SWDP Parishes Committee meeting with SWDP representatives October 12th 2021

Introductions

Context and Purpose

Challenges and Questions

- Worcestershire Parkway Town and the rail focussed Strategy
- Increasing density through Regeneration and delivering targets
- Sustainability
- Achievability and Delivery

Communication and Engagement

Context and Purpose

The SWDP Parishes Committee established in August 2021 to provide joint representations across Parishes impacted by the proposed Worcestershire Parkway 'Garden Town' development of 5,000 dwellings by 2041 and option for a further 5,000 dwellings by 2061.

The Committee consists of representatives from Stoulton, Drakes Broughton and Wadborough with Pirton, Whittington, Norton-Juxta-Kempsey and White Ladies Aston, Parish Councils.

The Joint Parish Committee believe that the proposed Worcestershire Parkway New Town development is not appropriate in terms of the number of dwellings, the land that will be consumed and the timescale and impact of delivery of the development to achieve the final outcome.

Since the concept was first proposed COVID 19 and its aftermath has, and will continue to, significantly change how people will live their lives.

The Climate crisis, whilst always high on people's agenda, has also become more critical since this scheme was first proposed and it is our contention that insufficient analysis and evidence was sought through the Sustainability Review to support WP as the preferred option.

Government policy on planning reforms appears to be changing with a stronger emphasis away from developing on rural land.

Worcestershire Parkway Town and the Rail Focussed Strategy

The adoption of a rail focussed strategy followed feedback from Worcestershire County Council that the cost of road infrastructure for the previous Strategy would make it non-viable.

This led to the development at WP station to be a preferred option. Large swathes of potential land for the development of a New Town were ignored as they were not located near to a rail station.

The SWDP stresses the role of localisation and how people can live and work within the area reducing car usage. At the same time it highlights promotion of Worcestershire Parkway Rail station and siting a Park and Ride which is clearly aimed at brining in more cars from a wide catchment in order for people to travel out of the area.

Given its location the proposed town will inevitably attract people who wish to or need to commute by car to a wide catchment area and will attract businesses that will benefit from the road systems and inward commuters. Worcester Parkway has all the attributes of a commuter town and could just as easily be labelled a 'motorway based' New Town.

- **What is the evidential basis for concluding that this strategy would reduce car usage to the point that infrastructure costs would be sufficiently mitigated – how will it be counter to the expected growth in traffic over the coming decades?**

- **Will the evidence currently being gathered include a detailed assessment of the future volumes of vehicle traffic (both private vehicles and commercial vehicles, online delivery traffic etc.) and the need to upgrade surrounding roads, including J7 and the surrounding roads into and out of the proposed town in order to absorb the increase in traffic volumes?**

- **If the previous approach would be unviable due to costs that would be borne by developers what assurances are there that developers would bear the cost of WP road infrastructure?**

- **What engagement has SWDP had with Highways and with Worcestershire County Council with respect to this issue and how will road infrastructure and upgrades be funded?**

Increasing Densities through Regeneration and delivering targets

The Issues and Options consultation also identified Increasing Densities through Regeneration as a preferred strategy but highlighted it as not being sufficient to meet all of South Worcestershire development.

The SWDP Review document published in Autumn 2019 was also dismissive of the opportunity for significant numbers of dwellings (potential of less than 1000) in Worcester City Centre.

The Worcester City Centre Masterplan adopted in July 2019 highlighted the opportunity for c.3200 dwellings over the next 20 years identifying a number of potential development sites.

These were published pre COVID. Since then there the imperative for the change of use of Town Centres in relation to the proportions of retail, commercial, recreational and residential property has been brought into sharp focus.

Government policy on planning reforms appears to be changing with respect to building on rural land with renewed focus on developing on land reuse and brownfield site development

- **There appears to be a discrepancy between the SWDP and Worcester City Master Plan - are these plans aligned?**
- **Will the SWDP review commit for a full reassessment of the long-term opportunities for the refactoring of town centres within Worcestershire (beyond merely regeneration of currently underused or vacant sites) to establish the true opportunity for residential developments over the next 20 years?**

We understand that Malvern cannot demonstrate the government requirement to be able to identify a 5 year housing land supply and an agreement was made that they can share the supply with Wychavon through the SWDP process

- **It is a Government requirement for every Local Authorities to have a 5 year housing land supply. Can you confirm that Malvern does have such a supply and if not why not and is that lack of demonstrable housing supply why Malvern is trying to push their supply issues onto Wychavon through the SWDP process .**

Sustainability

We have serious concerns regarding the Sustainability Appraisal Report and its apparent bias towards the WP development. We raised these when we compiled our response but have yet to have had any response back.

The Global Climate crisis is the largest issue facing humanity today. Despite this, and the availability of a global industry and science into measuring and assessing Carbon costs, only a very general assessment of Climate impact was made in the report with no data based comparison measurements made between the sites relating to their development.

One obvious omission was the cost of removing large areas of arable farm and resulting in increased Carbon cost (air miles and sea miles) of importing grain from abroad. This will be a year on year Carbon cost as well as impacting UK food security.

The scoring system of the Sustainability Report did not take into account that well within the timescale of phase 1 delivery all cars will be electric.

- **As part of its technical review will SWDP commit to undertaking a more detailed assessment and comparison of the net Carbon cost of the proposed developments both in their construction and post completion.**
- **Will SWDP also seek to establish the impact of the arable land that will be lost?**
- **Will SWDP undertake to revisit the Sustainability Review and address these concerns and those raised against the report previously?**

Achievability and Delivery

The timescale for delivery will result in the area becoming a development site for natural lifetime of a large proportion of our parishioners, particularly with respect to Phase 2. This will potentially have a significant impact on people's lives.

There is a risk that once committed to, the quality of this development and the provision of facilities beyond houses and business premises could be seriously compromised if sufficient funding isn't available, if developers do not fully meet requirements, if national planning policy changes.

- **What is the planned phasing of the development in terms of infrastructure, town centre facilities, schools etc.**
- **What engagement is there between Wychavon, Worcestershire County Council and other councils regarding the delivery of this proposal**
- **What are the commercial arrangements with developers, in particular with respect to funding arrangements – developer and private funding v. public funding**
- **How will Wychavon prevent piecemeal development by a myriad of different developers developing what they want at different times?**
- **What are the plans to mitigate the impact on people and on the wildlife and ecosystems throughout the development phases**

Continued…….

Achievability and Delivery

- If this is rail based then at what point will rail services be improved with a second Cotswold line track, electrification, full Cross Country Services? What engagement is Wychavon having with the rail authorities?

- Who will be maintaining the public infrastructure – cycle tracks, walkways, green spaces etc.

- How will the physical barriers of rail tracks, motorway, main roads be overcome to generate to 'local community feel that has been described and how will they be funded?

- As this is essentially a whole new town will there be a new town authority like there was in the past. Telford, Redditch, Corby, Cwmbran etc - all had New Town Development Corporations, which had planning and development powers to ensure the whole town was built as one entity and complete control over the entire development?

Communication and Engagement

- Developing a Communication Strategy
- The Confidentiality Issue
- Future meetings