

**South Worcestershire Development Plan Examination
Memorandum of Understanding relating to Housing Numbers and Distribution– Wyre Forest District Council**

This Memorandum of Understanding sets out Wyre Forest District Council's position and understanding with regard to the overall housing figures and their distribution as set out in the Submission South Worcestershire Development Plan.

Background

The District Council submitted representations at the SWDP's publication stage in January 2013. These supported the overall development strategy and supported the progression of the SWDP to its submission stage to ensure a comprehensive planning framework is in place and to help avoid piecemeal development. The District Council was particularly concerned about the potential for "off plan" developments to come forward to the south of Stourport-on-Severn, which could have adverse impacts on service provision within our District.

The Council did raise some minor concerns with regard to the potential impacts of larger dwelling allocations within the bordering settlements of Hartlebury, Great Witley, Abberley and Clows Top due to possible pressures on service provision within the Wyre Forest District. The reduction in the allocation of numbers for these settlements was welcomed and the overall development strategy welcomed.

Current Position

Wyre Forest District has an Adopted Core Strategy (2010) in place and this is now supported by the Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan which was adopted in July 2013. Together with the Kidderminster Central Area Action Plan these plans put in place our overall housing need to 2026 and set out the land allocations to meet this need. This equates to 4,000 dwellings over the plan period and with an up to date planning framework in place, the District Council fully expects to meet this need from within its own boundaries. Furthermore, it should be noted that the District has an excellent track record of meeting its 5 year housing land supply.

For these reasons, the District Council has consistently stated to the South Worcestershire authorities that it has no requirement for any additional allocations within the SWDP to meet Wyre Forest District's housing needs. This position is maintained by the District Council, as the SWDP goes through its examination stage. Conversely, there are no significant unmet needs for sustainable development or infrastructure arising in South Worcestershire which need to be accommodated within Wyre Forest District.

However, as set out in our previous representations, the District Council remains concerned that due to the more recent 5 year housing land pressures within the Malvern Hills District, there have been "off plan" applications submitted for land to the south of Stourport-on-Severn in the Astley Cross area. Such applications have fallen outside of the SWDP strategy and it is considered that they would entail unsustainable development which would create undue pressures on the town of Stourport-on-Severn. This is particularly concerning

as such developments would not be required to meet Wyre Forest District's own housing needs.

There has been considerable on-going cooperation and engagement across a number of areas of work involving Wyre Forest District Council and the South Worcestershire Authorities largely focussed at the County level. They have included:

- Joint commissioning of the Worcestershire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (2012) with an on-going commitment to support annual monitoring;
- Recent joint commissioning of a Worcestershire Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment to support development plan production across the county;
- Joint input to the Worcestershire Infrastructure Strategy which will establish a co-ordinated picture of county wide strategic infrastructure requirements;
- Production of the Worcestershire CIL Viability Study (January 2013) and joint liaison during its production;
- Input to the development of the Worcestershire Green Infrastructure Strategy and Action Plan
- Joint support for implementation of the Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership's priorities and objectives, as set out in the LEP Business Plan, including a commitment to bring forward the LEP's 'game changer' sites.

To conclude, the District Council is content with the overall level of provision and distribution of housing and employment that the SWDP sets out in its development strategy. The progression of the plan to adoption will avoid the threat of planning by appeal which would have more significant implications for the District.

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