

Joint Plan Making Experiences
South Worcestershire Development Plan
February 2019

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Topics covered

- What is SWDP?
- Plan Making Timetable
- Governance Arrangements
- Officer Team
- External Support
- Purdah
- Highs and Lows (and Risks)
- SWDP Review



SOUTH WORCESTERSHIRE Development Plan



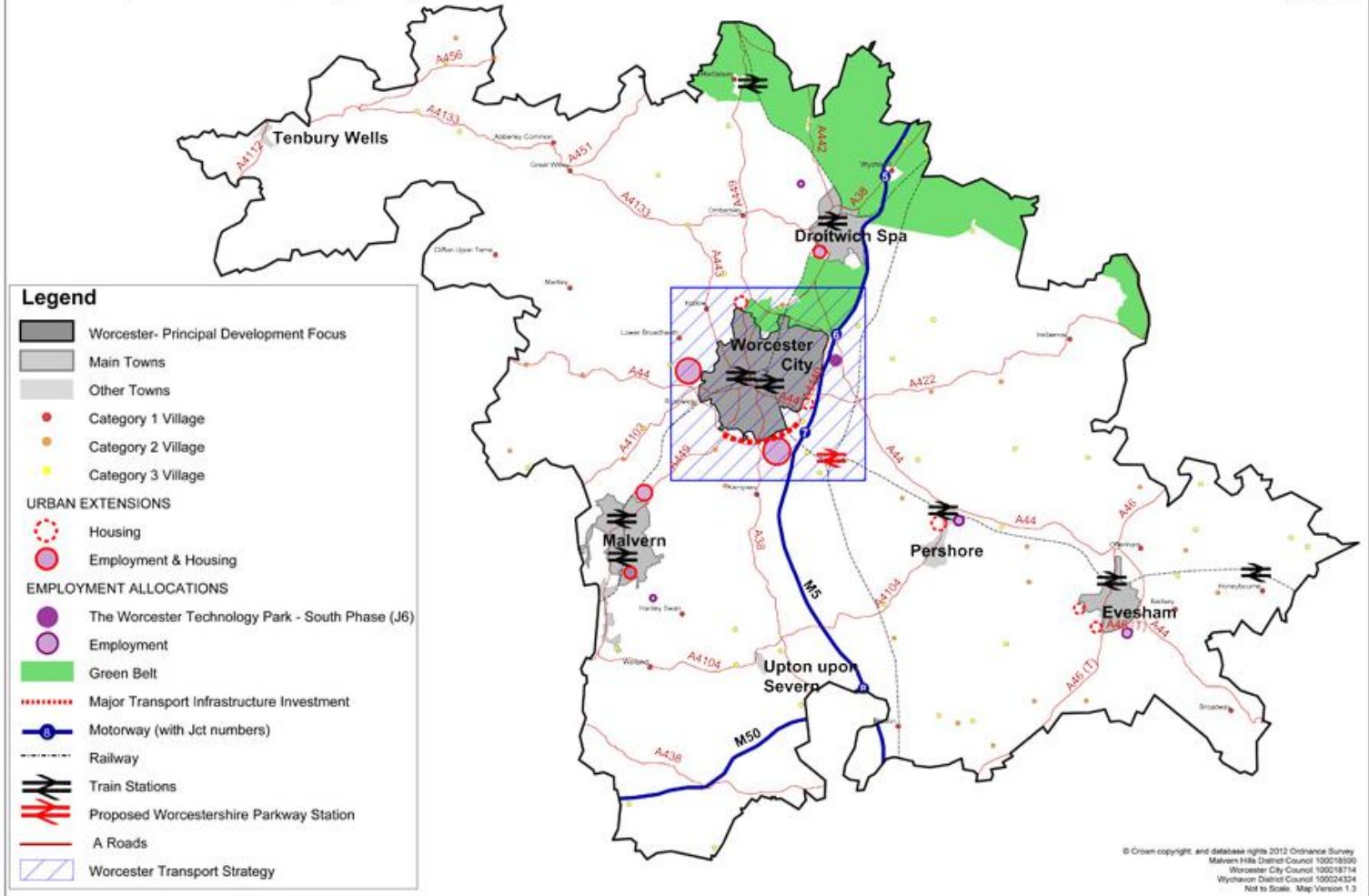
Adopted February 2016



SOUTH WORCESTERSHIRE
Development Plan

SOUTH WORCESTERSHIRE Development Plan Key Diagram

NORTH
Not to scale



Timeline

- Started in 2006 (SWJCS) - adopted SWDP in 2016
- Why did it take so long?
 - Switching from SWJCS to SWDP (political decision when RSS abolished)
 - New plan area : evidence base was a major resource and time factor
 - External influences: 12 – 18 months for WCC to build Saturn transport model for Worcester City
 - Resolving the housing requirement (2 years at examination)
 - Full Local Plan – strategic policies and DM policies
 - Time taken to get all three councils on board at key stages



Governance Arrangements (1)

- Early decision to work under informal joint planning arrangements
- Each Council had to agree each step (no joint committees)
- Agreed to create the south Worcestershire Joint Advisory Panel (no executive powers)
- SWJAP - Formal council approved terms of reference
- Initially 3 (now 5) members from each council
- Supported by joint officer team
- Media protocol for all plan making related releases



Governance Arrangements (2)

- Panel provides:
 - Sounding board re evidence base, including consultant presentations and undertakes policy development
 - Recommendations to the SWCs
- Decision to involve County Council (officers and members) in Panel meetings - although not formally part of the panel
- Agenda papers issued / notes reported to council
- Use of confidential Panel workshop sessions in advance of council papers being released
- Non Panel councillors can attend - open meetings



Governance Arrangements (3)

- Annual rotating Chairman and Vice Chairman
- Membership includes planning portfolio holders (leaders will attend and observe)(membership relatively stable over 12 years!)
- SWJAP remit now encompasses wider brief re joint planning work:
 - SPDs
 - Joint consultation responses (e.g. other plans, NPPF and Duty to Co-operate)
 - CIL development and administration
 - Provides links with other areas of work such as LTP
- All project costs equally shared – annual internal recharges



Officer Team

- Initially 3 separate policy teams (now WDC / MHDC merged)
- Project Manager post – non planner
- Officer Steering Group (includes WCC officer) (monthly meetings)
- Flexible use of jointly appointed temporary posts / consultants
- Be aware of turnover - only a handful involved all the way through!
- Work flexibly from any location
- Essentials: SWDP website, common IT and use of SharePoint
- Work responsibilities allocated by theme (not geography)
- Large team with a spread of expertise (but stretched)!



External Support

- SWJCS: initially positive input from Regional Government Office
- Close working with WCC re infrastructure requirements / IDP - particularly transportation and modelling
- Input from infrastructure providers - very mixed results
- Tensions around costs:
 - Agencies such as EA and NE charging for input to plan making
 - Costs associated with transport modelling
- Recently sought MHCLG advice but not as readily accessible as former regional office arrangements



Purdah

- Worcester City Council on annual thirds (unlike WDC / MHDC)
- Has impacted on both SWJCS and SWDP timetables - creating delay (particularly given sensitivities around political balance within City)
- Delay impacted on the timing of reports to SWCs and consultation stages
- Related point need to consider routes to Council decisions (protracted and unaligned internal procedures can incur further delay – remains an issue for SWCs)
- Flexibility – be prepared to consider special and aligned Council meetings



High Points

- **Adoption!** An up to date plan, full weight in appeals, five year land supply and generally successful at appeal
- Agreement (eventually) over a strategic approach to growth (such as urban extensions at Worcester)
- Shared costs and efficiencies (still expensive but better than three separate plans) (now common LDS, SCI, AMR, monitoring)
- Single joined up team at examination: planners, economic development, WCC, Worcestershire LEP, specialists
- Working as south Worcestershire: more impact and influence



Low Points

- Due to time required to get a plan in place the existing LPs were deemed 'out of date' and NPPF provisions engaged (housing land supply)
- SWJAP and leading members signed up to plan strategy - but elements of the wider council membership not on board (despite numerous workshops and briefings)
- Not all three councils prepared to take decisions at key stages (WDC threatened to go it alone and /or sue MHDC)



Risks (post adoption)

- Joint Plan means joint responsibility re implementation of the adopted Plan (such as single SWC target for new Housing Delivery Test and DM decision monitoring)
- Due to time required to get a plan in place the existing LPs were deemed out of date and NPPF provisions engaged
- Viability and delivery of strategic allocations (existing and new)
- Hitting LDS timetable and maintaining up to date plan status
- Costs of review (particularly on-going evidence base gathering)
- May 2019 elections may see significant influx of new members
- Officer turnover / recruitment (loss of specialist expertise / knowledge)



Reviewing the SWDP

- SWCs agreed to SWDPR - submission by February 2021
- Working with standard methodology for Objectively Assessed Housing Needs
- Issues and Options published November 2018 (over 4500 representations and 1000+ sites under the call for sites)
- Will revisit spatial strategy – possibility of new settlements and rail based options
- Next step: Preferred Options will be post May elections with new members with no previous involvement in SWDP / SWDPR



Questions?

