

Reasoned Justification

6.1 Droitwich Spa is identified in the settlement hierarchy (Policy SWDP1) as a main town being the largest settlement in Wychavon District with an estimated population of 23,600 (2009 Mid-Term Population Estimates). It has the highest natural increase in population and the greatest housing needs within the District.

Droitwich High Street



6.2 The town's origins can be traced back to at least the Roman period and its industrial heritage has been dominated by salt production, which only ceased during the first half of the 20th century. From the mid 19th century the town developed as a 'Spa' town with visitors taking to the brine baths. This continued well into the 20th century and the baths remained open in the town until 2008. The legacy of the 'Spa' culture has led to a town centre with spacious and pleasant parks and open-air leisure opportunities much valued by the local community.

6.3 Since the 1960s the town has undergone considerable growth with concentric phases of housing development predominately to the south of the town centre. This along with the established central shopping area, adjacent employment sites and industrial estates to the north west has led to a multilayered town providing a focus for town residents and local villages alike.

6.4 The range of services includes education, health, leisure and retail facilities. Employment is concentrated to the north west within three sizeable industrial estates, whilst shopping is centrally located, with some provision in larger units along the Kidderminster Road and other local shops serving residential areas. Approximately 46% of residents work outside the town, with more popular destinations being Worcester (14%), Birmingham (8%) and Bromsgrove (14%) with the remainder further afield within the West Midlands or south west.

6.5 Given these patterns of commuting this Development Plan needs to balance the provisions of both local employment opportunities and fulfil the town's role within the Worcestershire A38 High Technology Corridor, whilst avoiding increasing the travel to work journeys to and from the West Midlands conurbation. Droitwich Spa also provides employment opportunities for approximately 5,000 people from within and outside the town, the majority travelling from Worcester (22%), Wyre Forest (15%) and Bromsgrove (13%) areas.

6.6 With regard to accessibility Droitwich Spa is served by the M5 (Junctions 5 and 6), A38, rail (with two routes into Birmingham) and regular bus services to neighbouring towns. The recently completed Droitwich Canal project, completing the 'ring' linking to the Worcester and Birmingham Canal and River Severn, will also bring more visitors into the town centre.

6.7 Droitwich Spa has an extensive Conservation Area focused on the town centre and important areas of nearby public open space at Vines Park and Lido Park which offer high quality leisure facilities including the recently refurbished open-air Lido complex. The town lies between two high points, to the north Dodderhill and to the south of Yew Tree Hill and is therefore not particularly prominent within the wider landscape, although from these vantage points long distant views of the Malvern, Woodbury and Clent Hills are provided.

6.1 Droitwich Urban Capacity

6.8 In seeking to accommodate further growth there is an aspiration to build on the developments of quality that exist in the town. Further growth areas must be facilitated in such a manner as to deliver high quality design, public open space and integration into the surrounding rural area without impinging upon recognised areas of sensitivity adjacent to the town.

6.9 Evidence obtained from the South Worcestershire Joint Core Strategy Issues and Options consultation in 2007 supported a focus of housing growth on the main towns. Feedback also confirmed strong support for the following:

- Safeguarding employment sites;
- Urban focus for tourism opportunities;
- Maintaining the viability and vitality of town centres.

6.10 In identifying appropriate levels of growth for Droitwich Spa the following constraints have been taken into account:

- Natural barriers including River Salwarpe, Elmbridge Brook, steep slopes and landscape impact;

- Man-made barriers including the M5 motorway, A38 (Roman Way), railway, canal and Green Belt to the north and south of the town;
- Historic settlement pattern and features including listed buildings, historic gardens and parkland, i.e. Westwood House.

6.11 Feedback from previous consultations, alongside evidence from the 2010 Green Belt Review, Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment, and various open space and habitat studies point to new growth post 2013 being predominantly located outside the current Development Boundary.

Raven Hotel, Droitwich



6.12 Sites for 410 homes are identified on the Proposals Map. Given the identified constraints significant growth has to be either north or south, with the land in both directions subject to Green Belt designation. A review of the Green Belt has been carried out and concluded that there are no suitable locations that could deliver the level of development with out undermining the Green Belt designation. Therefore it is proposed the Green Belt boundary remains unaltered around the town.

6.13 With regard to future retail development where there is evidence to show further need, this will be supported through the relevant policies within the Sustainable and Prosperous Communities section.

6.14 The broad locations for development to provide for the requirements of Droitwich Spa have been identified as:

- Town centre – residential for 410 homes.

6.15 No further retail or employment allocations are identified within the town supported by evidence from the Retail Study and Employment Land Review.

6.16 Through the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment it has only been possible to identify a limited number of ‘Brownfield’ sites within the town.

6.17 These are set out in Policy SWDP 9 with the two main sites delivering 200 homes on existing employment sites off Vines Lane and Salwarpe Road. The location and existing infrastructure on the sites (one has been cleared) raise the issue of ongoing viability for employment use and the close proximity to the town centre provides an opportunity to deliver high quality housing in a sustainable location. The Scheduled Ancient Monument that forms part of the Vines Lane site will be safeguarded.

6.18 The remaining sites are smaller but provide opportunities for limited infill as well as delivering opportunities to enhance existing community facilities elsewhere lost through any redevelopment, e.g. Boxing Club and Girl Guides Hall.

6.1.1 SWDP 9: Droitwich Spa Allocations

SWDP 9: Droitwich Spa

Initially, phased development identified on the Proposals Map will be on ‘Brownfield’ land within the Development Boundary. Housing growth will deliver a range of housing sizes and tenures to ensure housing needs are met and that a wider choice of homes are available to both the existing and new population of Droitwich Spa.

Opportunities will be supported for the regeneration of Westlands, focusing on the neighbourhood centre, improvements to the public realm and layout.

Opportunities for the regeneration and redevelopment of sites for employment uses at Berry Hill Industrial Estate will also be considered favourably.

Infill development will respect the historic form and character of the centre of Droitwich Spa displaying high design standards and provision of public and private open space. Existing open space will be protected, enhanced and where appropriate new accessible urban greenspaces identified to reflect the town’s

'Spa' status. Development will be limited adjacent to the M5 motorway to preserve residential amenity and provide an environmental buffer to the residential areas to the south of the town.

All development will need to contribute in full via S106 Developer Contributions or Community Infrastructure Levy towards the range of infrastructure required in order to make overall growth sustainable. This will include the following:

- Improved public transport links to Birmingham and Worcester;
- Droitwich Spa 'Green Necklace' and cycle/walking networks;
- Increased parking capacity at Droitwich Spa railway station;
- Increased school capacity for Droitwich High School;
- New infrastructure for West Mercia Constabulary; and
- Support the regeneration of the Netherwich Basin area for a mixed use scheme comprising residential, office, retail and leisure elements.

Within Droitwich Spa the following sites as shown on the proposals map, are allocated for residential use.

Table 12 Sites in Droitwich Spa

Policy Reference	Site	Indicative Number of Dwellings
SWDP9/1	Land off Vines Lane	100
SWDP9/2	Lane east of Salwarpe Road	100
SWDP9/3	Boxing Club, Kidderminster Road	10
SWDP9/4	Oakham Place	6
SWDP9/5	Acre Lane	20
SWDP9/6	Willow Court, Westwood Road	24
SWDP9/7	Canal Basin (Netherwich)	80
SWDP9/8	Land Rover Garage, Hanbury Road	70
	Droitwich Spa Allocations Total	410

6.2 Droitwich Spa Urban Extension

Reasoned Justification

6.19 The land referred to as Copcut Lane is reserved for future development needs being designated as an Area of Development Restraint in the Wychavon Local Plan. It will be allocated for housing delivering a mixed use sustainable urban extension. This will comprise 740 homes of an appropriate mix, size and tenure, along with a local service centre that will include a police post. In accordance with the town's location in the South Worcestershire Technology Focus Priority Area, it will ensure a supply of sites that will strengthen the local economy, and balance the employment locations to the north of the town. The urban extension will include 3.5ha of high quality B1 and B2 employment land.

6.20 Features of the scheme will include enhanced open spaces, continued management of the community woodland, retention of the allotments and securing of a link in the 'Green Necklace' around the town. Links to the open countryside beyond via the existing public footpath network will also be secured. Any development will be required to respect the setting of the Salwarpe Conservation Area and the location on the rural/urban fringe of the town.

6.21 Access will be off the A38 and no vehicular access (other than for emergency purposes) will be off Copcut Lane. Pedestrian and cycle access to the town will be provided via Chawson Lane and a regular bus service will link to locations to the town centre.

6.2.1 SWDP 10: Copcut Lane

SWDP 10: Copcut Lane

The Proposals Map identifies a location for a sustainable, well designed urban extension to the south of the town in accordance with a more detailed Masterplan brief.

It is expected that the development will deliver:

- Phased delivery of approximately 740 new homes reflecting a range of housing sizes and tenures to reflect and accommodate the needs of both the existing and new population of Droitwich Spa.
- Phased delivery of 3.5 hectares of B1 and B2 employment uses.
- The provision of a local neighbourhood centre incorporating local shops, community facility and Police Post.
- Access will be provided off the A38 Roman Way, with enhanced public transport, cycle and pedestrian connections to Chawson and the town centre via Chawson Lane.

- New public open space as appropriate, to incorporate and enhance the existing Green Infrastructure and community woodland and develop the 'Green Necklace'.
- A landscaping strategy for the southern edge of the site, adjacent to Copcut Lane, should seek to minimise the impact of the development on the countryside beyond.
- A landscaping 'buffer' will be included as part of any future Masterplan along the edge of the railway line.

Links to the Objectives

6.22 The Preferred options policies for Droitwich Spa supports the following objectives :

- Economic Success that is Shared By All objectives 1, 2, 3 and 4;
- Stronger Communities objectives 1, 2, 4 and 5;
- A Better Environment for Today and Tomorrow objectives 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5;
- Improving Health and Wellbeing objectives 1, 2 and 3;
- Communities that are Safe and Feel Safe objective 1 and 2.

Alternative Options Considered

6.23 East of the M5, north into the Green Belt and west within the vicinity of Westwood House. Given the range of environmental constraints already identified in this location, and the evidence within the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment, these factors severely limit development potential elsewhere for the town. Developing east of the M5 and in close proximity to Westwood House and its associated parkland (Grade I listed and designated historic parkland) has not been supported.

6.24 Tagwell Road. It is considered inappropriate to develop this site which is designated in the Wychavon Local Plan as an Area of Development Constraint on environmental grounds, principally with its location immediately adjacent to the M5 motorway. The site is largely 'at grade' with the motorway and the acoustic impact of the M5 upon this site is considered to be a major constraint.

6.25 Development further south of the town. Through the previous consultation on the South Worcestershire Joint Core Strategy Issues and Options and Preferred Options the strength of feeling relating to the continued expansion of the town southwards into the open countryside were recorded. Concerns were expressed at the trend of residential areas becoming separated from the town centre and encroachment upon the neighbouring Green Belt and settlements of Martin Hussingtree and Fernhill Heath are acknowledged.

6.26 Development North of the town. However, growth to the north of the town would likewise encroach into the Green Belt that presents a significant barrier in terms of national planning policy. In addition, any development in this location, as with the Preferred Option site at Copcut Lane, would be separated from the town by the A38.

6.27 Finally, evidence in the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment shows that there is not a large enough site to the north of the town, taking into account landscape and topography, that has the potential to deliver enough houses to meet that required over the plan period. There would also be a continued need for a site to the south of the town to make up the shortfall.

6.28 Yew Tree Hill. The housing numbers proposed in this plan only require a single urban extension at Droitwich Spa and the preferred option is at Copcut Lane. Through the South Worcestershire Joint Core Strategy Preferred Options consultation in 2008 the site referred to as Yew Tree Hill was put forward as an urban extension. However, the site is not being considered as an option as its location and access constraints do not support an employment element, in addition to landscape character impacts and the setting of the rural character to the south of the town. Furthermore, through the previous consultation there has been significant public objection to the identification and level of development proposed in this location.

6.29 Direct more growth to the villages and direct growth to a new settlement. Directing more growth to the villages is not an environmentally sustainable option given the lack of services and public transport viability. As with directing growth to a new settlement this option is not supportive of the Regional Spatial Strategy, which clearly prioritises urban development. Both options were not well supported in the Issues and Options consultation.

View to Dodderhill Church from Droitwich

