

3. VISION AND OBJECTIVES

Introduction

3.1 The way in which Worcestershire develops between 1996-2011 will be influenced by the international, national and regional context. This context, however, provides the backcloth against which decisions in relation to more local issues and concerns can be taken. To give direction to these decisions it is important to have a vision of what kind of Worcestershire we want in the 21st Century. The Plan and other policies and plans can work towards the achievement of this vision. As part of the consultation exercise “Shaping the New Worcestershire” an outline of a vision for Worcestershire was set out and views invited. The views received were broadly supportive and have been taken into account in setting out the following vision for the County.

A Vision for Worcestershire

3.2 The vision for Worcestershire incorporates a desire to enhance quality of life, not only for today’s generation but also for future generations. This, in essence, is sustainability. The achievement of this requires us to be concerned for the well-being of future generations, to recognise that our future well-being is dependent on maintaining the health and integrity of the natural environment, to recognise that quality of life is different from standard of living and to recognise that there still exists a need for development. It should be made clear that it is not a question of no development, rather a question of how that development is undertaken and secured. The vision also encompasses economic, environmental and social factors which it is considered are most likely to be of concern to residents in meeting their aspirations and desires. These are for social equity, environmental protection, economic security and for a viable and competitive economy.

3.3 It is also important to remember that Worcestershire does not exist in a vacuum. Worcestershire is part of the wider West Midlands Region and is influenced by issues of regional significance. The region itself comprises

sub-regions of distinctive character whose specialisms, excellence and dynamic contribute to the diversity and vitality of the region as a whole. The regional vision looks to these distinctive and diverse characteristics being recognised and valued.

3.4 Overall the shared regional vision as set out in Regional Planning Guidance for the West Midlands Region (RPG11) includes achieving economic prosperity and a more competitive position for the region in European and World markets and building on the region’s success as an advanced manufacturing region. The Metropolitan Area, with Birmingham as the international city at its heart, provides the focus and core of the region with strong linkages to Worcestershire for employment, business, housing, shopping and recreational activities. The well-being of the Conurbation is therefore important for the well-being of Worcestershire, as well as the region as a whole. The regional vision also looks towards the regeneration of both the older urban and the rural areas of the region to make them places where people wish to live, work and invest, and aims to provide a high quality of life and choice of opportunity for everyone.

3.5 A vision for Worcestershire must build upon and sit comfortably with the main themes of the regional vision. Any vision for the County should utilise the region’s strengths and attributes to the benefit of the County’s inhabitants and Worcestershire’s rightful role in the future development of the wider region.

3.6 The vision is therefore of a County:

- **which is environmentally conscious.** Where the residents will want to be part of a society which respects and protects its environment and which strives to meet its own needs, both urban and rural, without jeopardising that environment. They will wish to minimise waste and conserve resources through a sustainable approach

to manufacturing and the consumption of natural resources, in particular energy. This requires a County where individuals, organisations and businesses acknowledge and act upon their environmental responsibilities, and where they recognise and acknowledge the importance of the area's diverse characteristics and wider environmental, nature conservation, landscape, townscape and historically distinctive features.

- **which is prosperous.** Where the link between residents and businesses in the creation of prosperity is acknowledged as inextricable and self-supporting. From a business viewpoint the County should be looking towards urban and rural areas which are economically attractive, vibrant and invigorated. From a resident viewpoint the County should be looking to satisfy the overriding need for job security, the payment of adequate wages and the generation of wealth within our communities. Opportunity to participate in the economic life and prosperity of Worcestershire will be essential. In this respect it will be particularly important to consider and address the needs of the least well-off in our society and to address the causes of poverty.
- **where the residents are healthy and safe.** Where people will all have access to the basic needs of food, water, and energy at a fair cost. Where they can feel part of a safe society, living free from crime, the fear of crime and anti-social behaviour. The aim should be for a good, pollution-free and stimulating environment, with clear air, clean water and pollution-free rivers, lakes and land.
- **where the people are treated fairly and afforded opportunity.** Where access to education and training will be of prime importance and people will have the opportunity to achieve their aspirations. There should be opportunity for all residents in the County to have access to housing of their choice. Local communities should be

capable of and allowed to identify and address their own needs. People should be given the opportunity of access to essential facilities irrespective of wealth, mobility and disability.

A Vision for Worcester City

3.7 Worcester City is the principal urban area in Worcestershire, the traditional County town and the primary administrative retail and employment centre for the County. It is an important sub-regional shopping centre at the top of the County's retail hierarchy, and its shopping centre provides both variety and quality of shopping for its wide catchment.

3.8 It is unique in all of the urban areas in the County in that its sub-regional role as a major employment centre ensures that it attracts a significantly greater number of commuters into the City than it has residents commuting out.

3.9 The City accommodates a range of social and community facilities and it is also the centre of governance and law and order. The City is well served by public transport with two rail stations and a third, Worcester Parkway, under investigation and a frequent bus service to and from the new bus station in the City Centre servicing the outlying urban and rural areas.

3.10 The City with its centralised, social, cultural and retail facilities well served by public transport meets the aims of sustainability.

3.11 The City's sub-regional role would be enhanced if there were improvements to some of its facilities for example for major office employers such as those who have located in other sub-regional towns and cities such as Cheltenham and Gloucester.

3.12 The vision for Worcester is therefore for it to retain its sub-regional role as the traditional County town, offering a range of opportunities for work, shopping and leisure

to its inhabitants and those within its sub-region. It is also to seek to provide those facilities and opportunities which will enhance its sub-regional role.

3.13 The policies in the County Structure Plan support this vision, particularly the levels of housing and employment development and transport policies aimed at improving public transport.

3.14 It is important that the policies in the Local Plan also seek to ensure that Worcester's sub-regional role is retained and enhanced.

3.15 Future development must ensure that the City's heritage is retained and that new housing is of a mix in terms of size and tenure. The City's place in the County's retail hierarchy must also be maintained by ensuring that the quality and variety of shops in the City Centre is retained and enhanced. Future policies for the City Centre should seek to widen the City's employment and cultural base.

The Role of the Structure Plan

3.16 It is necessary to clarify which aspects and requirements of the vision for Worcestershire are capable of being influenced through land-use policy. A series of principles have been developed to guide strategy and policy in a way which ensures consistency with both the vision, and the broad guidance and advice set out in national and regional policy planning guidance.

3.17 These guiding principles are set out below and form the objectives of the Plan. They have guided the formulation of the Plan's development strategy and policies and were used in a draft form to structure the development options in the "Shaping the New Worcestershire" consultation process. They have subsequently been used to undertake appraisals of all development options and to appraise at the formulation stage the policies set out in the individual chapters of the Plan. In this way the

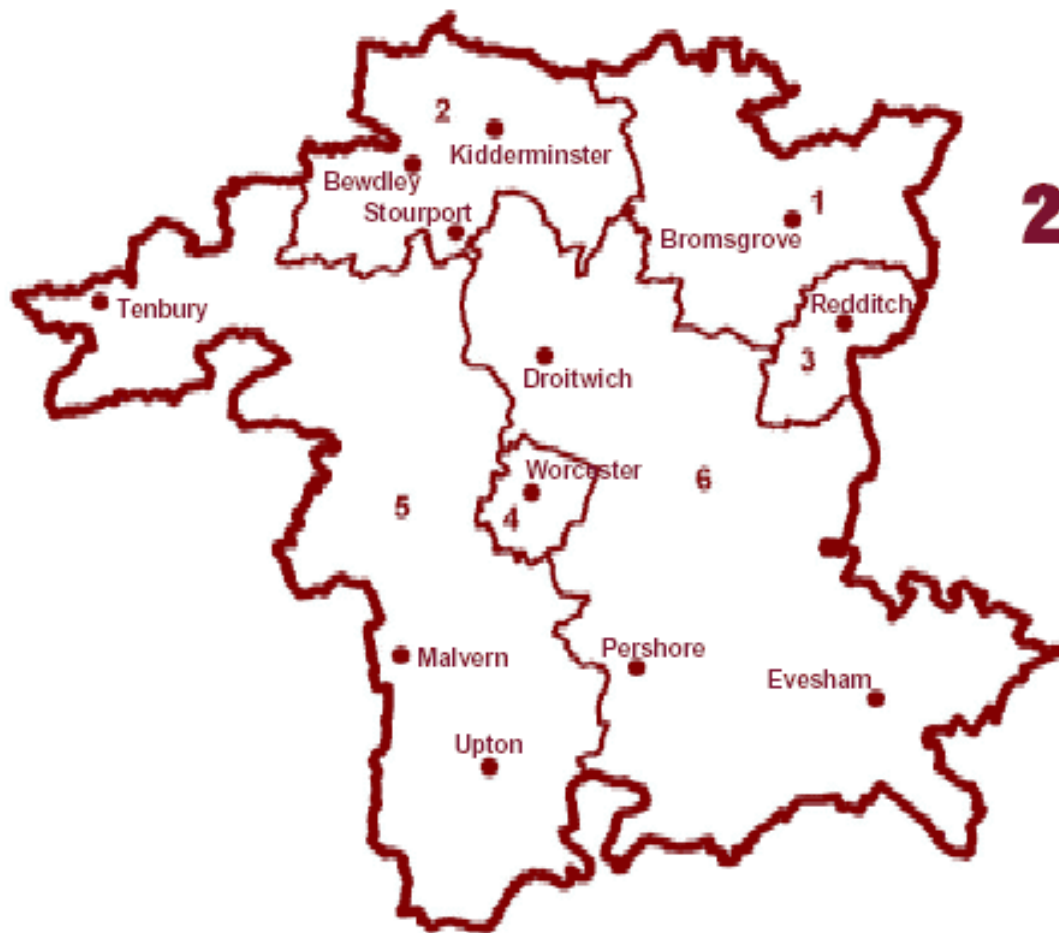
principles of sustainability have been woven into the fabric of the Plan from its inception, ensuring that the achievement of development in a sustainable way is at its core and enabling an appropriate balance to be struck between environmental, social and economic aspirations.

Objectives of the Worcestershire Structure Plan

- Encourage and promote land use activities which will lead to an improvement in the quality of air, water and land.
- Seek a reduction in the consumption of energy and finite resources through the more efficient use of resources, recycling, the use of renewable sources and the reduction in the amount of waste produced.
- Protect from damaging development and land use activity, and enhance, biodiversity and diverse and important environmental, landscape, townscape and historic features and characteristics.
- Ensure the integration of development within the landscape in order to protect and enhance essential landscape characteristics and features.
- Protect and expand amenity areas and open spaces, and access to them, in both town and country.
- Meet the housing requirements of the population of the new County through the provision of an adequate range of housing including general market, affordable and social housing in a way which protects the environment and makes the most effective use of the existing settlement pattern.
- Work towards a better balance between housing, employment, social and community facilities within settlements.

- Enhance the role of settlements as centres for service provision.
- Encourage development which will help retain and enhance the identity, character and vitality of settlements.
- Promote energy efficient construction, design and development patterns.
- Seek the location of development in areas which will minimise the need to travel and reduce the distances required to be travelled (energy efficient locations).
- Guide new development to locations which can be served by a choice of transport modes for both the movement of people and freight.
- Support and facilitate the development of alternative modes of travel to the car.
- Facilitate the strengthening and diversification of the economic base of the Region and of Worcestershire by the provision of a mixed portfolio of development locations and sites and by the enhancement and management of an attractive County environment.
- Encourage urban and rural regeneration.
- Support the enhancement, development and integration of, and access to, a range of recreation facilities both within and around settlements.
- Seek to reduce crime, the fear of crime and anti-social behaviour by introducing crime prevention as a material consideration into the land-use and development planning process.

STRUCTURE PLAN: District Boundaries



Key

- County Boundary
- District Boundary
- Urban Areas

Not to Scale

Districts

- 1 Bromsgrove
- 2 Wyre Forest
- 3 Redditch
- 4 Worcester City
- 5 Malvern Hills
- 6 Wychavon