

Reasoned Justification

21.1 Meeting the key housing challenges and objectives of this Development Plan is not simply about housing numbers. It is also about promoting equality and choice and providing a mix of the right housing types, sizes and tenures in the areas where they are needed.

Housing in Brickfields, Worcester



21.2 National planning policy requires local authorities to promote good design to provide a range of high quality housing, including affordable housing, using sustainable and environmentally friendly techniques to support mixed and balanced communities. The Government has produced guidance on Lifetime Homes with all public sector housing to be built to Lifetime Homes standards by 2011 with an aspiration that all other housing is built to this standard by 2013.

21.3 The local evidence ⁽¹⁾ available indicates that:

- there is a shortage of affordable housing and low cost market housing in both urban and rural areas;
- more accommodation is required to meet the needs of an increasingly ageing population and people with disabilities;
- there remains pressure from in-migration at the expense of meeting local needs;
- the number of flats constructed has increased considerably in recent years, particularly on Brownfield sites within Worcester and the towns. This has led to a lack of new family housing;
- there is a need for additional sites for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople.

1 Strategic Housing Market Assessment Monitoring Report for The South Area of the West Midlands Region 2007
Worcestershire Housing Market Assessment Monitoring Report 2009/10 Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment for The South Area of the West Midlands Region 2008 Research into the Housing and Support Needs of Older People within Worcestershire 2009

21.4 In Worcestershire over the period up to 2030, just over 70% net household increase is expected to be as a result of the growth in single person households.

21.5 Because of the ageing population and the challenges associated with this change (as highlighted by the emerging Worcestershire Housing Strategy), the South Worcestershire authorities wish to encourage housing for older people generally. Moreover, specialist housing for people with disabilities will also be supported. These types of housing are important in terms of meeting equalities and diversity requirements, as well as helping to create a balanced housing market offering choice for everyone.

21.6 In principle, this type of accommodation will be acceptable in established residential areas and on allocated sites subject to detailed site considerations and accessibility requirements. Proposals beyond the main/other towns will be carefully scrutinised to ensure that the proposal relates to genuine local need, is sustainable with respect to the accessibility needs of future residents and is of a scale appropriate and proportionate to the host settlement/location.

21.7 Whilst only schemes which fall within Class C3 will form part of the land supply for National Planning Policy Statement 3 purposes all schemes whether C3 or C2 should be considered as an integral element of the Development Plan response to meeting the strategic housing needs and aspirations of South Worcestershire in line with the emerging Worcestershire Housing Strategy.

21.8 Proposals for accommodation which comprise residential units with living arrangements and facilities which support independent living, will be required to provide detailed evidence, with respect to the level and type of care provided to residents and associated care needs/criteria for becoming a resident, where it is proposed that the development is treated as a C2 use.

21.9 The following policies set out how housing mix, the requirements for affordable housing provision and accommodation for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople will be delivered.

21.1 SWDP 30: Housing Mix

Reasoned Justification

21.10 The mix of housing on sites of over 5 dwellings will be informed by the Housing Market Area Housing Needs Assessment and the Local Housing Needs Report for the three South Worcestershire Districts (both regularly updated) and any other relevant local data.

21.11 The needs identified for particular sectors of society, such as older people or people with disabilities may be delivered primarily in Worcester and the main/other towns, and within some of the larger site allocations.

21.12 This Plan seeks to enable the provision of extra care and supported housing, particularly where it is driven by population trends in an area. Whether it is classed as housing or institutional use, it is being planned for and managed as part of the housing strategy and housing land supply.

21.13 There is a continued need for a range of different types of more affordable housing to be made available for students and other people with shorter term housing needs such as bedsits and hostels. Much of this sort of accommodation can and should be provided within the larger urban centres close to educational establishments and appropriate support services and facilities. In many cases the conversion of existing large dwellings offers an opportunity to do this. It will be important to consider each planning application for conversion to a House in Multiple Occupation against Policy SWDP 30 in order to protect against significant loss of large family housing which forms part of the balanced housing mix throughout South Worcestershire.

21.14 In many cases and on allocated sites, developers of market housing will have good knowledge of local market demand and this Development Plan will not seek to intervene in this process of determining an appropriate market housing mix.

New Housing at Broadheath



Policy SWDP 30: Housing Mix

All new residential developments of 5 units or more should reflect housing need within its locality. Where specialist housing falling into Class C2 of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended) is proposed, support will generally be given provided that the following conditions are met:

- a. that there is a genuine undersupply of that type of accommodation provision in the locality and that any new proposal will not lead to an unacceptable over-concentration within the area;
- b. that the scheme is situated in a sustainable location – having good access to public transport; healthcare; shopping and other community facilities.

Where a mix of C2 and C3 uses are proposed on a single site, on-site affordable housing will be required related to the C3 element (Policy SWDP31).

Planning Permission for the sub-division or multiple occupancy of dwellings, including changes of use to hostels and guest houses will normally be granted, provided that the property is larger than average (4 or more bedrooms) and is no longer suitable for single family occupation and in the case of hostels, the property must be detached.

In addition to the affordable housing requirements set out in Policy SWDP31, 10% of the open market housing units on C3 residential sites of 10 or more units (or on a site in excess of 0.4ha) should be in the form of low cost housing with a discount on initial and subsequent purchase.

Links to the Objectives

21.15 The Preferred Option policy for Housing Mix supports the following objectives:

- Stronger communities objectives 1 and 2;
- Improving Health and Well-being objective 1.

Alternative Options Considered

21.16 Not having a policy promoting a housing mix. This is more likely to result in communities which are neither strong, vibrant nor sustainable. Social cohesion and inclusion is an important factor in planning for Sustainable Development.

21.2 SWDP 31: Meeting Affordable Housing Needs

Reasoned Justification

21.17 The delivery of affordable housing is a significant aim of the local Sustainable Community Strategies.

21.18 National housing policy includes a specific provision for the delivery of a mix of housing, both market and affordable, to support a wide variety of households. This should include affordable housing that incorporates social rented as well as 'intermediate tenures' such as affordable rent, rent to buy and shared ownership housing. Despite low cost market housing not being either classified or defined as affordable, Planning Policy Statement 3 advocates its delivery as part of the overall housing mix (See Policy SWDP 30).

21.19 The Strategic Housing Market Area Housing Needs Assessment (April 2007) and the Local Housing Needs Report for the three South Worcestershire Districts (September 2007) conclude that the current thresholds and percentages of development required for affordable housing on open market housing sites will need to change if sufficient affordable housing is to be delivered to meet future needs in South Worcestershire.

21.20 Evidence in the above reports suggested that at 2007 there was an indicative annual requirement of 600 dwellings for South Worcestershire, of which approximately 46% would be required for social renting purposes. Grant funding to support social rented housing and indeed other forms of affordable housing has become limited and therefore it will be more difficult to deliver an appropriate balance of affordable housing tenures that reflect need, without undermining development viability.

21.21 The annual housing need and supply set out within the South Housing Market Area Housing Needs Assessment Monitoring Report for 2009/10 predicts an annual shortfall of 1,402 subsidised affordable dwellings for Worcestershire. For South Worcestershire this is an annual shortfall of 846 subsidised affordable dwellings. Beyond 2011, if affordable housing constitutes an average of 40% of total new supply, this would amount to 810 units per year. A level of 58% would be required to meet the shortfall.

21.22 The split between social rented and intermediate housing will be dependent upon a number of factors. These will include economic circumstances, site characteristics, development viability, affordability levels prevailing at the time a planning application is made, availability of public subsidy and any other planning objectives which may need to be addressed by the development.

21.23 Evidence in the Development Viability Study 2008 and its Property Market Update Report (July 2010) undertaken for the South Worcestershire districts suggests that affordable housing provision could still be provided at a rate of 40% in most cases without undermining development viability. However, since the report was produced changes to the way affordable housing is funded may affect the tenure

mix delivered. Off-site contributions will still be considered in some cases, although this will depend upon the size and location of the site. Whilst it is recognised that market conditions may have an impact upon development viability it is considered that it should not dictate longer term strategic policy direction and delivery objectives. Therefore any affordable housing delivery below the policy expectations would need to be assessed on a site by site basis and be fully justified. Contingent Deferred Obligations may be employed in certain circumstances to allow for changing market conditions.

Affordable Housing at Elbury Mount, Worcester



21.24 An Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document will be produced which will contain further detailed advice on affordable housing provision and set out how the policy will be implemented. The following policy sets out a baseline level of affordable housing provision which local communities may choose to supplement through enabling powers to be brought forward through the Decentralisation and Localism Bill.

Policy SWDP 31 - Meeting Affordable Housing Needs

All new residential development, including conversions (and including adjacent land if it can be expected to form part of a larger site) will contribute to the provision of affordable housing.

The number, type, tenure and distribution of affordable dwellings to be provided will be subject to negotiation, dependent on the recognised local housing need, specific site/location factors and development viability, having regard to the stepped approach set out below.

On sites of 5 or more dwellings, 40% of the units should be affordable i.e. social rented or intermediate tenure and provided on site.

On sites of less than 5 dwellings a financial contribution towards local affordable housing provision will be required.

Where a developer can demonstrate exceptional circumstances, off-site contributions may be accepted for developments of 5 or more dwellings subject to the planning authority's agreement.

Negotiations on tenure mix will be based on a split of 80% social rented, 20% intermediate tenures.

On sites where the affordable housing requirement is proven not to be viable (to the satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority) the maximum proportion of affordable housing will be sought which does not undermine the development's viability. Financial viability assessments conforming to an agreed methodology will be required and, where necessary, independently appraised by the local authority at the cost of the applicant. Contingent Deferred Obligations and other flexible arrangements will be sought through planning agreements to allow for changing market conditions in future years.

The manner in which the policy will be implemented will be set out in the Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document. This will include details of the levels of off-site contributions (including for sites of less than 5 units), Contingent Deferred Obligation arrangements, the exceptional circumstances which may justify an off-site contribution in respect of sites for 5 dwellings or more and the procedures to be followed when a planning application is submitted.

Links to the Objectives

21.25 The Preferred Option policy for Meeting Affordable Housing Needs supports the following objectives:

- Stronger communities objectives 1, 2 and 3.

Alternative Options Considered

21.26 No Policy. National policy on housing as set out in Planning Policy Statement 3 requires affordable housing targets, based on evidence, to be set out in Development Plans. Without such a policy, affordable housing needs would not be met.

21.3 SWDP 32: Rural Exception Sites

Reasoned Justification

21.27 Rural “exception” sites are additional housing sites that can be approved for defined affordable housing needs in rural areas, where up to date survey evidence shows there is a need. This enables small sites to be used specifically for affordable housing in small rural communities that would not normally be used for housing because, for example, they fall outside current Local Plan development boundaries. The wider policy background is outlined in Planning Policy Guidance 3.

21.28 Historically, these sites have relied almost wholly on public subsidy, and have been promoted by both Malvern Hills and Wychavon District Councils, with the support of Registered Social Landlords. However, in response to the difficult economic circumstances; a reduction in social housing funding and the Government's emphasis

on Localism, a number of Local Planning Authorities are developing more pragmatic rural exceptions planning policies through their Local Development Frameworks to help deliver affordable housing. This could include cross subsidisation through allowing an element of market housing on exceptions sites to subsidise the affordable housing.

21.29 It is likely that Homes and Communities Agency grant funding will be reduced significantly from 2011 onwards. The introduction of affordable rent may offer providers the opportunity to utilise the flexibility to charge rents up to 80% of market rents to maximise financial capacity. This could help to improve the viability of sites to deliver affordable housing.

21.30 Based on the good practise examples that have been looked into it is suggested that there may be scope for an element of cross subsidy from market housing of up to 20% of the total dwelling mix, on sites where it can be demonstrated through viability assessment that the provision of 100% affordable housing would not be viable by itself.

21.31 It should be emphasised that exception sites must meet local needs, and in this context, “local” means the parish and adjoining parishes.

Policy SWDP 32: Rural Exceptions Sites

In exceptional cases, affordable housing development will be permitted on small sites beyond settlement Development Boundaries to meet identified needs.

In all cases the following will need to be demonstrated:

- a. There is a proven and as yet unmet local need having regard to the Local Housing Needs Report for South Worcestershire (as updated from time to time), the Common Housing Register and other local data e.g. Parish Survey or Parish Plan;
- b. No other suitable and available sites exist within the Development Boundary of the settlement;
- c. The site has reasonable access to public transport and local services/facilities; and
- d. Secure arrangements exist to ensure the housing will remain permanently affordable and available to meet the continuing needs of local people.

In exceptional cases where viability for 100% affordable housing provision cannot be given to providing a maximum of 20% market housing for inclusion within a rural exception scheme, to provide sufficient cross subsidy to facilitate the delivery

of affordable homes. In such cases, land owners will be required to provide additional supporting evidence in the form of an open book development appraisal for the proposed site containing verified inputs supported by a chartered surveyor.

Links to Objectives

21.32 The Preferred option policy for Rural Exception Sites supports the following objectives:

- Stronger communities objectives 1, 2 and 3.

Alternative Options Considered

21.33 No Policy. Without such a policy a higher number of rural people would remain in housing need.

21.34 To allocate more development in order to secure more affordable housing. This would compromise other Sustainable Development objectives.

21.4 SWDP 33: Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople

Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople

Reasoned Justification

21.35 National planning policy requires local authorities to make appropriate provision for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople, having regard in the first instance to the outcomes of an assessment of Gypsy and Traveller accommodation needs. Furthermore, this Development Plan should set out the location criteria for the allocation of sites.

21.36 A Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment was undertaken for the South Housing Market Area (which includes South Worcestershire) in 2007. The Assessment addressed the need for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople. It identified the following requirements for additional permanent residential and transit (temporary) Gypsy and Traveller pitches for the period from 2008 up to 2013:

Table 21 Additional permanent residential and transit pitches (Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment, 2007)

District	Permanent pitches	Transit pitches
Malvern Hills	26	10
Worcester	16	20
Wychavon	40	20
Total	82	50

21.37 The evidence base for the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy Interim Policy Statement: Provision of New Accommodation for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople published in March 2010 has been used to inform the level of provision over the plan period from 2007, as shown in the table below.

Table 22 Permanent Residential Pitches (West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy Interim Policy Statement: Provision of New Accommodation, 2010)

District	Permanent Residential Pitches			Total
	Allocation	Indicative Requirements		
	2007 - 2017	2017 - 2022	2022-2027	
Malvern Hills	33	12	14	59
Worcester	22	8	9	39
Wychavon	42	15	17	74
Total	97	35	40	172

21.38 Since the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment was undertaken additional Gypsy and Traveller sites have come forward and reduced the number of pitches required accordingly. The table below indicates the number of pitches granted consent to end of March 2011, the number assumed to come forward through the Development Management process (i.e. planning applications on unallocated land) and the number to be allocated during the plan period. The table addresses the period up to 2022 using the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy Interim Policy Statement as the basis for the figures. However, this evidence is only a guide until further local needs assessments are undertaken when an alternative level of provision may be required to be planned for. A review of this Development Plan and further needs assessments will inform the number of pitches required for the period 2022 to 2030.

Table 23 Number of pitches granted consent to end of March 2011, the number assumed to come forward through the Development Management process and the number to be allocated during the plan period.

District	Number of pitches granted consent between 01/04/07 and 31/03/11	2011-2017		2017-2022	
		Assumed through Development Management process	To be allocated	Assumed through Development Management process	To be allocated
Malvern Hills	2	12	9	10	12
Worcester	0	5	20	5	0
Wychavon	48	0	0	9	0
Total	50	17	29	24	12

21.39 Within Wychavon District the requirements have already been met for the period up until 2017 and part of the requirement for 2017 – 2022. It is assumed that the balance for this period will come forward via the Development Management process.

21.40 The phasing of gypsy pitch provision for Malvern Hills has been amended from that given in the Interim Statement to accord with the anticipated delivery of the urban extensions to Worcester.

Travelling Showground, Malvern Link



21.41 The provision of transit pitches, as referred to in the Interim Policy Statement, is considered to be inappropriate on two grounds. Firstly, transit sites are likely to generate pressure for the pitches to be occupied on a more permanent basis (for which they will be unsuitable as a more basic level of service provision is acceptable for transit pitches). Secondly there is a temporary toleration policy that is operated within the County which enables the need to be accommodated in the shorter term without the formal provision of sites. Therefore, this Development Plan does not propose to allocate any transit pitches.

21.42 In addition to permanent and transit pitches the Interim Policy Statement identified an additional requirement for 22 plots for Travelling Showpeople within Worcestershire for the period 2007-2012. For the period beyond 2012 the Interim Statement recognises the difficulties of predicting requirements over a longer period and does not indicate a specific plot requirement for Worcestershire as a whole. General requirements for Travelling Showpeople remain within the north of the County, based on the evidence contained within the Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople Assessment. Existing provision for Travelling Showpeople within South Worcestershire is currently adequate.

21.43 It is intended that the net outstanding requirement for Gypsy and Traveller pitches will be partly met through the identification of small sites (up to 10 pitches) on some of the strategic housing sites including the urban extensions for Worcester. These will be in addition to the affordable housing requirements for the urban extensions. The South Worcestershire authorities recognise that it is not necessarily appropriate for all provision to be made in this manner and that provision should be made for smaller or individual sites to be considered and evaluated through the normal Development Management process.

21.44 In general it is anticipated that sites for Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople will not be appropriate in sensitive locations, e.g. Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Significant Gaps. If such a location is necessary, supporting evidence will be required to demonstrate why the need cannot be met outside of the sensitive area.

21.45 The Policy below addresses the net outstanding pitch requirement as at March 2011.

Policy SWDP 33: Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople

Provision will be made for the net requirement for additional Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople pitches after taking into account existing commitments and other planned provision. The broad locations to meet the requirement are within or on the edge of the main urban areas, including the proposed urban extensions at Worcester and the other main towns, and at rural settlements where reasonable access can be gained to community facilities. In addition consideration will be given to the reasonable expansion of appropriate existing sites, as well as in the following broad locations:

- Broomhall Community and Norton Barracks Community
- Temple Laughern

Small sites (i.e up to 10 pitches) may be permitted through the normal Development Management process, having regard to the following criteria:

- there is a need which cannot otherwise be met by extant planning consents, lawful existing sites or through the allocations set out above;
- environmentally sensitive locations will be avoided unless there is overriding supporting evidence that the need cannot be met outside of the sensitive area;
- the proposed site has good natural landscaping and/or the development will not be a significant visual intrusion in the landscape by virtue of an approved landscaping maintenance plan;
- existing residential or rural amenity is not prejudiced e.g. as a result of visual intrusion, excessive noise, lighting and traffic generation, or activity at unsocial hours;
- individually and cumulatively the site respects the scale of the nearest settled community;
- the site can be safely accessed from the local road network by vehicles towing caravans and other large vehicles e.g. those used by travelling showpeople;
- appropriate road layout and visibility can be provided at the site's access point to the highway without significant loss of natural screening;
- the applicant can demonstrate at the time of the application that the site has, or can be provided with, satisfactory foul and surface water drainage, water supply and mains electricity.

Planning applications for permanent pitches/plots for Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople whether allocated or otherwise should demonstrate how the proposal will meet current national standards for site design and management. Any planning permission will be subject to conditions restricting occupancy to Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople use.

The provision for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople for the period beyond 2013 will have regard to the findings in future Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation Assessments, the implementation of planned schemes prior to 2013 and other extant planning consents.

Further analysis will be undertaken to determine where future sites (as unmet need for up to 11 pitches) within Malvern Hills District may be located, subject to further consultation.

Links to the Objectives

21.46 The Preferred Option policy for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople support the following objectives:

- Stronger Communities objectives 1 and 2.

Alternative Options Considered

21.47 Do not allocate any sites for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople but rely solely on planning applications coming forward. This is not in accordance with national policy and being reactive rather than pro-active is not consistent with the provision of other types of housing.

21.48 Meet needs solely through site allocations. This would be overly prescriptive and inflexible by not allowing Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople to come forward with their own private sites.

21.5 SWDP 34: Replacement Dwellings in the Open Countryside and Re-use of Agricultural Buildings

Replacement Dwellings in the Open Countryside and Re-Use of Agricultural Buildings

Reasoned Justification

21.49 Generally development will be very limited in the open countryside, and will relate mainly to exceptions, for example for new affordable housing where there is a proven need (policy SWDP 32) . However, there is also a need to consider the specific housing requirements of those who work in countryside employment, such as agricultural workers, and the replacement of existing dwellings in the countryside.

21.50 Replacement dwellings can help maintain the level of the existing housing stock, where properties are in poor repair, or not appropriate in terms of design or size for current needs. However, the replacement of existing smaller dwellings with much larger properties can affect the character of a rural area, especially where traditional dwellings are small.

21.51 Under the General Permitted Development Order, extensions and external alterations to existing dwellings are usually permitted up to a certain size, under certain circumstances. Thus, in order to make best use of the existing housing stock, applicants will need to demonstrate why extension, alteration or refurbishment is not considered suitable, and thus why a replacement dwelling is required.

21.52 Proposals for replacement dwellings in the floodplain will need to have regard to policy SWDP 47 and will not be permitted where flood risk is paramount.

21.53 In the light of changes to the General Permitted Development Order that allow larger extensions, current policy on replacement dwellings have been out of line with the size that can be permitted for extensions. Also, although there is a desire to retain small buildings to allow “choice” in rural areas, in reality, however small the dwellings are they do not often give choice because of their cost. So the main justification to retain small dwellings is on design grounds affecting the character of an area. A percentage approach to any increase in size of the dwelling is considered to reflect the dimensions and plot size of the dwelling that is being replaced, so that any increase will be proportionate.

SWDP 34: Replacement Dwellings in the Open Countryside and Re-Use of Agricultural Buildings

The replacement of an existing dwelling in the open countryside with another single dwelling will be permitted where:

- The existing dwelling is not a caravan, mobile home or subject to a temporary planning permission;
- The use of the existing dwelling has not been abandoned;
- It can be demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Local Authority that suitable accommodation needs cannot be met through the alteration or extension and /or the refurbishment of the original dwelling;
- The replacement is not disproportionately larger than the existing dwelling and will not exceed the size of the existing dwelling by more than 30%;
- The proposed dwelling is positioned on the footprint of the existing dwelling, unless it can be demonstrated to the Local Authority that there are visual, landscape or highway safety or other environmental grounds to justify an alternative location within the existing curtilage;
- The curtilage of the replacement building is no greater than that of the existing dwelling; and
- The proposal includes the demolition of the dwelling to be replaced.

The re-use of redundant agricultural buildings will be permitted, where:

- The existing building will allow an appropriate conversion without substantial re-building or new additions; and
- The building will remain from a visual perspective, agricultural in nature and where appropriate new window and door openings may be limited.

Further guidance will be provided within the Design Supplementary Planning Document.

Links to objectives

21.54 The Preferred Option policy for Replacement dwellings in the countryside and re-use of agricultural buildings supports the following objectives:

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

Alternative Options Considered (Both Policies)

21.55 A more general policy for replacement dwellings was considered, without a percentage or upper floor area limit, but it was considered that it would be difficult to retain proportionately smaller dwellings without more guidance on acceptable increases.

21.56 It was debated whether a policy was needed at all, but the design and size of dwellings in the countryside can have a high impact on the landscape and character of an area and it was considered it was important for this to be addressed more clearly.

21.6 SWDP 35: Dwellings for Rural Workers

Dwellings for Rural Workers

21.57 Dedicated housing for rural workers is still important to support agriculture, horticulture and rural occupations that support the rural economy.

21.58 New development in the countryside is strictly controlled. This has been the case in previous development plans in South Worcestershire, and is also a national policy, as contained in Planning Policy Statement 7 "Sustainable Development in Rural Areas. The objective is to protect the countryside for its intrinsic character, natural beauty and resources for all to enjoy. Justification for new dwellings for those who can show an essential need for location for work purposes in the open countryside will need to meet the advice contained in Planning Policy Statement 7 Annex A. This will cover the need to demonstrate that the dwelling will support an existing agricultural, forestry enterprise or other rural enterprise where it is essential

that accommodation is provided on site. For new enterprises, temporary consent may be given for non-permanent dwellings such as a caravan, until the economic merits of the enterprise are established.

21.59 Where a case can be made for a permanent dwelling in the countryside for work purposes, planning conditions will be placed on the property so that it will be retained for those purposes, and cannot be sold on for general accommodation unrelated to the enterprise.

21.60 Any new dwelling should be carefully sited to minimise its impact in the landscape, surroundings and should wherever possible be located close to existing buildings or other dwellings. All dwellings should be of a size commensurate with the functional requirement of the enterprise and generally should not exceed 140m² (i.e. habitable accommodation and office space but excluding garaging).

SWDP 35: Dwellings for Rural Workers:

Proposals for agricultural, forestry and rural enterprise- related dwellings will be permitted where:

- The enterprise is proven to be economically viable and has clear prospects of remaining so;
- A functional need can be demonstrated for a full-time worker in the rural enterprise to live on site;
- The functional need could not be fulfilled by an existing dwelling located in the immediate locality of the enterprise, or the re-use of an existing building that is suitable for residential conversion;
- No dwelling serving or closely associated with the holding has recently been sold or separated from the holding
- The proposed dwelling is of a size commensurate with the functional requirements of the enterprise and is of a scale, design and layout appropriate to its surroundings and
- Where practical for its purpose it is located close to existing buildings/dwellings, to minimise its impact

Links to the Objectives

21.61 The Preferred Option policy for dwellings for rural workers supports the following objectives:

- Stronger communities objectives 1;

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

Alternative Options Considered for policies SWDP 34 and 35

21.62 A more general policy for replacement dwellings. This was considered, without a percentage or upper floor area limit, but it was considered that it would be difficult to retain proportionately smaller dwellings without more guidance on acceptable increases.

21.63 None. It was debated whether a policy was needed at all, but the design and size of dwellings in the countryside can have a high impact on the landscape and character of an area and it was considered it was important for this to be addressed more clearly.

21.64 Not to have two policies. Policy SWDP 35 is in line with government policy guidance outlined in Planning Policy Statement 7, but includes additional information on appropriate locations for such dwellings. The alternative is not to have a separate policy, and just rely on Planning Policy Statement 7, but it is considered that the additional information within this policy is helpful in dealing with applications for housing in often sensitive locations.