



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

South Worcestershire Development Plan
Civic Centre
Queen Elizabeth Drive
Persore
WR10 1PT

December 14, 2019

South Worcestershire Development Plan Review Consultation

I am writing this response in my capacity as Member of Parliament for West Worcestershire and I reflect the views of constituents who have discussed this review with me in recent months. It is also submitted in addition to the response I made to the original Plan in 2012, which views I still hold.

Village Categorisation

West Worcestershire has already seen substantial housing development including major projects in Persore and Kempsey and extensive house-building on the edge of Upton-upon-Severn, in Hallow, in Clifton-on-Teme and Great Witley. This means that the larger settlements continue to bear the brunt of major house-building and the commensurate impact on local schools, GP surgeries, infrastructure and other public services. This means that Category 1 villages continue to grow whilst smaller communities are still excluded from being able to refresh their communities. This matter is of particular concern to the smaller rural primary schools, which depend on young parents being able to move into smaller villages – schools will inevitably close if they are not able to fill their reception class each year. I have always felt that smaller villages should be freed to add one or two new houses to their community each year to allow for organic growth. This means that the planning authorities need to relax the rules regarding development on lower category villages and allow them to build the right homes for their community according to their own neighbourhood plans.

Green Spaces

Major development on the edges of Worcester city are having the inevitable consequence of driving urban sprawl. In order for West Worcestershire to maintain its rural charm, there is a need to protect the green spaces between settlement areas and to secure undeveloped areas forming clear boundaries. In addition, it is essential to preserve treasured green spaces within settlement area. I have formally responded, in a private capacity, to your consultation about the Tiddesley Wood proposals; in my view it is essential that we protect our ancient woodlands and speculative applications which destroy such woodlands should be rejected. Our region already benefits from the protections afforded by Areas of

Outstanding Natural Beauty, but our towns also have treasured green spaces and planned development must protect the integrity of such areas.

Infrastructure

Extra housing development raises inevitable concerns about the impact on local infrastructure especially the impact on transport, access to public services and effective operation of local schools and medical services. Although developer's contributions have delivered a range of benefits to local communities, these often come too late in the cycle. My postbag is filled with complaints about developers which scrimp on their obligations or ignore them altogether. Therefore, I would request that housing development is not allowed to progress until these obligations have been fulfilled – allowing communities to reap their benefits in parallel with the addition of new housing. The Government has pledged to legislate on this matter, and I expect that, in due course, local authorities will have sufficient powers to compel major housing developers to comply; in the interim, I would hope that you are able to structure your plan to allow for developers' infrastructure investment ahead of house construction.

Considering Local Views

I have long been a supporter of the Neighbourhood Plan process and have supported communities which develop their own local planning blueprint. The best housing development is delivered with the consent of the local community and, in my experience, local people can, and should, be trusted to identify areas where development can be carried out with general local consent. And I also support the efforts of local communities to encourage smaller housing developers producing small, bespoke projects which often deliver better looking houses and adding to the appeal of a village.

The Green Challenge

Our national ambitions to deliver net zero emissions by 2050 will inevitably have direct consequences on how we plan for growth across West Worcestershire, from the way we build homes to the transportation links connecting us all to our places of study, work and leisure. We should be cognisant of the importance that the green agenda is regarded by all of my constituents and plans should be developed now to ensure that a carbon-neutral future is possible. The Government plans to legislate to ensure that new homes comply to improved green standards and better use of renewable energy sources should form part of new development specifications. I am also keen to see plans to deliver an enhanced electric car charging network, better public transport links and better provision for cyclists.

Permanent Flood Defences

We have six major flood defence schemes now in operation in West Worcestershire and their return on investment has been impressive, keeping communities open and allowing



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

businesses to keep trading. We still have two significant areas which require protection – Tenbury Wells and Severn Stoke – and I am eager to support any measures which may be taken to mitigate the high cost of both of these schemes. The Government has committed to continue investing in flood defence schemes and such ambition should be built into the long-term plan.

Extra Care Housing

West Worcestershire has an ageing population and there is increasing demand for housing where couples where one partner requires extra medical support but still allowing them to stay living together. Extra Care Housing developments are essential to meet the ageing demographic challenge and I would encourage more of this housing, in particular, using brownfield sites.

Affordable Homes

The Government has implemented a range of measures to help young people take their first step on the housing ladder including the Help to Buy ISA and the reduction Stamp Duty for first time buyers. In order that we allow communities to attract younger people, and to give key workers the chance to live near to their places of work, it is essential that this new plan makes appropriate provision for affordable housing.

Finally, I would repeat my views that local people remain concerned about the high numbers of housing being delivered in the larger villages, which will have inevitable negative consequences for the way our county grows. I would ask that you consider, favourably, proposals which deliver smaller sites, and in particular brownfield sites, and stray from the large-scale developments which can change communities forever.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading 'H - it Baldwin'.

Harriett Baldwin MP

Member of Parliament for West Worcestershire