

# Economic Development Needs Assessment

## TOPIC PAPER

### 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. This Topic Paper provides context for the proposed approach to the identification of requirement and provision of employment land outlined in the EDNA Addendum 2024, as set out within the South Worcestershire Development Plan Review (SWDPR).
- 1.2. Specifically, it sets out why the [EDNA 2022 \(ECO1\)](#), submitted as part of the [Examination Library](#) in support of the SWDPR, was considered by the South Worcestershire Councils (SWCs) to require an update and provides a summary of how that update was undertaken.

### 2. NATIONAL AND LOCAL POLICY CONTEXT

- 2.1. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2021), under which the SWDPR was prepared, sets out in Section 6, the approach to building a strong, competitive economy. It encourages planning policies and decisions to help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Further, that significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development.
- 2.2. Specifically, and in the context of the more rural districts of Malvern Hills and Wychavon, Paragraph 85 states that, 'Planning policies and decisions should recognise that sites to meet local business and community needs in rural areas may have to be found adjacent to or beyond existing settlements, and in locations that are not well served by public transport.' The aforementioned would be considered against the impact of the local road network. This is particularly pertinent to the more rural District of Malvern Hills.
- 2.3. The SWDPR sets out at Policy SWDPR 02A the employment land need (2021 – 2041) and proposed provision across locations, detailed across Section 8: Allocations, policies SWDPR 51 to 63. The identified gross base employment land need in the EDNA 2022 was 280.40 ha (350.50 ha when a 5 year buffer is included, as was recommended by the consultants). Policy SWDPR 02 confirms as at 31.03.2021 that 71.75 ha had already been committed across extant, but not implemented planning permissions. The commitment figure has been updated in the Addendum to 59.01 ha (as at 31.03.2023),

and officers would propose to reflect this update in SWDPR 02A as modification. The reduction in the commitment figure is as a result of permissions expiring and also being completed and absorbed into the completions data. The updated employment land need calculations have also accounted for completions between 2021 (the start of the forecast period) and 2023.

### **3. THE REASON FOR UPDATING THE EDNA**

- 3.1. Towards the end of 2022, the SWCs undertook a data cleanse of employment records. The data cleanse took place as a housekeeping exercise. Each record was reviewed, and the information updated as required.
- 3.2. Any discrepancies in data were corrected, and data quality checking undertaken. The cleansed data has been used to inform the update to the EDNA Addendum and has therefore resulted in an updated requirement figure the SWCs consider to be more robust.
- 3.3. Alongside the data cleanse, the SWCs also considered the post-Covid economic landscape. The reader should note that separately, but also relating to the economy of South Worcestershire, a [2024 update](#) (EXAM 10) on the [Retail Study 2020](#) (ECO12) has also been submitted as supporting evidence for the SWDPR.

### **4. THE PROCESS**

- 4.1. As with the EDNA 2022 methodology, the need arising from the EDNA Addendum 2024 is calculated using historic completions data. In the Addendum, the SWCs took the decision to reduce the time period from 2011 to 2023 (as opposed to 2006 – 2021), which provides a realistic projection, as the SWC have more certainty over the quality of this cleansed and more recent data, and consider it to be a robust dataset against which to project future requirements.
- 4.2. Using the cleansed data, the gross base need across South Worcestershire is 257.40 ha (the consultants have recommended including a buffer of 5 years, which takes the figure to 313.80 ha). In this Addendum the buffer is applied to Malvern Hills and Wychavon District Councils, as was the case for the EDNA 2022. However, owing to overall losses seen in Worcester City between 2011 and 2023, a buffer was not included as it may be considered to artificially inflate need.
- 4.3. In terms of qualitative data collection, the consultants revisited property agents for further market analysis. They also interviewed the Heads of Economic Development for

each of the South Worcestershire Councils to further augment and sense check their findings.

## **5. THE OUTCOME**

- 5.1. The base need, calculated in the Addendum of 257.40 ha, is met entirely by allocations proposed within the SWDPR.
- 5.2. The addition of a 5 year buffer increases this need between 2021 and 2041 to 313.80 ha. Between 2021 and 2023 some 17.32 ha has been taken up through completions of new developments and extensions. Therefore, compared to supply as at March 2023 and accounting for completions since 2021, there is estimated to be a small surplus of employment land of 12.92 ha to 2041.
- 5.3. It is noted that approximately 34% of current commitments relate to non-allocation sites. It would therefore be realistic to expect some further commitments outside of the proposed allocations throughout the planning period to add to further choice for businesses.