

SWDP 9: Creating and Sustaining Vibrant Centres



- A. New retail, leisure and tourism development that contributes to achieving a high-quality sustainable network of urban and rural settlements will be promoted and supported. Retail and other town centre development should be of a scale appropriate to its location.**
- B. Measures to secure the vitality and viability of the City Centre and Town Centres as defined on the Policies Map (Worcester, Droitwich Spa, Evesham, Great Malvern, Pershore, Tenbury Wells and Upton-upon-Severn) will be set out in Supplementary Planning Documents, Neighbourhood Plans and Local Development Orders as appropriate. These measures will include environmental enhancements and activities that seek to improve the visitor experience.**
- C. Proposals for retail or leisure facilities within the City Centre and Town Centres will need to demonstrate that they are:**

- i. **Contributing to a comfortable, safe, attractive and accessible environment.**
- ii. **Making full use of the premises, avoiding vacant floors over shops and providing a separate entrance for office or residential use of upper floors, where they are within the reasonable control of the applicant.**

D. Development proposals linked to the evening and night time economy will be supported provided they:

- i. **Do not result in a clustering of dead frontages during the daytime;**
- ii. **Do not on their own, or cumulatively, result in an unacceptable impact on neighbouring uses by reason of disturbance, traffic or safety;**
- iii. **Do not on their own, or cumulatively, result in an inappropriate balance of uses.**

Reasoned Justification

1. The Government's fundamental objective for town centres is to promote their vitality. Local planning authorities should, amongst other things:
 - a. Recognise town centres as the heart of their communities and pursue policies to support their viability and vitality.
 - b. Define a network and hierarchy of centres that is resilient to anticipated future economic change.
 - c. Define town centre boundaries based on a clear definition of primary and secondary frontages and set clear policies outlining which uses will be permitted in these locations.
 - d. Allocate a range of suitable town centre sites to match the need for retail, leisure, commercial, office, tourism, cultural and community development in full.
 - e. Establish policies to assist in the consideration of proposals for main town centre uses that cannot be accommodated in or adjacent to town centres.
2. Worcester, being at the top of the retail hierarchy, will be the preferred location for major leisure, office and retail developments and other uses that attract large numbers of people. Other centres are suitable for day-to-day food and non-food shopping, small-scale leisure uses and local service and facility provision.
3. The retail studies prepared by DPDS in 2007 and 2010⁽³⁰⁾ and the retail study update 2013 concluded that:

30 South Worcestershire Town Centres and Retail Strategy (DPDS, September 2007 and December 2010).

- a. No additional food floorspace beyond that already planned will be required before 2031.
 - b. The Wider Worcester Area needs to provide at least 30,726 square metres of additional non-food retail space by 2031.
 - c. Town Centres within Malvern Hills District need to provide at least 6,786 square metres of additional non-food retail space by 2031.
 - d. Only modest additional non-food floor space is required in the wider south Worcestershire area.
4. If Worcester is to maintain its sub-regional role within the area and attract south Worcestershire residents who might otherwise travel to Birmingham, Merry Hill or Cheltenham, it must be the focus for major retail development.
 5. Major leisure and tourist attractions should be directed to existing centres where they can be easily accessed by most people and where alternatives to car use such as public transport are readily available. This is to ensure that these facilities do not contribute to an unsustainable growth in personal car use. However, tourism is important to the rural economy. Where location in the existing centres is not appropriate, tourism related proposals should be directed to rural settlements and locations accessible by a choice of means of transport (see SWDP 34 for specific policy guidance on tourist development).
 6. To retain the attractiveness of South Worcestershire's centres for visitors, investors and residents it is important that development proposals respect the character and environment of these centres. This should include any special historic, architectural and archaeological interest consistent with policies SWDP 6 and SWDP 24.
 7. Successful centres need a balance of uses, e.g. shops, cafes, bars, restaurants and clubs to provide leisure opportunities throughout a full day. It is important that local amenity and safety is not compromised through an excess of evening and night time uses. Ensuring this will require investment in public realm and safety improvements by promoters. The SWC will, through the South Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership and other city / town centre stakeholders, also continue to invest in their centres.
 8. The provision of additional retail development is set out in the individual site allocation policies for the main urban centres (SWDP 43 - SWDP 56).