

### Promotion of Tourism and Tourist Facilities

#### The Malvern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is a key tourist destination



### Reasoned Justification

**22.1** South Worcestershire relies heavily on tourism and leisure and it is an important element within the overall economy of the locality. Along with Worcester, the main towns and villages with their rich history, as well as the acknowledged high landscape quality of the area, makes South Worcestershire a key destination within the region for short breaks and for overseas visitors.

**22.2** Tourism both nationally and locally is an expanding part of the economy. At a national level tourism expenditure in the UK is estimated to be at £85billion, employing 1.4 million people directly<sup>(1)</sup>. During the past decade, within the County as a whole, tourism generated in the region of £370million via 10 million visitors per annum<sup>(2)</sup>

**22.3** For Worcester, the main towns and larger villages there are important links between economic vitality and support for conservation of the built and natural environment. Tourism provides uses for historic buildings and supports greater diversity within central shopping areas and improves the viability of a range of sporting and cultural events. Within the rural context national Planning Policy Statement 4: Planning for Sustainable Growth requires local authorities to support sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments that benefit rural businesses and communities.

**22.4** Visitor attractions can range from site specific interpretation centres or museums to extensive theme and leisure parks. The policy looks to support proposals that are compatible with the physical character of the area, reduce the need to travel by private vehicle and look to maximise the reuse of Brownfield locations.

1 DCMS (2010) 'Winning: a Tourism Strategy for 2012 and Beyond'

2 Heart of England Tourist Board (2004) 'Economic Impact of Tourism. Worcestershire 2002-2004'

## 22.1 SWDP 36: Tourist Development

### SWDP 36: Tourist Development

Proposals for the expansion and development of the tourism potential of the urban and rural areas of South Worcestershire will be supported where the following criteria are met:

- the development is compatible with the physical character of the area.
- where applicable the special architectural or historic character and appearance of buildings and conservation areas are protected and enhanced.
- the character and setting of listed buildings are preserved.
- in assessing schemes on Greenfield land consideration should be given to the availability of alternative Brownfield sites.
- in all cases adequate provision is made for access and vehicular parking facilities (including coach parks).
- the site is readily accessible by public transport and modes other than the private car.

### Links to the Objectives

**22.5** The Preferred Option policy for Tourist Development supports:

- Economic prosperity that is shared by all objectives 1, 2, 3 and 4;
- A better environment for today and tomorrow objectives 1, 2, 4 and 5.

### Alternative Options Considered

**22.6** **Development Management decisions could be based upon national planning policy.** This would result in an absence of local planning policy to compliment strategies by other agencies/organisations, e.g. The Local Economic Partnership. This situation could worsen when detailed national planning policies are replaced by the National Planning Framework.

## 22.2 SWDP 37: Visitor Accommodation

### Reasoned Justification

**22.7** A significant proportion of visitor spend is upon accommodation therefore the retention of existing and provision of new visitor accommodation is an essential element of supporting tourism. By encouraging the development of tourist

accommodation in built-up areas, the environmental impact of building in the open countryside is avoided. Sites within settlements are more practical as they already have the infrastructure, amenities and the public transport links to support them. The size of new hotels should be relative to the size of the host settlement.

**22.8** So that tourism enhances the local community, it is important that it does not conflict with local residents. The conversion of buildings to guesthouses and hotels, especially within residential areas, can generate patterns of activity that are disruptive to neighbours.

**22.9** Tourist accommodation can take a wide variety of forms, including hotels, bed and breakfast, self catering and group accommodation such as Youth Hostels.

**22.10** All proposals will require careful consideration to be given to the siting, scale and design, materials and landscaping of the proposal and that it should be in harmony with the local environment. Where there is potential for over development it may be necessary to control this development. Detailed consideration will be given to proposals within the Cotswolds (including Bredon Hill) and Malvern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty to ensure that any proposed development either by itself or cumulatively will not have an adverse affect on the character of the area.

**22.11** Proposals within the open countryside should make the best use of existing accommodation through re-use, extension or alteration.

### **SWDP 37: Visitor Accommodation**

#### **Hotels and Bed and Breakfast**

Within urban areas support will be given for new hotels or redevelopment of existing buildings for hotels where the following criteria are met:

- the development will not adversely affect residential, environmental and visual amenities;
- the proposed site is readily accessible by public transport; and
- the site is within close proximity to the urban centre.

Planning permission for the change of use to guest house, bed and breakfast or small hotels will be supported provided the following criteria are met:

- the property is detached; and
- within the main urban areas they are located along a main radial road or in close proximity to public transport routes;

### Self Catering

Outside settlement boundaries new build tourist accommodation will not be permitted. However proposals for the provision of new, or extensions or alterations to permanent serviced and self catering accommodation will be permitted where the proposal:

- is an extension which is compatible in scale and character with an existing tourism accommodation facility; or
- would result in the provision of ancillary accommodation within an existing public house, restaurant, or similar establishment; or
- would result in a change of use of a suitable residential property; or
- would be a conversion of an existing rural building(s); and
- is in a location reasonably well served by public transport, providing access to a range of services and local destinations.

### New Facilities

Exceptionally new build tourist accommodation may be permitted where it forms part of a farm diversification scheme, or is adjoining a settlement boundary where it is of a scale appropriate to the range of services and facilities within the settlement and physically related to an existing tourist or recreation facility within the settlement.

### Links to the Objectives

**22.12** The Preferred Option policy for Visitor Accommodation supports the following objectives:

- Economic success that is shared by all objectives: 1, 2, 3 and 4;
- A better environment for today and tomorrow objectives 1, 2 and 3.

### Alternative Options Considered

**22.13** **Development Management decisions could be based upon national planning policy.** This would result in an absence of local planning policy to compliment strategies by other agencies/organisations, e.g. The Local Economic Partnership. This situation could worsen when detailed national planning policies are replaced by the National Planning Framework.

### 22.3 SWDP 38: Static and Touring Caravans, Chalets and Camping Sites

#### Reasoned Justification

**22.14** Caravanning and camping are popular recreational pursuits and provide flexible tourist accommodation and mobile holidays at the moderately priced end of the market. They can be of great benefit to the local economy. As most are self catering, local shops, pubs and restaurants can benefit. Also, the large numbers of visitors contribute greatly to local attractions and other local businesses.

**22.15** All holiday (i.e. non-residential) caravan sites, whether touring or static, as well as camping sites (where planning permission is required) and holiday chalets will be subject to this policy. Proposals should seek to minimise the impact on the landscape through careful siting and should be well screened by landscaping or the existing landform. It is also important that there should be no adverse effect on the surrounding environment, wildlife, agricultural uses, or archaeological and historic sites of interest.

**22.16** The number of pitches proposed will be a key consideration in assessing the impact of proposals. Accordingly, small sites are likely to be viewed more favourably than large sites. Small sites are defined as no more than 10 pitches or units.

**22.17** Access is of particular importance and sites must be located close to major roads. Proposals must demonstrate that the extra traffic generated does not compromise highway safety. Static sites however do not need to be located near to major roads, but the road network must be able to cope with the initial delivery of caravans and the consequent traffic of visitors and service vehicles. Access to public transport, public footpaths and cycle routes will be considered when dealing with planning applications.

**22.18** Landscaping and locational conditions will be particularly stringent for applications for caravan sites. This is to prevent them from becoming obtrusive in the countryside because of inadequate indigenous screening or poor topographical location. Sensitive areas include exposed riverbanks and high or sloping land which is visually prominent or land within the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

**22.19** It is essential that the site is well screened all year round, not just in the summer months when vegetation is at its thickest. Where screening is seasonal, touring caravans or the removal of static caravans from the site in winter will be required.

**22.20** For static caravans, conditions will be imposed on any planning consent, limiting occupation to a period not exceeding 10 months in any one year, thus avoiding permanently sited caravans being used as residential accommodation.

**22.21** The 'Good Practice Guide on Planning for Tourism' (2006) recognises the need for Local Authorities to examine the scope for improvements in the quality of their sites (Annex 4, para 22). In special circumstances, therefore, consideration may be given to minimal expansion of a site so that improved layout and/or better landscaping can be implemented.

### **SWDP 38: Static and Touring Caravans, Chalets and Camping Sites**

Proposals for new or extensions or improvements of existing static and touring caravans, chalets (including 'log cabins') and camping sites will only be permitted where:

- there is a proven need for the proposal;
- the site is not within Flood Zones 2 or 3;
- the site is visually unobtrusive and well screened from important local vantage points, public footpaths and roads;
- appropriate landscaping is provided within the site and around the site boundaries;
- the development is of a design, form and scale related to its setting and does not go beyond the capacity of the area to accommodate such sites in terms of landscape and infrastructure considerations;
- any improvements to existing facilities are of a scale directly related to the essential requirements of visitors on-site and are designed to a high standard with their form, mass, design and material appropriate to the proposed function and the locality;
- the vehicular traffic generated could be safely accommodated on the local highway network; and
- it would make adequate provision for water supply and utilities, and for sewage and waste disposal.

### **Links to the Objectives**

**22.22** The Preferred Option policy for Static and Touring Caravans, Chalets and Camping Sites supports the following objectives:

- Economic success that is shared by all objective 1;
- A better environment for today and tomorrow objectives 1 and 2.

### Alternative Options Considered

**22.23 Development Management decisions could be based upon national planning policy.** This would result in an absence of local planning policy to compliment strategies by other agencies/organisations, e.g. The Local Economic Partnership. This situation could worsen when detailed national planning policies are replaced by the National Planning Framework.