

Introduction

12.1 South Worcestershire is predominantly rural and the retention of this characteristic is a key objective of the strategy. The state and future of rural areas across South Worcestershire is a significant consideration. The rural area contains a network of thriving villages and rural settlements with their own distinct characters and identities. It is vital that these features are preserved and enhanced into the future. Providing an element of balanced growth to address local needs in these areas is crucial to their viability.

Cotswold village, Broadway



12.2 The development strategy for rural areas seeks to direct development to those rural settlements which contain a variety of services and community facilities and where reasonable public transport services exist. In order to achieve this, the sustainability of settlements has been assessed via the Village Facilities and Rural Transport Survey, which assessed the availability of services and facilities and level of public transport provision.

12.3 The results of village service surveys illustrated those rural settlements that have a range of services and facilities and are accessible by public transport. Those settlements with a broader range of services are considered by this Plan to be a more appropriate location for rural housing growth. These are to be known as Category 1, Category 2 and Category 3 settlements, with Category 1 being considered the most sustainable rural settlement.

12.4 The South Worcestershire Development Plan has adopted a flexible criteria based approach to rural employment and retail land supply across its rural areas. Employment development within or adjacent to rural settlement boundaries will be considered in accordance with SWDP 27. However, in general employment development will be directed to Category 1 and Category 2 settlements.

Rural Housing Land Requirements

12.5 In line with policy SWDP2, provision should be made for the development of 1,805 dwellings in rural areas by 2030. Development to meet local needs arising from within the rural areas will be directed to the settlements identified by Policy SWDP1 and in accordance with the hierarchy established by those and other policies in the this Development Plan.

12.6 The hierarchy established by SWDP1 reflects the sustainability credentials of South Worcestershire's rural settlements and, notwithstanding local housing needs for affordable housing, new development will be directed to Category 1, then Category 2 and finally Category 3 settlements.

View of Old Hollow, West Malvern



12.7 The supply of housing land identified to meet the requirements will need to be maintained on a rolling basis and the progress of committed sites will be monitored in case any action needs to be taken to increase housing supply.

12.8 The implementation of the housing sites allocated for development is phased in policy SWDP 50. It also illustrates that housing requirements for South Worcestershire will be comfortably met by the allocated housing sites.

12.9 Sites allocated for housing have a capacity of 5 or more dwellings and have been identified through the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment process, together with consultations with local parish councils. The following policies include an indicative number of dwellings although the actual number that might be achieved on each site could vary from that indicated. This depends upon the character and detail of the actual scheme submitted for planning permission.