

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL**CABINET**
20TH NOVEMBER 2008**South Worcestershire Joint Core Strategy**
Preferred Options Consultation Response

OPEN	
SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY THEME:	A Better Environment
CORPORATE PLAN AIM:	A Sustainable Environment
CABINET MEMBER:	Councillor Stephen Clee
HEAD OF SERVICE:	Head of Planning, Health and Environment
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APPENDICES:	Appendix 1 – South Worcestershire Joint Core Strategy Preferred Options Paper Appendix 2 - Representations submitted The appendices to this report have 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 Preferred 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 Preferred 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. Members may recall that the District Council submitted responses to the Issues and Options consultation in December 2007. A Preferred Options Paper has now been produced, setting out more detail on how future growth might be accommodated within the area over the next twenty years.
- 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 sets out the emerging spatial planning framework for the long-term development of South Worcestershire. The document contains preferred options relating to: the strategic policies for delivering the spatial vision and guiding broad patterns of urban and rural development; the directions of strategic housing and employment growth; and policies setting out the issues to be taken into account when considering development proposals. The responses received during the Issues and Options consultation have been analysed and have informed the production of the Preferred Options Paper.

4. KEY ISSUES

- 4.1 Officers have assessed the Preferred Options Paper and identified a number of areas for comment. A summary of these is attached at Appendix 2.
- 4.2 Most significantly, the Preferred Options Paper sets out a settlement hierarchy for South Worcestershire which identifies Worcester as a settlement of significant development, and categorises the remaining settlements into main towns, other towns, and category one, two and three villages. Of significance to Wyre Forest District is the designation of Hartlebury as a Category One village, and the designation of Clows Top as a Category Two village. Category One villages are those villages which 'offer a good range of services and facilities and access to public transport after the towns', and are identified as being suitable to accommodate up to 50 dwellings up until 2026. Category Two villages are those villages which offer a reasonable range of services and facilities and levels of public transport, and are identified as being suitable to accommodate up to 30 dwellings up until 2026. It is considered that the settlement hierarchy set out should be supported.

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- 4.3 Droitwich is identified within the settlement hierarchy as a main town. Main towns are those which offer a wide range of services, facilities and employment, and serve the wider rural communities. Whilst it is considered that this designation should be supported, any growth to the north of Droitwich which would encroach into the Green Belt.
- 4.4 Policy CS2 states that development within the open countryside (beyond the settlement boundaries) will be strictly controlled. It is considered that this should be supported in order to safeguard the open countryside adjacent to the District boundary.
- 4.5 The paper sets out some options for addressing a higher growth target which have been considered in light of the additional housing growth which might arise from the RSS2 revision. One of the options considered was that of a free-standing settlement, however, it is not considered to be a sustainable option as it would inevitably become a commuter village. It is considered that the rejection of this option should be supported.
- 4.6 It is considered that the approach towards windfall developments which is outlined within the paper should be supported in order to avoid the need for excessive provision of greenfield land for development.
- 4.6 It is noted that the paper contains no reference to the important role that Hartlebury Trading Estate has in the local economy. It is considered that this site should be identified within the 'Employment Protection and Generation' chapter of the report which refers to the need to protect strategically important employment sites.
- 4.7 In view of the deadline for receipt of representations on the Preferred Options Paper (31st October 2000), Officers have, following the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Enterprise's agreement, submitted representations reflecting those issues outlined in this report and attached at Appendix 2. Cabinet's formal endorsement of the representations is now being sought. A further opportunity to consider the South Worcestershire Joint Core Strategy in more detail will be available at the Submission stage of the document's preparation when a consultation will be undertaken on the submission plan.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no financial implications to the Council arising from 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 Overall the proposals for South Worcestershire seek to accommodate the levels of development set out in the RSS2 submitted Preferred Option. A number of representations should be made relating to the potential impact of these proposals on Wyre Forest District.

9. CONSULTEES

- Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Enterprise

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- South Worcestershire Joint Core Strategy – Preferred Options Paper (September 2008)
- South Worcestershire Joint Core Strategy – Issues and Options Paper (November 2007)
- Cabinet Report South Worcestershire Joint Core Strategy Issues and Options Consultation Response Thursday 21st December 2007