

### 13.1 SWDP 22: Rural Employment

#### Reasoned Justification

**13.1** Rural employment within South Worcestershire is characterised by small employers who work from home or operate from a commercial property near to home. Due to the relative inaccessibility of existing rural employment sites to the larger urban areas, they should continue to be supported only as low intensity employment uses.

**13.2** The Employment Land Review (2011) demonstrates that the rural employment market across South Worcestershire is characterised by bespoke individual property requirements. Small local businesses are likely to require freehold property which is difficult to deliver speculatively in advance. The provision for new rural employment sites should be considered favourably during the plan period provided they are not harmful to the integrity of the settlement or landscape character. It is important that such developments are offered on flexible terms. In addition, sites should continue to be actively marketed to avoid turn over to an alternative use such as residential and the loss of an important local employment facility.

**13.3** There is a need for a positive approach to farm diversification, however development should not jeopardise future agricultural production.

#### Orchard in Blossom



#### Rural Employment Opportunities

**13.4** South Worcestershire's economy is also characterised by the location of a number of employment sites and small businesses, including home working arrangements dispersed throughout the rural areas. Within Wychavon, agriculture, food processing and distribution remain a very important part of the local economy,

particularly in the Vale of Evesham. Improving the economic prospects for those living in the rural north and west of the Malvern Hills District is an important focus for the Strategy.

### **SWDP 22: Rural Employment**

#### **Protection of Existing Employment Sites**

To help promote rural regeneration across South Worcestershire, existing employment sites within the rural area will be safeguarded for employment generating uses during the plan period. Any proposals for a change of use to residential would need to demonstrate that the site has been actively marketed for employment purposes (for a period of 2 years) and that it is no longer viable as an employment site.

#### **Promoting Employment Opportunities**

Small scale proposals for employment purposes within or adjacent to Category 1, 2 and 3 settlements will generally be permitted, provided that they maintain the integrity of the associated settlement and accord with the following criteria:

- The proposed development is of a scale and form in keeping with the size and character of the settlement and its setting;
- The scale of development can be clearly related to the employment needs of the local economy and workforce;
- Proposals will not generate trips by Heavy Goods Vehicles using unsuitable rural roads; and
- Proposals that are located adjacent to the settlement's boundary should be closely related to the settlement; demonstrate that there are no other suitable sites available within the boundary and make use of previously developed land and buildings wherever possible.

#### **Farm Diversification**

Proposals to diversify farm businesses will be permitted in accordance with the following criteria:

- The proposed new use does not detract from or prejudice the existing agricultural operation or its future operation;
- The scale of activities associated with the proposed development is appropriate to the rural character of the area;

- Wherever possible existing buildings are used to reduce the need for new built development; and
- Open storage of goods, containers and equipment is kept to a minimum and is appropriately located to reduce impact on landscape character.

### **Re-use of Rural Buildings**

Priority will be given to the re-use and conversion of rural buildings for employment, tourism or recreational purposes whenever appropriate. This should be undertaken in accordance with the following criteria:

- The scale and type(s) of use proposed is suitable for the building and its location;
- The building is of a permanent and substantial construction and capable of accommodating the proposed use without excessive rebuilding, extension or alteration;
- The form, bulk and general design of the building is in keeping with its surroundings;
- The proposals do not harm the character, appearance and landscape quality of the area or the setting of the building; and
- The scale and type of development does not generate traffic levels unacceptable to the location. Where the proposal is for a tourism or recreational purpose, the site should be reasonably accessible by a choice of transport modes.

### **Live/Work Units**

The provision of rural based workspace and live/work units will be permitted providing the proposals are small scale and that they are appropriate to the character of the area. In all cases the preference will be for conversion of existing buildings. However, proposals for new development should be located in accordance with the settlement hierarchy as set out in SWDP 1 and should have reasonable access to services and facilities.

All proposals for employment related development within the rural areas will need to demonstrate that they have taken full account of the relevant criteria as set out in Policy SWDP3.

### Links to the Objectives

**13.5** The Preferred Option policy for Rural Employment supports the following objectives:

- Economic Success that is shared by all objectives 1 and 2;
- A Better Environment for Today and Tomorrow objectives 1 and 2.

### Alternative Options Considered

**13.6 To allocate new employment sites within the rural areas.** The Employment Land Review confirmed that within the rural areas - employment opportunities are often entrepreneurial and require a more flexible planning approach to be considered on a case by case basis on their merits.

**13.7 To assume that Category 3 Villages have no specific role in meeting local employment needs and therefore do not make provision for the consideration of small scale employment proposals within or adjacent to Category 3 Villages.** It is considered that this would not provide a flexible and enduring policy approach to 2030, particularly given the Plan's focus on creating economic prosperity.

#### Factory workers preparing spring onions

