

Wychavon Play Strategy

2011/12



About Wychavon District



Location and Geography

Wychavon is located in the West Midlands region, The district covers 673km square of the south and eastern part of the county of Worcestershire and is the largest of the six Worcestershire districts.

With a population of 118,000, which is predicted to increase at a faster rate than the national average. The District is made up of three towns, Droitwich Spa, Evesham and Pershore, and nearly 100 villages.

The area is largely rural with a rich natural environment, diverse geology and historic heritage. The southern part of Wychavon forms part of the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. There are a number of sites of special scientific interest, local nature reserves, conservation areas and many listed buildings.

The River Avon runs from east to west, winding through Evesham and Pershore in the southern half of the district. The River Severn runs from north to south to the west of Wychavon. Both flood on a regular basis, sometimes leading to major emergencies.

The three main towns of Droitwich Spa, Evesham and Pershore, along with the large Cotswold village of Broadway, account for almost half of the district's population. The rest of the district is sparsely populated and includes nearly 100 smaller villages and hamlets.

Population

The estimated population in 2009 was 116,700 and is predicted to increase by 5.9% to 124,700 by 2026. This is a faster growth rate than the national average and doesn't take into account any increases resulting from planned housing growth.

The gender split is 49.4% male and 50.6% female. Most Wychavon residents are from a White British background. Just 3% of the districts population is from an ethnic minority. Wychavon has the largest number of Gypsy and Traveller caravans across Worcestershire with 292 caravans counted in January 2006 giving an estimated 700-800 Gypsies and Travellers in Wychavon. 64% live on a total of 70 recognised sites, 25% in housing and the remaining 11% live in unauthorised encampments.

Worcestershire and Wychavon itself, has seen a noticeable rise in the migrant worker population, because people who previously were only able to come to the UK under the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Scheme are now able to come to the UK freely.

The response to this year's electoral register In 2010, 98% of electoral roll registration forms were completed and returned. Of the 91,919 people who registered, Polish, Irish and Italian are the top three non-British nationalities recorded.

Environment

The district has suffered several major flooding events during the last 13 years: In April 1998, June 1999 and most severe in June 2007. Over 1,500 homes, 220 businesses, parks, open spaces and other public amenities were badly affected by the 2007 floods. The impact was felt across most of the district, with Droitwich High Street, Port Street and Waterside in Evesham, Hampton, Sedgeberrow, Cropthorne, Broadway and Pershore amongst the worst affected.



Culture and Leisure

In the November 2011 Worcestershire Viewpoint Survey, satisfaction with parks and open spaces increased by just 2 percentage points to 79%, however this has overtaken satisfaction with libraries which has fallen by 4 percentage points to 71%. Of all the cultural and leisure facilities museums and libraries have the lowest satisfaction level at 30%, down some 7 points since the November 2009 survey.

Housing

There are approximately 51,500 homes in Wychavon. 76.4% are owned compared to 68.7% nationally; of these 43.5% are owned outright, a further 14.9% are defined as social rented housing. 6.5% are privately rented and 2.2% are free rental. The main social housing landlords are Rooftop Housing Group, Festival Housing Group, WM Housing Group, Bromford Housing Group, Sanctuary Housing Group and Housing 21.

Transport

Wychavon is located close to national transport networks. However, the geography of the district means that some residents feel isolated because in some of the rural areas, there are few public transport options and limited access to services. Car ownership is high in Wychavon, 85.6% of households have at least one car.

Crime

2009/10 crime levels across Wychavon are among the lowest in the country at 47.4 crimes per 1000 head of population. These low figures have continued to fall in absolute terms since 2002/03 when 58.76 crimes per 1000 population were recorded.

Despite this, surveys such as the Worcestershire Viewpoint, show that crime and community safety issues remain a high priority for Wychavon residents in forming their view about what makes somewhere a good place to live. However, residents do not now see it as an issue that needs improving.

Deprivation

Overall the district is relatively well-off and lies bottom third of the most deprived local authorities. Wychavon's overall ranking in the indices of Multiple Deprivation is 261 out of 354. However when looking at a smaller geographical area such as Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) which have between 1,000 - 3,000 people living in them there are three LSOAs which fall into the top 30% most deprived across England. Harvington and Norton is the most deprived rural LSOA of the 361 in Worcestershire.

- Droitwich West
- Evesham North
- Harvington and Norton

Education, qualifications and skills

Education in Wychavon follows the three tier system. With falling numbers on the rolls expected in the first schools, this will become a matter of some concern in some village schools, although in Evesham a significant housing growth will counter-act the decline in the town.



Employment

At the end of June 2010, 81% of the working age population were economically active, higher than the national average at 76.4%.

Health

The health of residents is better than the national average. Overall life expectancy for men is 79.5 years and 83.8 years for women. This is above the national averages of 77.9 and 82 years respectively. In Wychavon, men from the least deprived areas can expect to live six years longer than those in the most deprived areas, while for women the difference is over 5 years.

In the May 2010 Worcestershire Viewpoint survey, 80% of respondents said their health was good or very good, an increase from 77% in the 2008 Place Survey.

Physical Activity

The 2007/08 Active People Survey demonstrates that participation in sport and active recreation (for those aged 16 and over) within Wychavon is higher among males than females. This pattern of participation is also similar to the whole of Herefordshire and Worcestershire County Sports Partnership area.

Satisfaction with local Services

In 2008 the district was in the top five of all districts when it came to the proportion of residents who express overall satisfaction with the way the council runs things and for those who tend to agree that the council provides value for money.

About the Council

Wychavon covers 260 square miles and is the largest of six districts in Worcestershire. The District Council was formed in 1974. We have around 213 full-time equivalent staff, plus a range of shared services. We have a flat management structure with six service units and a Managing Director. Responsibility for play falls with the Community Services service unit.

Priorities and actions from the LSP's Action Plans feed into our Community Plan and with the primary focus of our LSP's on local delivery, our Community Plan Core Group takes a more strategic and co-ordinating role. It is responsible for preparing the Wychavon Community Plan and managing progress against the actions in it. It provides a vehicle for partners to discuss joint approaches to more strategic issues and build links with the county LSP and the Worcestershire Partnership. The Chairman of the Core Group, along with our Leader, are on the Worcestershire Partnership Board, ensuring the local voice has an influence at a strategic level.

Our strategic context

Our five year corporate strategy (2008-2013) gives us a clear direction and helps us prioritise, deliver on local priorities and meet national agenda. It sets out our vision of the district and our aims which are:

Our vision: a safe, green, healthy and beautiful district that is a vibrant and creative place for everyone to live, work and visit.

Our aim: to deliver excellent services and make life better for everyone.

We've structured our strategy around five priorities and for each one set out how we want Wychavon to look and feel in five years' time. These priorities are underpinned by five year goals and annual promises, many with an equalities focus.

Safer: Communities that are safe and feel safe.

Greener: A better environment – for today and tomorrow.

Healthier: Improving health and well being.

Stronger: Vibrant and inclusive communities with a strong economy.

Successful: Delivering excellent and value for money services.

Our Play Strategy and Action Plan will contribute to a number of the goals in our strategy including reducing coronary heart disease, cancer, obesity and diabetes, and increasing leisure and cultural activities.

Community Strategy and Local Strategic Partnerships

A Community Strategy is a plan that sets out priorities for a particular area and how strategic organisations in that area will work together to deliver them. Wychavon's most recent Community Strategy ran from 2007 to 2010. The Wychavon Strategic Partnership is now working with other Local Strategic Partnerships (LSP's) across Worcestershire to create a single Community Strategy for the county, with county wide and district priorities.

The Play Strategy will be a delivery vehicle for a number of the priorities in the new Worcestershire Community Strategy.



Community Plan

The local Government Act 2000 led to the development of community strategies so all local authorities. These strategies set out how services were to be delivered to local communities and how they could be improved. The Play Strategy will be a key delivery vehicle for the following targets in the Wychavon Community Plan:

- Better play parks and open spaces
- More youth facilities and services

The Action Plan for 2007-2010 contributed to the followed shared priorities from the last Wychavon Community Strategy 2007-2010.

- Improving activities/facilities for young people.
- Increasing levels of physical activity across the generations.
- Increasing sporting cultural facilities and activities.

Current state of play in Wychavon

The current situation with regard to play provision in Wychavon is mixed. It is the only District in the County with an adventure playground (Evesham Adventure Playground) and has a number of high quality public open spaces, especially in its three towns. However, given the predominantly rural nature of the District provision is sporadic in large parts of the District. This is evidenced by the recent PPG17 Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study carried out in the District. The following are some examples of it's findings:

Parks and Gardens

There are 18 sites classified as Parks, Gardens and Nature Reserves in the District. 16 of these fall in the urban areas of Pershore, Droitwich and Evesham. 79% of Wychavon residents are satisfied with the parks and open spaces that we provide. (The source for this is the November 2010 Worcestershire Viewpoint survey).

There are few parks and gardens in the rural areas and those that are provided are small in size. Most Parishes have a recreation ground rather than a park. Residents of rural areas may travel to reach the urban parks.

Rural Play Initiative

Wychavon developed a Rural Play Initiative helping local rural committees improve and maintain their provision. A series of workshops took place and a limited grant has been made available for capital improvements in 2011/12.

Wychavon believes that providing quality play opportunities can support learning, raise achievement, reduce anti-social behaviour and increase both self confidence and resilience.

Amenity green spaces

There are 269 Amenity green spaces across the District with 183 of those being in urban areas and 86 in rural areas. Quality of these sites seems to be pretty consistent but there is a significantly lower degree of provision in the rural north of the District than other areas.

All sites and open spaces have been mapped onto a GIS database as part of the audit process and this enables us to identify where the areas of need really lie and how best to prioritise resources.

Rural provision

Ensuring that children and young people in rural and remote communities can access a range of high quality play opportunities.

Teenage and youth provision

Ensuring that the range of play facilities within the District meets the needs of all children and young people, including those in the 11 -16 age range.

Accessible play

Ensuring that children and young people in any area of the District can access quality play opportunities within a reasonable distance and length of time from their homes.

Risky play

Ensuring that children and young people in the District have the opportunity to challenge themselves by providing play features including “safe risks”.

Worcestershire’s Play Outcomes

Worcestershire has agreed four key outcomes for play in the county. As part of the process of developing a countywide strategy, Wychavon has signed up to these outcomes. The countywide outcomes are as follows:

Outcome 1

Children and young people have increased opportunity to access and enjoy a variety of play

Outcome 2

Increased inclusive play opportunities

Outcome 3

A greater understanding of the importance of play

Outcome 4

Children and young people are involved in the design and delivery of play

Wychavon’s position statements / standards

Wychavon has adopted a number of local standards and position statements on issues around quality, risk and accessibility. For example, in terms of new housing development these are contained in the Supplementary Planning Guidance (2003) “Developer Contributions towards Service Infrastructure”

Quality

Parks and Gardens

The Green Flag Award is the national standard for parks and green spaces and represents a benchmark against which the quality of all parks can be measured.

Although a large number of sites are parks and gardens, the criteria for an award also extends across recreational green spaces including nature reserves, millennium greens and allotments. Abbey Park and Workman Gardens in Evesham and Abbey Park in Pershore has achieved this award and should therefore be considered an example of good practice.

Wychavon's own quality statement on parks and open spaces is as follows:

A welcoming, clean and litter free site providing a one-stop community facility with a wide range of leisure, recreational and enriched play opportunities for all ages. Sites should have varied and well-kept vegetation, appropriate lighting and ancillary accommodation (including benches, toilets and litter bins) and well signed to and within the site. The safety of sites should be enhanced wherever possible (e.g. through appropriate planting, CCTV and a community warden presence). Each park has its own individual range of provision such as play areas, waterplay, artwork and plant collections.

Wychavon's own quality statements on provision for children and young people are as follows:

Children

A well-designed clean site providing a mix of well-maintained and imaginative formal equipment and an enriched play environment in a safe, secure and convenient location. Sites should have dog controlled areas and include appropriate ancillary accommodation such as seating, litter bins and toilets within the larger sites. Sites should also comply with appropriate national guidelines for design and safety.

Young people

A site providing a robust yet imaginative play environment for older children in a safe and secure location, this may also have clear separation from younger children or contain family areas for all ages, overlooked from some aspects and that promotes a sense of ownership. The site should include clean, litter and dog free or controlled areas for more informal play and appropriately designed seating and shelter. Sites should also comply with appropriate national guidelines for design and safety.

Wychavon's own quality statement on amenity green space is as follows:

A clean and well maintained site with appropriate ancillary accommodation (seating, dog and litter bins etc), pathways and landscaping in the right places providing a spacious outlook and overall enhancing the appearance of the local environment.

Larger sites should be suitable for informal play opportunities and should be enhanced to encourage the site to become a community focus, while smaller sites should at the least provide an important visual amenity function.

Risk

Wychavon also believes that all children need and want to take risks in order to explore limits, venture into new experiences and develop their capacities, from a very young age and from their earliest play experiences.

The line between providing opportunity for risky play and providing sufficient measures to ensure safety and safeguards is a fine one but it is one that we need to tread in order to provide the best possible play opportunities for the children and young people of Wychavon.

Accessibility

All sites will comply with the standards required by the Disability Discrimination Act.