavon. The city is a sub-regional focus for strategic employment, housing and retail development. Worcester's success will benefit the rest of south Worcestershire.	The city will To continue to fulfil its role, <u>accommodating the city needs to accommodate</u> the largest amount of employment, housing and retail development. <u>To support implementation in an effective and sustainable manner, significant investment is required in infrastructure as set out in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan. SWDP Allocation Policies 43,44 and 45 are of particular relevance.</u> To deliver this in an effective

				and sustainable manner, significant investment in infrastructure is required, as set out in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan.
<u>Urban areas - Main Towns</u>	Second	Droitwich Spa, Evesham, Malvern	These towns provide a comprehensive range of local services and employment opportunities for their residents and the rural hinterland. The towns will continue to be the focus of balanced growth in Malvern Hills and Wychavon.	<u>Housing development policies focus upon urban extensions and settlement infill allocations along with the necessary associated infrastructure. Also significant focus upon supporting employment. Allocation policies include: SWDP 46-56. A number of urban extensions and smaller infill allocations are proposed along with necessary associated infrastructure.</u>
<u>Urban Areas - Other Towns</u>	Third	Pershore, Tenbury Wells, Upton-upon-Severn	These are less than a third of the size of the m Main t Towns, with fewer high-level services. Nonetheless Pershore, Tenbury Wells and Upton-upon-Severn provide a range of services and employment opportunities and act as local service centres.	Due to the extent of the floodplains surrounding Tenbury Wells and Upton-upon-Severn, new development will be limited. As Pershore is considerably larger and has more available suitable land, an urban extension is proposed for it. New development is limited in Tenbury Wells and Upton-upon-Severn due to the extent of the floodplains surrounding the towns. Pershore is a larger settlement with more available suitable land, part of which is allocated for an urban extension. The necessary local infrastructure requirements are set out in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan. <u>Relevant allocation policies include SWDP57 and 58.</u>
Rural Areas (1)	Fourth	Category 1, 2 and 3 villages and	These villages provide varying ranges of local services and facilities. However, the larger	<u>To be supportive of the Sustainability Appraisal, the scale of allocated</u>

		village clusters	settlements generally tend to provide the greatest range. Their role is predominately aimed at meeting locally identified housing and employment needs. They are, therefore, suited to accommodate market and affordable housing needs alongside limited employment for local needs.	development is significantly less than that for the urban areas. It is predominately/predominantly aimed at helping to address housing needs and support local services. A number of housing sites of an appropriate scale are allocated in Category 1,2 and 3 villages to address housing needs and support local services. Rural employment opportunities of an appropriate scale are also encouraged. Directly relevant policies include: SWDP 12 and 16 together with allocation policies SWDP 59-61.
Rural Areas (2)	Fifth	Lower category villages	These villages tend to be very small and at best offer one or two local services. Their role in providing additional future development is therefore limited.	No housing allocations. These lower level villages may be able to accept limited infill development, small scale employment opportunities (SWDP 12) and rural exception sites (SWDP 16). No allocations are proposed. Where a Development Boundary exists, limited infill development is acceptable subject to more detailed policies, in particular SWDP 21. Where a need for affordable housing can be demonstrated and it cannot be delivered in a Category 1, 2 or 3 village, 'exception' sites could be acceptable in line with SWDP 16.

B. The open countryside is defined as land beyond any development boundary² and the built form of the urban area, or land or beyond the Worcester City administrative boundary³. In

² No development boundary was defined for the city in the Worcester Local Plan. Worcester's 'development boundary' is defined as its administrative boundary and the urban extensions with the exception of Worcester Technology Park (SWDP 45/5). Most allocations extend beyond the development boundaries, which have been carried forward from the former Malvern Hills and Wycheavon Local Plans. Once

these areas, development will be strictly controlled, especially in designated areas such as the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and will be limited to dwellings for rural workers, small scale employment (where supported by more detailed SWDP policies), house extensions, replacement buildings and renewable energy projects that are supportive of overarching sustainable development requirements set out in SWDP 1. This policy should also be read in conjunction with SWDP 12 and 16.

C. Any development proposals should ensure the retention of the open character of the Significant Gaps.

D. The West Midlands Green Belt will be maintained and Green Belt policy will apply in accordance with national policy as set out in the NPPF. Development at Major Developed Sites will be limited to within the relevant site boundaries set out in the Policies Map and will be restricted to the limited infilling and ~~erand~~ redevelopment of previously developed land and will be assessed in accordance with national policy. ~~safeguarded; only appropriate development (as specified in the Framework), to include infill development within a Major Developed Site boundary, will be permitted unless 'very special circumstances' can be fully demonstrated.~~

D. Table 3 Major Developed Sites within the Green Belt³

Roxel; <u>Hartlebury Trading Estate; Potter Group – Site 7</u>	Major Developed Site <u>restricted to the limited infilling and er redevelopment of previously developed land for employment uses only within the identified site boundary (for limited infill development for employment uses only). Within the identified site boundary, the principle of infill development would be acceptable for employment uses.</u>
Hindlip Park	Major Developed Site <u>restricted to the limited infilling and er redevelopment of previously developed land for employment uses only within the identified site boundary⁴ (for limited infill development for specific uses only). Within the identified site boundary⁴, the principle of infill development would be acceptable for employment uses.</u>
Sixways	Major Developed Site <u>restricted to the limited infilling and er redevelopment of previously developed land for employment and leisure uses only within the identified site boundary Major Developed Site (for limited infill development for specific uses only). Within the identified site boundary, the principle of infill development would be acceptable for employment and leisure-related</u>

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detailed schemes for these allocations have been approved and work commenced, these will be treated as being within the development boundary for the purpose of this definition. The associated green infrastructure will then be treated as Local Green Network under SWDP 38.

³ The allocated Worcester urban extensions are part of the open countryside until planning permission has been granted and development has commenced in accordance with SWDP45/1, SWDP45/2, SWDP45/3, SWDP45/4 and SWDP45/5, when they will be considered to form part of the urban area and therefore will no longer be considered to form part of the open countryside.

³ This table should be read in conjunction with the Proposals Policies Map, which identifies the acknowledged boundaries of each site. The table identifies those designations that are considered to fall within the categorisation of major developed sites in the Green Belt (note: these are neither allocations nor intended as sites proposed for major redevelopment).

⁴ The strategic importance of Hindlip Park is likely to continue to increase during the Plan period. Subject to the outcome of masterplanning and site appraisal, including an historic environment impact assessment, the MDS boundary set out on the Policies map could be subject to public consultation extended.

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	development.
Hartlebury Trading Estate	Major Developed Site (for limited infill development for employment uses only). Within the identified site boundary, the principle of infill development would be acceptable for employment uses.

Any development proposals within the site boundaries which impact on the openness and purposes of the Green Belt will need to demonstrate very special circumstances.

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E. E. With regard to development proposals, they should be of an appropriate scale and type with regards the scale must be proportionate to the needs and size of the settlement, local landscape character and / or location as well as the availability of community service infrastructure to accommodate it in a sustainable manner. ~~The scale of development proposals must also enhance the local landscape character.~~

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F. Within development boundaries and within the Worcester City administrative area, preference is given to the redevelopment of brownfield sites before bringing forward greenfield land. ~~Beyond development boundaries~~In the open countryside the preference will also be to redevelop brownfield sites in the first instance although ~~their biodiversity interest~~, availability of infrastructure and accessibility to local services will be material considerations. The biodiversity interest of brownfield sites will also be considered.

G. The SWDP is supportive of development proposals that are promoted through neighbourhood planning mechanisms, where these proposals do not compromise the delivery of the plan's strategic plan objectives policies and proposals⁵.

H. As required by the Duty to Co-operate⁵, the SWDP will give due consideration to housing proposals that are intended to meet the clearly identified needs of a neighbouring planning authority⁶ and that are set out in an adopted Local Plan⁷.

I. The following three Sub Areas are identified to support the implementation of SWDP2, including policy set out in SWDP 3:

- Wider Worcester Area
- Malvern Hills (Excluding Wider Worcester Area) Sub Area
- Wychavon (excluding Wider Worcester Area) Sub Area

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Reasoned Justification

1. The development strategy is driven by the SWDP Vision and associated objectives. It brings together land use, development and infrastructure considerations ~~which that~~ flow from the economic, environmental and social characteristics of the area. The Sustainability Appraisal (SA) demonstrates that the proposed development strategy will help deliver the SA objectives.
2. The urban areas, in particular Worcester and the main towns, have the greatest housing needs and are locations where the cost of public service delivery is relatively low. In order to deliver the social objectives of sustainable development, some growth is directed to those rural settlements (Category 1, 2 and 3 villages) that enjoy a reasonable range of local services.

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⁵ -E.g. development in areas of high flood risk, sites of national / international importance, green belt (where it would compromise overall green belt objectives).

⁵ Section 110, Localism Act (2011) relating to unmet need.

⁶ Cheltenham Borough, Gloucester City and Tewksbury Borough Councils are preparing a Joint Core Strategy. Land at Mitton (Wychavon District) and the Mythe (Malvern Hills District) were not included as strategic allocations in the partner authorities' 2014 'Developing the Preferred Options' document (2011).

⁷ If neighbouring authorities can demonstrate through their local plan process that there is a genuine and evidenced need that can only be met through provision in the south Worcestershire area, this can be addressed through a review of the SWDP in 2018-19.

3. The villages and hamlets across south Worcestershire are characterised by close-knit communities that in many places retain links with the traditional rural economy, as well as providing a range of services. The specific role of each settlement in the hierarchy is based on a detailed assessment of the services and facilities that are available, as set out in the Village Facilities and Rural Transport Study.
4. Maintaining the identity and integrity of individual settlements is an important issue for local communities. This is achieved by the West Midlands Green Belt designation ~~around the city of Worcester and~~ to the north and north-east of Worcester within Wychavon, as shown on the ~~Proposals Policies~~ Map. ~~Green belts serve five purposes (set out in the Framework), which are: to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas; to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another; to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment; to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land. Green belt policy (set out in the NPPF) serves a number of purposes. These include preventing urban sprawl and the coalescence of settlements, as well as preserving their existing character. Green belts also encourage the regeneration of urban areas.~~ Locally, the ~~Worcestershire~~ Green Belt continues to serve all the purposes of national policy and the boundaries are considered to be strong and enduring. Where the ~~g~~Green ~~b~~Belt is narrow (e.g. between Fernhill Heath and Worcester), it will be particularly important to ensure that the land remains open, ~~as~~ otherwise its ability to function as green belt would be compromised.
5. There are a number of Significant Gaps shown on the ~~Proposals Policies~~ Map. The purpose of maintaining these gaps, ~~which either serve as a buffer or visual break between rural settlements and adjacent urban areas or protect the character and setting of settlements,~~ is to provide additional protection to open land that may be subject to development pressures ~~which either serves as a buffer / visual break between rural settlements and adjacent urban areas or protects the character and setting of settlements.~~ The designation helps to maintain a clear separation between smaller settlements and urban areas in order to retain their individual identity. Acceptable development proposals in such areas may include the reuse of rural buildings, agricultural and forestry-related development, home-based businesses, playing fields, other open land uses and minor extensions to existing dwellings.
6. As a spatial plan, the SWDP sets out strategic policy that relates to places, unconstrained by administrative boundaries. SWDP 2 therefore identifies three separate Sub Areas that are mutually exclusive and together cover the whole plan area. The Sub Areas are:
 - the Wider Worcester Area (WWA) – comprising Worcester City plus the urban extensions directly abutting the administrative area of the City;
 - the Malvern Hills (Excluding WWA) Sub Area – comprising that part of Malvern Hills district outside of the Wider Worcester Area;
 - the Wychavon (Excluding WWA) Sub Area – comprising that part of Wychavon district outside of the Wider Worcester Area,
7. The Sub Areas are the SWDP response to two strategic issues:
 - a. Worcester City's built up area is tightly constrained inside its boundaries. There is insufficient space in the City's administrative area to meet all its needs for development, especially housing. This is the driver for the concept of the Wider Worcester Area (WWA) enabling Worcester as a sub regional centre to grow beyond the City boundary. A share of Worcester's housing and employment need is redirected to the Worcester urban extensions so that need is met on sites just outside and abutting its boundary, in both Malvern Hills and Wychavon.

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b. Because of natural and environmental constraints, Malvern Hills district has limited ability to accept new development. The Plan therefore proposes that part of its housing need which cannot be met in the Malvern Hills (Excluding WWA) Sub Area be redirected in the first instance to the Wider Worcester Area, at the Worcester urban extensions,

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8. These arrangements are entirely in line with the approach suggested in the Framework paragraph 179 to deal with situations where development requirements cannot wholly be met within an LPA's own area. SWDP 3 sets out further policy to implement this approach.

9. The retail hierarchy set out in SWDP 2 is a strategic policy tool to help maintain the position of the main competing centres in South Worcestershire relative to other nearby centres, as evidenced by national ranking⁸. Supported by SWDP 9 and SWDP 10 it helps to retain each centre's market share of expenditure by reducing expenditure lost to centres outside the plan area. Evidence of the relative retail strength, vitality and viability of the main competing centres supports the retail hierarchy structure in SWDP 2. It demonstrates that Worcester city centre's position in the national ranking is well above that of Evesham, Malvern and Droitwich Spa. This justifies Worcester's first position in the local retail hierarchy, as might be expected from its historic county town role and its size. Of its nearest competing centres, only Birmingham and Cheltenham are ranked higher. Worcester's sub-regional role has long been recognised, most recently in the former Worcestershire Structure Plan, and in evidence about its position amongst centres with the highest comparison goods turnover in the West Midlands. Concentration of new retail development in or closely related to the city centre is important for achieving the critical mass of retail floorspace necessary to attract investment consistent with its hierarchy position. Evesham is next in terms of national ranking whilst Malvern and Droitwich Spa are on a lower ranking but the two are similar. These three towns are grouped in the second position of the local hierarchy. They serve their residents and communities in surrounding rural areas.

5-10. The Other Towns' centres at Pershore, Tenbury and Upton-upon Severn are smaller and are not in the national ranking of main competing centres. They are grouped in the third position in the local hierarchy, functioning as local service centres. Centres in Category 1, 2 and 3 villages are smaller and are in the fourth position in the hierarchy, based on evidence from the Village Facilities and Rural Transport Survey 2012 about the local services they provide. Villages in the countryside with limited retail facilities are in fifth position.

6-11. The implementation of SWDP 2 is essential to achieving ~~truly~~-sustainable development and the delivery of economic prosperity.

⁸ Suite of Town Centre and Retail Studies for Worcester City, Malvern Hills and Wychavon. September 2007 (updated in 2010). DPDS Consulting.