

POLICY LINKAGES

The matrix below cross-refers Sustainable Development Policies to other Structure Plan policies which are, or may be, of particular relevance. The Plan however should be read as a whole.

Structure Plan Policy	Links to other policies
SD.1 Prudent Use of Natural Resources	SD.3, SD.4, SD.7, D.4, D.5, D.6, D.7, D.8, D.9, D.10, EN.1
SD.2 Care for the Environment	SD.9, All CTC policies
SD.3 Use of Previously Developed Land	SD.6, SD.7, D.3, D.5, D.11, D.20
SD.4 Minimising the Need to Travel	SD.6, SD.7, SD.8, T.1
SD.5 Achieving Balanced Communities	SD.6, SD.8
SD.6 Location of Development in Urban Areas	SD.4, SD.5, SD.7, RST.11, T.1
SD.7 A Sequential Approach to the Location of Development	SD.3, SD.4, SD.6, RST.11, T.1
SD.8 Development in Sustainable Rural Settlements	SD.5, D.27, D.28, RST.11
SD.9 Promotion of Town Centres	D.26, D.32

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4. A SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

Introduction

4.1 The vision and objectives of the Structure Plan are aimed at moving the County towards more sustainable patterns of development. Sustainable development lies at the heart of the Plan and to make clear what this means for development of land in the County up to 2011, it is appropriate to set out first the Sustainable Development Framework for the Plan.

4.2 The first part of this Chapter under the heading 'Sustainable Development Principles' sets out the principles of sustainability which underpin the development strategy and all other policies in the Structure Plan. The second part under the heading 'The Development Strategy' establishes the strategy which puts those principles into effect. The strategy is founded on four key elements for the accommodation of all development:

- to accommodate development in accordance with the sequential approach to the location of development (see Policy SD.7);
- as far as possible meet the housing requirements generated by the expected natural increase in the population during the Structure Plan period in the Districts where it arises;
- enable Worcester City as the largest urban area and the main service and employment centre in the County to retain and develop its sub-regional role through an appropriate level of growth; and
- to ensure the majority of the housing needs of the County during the Structure Plan period are met within the Central Crescent in accordance with RPG11 Regional Planning Guidance for the West Midlands Region (April 1998).

Policies

Sustainable Development Principles

Prudent Use of Natural Resources

Policy SD.1

Proposals for development should demonstrate how the use of natural resources will be minimised.

Wherever possible, development proposals and associated operations which can lead to the pollution of resources should be avoided. Proposals which are likely to have an adverse impact should demonstrate how likely levels of pollution will, through design and location, be minimised.

The energy implications of development proposals will be assessed with the aim of minimising energy consumption.

Explanatory Memorandum

4.3 A key aspect of sustainability is that careful use is made of resources in order to conserve them for future generations. It is important to ensure that development proposals examine closely the level of resource use required for their implementation (in particular those resources which are finite), and the likely longer term impact of the development on resource use, especially in relation to energy needs and location. The more efficient use of resources such as secondary aggregates will help to protect finite resources as well as contributing towards other sustainability objectives such as the reduction in waste production and pollution. The former Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR) defined secondary aggregates as other materials usable as aggregate, which are the by-products of quarrying and mining and

industrial processes. In Worcestershire, these include demolition and construction wastes such as road planings.

4.4 In a land use plan it is important to have regard to land and built resources and to seek to use buildings and land in the most efficient and effective way. The starting point for any development proposals should therefore always be to examine the possible improved or increased use or reuse of existing buildings and land particularly within existing settlements before considering the option of completely new development. The reuse of buildings in the open countryside for housing purposes would not generally be considered to be sustainable.

4.5 In considering proposals for development, Local Planning Authorities should recognise that it will still be necessary for the transportation and re-distribution of aggregates and waste materials away from proposed development sites.

4.6 Where relevant, proposals will be subject to environmental assessment in accordance with the appropriate and prevailing legislation and the requirements of the relevant Local Planning Authority and/or the Environment Agency.

4.7 Environmental assessments are required for major development proposals, as set out in the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (England and Wales) Regulations 1999. For developments not requiring statutory environmental assessments under the Regulations, Local Planning Authorities should encourage the provision of environmental information and informal assessments as best practice in promoting sustainable development. Assessment of the pollution of resources will be for the relevant Local Planning Authority and/or the Environment Agency to undertake.

4.8 It can be argued that any development can lead to some form of pollution of one or more of the primary resources if the full life cycle of the development itself or the products it uses are examined. The intention of Policy SD.1 however is not to preclude

development per se but to ensure that due regard is given to the likely impact of the development itself and its associated operations on land, air and water, and to limit any potentially polluting impacts to acceptable levels.

4.9 Currently there are separate, but complementary, planning and pollution control systems designed to protect the environment from the potential harm caused by development and operations. The planning system is intended to complement pollution control policies by regulating the location of development and the control of operations in order to avoid or minimise adverse effects on the use of land and on the environment; and to ensure land is adequately restored after the development or use ceases. Development proposals will be assessed in the context of this role by the Local Planning Authorities in accordance with their duties and responsibilities at the time of any proposal being brought forward. Proposals will also be assessed in accordance with any pollution control requirements by the Environment Agency.

4.10 The land use planning system also has an integral role to play in improving air quality and in contributing to the achievement of national air quality objectives. This can best be secured through the proper integration of land use policies, in particular those relating to the location of development and transport. Reference should be made to Circular No. LAQM.G4 (97): Air Quality and Land Use Planning when considering the role land use planning can play through development proposals.

4.11 There is a primary need to reduce energy use wherever possible. Total energy use associated with a development can be influenced by a range of factors, beginning with its design, choice of materials and construction method, through to how its location, orientation and integration with other land uses affects energy consumption (for example, by using passive heating and ensuring the ease of access by alternative modes of transport). Policy SD.1 is intended to ensure that the likely implications for the consumption of energy are given full consideration in determining proposals for development.

Care for the Environment

Policy SD.2

Development proposals should seek to ensure that there is no detrimental impact on the County's environmental assets or landscape character. Proposals should seek to retain and enhance environmental assets, and the distinctiveness of the local environment and should integrate fully with the landscape. Proposals which may cause damage to or lead to an erosion of the County's environmental assets and/or important landscape features or character will be required to demonstrate why the proposal is of sufficient importance to justify such erosion or damage taking place.

Explanatory Memorandum

4.12 The County contains a wealth of environmental assets, both built and natural, which need to be protected wherever possible. Certain of these assets are critical in so far as their contribution cannot be replaced by compensatory action and their loss would be serious. The County's landscape is similarly distinctive and renowned for its high value and variety. It is a valuable asset in its own right and needs to be maintained and enhanced. The Supplementary Policy Guidance "Draft Landscape Character Assessment" identifies the landscape character of the County and the components that contribute towards the different areas within it.

4.13 Proposals which are likely to lead to an erosion of the County's environmental or landscape assets or which are out of keeping with local character or distinctiveness will therefore have to demonstrate why the proposal's benefits outweigh the likely environmental or other loss or damage. At the same time development proposals should seek to enhance the County's assets and contribute towards local distinctiveness.

4.14 Where proposals for development are permitted under Policy SD.2, potential adverse effects should be mitigated by careful siting, design, quality and appropriate landscaping.

Use of Previously Developed Land

Policy SD.3

The reuse and regeneration of previously developed urban land will be encouraged in preference to the use of greenfield sites, subject to safeguarding environmental quality within the urban environment.

Explanatory Memorandum

4.15 Encouraging development on previously developed urban land will allow the maximum use to be made of vacant and previously developed sites, will assist urban regeneration and will help reduce the pressure for development on greenfield sites, particularly in the open countryside. It will also allow maximum use to be made of existing infrastructure including public transport facilities (see also Policy SD.4) and will help to maintain the viability and vitality of settlements. It is important however that development should not be allowed where it would have an adverse effect on the environmental quality of the urban area.

Minimising the Need to Travel

Policy SD.4

Proposals for development will normally only be allowed where they are located so as to minimise the need to travel, and where the development provides for access by different modes. In this respect development should generally be located in or adjacent to urban areas at nodes on transport corridors, particularly rail-based corridors, where frequent and attractive services are available or there is a realistic prospect that they will be available when development takes place.

Explanatory Memorandum

4.16 The urban locations referred to in Policy SD.4 are those which provide a significant scale and mix of development and provide a balance of employment, homes, educational, retail and community facilities situated on nodes on public transport corridors. The nodes are where public transport services are concentrated, principally where there is a rail station and interchange between rail and bus services.

4.17 The urban areas should preferably be on rail lines but can also be on road-based public transport routes. In all cases the locations should be at nodes on public transport corridors which provide a frequent and attractive rail and or bus service or where there is a realistic prospect that these services will be available when development takes place.

4.18 The rail and/or bus service should be at such a frequency and time of day or night which ensures that access is attractive and frequently available by public transport from home to other centres for work, retail, educational and community facilities.

4.19 In respect of where there is a realistic prospect that these services will be available when development takes place, development should only be located in or adjacent to these urban areas when improvements to the public transport services in respect of frequency and attractiveness will be made within the Structure Plan period.

4.20 The development in or adjacent to the urban areas at nodes on public transport routes are those locations which should generally be within five minutes drive time to an existing or proposed rail station or within fifteen minutes walking or cycling distance to an existing or proposed rail station or bus station. These locations are considered to provide the greatest potential for residents who need to travel to work or for educational, retail, cultural or other purposes to be able to do so by public transport.

4.21 The rail corridors are:

- (a) Birmingham (New Street and Snow Hill)/ Stourbridge/Kidderminster/ Droitwich/ Worcester/Malvern/Colwall;
- (b) Birmingham (New Street)/Northfield/ Bromsgrove/Droitwich/Worcester/ Malvern/Colwall;
- (c) Birmingham (New Street)/Northfield/ Redditch;
- (d) Worcester/Pershore/Evesham/ Honeybourne;
- (e) The part of the North Warwickshire line which runs through the County at Wythall.

4.22 Supplementary Planning Guidance will be produced in consultation with District Councils and other interested parties setting out what constitutes frequent and attractive services to inform the implementation of Policy SD.4. The SPG will recognise that rural settlements will not have the same level of accessibility as urban areas. Full regard should be had to Policy SD.7 in applying Policy SD.4.

Achieving Balanced Communities

Policy SD.5

Development proposals should help to sustain and improve the balance of housing, employment, community and social facilities in settlements, should maximise the use of existing infrastructure and self-containment and the building of communities.

Explanatory Memorandum

4.23 A major objective of the Structure Plan is to deliver sustainable patterns of development which allow accessibility to jobs, education, health, shopping, leisure and other local services. The locations which provide the greatest opportunity to achieve this objective are the main urban areas in the County.

4.24 The optimum sustainable pattern of development is where all the needs of the urban areas, housing, employment and social needs are met within that urban area, i.e. self-contained.

4.25 Worcester City, the principal urban area in the County which has a wide range of retail, social and community facilities and employment opportunities, is considered to be the most self-contained urban area in the County. The degree of self-containment is dependent on the employment opportunities and facilities available for local residents, the greater the employment opportunities and range of retail, social and community facilities, the higher the degree of self-containment.

4.26 In the urban areas of the County new housing development should therefore be accompanied by development to meet the employment, community and social needs associated with the housing development where they are not currently provided. This 'balanced' development in urban areas which already have a wide range of jobs, education, health, shopping, leisure and other local services will help sustain and improve the balance of housing, employment, community and social facilities in them.

4.27 Housing development without associated development to meet the employment, social and community needs means an absence of those facilities which support communities and which will encourage community access to services. The provision of employment, social and community facilities accompanying the housing development will provide the necessary facilities to support the community. The development will also maximise the opportunity for self-containment of the urban areas.

4.28 The principal urban areas named in Policy SD.6 are considered to be those areas which have the greatest opportunity for self-containment and to help sustain and improve the balance of housing, employment and community and social facilities in these areas. There are however other urban areas in the County where development would be

considered appropriate if the following criteria were satisfied:

Development in urban areas should be in sustainable locations and should be located in or adjacent to the urban areas where development:

- will help sustain and improve the balance of housing, employment, community and social facilities;
- assist in sustaining an appropriate level of local services and facilities;
- make best use of the existing infrastructure including educational, medical, cultural services and public transport; and
- there is frequent accessibility to jobs, education, health, shopping, leisure and local services, and the location accords with Policy SD.4. The Supplementary Planning Guidance to be prepared on frequent and attractive services in relation to Policy SD.4 will be equally relevant to Policy SD.5

4.29 It will be for District Councils to determine the settlements to which Policy SD.5 applies in Reviews of District Local Plans having regard to this Explanatory Memorandum.

The Development Strategy

Location of Development in Urban Areas

Policy SD.6

The majority of the outstanding development needs of the County to be met within the Structure Plan period will take place within or adjacent to the principal urban areas within the Central Crescent, namely Bromsgrove, Droitwich, Kidderminster, Stourport, Redditch and Worcester. Elsewhere in the Central Crescent development would be

appropriate at other urban settlements if the criteria in Policies SD.4 and SD.5 can be satisfied. Outside the Central Crescent, development should be concentrated at the urban settlements of Malvern, Evesham and Pershore.

Explanatory Memorandum

4.30 If the objectives of the Structure Plan are to be met and the County is to move forward in a sustainable way to 2011, it is important to have clear strategic guidance on how development requirements should be met: i.e. the housing and employment needs to 2011. Policy SD.6 makes it clear that the majority of the development required during the Structure Plan period should be located within or adjacent to certain key urban areas which it is considered provide the best opportunity to accommodate development in a sustainable way in accordance with PPG3 Housing (March 2000), other Government guidance and the objectives of the Structure Plan.

4.31 The Central Crescent is described in RPG11 Regional Planning Guidance for the West Midlands Region (April 1998) as an area around the West Midlands Metropolitan Area which has close economic, social and commuting links with that area. RPG11 does not identify the Central Crescent on a map and, in common with the Structure Plans of the adjoining Counties of Staffordshire and Warwickshire, the Central Crescent is not defined on the Key Diagram. However, to aid understanding the broad extent of the Central Crescent in the County is described below.

4.32 Reflecting advice in RPG11, the Central Crescent in Worcestershire comprises the Districts of Wyre Forest, Bromsgrove, Redditch and Worcester City, and that part of Wychavon District within the Worcester – Droitwich rail corridor and immediately surrounding the Worcester City boundary to the east and south. The area of Malvern Hills District within the Central Crescent is limited to the immediate surrounds of Worcester City.

4.33 In accordance with RPG11 and given the distribution of housing provision, the majority of the housing needs of the County during the

Structure Plan period will be met within the named principal urban areas in the Central Crescent as described and therefore it is not necessary to show the area on the Key Diagram.

4.34 Outside the Central Crescent, development should be located within or adjacent to the urban settlements of Malvern, Evesham and Pershore. There is currently an imbalance of employment and housing in the south of Wychavon District and housing development at Evesham and Pershore will help address this. However, public transport accessibility to the two settlements is relatively limited. Therefore, the scale of development proposed at Evesham and Pershore in the Review of the Wychavon District Local Plan should reflect their lower level of public transport accessibility.

4.35 For the purposes of applying Policy SD.6 the word 'concentrated' should be interpreted as meaning 'within or adjacent'.

A Sequential Approach to the Location of Development

Policy SD.7

In the settlements covered by Policy SD.6 there will be a sequential approach to the location of all development in the following order:

- (i) consideration of locations within the urban area on previously developed (brownfield) land which avoids damaging the quality of the environment;**
- (ii) consideration of locations within the urban areas on greenfield land which avoids damaging the quality of the environment;**
- (iii) consideration of locations adjacent to the urban area outside the Green Belt and adjacent to the urban area in Areas of Development Restraint;**

- (iv) in exceptional circumstances, when all the options for locating development set out above, in sustainable locations, have been exhausted and where there exists a clear development need, consideration of locations adjacent to the urban area on land currently designated as Green Belt, where the purposes for which Green Belts were designated would not be compromised.

Explanatory Memorandum

4.36 'Planning for the Communities of the Future' states that when identifying options for development, consideration should be given to the order of preference of locations and the sequence in which development should take place. PPG3 Housing (March 2000) reinforces this and sets out in more detail the Government's approach to the creation of sustainable patterns of development. Policy SD.7 reflects this guidance. In consideration of the location of new housing in particular, the Government's clear objective is for it to be accommodated principally in existing towns and cities where it can contribute to improving the quality of urban life and make a significant contribution to urban renaissance.

4.37 It is important to ensure that in accommodating development within those settlements covered by Policy SD.6, every attempt is made to make the best use of land, reducing the need to take greenfield land wherever possible. It is considered that a significant amount of the development needs of the County to 2011 can be accommodated on previously developed land.

4.38 In general terms, urban sites are the most sustainable locations for development (see Policy SD.6) not least because of links with existing communities. This is reflected in the sequential approach. District Planning Authorities should make judgements about relative sustainability when assessing sites, taking into account other relevant Structure Plan policies.

4.39 After development within sustainable urban areas has been considered, locations around sustainable urban areas (i.e. peripheral locations) outside the Green Belt are preferable to development which requires land to be removed from the Green Belt. In this respect, development adjacent to sustainable urban areas on greenfield sites in areas with no Green Belt designation and sustainable sites already removed from the Green Belt by District Local Plans for long term development needs (Areas of Development Restraint) are considered to be of equal status in terms of their general suitability for development under Policy SD.6. In applying Policy SD.7 Areas of Development Restraint identified in adopted local plans should be reviewed in accordance with Policy D.41.

4.40 For the purposes of Policy SD.7, examples of greenfield sites within urban areas may include garden nurseries and disused allotments.

4.41 In considering sites in sustainable settlements, regard should be had to the overall quality of the urban environment, taking into account Government guidance set out in PPG1 General Policy and Principles (February 1997), PPG3 Housing (March 2000) and PPG17 Sport and Recreation (September 1991).

4.42 In exceptional circumstances, there may be a case for reviewing Green Belt boundaries and planning for development where this would be the most sustainable option. Paragraph 68 of PPG3 Housing (March 2000), acknowledges that a Green Belt location may be preferable to a less sustainable location outside the Green Belt but that this would be by exception and must not compromise the purposes for which Green Belts were designated. For example, it is important to avoid coalescence of settlements. Given this guidance, it is considered therefore that the removal of land from the Green Belt in sustainable locations, in exceptional circumstances, should be only considered when alternative locations in categories higher in the sequence have been exhausted.

4.43 In respect of the provision of land for employment uses regard should be had in the application of the sequential approach to the

need to provide for a portfolio of sites (see Policy D.20) and to the implications of this in respect of special requirements on size, location and infrastructure provision. It is important that sites for economic development must be economically sustainable. For example, there may be opportunities that some greenfield sites can offer in terms of size, location, and infrastructure provision to meet economic needs. It will be for District Planning Authorities to make the case for greenfield development for employment in the context of local economic circumstances and the range of sites available.

Development in Sustainable Rural Settlements

Policy SD.8

In settlements outside urban areas development will be permitted within or adjacent to the boundary of the settlement at a level appropriate to meet local housing needs or employment and/or other local needs in order to support local services and to help achieve an improved balance of facilities. In all instances the development should be of an appropriate scale to the location, and a choice of modes of travel should be regularly available.

Explanatory Memorandum

4.44 PPG3 Housing (March 2000) indicates that there should be adequate housing provision in rural areas to meet the needs of local people and that Local Planning Authorities should therefore make sufficient land available either within or adjoining existing villages to enable these local requirements to be met. Policy SD.8 reflects this advice and broadens it to include employment, and/or other local needs such as community and social facilities, for the reasons stated in the policy. In rural settlements which meet the requirements of Policy SD.8, development for local needs only should be permitted during the Structure Plan period. This local housing need should be capable of being met through existing allocations and windfall allowances already allowed for in the Structure

Plan (see Policy D.11) in accordance with Local Plan policies. It is not anticipated that there will be a need to allocate additional sites for local needs housing purposes, in locations outside the urban areas referred to in Policy SD.6, to help meet the housing requirements of the County up to 2011. However additional housing allocations through the Local Plan process may be necessary where District Planning Authorities demonstrate that local housing needs cannot be met through existing allocations and windfall planning permissions. Any development in a sustainable rural settlement must be in accordance with relevant Structure Plan policies.

4.45 Development which helps to achieve a better balance of facilities, particularly between housing and employment, and to provide for other local needs such that it will reduce the need to travel is to be encouraged, for example community and social facilities. Employment development at locations other than the urban areas listed in Policy SD.6, should be at a scale in keeping with the size of the town or village, and will not be a justification for the release of additional land for housing purposes. Such employment development should be in accordance with other policies in the Structure Plan, in particular Policies D.27 and D.28.

4.46 In rural settlements outside of the urban areas listed in Policy SD.6 or other urban settlements identified by District Planning Authorities, it will be for the relevant Authority to assess local housing needs. District Planning Authorities should undertake this assessment in accordance with paragraphs 12 and 13 of PPG3 Housing.

4.47 Policy SD.8 seeks development in rural settlements where choices of modes of travel are regularly available. However, in applying the policy Local Planning Authorities should not expect sustainable rural settlements to have the same level of accessibility as exists in the urban areas listed in Policy SD.6. The County Council will issue advice in the form of Supplementary Planning Guidance to assist District Planning Authorities in determining what constitutes regular public transport services for the purposes of implementing Policy SD.8.

4.48 It will be for District Planning Authorities to identify settlements which accord with Policy SD.8 in Local Plan Reviews and where an allocation for development is appropriate, the sequential approach set out in Policy SD.7 will apply.

4.49 The policy refers to development being permitted within or adjacent to settlements. Where settlement boundaries are drawn in District Local Plan Reviews, it will be for District Planning Authorities to interpret the phrase 'adjacent to', having regard to the requirements of the policy, in the context of the rural settlement.

development which attracts a lot of people and trips where a choice of travel, particularly by public transport, is readily available. Town centre locations should therefore be encouraged as locations for development from a travel as well as a vitality and viability point of view.

4.51 It is recognised that not all development proposals are appropriate in town centres, for example some sports facilities, and that their impact on town centres should be a consideration in determining whether their out of centre location is appropriate.

Promotion of Town Centres

Policy SD.9

Town centres will be promoted as the foci for key uses which attract a lot of people including commercial, office, entertainment and leisure uses as well as retail uses. Mixed use development including housing will be encouraged.

Development proposals in out of centre locations should not undermine the vitality and viability of a town centre.

Explanatory Memorandum

4.50 A key element of sustainability is to ensure that town centres within the County are not undermined by development proposals elsewhere. Policy SD.9 is intended to ensure that the likely impact of development proposals on existing town centres (as defined in PPG6 Town Centres and Retail Development, June 1996) is examined and to ensure that they will at least sustain, but hopefully enhance, the vitality and viability of those centres. In this respect, diversity of uses in town centres and their accessibility to people living and working in the area are seen as making an important contribution to their vitality and viability. Policy SD.9 is therefore also intended to encourage diversification of uses in town centres as a whole. It is also recognised that town centres are the appropriate locations in which to focus