

South Worcestershire Councils Five Year Housing Land Supply Statement November 2022

This is an interim statement explaining the South Worcestershire Councils (SWCs) five year housing land supply (5YHLS) position, ahead of publication of a full report that is hoped to be published by the end of December 2022. This interim statement briefly outlines the issues and considerations regarding the 2022 5YHLS Report (August 2022) and the subsequent publication of a revised 5YHLS position as set out in this interim statement.

The adopted South Worcestershire Development Plan (SWDP) (2016) established five separate sub areas (Malvern Hills, Worcester City, Wychavon, Wider Worcester Area Malvern Hills and Wider Worcester Area Wychavon) for dealing with housing, employment and retail provision, redistributing the requirements according to land availability and natural and environmental constraints. Since the adoption of the Plan, the SWCs have published five separate 5YHLS Reports on an annual basis against the housing requirements detailed in the adopted Plan.

For the monitoring year 2020-2021, the SWDP (2016) was more than 5 years old, and as such the adopted Plan, for housing target purposes, was considered to have expired. Therefore, under national planning policy, the Standard Method of calculating a 5 Year Housing Land Supply had to be applied.

The published 5YHLS Report of August 2021 set out a joint approach to the Standard Method calculation resulting in a single supply figure for the joint area and indicated the intention to monitor delivery on this joint basis and to formally establish this through the Review of the SWDP. Since 2015-2016 housing completions had been above the cumulative annual requirement and the 2021 5YHLS Report included an oversupply of housing completions offset against the five year requirement. The outcome of these changes resulted in a joint 5YHLS of 5.76 years.

A number of appeal decisions were subsequently reviewed, where Inspectors concluded that oversupply should not be included within the 5YHLS calculation, due to the housing requirement being considered to be a minimum requirement. So, although the Councils had worked positively to meet the adopted Plan requirements and more houses had been built earlier than expected, this oversupply was not carried forward into the 2022 calculation.

In August 2022, the 2022 5YHLS Joint Report was published, detailing a joint 5YHLS of 5.22 years. It was quickly determined that there was an error in the calculation. Further checking of the data then took place and consideration of a more recent relevant appeal decision. The decision was significant, in that a joint approach to calculating the 5YHLS was not supported by the Planning Inspector, primarily due to it being a departure from the adopted SWDP. An alternative approach of reverting back to the redistribution sub areas was also not supported.

The SWCs are therefore proposing that each Local Planning Authority (LPA) calculate and publish a single district land supply position, with no apportionment. This is considered to be the approach that is most consistent with the Planning Practice Guidance at the current time and has regard to relevant appeal decisions where housing land supply has been considered in detail.

In support of the SWDP's overarching objective to meet needs in full across the Joint Plan Area and the way in which the SWDP strategic sites around the city of Worcester are helping to meet the housing needs of the City, the LPAs will continue to publish and monitor a joint supply position for information purposes and for the Public Examination of the SWDP Review. The single district versions will be used for the purposes of calculating the 5YHLS for each district and in determining planning applications.

Based on this individual LPA approach, Wychavon District at **3.68 years** and Worcester City at **3.06 years** do not have a 5YHLS, but Malvern Hills District does at **5.06 years**. The joint 5YHLS for the three LPAs results in **3.94** years of housing land supply.

The full SWCs 2022 5YHLS Report is expected to be published later this year and will give further detail on the 5YHLS options and the evidence supporting the 5YHLS calculations.