

SWDP 2: Development Strategy and Settlement Hierarchy

A. The Development Strategy and the site allocations in the SWDP are based upon the following principles:

- i. Provide accessible, attractive employment sites and positive policies to deliver job creation opportunities.**
- ii. Provide for and facilitate the delivery of sufficient housing to meet objectively assessed needs to 2030.**
- iii. Safeguard and (wherever possible) enhance the open countryside.**
- iv. Encourage the effective use and re-use of accessible, available and environmentally acceptable brownfield land.**
- v. Maintain the openness of the Green Belt (as shown on the Policies Map).**
- vi. Focus most development on the urban areas, where both housing needs and accessibility to lower-cost public services are greatest.**

B. Windfall development proposals will be assessed in accordance with the settlement hierarchy below:

Table 2 - South Worcestershire Settlement Hierarchy (also see Annex D)

Category	Retail Hierarchy Position / Role	Settlements Included	Role	Policy Implementation
Urban areas - City	First (city centre)	Wider Worcester Area (excluding Worcester Technology Park)	Worcester is the administrative centre of the county and provides the greatest range of services. It is the main employment destination for people from Malvern Hills and Wychavon. The city is a sub-regional	The city will continue to fulfil its role, accommodating the largest amount of employment, housing and retail development. To support implementation in an effective and sustainable manner, significant investment is required in infrastructure. Allocation policies SWDP 43, 44 and 45 are of particular relevance. In principle

Category	Retail Hierarchy Position / Role	Settlements Included	Role	Policy Implementation
			focus for strategic employment, housing and retail development.	support for infill development within the administrative area subject to the more detailed Plan policies.
Urban areas - Main Towns	Second	Droitwich Spa, Evesham, Malvern	These towns provide a comprehensive range of local services and employment opportunities for their residents and the rural hinterland. The towns will continue to be the focus of balanced growth in Malvern Hills and Wychavon.	Housing development and the necessary associated infrastructure delivered through urban extensions, other allocations and infill development within defined development boundaries. Also significant focus upon supporting employment. Relevant allocation policies are SWDP 48-53 and 56.
Urban Areas - Other Towns	Third	Pershore, Tenbury Wells, Upton - upon - Severn	These are less than a third of the size of the main towns, with fewer high-level services. Nonetheless Pershore, Tenbury Wells and Upton - upon - Severn provide a range of services and employment opportunities and act as local service centres.	New development is limited in Tenbury Wells and Upton-upon-Severn due to the extent of the floodplains surrounding these towns. Pershore is a larger settlement with more available suitable land, part of which is allocated for an urban extension. Provision will need to be made to meet necessary local infrastructure requirements. Relevant allocation policies are SWDP 46, 47, 57 and

Category	Retail Hierarchy Position / Role	Settlements Included	Role	Policy Implementation
				58. Infill development within the defined development boundaries is acceptable in principle subject to the more detailed Plan policies.
Rural Areas (1)	Fourth	Category 1, 2 and 3 villages	These villages provide varying ranges of local services and facilities. However, the larger settlements generally tend to provide the greatest range. Their role is predominately aimed at meeting locally identified housing and employment needs. They are, therefore, suited to accommodate market and affordable housing needs alongside limited employment for local needs.	A number of housing sites of an appropriate scale are allocated in Category 1, 2 and 3 villages to address the need for housing and support local services. Rural employment opportunities of an appropriate scale are also encouraged. Directly relevant policies include: SWDP 12 and 16 together with allocation policy SWDP 59. Infill development within the defined development boundaries is acceptable in principle subject to the more detailed Plan policies.
Rural Areas (2)	Fifth	Lower category villages	These villages tend to be very small and at best offer one or two local services. Their	Infill development within the defined development boundaries is acceptable in principle subject to the more

Category	Retail Hierarchy Position / Role	Settlements Included	Role	Policy Implementation
			role in providing additional future development is limited.	detailed Plan policies. Small scale employment development and rural exception sites are acceptable in principle, as set out in Policies SWDP 12 and 16.

C. The open countryside is defined as land beyond any development boundary⁽²⁾. In the open countryside, development will be strictly controlled and will be limited to dwellings for rural workers (see policy SWDP 19), employment development in rural areas (see SWDP 12), rural exception sites (see SWDP 16), buildings for agriculture and forestry, replacement dwellings (see SWDP 18), house extensions, replacement buildings and renewable energy projects (see policy SWDP 27) and development specifically permitted by other SWDP policies.⁽³⁾

D. Development proposals should ensure the retention of the open character of the Significant Gaps.

E. The West Midlands Green Belt will be maintained and development proposed within the Green Belt will be considered in accordance with national policy as set out in the Framework. Development at the Major Developed Sites (listed in Table 3 below) will be limited to within their site boundaries as set out on the Policies Map and will be restricted to limited infilling and the redevelopment of previously developed land. Development proposals within a Major Developed Site boundary should not have any greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt and the purposes of including land within it than the existing development.

Table 3 Major Developed Sites within the Green Belt⁽⁴⁾

Hartlebury Trading Estate	Major Developed Site restricted to limited infilling and the redevelopment of previously developed land within the identified site boundary for employment uses only.
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2 Worcester’s ‘development boundary’ is defined as its administrative boundary and the outer boundaries of the urban extensions with the exception of Worcester Technology Park (SWDP 45/6). The boundary to sites allocated for development outside and adjoining an existing settlement boundary will form the basis of an extension to the existing development boundary as set out on the Policies Map. Where a housing allocation is not coterminous with the development boundary, it will not be included in the boundary.

3 See, for example, policies SWDP 8, 10, 17, 20, 34, 35, 36, 41 & 42.

4 The table identifies those sites that are designated as Major Developed Sites in the Green Belt (note: these are neither allocations nor intended as sites proposed for major redevelopment). This table should be read in conjunction with the Policies Map, which identifies the boundaries of each Major Developed Site.

Potter Group – Site 7	Major Developed Site restricted to limited infilling and the redevelopment of previously developed land within the identified site boundary for employment uses only.
Hindlip Park	Major Developed Site restricted to limited infilling and the redevelopment of previously developed land within the identified site boundary for emergency and civil resilience services provision only.
Sixways	Major Developed Site restricted to limited infilling and the redevelopment of previously developed land within the identified site boundary for employment and leisure uses only.

- F. Development proposals should be of an appropriate scale and type with regard to the size of the settlement, local landscape character (see SWDP 25), location and the availability of infrastructure.**
- G. Encouragement is given to the redevelopment of brownfield sites. The biodiversity interest of brownfield sites will also be considered.**
- H. The SWDP is supportive of development proposals that are promoted through neighbourhood planning mechanisms, where these proposals do not compromise the delivery of the plan’s strategic policies and proposals.**
- I. As required by the Duty to Co-Operate⁽⁵⁾, due consideration will be given, including through a review of the SWDP where appropriate, to the housing needs of other local planning authorities⁽⁶⁾ in circumstances when it has been clearly established through the local plan process that those needs must be met through provision in the SWDP area.**
- J. The following three Sub Areas are identified to support the implementation of SWDP 2, including policy set out in SWDP 3:**
- **Wider Worcester Area**
 - **Malvern Hills (Excluding Wider Worcester Area) Sub Area**
 - **Wychavon (excluding Wider Worcester Area) Sub Area**

Reasoned Justification

1. The development strategy is driven by the SWDP Vision and associated objectives. It brings together land use, development and infrastructure considerations that flow from

⁵ Section 110, Localism Act (2011) relating to unmet need.

⁶ Cheltenham Borough, Gloucester City and Tewkesbury Borough Councils are preparing a Joint Core Strategy (JCS). Land at Mitton (Wychavon District) and the Mythe (Malvern Hills District) were not included as strategic allocations in the Submission Version of the JCS (November 2014). The South Worcestershire Councils will, however, continue to monitor progress on the examination of the JCS.

the economic, environmental and social characteristics of the area. The Sustainability Appraisal (SA) demonstrates that the proposed development strategy will help deliver the SA objectives.

2. The urban areas, in particular Worcester and the main towns, have the greatest housing needs and are locations where the cost of public service delivery is relatively low. In order to deliver the social objectives of sustainable development, some growth is directed to those rural settlements (Category 1, 2 and 3 villages) that enjoy a reasonable range of local services.



3. The villages and hamlets across south Worcestershire are characterised by close-knit communities that in many places retain links with the traditional rural economy, as well as providing a range of services. The specific role of each settlement in the hierarchy is based on a detailed assessment of the services and facilities that are available, as set out in the Village Facilities and Rural Transport Study.
4. The high quality of the open countryside is an important planning attribute of the area. Sites beyond development boundaries generally are less sustainable as access to local services and employment opportunities tends to be poorer and therefore it is appropriate that development in the open countryside is restricted to proposals which are supportive of more specific SWDP policies, e.g. SWDP 12 – Employment in Rural Areas, SWDP 16 – Rural Exception Sites, SWDP 18 – Replacement Dwellings in the Open Countryside, SWDP 19 – Dwellings for Rural Workers, SWDP 27 – Renewable and Low Carbon Energy.

5. Maintaining the identity and integrity of individual settlements is an important issue for local communities. This is achieved by the West Midlands Green Belt designation to the north and north-east of Worcester within Wychavon, as shown on the Policies Map. Green Belts serve five purposes (set out in the Framework), which are: to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas; to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another; to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment; to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land. Locally, the Green Belt continues to serve all the purposes of national policy and the boundaries are considered to be strong and enduring. Where the Green Belt is narrow (e.g. between Fernhill Heath and Worcester), it will be particularly important to ensure that the land remains open, otherwise its ability to function as Green Belt would be compromised.
6. The Major Developed Sites (MDS) within the Green Belt all have a lengthy planning history with respect to employment and leisure development. They are predominantly brownfield and are likely to continue to be the subject of further development proposals. In order to help inform investment decisions therefore, applications for employment / leisure development within the defined MDS boundary will be supported subject to more detailed Plan policies, e.g. SWDP 25 – Landscape Character. This is consistent with the Framework (paragraph 89 refers).
7. The re-use of Previously Developed Land (PDL) is consistent with the principles of sustainable development. To prioritise PDL sites however, is not supported by the Framework. For the Plan therefore, the fact that a site is Greenfield does not count against it, rather in assessing development proposals on PDL sites, the fact that they are PDL will be a plus in the consideration of the planning balance.
8. There are a number of Significant Gaps shown on the Policies Map. The purpose of maintaining these gaps, which either serve as a buffer or visual break between rural settlements and adjacent urban areas or protect the character and setting of settlements, is to provide additional protection to open land that may be subject to development pressures. The designation helps to maintain a clear separation between smaller settlements and urban areas in order to retain their individual identity. Acceptable development proposals in such areas may include the reuse of rural buildings, agricultural and forestry-related development, playing fields, other open land uses and minor extensions to existing dwellings.
9. As a spatial plan, the SWDP sets out strategic policy that relates to places, unconstrained by administrative boundaries. SWDP 2 therefore identifies three separate Sub Areas that are mutually exclusive and together cover the whole plan area. The Sub Areas are:
 - the Wider Worcester Area (WWA) – comprising Worcester City plus the urban extensions directly abutting the administrative area of the City;
 - the Malvern Hills (Excluding WWA) Sub Area – comprising that part of Malvern Hills district outside of the Wider Worcester Area;
 - the Wychavon (Excluding WWA) Sub Area – comprising that part of Wychavon district outside of the Wider Worcester Area.

10. The Sub Areas are the SWDP response to two strategic issues:
 - a. Worcester City's built up area is tightly constrained inside its boundaries. There is insufficient space in the City's administrative area to meet all its needs for development, especially housing. This is the driver for the concept of the Wider Worcester Area (WWA) enabling Worcester as a sub regional centre to grow beyond the City boundary. A share of Worcester's housing and employment need is redirected to the Worcester urban extensions so that need is met on sites just outside and abutting its boundary, in both Malvern Hills and Wychavon.
 - b. Because of natural and environmental constraints, Malvern Hills district has limited ability to accept new development. The Plan therefore proposes that part of its housing need which cannot be met in the Malvern Hills (Excluding WWA) Sub Area be redirected in the first instance to the Wider Worcester Area, at the Worcester urban extensions.



11. These arrangements are entirely in line with the approach suggested in the Framework paragraph 179 to deal with situations where development requirements cannot wholly be met within an LPA's own area. SWDP 3 sets out further policy to implement this approach.
12. The retail hierarchy set out in SWDP 2 is a strategic policy tool to help maintain the position of the main competing centres in South Worcestershire relative to other nearby centres, as evidenced by national ranking⁽⁷⁾. Supported by SWDP 9 and SWDP 10 it

7 Suite of Town Centre and Retail Studies for Worcester City, Malvern Hills and Wychavon. September 2007 (updated in 2010), DPDS Consulting.

helps to retain each centre's market share of expenditure by reducing expenditure lost to centres outside the plan area. Evidence of the relative retail strength, vitality and viability of the main competing centres supports the retail hierarchy structure in SWDP 2. It demonstrates that Worcester city centre's position in the national ranking is well above that of Evesham, Malvern and Droitwich Spa. This justifies Worcester's first position in the local retail hierarchy, as might be expected from its historic county town role and its size. Of its nearest competing centres, only Birmingham and Cheltenham are ranked higher. Worcester's sub-regional role has long been recognised, most recently in the former Worcestershire Structure Plan, and in evidence about its position amongst centres with the highest comparison goods turnover in the West Midlands. Concentration of new retail development in or closely related to the city centre is important for achieving the critical mass of retail floorspace necessary to attract investment consistent with its hierarchy position. Evesham is next in terms of national ranking whilst Malvern and Droitwich Spa are on a lower ranking but the two are similar. These three towns are grouped in the second position of the local hierarchy. They serve their residents and communities in surrounding rural areas.

13. The Other Towns' centres at Pershore, Tenbury and Upton-upon Severn are smaller and are not in the national ranking of main competing centres. They are grouped in the third position in the local hierarchy, functioning as local service centres. Centres in Category 1, 2 and 3 villages are smaller and are in the fourth position in the hierarchy, based on evidence from the Village Facilities and Rural Transport Survey 2012 about the local services they provide. Villages in the countryside with limited retail facilities are in fifth position.
14. The implementation of SWDP 2 is essential to achieving sustainable development and the delivery of economic prosperity.