

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 A Local Plan for Malvern Hills District

1.1.1 The Malvern Hills District Local Plan provides the detailed framework for the future development of Malvern Hills District. The Plan covers the whole of Malvern Hills District and addresses the period 1996 to 2011.

1.1.2 This Local Plan is a statutory document prepared under the provisions of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) and the Town and Country Planning (Transitional Arrangements) (England) 2004. It will play a vital role in both guiding long-term decisions about the future of the District and day to day development control decisions about individual planning and other applications.

1.1.3 It is the role of the Local Plan to:

- Set out detailed policies and proposals for development and the use of land;
- Allocate specific sites for development;
- Set out the criteria against which planning applications are assessed;
- Address a wide range of community and environmental issues; and
- Provide opportunities for community consultation and participation.

1.1.4 Preparation of the Local Plan has to take account of a wide variety of guidance and information including:

- National, regional, strategic and local planning guidance;
- Population, employment and development trends;
- The effectiveness of existing Local Plan policies; and
- The views and needs of the local community, businesses and service providers.

1.1.5 The Malvern Hills District Local Plan will replace the two existing adopted Local Plans covering Malvern Hills District, both of which address the period 1986 – 2001. The two Local Plans which will be replaced are the:

- Malvern Hills District Local Plan (adopted 1998);
- Leominster District Local Plan (Tenbury Area) (adopted 1999).

1.1.6 The new Local Plan represents a major opportunity to address both pressures and opportunities experienced within Malvern Hills District and to provide a powerful delivery vehicle for wider community aspirations expressed through the Malvern Hills District Community Strategy. Consequently, the preparation of the Plan's policies and proposals have been informed by the Community Strategy and community feedback received in response to the informal Local Plan Key Issues consultation undertaken over the summer of 2001.

- 1.1.7 The Local Plan is the product of a comprehensive review of both existing adopted Local Plans. Some existing policies in these Plans have been carried forward with little modification, others have been significantly altered to meet changing circumstances or they have been deleted, as they are not considered appropriate with respect to current policy requirements or in the interests of delivering a shorter Local Plan. Wholly new policies have been introduced to address new issues, changes in government guidance and specific sites.
- 1.1.8 Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that planning decisions are made in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations suggest otherwise. This provision has been introduced in order to deliver a plan led approach to decisions about development or the use of land. Once adopted, the Local Plan will receive the full weight of Section 38 (6) as an adopted Development Plan document.
- 1.1.9 In order to support both the understanding of the Local Plan and guide the detailed implementation of specific policies and proposals the District Council has prepared a number of background documents and Supplementary Planning Guidance/Documents. Details of which are provided in Appendix 12.
- 1.1.10 The Local Plan has been prepared under Section 36 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended), the Town and Country Planning (Transitional Arrangements) (England) Regulations 2004 and associated regulations and guidance. Consequently, the form and content of the Local Plan are fairly closely regulated. The government however, introduced changes to the Development Plan system through the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. These changes will ultimately see the abolition of Local Plans, which are to be replaced by a new form of Development Plan.
- 1.1.11 The production of the Local Plan continued on the basis of an 'old style' Local Plan with respect to its form, content and most aspects of public consultation. However, this was subject to 'transitional arrangements' under the new enacted legislation (September 2004).
- 1.1.12 The entire plan was re-deposited under transitional arrangements at the Second Deposit stage and was subject to a binding Inspector's Report following the Public Local Inquiry.
- 1.1.13 Changes to the new national Planning system came into effect in September 2004 under the provisions of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. A Local Development Framework (LDF) replaces the old system of County Structure Plans and Local Plans. The development plan for the District will consist of the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS), the Worcestershire County Council Minerals and Waste Plans and Development Plan Documents (DPDs) prepared by the District Council. Transitional arrangements have been put in place which allow the Worcestershire County Structure Plan (WCSP) and the Local Plan to retain their development plan status and for the policies to be 'saved'. The WCSP will be valid until 2007. The Malvern Hills District Local Plan will be "saved" for three years from the date of adoption to 2009. Many policies will be saved for longer than three years, as set out in the District Council's Local Development Scheme.
- 1.1.14 These documents should be read as a whole in order to provide the complete range of Development Plan policies which may be relevant to a particular proposal or issue. Details of these documents are provided in Appendix 12 to this Local Plan. The Malvern Hills District Local Plan does not restate or repeat other policies where there is no requirement for amplification or development.

How to use this Plan

- 1.1.15 A Local Plan consists of a Written Statement and a Proposals Map. The Proposals Map accompanying this Written Statement is reproduced at a recognisable scale and is based upon an Ordnance Survey base map which allows readers of the Local Plan, where appropriate, to relate policies and proposals to specific sites or locations. Where greater detail is required a number of Inset Maps are provided. The number and details of Inset Maps are provided in the Contents section of the Written Statement and they are clearly identified and numbered on the main Proposals Map.
- 1.1.16 The Local Plan is structured around the themes identified through the Local Plan Key issues consultation, these are Development Strategy, Economic Prosperity, Quality of Life, Providing Sustainable Transport and Community Needs.
- 1.1.17 Policies and proposals within the Local Plan are clearly set out in **bold** type to differentiate these from supporting text and information. Each policy or group of policies has a reasoned justification, which provides readers of the Local Plan with the District Council's reasons for including the policy and explanation about how it will be applied.
- 1.1.18 Each Policy within the Local Plan is provided with a unique Policy reference number (e.g. CN1) and individual sites, where appropriate are also given a unique reference number. These should be quoted in correspondence or representations relating to the Local Plan.
- 1.1.19 The Local Plan should be read as a whole, as more than one policy is likely to be relevant to an individual proposal or issue. The Development Strategy provides a number of core policies relating to the location and control of development and will provide general guidance. Policy DS3 provides specific development control criteria and Policy QL1 provides specific design criteria and are likely to be relevant in most cases.
- 1.1.20 A number of diagrams and supporting maps are provided in the Appendices to the Local Plan. These are provided for information and interpretation purposes. They do not form part of the Local Plan.
- 1.1.21 Any reference in the Plan to organisations or guidance applies to any successors, should that organisation or guidance change or cease to exist.

1.2 Influences on the Local Plan

- 1.2.1 The Local Plan has been prepared against the background of national, regional and local policies and strategies, which have influenced both its form and content. However, it is those priorities established by the Malvern Hills Community Strategy, which have provided the local context for the Development Strategy and other Local Plan policies.

Malvern Hills District Community Strategy

- 1.2.2 District Councils have a duty to prepare a community strategy to promote the economic, social and environmental well being of the District. A local strategic partnership known as Vision 21 – Malvern Hills Partnership, made up of local organisations, the public, together with the voluntary and private sectors was set up to oversee the preparation and implementation of the Community Strategy. This was published in November 2002 and will be reviewed in 2006.
- 1.2.3 The Community Strategy partnership established the following Vision for the District:

“The long term vision is for a District that has a mix of people of all ages who live in supportive communities, where people can get about without being dependent on the car, where people can live in safety free from crime and fear of crime, where the rural character and beauty of

the area is looked after, where people enjoy a good standard of living and have secure, well paid and fulfilling jobs and can afford a home that suits their needs”.

1.2.4 The Community Strategy is pursuing the following key actions:

- An effective transport system that offers choice;
- A safe community with no crime;
- Secure and fulfilling jobs;
- Protection of the environment, countryside and the character of towns and villages, and cleanliness and quietness where it matters;
- Housing to suit everyone’s needs;
- Easy access to good health and support services;
- A good range of shops and services where they’re wanted;
- A sense of belonging to a supportive community;
- The chance to play sport, enjoy culture and relax;
- Opportunities for lifelong learning and personal development.

1.2.5 At the District level, the Community Strategy is the overarching strategy into which all other plans and strategies have to fit and endeavour to implement. The Community Strategy and Local Plan are therefore complementary. Now that the Malvern Hills Community Strategy has been established, the Local Plan provides the primary means of taking forward those elements of its vision and priorities that concern the development and use of land.

1.2.6 The vision and priorities established by the Community Strategy through extensive public consultation provide a local basis for assessing the requirements and implications of other strategies, plans and guidance, which the Local Plan has also had to take into account.

Worcestershire Community Strategy 2003 – 2013

1.2.7 The Worcestershire Partnership produced the Worcestershire Community Strategy in March 2003. The document entitled ‘Partnership Towards Excellence’ establishes the following vision for Worcestershire:

“A county with safe, cohesive, healthy and inclusive communities, a strong and diverse economy and a valued and cherished environment”.

1.2.8 The Strategy carries forward the vision in six key themes. These are:

- Communities that are healthy, and support vulnerable people;
- Communities that are safe, and feel safe;
- Learning skills for everyone, at every age;
- Economic success that is shared by all;
- A better environment – for today and for our children;
- Connecting Worcestershire.

1.2.9 There is a significant degree of common ground with respect to key themes and priorities established by both county and district community strategies. The county strategy highlights a number of issues which are of specific relevance to this Local Plan:

- Malvern Hills District has the highest proportion of population over 65 years old in the County (15%);
- There is a need to diversify Worcestershire’s economy, particularly into growth areas through initiatives such as the Birmingham / Worcestershire Technology Belt and the potential for start up businesses at Malvern Hills Science Park;
- Encouraging rural diversification in the wake of foot and mouth, promoting food and drink as a basis for clusters of related employment;
- Promoting sustainable tourism within Worcestershire;

- Protecting, conserving and enhancing the individual components of the environment;
- Increasing the percentage of new homes built on previously developed land;
- Delivering new development which is locally distinctive and environmentally sensitive;
- Promoting Biodiversity.

Government Guidance

1.2.10 The government's policies on different aspects of planning are set out in Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) notes, Planning Policy Statements (PPS), circulars, ministerial statements and various strategies and reports. Local planning authorities must have regard to these policies when preparing development plans. PPGs will be replaced by PPS in due course and cover a number of key issues of particular relevance to this Local Plan including housing, transport, the countryside, town centres and retailing and are referred to in more detail in the relevant sections of the Plan. However, this Plan adopts the stance that there is no need to simply restate Government advice within the Plan if it is clear that appropriate regard has been paid to that advice when drafting the Local Plan.

Regional Planning Guidance/Regional Spatial Strategy

1.2.11 Regional Planning Guidance for the West Midlands region was originally published in 1998 and established a locational framework for development, influencing the content of Development Plans across the region. It established a set of development principles relating to economic growth, urban and rural regeneration, the promotion of sustainable patterns of development and maintaining and enhancing the environment. It also provided guidance on the number of dwellings to be provided in Worcestershire during the period 1991-2011.

1.2.12 Regional Planning Guidance became the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) in 2004 and addresses the period 1996 to 2021. It proposes a fundamental change to the spatial strategies adopted in previous plans and focuses on urban regeneration and rural renaissance, diversifying and modernising the Region's economy and modernising the transport infrastructure of the West Midlands. The strategy places a greater emphasis on the need for the major urban areas to accommodate much of their own growth in an attempt to reverse past trends with respect to migration. A partial review of the RSS has commenced and will provide detailed housing and employment requirements up until the year 2026. These detailed requirements will replace those set out in the Worcestershire County Structure Plan. The purpose of the RSS is to guide the preparation of local authority development plans and local transport plans. In Malvern Hills District, the RSS is a statutory plan, which along with the Local Plan, has 'development plan' status. This means the RSS has to be taken into account not just in considering planning applications within the District, but also in setting the land use policy direction for the District, currently up to 2021.

1.2.13 This Plan has been prepared under the terms of the published Regional Planning Guidance (1998). However, regard has been given to the strategy and policies set out in the replacement Regional Spatial Strategy (2004).

Worcestershire County Structure Plan

1.2.14 The Worcestershire County Structure Plan (WCSP) sets out key strategic policies for the County and provides a framework for development at a local level. The Local Plan is required to generally conform to the Structure Plan, which covers the period 1996 to 2011.

1.2.15 The WCSP provides clear strategic guidance on how development requirements should be met. Its development strategy and policies are aimed at moving the County towards sustainable patterns of development and seeks to:

- Locate the majority of development within/adjacent to the county's principal urban areas (which includes Malvern);

- Encourage a sequential approach to selecting development sites favouring locations in urban areas on brownfield sites;
- Restrict housing, employment and community development in rural areas to a level which meets local needs; and
- Encourage the diversification of town centre uses to help sustain and enhance the vitality and viability of those centres.

1.2.16 The District Council is mindful that eventually the County Structure Plan for Worcestershire will not form part of the new Development Plan framework due to legislative changes. However, the Local Plan has been prepared in the light of its adopted strategy and policies, and the Structure Plan will continue in operation as a 'saved plan' until 2007. Consequently, as set out above, the Regional Spatial Strategy will ultimately supersede those aspects that relate to detailed housing and employment requirements. Notwithstanding, the intended phasing out of the County Structure Plan the Local Plan does not unnecessarily restate Structure Plan policies where no local amplification or interpretation is required. It is the view of the District Council that the Structure Plan and Malvern Hills District Local Plan should be read alongside each other until such time as the Structure Plan is wholly replaced by a statutorily adopted Sub-Regional Strategy and its policies no longer form part of the development plan framework for Worcestershire.

Worcestershire Local Transport Plan

1.2.17 The Worcestershire Local Transport Plan (LTP) was prepared by the County Council and represents an important input into the Local Plan. The LTP Strategy focuses on delivering a transportation system, which meets the mobility needs of all travellers without compromising the environment. It emphasises the importance of encouraging sustainable modes of travel through the promotion of alternative means to the private car. The integration of land use planning with transport planning will help ensure that in the long term, Worcestershire's settlements provide a basis for increasingly self-sufficient communities in terms of transport, housing, jobs, leisure and education. The second Worcestershire LTP was published after the preparation of this plan in 2006 however its draft versions assisted in the formulation of Local Plan policies, and was used during the Public Local Inquiry.

Worcestershire Biodiversity Action Plan

1.2.18 The Worcestershire Biodiversity Partnership published a Biodiversity Action Plan in 1999. Its purpose is to focus local policies and resources on conserving and enhancing the county's biodiversity using a broad partnership approach. The Plan sets out action plans and priorities for wildlife conservation and identifies key habitats for protection, restoration and re-creation. It also highlights which species are the most threatened in the county and defines actions that are required to protect and enhance their populations. Local authorities are identified as key players in protecting biodiversity.

1.2.19 In addition to the national, regional and local policies and strategies outlined above, the following guiding principles for development, found in government guidance on planning-related issues, have provided the context for the Plan's Development Strategy.

Sustainable Development

1.2.20 In 1999, the government published a national sustainable development strategy “A Better Quality Of Life”.

1.2.21 The objectives of the strategy are to ensure:

“a better quality of life for everyone, now and for generations to come through:

- i) Social progress which recognises the needs of everyone;*
- ii) Effective protection of the environment;*
- iii) Prudent use of natural resources;*
- iv) Maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment.”*

1.2.22 Achieving sustainable development means addressing all of these objectives. In March 2005, the Government published a new national Strategy for Sustainable Development ‘Securing the Future’. This document sets out criteria which expand on the above objectives but with greater emphasis on societal impacts.

1.2.23 The government recognises the important role of the planning system and in particular, Local Plans in delivering sustainable development. The Local Plan Review Key Issues Report identified the following factors as being of fundamental importance in developing a sustainable Local Plan development strategy: development of previously developed land and buildings, minimising the need to travel by car, promoting mixed use development, conserving the natural and built environment, concentrating development in urban areas, ensuring a balance between new housing and jobs and supporting rural areas and communities.

Use of previously developed land

1.2.24 The Government is committed to maximising the re-use of previously developed land and buildings in order to promote regeneration and to minimise the amount of greenfield land being used for development. The Worcestershire County Structure Plan (WCSP) has set an indicative target of 70% of the Structure Plan housing requirement in Malvern Hills District to be developed using previously developed land and buildings. Between 1996 and 2005 just over 71% of housing completions within the District have been on brownfield sites.

1.2.25 As part of the Local Plan Review process, the District Council undertook an Urban Capacity Study to help identify potential development sites within its urban areas. The results of the study provided a basis for housing sites on previously developed land proposed by the Local Plan. The Urban Capacity Study was published in 2004 as a background document to this Plan.

The sequential approach to the location of development

1.2.26 Government guidance states that consideration should be given to the order of preference of locations and the sequence in which development should take place. To help achieve more sustainable travel patterns, protect and conserve areas of recognised environmental and amenity importance, promote regeneration and minimise the amount of greenfield land taken for development, a sequential approach must be employed in the identification of land for development. Priority must be given to the re-use of previously developed land, the conversion of existing buildings and bringing vacant property back into use in sustainable locations.

Mixed use development

1.2.27 PPG3 - Housing indicates that development plans should identify individual sites suitable for development, which combines a mix of land uses including housing. Mixed use development can help create vitality and diversity and reduce the need to travel but can also help to achieve balanced communities. The majority of development sites, which have come forward over the last plan period, have not been suitable for mixed use development, primarily due to

their small size or rural location. However, where appropriate, sites have been identified as part of the Local Plan review process for mixed use development.

Reducing the need to travel

- 1.2.28 A central objective of national planning policy is to integrate planning and transport at the national, regional and local levels to promote sustainable transport choices and to minimise the need to travel, especially by the private car. The long term planning of land use to reduce demand for travel can play an important role in the delivery of a sustainable transport system.
- 1.2.29 Government guidance suggests that development, which is likely to generate a significant amount of travel should be located where it is, or has the potential to become, easily accessible to a range of transport modes. This requirement has obviously influenced both the assessment of potential development sites identified through the Urban Capacity Study and the content of Local Plan policies which influence the location of new development.
- 1.2.30 Malvern Hills District in overall terms is a rural district. The Local Plan recognises that it is not always possible to apply the same transport and accessibility tests to proposals in the open countryside as in the main urban area or other larger settlements. However, the Plan has been prepared on the basis that wherever development is proposed within the District the transport / travel implications and consequences of the proposal should be identified and assessed in accordance with policies aimed at reducing the need to travel.

The efficient use of land and buildings

- 1.2.31 To help achieve more sustainable patterns of development, Local Plans should seek to ensure that land and buildings are used efficiently. Particular emphasis should be given to:
- Securing a more balanced pattern of housing and employment development;
 - Encouraging higher densities for housing development within urban areas;
 - The reduction of on-site car parking having regard to the type of development, its potential users and its location in terms of its accessibility to a range of travel modes and the availability of alternative parking arrangements; and
 - Designs and layouts which use a site or building effectively.

The provision of social and physical infrastructure

- 1.2.32 Development should only proceed where there is an appropriate level of supporting physical and social infrastructure. Such infrastructure may include water supply, drainage, sewage and other utilities, education, sport and recreation, public transport, community and healthcare facilities. Planning policy states that it is reasonable to expect developers to provide or contribute to infrastructure requirements where it is clearly related and necessary to support and facilitate proposed development.

Corporate influences

- 1.2.33 As one of the District Council's main corporate policy documents, there is a need to ensure the Local Plan is consistent with other strategies and policies of the District Council and that it reflects the District Council's wider Vision for the District.
- 1.2.34 The District Council has adopted the following corporate purpose and vision, which have provided a benchmark for the development of the Local Plan:

The Council's purpose is to:
"improve the quality of life for everyone in the District"

Our vision is to:
"make a difference for the good of the District".

- 1.2.35 Preparation of the Local Plan has regard to all four of the Council's objectives, but specifically the intention:

"to improve the economic, social and environmental quality of life of the local community in a way that is sustainable, inclusive and contributes to community safety and development".

- 1.2.36 The following strategies have been important to the framing of Local Plan policies:

The District Housing Strategy

- 1.2.37 The District Council's Housing Strategy is prepared annually through a comprehensive and on-going consultative process. The aim of the strategy is two-fold: firstly to identify the housing needs of local people for additional housing (including the need for care and support and to improve existing housing stock) and secondly to set clear objectives and targets for meeting those needs.

- 1.2.38 The priorities for the District identified in the Housing Strategy include facilitating and encouraging the provision of affordable housing of all types of tenure to satisfy local housing need, by working in partnership with housing associations and other providers to attract investment and suitable development in the District.

The Economic Development Strategy

- 1.2.39 The District Council has produced an 'Economic Development Strategy' entitled 'Be Inspired - An Economic Strategy for the Malvern Hills' which establishes the economic objectives for the area up to 2010. The strategy includes the following over-arching Vision Statement:

"Our Vision is for a District where, by 2010,

The high tech, manufacturing and visitor economy sectors will have expanded and our three District centres, rural villages and key business districts will be vibrant and prosperous.

The majority of the jobs in the District will be defined as quality jobs; people will have the necessary skills to meet the needs of the local and regional economy and will be best placed to take up local employment and opportunities.

All of the District will have access to broadband allowing people to work flexibly and will be able to travel to work and learning easily and affordably by public transport.

The District will be acknowledged as somewhere which recognises and encourages excellence, quality, innovation and creativity".

- 1.2.40 The Strategy also identifies five key interventions relating to enhancing the image of the District, the sustainable development of the District's land and premises, development of virtual and transport networks, business and community support and maximising opportunities for all members of the community to achieve their full potential.

- 1.2.41 The Local Plan is an important vehicle through which the objectives of the Vision Statement can be met. Specifically it can:

- Identify land for employment development;
- Provide guidance on the types of businesses and commercial activities, which will be appropriate in different locations; and
- Reflect the varying employment and economic need of parts of the District through the development of tailored land use policies.

Community Safety Strategy

- 1.2.42 The District Council has also produced a Community Safety Strategy in partnership with Worcestershire County Council and West Mercia Constabulary. The Strategy reflects the duty placed upon the District Council and others under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to reduce crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour and increase the feeling of safety within the District. Although Malvern Hills District is still one of the safest places in the U.K in which to live, work and visit, crime and disorder can still be a problem.
- 1.2.43 The Local Plan can assist in the realisation of the objectives set out in the Community Safety Strategy by ensuring that all aspects of public safety are carefully considered in new development proposals.

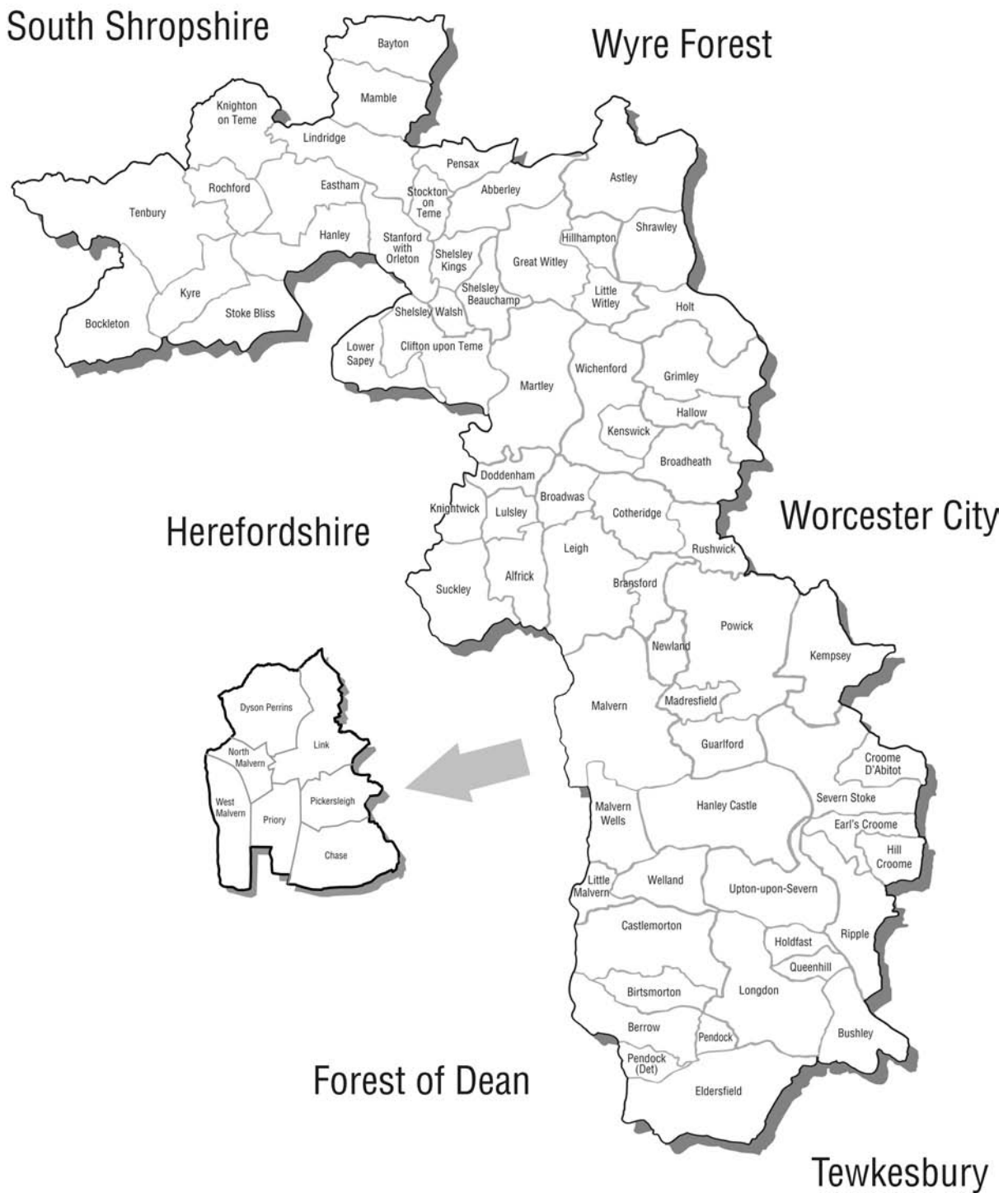
Community-based plans

- 1.2.44 A significant number of Parish and Town Council's across Malvern Hills District have commenced work upon the preparation of Parish and other Community-based plans. The District Council recognises that such plans can provide both an important context for future reviews of the Malvern Hills District Community Strategy and a mechanism for its implementation. Furthermore, such plans can also provide an important link between the statutory development system and specific local circumstances and issues. The District Council therefore welcomes the production of Parish and other Community-based plans.
- 1.2.45 The District Council also recognises that Parish Plans, Village Design Statements and similar initiatives can provide useful detailed information related to the character and fabric of towns and villages which can assist in making development control decisions and promote greater community involvement in the planning process as a whole. In particular local communities can provide information related to the effects of demolitions and infilling on the character of settlements, design, important views and spaces, significant groups of buildings in the streetscene and appropriate densities for new development. The District Council anticipates that Parish and Town Council's are likely to seek adoption of local Community-based plans as Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD). The District Council has produced guidelines to ensure that such plans are compatible with national guidance, the development plan framework and that they are capable of meeting criteria for their adoption as SPD by the District Council.

Sustainability Appraisal of the Plan

- 1.2.46 The plan is based on the principles of sustainable development and appraisals have been carried out as the Plan has progressed. The sustainability appraisal has helped to ensure that the plan has taken into account the principles of sustainable development.
- 1.2.47 The sustainability appraisal consists of two stages:
- Stage One – Compatibility of Objectives**
- a consistency analysis to test whether the Plan's aims are compatible with the Council's Community Strategy, Priority Plans and the Plan's aims itself.
- Stage Two – Strategy and Policy Appraisal**
- the assessment of individual Local Plan policies against a set of criteria which reflect the full range of issues encompassed within the concept of sustainability.
- 1.2.48 The sustainability appraisal is outlined within the Local Plan.

Figure 1.1- Local Plan Coverage



1.3 Malvern Hills District in Context

Location

- 1.3.1 Malvern Hills District is located along the western boundary of Worcestershire adjoining the counties of Herefordshire, Gloucestershire and Shropshire. The district boundary passes along the western fringe of the city of Worcester and also close to the towns of Tewkesbury in the south and Stourport-on-Severn in the north. The River Severn runs north to south along the eastern edge of the District and the River Teme runs from the north-west of the district to join the River Severn close to Worcester in the east. The M5 motorway is situated to the east of the district boundary and the city of Worcester and the M50 motorway passes through the district to the south.
- 1.3.2 The district is served by an east – west rail connection, which links Worcester and Hereford. Two passenger railway stations are located in Malvern and Malvern Link.
- 1.3.3 Located to the south west of the West Midlands region the district has many social and economic links with the west midlands conurbation such as the Birmingham / Worcestershire High Technology Belt. Yet it is also closely linked to the rural life and economic performance of the region through its ties with the rural west and the Marches area, as typified by inclusion of part of the district in the Rural Regeneration Zone and the influence of agriculture on its landscape, local economy and heritage.

The District

- 1.3.4 The new Malvern Hills District was created in April 1998 when the county of Hereford and Worcester (formed in 1974) was once again divided into the two separate counties of Herefordshire and Worcestershire. At this time the Tenbury Wells area, formally administered by Leominster District Council, was brought within Worcestershire to comprise part of the new Malvern Hills District administrative area.
- 1.3.5 Malvern Hills District adjoins a number of local authority boundaries including Herefordshire Council, Worcester City Council, Tewkesbury Borough Council and the District Councils of South Shropshire, Wyre Forest, Wychavon and the Forest of Dean. See Figure 1.1 Local Plan coverage.
- 1.3.6 The District is largely rural in character and covers an area of 57,710 hectares (142,000 acres 223 square miles) (2001 Census) and had a population of 73,750 in 2003. The main centres of population are the towns of Malvern (population 30,900) Tenbury Wells (population 3,000) and Upton-upon-Severn (2,900).
- 1.3.7 In addition to the principal towns, there is a rich and distinctive variety of villages and settlements across the district many of which include important Conservation Areas, fine Listed Buildings and features of local interest.
- 1.3.8 Despite sustained additional housing growth within the district overall population growth has been relatively low. The ageing profile of the existing population, access to affordable housing and appropriate employment for all sectors of the community are key issues addressed by the Local Plan.
- 1.3.9 The District workforce comprises 10.8% of the total workforce in Worcestershire – the smallest proportion of all the districts within the county. In terms of the types of employment within the District, 35.0% of the workforce are employed in non-marketed services such as health and educational services, public administration and defence and 25.1% are employed in distribution and transport. 16.9% are employed in manufacturing and 13.9% in business and other services.

- 1.3.10 The local workforce is highly skilled particularly in mechanical engineering, electrical engineering and the sciences. The largest employer is QinetiQ, based in Malvern, which employs approximately 2,500 people. Adjacent to this site is the Malvern Hills Science Park, which continues to grow and allows for fledging high technology businesses to reach their potential.
- 1.3.11 Of the six county Districts within Worcestershire, Malvern Hills has the greatest proportion of small businesses employing 1-10 people with 87% of workplaces within the District employing less than 10 people. Only 0.8% of all workplaces employ more than 100 employees.
- 1.3.12 Around 1.9 million visitors came to the Malvern Hills District in 2000, comprising around 1.7 million day visitors and 0.2 million overnight visitors. Tourism plays an important part in the local economy with over 100,000 people visiting the District's Tourist Information Centres each year. The total expenditure of visitors is estimated at over £59 million.
- 1.3.13 Visitor attractions around Malvern include the Malvern Hills, Malvern Theatres and the Three Counties Showground, which hosts a variety of major shows and events throughout the year. Tenbury Wells and Upton-upon-Severn boast many popular events such as the Upton Jazz Festival and have their own attractions.
- 1.3.14 The Malvern Hills were designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in 1959 and comprise the most prominent feature of the district's landscape. This nine-mile stretch of the hills extends from Bromsberrow in the south to Malvern in the north and is surrounded by extensive green swathes of common land. Further to the north are the Abberley Hills and the Teme Valley which represent particularly fine assets within the varied and high quality landscape which contributes to the high environmental quality of the district. The District possesses a wide range of important habitats and a significant number of formally designated wildlife sites, including 47 SSSIs, wholly or partly located in the District, covering 3.3% of the District area, one Local Nature Reserve and numerous Special Wildlife Sites.
- 1.3.15 The effects of flooding upon the district are significant. Problems are direct such as those experienced by Tenbury and Upton, and also indirect such as the effects of flooding on reducing accessibility to the district via the main road network with perceived implications for economic growth and investment.

Malvern

- 1.3.16 The urban area of Malvern has developed from a number of individual settlements located to the north, east and west of the Malvern Hills. There was little development in the area until the mid-nineteenth century when the first water-cure establishment was opened and the arrival of the railway, which resulted in rapid expansion of the urban area based on the environmental attractions of living and visiting the spa town which for the purposes of the Local Plan includes Malvern Town, Malvern Wells and West Malvern as indicated on Proposals Map Inset No 1 - Malvern.
- 1.3.17 Today Malvern is dominated by the backdrop of the Malvern Hills and retains much of its Victorian character of large individual houses set in landscaped gardens along tree lined roads. The town's original growth has a distinctive and identifiable character when viewed from the hills.
- 1.3.18 Malvern is the largest town as well as the administrative centre of the district. It also has important educational establishments and service functions.
- 1.3.19 Much of the settlement of Malvern is designated as Conservation Area with four contiguous Conservation Areas north to south through the settlement.

Upton-upon-Severn

- 1.3.20 Upton-upon-Severn is a town of early foundation, which developed on land above the seasonal flood plain and around an early crossing point on the River Severn. During medieval times it became a centre for providing daily and weekly markets and meeting the service needs of the surrounding rural area. Its location on a navigable section of the River Severn made it an important inland port. Constraints imposed by the flood plain have resulted in Upton developing into a compact town with a unique character, displaying a variety of architectural styles.
- 1.3.21 The use of the river has changed in recent times and it is now a navigable waterway associated with the leisure and tourism industry. Today, the river with the associated marina at Upton-upon-Severn, attracts many day visitors to the town.

Tenbury Wells

- 1.3.22 In the north west of the District, Tenbury Wells lies on the south bank of the River Teme and the boundary with Shropshire follows the river at this point. Thomas Telford constructed the bridge, which crosses the river into the adjoining settlement of Burford in the nineteenth century.
- 1.3.23 The name 'Tenbury' derives from "fortified place by the River Teme". It is a long established settlement recorded in the Domesday Book of 1086. It was a market town in medieval times and in the nineteenth century, a coaching stop on one of the main London to North Wales routes. The medieval street pattern remains a strong element of the town, which manifests typically narrow winding roads and paths. However, extensive mid-19th century rebuilding now gives the town much of its character. Tenbury Wells is also known as "the town in the orchard" and contains many Victorian buildings including the Brine Baths and the Pump Rooms which is the only British example of Chinese Neo Gothic architecture.
- 1.3.24 Today, the generous provision of public open space, the River Teme and numerous local attractions makes the town popular with day-trippers, especially during the summer months.

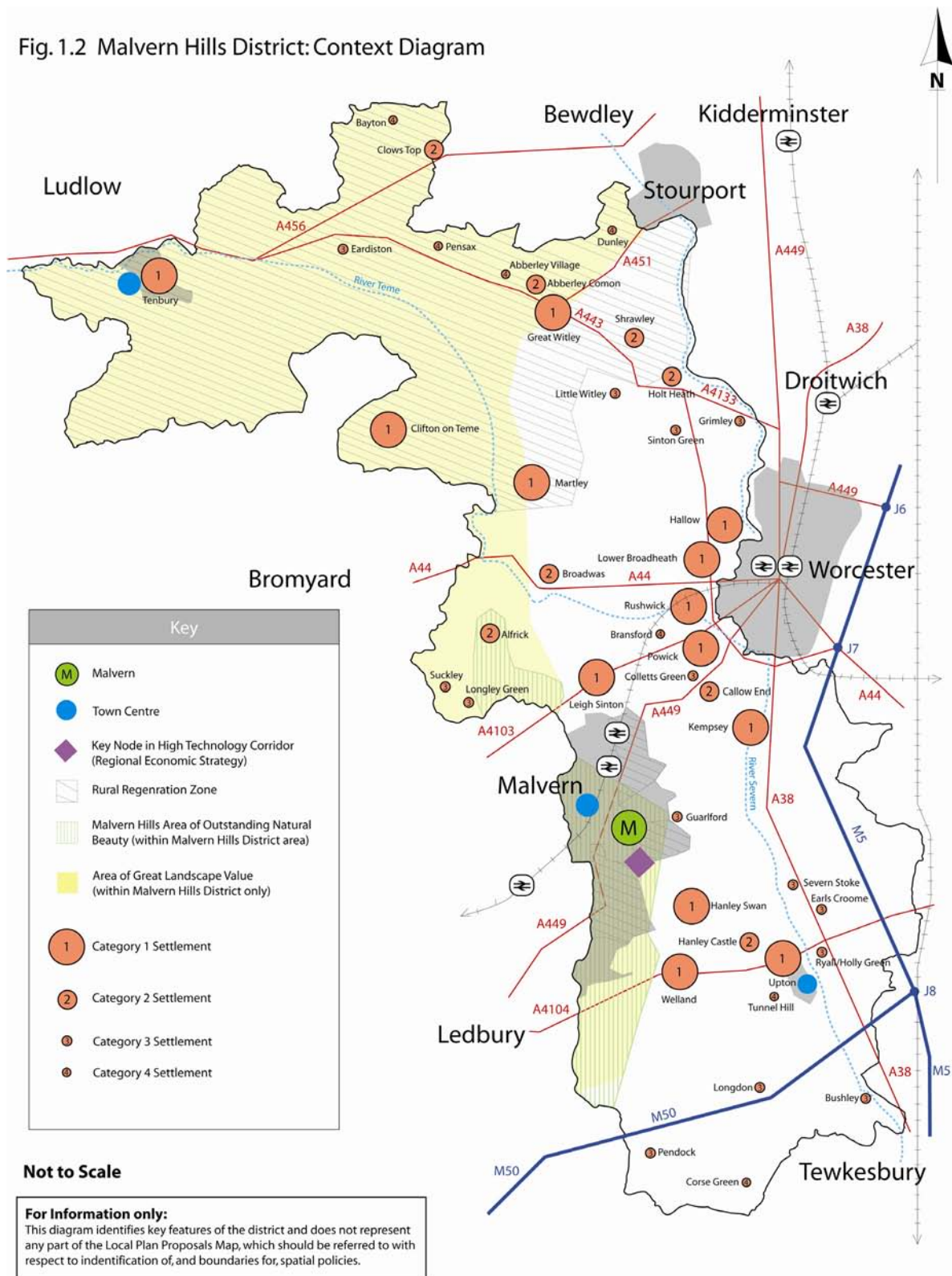
The People

- 1.3.25 The population of the District was 73,750 in 2003. 20.1% of the population are within the 0-17 age group, 55.6% are within the 18-64 age group and 24.3% are aged 65 or over which is slightly above the national average for England and Wales which currently stands at 19.3%.
- 1.3.26 Ethnic minority groups only make up 1.4% of the District's population. Unemployment in the District, from monthly County Economic Summary stands at 1.5% in March 2006 (compared with 2.4% in Worcestershire and 3.4% nationally). Only 0.5% of the District's workforce is classed as being long term unemployed. The number of married households within the District has dropped by over 20% from 61% to 40% since the 1991 census.

Context Diagram

- 1.3.27 Figure 1.2 Malvern Hills: Context Diagram provides an illustration of some of the key features of the Malvern Hills District which are described above.

Fig. 1.2 Malvern Hills District: Context Diagram



1.4 Local Plan Objectives and Spatial Strategy

- 1.4.1 A series of objectives have been identified for the Local Plan, which have influenced the content of the Local Plan's policies and proposals. The objectives are a combination of social, economic and environmental objectives and reflect the Council's long term vision for the District.
- 1.4.2 The objectives carry forward the theme of sustainable development established by the Worcestershire County Structure Plan. Policies and proposals of the Local Plan will each relate to one or more of the following objectives.
- 1.4.3 However, there is a need to translate broad objectives into the specific context of Malvern Hills District. Consequently, to guide policy development a series of spatial requirements have also been established which reflect policies at the regional, strategic and local levels and which are relevant to this District.

Local Plan Objectives

1.4.4 The Development Strategy

1. Seek to locate development in areas which will minimise the need to travel.
2. Encourage development which will help retain and enhance the identity, character and vitality of settlements.
3. Guide new development to sustainable locations which reflect the role of Malvern as the main focus for future development and the needs of rural areas.
4. Promote the reuse of previously developed land and buildings for development particularly in urban areas.
5. Protect the open countryside from sporadic and inappropriate development.
6. Ensure the supply of suitable land and buildings to meet the District's strategic housing requirement of about 3,900 new dwellings to 2011 through the application of the 'plan, monitor, manage' approach to housing land supply.
7. Meet the housing requirements of the population of the District through the provision of a range of dwelling types, sizes, densities and tenures including general market, affordable and social housing in a way which protects the environment and makes the most effective use of the existing settlement patterns.
8. Ensure that sufficient employment land is identified and available to meet the District's strategic employment requirement of about 55 hectares to 2011.
9. Ensure there is a range of employment sites and premises available across the District to provide a balanced portfolio of employment opportunities and meet the varying requirements of new and existing businesses.

Economic Prosperity

10. Sustain and enhance the vitality and viability of the District's town centres of Malvern, Upton upon Severn and Tenbury Wells and to protect shopping facilities located in district and local centres, together with those in rural areas.
11. Encourage greater diversification of the rural economy.
12. Encourage sustainable tourist development which reconciles economic growth with the conservation of the environment.

Sustainable Transport

13. Seek a more sustainable and balanced transport system based upon reduced dependence on the private car and increased emphasis on public transport, community transport, cycling and walking.
14. Improve the levels of accessibility within and to the District via sustainable modes of transport.

Quality Of Life

15. Enhance biodiversity and protect from damaging development and land use activity, important environmental, landscape, townscape and historic features and characteristics.
16. Ensure the integration of development within the landscape in order to protect and enhance essential landscape characteristics and features.
17. Encourage the design of new development to be of a high quality which respects and enhances local character and distinctiveness.
18. Protect and expand amenity areas and open spaces, and access to them, in both town and country.
19. Minimise the pollution of air, water and land.

Community Needs

20. Work towards a better balance between housing, employment, social and community facilities within settlements.
21. Resist the loss of community, social and leisure facilities and of open space unless there are proposals for appropriate alternative provision.
22. Meet the needs of the local community and pay regard to the needs of specialist groups such as the elderly and the disabled, measures for crime prevention and ancillary requirements such as parking provision and open space.
23. Seek to reduce crime, the fear of crime and anti-social behaviour by introducing crime prevention as a material consideration into the land-use and development planning process.
24. Ensure that appropriate community infrastructure is secured with new developments.

Spatial Strategy for Malvern Hills District

- 1.4.5 The following are seen as being key components of a spatial strategy for Malvern Hills District and are carried forward through the policies of the Plan.
1. Establish Malvern as the main urban area and as the focus for strategic requirements for housing, employment and related development using brownfield sites first.
 2. Meeting local needs for housing, employment, community facilities and services in the countryside in sustainable rural settlements.
 3. Provide a focus for rural renaissance through the Rural Regeneration Zone.
 4. Address opportunities associated with the Central Technology Belt at Malvern.
 5. Protect the open countryside and the character, settings and identities of the district's settlements.
 6. Promote a hierarchy of retail locations, which serves wider needs in the recognised Town Centres of Great Malvern, Tenbury and Upton and local needs within district / local centres and sustainable rural settlements.
 7. Promote the role of Tenbury and Upton as the focus for retail, commercial and service facilities to serve the rural areas.
 8. Have regard to the need to protect and enhance the special qualities of the Malvern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
 9. Acknowledge the role of Worcester as a strategic centre but prevent the spread of inappropriate development into the open countryside and coalescence with adjacent rural settlements.
 10. Identify, protect and enhance those areas and features, which contribute to the quality of life and high environmental character of the district and historical/cultural heritage.
 11. Locate development where there are opportunities to reduce the need to travel and maximise access to public transport, such as locations accessible to Malvern's rail interchanges and where regular and frequent bus services also serve recognised settlements.
 12. Reflect the precautionary principle of avoiding development within flood plain and specifically along the strategic river corridors associated with the Teme and Severn Rivers.
 13. Promote Biodiversity within areas considered to be appropriate for enhancement at the regional level.