

# Lower housing targets likely

As reported in the last edition of WYCHAVON, planning officers have started initial work on preparing the companion plan to the South Worcestershire Joint Core Strategy (SWJCS), called the Site Allocations and Policies Plan. This fills in the local detail and sets out several generic planning policies to help make decisions about development proposals when submitted for planning permission.

More recently though this work has been interrupted by the new coalition Government's announcement to scrap regional spatial strategies. Regional spatial strategies (RSS) provided housing targets which then influence and fed into the SWJCS, so the move to scrap them is significant.

The aim of this move is to give power to local communities to make the big decisions about growth in their area. Figures for future housing developments are likely to be substantially lower, although the new housing figures and detailed changes to the planning system are yet to be announced.

## **Councillor Paul Middlebrough, Leader of Wychavon District Council said**

"We are relieved that the new coalition Government has acted quickly in heralding the demise of the RSS. This provides a window of opportunity for locally led development at acceptable levels. However, we still need to keep the momentum up on the progress with the SWJCS, our technical work on the strategy has provided a sound base for moving the document forward. We also recognise that big questions still remain over infrastructure and how that will be provided."

## **SWJCS work continues**

Although there may be further timetable adjustments, given the new governments stance, the currently agreed programme remains in place. Once the draft Joint Core Strategy has been submitted to the Secretary of State in early 2011, an independent panel of planning inspectors will be appointed to hold a public inquiry later in the year. They will publish their findings report soon afterwards, making changes to the document as appropriate and it is then the intention of the 3 partner authorities to adopt the document in late 2011.

In parallel to this work on the Site Allocations Plan began in late 2009 and into the first part of 2010 with a series of 18 events held in the main towns and in the locality of villages in the district and these concluded in early April 2010. Over 2,300 people attended these events and were able to speak with a planning officer and make comments on a number of possible locations for development, raise other site options and discuss the level of housing that might be expected. There was also the opportunity to raise other issues and needs within the community, eg facilities, open space, employment opportunities etc. that the Site Allocations and Policies Plan may be able to address. All the responses to this first stage of the process are available to view via the consultation portal, with an officer response, at the SWJCS website. At the same time further evidence has been prepared, in particular on strategic flooding, update of the employment land situation and a review of the Green Belt boundary (relevant to Wychavon district). These have now been published and are available to view, along with other technical studies and background topic papers on the website [www.swjcs.org](http://www.swjcs.org).

Peoples views from the recent consultation events, along with other technical background evidence, will help planners write the content of the Preferred Options consultation report that will add more detail relating to possible housing and employment sites in towns and villages as well as the planning policies that will help direct future development. This will be published in early 2011, with an extended the consultation period running up to March 2011.

**For further information please either visit [www.swjcs.org](http://www.swjcs.org) or call 01386-565365 or e-mail [policy.plans@wychavon.gov.uk](mailto:policy.plans@wychavon.gov.uk).**