

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET MEETING
20th December 2007

South Worcestershire Joint Core Strategy
Issues and Options Consultation Response

OPEN	
COMMUNITY STRATEGY THEME:	A Better Environment
CORPORATE PLAN THEME:	Managing the Local Environment
KEY PRIORITY:	Forward Planning
CABINET MEMBER:	Councillor Stephen Clee
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:	Head of Planning, Health and Environment
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APPENDICES:	Appendix 1 – South Worcestershire Joint Core Strategy Appendix 2 - Representations submitted Appendix 1 has been circulated electronically and a public inspection copy is available on request (see front cover for details)

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek the Cabinet's endorsement of representations submitted on the Issues and Options Consultation Paper for the South Worcestershire Joint Core Strategy.

2. RECOMMENDATION

The Cabinet is asked to **DECIDE:**

- 2.1 To endorse the representations submitted to the South Worcestershire Authorities on the South Worcestershire Joint Core Strategy Issues and Options Paper, as set out at appendix 2 to the Cabinet report.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Malvern Hills District Council, Worcester City Council and Wychavon District Council are working in partnership to produce the South Worcestershire Joint Core Strategy (SWJCS) to guide development in the area up to 2026. They have produced an Issues & Options Paper to formally start debate about the planning issues facing South Worcestershire.

- 3.2 The three local authorities have decided to work together to address the levels of growth indicated through the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy (WMRSS) Phase 2 revision. These levels necessitate cross boundary working in the vicinity of Worcester. The joint core strategy will need to determine where the increase in housing and employment requirements from WMRSS Phase 2 will be accommodated within South Worcestershire.
- 3.3 The RSS identifies Worcester City as a Sub Regional Focus for growth. In recognition of the need for significant growth and additional infrastructure, the Worcester area has also been designated by the Government as a New Growth Point.
- 3.4 The Paper identifies a range of key issues facing South Worcestershire including; how the housing required to meet the allocations set out in the RSS might be distributed; where new employment development should be generally located; encouraging more sustainable means of travel; how to secure more affordable housing within the District; how the needs of gypsies and travellers should be met; how can the rural economy be strengthened; how city and town centres should develop; the future development of the tourism economy; how to conserve, enhance and restore the landscape character; and environmental sustainability.

4. KEY ISSUES

- 4.1 Officers have assessed the Issues & Options Paper and identified a number of areas for comment. A summary of these comments is attached at Appendix 2.
- 4.2 Most significantly, the Paper introduces a development strategy for the broad location and balance between housing and employment development and opportunities for improving accessibility. This is based on a proposed hierarchy of city, towns and villages based on evidence gathered from Parish and Town Councils and public transport operators (The Village Facilities and Rural Transport Survey). The proposed hierarchy is set out at Appendix 4 of the paper and proposes the following:
 - Category 1 villages – offer greatest range of facilities and access to public transport after towns.
 - Category 2 villages – offer a reasonable range of services and facilities and levels of public transport provision.
 - Category 3 villages – villages that have a comparatively more limited range of services & facilities and lower levels of public transport service.
- 4.3 It is noted that Appendix 4 includes Hartlebury under Category 1 villages. Furthermore, Map 5 accompanying the settlement hierarchy appears to depict the Summerfield Settlement as a Category 1 village although this is not individually listed at Appendix 4. Whilst the principle of allocating development in general accordance with the proposed settlement hierarchy should be supported, it is questionable whether Hartlebury and Summerfield should be classified as Category 1 villages. It is considered that Hartlebury should be moved further down the scale to a Category 2 village due to its limited range of facilities and public transport services.
- 4.4 In particular it is suggested that Summerfield be removed from the settlement hierarchy map as it is not specifically listed at Appendix 4. It is noted that page 12, paragraph 4.13 of the Issues & Options Paper states “Those villages not listed are considered to be in unsustainable locations based on the survey approach.” Due to the limited availability of services in these settlements it is not considered that they would support sustainable communities. Summerfield and the communities on the north west edge of Wychavon district rely on services provided from within the Wyre Forest district such as health and shopping.
- 4.5 It is noted that the SWJCS Issues & Options Paper contains no reference to, or possible options for the allocation of Greenfield land to the south of Stourport-on-Severn at Astley Cross to meet future development needs. This is supported as it is considered there is no justification for an urban extension of Stourport-on-Severn into Malvern Hills District.

- 4.6 The paper contains no reference to the important role that Hartlebury Trading Estate has in the local economy. It is considered that such sites should be identified, particularly as the “Economic Success” theme of the paper relates to strengthening the economy by securing a robust employment base, protecting existing employment areas and supporting the rural economy. Hartlebury Trading Estate is in part included within the Kidderminster Travel to Work area and is therefore an important cross boundary issue.
- 4.7 In view of the deadline for receipt of representations on the Issues and Options Paper (14th December 2007), Officers have, following the Cabinet Member for Planning, Regeneration and Prosperity’s agreement, submitted representations reflecting those issues outlined in this report and Council policy. Cabinet’s formal endorsement of the representations is now being sought. Further opportunities to consider the South Worcestershire Joint Core Strategy in more detail will be available at the Preferred Options and Submission stages of the document’s preparation.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no financial implications to the Council arising out of this report.

6. LEGAL AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report. The recommended policy responses are in accordance with the Council’s established priorities.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 7.1 There are no risk management issues arising from this report.

8. CONCLUSION

- 8.1 It is considered that the Core Strategy for South Worcestershire should ensure that any development taking place in the District does not have a detrimental impact on Wyre Forest District. Particular concerns have been highlighted in relation to the classification of Hartlebury and Summerfield as Category 1 villages. A number of cross boundary issues have also been raised.

9. CONSULTEES

Cabinet member for Planning, Regeneration and Prosperity

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

South Worcestershire Joint Core Strategy – Issues and Options Paper (November 2007).

4.12.07