

SWDP 1: Overarching Sustainable Development Principles

- A. When considering development proposals, the Local Authority will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework. It will always work jointly and proactively with applicants to find solutions that mean proposals can be approved wherever possible and to secure development that improves economic, social and environmental conditions in south Worcestershire.
- B. Planning applications that accord with the policies in the SWDP (and where relevant, with policies in Neighbourhood Plans) will be approved unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- C. Where applications do not accord with policies in the SWDP, the Local Authority will seek to work with applicants with a view to mitigating adverse impacts and identifying sustainable solutions where possible.
- D. Where there are no policies relevant to the application or relevant policies are out of date at the time of making the decision then the Local Authority will grant permission unless material considerations indicate otherwise – taking into account whether:
 - i. any adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole; or
 - ii. specific policies in the Framework indicate that development should be restricted.

Reasoned Justification

1. The economic, social and environmental aspects that make up sustainable development need to be balanced carefully to accomplish a positive outcome. The Government's National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) makes it clear that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development.
2. In order to achieve a sustainable end result, the SWDP (through its overall approach and policies) needs to perform a number of roles:
 - a. **An economic role** – contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive south Worcestershire economy by:
 - i. Ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right locations and at the right time to support economic and social growth and innovation.

- ii. Identifying and co-ordinating development requirements, including the provision of infrastructure.
 - iii. Promoting accessibility to everyday facilities for all, especially those without a car.
 - iv. Implementing the Worcestershire Economic Strategy.
- b. **A social role** – supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities in south Worcestershire by:
- i. Providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations.
 - ii. Creating a high-quality built environment, with accessible local services that reflect a community's needs and support its health and social and cultural well-being.
 - iii. Creating a strong sense of place by strengthening the distinctive and cultural qualities of towns and villages.
 - iv. Creating safe and accessible environments where crime, disorder and the fear of crime do not undermine quality of life or community cohesion.
- c. **An environmental role** – contributing to protecting and enhancing south Worcestershire's unique natural, built and historic environment by:
- i. Helping to improve biodiversity.
 - ii. Using natural resources prudently.
 - iii. Minimising waste and pollution.
 - iv. Safeguarding and enhancing landscape character.
 - v. Protecting important historic buildings, monuments, sites of archaeological significance and the integrity of local planning designations.
 - vi. Protecting and enhancing green infrastructure.
 - vii. Mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.
3. These roles cannot be undertaken in isolation because they are mutually dependent. Economic growth can secure higher social and environmental standards and well-designed buildings and places can improve the lives of people and communities. For example, the promotion of local food production can help support and diversify the local agricultural economy, promote healthier lifestyles and provide valuable habitats for wildlife. Similarly, sustainable drainage can provide a cost-effective measure to reduce the environmental impact of surface water run-off and increase resilience to flooding.

To achieve sustainable development, economic, social and environmental gains will be sought jointly and concurrently wherever possible.

4. The SWDP will seek to guide development to achieve sustainable solutions and SWDP 1 to SWDP 63, taken as a whole, constitute the partner authorities' view of what sustainable development means in practice for the south Worcestershire area when promoted through the planning system.

