

Memorandum of Understanding



Worcestershire
We're Open for Business

Action Plan

November 2012

Produced in Partnership with:

Worcestershire County Council, Bromsgrove District Council, Malvern Hills District Council, Redditch Borough Council, Worcester City District Council, Wyre Forest District Council, Wychavon District Council, Worcestershire LEP.

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A Memorandum of Understanding for planning and enterprise in Worcestershire Action Plan MOU

Foreword

In December 2011, the Worcestershire Partnership, through its Place Shaping Group, signed a Planning Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Worcestershire LEP (WLEP). The purpose of the MOU is to create a business-friendly planning approach which contributes towards Worcestershire being “Open for Business” and to create a competitive economic edge in the UK and globally. We should not wait for investment to come to us; we should encourage businesses to come to Worcestershire and to stay here, not least because of the excellent services provided by the county's Local Planning Authorities.

There have been a lot of changes since the MOU was produced in December 2011, most notably:

- New Government legislation and policy, (e.g. the National Planning Policy Framework and the Localism Act)
- Greater clarity on the WLEP priorities for planning and infrastructure through their current business planning process.

The re-launched MOU and Action Plan takes account of these changes.

The Worcestershire Partnership and the WLEP are agreed on the need to work together for the economic recovery of Worcestershire. All our economic challenges, in some degree or other, will need to be addressed through the planning system, for example, by the allocation of employment land, and the consideration of planning applications.

The Localism Act has introduced a new statutory planning system which we must use effectively to shape new development in Worcestershire for the next 20 years. It is crucial that both the planning authorities and the business and development sector understand what role they have to play in making the new system work. This is why we have adopted this MOU, to set out clearly the local authorities', WLEP's and applicants', roles in delivering this agenda.

How we will work together

The Place Shaping Group (PSG) brings together Worcestershire's local authorities and major public sector service providers to address the needs of the county's diverse communities. These needs are articulated through the Sustainable Community Strategy. In this work, we complement the WLEP's focus on opportunities for business growth, jobs and enterprise. The two groups have cross public/private sector membership to ensure full cooperation and coordination at policy making level. Joint support arrangements, led by the Chamber of Commerce and the County Council, are also in place.

Each organisation has its own priorities – the LEP's are very much economy and skills focused, while the PSG has a wider remit to pursue social, environmental and economic well-being. We are developing effective ways of highlighting Worcestershire's development and infrastructure investment priorities, focussing on those priorities on which we are both agreed. In this way, we can bring all our collective resources and influence to bear on a single set of Core Priorities which

will form the basis for the effective promotion of Worcestershire and the attraction of inward investment.

A project board has been set up to ensure that implementation of the MOU and Planning charter is undertaken through this Action Plan, as detailed below. The project board is led by Worcestershire County Council with representatives from the Local Planning Authorities and the LEP. This Action Plan will be reviewed six months after it has been endorsed to establish what has been achieved.

Vision

Our Vision is of a Worcestershire that is Open for Business¹, where sustainable development is welcomed. We see a county where planning authorities go above and beyond to retain and attract investment, providing clear and helpful advice to developers to guide them through an efficient planning process.

Priority Actions

Detailed below are priority actions for WPOG and WLEP.

Standards & Performance: us and you/ Local Planning Authority and businesses

Issue	Progress/Timetable	Actioned by
To ensure that all local authority staff have access to appropriate training.	WPOG training programme 2012/13 for Local Planning Authority (LPA) staff in place.	WPOG

¹ Providing an environment where local businesses can thrive and new businesses are welcomed, barriers to growth are removed, skills are improved and where the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), council and businesses work together to increase economic prosperity.

Partnership: Working together to drive forward sustainable development

Issue	Progress/Timetable	Actioned by
Investigation if any 'hold ups' exist in the planning system e.g. LPA, PINS, Statutory consultees.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LEP to report back to group on LEP workshops that were held in May. By October 2012. 	WLEP
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WPOG to report back on findings from survey Monitoring Report on the MOU in time to inform Chief Executive Panel meeting on the 23.11.12. 	WPOG
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify from the Worcestershire Local Investment Plan whether 'planning' is responsible for sites not being brought forward, on a six monthly basis. 	WPOG

Assist, advise and support

Issue	Progress	Actioned by
Prioritise the processing of planning applications that will deliver economic regeneration	WPOG to provide definition as to what constitutes economic development/regeneration (definition to include housing).	WPOG
	Delivery of future landscape conference (on the 14.11.12) to include economic development item for discussion.	WPOG

Timely Decision Making

Issue	Progress	Actioned by
Work with statutory consultees to ensure that they submit responses in a timely manner.	Investigate how to build stronger relationships with statutory consultees to ensure they respond in a timely manner.	WPOG/WLEP

Helping us to help you

Issue	Progress	Actioned by
Ensuring that local business and developers are aware of the MOU,	Promote the MOU and charter at the LEP conference on 9th	WLEP

what to expect from it and what it expects from them.	November.	
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Performance /Monitoring and Implementation of this Memorandum of Understanding

Issue	Progress	Actioned by
To establish what has been achieved since the release of the MOU in December 2011.	WPOG to report back on findings from survey Monitoring Report on the MOU to Chief Executive Panel meeting.	WPOG

Further Issues and Actions

Detailed below are further actions to be undertaken, during the 6 month period once the MOU has been launched.

Issue	Action/Progress	Actioned by
Standards & Performance: us and you/ Local Planning Authority and businesses		
	Annual review of performance of Local Planning Authorities, in applying MOU.	WPOG and WLEP
To ensure that all local authority staff have access to appropriate training.	To investigate for WPOG training programme 2013/14, through the LEP and WPOG, any particular training issues that would be of benefit to LPAs.	WLEP/WPOG
To provide opportunities for local business and their agents to have access to appropriate training.	To investigate whether LPAs can provide local business and their agents appropriate training and briefings to aid them in the creation of sustainable development.	Training requirement to be identified and undertaken by WLEP/WPOG
Examining if we need to improve our customer service approach and if a need is demonstrated, how we can provide exceptional customer service.	LPAs to implement customer feedback sheets following pre-application advice	WPOG
Partnership: Working together to drive forward sustainable development		
Ensuring the LEP is involved, effectively and efficiently, at each stage of the plan making process.	To establish what constitutes good practice for involvement of the WLEP. Dissemination of good practice.	WLEP/WPOG
Promote the benefits of	Develop programme of	WLEP

<p>operating within the spirit of the MOU to affiliated business, representation bodies, individual development interests and local authorities.</p>	<p>promotion for the MOU to affiliated business, representation bodies, individual development interests.</p> <p>All 7 Local Authorities to adopt MOU.</p> <p>Local Authorities to promote MOU to Local Authority staff and customers.</p> <p>WCC to produce leaflet detailing good customer feedback from planning applicants.</p> <p>Local authorities to include link to the WLEP webpage.</p>	<p>WPOG</p> <p>WPOG</p> <p>WPOG</p> <p>WPOG</p>
<p>Assist, advise and support</p>		
<p>Provide information about the planning process on website, directing applicants to the relevant local authority.</p> <p>Lack of consistency of key information such as contact details and charges.</p>	<p>WLEP to include on website information on the planning processes and links to the relevant Local Authority planning web pages.</p> <p>Local authorities to ensure websites are up to date with relevant information regarding submitting a planning application, pre-application charging and contact details.</p> <p>Pull together in one location current charges for pre-application discussions for all 7 LPAs.</p>	<p>WLEP</p> <p>WPOG</p> <p>WCC already include information regarding the planning process and links to other local authority websites.</p> <p>WPOG</p>
<p>Make applicant aware of information/expertise that the LPA can provide to assist with the planning application process.</p>	<p>To update WCC website to reflect information that Worcestershire County Council can provide to the applicant on the natural environment, i.e.</p>	<p>WPOG</p>

	protected species.	
Investigate the possibility of using more Planning Policy Agreements (PPAs) to aid the developer and LPA.	Investigate the possibility of using more PPAs to aid the developer and LPA.	WPOG
Timely Decision Making		
Commitment to turn around applications on single buildings and development up to x sqm within 8 weeks and to process more complex or contentious applications within 12 weeks.	To provide definitions of what applications would be determined under an 8 week and 12 week turnaround.	WPOG
Planning authorities to take on responsibility to co-ordinate and deliver a joined up view from statutory authorities.	To draw up paper detailing how this might be undertaken	WPOG
Helping us to help you		
Ensure that all information needed to make a valid application is submitted.	Local Authorities to have up to date validation documents in place.	WPOG
Performance /Monitoring and Implementation of this Memorandum of Agreement		
Obtain buy-in to the MOU	Each LPA to endorse/adopt MOU and Planning charter.	WPOG/WLEP
Establish what has been achieved since the re-launched MOU in November 2012.	Report on actions achieved in this Action Plan 6 months after the re-launch of the MOU.	WPOG/WLEP

