

Subject: Submission to SWJCS Options Paper

The South Worcestershire Joint Core Strategy Team Urban Environment
Orchard House
Farrier Street
Worcester
WR1 3BB

30th October 2008

Dear Sir/Madam,

SOUTH WORCESTERSHIRE JOINT CORE STRATEGY PREFERRED OPTIONS PAPER

I am writing to add my views to the consultation on the preferred options for housing and employment development for South Worcestershire set out in the above document.

I feel the entire process has been badly misdirected from the outset, leaving local people with very little real say in the outcome.

These housing numbers and preferred options for development sites have already been chosen by local councils from a menu passed down by central government, processed through an unelected body, the West Midlands Regional Assembly.

In order to gain assent and legitimacy, there should have been far greater involvement of existing communities in South Worcestershire, forming part of a genuine negotiation between local and central government.

This has not happened. Of course we need a housing strategy, but not this strategy, and not these numbers.

Current projections for population growth from the Office of National Statistics, based on 2006 figures, show a far smaller projected natural increase in population by 2026 than is indicated by SWJCS projections for housing growth.

What this demonstrates is that housing numbers chosen and agreed by formal voting through the three South Worcestershire councils includes a very significant element of migratory growth, particularly in the Wychavon and Malvern Hills areas, and makes huge assumptions about future employment capacity.

Not surprisingly, local people feel they have never been asked if they agree to the notion of migratory growth, and feel their existing communities will be devastated by these proposed developments.

Given the housing numbers that the participating councils signed up to, it comes as no surprise that the Plan involves the large scale development of existing green open spaces that currently helps define and protect many existing communities whose way of life is now under threat.

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Far more attention should have been given to brownfield sites, to locally determined sustainable development according to parish plans, to the capacity for future windfall development, and of course to reducing the target number of homes towards natural population growth projections.

Many hundreds of residents and their parish or town councils will submit detailed objections to the proposals set out in the Preferred Options Paper, but I will limit myself to more general observations that can easily be applied to the policy sub-sections under review.

It is patently clear that there is inadequate planning or provision for necessary infrastructure improvements if these plans were to go ahead.

The principle of significant migratory, rather than natural population development, has never been properly discussed and agreed by local communities and should not therefore go ahead.

The numbers proposed are excessive and should be reviewed because they will have a devastating effect on local communities, wherever they are built.

To press ahead with the proposed numbers would lead to the encroachment of Worcester City into parish boundaries with no benefit to the parishes whatsoever - most would say considerable harm to village life.

Nowhere could this be better illustrated than Kempsey, where the parish plan concluded that no further development of this large settlement was necessary, and that the significant gap between St Peters and Kempsey should be maintained to preserve village identity.

The SWJCS entirely ignores this document and sets itself on a collision course with local wishes, proposing up to 100 new houses within the settlement boundary and 3000 new homes encroaching into the parish, eating up the significant gap fought for so determinedly by local residents to preserve Kempsey's village character.

Very similar arguments can be made for the villages of Rushwick and Lower Broadheath, building overcapacity on existing roads from commuting traffic through Hallow, Holt Heath and other villages.

Proposed developments to the Malvern, particularly to the NE of the town, will consume Newland village and transform the population from around 300 to nearer 6000, with huge additional strain on already creaking services and infrastructure.

Planned development of this magnitude will inevitably change the unique character of the town that has for generations been an attractive location for high skill, high value business and employment.

Here, as elsewhere across South Worcestershire, people are angry because they do not feel they have been properly engaged in deciding the housing numbers that led

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to this single option consultation, either by central government or by their local councils.

Yours sincerely,

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