



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Fred Davies  
South Worcestershire Development Plan  
Civic Centre  
Queen Elizabeth Drive  
Persnore  
WR10 1PT

April 16, 2021

Dear Fred Davies

I am writing in response to the Sustainability Appraisal Consultation to the latest iteration of the South Worcestershire Development Plan, in my capacity as Member of Parliament for West Worcestershire and reflecting the conversations and communications I have had with local people and businesses in my constituency.

I am briefed that this is not an opportunity to comment on specific developments and specific sites and as a matter of policy, I refrain from intervening on single planning applications.

However, this consultation is an opportunity to comment on the wider strategic aims of the revised SWDP and I make the following observations:

**Green Spaces**

In my consultation responses, I have been clear about the importance of preserving green spaces around villages, towns and, in particular, the importance of preventing urban sprawl and the loss of definition between Worcester city boundaries and the communities of Kempsey, Lower Broadheath and Rushwick, in my constituency. I am keen to see a clear definition of green space areas where development is not allowable in addition to a designation of areas in flood plains or on AONB land where development is not permitted under other policies.

**Agricultural Land**

West Worcestershire has a significant agricultural and food production economy and the year of coronavirus restrictions has highlighted the importance of food retailer supply chains and local food production. I feel that it is crucial, both in terms of the pandemic and with a national aspiration for food security, that the new iteration of the SWDP ensures greater protection for our high-quality agricultural land and ensure that this asset is protected for future generations.



### **Neighbourhood Planning**

I have consistently encouraged local communities to develop their own Neighbourhood Plan and democratically approve their own blueprint for growth. The current hiatus in progressing the new local plan now also allows communities to further develop their own Neighbourhood Plans and I repeat my preference for hyper-local views to take priority when planning for growth, where they have been democratically developed and approved.

### **Planning White Paper**

I have responded to consultations led by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government on its Planning White Paper and the controversial housing algorithm and I am pleased that the department is amending the proposed legislation taking consideration of significant local and national resistance. Nevertheless, I do support the direction of travel in the white paper to simplify the planning process and also agree with measures which propose better building regulations to deliver more attractive housing, with a requirement for 'green design and construction' taking into account our country's obligation to reach net carbon zero targets by 2050. With this in mind, I would be keen to see the plan embrace schemes which commit to low carbon construction methods, energy efficient new homes with electric vehicle charging capability and a wider commitment to engaging with the active travel strategy and having greater connectivity with improved public transport. In addition, with the increase in home-working over the last 12 months and the resultant reduction in car traffic, I would encourage the plan to support schemes which support greater deliver of fibre to the premises broadband connectivity and roll out of 5G mobile phone connectivity.

### **Green Homes**

The Government is committed to helping people improve the energy efficiency of their homes, both to help reach out net zero commitment but also to help people reduce their individual energy bills. This is particularly a challenge in older, rural homes in my constituency. I would therefore encourage the planners within the SWDP team to work with central Government to ensure that the next iteration of the local plan allows individual home-owners to take their own steps to improve energy efficiency, unencumbered by planning red tape or specific local regulations.

I will be publishing my response to this consultation on my website. I look forward to reading an updated local plan which is sympathetic to local housing need, while helping our nation to build back better in a post-covid world and improve our chances of leaving the environment in a better state for our children and grand-children.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Harriett Baldwin". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line at the end.

**Harriett Baldwin MP**  
**Member of Parliament for West Worcestershire**