

AYMESTREY

Neighbourhood Development Plan 2011-2031

AYMESTREY PARISH

Neighbourhood Development Plan
2011 to 2031



Contents

| | |
|-----------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| 1. Introduction. | 3 |
| 2. Background to the Plan Area. | 5 |
| 3. Issues and Options | 12 |
| 4. Vision, Objectives and Strategic Policies | 17 |
| 5. Environmental Policies | 20 |
| 6. Transport Policies | 34 |
| 7. Jobs and Economy Policies | 37 |
| 8. Housing Policies | 39 |
| 9. Delivering the Plan | 50 |
| 10. Settlement Boundary Maps | 51 |
| 11. Environmental Report | 55 |
| 12. Environmental Maps and Surveys | 71 |

Index of Appendices

| | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| Appendix 1: Mortimers Cross Housing Site Development Brief and Design Guide. | 75 |
| Report Ends | 82 |

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Data Orchard for their assistance throughout the whole process.

The community for their input and support.

David Lovelace for the Environmental Report.

1. Introduction

1.1 Aymestrey Parish Council made a formal submission to Herefordshire Council to designate the Group Parish as a Neighbourhood Plan Area under the Localism Act 2011 on 3rd December 2015, with the intention of preparing a Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP). Following a consultation period this was designated on 7th January 2016 by Herefordshire Council. A Steering Group for the plan was established on 9th February 2016. This NDP has been prepared following the adoption of Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy by Herefordshire Council on 16th October 2015.

Map 1 – Aymestrey Neighbourhood Plan Area



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- 1.2 The plan has been prepared to enable the community of Aymestrey Parish to help shape and manage future development within its area in a way that facilitates necessary growth, to meet its aspirations including the preservation and enhancement of the beauty of the landscape, high levels of biodiversity, and a quality built environment.
- 1.3 This NDP has been prepared using evidence from surveys and public consultation events. It has also drawn on surveys conducted for the Parish Plan, which was adopted in January 2013, on evidence gathered in support of the Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy and other information gathered the NDP Steering Group. The NDP was drafted to meet the sustainable development aims of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy (HCS).

1.4 Work on the Plan began in earnest in 2016.- Three questionnaires were devised; Land for Future Development, Housing Needs and Parishioner. A stall at the Fete in July and an Open Weekend in August helped to receive feedback on the questionnaire designs. Questionnaires were hand delivered in August 2016. A good response rate of 45% was achieved.

2017 - A further Open Weekend to feed back results and an Environmental Open Evening with experts from a variety of organisations was held in February.
A stall at the Summer Fete was taken. A second environmental survey was commissioned.

2018 - Draft NDP approved by the Parish Council 13th February.
Pre-submission (Regulation 14) consultation took place between 19 March – 13 May.
Two Open Weekends were held during this period. Submission (Regulation 16) consultation was carried out between 27 June – 22 August.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

- 1.5 Aymestrey Parish Council established a Steering Group to prepare the Neighbourhood Plan and it first met in 8TH March 2016. This included members from the Parish Council and the wider community. A Parish questionnaire survey¹ was circulated to all adults within the Parish during the autumn 2016, to which 45% of Parishioners responded. A 'Call for sites' was also issued along with the main survey. Opportunities were also provided for younger members of the community to contribute.
- 1.6 The Steering Group has produced this plan with professional support from Data Orchard, consultants; a registered social enterprise and research consultancy.

RELATIONSHIP TO HEREFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL CORE STRATEGY

- 1.7 There will be matters not covered in this NDP although covered by policies in HCS. This may be because it is considered there is little likelihood that such development will occur within the Parish during the plan period or because HCS policy is considered adequate and appropriate such that it is unnecessary to duplicate it within this NDP. This NDP includes policies that seek to interpret those within HCS where this is necessary, to expand upon HCS strategic policies, including to take into account local circumstances, or to cover matters that are not addressed at all or insufficiently within HCS.

¹ See Aymestrey NDP website at www.Aymestrey.org

2. Background to the Plan Area

2.1. Aymestrey Parish covers a large rural area within north Herefordshire with the market towns of Leominster some 8 miles to the south and Ludlow 12 miles to the north and Presteigne in Wales some 9 miles to the west of the main village. Herefordshire Council has identified four small settlements within the Parish – Aymestrey village, Leinthall Earls, Mortimers Cross and Yatton. Yatton is the smallest of the four settlements and normally, when referred to, comprises both the main concentration of houses at Yatton and Yatton Marsh.

Key Facts -

- 165 households.
- 351 Residents.
- 59 residents are 18 years old or under.
- 2 pubs; 1 Parish Hall; 2 churches; 2 traveler sites.
- Limited bus service.
- Traffic speeds have been identified as an issue.
- Poor broadband is still an issue for many residents.
- No schools or shops or **doctor's** surgery.
- Limited commerce in parish.
- Tourism is the main employer, with home working/self employed.
- **Builder's** merchants and Saw Mill are other two main employers.
- Large quarry at Leinthall Earls.
- HCC has designated 4 settlements in the parish, Aymestrey, Leinthall Earls, Mortimers Cross and Yatton; up until 2015 HCC had classified the parish as open countryside.
- The Parish is 11km from east to west; 5km north to south at widest point; 32 square Km in area.
- Bisected by the A4110, which follows the line of the old Roman Watling Street Road.
- River Lugg runs through Parish with corresponding flood plains and is an SSSI.
- East of parish mainly agriculture.
- West of parish dominated by state forest wooded hills.
- 33% of Parish is woodland much of which is of ancient origin.
- Many historic sites, Iron Age forts, evidence of Roman occupation.
- Possible site of Battle of Mortimers Cross.
- Many historic buildings including mill, farm houses, Gatley Park and churches.
- Historic orchards.
- Walking is a major draw for the parish.
- Campaign to Protect Rural England is pursuing to designate parish as AONB.
- High levels of biodiversity.

2.2. The Parish is sparsely populated with 351 residents (2011 census), the majority of whom live in small settlements or isolated locations away from the village of Aymestrey itself. The Parish falls within Mortimer Ward although Census data is available at a lower level for an area identified as the Aymestrey Horseshoe LSOA². The data for this shows it had a smaller proportion of people under the age of 16 years than both the ward and the County as a whole (15% compared to 18% and 17% respectively); slightly more than the ward proportion of people between 16 and 65 years but slightly less than that for the County (61% compared to 59% and 62% respectively); and the same proportion of people over 65 years of age as the ward but higher than the County (24% compared with 21%).

LANDSCAPE SETTING

2.3 The landscape of Aymestrey Parish is diverse, dramatic and steeped in history. It is shaped by its distinctive underlying geology. Aymestrey is the cradle of modern geology due to the discoveries made by the local curate Rev. T.T. Lewis and Sir Roderick Murchison.

Aymestrey's position on the shelf edge during the Silurian period gave rise to its distinctive landscape form of hills and gorges with flat valleys carved out by the river Lugg. The name Aymestrey Limestone, describing a particular fossiliferous limestone, is derived from the name of the parish. The Parish falls within an area under consideration by Natural England for inclusion in a new Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). It is undoubtedly a valued landscape within the meaning of paragraph 170 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2018.

The NPPF does not define what a valued landscape is. However, the Landscape **Institute's** Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA 3) set out how to identify a valued landscape at box 5.1, under the headings Landscape Quality, Scenic Quality, Rarity, Representativeness, Conservation Interests, Recreation Value, Perceptual Aspects and Associations.

Aymestrey's landscape readily meets all of the factors in box 5.1. The landscape is of a high quality as set out above. Historically it was preserved because the parish was identified as open countryside in previous local development plans and thus protected from significant development. The landscape is not only visually scenic, but it is exceptionally tranquil and an area where visitors can enjoy the sights, sounds and smells of nature, undisturbed by traffic or significant development. The rarity of the landscape derives from its geology and its location close to the Welsh border and at the entrance to the Shropshire Hills. It stands at a point where the low fertile agricultural lands of Herefordshire shift to high slopes and woodland. Such unspoilt transitional landscapes are rare. At the same time, the landscape contains qualities representative of the Shropshire Hills, which is why it was selected for inclusion within the AONB.

The high number of conservation interests - both natural and man-made - within the parish is set out in the Environmental Survey.

² 'Lower Super Output Area'.

The parish is enjoyed by tourists who visit for the beauty of the landscape and by residents, many of whom have chosen to live here because of the high quality of the landscape and the value they place on it.

The points noted in respect of scenic quality are also important perceptual aspects of the Aymestrey landscape. The landscape has many important associations from the 1461 Battle of Mortimers Cross, known to have been fought within or very near to the parish, to its links with the Mortimer Family and in later years to Rev. T.T. Lewis and Roderick Murchison, who together put Aymestrey at the centre of geological study worldwide.

The Parish falls within Natural England's Clun and North- West Herefordshire Hills National Character Area³. Broadly, its strategic objectives so far as they relate to the Parish are:

- to protect, manage and enhance its landscape character, important species, soils, water resources, tranquility and recreational opportunities -
- To protect, manage and enhance and improve the valleys, the habitat mosaic of semi-natural grasslands, meadows, woodlands, hedgerows and riparian habitats to enhance ecological networks, strengthen the distinctive landscape character.
- to protect and manage the river Lugg and associated watercourses, along with their flood plains, wetlands and woodlands, maintaining high water quality, reducing the potential risk of flooding
- To conserve and enhance the **area's** distinctive historic environment, cultural heritage and nationally important geological sites, demonstrating how the interaction of natural and historic factors has influenced the distinctive character of its landscape and settlement patterns.

³ <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5932924754984960>



Figure 1: Extract from Herefordshire Council's Landscape Character Assessment.⁴

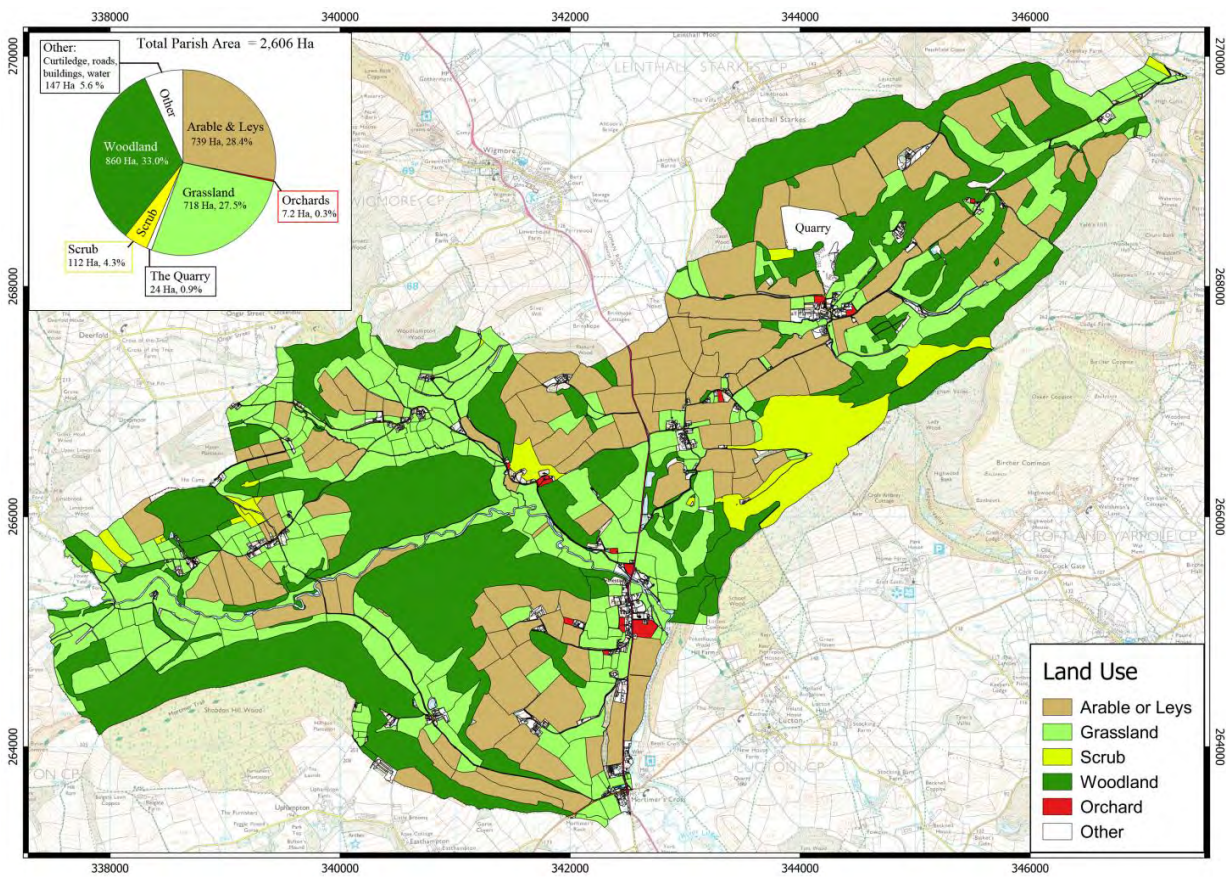


Figure 2

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⁴ Ibid

- 2.4 Aymestrey Parish is flanked to the east by Historic England Registered Park and Garden of Croft Castle Park and the historic monument of Croft Ambrey, to the north by Richards Castle and another Registered Park and Garden at Gatley Park, which falls within the Parish, and to the west by woodlands and river valleys extending into mid-Wales. To the south and on leaving the Parish, the landscape changes to flatter, arable agricultural land with the village of Kingsland, three miles away. The Parish incorporates a range of landscape types, defined within Herefordshire **Council's** Landscape Character Assessment⁵ (see Figure 1). The Parish is approximately 2,606 hectares (6,000 acres) is 32km square is 11km from East to West and has 19km of footpaths and 23km of country lanes.
- 2.5 Mortimer Country was to have been included within the Shropshire Hills AONB when it was designated in 1958. It was left out because of administrative difficulties arising from the fact that it was in a different county but in 2009, Herefordshire Council again supported a submission that it should be designated an AONB. The designation has not progressed, due to lack of funding. The **government's** draft 25-year Environment Plan proposes a review of AONB boundaries and investigation of the need to create new ones. This may generate impetus behind the plans to incorporate Aymestrey into the Shropshire Hills AONB.
- 2.6 In addition to a very high-quality landscape Aymestrey Parish is ecologically important containing notable areas of biodiversity and geodiversity, especially that associated with the river Lugg, which is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) which is in unfavourable condition but recovering. Rockhall Quarry is another SSSI within the Parish, which is of geodiversity importance and in favourable condition. There are some 15 further Special Wildlife Sites within the Parish of which over half include important woodlands. These link in with many other local sites both adjacent to and just beyond the Parish boundary, demonstrating the importance of the area to the **County's** Ecological Network⁶ of biodiversity core areas, buffers, corridors and stepping stones. A local Environmental Survey⁷ has been undertaken and presented in the NDP evidence base - see Schedule 1 of this document which should be read in conjunction with this plan.

HISTORY TO THE PARISH

- 2.7 Aymestrey Parish and especially Aymestrey village occupies a strategic position within a valley as a river crossing dating back to pre-history and it was clearly important from Roman Times onwards. The valley shows traces of an ancient history of strategic occupation from the Scheduled Iron Age hillforts of Pyon Wood and Croft Ambrey (a site of an early Bronze Age Beaker Burial), to the undesignated route of the Roman Road (Watling Street) to Leintwardine, the Scheduled remains of medieval motte and bailey castles, the undesignated site of the Battle of Mortimer's Cross and medieval and post medieval Listed Buildings. There are several unlisted historic buildings and designated and undesignated historic monuments and archaeological remains scattered throughout the Parish. Refer to the Environmental Report in Schedule 1 and the map on page 72.
- 2.8 Mortimer Country, within which the Parish sits, was named after the Mortimers (Marcher Lords of the 11th to 15th Century), who lived in this part of North Herefordshire, wielding

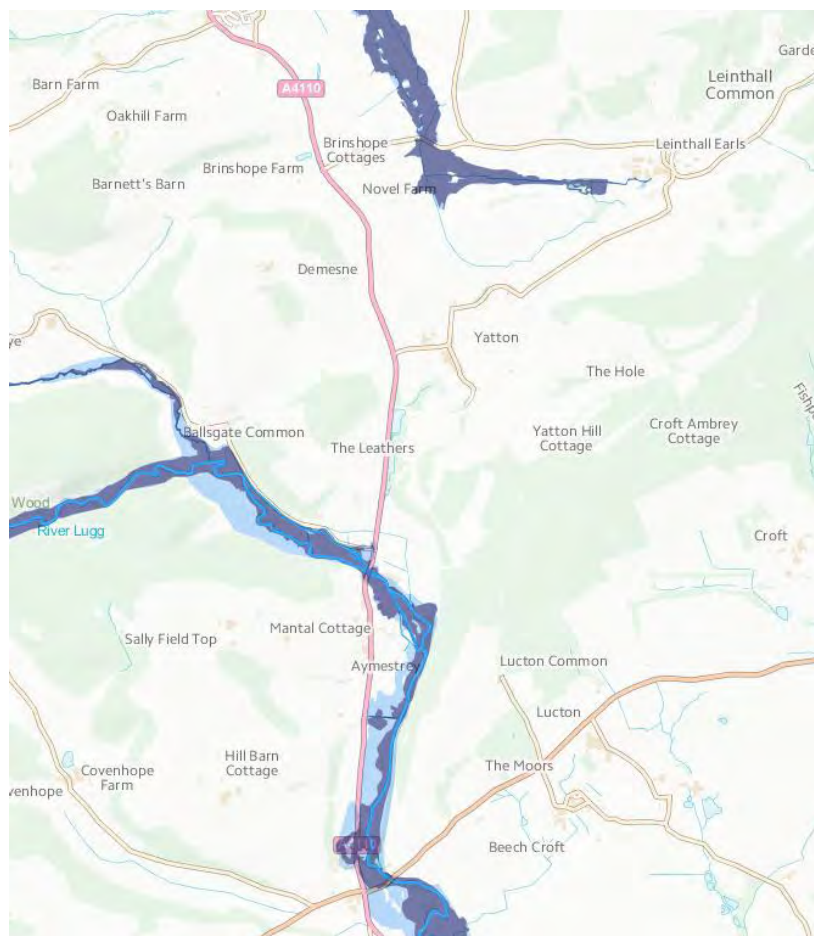
⁵ [file:///C:/Users/User/Downloads/landscape character assessment%20\(2\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/User/Downloads/landscape%20character%20assessment%20(2).pdf)

⁶ https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/downloads/download/77/ecological_network_map

enormous influence over the English throne. The Battle of Mortimers Cross of 1461, in which Edward, Earl of March, defeated Jasper Tudor and subsequently seized the throne, is thought to have been fought, at least in part, in Aymestrey Parish.

INFRASTRUCTURE

- 2.9 None of the settlements within the Parish connect to a public sewer and development must rely upon private waste water treatment.
- 2.10 The Parish is traversed north-south by the A4110 which runs parallel to the A49 trunk road and often carries traffic using it as an alternative to the strategic network route, especially when works are undertaken at Leominster when the level crossing is closed for regular maintenance. The route cuts the Parish in half and runs through the middle of both Aymestrey village and Mortimers Cross where, despite speed limits, vehicle speeds are not contained within the limits set. The B4362 crosses east-west through Mortimers Cross, where it forms a cross-road with the A4110. This route is well used, especially by tourist traffic travelling to mid-Wales and its west coast. The B4362 is also the main route in and out of Shobdon Airfield Industrial Estate as the result of **HGV's** being restricted from the only alternative access from the east through Pembridge village.
- 2.11 The river Lugg, an SSSI, also has a wide flood plain which restricts development at both Aymestrey and Mortimers Cross. In addition, there is an area liable to flood on the west side of Leinthall Earls (see figure 2).



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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- 2.12 There are two merchant businesses at Mortimers Cross; one selling building materials and the second Oak timber products and wood burning stoves. There are two public houses and restaurants - The Riverside Inn beside Aymestrey bridge and The Mortimers Cross Inn at Mortimers Cross. Breedon Group operates a substantial quarrying business at Leinthall Earls, where Tarmac also has a concrete mixing plant. These are the biggest individual sources of employment in the Parish.
- 2.13 Evidence gathered for the Parish Plan suggested that some 60% of people of working age in the Parish were self-employed. The single largest employer is tourism with commerce and industry second and then farming. There are numerous farms within the Parish these provide employment opportunities for both the immediate family and varying levels of seasonal work. They employ contract workers, usually with their own tractor or equipment, for seasonal work. There are a number of such contract workers living within the Parish. Several residents work from home in a range of businesses from arts and crafts to professional consultancy and are mainly self-employed.

COMMUNITY, SOCIAL AND HEALTH NEEDS

- 2.14 There are limited community facilities in Aymestrey Parish. There are two churches within the Parish one in Aymestrey and one at Leinthall Earls, both of which have small congregations. The Parish Hall is the only other community facility, hosting frequent entertainments, meetings and community events. All three make an important contribution to community life.
- 2.15 There is no shop, school or doctor's surgery, the nearest such facilities being at Kingsland, some three miles away along the busy A4110, meaning that it is not genuinely accessible by foot or on bicycle.
- 2.16 There are two traveller sites within the Parish; one at Mortimers Rock and the other for a single pitch behind The Mortimers Cross Inn.

3. Issues & Options

3.1 The findings of the Parish Plan, community consultation through the NDP process, and matters identified as relevant to the Parish within Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy (HCS) have been used to formulate the policies within the NDP. The following have informed the plan.

HOUSING

- 3.2 Herefordshire Council used a baseline figure of 20 dwellings to determine those settlements that might accommodate new housing development with those communities below this figure not being considered villages (or small villages) by being insufficiently compact in terms of houses and other buildings. Four settlements, Aymestrey village, Mortimers Cross, Leinthall Earls and Yatton, were identified by Herefordshire County Council as qualifying on that basis. These settlements are defined in HCS Policy RA2 as settlements where “sustainable housing growth” will be supported and should accommodate the majority of new housing development and because they all fall within HCS Figure 4.15, when deciding where such housing should be located special regard should be had to their layout, character and setting of any site and its location in that settlement. In addition, such development contributes to or is essential to the social well-being of the settlement concerned.
- 3.3 The Parish falls within Leominster Housing Market Area, which has an indicative housing growth target of 14% over the plan period (2011 - 2031). HCS indicates this growth target to be a minimum and would amount to 23 dwellings over the period 2011 to 2031. At January 2018, some 18 new homes had been built or had planning permission leaving a minimum balance to be found of 5.
- 3.4 At the time the Residents Survey was undertaken, a minimum of some 11 dwellings needed to be found. Around half of residents (51%) responding to the survey considered this to be about right in terms of provision with a quarter suggesting it was not. Just over half (53% of respondents considered the figure should not be exceeded. Again half (50%) of respondents considered land should be allocated for housing development with just over one third (36%) opposed to this approach. Respondents were almost equally split about whether settlement boundaries should be defined. However, specifically in relation to settlements, there were slightly more respondents supporting settlement boundaries for Aymestrey and Mortimers Cross, with those for Leinthall Earls and Yatton roughly equal. There was recognition that new houses should be within or on the edge of settlements with preference given to the use of brownfield sites should they be available. There was opposition to the use of greenfield sites.
- 3.5 Although there was a low level of response, with between 50% and 65% of those responding answering questions about preferred size of sites, there was a general preference for small developments. There was however, a high level of response in relation to design matters with the need for rear gardens, off-road parking, reasonable gaps between dwellings and building design to reflect that in the vicinity, especially traditional forms, being supported. There was support for a range of house tenures with home ownership receiving the highest overall level.

- 3.6 Very few sites came forward through the 'Call for sites' and subsequently one further site was presented. None involved brownfield sites. Two were found to be within the area at risk of flooding and considered unsuitable as reasonable alternatives.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- 3.7 Constraints, especially for home working, include poor mobile phone coverage and the fact that the Parish is remote from major business centres. Conversely, however, this remoteness is also an attraction for many self-employed who choose to live in Aymestrey Parish for the quality of life it offers. The arrival of fibre optic broadband in spring 2017 represented a boost for businesses of all types, although it is still not available to the whole Parish. Feedback received from the NDP questionnaire showed that the majority of residents would support tourism and leisure businesses (64%) and business use that protect the natural and historic environment (66%). Again, new business use or developments should utilise brownfield land (75%) or existing buildings (69%). There was strong support for measures to encourage working from home (78%). Operations such as market gardening/plant nurseries (72%) and craft workshops (67%) were also supported.
- 3.8 Respondents said new employment land should be within existing settlements (41%) or on the edge of settlements (40%) although there was concern to protect residential amenity with 76% advising that intrusive noise is important in deciding the acceptability of any change of land use to business. In addition, unpleasant smells, visual impact and increase in road traffic were factors to consider. There was opposition the introduction of warehousing (69%).

HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT

- 3.9 The only speed limits are at Mortimers Cross (40mph) and through Aymestrey (30mph) and these are generally not observed and reckless overtaking manoeuvres are common. Access to other settlements in Aymestrey Parish is by narrow roads with limited passing places. The A4110 is heavily used by quarry traffic from the quarry at Leinthall Earls. There is a heavy volume of agricultural and forestry traffic, involving large vehicles. The public houses at Mortimers Cross and in Aymestrey have vehicles parking on the public highway at peak times for those businesses, creating a further traffic hazard.
- 3.10 There are narrow pavements along the western side of the A4110 in Aymestrey and some of Mortimers Cross but other roads are without pavements. There are key crossing points in Aymestrey at the Parish Hall, the church and where the Mortimer Trail long distance footpath crosses the A4110. The A4110 is a popular option for cyclists travelling the **Lands'** End to John O' Groats long distance cycle route.
- 3.11 Nearly 80% of respondents agreed that there needs to be improvement to the issue of speeding traffic in the Parish. Other matters included volume of traffic, need for further footpaths, road drainage and footpath/bridleway maintenance. Some 37% of respondents indicated bus services are important and 36% advised they needed improvement.

COMMUNITY, SOCIAL AND HEALTH NEEDS

- 3.12 The small population of the Parish means that it is unlikely to generate the need for further community facilities although improvements to Aymestrey Village Hall at some stage within the plan-period cannot be ruled out. As an important facility any development close to it must not result in any restrictions upon its use. This factor also applies to businesses such as the two public houses within the Parish.

TRAVELLER SITES

- 3.13 There is within the Parish two sites allocated for travellers/gypsies; one at Shobdon Rock on the border with Shobdon Parish and the other a single caravan pitch behind Mortimers Cross Pub, which is listed in Herefordshire **Council's** Gypsy and Travellers' Accommodation Assessment. Both sites have been in existence for several decades.

ENVIRONMENT

- 3.14 The high environmental quality reflects its landscape, ecology and heritage and has in the past not received the level of protection in terms of designations or surveys that it deserves, as a consequence of there being little development pressure with none of its settlements being identified in any plans for development. For at least the past half century the whole Parish has been considered 'open countryside' where new housing development was restricted to exceptions to meet rural needs such as agricultural dwellings. With the introduction of Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy policy RA2, this has now changed. And the Parish is now required to accommodate an element of general housing. This change has not been accompanied by commensurate reviews of conservation areas, special wildlife sites or landscape protection such as through support for the designation of an AONB in north-west Herefordshire.
- 3.15 There is a need to protect, enhance and enrich its environmental assets through the careful management of development and growth. In addition to addressing this from a national perspective, the community has identified the need to protect important green spaces and open areas and would support the provision of community orchards and allotments. In addition, there was support for the protection of natural and heritage assets such as important buildings, places and views. Because of this an Environmental Survey (refer to Schedule 1 of this report) was commissioned that will be used to inform community projects and activities that might be undertaken as well as more detailed responses to planning applications where this is relevant.
- 3.16 In the absence of appropriate sewage treatment facilities, growth represents a potential threat to the ecological quality of the river Lugg, either from individual dwellings or cumulatively. Public authorities, including through the mechanism of this NDP, have a statutory duty to enhance the ecological status of the River Lugg SSSI⁸ and this includes improving water quality.

⁸ Section 28G of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000).

OPTIONS

3.17 Aymestrey NDP Steering group considered the following development options, which primarily relate to how to accommodate housing development because this is the primary concern in terms of necessary development that it has to address. There are no requirements to provide specifically for other land uses and their spatial aspects will be determined mainly through the strategic approach set out in Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy. There is, however, the opportunity to advocate promotional aspects for these other land uses and forms of development and to expand upon matters of detail where this still conforms to the Core Strategy:

Option 1 - Not to prepare a NDP: this would mean that housing development within then parish would be developer led until such a time as Herefordshire Council adopts its Rural Areas Development Plan Document (DPD).

Option 2 – To allocate sufficient land to meet the required level of housing growth but not to define settlement boundaries, relying on settlement policies only: this approach would rely upon the ability to meet community and environmental objectives satisfactorily without defining a boundary within which most new housing development would be restricted.

Option 3 – To allocate sufficient land to meet the required level of housing growth and defining settlement boundaries within which most new housing development would be restricted: this approach, promoted through Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy, would define the extend of the built-up area of each settlement and any proposed extensions to it where housing development might take place.

Option 4 – A mixture of allocating sufficient land to meet the required level of housing growth but with some settlements having settlement boundaries defined while others rely upon policies only: This is an option where each settlement would be assessed to determine whether either option 2 or option 3 might be most appropriate.

3.18 Choice of Preferred Option

The choice of preferred option was made on the basis of the most appropriate way to protect the environment, especially the quality of the landscape and scale and character of the parish's settlements. The local community was almost equally split upon whether settlement boundaries should be defined.

In relation to Option 1, it was considered this would result in a largely unrestricted approach in the short to medium term, enabling development to take place in locations and of a scale that was inappropriate in environmental terms. In addition, the community would not be able to influence to the location and extent of development to the same degree as it might, with the development management process proceeding on the basis that proposals might not be sufficiently unsatisfactory to approve. The neighbourhood planning process is one that would look for the best locations and forms of new housing. This approach would continue until such time as Herefordshire Council had adopted its Rural Areas DPD, which is expected to take longer than the preparation of the neighbourhood plan. In addition, although there will be consultation upon this, the process would likely be less able to be influenced by the local community because it will need to adopt an approach across a wide-ranging area and might not be able to look at local, issues in such depth. The absence of a 5-year housing land supply will remain a material consideration even after the adoption of the Rural Areas NDP should this be an issue, while an adopted Neighbourhood Plan will be

stronger in this regard should the Council have a 3-year land supply. As a consequence, the need to prepare a neighbourhood plan was reaffirmed and this option rejected.

- 3.19 Of the three remaining options it became clear to the Steering Group that defining settlement boundaries would best protect the concerns of residents and the quality of the environment. The use of policies without settlement boundaries could not provide the level of certainty that residents might wish to see. A consistent approach across the four settlements was considered to be most appropriate and hence Option 3 was chosen as the basis for the development strategy for the four settlements.

4. Vision, Objectives and Strategic Policies

4.1 In preparing Aymestrey Neighbourhood Development Plan the following vision sets the basis for what it is hoped to achieve through the planning system by the end of the plan period:

" To have a flourishing community, cherishing our unique environment as a place to grow up, work, retire and enjoy "

4.2 To achieve this vision the following objectives have been set:

- (i) To protect and manage the high-quality landscape, green space, biodiversity and geology of the Parish and the settings of its settlements.
- (ii) To pay special regard to the River Lugg Site of Special Scientific Interest and its associated watercourses and habitats, both for its ecological interest and for the management of flooding within the Parish and downstream.
- (iii) To protect and manage the historic assets and their settings within the Parish, whether of national or local importance, the level of protection being in accordance with the importance of the asset.
- (iv) To conserve and enhance the **area's** distinctive historic environment, cultural heritage and nationally important geological sites, demonstrating how the interaction of natural and historic factors has influenced the distinctive character of its landscape and settlement patterns, and use as a framework for sustainable development and habitat restoration and to maintain and promote the enjoyment of its high levels of tranquility and landscape.
- (v) To contribute towards energy conservation and renewable energy.
- (vi) To promote business activity that is appropriate to the Parish, including working from home.
- (vii) To promote sustainable housing through controlled growth within defined settlement boundaries and on allocated sites, seeking small scale developments that achieve high design standards.
- (viii) To foster social and economic wellbeing.
- (ix) To respond to the demands for improved telecommunications
- (x) To retain and where appropriate improve existing public transport services
- (xi) To enhance access to the countryside
- (xii) To address community concerns about the volume and speed of traffic on the major roads and its impact and to improve safety (and perception of safety) for pedestrians and highway users including cyclists.
- (xiii) Promote sustainable travel either through cycle lanes, track ways or road user awareness.
- (xiv) To prevent development in areas at risk of flooding, improve land drainage, and avoid pollution, especially from waste water.

4.3 The community was consulted upon the vision and objectives for the NDP and changes were made to an initial set to reflect views expressed through the consultation process. It is recognised that it may not be possible to directly influence all the objectives through the NDP although its policies may have produce some indirect benefits through accommodating growth in a sustainable way.

Strategy for Sustainable Development

- 4.4 Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It embraces social, economic and cultural outcomes as well as environmental ones. It aims to provide the community with sufficient and appropriate housing, jobs, opportunities for enterprise, and access to community facilities to maintain healthy and thriving communities while protecting our natural and historic environment, which contributes to our quality of life.

Policy AYS1: Promoting Sustainable Development

Proposals for development should demonstrate that the following factors have been considered from the outset with enhancement, restoration or, where necessary, mitigation built into the design where appropriate:

- **landscape**
- **settlement character**
- **heritage assets**
- **biodiversity**
- **geo-diversity**
- **residential amenity**
- **effect on existing businesses**
- **effect on and provision of support for community facilities**
- **highway safety**
- **public rights of way**
- **open access land**
- **flood risk**

New housing will be accommodated within the capacity of the local environment, village character and the highway network.

REASONS AND INTERPRETATION

- 4.5 This NDP will form part of the Local Development Framework and as such its policies will guide development.
- 4.6 Development should not result in harm to landscape, amenity, biodiversity or heritage assets. Enhancement of one aspect will not necessarily outweigh harm to another. In terms of sustainable development, the settlements within the Parish are small and facilities are limited. Services and facilities such as village shops and local schools are in the larger villages of Kingsland and Wigmore that lie outside the Parish to the south and north respectively. Hence, while this NDP aims to deliver the required level of proportional housing growth, the lack of services and facilities makes it inappropriate to consider significant development. Similarly, it is unlikely that any threshold for additional facilities will be met. The absence of any public waste water facilities adds to the need to minimise development that might result in pollution of the water environment and a precautionary approach must be taken. Furthermore, there is a statutory requirement upon public authorities to seek en-

hancements the ecological status for the River Lugg SSSI through its duties and responsibilities.

- 4.7 The landscape of the Parish is of relatively small scale and intimate, predominantly hills and valleys with scattered settlements of very few houses, most of which are historic and built of traditional materials. There is widespread public access to high ground on the several commons and land in Forestry Commission and National Trust ownership. This facilitates extensive views over the landscape of the Parish as well as more distant views to the Malvern Hills, Shropshire Hills and Welsh Mountains. Thus, development of even relatively small scale has the potential for major landscape impacts. Consequently, for many forms of development within the Parish, a proportionate landscape assessment may be required when a planning application is submitted.
- 4.8 The other factors listed also contribute towards sustainable development and proposals should show not only how they are to be protected but also how they might be enhanced. Policies later in this plan cover most of these matters in greater detail. There are significant areas prone to flooding within the Parish. Mortimers Cross, parts of Aymestrey village and much of the valley between these two settlements are especially prone to flooding. There are also areas to the north and west of the village where river flooding is a problem, meaning there are few areas of level land in the Parish suitable for development (see Figure 2).

Policy AYS2: Development Strategy

Residential development within the Parish will be confined to appropriate development within settlement boundaries and the site allocated within this plan which should be in accordance with its planning brief.

Developments outside of settlement boundaries is only acceptable if it complies with policies of this plan and with HCS Policies RA3, RA4 and RA5. Land outside of the settlement boundaries, including that adjacent to or adjoining them, is deemed to be open countryside.

REASONS AND INTERPRETATION

- 4.9 The defining of settlement boundaries provides the greatest level of certainty in showing where the majority of housing development may take place (HCS paragraph 4.8.23). Infilling may take place within these boundaries although they should reflect the scale, density and amenity of the properties surrounding such sites and not involve inappropriate development within residential garden. A site is proposed for development at Mortimers Cross and it is considered a planning brief should indicate how the site should be developed.
- 4.10 Development outside of the settlement boundaries, including that adjacent to or adjoining it will be considered open countryside. In relation to new housing proposals it should meet the exceptional criteria set out in HCS. Other forms of development that may take place in the open countryside are covered either or both by HCS or this NDP. This provides the greatest level of certainty that the community requires about where development might take place.

5. Environmental Policies

5.1 The environmental assets within Aymestrey Parish, comprising diverse and notable natural habitats and features, significant heritage assets and a small-scale settlement pattern, combine to provide a varied, attractive and high-quality landscape of significant cultural value. The Parish is within an area under consideration by Natural England for inclusion in a new Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty within North-West Herefordshire. For the reasons set out above, the landscape of the parish is highly valued in the context of the NPPF paragraph 170. It is, therefore, undoubtedly a valued landscape. Protecting and enhancing this valuable national asset should be given the highest priority. The character and settings of other environmental assets are also important and should be given appropriate weight. The following policies seek to address these objectives. Read Schedule 1 – Environmental Report in conjunction with this section. The Parish is approximately 2,606 hectares (6,000 acres) is 32km square is 11km from East to West and has 19km of footpaths and 23km of country lanes. With 33% of the parish is covered in woodland much of which is of ancient origin. Refer to Schedule 1 the Environmental Report see also the land use map on page 71.

Policy AYEnv1 - Landscape

Development proposals should contribute positively to the high-quality landscape within the Parish through:

- a) Being appropriate to the local landscape character in terms of siting, scale, nature and design, demonstrating specific reference to the relevant Landscape Character Type and ensuring the features contributing to their identification are conserved, restored or enhanced through measures consistent with their characterisation;**
- b) Protecting, conserving and enhancing those elements and features of natural, historic and scenic beauty within the Parish that contribute to its landscape quality;**
- c) Protecting hedgerows, woodlands, tree cover and important trees;**
- d) Incorporating landscaping schemes that ensure development both integrates with its surroundings and offers enhancements, including to biodiversity;**
- e) Conserving visual amenity for all, including residents and users of public rights of way and open spaces. Views including sightlines through to important features should not be impeded.**

The following information may be required for developments likely to influence the landscape, its features or the setting of settlements:

- 1. Tree surveys, to indicate trees to be retained in accordance with good arboricultural practice, will be required where development proposals are likely to affect large numbers of trees or important trees of potential amenity value.**

REASONS AND INTERPRETATION

- 5.2 This policy describes how development should meet the provisions of Herefordshire Core Strategy Policy LD1 in so far as it relates to Aymestrey Parish. The NDP will pursue Natural England's strategic objective for this landscape area - Clun and North-West Herefordshire Hills, (see para 2.3). Planning applications for development should also have regard to the relevant Herefordshire Council Landscape Character Areas (LCA) and the management guidelines and environmental mitigations contained therein. Most of the Parish falls within the Principal Wooded Hills landscape character type with the area around the A4110 being Principal Settled Farmlands within the north of the Parish and Riverside Meadows in the south. These landscape character types have distinct characteristics and features that should be conserved, reinforced or enhanced. Aymestrey village sits within two distinct landscape types with the area to the west of the A4110 being Wooded Hills and Farmland where you would normally expect to see a small village of low settlement density. The area to the east of the road is Riverside Meadow which would normally include only buildings associated with the river, such as mills. Leinthall Earls falls predominantly within an area defined as Wooded Hills and Farmland although small parts just outside its western edge are either Principal Settled Farmlands or Wet Pasture Meadow. Mortimers Cross sits primarily within the Riverside Meadows character type. Yatton falls within the Principal Settled Farmlands category. Within this landscape type the settlement pattern would normally comprise farmsteads and small hamlets where any further development would be limited, modest in size preserving the character of the original settlement. Paragraph 2.4 provides the link to the Landscape Character Assessment and Figure 1 shows the areas covered by the relevant landscape types.
- 5.3 Landscape features should also be protected. These include established hedgerows, orchards, woodlands, water courses, historic buildings and monuments and archaeological remains. Whether designated or not, these should be identified in surveys in support of any development proposals and to inform landscape schemes. Such schemes will ensure development fits sensitively into the landscape. There are numerous important trees within the Parish which should be retained whether or not they are subject to a Tree Preservation Order. Landscape schemes should also contribute to the enhancement of ecological networks and biodiversity within and throughout the Parish. There are also viewpoints both out from and towards settlements, from the large areas of public access land and along public rights of way, in particular those important to the Mortimer Trail and National Cycle Route through the Parish. The importance of the 'borrowed view' needs to be recognised, especially those associated with historic parks and gardens.
- 5.5 Development proposals will be expected to respect this high-quality landscape in North Herefordshire, of which the Parish forms part and its potential designation as an AONB.

Policy AYEnv2 – Biodiversity and Geodiversity

Development proposals should maintain and reinforce the ecological network of the Parish and enhance biodiversity where relevant through:

- a) Protecting and, where possible enhancing the ecological status of the River Lugg SSSI and its catchment including considering the cumulative effects of development upon its conservation status, habitats and water quality.**

- b) Maintaining and, where possible enhancing, the conservation status of Rockhall Quarry SSSI.**
- c) Reinforcing the ecological network of the Parish by respecting biodiversity features, including those identified in the Aymestrey Environmental Survey and any identified in assessments appropriate to the development proposed.**
- d) Supporting locally important nature conservation sites and green infrastructure across the Parish, protecting and enhancing sites, habitats and species, whether designated or not.**
- e) Protecting any habitat or species listed in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan.**
- f) Utilising the lowest quality land for development first. If there is no brownfield land available, Grades 3b, 4 and 5 agricultural lands only should be considered for development. Proposals to develop best and Most Versatile agricultural land (Grades 1, 2 and 3a) must demonstrate that they serve the public interest and could not be accommodated on land of lesser quality.**

REASONS AND INTERPRETATION

- 5.6 The Parish contributes significantly to the ecological network of north-west Herefordshire. The River Lugg SSSI flows from the west and then south passing adjacent to Aymestrey and Mortimers Cross hamlets. The ecological condition of the river is currently unfavorable-recovering. It is important that development does not lead to any deterioration of its condition or compromise its recovery and that opportunities are sought to improve the ecological quality of the river. The provisions in this policy complement Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy LD2. The river Lugg flows into the River Wye Special Area of Conservation just to the south of Leominster. Rockhall Quarry is designated an SSSI for its geological interest and its condition is favorable. This status must be maintained. There are 16 local wildlife sites and 2 regionally important geological sites within the Parish. Several other SSSIs are located outside but on the border of the Parish.
- 5.7 The combination of these internationally, nationally and locally important habitats give rise to a rich natural environment in the Parish as shown on Herefordshire **Council's** Ecological Network Map. The area contains a significant number and expanse of habitat core areas and buffers including some that extend well beyond the boundaries of the Parish. In addition, the network map shows a number of locally important biodiversity links. The reinforcement of this network will benefit both the Parish and the wider County. As part of the work to prepare this NDP a local environmental survey was undertaken involving the community and the important sites, features and species identified to be present adds to the network. These are listed in Schedule 1 and will be relevant to this policy, meeting the provision of Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy Policy SS6, as an assessment contributing to defining the local distinctiveness of the Parish.
- 5.8 An environmental survey was undertaken for the Parish - please refer to Schedule 1 of this Plan - This survey should be used in deciding what forms of enhancement are appropriate to different areas of the parish. Pursuing such measures in association with development would have benefits and may contribute more widely to biodiversity and the ecological network. The inclusion of such measures would not, however, normally overcome in principle objections to development resulting from NDP and other policies.

Policy AYEnv3: Protecting Heritage Assets

The significance of heritage assets and their settings within the Parish will be conserved and enhanced through:

- a) Refusing development proposals that would lead to substantial harm or total loss of significance of any designated heritage asset unless it can be demonstrated that the development would offer substantial public benefits.**
- b) Requiring robust evidence of the public benefits of any proposal that would result in less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated asset or its setting.**
- c) Ensuring the conservation of Aymestrey's Grade 1 listed church and the Grade II* listed church at Leinthall Earls and their settings. Development proposals should conserve the openness and character of the settings and preserve or enhance views to and from the Churches, which make an important contribution to their significance.**
- d) Ensuring the conservation of Scheduled Monuments and their settings. Development proposals shall conserve important views to and from the monuments and conserve their setting and character.**
- e) Conserving Registered Parks and Gardens and their setting.**
- f) Demonstrating that consideration of all heritage assets, whether designated or not, and the historic environment have been fully considered in any proposals, carrying out a level of assessment appropriate to the significance of the asset and explaining how consideration of the asset and its setting has influenced the location, siting, scale and design of proposals.**
- g) Protecting recorded and unrecorded archaeology. Given the long history of the Parish and its important historical context Herefordshire Council Historic Environment Record must be consulted and if required archaeological surveys must be undertaken and any archaeological remains identified must be fully recorded and conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance.**
- h) Conserving the historic patterns of settlement within the Parish.**
- i) Encouraging development proposals that would restore or protect heritage assets that are in poor condition or otherwise under threat, including appropriate re-uses of the asset, where this is compliant with other policies within the NDP.**
- j) Protecting ancient hedgerows and associated hedgerow patterns from loss or deterioration unless the public benefits of development clearly outweigh such loss or deterioration.**

REASONS AND INTERPRETATION

- 5.10 The **area's** heritage is reflected in the presence of many Scheduled Monuments, Listed Buildings, Historic Parks and Gardens, and attractive historic villages. There are also expected to be potential archaeological sites given the history of the area and historic landscapes that contribute to the **area's** character. These assets and, where appropriate, their settings⁹ are important and need to be preserved or enhanced. These features are important to both the local economy and cultural awareness, and should be retained. With regards Heritage Assets there is a relationship between the significance of the asset (its importance) and its setting (how the asset is experienced). It may prove problematic to try to enforce protection of aspects of the setting of an asset which do not contribute to its significance.
- 5.11 Consideration of the impacts of heritage assets should be carried out in accordance with Historic **England's** Guidance on the Setting of Heritage Assets (2011) or its updated equivalent (2018 Historic England Guidance on the Setting of Heritage Assets). This emphasises that consideration of impacts is not restricted to visual impacts. Grade I listed The Church of St John the Baptist and St Alkmund sits in the flat land of the Lugg valley. The majestic square stone tower of the church is a focal point in views up the valley on leaving Mortimers Cross and is also clearly visible from the hills on either side of the valley. The valley provides the setting in which the church is experienced.
- 5.12 There are five Scheduled Ancient Monuments within the Parish including - Bowl barrow east of Yatton Marsh Farm; Croft Ambrey (camp); Pyon Wood camp; Churchyard preaching cross in St John the Baptist and St Alkmund's Churchyard; Castle mound in Camp Wood. Their protection, including their settings, is national policy. The major contribution they make to the wider landscape is also important. The area has an extensive history and investigations are ongoing (supported by Lottery Funding) to establish whether the site of the Battle of Mortimers Cross 1461 is within the Parish.
- 5.13 The heritage of the Parish is also reflected in the numerous Listed Buildings, and other locally important buildings and heritage assets and their settings¹⁰ make a major contribution to the **area's** character. There are two Historic England Registered Parks and Gardens within the Parish at Gatley and Yatton Court.
- 5.14 The importance of locally distinctive buildings, archaeology, parks and gardens and other assets, whether designated or not, should be recognised for the contribution made to the Parish's landscape and settlement character. There are no conservation areas within the Parish although both Aymestrey and Leinthall Earls are of such architectural and historic interest and quality that they should be considered for designation. Both settlements were previously designated as open countryside for planning purposes and this may be why they were never designated as conservation areas. With the change in policy in the Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy the Parish benefits from the protections of policy RA2 (1) which requires development proposals to demonstrate attention to the form, layout, character and setting of the site and its location in that settlement. For both settlements, Herefordshire **Council's** Landscape Character Assessment, makes clear that proposals should be small scale to remain in keeping with the setting.

⁹ NPPF Section 16

¹⁰ NPPF Section 16

Policy AYEnv4: Addressing Climate Change

Development (including where planning permission is required for renovations or conversions) proposals are encouraged to, where possible incorporate measures to reduce the use of fossil fuels by:

- a) Making efficient use of natural resources, including the use, wherever possible, of locally sourced and sustainable materials and sustainable construction methods and design.**
- b) Promoting the production and consumption of renewable or low carbon energy. Where proposals are to use biomass, such proposals should respect the scale of the landscape and developers should utilise feedstock is predominantly sourced locally.**
- c) Encouraging and where possible facilitating the development of low and zero carbon energy consumption particularly in the case of proposed new housing development. Support for sustainable travel should also be encouraged on-site through integration with existing network or cycle parking and encourage and facilitate the use of active travel.**
- d) Ensuring all new renewable energy proposals take account of landform, layout, building mass and orientation and landscape to minimise consumption and be appropriate for both the type and scale of the proposed development.**
- e) Promoting renewable and low carbon technologies in locations where they will not harm the character or appearance of the Parish or the surrounding landscape.**

To be supported, development proposals, (including material changes of use), should demonstrate how the above energy efficiency considerations have been factored into the proposal from the start.

REASONS AND INTERPRETATION

- 5.15 The above policy promotes energy conservation, sustainable design and renewable or low carbon energy proposals of a relevant scale. Sustainable design requires a coordinated approach to be undertaken in an integrated way to address measures related to individual buildings, site layout and landscaping, and support for off-site measures where these are appropriate; such as links to the public footpath network and supporting public transport through facilities, such as providing bus shelters.
- 5.16 In addition to minimising construction traffic and reducing waste, developers are encouraged to use natural materials and adopt local purchasing, so far as may be possible, to support sustainable work practices; especially where this will achieve low transport miles. Such measures along with others identified will contribute towards a low-carbon economy. The promotion of renewable or low carbon energy is also important and the community is prepared to support such measures where they are of an appropriate scale, fit sensitively

into the landscape and support local resourcing. With regard to proposals producing bio-mass energy, these should reflect the high quality landscape and its scale, and the benefits should not be cancelled out by requiring material to be imported over excessive distances. Where the latter would be the case, the development would not be appropriate to the parish due to the need to keep transport movements to a minimum and the conflict with the sustainability principles of the NDP. Where permission for such development is granted, a planning condition will be required to ensure that feedstock will be predominantly locally sourced waste material throughout the lifetime of the development

Policy AYEnv5: Waste Water Treatment

Proposals for non-mains waste water treatment should first seek to utilise package sewage treatment works (discharging to watercourse or soak away) or, if not possible, septic tank drainage (discharging to soak away). All relevant drainage proposals should be accompanied by information to demonstrate there will be no likely significant effect on the water quality and ecological integrity of the River Lugg SSSI and subsequently the River Wye SAC, indicating what measures for achieving the highest standard of water quality discharge to the natural drainage system will be put in place, including where relevant, provision for monitoring.

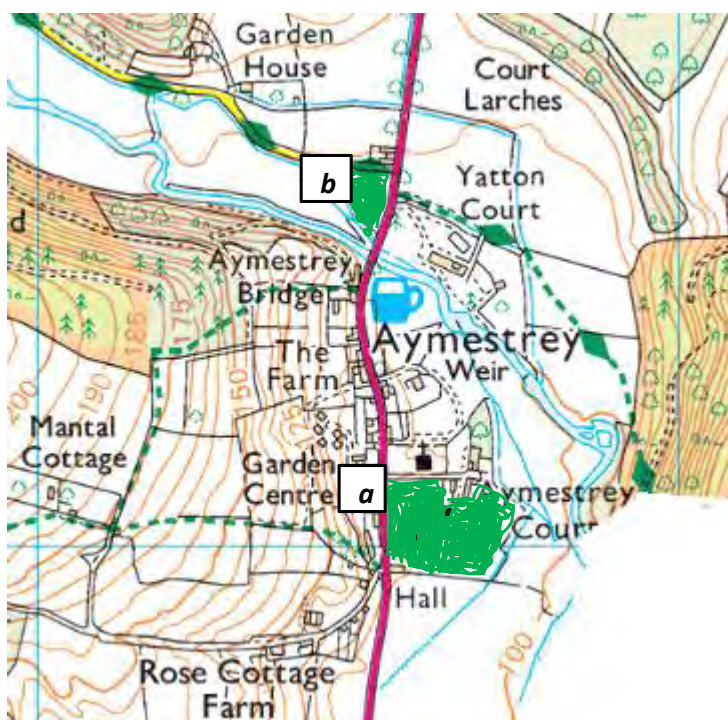
REASONS AND INTERPRETATION

- 5.17 None of the settlements within the Parish are served by a public mains sewer. This policy supports that part of HCS Policy SD4 which applies to development within the NDP area. The use of cesspools is considered unsuitable for development within the Parish given the importance of the river Lugg and the need to ensure everything is done to increase its conservation status.

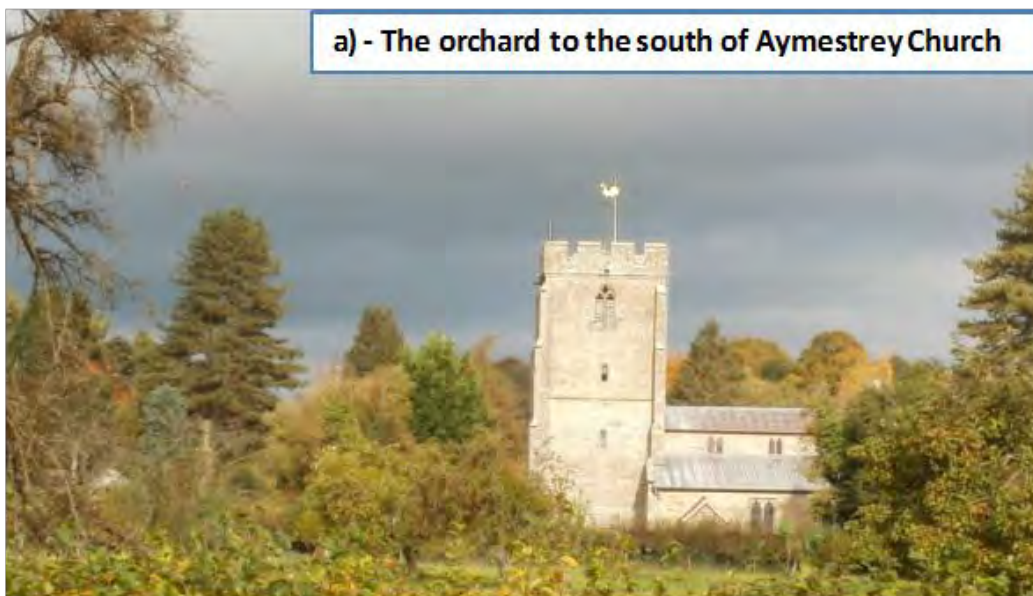
Policy AYEnv6: Protection of Local Green Space

The following areas are designated Local Green Space. Development that would result in the loss of or significant harm to these sites will not be permitted. Proposals that enhance or extend the purpose or purposes for which they are designated will be permitted provided there are no significant adverse effects:

- a) Orchard to the south of St John the Baptist and St Alkmund's Church, Aymestrey;
- b) Aymestrey Mill's Orchard



a) - The orchard to the south of Aymestrey Church



b) - Aymestrey Mill's Orchard



REASONS AND INTERPRETATION

5.18 The areas identified in this policy are considered important green space and special to the whole community. Development is not totally restricted within these areas, but any proposals should be for the benefit of the **site's** current use. Designation as Local Green Space does not indicate a right of public access if it is not already public space, neither does it change the current use. The reasons advanced for the designation of each site are as follows:

i) Orchard to the south of St John the Baptist and St **Alkmund's** Church: This orchard has biodiversity value, and is an important habitat for which a Habitats Action Plan has been prepared. Herefordshire Local Nature Partnership has recently supported a review of the County Biodiversity Action Plan (HBAP) which includes Action Plan. The orchard also contributes towards the setting of St John the Baptist and St **Alkmund's** Church, enabling open views towards the church, and it is an important feature within the character and street scene of Aymestrey. The owners of these orchards have been consulted upon this designation and support it.

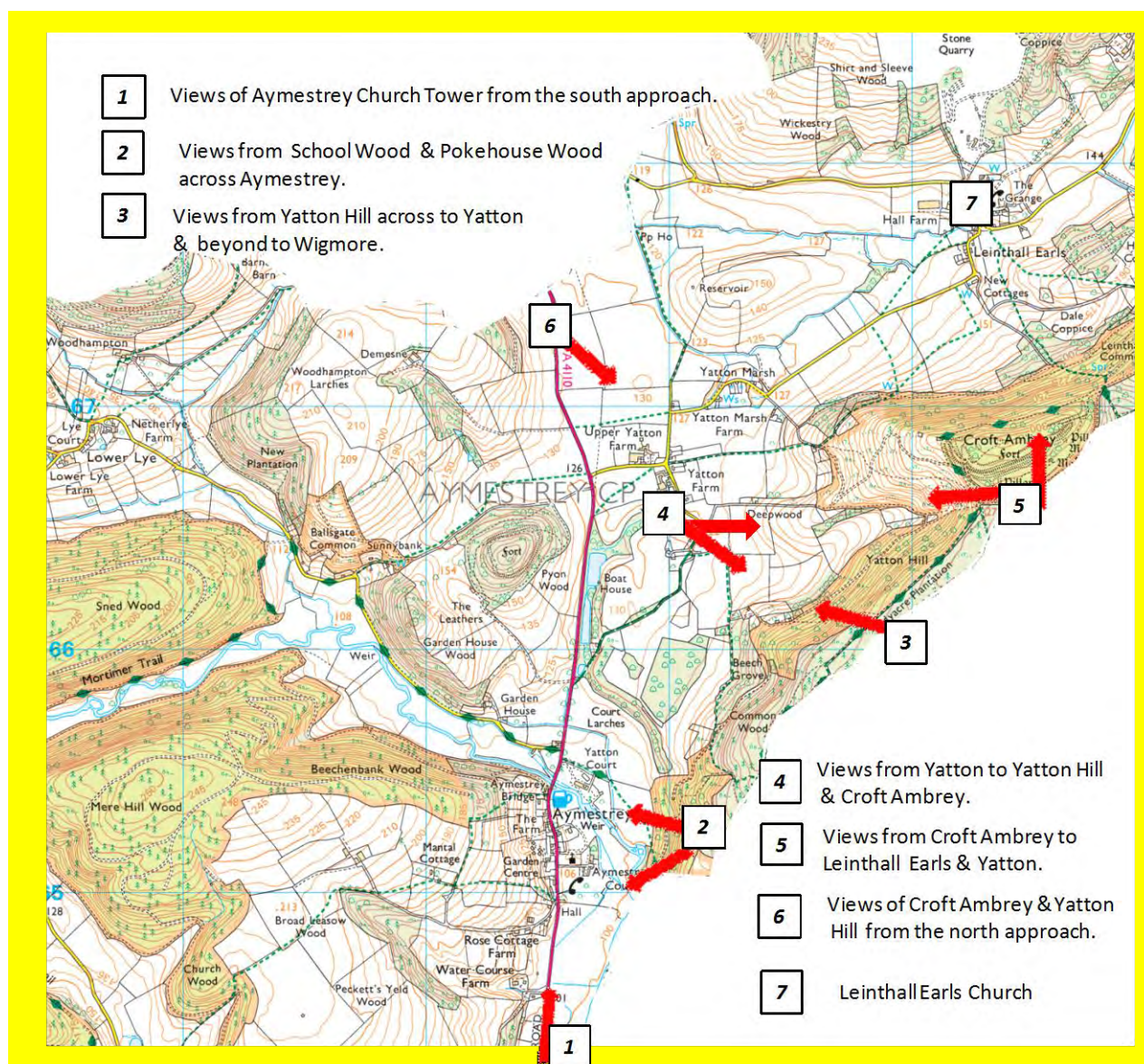
ii) The Orchard at Aymestrey Mill again has biodiversity value and is an important HBAP habitat. It contributes to the setting of the mill house and views as you enter Aymestrey village from the north. The Mill has recently become a Listed Building and the orchard forms part of its curtilage. The owners of this orchard have been consulted upon this designation and support it.

Policy AEnv7: Protection of Views and Vistas

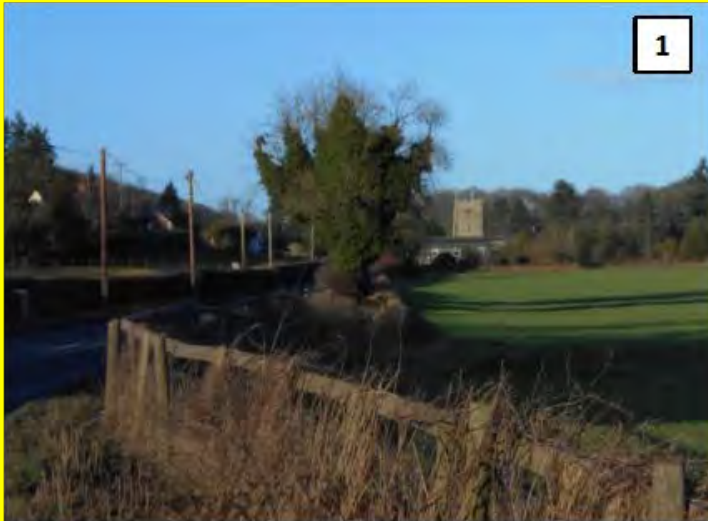
The following views which are identified on Map Env7 (below) shall be protected. Any development or alterations to an area within the identified views must ensure that key features of the view can continue to be enjoyed including distant buildings, areas of landscape and the juxtaposition of village edges and countryside -

- a) Views to and from Yatton Hill and Croft Ambrey (views 3,4,5 & 6)
- b) St John the Baptist and St Alkmund's Church, Aymestrey; (views 1)
- c) Views from School Wood and Pokehouse Wood across Aymestrey valley (views 2)
- d) Leinthall Earls Church and environs. (views 7)

Map Env 7



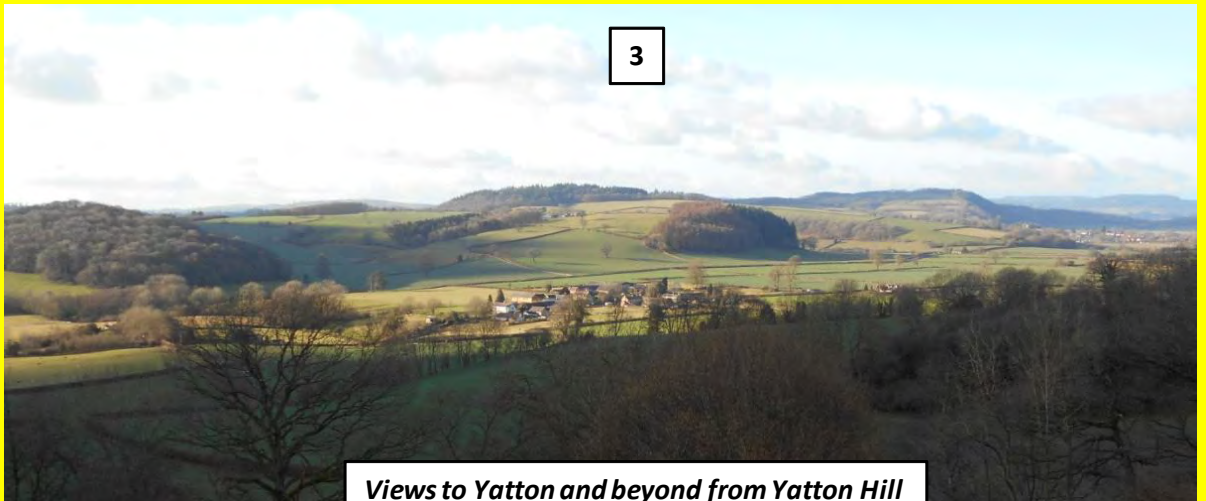
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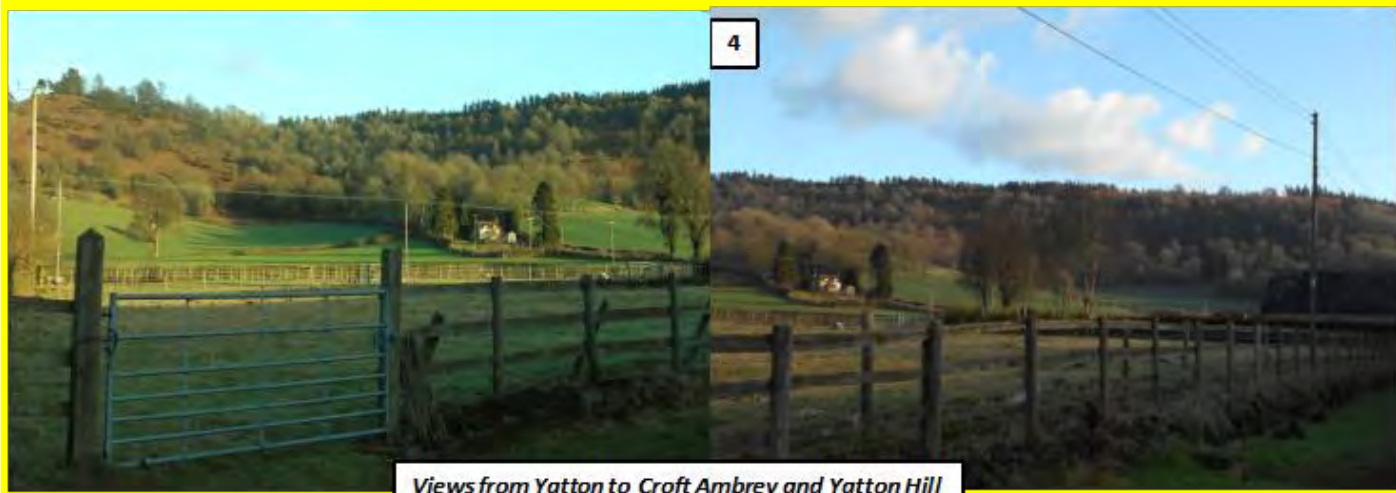
Aymestrey Church approaching along the A4110 northwards



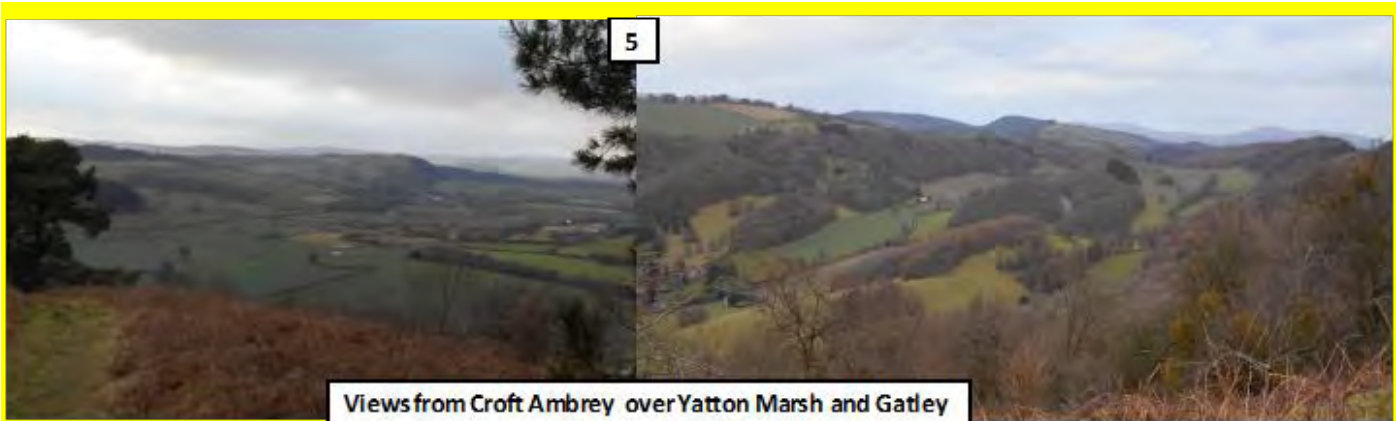
Aymestrey from School Wood & Pokehouse Wood



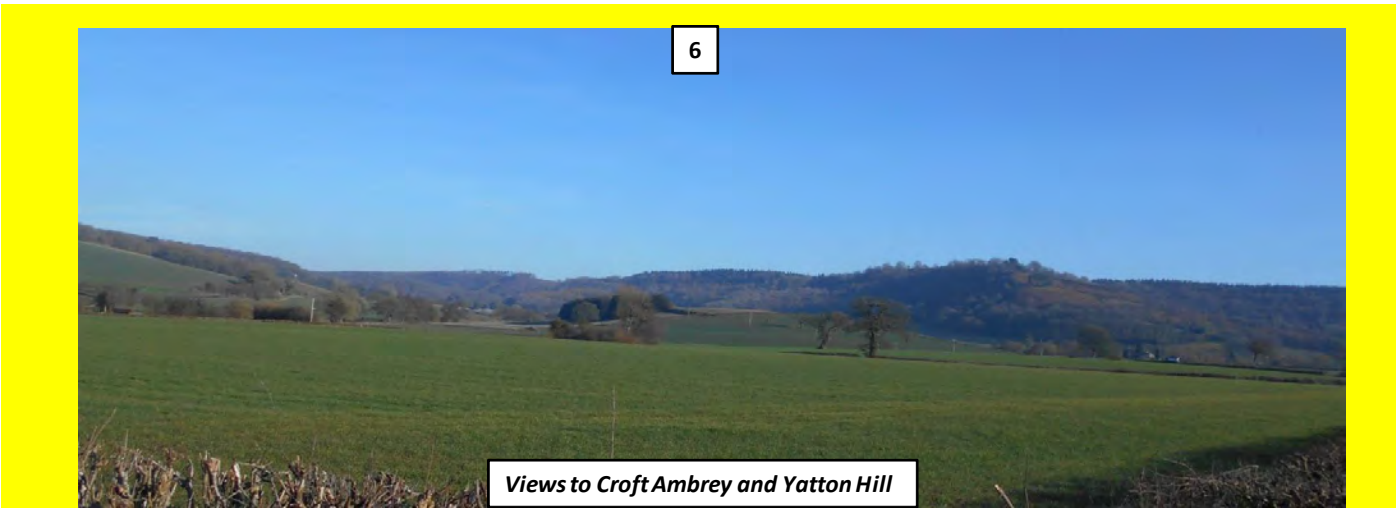
Views to Yatton and beyond from Yatton Hill



Views from Yatton to Croft Ambrey and Yatton Hill



Views from Croft Ambrey over Yatton Marsh and Gatley



Views to Croft Ambrey and Yatton Hill



REASONS AND INTERPRETATION

5.19 The above areas were repeatedly cited as important by the community in the feedback from the NDP Questionnaire and their preservation and enhancement should form part of any relevant proposals.

Policy AYEnv8: Protection from Flood Risk

New development shall be subject to the Flood Risk 'sequential' and 'exception' tests set out in the National Planning Policy Framework, and housing development will not be permitted in areas identified as flood zones 2 and 3. Where other forms of development are necessary in areas at risk of flooding, full and effective mitigation measures must be provided. No development will be permitted that will result in increased flood risk to properties elsewhere.

Proposals should also have regard for the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) 2009 for Herefordshire or any form of its updated equivalent.

Where flood risk is identified, developers shall undertake full and detailed flood risk assessments, including taking into account climate change, to inform decisions on planning applications.

Development should not cause or increase surface water flooding or risk of pollution. Opportunities to address existing surface flooding problems should be taken where available.

Where the management of drainage needs to be addressed, developers should utilise or contribute to sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) to prevent any risk of flooding, and where this is practicable, include measures to support biodiversity. Compliance with this policy should be secured by conditions to any planning permission.

REASONS AND INTERPRETATION

- 5.20 Substantial areas within the Parish fall within areas identified by the Environment Agency to be at risk of flooding along the river Lugg. Both Aymestrey village and Mortimers Cross are affected by flooding and development within these areas may also increase flooding elsewhere. Flooding is also associated with the brook at Leinthall Earls. Relevant development should be restricted within these areas where possible and proposals should not result in increased flooding elsewhere. This policy seeks to address this issue. Surface water run-off from fields and the highway can also be a problem in some areas. Where appropriate, developers must show that the flood risk has been fully addressed and includes measures brought forward as necessary to protect development without adversely affecting other properties. This reinforces Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy Policy SD3.
- 5.21 In addition, given the extent of flooding within the two settlements referred to, it is important that storm water drainage from development does not increase the level of run off and that it should reflect greenfield flows. Consequently, developers should ensure sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) are utilised to make sure run-off levels are acceptable. A range of SuDS systems are available and should be considered. These include retention ponds, infiltration trenches and basins, rain gardens, sand filters, detention basins, swales, rainwater harvesting, permeable paving and green roofs. In addition, such systems as wetlands, for example shallow ponds, and bio-retention/filter strip, including tree pits, can have biodiversity benefits and measures to benefit wildlife are to be encouraged.

6. Transport Policies

- 6.1 Nearly 80% of those responding to the Parish questionnaire survey indicated improvements were needed to address speeding vehicles through the Parish. A similar proportion considered footpath and bridle path maintenance needed to be improved. A notable proportion (54%) agreed that improvements to address the volume and type of traffic were necessary. Speeding vehicles, noise, pollution and safety are significant disadvantages, especially for Aymestrey village and Mortimers Cross.

Policy AYT1: Traffic within the Parish

Aymestrey Parish Council will work with Herefordshire Council and development proposals will, where relevant; ensure that their impact on the road network is acceptable. This will include increasing transport choices through different modes of travel. Consideration should be given to :

- a) Providing better access to and use of public transport, cycling and walking links to serve the community.**
- b) Ensuring other narrow lanes are capable of accommodating traffic generated by new proposals while protecting their character.**
- c) Introducing measures that would improve and add to the Public Rights of Way network.**

REASONS AND INTERPRETATION

- 6.2 Aymestrey Parish Council will work with Herefordshire Council to introduce measures to improve the road network, in particular to ensure greater safety and reduce the impact of vehicles including through ;
- a) Slowing vehicle speed in Aymestrey and Mortimers Cross villages through traffic calming measures.
 - b) Other measures to manage vehicle speed through settlements within the Parish.
 - c) Improving safety at dangerous junctions.
 - d) Enabling additional passing spaces to be provided along the road used by quarry traffic between Leinthall Earls Quarry to the A4110;
- 6.3 Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy policy SS4 indicates that Herefordshire Council will work with local communities and developers to bring forward improvements to the local and strategic transport network to reduce congestion improve air quality and road safety and offer greater transport choices. This policy identifies those matters that the local community will seek to include in those discussions, all of which meet the provisions included within Policy SS4. Discussions between Balfour Beatty (acting as agents of Herefordshire Council and Aymestrey Parish Council in respect of highway matters) have identified and agreed several measures which make up a traffic calming scheme for Aymestrey village, some of which may also be implemented at Mortimers Cross. These measures include village gates, removal of 'cats' eyes and all existing road surface lines and the "30" roundels

to be replaced with solid lines at either side of the carriageway (all of which will give an impression of the road narrowing) and a raised kerbing area by the church Lych gate with associated hash markings at either end. Future options for consideration could include the installation of a permanent and enforceable speed camera and two pinch points (one for south-bound and one for north-bound traffic) situated within the village boundary.

- 6.4 A survey in November 2011 conducted on behalf of Safer Roads Partnership identified that 79% of the over 3,350 vehicles exceeded the 30mph speed limit through Aymestrey village, with some 22% exceeding 40mph. Proposals for a calming traffic upon entry to and through the village is considered important to the local community and should be given the highest priority within the discussions that are to take place. In addition, the 40mph speed limit through Mortimers Cross is exceeded by many vehicles, including heavy vehicles. This settlement is to be the location for new housing development and the Parish Council will engage with the relevant authorities to seek a reduction in the speed limit in this area to 30 mph to ensure that an additional highway access in this location can be safely accommodated.
- 6.5 Measures to improve safety at existing junctions and enhance the Public Rights of Way network to benefit tourism and residents. The Mortimer Trail long distance walking route passes through the Parish following the north bank of the river Lugg where it skirts Aymestrey village, passes through Yatton and near to Croft Ambrey hillfort. It also passes through Lyepole and Covenhope within the Parish. Associated circular routes might usefully be developed within the Parish.
- 6.6 The policy also supports Herefordshire **Council's** desire to offer greater transport choices for which it is important to retain existing bus services and to safeguard pedestrians/walkers and cyclists. Aymestrey and Mortimers Cross sit on one of the more popular **Land's End** to John **O'Groats** national cycle routes.
- 6.7 There are limited passing spaces along the lane used by quarry traffic between Leinthall Earls and the A4110. The provision of additional spaces would improve safety and convenience. It is understood that the parties involved would consider assisting with such additional provision.

Policy AYT2: Highway Design Requirements

Proposals for development should be capable of being accommodated safely upon the local highway network through:

- a) Recognising that key local distributor roads within the Parish are the A4110 and B4362 which are to be regarded as more suitable than other local roads to accommodate additional traffic generated by new development.**
- b) Being located on roads that have sufficient capacity to connect to these local key distributor roads.**
- c) Avoiding any significant increase in the volume of traffic travelling through the settlements within the Parish by directing development to appropriate locations.**
- d) Making appropriate provision in the design and layout of roads serving new developments to ensure suitable sight-lines for safe access onto the highway, including for service vehicles such as refuse lorries, having regard to turning requirements.**
- e) Providing, where possible, safe and practical connections to the existing public right of way network through providing new public rights of way and cycleways.**
- f) Making adequate provision for off-street parking within residential development, including parking for visitor's in-line with highway design guidance and cycle parking provisions.**
- g) Ensuring the amenity of residents is not adversely affected by traffic.**
- h) Protecting the safety of pedestrians and cyclists, especially where there are no public footpaths.**
- i) Ensuring development proposals do not detract from the enjoyment of users of Public Rights of Way**
- j) Ensuring development does not lead to pressure for the provision of street lighting where none is currently present.**
- k) Including measures in development proposals to keep vehicle journeys to a minimum.**

REASONS AND INTERPRETATION

- 6.7 This policy seeks to address the impacts of additional development on the local highway network. With the need to accommodate further development, it is essential that the highway requirements, especially in terms of safety, are met and that the network can cope with increases in traffic generated. This applies not only in the settlements where some growth is proposed, but also elsewhere in the Parish where development may come forward through other policies in this NDP and the Local Plan. Development, especially that of significant scale, should normally be accessed from either of the two key local distributors. However, it is recognised that minor developments or that which cannot take place elsewhere, may need to utilise other roads. These should have the potential to accommodate such development. Attention must be paid to the impact of traffic on residential amenity. Opportunities for new/enhanced pedestrian and/or cycle links should be explored where possible. There is no street lighting within the Parish and there is support for maintaining dark skies and tranquility. This policy complements Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy policy MT1.

7. Jobs and Economy Policies

- 7.1 Notable businesses in Aymestrey Parish include the **builders'** merchants and sawmill at Mortimers Cross; Leinthall Earls Quarry and associated transport; and two public houses. As might be expected farming is a major land use as well as local employer, and many such businesses include elements of diversification, especially into tourism. There are also high levels of self-employment that make an important contribution to the local economy and which need to be recognised by this NDP. The future of Leinthall Earls Quarry is not a matter for this NDP but will be considered by Herefordshire Council within its Waste and Minerals Local Plan. However, NDP policies covering transport will be relevant. There are no specific proposals within this plan to allocate specific areas of land for employment.

Policy AYJE1: Business, Farming and Employment

Proposals for development to support new or existing business or for farm diversification and other land-based rural businesses will be supported where:

- a) The scale of development is consistent with the character and environment of the Parish especially that defined for the landscape character area within which it is to be located and,**
- b) It will not result in any loss of amenity to neighbouring properties, or other users of surrounding land. This includes generation of noise, odour, dust or any other emission that would reduce quality of life or the experience of the Parish for visitors.**
- c) Proposals for new agricultural buildings or commercial polytunnels must demonstrate no significant adverse effects on the landscape, other environmental considerations or amenity, either alone or in accumulation with other relevant developments; that there is safe access to the highway, and that it will not result in a significant increase in heavy vehicle movements upon unsuitable roads.**

REASONS AND INTERPRETATION

- 7.3 This policy supports employment and business proposals where they reflect the small scale and environmental qualities and character of the Parish and its settlements. The physical constraints of the Parish - including topography, flood risk and highway network – limit opportunities for large scale employment development. Such development that meets the provisions of this policy should preserve the character of the settlement or area in which it is located and serve to enhance the special character of the Parish in accordance with policies within this NDP. Existing businesses and the ability to work from home should not be adversely affected because these have and will continue to make important contributions to the local economy.

Policy AYJE2: Tourism Development

Proposals for small-scale tourism and related development compatible with the character and other environmental qualities of the Parish will be supported where they comply with the policies of this plan and the HC Core Strategy and the following:

- a) Proposals do not result in any loss of amenity for neighbouring properties or other land users, including other visitors arising in particular from noise, traffic or visual impacts and,**
- b) Proposals will include appropriate access and parking arrangements and do not give rise to a significant increase in traffic on the minor roads of the Parish.**

REASONS AND INTERPRETATION

- 7.4 Tourism developments that preserve and enhance the environmental qualities of the Parish, especially those that celebrate the quality of the environment, have and should continue to contribute to the local economy.

Policy AYJE3: Working from Home

Working from home, including through the provision of live-work units in locations where residential development would normally be permitted, will be supported provided:

- (a) There is no adverse impact on the amenity of adjacent dwellings through noise or other pollution;**
- (b) Traffic generation and parking will not adversely affect residential amenity.**
- (c) The use is confined to the dwelling curtilage.**

REASONS AND INTERPRETATION

- 7.5 There is support for the working from home, which is already a major contributor to the economy of the Parish/County. Should such businesses or uses expand to the extent that planning permission is required then there needs to be safeguards. Those indicated are considered appropriate to ensure residential amenity of neighbouring properties and the character of the area more generally is fully protected.

8. Housing Policies

- 8.1 Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy sets a level of proportional housing growth that is required between 2011 and 2031. For Aymestrey Parish the minimum requirement is 23 new dwellings. Some 18 new dwellings have either been built or received planning permission since 2011 leaving a minimum of a further 5 to be provided.
- 8.2 Rural windfalls within the Parish over the period 2001-2016 delivered 11 houses and based on this trend continuing, this would suggest an allowance of 15 dwellings would come forward during the plan period 2011-2031 through Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy policy RA3. Some 4 of the 15 dwellings came forward between 2011 and 2016 suggesting the trend is continuing. Consequently, the remaining allowance of 11 dwellings would be a reasonable assumption in terms of contribution towards the required level of proportional housing growth (see Table 1).
- 8.3 The settlements where most new housing should take place are identified within Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy and cannot be changed, although the NDP can determine where development might be located within one or more of these.
- 8.4 In determining which sites might be considered for inclusion in the NDP they have to be available and suitable for development and as part of the process for assessing opportunities a 'call for sites' was undertaken. The results of the site analysis are available at www.Aymestrey.org under NDP Site Assessments.

Policy AYH1: Housing on Land at Mortimers Cross

Land amounting to around 0.5 hectares at Mortimers Cross, shown on Mortimers Cross Policies Map, is proposed for housing development – around 12 dwellings - where it must comply with the following requirements:

- a) **The design and layout should comply with the requirements of the Mortimers Cross Development Brief and Design Guide (Appendix 1).**
- b) **Developers should show, through appropriate evidence, that the provisions of policies AYEnv5 and AYEnv8 can be met and especially that foul and storm water drainage can be accommodated without causing pollution or flooding to other properties and land. In addressing the management of drainage, developers should ensure any proposed scheme that meets the above requirement is fully implemented before development is brought into use. Regard should also be given to utilising a SuDs scheme.**
- c) **An archaeological investigation should be undertaken in accordance with Herefordshire Council's Archaeology and Development Supplementary Planning Document¹¹ before any development commences.**
- d) **Provision should be made for safe vehicular access, links with the public footpath network and vehicle parking arrangements that will not detract from the site's rural setting.**

¹¹ [file:///C:/Users/User/Downloads/Archaeology SPD June 2010.pdf](file:///C:/Users/User/Downloads/Archaeology_SPD_June_2010.pdf)

REASONS AND INTERPRETATION

- 8.5 This land lies at the heart of what is the settlement of Mortimers Cross and will join up the two separate built-up areas to form a coherent whole. However, care in its design is needed to ensure that the impact of any development does not result in the urbanization of this settlement but reflects the rural landscape within which it is set. This site comprises part of a larger area of water meadow which includes land further to the west; land comprising a number of dwellings, park homes and **builders'** merchant to the north; the A4110 along its eastern edge; and Mortimers Cross Inn to the south. Design guidance, including using a planning concept approach, is proposed to inform the development of this site because of the range of important issues that need to be addressed, especially given that Mortimers Cross is a very small settlement to which attention must be given to form, layout, character and setting, given the requirements of HCS policy RA2(1).
- 8.6 The area has been defined to retain an element of the water meadow, which has biodiversity value and that sits below a steeply sloping bank where runoff is understood to result in waterlogging. Flood risk areas to the north and to the east are known to suffer from excess surface water. This area might also accommodate any swale required to accommodate surface water and provision for foul water drainage. In addition, there are wells supplying domestic water to the two houses immediately adjacent to this plot to the north. Detailed water treatment measures must be presented to deal with excess run-off created by any development and the waste water and effluent generated by any new dwellings. Consequently any proposed development must show robust water management/treatment measures which are both achievable and sustainable.
- 8.7 Work is currently being undertaken to seek the location of the Battle of Mortimers Cross 1461 with a view to it being designated a Battlefield Site by Historic England. Given the proximity of the site to the probable location of the battle the site may contain buried archaeology and it is in the public interest for an archaeological assessment of this site to be carried out.
- 8.8 The requirements in relation to access, provision of footpaths and car parking are covered by policy AYT2 although it is important that these are undertaken in a sympathetic manner to retain the rural character of the Parish and avoid any urban or suburban appearance within the important landscape. This hamlet out of the entire Parish is the best served by public transport.

Policy AYH2: Settlement Boundaries

Settlement boundaries are defined for Aymestrey Village, Leinthall Earls, Mortimers Cross and Yatton on their respective Policies Maps. Within these boundaries, and with the exception of land proposed for housing in Policy AYH1, new housing development will be restricted to sensitive infilling, alterations or extensions. Outside of this boundary no residential development will be permitted, including upon adjacent or adjoining sites, unless it complies with one or more provisions of Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy policies. Within the settlement boundaries development should comply with policy AYH3.

REASONS AND INTERPRETATION

- 8.9 None of the four settlements had previously had settlement boundaries defined for them and new housing development was restricted to those exceptions that were allowed within the open countryside. As a consequence, such boundaries have been drawn for the first time and it in undertaking this task it has been considered essential to take into account Core Strategy policy RA2, in so far as it relates to settlements listed in Figure 4.15. In this regard it is essential to demonstrate boundaries pay attention to the form, layout, character and setting of the settlement when considering the advice set out in Herefordshire **Council's** Guidance Note 20.
- 8.10 Aymestrey settlement boundary - Its character reflects that of a small historic settlement with very few modern buildings and no suburban layouts such as cul-de-sacs. A settlement boundary has been defined that seeks to retain the single plot depth development along the road frontage on the west side of the A4110 the Principal Road which follows the alignment of the Roman Road, Watling Street. Limited development extends back from the road frontage only where, historically, this comprised agricultural buildings. Modern agricultural buildings have been excluded from the settlement boundary. In addition, the boundary reflects the fact that housing does not extend up the slopes of the hill that sits close to the frontage on the west side but sits at their very bottom, in line with the characteristic of this landscape type. More recently an incongruous anomaly in terms of a tourism development comprising log cabins is set back from the frontage on the hill slope and this demonstrates the adverse effects such development would have upon the form and character of the village, which is an important consideration for Aymestrey within Herefordshire local Plan Core Strategy policy RA2. This form of development should not set a precedent for further such development. On the east side of the road land falls within the Riverside Meadows Landscape Type and this is typically unsettled except for properties such as mills. The properties currently upon this side of the road have been excluded from the settlement boundary to reflect its landscape characteristic which is added to by an open 'parkland' appearance.
- 8.11 Leinthall Earls settlement boundary – Although a settlement boundary has been defined that might potentially result in the loss of this characteristic through infilling there is no indication that the estate which owns the village would promote such development. Nevertheless, there needs to be consistency in terms of defining settlement boundaries within the NDP area. Criterion (1) in Policy RA2 suggests that as Leinthall Earls falls within Table 4.15, its character which reflects that of a historic working village based on agricultural and forestry activity should be capable of appropriate protection. A settlement boundary has been defined that follows physical boundaries, particularly curtilages of dwellings, to incorporate what is the built-up area of the settlement. Outlying properties have been excluded in that this would result in significant gaps where development would result in a major change to the **village's** character. Only a small amount of housing growth has been requested by the estate that owns the village and the NDP seeks to accommodate part of this within the defined settlement boundary while protecting the setting of St **Andrew's** Church (see paragraph 8.20). The modern farm buildings are excluded from the settlement boundary. They support major modern agricultural activity for the wider operation extending beyond the Parish. Those buildings forming the historic farmstead of Hall Farm are, however, included in that they contribute towards village form and character.
- 8.12 Mortimers Cross settlement boundary – the form of this settlement has developed in an ad-hoc fashion containing a range of residential and economic forms of development and there

are no design aspects that can be defined which might be used to describe a sense of place or local distinctiveness. Notwithstanding this, it is defined as a settlement within HCS figure 4.15; it has no core that might be defined as a built-up area. However, given its current status, the intention is to seek to create a small core area and a settlement boundary has been defined that encompasses the public house, adjacent historic farmstead and proposed housing site (policy AYH1). This excludes the sawmill, builders' merchant, and two dwellings to the north of the proposed housing site, and park homes site. With regard to the first two, these are businesses providing local employment and fall within the area prone to flooding and consequently would not be appropriate for residential development. The flood area also covers some of the dwellings and park homes while in relation to the latter it is recognised these have a role in contributing to meeting housing needs but there is concern that inclusion within any settlement boundary might alter their status and it would be unwise to affect tenancy arrangements through the NDP. Consequently, these areas have been excluded from the settlement boundary. The modern farm buildings associated with Mortimers Cross Farm are also excluded from the settlement boundary although the historic farmstead house and barns are included in that they contribute towards village form and character.

- 8.13 Yatton Settlement boundary – A boundary has been defined for its main built-up area of Yatton utilising identifiable features. It is not proposed to promote development within the settlement in that it is the least sustainable location of the four settlements within the Parish. Yatton Marsh is excluded in that it comprises very small groups of isolated properties with no sense of them comprising a settlement. No sites came forward for the settlement within the 'call for sites'. To the south-west, not all the curtilage area to former farmstead complex that was recently converted to a number of dwellings is included in order to retain the settlement form. In the north-west the modern farm buildings associated with Upper Yatton Farm are excluded from the settlement boundary although the historic farmstead house and barns are included in that they contribute towards settlement's form and character.

Policy AYH3: Housing Development within Settlement Boundaries

Within settlement boundaries development, including alterations and extensions will be permitted where it meets all of the following criteria where they are appropriate to the particular settlement:

- a) The form, scale, layout, character, setting and local distinctiveness of the settlement is conserved or enhanced.**
- b) The density and building line/form of the particular part of the settlement within which it is to be located is respected.**
- c) Development should incorporate materials that reflect the historic buildings within the Parish. Walls should be constructed of stone, timber framing or rendered and roofs should be thatched or of natural slate. In some locations brick or timber may be appropriate, taking account of the local context.**
- d) It will not result in the loss of important features, especially those of significant landscape and biodiversity value, such as trees, hedgerows, or significant frontage gaps or green spaces that contribute to the unique character of the settlement.**
- e) It does not adversely affect the amenity of adjacent residential properties. and that local agricultural or commercial activity does not adversely affect the amenity of future occupants.**
- f) Safe vehicular access and links with the public footpath network can be provided.**

- i) Vehicle parking meets or exceeds Herefordshire Council standards although arrangements should ensure that it will not detract from the settlement's street scene but form an integral part of the overall design.**
- j) There should also be provision made for cycle parking with developments**

REASONS AND INTERPRETATION

- 8.14 Within all four settlements Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy expects proposals to demonstrate attention to the form, layout, character and setting of the location and settlement. The design criteria listed pay regard to this requirement and specific locally distinctive features are listed for each of the settlements in terms of principles to inform the layout and design of proposals. These must be addressed through design statements where appropriate. Protection of residential amenity must be assured whatever the form of the settlements. The protection of important natural and heritage assets must also be considered within those settlements and areas where they contribute to both local distinctiveness and the **County's** network of sites. Maintaining highway safety is essential as is the safety of pedestrians where connectivity should be maintained and enhanced when possible. The low levels of public transport within the rural area has resulted in increased car ownership such that parking often impinges upon the street scene and residential environments. Adequate provision for parking must be made in ways that do not impinge upon the residential environment and amenity.
- 8.15 Aymestrey Village development principles –The important aspects of form, scale, layout, character, setting for Aymestrey village that should influence design are:
- The settlement is essentially linear in form, stretching north-south, with no development in depth except where this is the result of buildings associated with historic farmsteads. The character reflects two landscape types with that on the east side of the A4110 already referred to in 8.10 above. On the west the landscape type is 'Principal Wooded Hills where the settlement pattern is usually one of small scale properties such as forestry workers cottages, and only capable of accommodating occasional additional dwellings at a low density¹². In order for any proposal to be acceptable **it's** scale must reflect the form, size and density described which is typical within this village.
 - Its character is added to by the fact that no dwellings look even remotely like any of their neighbours, nor do they extend significantly back from the road frontage, and certainly not onto the lower slopes of hillside to the west. There are a number of recently constructed timber clad holiday cabins which conflict with this characteristic, but these are not permanent dwellings and their effect is mitigated through their use of materials, significant landscaping and avoidance of domestic clutter and similar paraphernalia.
 - Materials and features vary but reflect the historical development of the village, and this variation ensures that the potential suburban visual effect of new red-brick properties is avoided. This should be an objective of any visual analysis set out within any design statement.
- 8.16 The need to protect heritage assets, particularly the setting of Church of St John the Baptist and St Alkmund, is important to the character of the village. Historic England has expressed concerns about the need to preserve the setting of The Church, in particular, which is listed Grade I and sits in the flat land of the Lugg valley. Its analysis indicates that the majestic

¹² See Herefordshire Landscape Character Assessment Supplementary Planning Guidance, page 40

square stone tower of the church is a focal point in views up the valley on leaving Mortimer's Cross. The valley provides the setting in which the church is experienced and one which bears evidence to an ancient history of strategic occupation from the Scheduled hillforts of Pyon Wood and Croft Ambrey to the undesignated route of the Roman Road to Leintwardine, the Scheduled remains of medieval motte and bailey castles, the undesignated site of the Battle of Mortimers Cross 1461 and medieval and post medieval Listed Buildings. The setting of the church is therefore extensive, attractive and characterised by designated and undesignated heritage which contributes to the significance of the church. Its view is that development on the south-east side of the village would be within the setting of the church and would impact upon it and Section 16 of the NPPF requires the significance of the Church and its setting should be considered. This would also apply to other heritage assets. Consequently, the criterion included in this policy is important so that the balance can be drawn between harm and public benefits. This requirement has also influenced the definition of the settlement boundary. A further important heritage asset on the east side of the A4110 is the imposing Yatton Court set back from the river Lugg on its north side together with its associated Unregistered Park and Garden. These contributing to the special character of river meadow environment.

- 8.17 Reference has already been made to the two landscape character types marked by the A4110 route through Aymestrey. Landscape and biodiversity features that are important to these landscape types are described in Herefordshire **Council's** Landscape Character Assessment Supplementary Planning Guidance. Tree cover is an important characteristic of the village and these vary between fine examples of specimen trees close to the valley floor to the wooded hills that form the backcloth to the valley setting. The river Lugg is an SSSI that flows into the River Wye SAC and the biodiversity elements that contribute to the associated ecosystem need to be retained or enhanced to ensure the river achieves favourable conservation status. Important green spaces and gaps ensure that, not only is the density requirement maintained but that views are available to emphasise the **village's** attractive and historic setting. Two have been identified for protection within policies AYEnv6 and 7 and at Map Green Spaces page 27.
- 8.18 The **settlement's** location along the A4110 is such that there needs to be an emphasis upon highway safety and this includes ensuring that there is no increase in road-side parking. The protection of pedestrians and cyclists is also highlighted in that the amount, speed and size of vehicles passing through the **village's** narrow street is a cause for concern.
- 8.19 Leinthall Earls development principles – Leinthall earls is an estate village within a single ownership. It is a small village with a central core at the junction of several narrow lanes with The Hall Farm on the frontage along its western edge. Further individual properties comprising small cottages and farmsteads sit within a U shape road configuration on the eastern side of the village and these sit within reasonably sized plots at a low density. A limited number of other primarily agricultural buildings lie to the north and south along other lanes, one complex of which has recently been converted to four dwellings. The Listed St **Andrew's** Church lies adjacent to this development. A number of large modern agricultural buildings are located on the western side of The Hall Farm providing the base for operations not only along the Gatley valley but for other substantial holdings elsewhere. Gatley Park, a Historic England Registered Park and Garden sits along the northern side of the village with a grade II* Listed Building of the same name at the centre. Beyond this and out of view is Leinthall Earls Quarry which supplies hard rock utilising a designated route to join the A4110 to avoid large vehicles travelling through the village.

- 8.20 One of the strong characteristics of the village is the absence of pressure to develop gaps within the frontage within the village core. Its loose-knit low-density form and irregular juxtaposition of properties is an essential component contributing towards its local distinctiveness and sense of place. Leinthall Earls is a village where Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy expects proposals to demonstrate attention to the form, layout, character and setting of the location. In this regard the important aspects that should influence design are:
- The village comprises a loose cluster of detached or semi-detached houses or cottages sat within reasonably sized gardens. The scattered settlement patterns are characteristic of the '**Principal** Wooded Hills' landscape type that would accommodate occasional additional dwellings at a low density¹³. In order for any proposal to be acceptable **it's** scale must reflect the form, size and density described which is typical within this village.
 - Its character is added to by the fact that dwellings do not extend significantly back from the road frontage and are individually designed.
 - Materials and features reflect the historical development of the village, and avoid any suburban nature. This should be an objective of any visual analysis set out within any design statement.
- 8.21 The need to protect heritage assets, particularly the settings of St **Andrew's** Church and features associated with Gatley Park are important to the character of the village.
- 8.22 Landscape and biodiversity features that are important to these landscape types are described in Herefordshire **Council's** Landscape Character Assessment Supplementary Planning Guidance. As with other settlements, tree cover is an important characteristic of the village. Important green spaces and gaps ensure that, not only is the density requirement maintained but that important views remain available.
- 8.23 The estate has indicated it is willing to contribute towards meeting the proportional housing growth requirement through making available a site to the north of The Old School House. It has suggested that a small development of some 2/3 dwellings might be accommodated upon this parcel of land although the lower figure is considered more appropriate. This site meets the provisions of Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy policy RA2 in locational terms in that it is within or adjacent to the built-up area of the settlement falling between The Old School House and the barn complex being converted to dwellings at Church Cottage. The wider site does, however, sit in front and to the west of St **Andrew's** Church, a Grade 2* Listed Building. Development to the south-west should be possible while protecting the **church's** setting. An area between any houses and the church should be left open to enable the full setting of the Listed Building to be viewed and retain views from the church to the west. The development should be informed by a heritage impact assessment which should determine the significance of heritage assets in this location and the form of development.
- 8.24 The estate also proposes to convert a barn at the southern end of the village to a dwelling. This would be possible through Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy policy RA5 and not a matter for this NDP although it may count towards the required level of proportional housing growth. A curtilage will need to be defined for this property and this should respect the character of the village.
- 8.25 **Mortimers Cross development principles** – This settlement comprises an area of mixed uses

¹³ See Herefordshire Landscape Character Assessment Supplementary Planning Guidance, page 40

with a limited number of dwellings, a public house, **builders'** merchant, sawmill, working farm, a park homes site and Mortimers Cross Mill which is an English Heritage property. It sits at a staggered cross-roads formed by the A4110 and B4362. There are two Listed Buildings within or close to the settlement. Mortimers Cross Mill sits within Yarpole Group Parish. Parts of the **settlement's** area falls within Flood Risk Zones 2 and 3 on the Environment **Agency's** Flood Maps for Planning and this limits the potential for development significantly. In addition, the A4110 is a particularly fast road through the settlement despite it falling within a 40-mph speed limit. There is a public footpath along the west side of the A4110 for a short length although it does not extend fully along the developed frontage. A short section sits on the east side approaching the telephone box on the north-eastern corner of the cross-roads. The public house, sawmill and **builder's** merchants provide local job opportunities. The future intentions of these operations are unknown. Small Acre Park comprises a number of park homes.

8.26 Those settlement does not have any particular architectural form or character and its essential development requirements are:

- To address ensure development does not flood or cause flooding to other property.
- To ensure there is no pollution of the river Lugg.
- To ensure development does restrict the current businesses that operate within or adjacent to the settlement.
- To create an attractive residential environment.

8.27 Yatton development principles – Although a very small settlement, Yatton has seen a disproportionate amount of development in recent years. It comprises a small group of properties based upon two farm complexes, one of which has recently seen its buildings converted to dwellings and this together with adjacent dwellings comprise what might be described as its main built-up area. The settlement sits away from and to the east of the A4110. Most of its other buildings are 20th century properties. There are no facilities within the settlement.

8.28 Although there is currently no suggestion that further sites are likely to come forward within the settlement, this may not remain the case over the plan-period, and some extensions or alterations to dwellings may be proposed. There are limited landscape features and many important buildings respecting the vernacular. There are also some modern dwellings. Scale of development is important and suburban designs and features should be avoided. Development should not adversely affect valued vistas particularly of Croft Ambrey and Yatton Common.

Policy AYH4: Exception Sites for Affordable Housing.

Affordable housing exception sites will be encouraged where a requirement has been identified through an up to date Housing Needs Assessment. Such sites will not have an unacceptably adverse impact on any of the following....

- a) Amenity or privacy of neighbouring properties.**
- b) The character and appearance of the area.**
- c) The integrity, character or appearance of any historic or natural assets of the Parish.**
- d) There should be safe access for vehicles, and parking arrangements should not detract from the village street scene but be an integral part of the overall design.**

REASONS AND INTERPRETATION

- 8.31 Where there is an identified need for affordable housing, including low-cost market homes for young families with local connections, or smaller homes for older people needing to downsize, but wishing to stay in the community, proposals may come forward through HCS policy H2. However, they will need to meet criteria that would protect the environment and amenity. Locations should be normally close to settlements to avoid unnecessary development in open countryside, and to ensure that affordable homes are integrated into the community rather than placed in isolated locations. Surveys may be undertaken from time to time to identify any need.

Policy AYH5: Conversion of Rural Buildings to Residential Use

Proposals to convert existing buildings to residential use should conform to the requirements of HCS Policy RA5. In addition:

- a) The building is of permanent and substantial construction capable of conversion without major or complete reconstruction. For example, buildings predominantly constructed from materials such as corrugated iron, insulated panels, asbestos, pre-cast concrete, will not be considered suitable for conversion.**
- b) Where permission is granted for the conversion of rural buildings, a condition will be imposed removing residential permitted development rights and garden and parking areas will be tightly constrained.**

REASONS AND INTERPRETATION

- 8.29 Sympathetic conversion of rural buildings is encouraged where it will preserve and protect buildings worth of retention. Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy policy RA5 permits the conversion of redundant or disused rural buildings for business, enterprise, residential or social well-being subject to a number of criteria. It also indicates that in such instances permitted development rights will be removed in relation to future alterations, extensions and other developments and this will ensure that the character of such buildings and their rural setting is protected. There are several buildings within the Parish that are not of sympathetic design and it would not be appropriate to preserve or retain these, in particular for

housing. This policy seeks to ensure that development remains sympathetic to the landscape and development does not significantly alter the rural setting and design of the buildings.

8.32 Table 1 below shows how it is intended that Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy housing target should be met through the approach adopted.

Table 1: Achieving the Housing Target 2011-2031

| | | Number of Dwellings |
|--------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| HC Core Strategy Requirement 2011 – 2031: 23 Dwellings | | |
| 1 | Number of Completions or dwellings with outstanding planning permissions 2011-2017 (source Herefordshire Council) | 12 |
| 2 | Dwellings granted planning permission April – December 2017 | 6 |
| 3 | Mortimer’s Cross Site Allocation | 10-12 |
| 4 | Leinthall Earls sites | 3 |
| 5 | Outstanding rural windfall allowance (estimate of 11 dwellings less the barn conversion at Leinthall Earls included in 4 above) – see para 8.2 | 10 |
| 6 | Potential Total during Plan Period | 42/44 |

Data as at 31.12.2017

* The estimate of dwellings under 3 to 5 is for the purposes of showing how Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy target for the Parish might be met. The estimate in relation to 3 is based upon a medium density and seeks to consider amenity, environmental characteristics and other constraints. It is possible that the number of dwellings may vary from the estimate depending upon the type of dwellings provided at the time.

Policy AYH6: Affordable and Intermediate Homes.

Where affordable or intermediate dwellings are to be retained for that purpose under Section 106 agreements, the priority for their allocation should first be given to those demonstrating a local housing need within Aymestrey Parish. Should at the time of allocation there be nobody with such a connection the accommodation may be allocated to those from the adjacent parishes and subsequently to those within Leominster Housing Market Area, and then Herefordshire.

For the purposes of identifying a local need/connection these shall be:

- (a) Those that live within the Parish.**
- (b) Those currently not living in the Parish but who had done so within the past 10 years.**
- (c) Those that work or are coming to work within the Parish.**
- (d) Those with an essential need to support or be supported by a current resident within the Parish.**

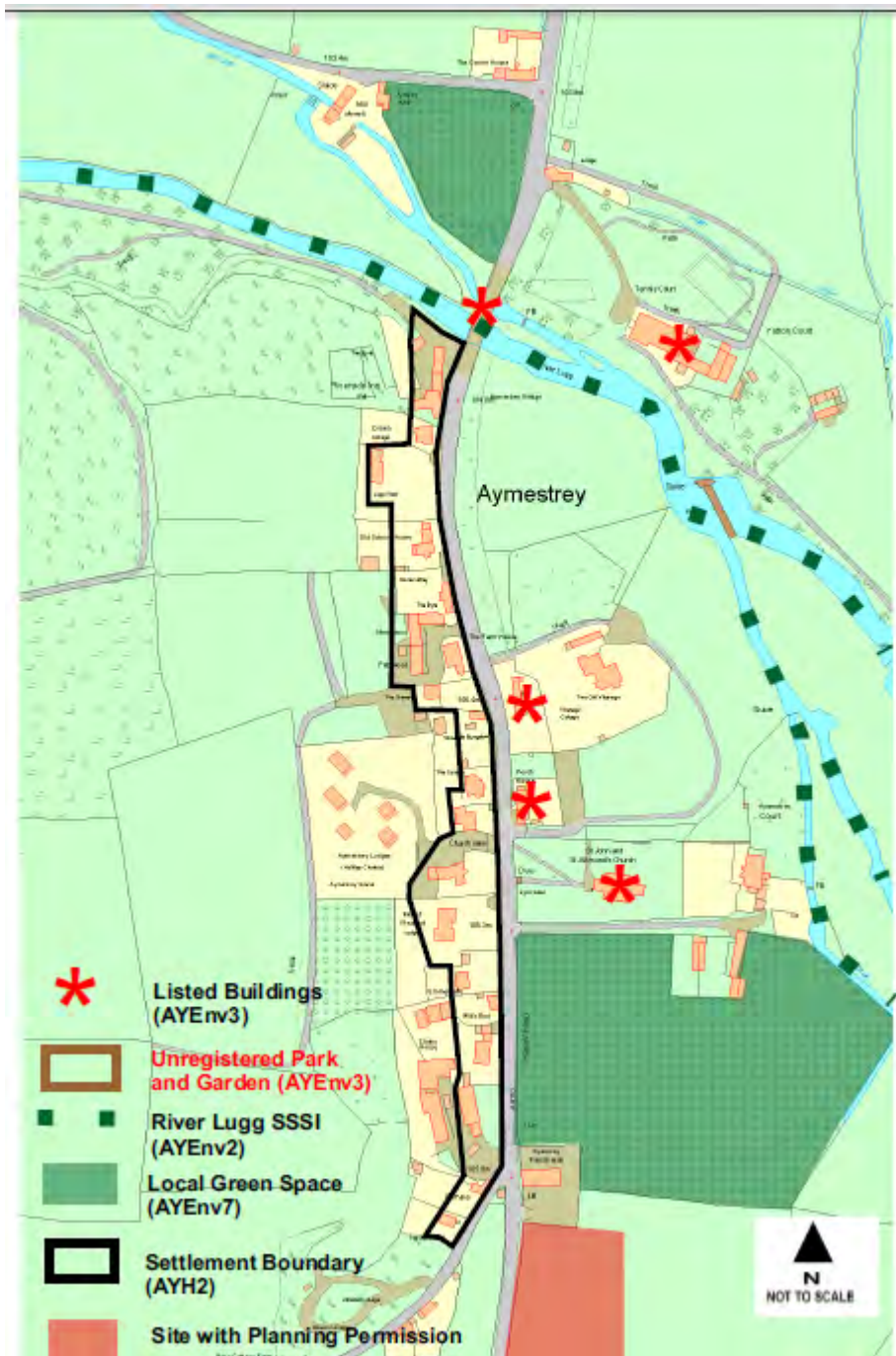
(In each instance the qualifying criteria may apply to other adjacent parishes and areas specified when they become relevant. "local connection" is as defined by the housing allocation policies of Herefordshire Council.)

- 8.33 The extent of affordable housing within Aymestrey Parish is very small. Some provision would reflect the concerns of residents that there should be a mix of housing provision although no up to date survey of specific local needs has been undertaken. The extent of need for affordable housing is, however, considered to be small and a preference would be expected for low-cost home ownership. Affordable housing should in the first instance ensure local housing needs are met, especially those of local people unable to compete within the general housing market. The criteria set out in this policy are considered consistent with the approach adopted across Herefordshire. Provision may well come forward through Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy policy H2. Developers are, nevertheless, encouraged to assist in meeting local housing needs and may wish to provide such housing, even if sites fall beneath the threshold set by Government for this purpose. This approach increases flexibility within the local housing market to the benefit of the wider community.
- 8.34 This policy seeks to satisfy locally identified needs for all life stages, including affordable homes.

9. Delivering the Plan

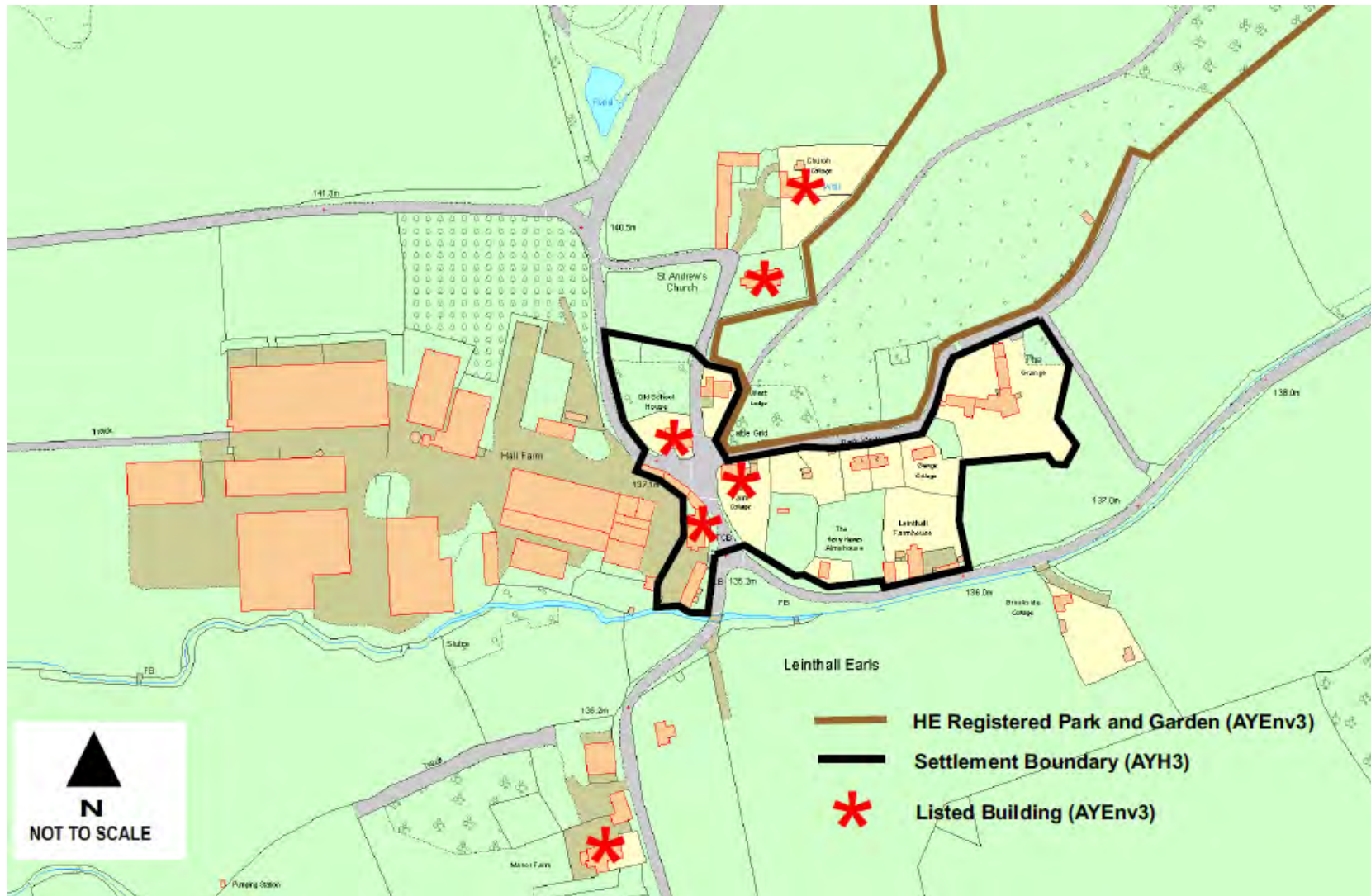
- 9.1 Aymestrey NDP will be adopted as Planning Policy by Herefordshire Council and will become part of the Local Development Framework (The Development Plan). S70(2) of the Town and County Planning Act 1990 and S38(6) of The Planning and Compulsory Purchasing Act of 2004 indicates that planning decisions must be taken in accordance with The Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Consequently, any planning applications within the Parish must demonstrate compliance with this NDP and where there is conflict a robust justification for departing from the NDP will be required, including detailed evidence of any material considerations.
- 9.2 The NDP will be delivered and monitored over the period to 2031 by the Parish Council, working with statutory partners, residents, businesses and community groups. A group of Parish councillors and residents will prepare an annual monitoring report on the progress of the plan, which will form part of the agenda for the annual Parish meeting each spring.
- 9.3 The NDP runs to March 2031 and will need to be reviewed at least five years before the end of that period. There will need to be an option to roll-over the existing plan with suitable revisions for a further period, or start a new plan to cover the period. The timing of such a review will be shaped by decisions on the review of HCS. Recent experience suggests that this process will need to be addressed well before the end-date of adopted plans and it is understood the review of HCS will commence in 2019.

Map 1: Aymestrey Village Policies Map



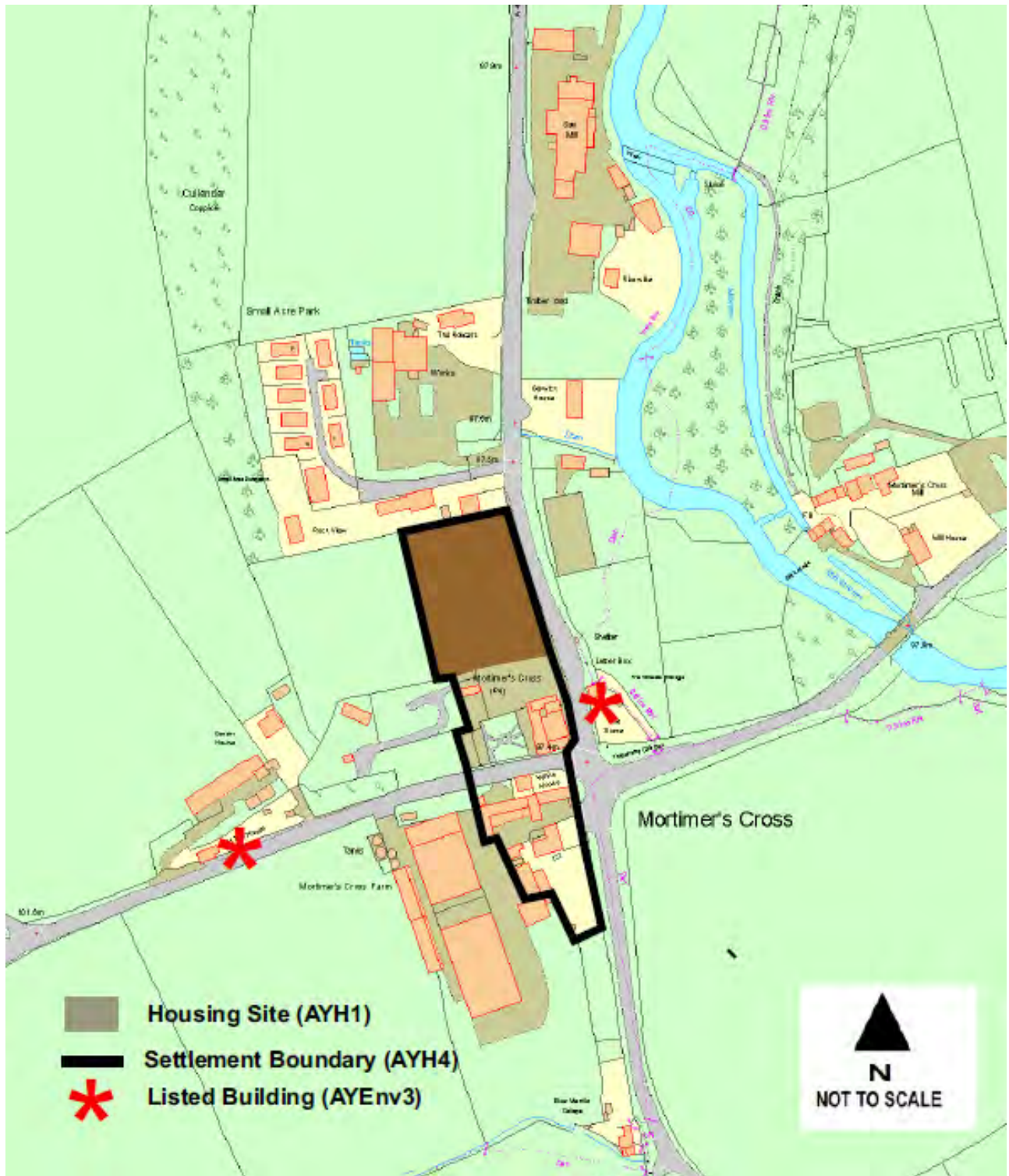
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Map 2: Leinthall Earls Policies Map



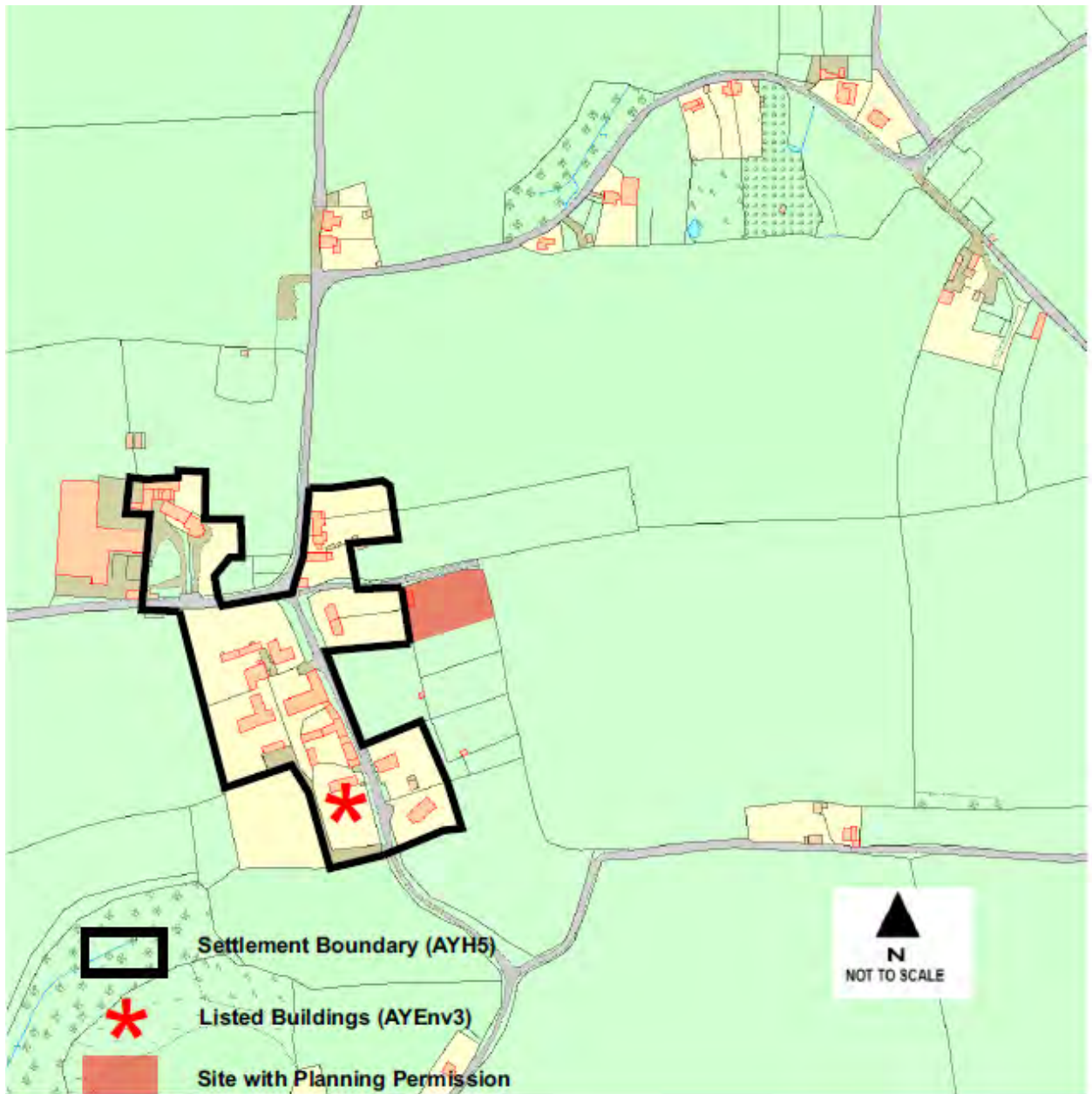
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Map 3: Mortimer's Cross Policies Map



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Map 4: Yatton Policies Map



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Schedule 1: Environmental Report

Environmental Report – Summary

- Parish rich in archaeology and ecology that needs to be preserved. Any development must be complementary to the look and feel of the parish, preserving its uniqueness and place in history.
 - Historic sites need protection from physical development and alteration of visual aesthetics
 - The environment must be protected or where possible enhanced.
 - The Leinthall Earls quarry is the biggest challenge to the environment, not just the mining but the traffic, noise and dust that it creates.
 - The woodlands hide a lot of history, from charcoal **burners'** hearths to Iron Age forts.
 - The river Lugg has provided power throughout the ages and there is potential for other developments. It is also an attraction for tourism. It defines the centre of the parish creating flood plains. A balance needs to be struck between all these factors.
 - There are many historic buildings, many are not listed but this should not allow unchecked development that conflicts with the environment.
 - The environment is under pressure from intensive farming, if there are opportunities to reverse or relieve this stress then that should be encourage.
 - Common areas should be protected for their biodiversity and managed.
 - State woodlands in the parish are becoming uneconomic and are '**deserts**' in a diverse environment. The opportunity to replant and transform them back to a natural environment should be encouraged.
-

Environmental Report –

Aymestrey is one of the Herefordshire's larger parishes at 2,606 hectares and extends 11 km from east to west. It also has an unusually high proportion of woodland at 33 per cent most of which are of ancient origin. The landscape topography is dominated by limestone hills characteristic of this part of north Herefordshire, the investigation into nature and origins of which were to make a key contribution to geology in the 19th century. Roderick Murchison one of the founders of geological science named this rock type '**Aymestrey Limestone**' in 1839. Entering the parish from West at Shirley Farm the river Lugg has cut through this limestone to create a spectacular valley system between the steeply wooded slopes of Mere Hill and Sned Wood and is then forced south by wooded hills of the Croft estate into the wider valley alongside Aymestrey village. It is this diversity of geology and topography that has blessed the parish with stunning scenery and a rich inher-

itance of biodiversity. In their **"Beauties of England and Wales"** published in 1805 Brayley and Britton write *"The valley through which the river Lugg flows, in this part of its course, is extremely rich and picturesque; particularly near Aymestrey, where the bridge, rocks, hanging woods, and beautiful meadows compose a scene worthy of the pencil of Claude"* (Claude Lorrain is the much admired French 17th century landscape painter and draughtsman who influenced Turner).



History and archaeology

The parish is rich in archaeology, evidence of its long history of human occupation. While Croft Ambrey Iron Age fort is most spectacular and best known of archaeological sites there are a great many more sites throughout the parish with over 400 entries in the Historic Environment Record



Crop mark of a Romano-British (?) defensive enclosure, SO418627, 180 meters west of Demesne Farm. This one is not listed on the HER.

(HER), see map Env 2 page 72. A number of arable fields show 'crop marks' of ancient occupation that may be Roman or earlier.

Many ancient earthworks have been recorded including 'ridge and furrow' medieval cultivation, lynchets and ancient boundary banks. These earthwork features survive in unploughed grassland but a fair number of these earthwork sites still listed on the HER have now been damaged or destroyed by ploughing.

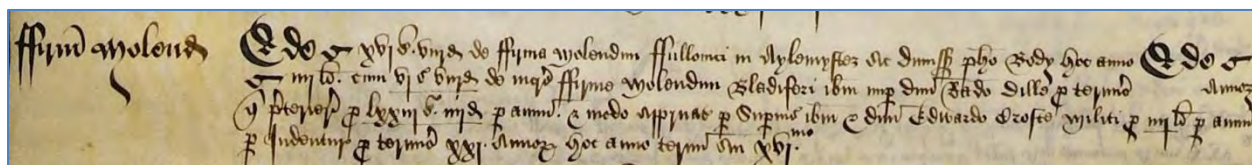
Many archaeological sites survive in the woodlands of the parish including charcoal burners hearths, saw pits, ancient track ways and most notably the camp of Pyon Hill wood. Recently a partial fort was discovered on Mere Hill and there are likely to be further discoveries with accessible technologies such as LIDAR.



Side by side air photo and LIDAR scan of Pyon Hill penetrating the canopy and showing the ramparts, entrance to the east and later quarrying.

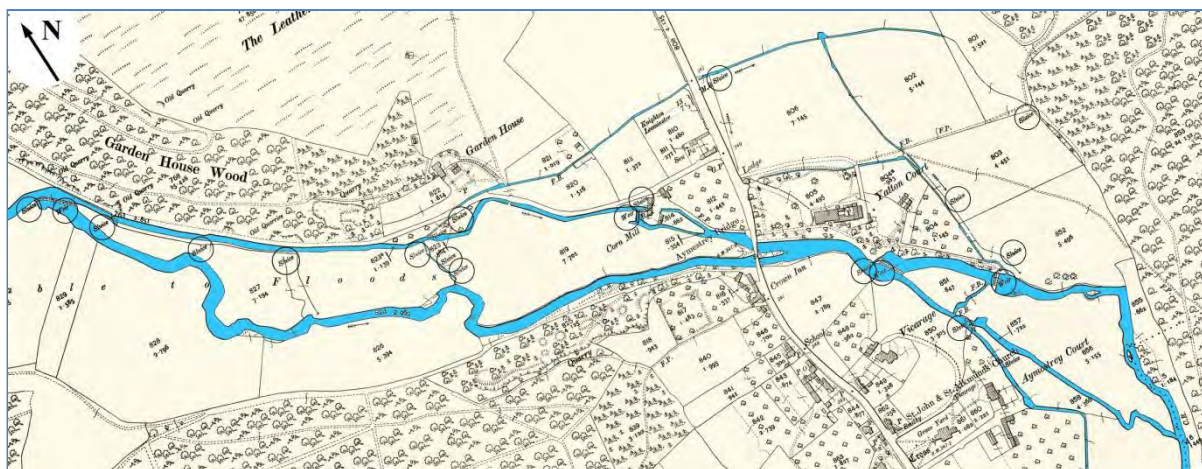
In Domesday Aymestrey is named as 'Elmodestreu', a sub-manor of the Leominster with little information apart from there being '1 hide held by Ralph de Mortimer' and that Leinthall had a woodland '1 league long and 1 league broad'. A hide is about 40 hectares of cultivated land and a league is about 2 km so a large area of woodland. Encompassing the sub-manor of Leinthall Earls to the east, Aymestrey parish includes the formerly extensive medieval Gatley Park which probably derived from the above mentioned Domesday woodland and occupied most of the NE part of the parish. Archive references from the 14th century shows income from the park including timber, 'lop and top' of trees, 'pannage' for pigs and general grazing as well as a reference to an arrest for chasing deer.

An account roll for the year 1324 for Leinthall Earls gives us a glimpse of the farming in the parish at that time which includes payment for iron and the smith's wages for making and mending ploughs, sales of hay from meadows, sale of pasture for the year, fruit from gardens, and "20s 8d received for 4 bullocks and foals and 35 oxen and cows, for each one, 6d, and of 2 oxen for 4 weeks, 8d, and of 2 steers for 3 weeks, 6d for the right to graze in Gatley Park". During Elizabethan times parts of Gatley Park were being converted to farmland since the park keeper Thomas Croft then had "divers trees cut down and carried to Gatley Park to enclose and divide the same".



The water of the river Lugg was used for irrigation of farmland in the valley and motive power for two Aymestrey mills, just west of Yatton Court. An account roll of 1536 gives details of the millers, income to the manor and types of mill:

This text reads "14s 8d from rent of the fulling mill in Aylemyster let to Philip Body this year for. £4 6s 8d for the rent of the corn mill there lately let to Randolph Dille".



A 1.5 km stretch of the Lugg from Garden House Wood to Aymestrey Court mapped in 1903 showing 19 sluices and weirs along a complex and sophisticated arrangement of leats and channels. The main leat arises from a weir under the wood supplying the Aymestrey corn mill and a channel from its 'tail leat' irrigates the meadows north of Yatton Court. The weir by the Court sends water southwards for the meadows either side of the A4110 to Mortimers Cross.

A system of weirs, sluices, water channels (**'leats'**) and mill ponds are required to be engineered for the controlled water supply required for the operation of mills. Leats for mills and field irrigation were dug to take water off a main river using a weir some way upstream to create a head of water. This type of water engineering is centuries old and continued in operation well into the 20th century. The 1903 edition of the 25 inch to the mile Ordnance Survey map shows no less than 37 sluices and weirs within the parish along the Lugg and its various manmade leats and water channels, many were for irrigating water meadows along the Lugg alluvial flood plain. The presence of channels and sluices not associated with powering mills are evidence of managed water meadows either side of Lyepole Bridge, meadows to the north of Yatton Court, its landscaped water features and meadows from Aymestrey Court to Mortimers Cross.

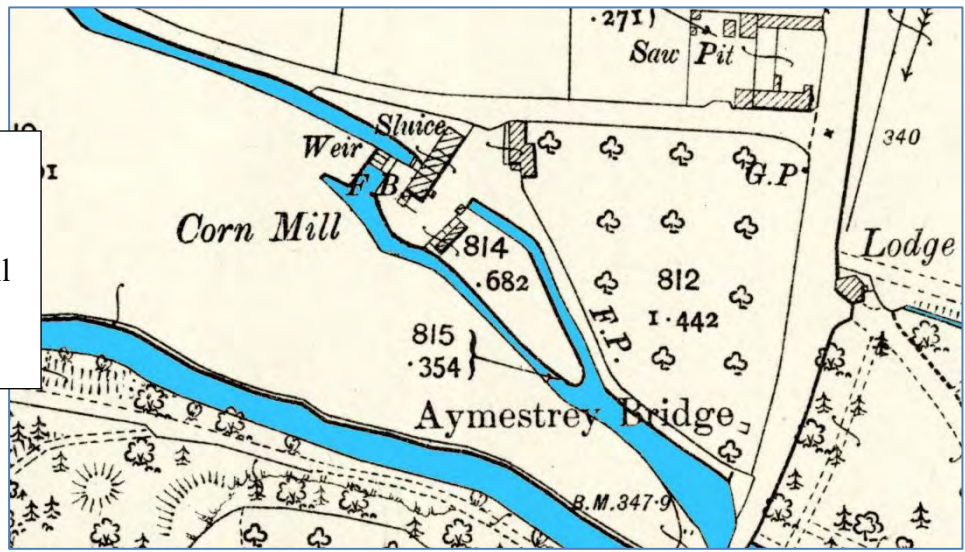
Many of the channels, sluices and other infrastructure of water management have been lost through disuse and most of the water meadows have been ploughed since the date of that map, sometimes compulsorily during the two world wars but more frequently due to the intensification of agriculture since WWII.

Water management is an important part of the heritage of the parish so any surviving components of these water management features should be identified and preserved.



Two photos of Aymestrey Mill taken during the 1950s, well after it became disused, note the bridge over the 'tail leat' and the fishy weather vane! Now a listed building.

Close up the of 1903
25 inch to mile Ordnance
Survey map of the mill and
its weir to hold water in mill
pond (channel to the west)



The Built Environment

Traditionally the parish buildings have been mainly timber frame or stone and when the Royal Commission visited the parish in 1931 it recorded and photographed 29 buildings considered historic and worth listing and most (27) are listed now, (see Env map 4 page 74). These 1931 photographs from the National Monument Record are a valuable record of the build heritage of the parish.



Some Aymestrey buildings 1931, Clockwise from the top left: Oldfield Farm, Court Farm Leinthall Earls, Gatley Park and Upper Lye Farm.



Aymestrey village 2010 © Derek Foxton

Grassland

A significant proportion of the farmland in Aymestrey supports livestock enterprises and the parish has an estimated 718 ha of permanent grassland, 27% of the parish, (see map Env 1 page 71). The agricultural definition of the term '**permanent pasture**' includes grassland that has been ploughed and re-seeded within 5 years so that there is a grey area between leys that are part of an arable rotation farming and permanent grassland.

Only a small fraction of this area contributes to the biodiversity of the parish since most of the grassland is fairly intensively managed in terms of stocking density, fertiliser and chemical weed control. Examples of grassland which is rich in native species including historically common plants such as cowslips, knapweed and ox-eye daisy can be found in the meadows on the north side of the river Lugg either side of the Lyepole Bridge and parts of Shirley Farm. Such species rich grassland has developed slowly over a long time and is easily impoverished by conventional fertilisation and stocking rates. Once lost such assemblages of traditional native meadow species are difficult if not impossible to restore.

Countryside Stewardship schemes can encourage the retention or restoration of species meadows by offering annual area payments under the funded agri-environment schemes (part funded by the EU) but the schemes are bureaucratically complex and the payments insufficient to compete with conventional farming systems and main-stream farm payments. The recently introduced EIA regulations in theory protect '**uncultivated land**', including such meadows, from damage or destruction but good evidence, often lacking, is required.

It is important therefore to review the remaining parcels of species rich grassland in the parish to try to ensure their survival for future generations.



Cowslips, knapweed and other plants typical of species rich grassland in this meadow on the north side of Lugg downstream from Lyepole Bridge. Such meadows are now very rare nationally and any surviving in the parish are major environmental assets.

Common land, heath, scrub and wood pasture

The areas of common land are Ballsgate Common (0.8 ha), Leinthall Common (9.62 ha) and the access land around Croft Ambrey have been relatively undisturbed over many decades and they are have become important components of the biodiversity of the parish. The photo below shows

a haze of bluebells on Ballsgate common a probable relic of former woodland. The mosaic of scrub, trees and open heath on these commons and access lands constitutes a diversity of habitat for many invertebrates, birds and mammals as well as their being delightful elements of the parish landscape.

Left undisturbed most land eventually becomes woodland as is happening with parts of Leinthall Common so there is transition between scrub and woodland. Such transitional ecosystems have important biodiversity benefits due to their variety of habitat.



Croft Ambrey and Leinthall Common, Gatley Park to the left. Photo © Derek Foxton

Ballsgate common

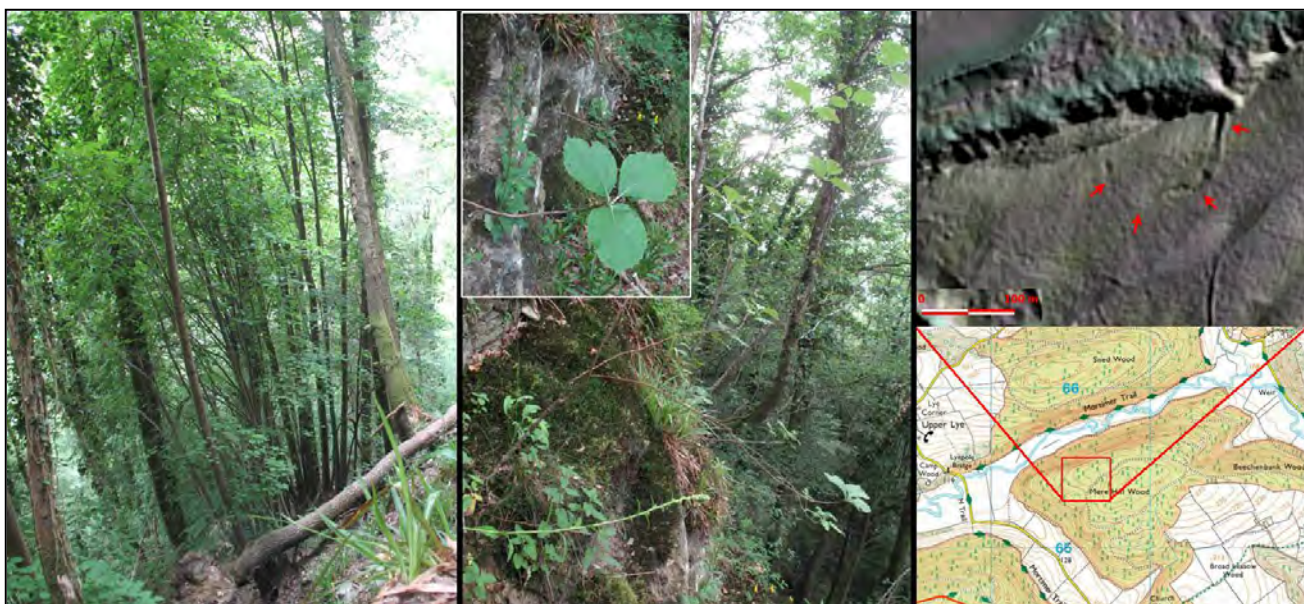


Woodlands

Aymestrey parish has 860 hectares of woodland, some 33% of its land area, of which most is classed as Ancient Woodland. During the 20th century most of this ancient woodland was converted to conifers by the Forestry Commission (maps Env 1 page 71 and Env 3 page 73). In recent years Commission policy has been to restore all ancient woodland under its management to native broadleaves and recent Forest Design Plans reflect this intention. What follows pertains to the three main blocks of Commission owned woods in the parish: Sned, Mere Hill and Shobdon Hill woods (split with Shobdon parish).

The presence of the ancient woodland indicator semi-natural Lime (*Tilia cordata*) in Sned and Mere Hill wood on the steep slopes rising up from the Lugg valley indicate that these parts have continuity of woodland probably since pre-history. In the Medieval period these woods were a mix of wood-pasture, parkland, enclosed wood with a complex set of manorial rights to cut, graze, gather resources, quarry and even plough.

Within these woods can be found the evidence of remaining charcoal burners hearths testament to a history of organised coppice and charcoal making which is likely to have been Elizabethan or earlier in origin, features that are mainly confined to the wooded slopes or nearby. There are also many banks and ditches some of which may have originated as field systems or maybe coppice compartment boundaries. A significant archaeological feature occurs in Mere Hill wood visible both on the ground and revealed by LIDAR which appears to be an incomplete fortification perhaps Iron Age.

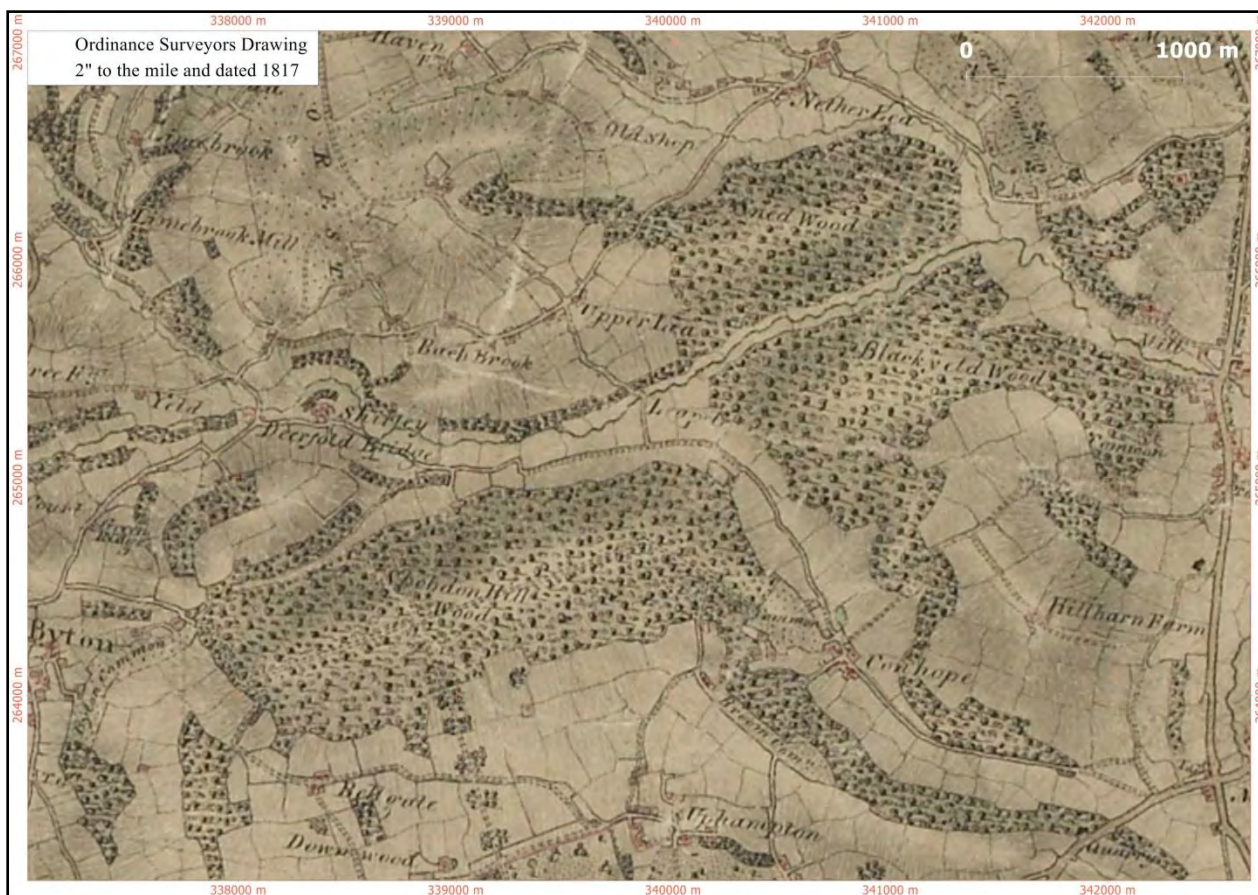


Left: Small leaved Lime coppice Mere Hill Wood (cpt 1823), middle and inset: a rare Whitebeam (*Sorbus aria* agg.) and Golden Rod (yellow flower), right: LIDAR-derived DTM showing what is believed to be a possible incomplete Iron Age fort.

Although significant documentary records have yet to be found for these woods earlier than the early 18th century Shobdon Hill and Sned Woods appear in the Shobdon estate map of 1708 made for Sir James Bateman (see next page). This is a detailed and unusually early map for an 18th century estate showing as it does that the extent and outline of the woods have hardly changed in 300 years (although note the southern boundary of Shobdon Hill Wood has extended since then). The shape is unlikely to have changed much in the previous 300 years showing that at least these two woods are indeed 'ancient' according to the statutory definition (continuously woodland since 1600). There has not been access to the Mere Hill Wood part of the map.



By the time of the first Ordnance Survey mapping of the mid **1810's** - the **2"** to the mile 'surveyor's drawings' - the woodland boundaries of all three woods are very similar to what they are now. Note that Mere Hill wood was then called Blackyeld Wood.



The subsequent 1840 tithe map apportionments describe all three as 'coppice'. A general idea of what they were like comes from a description of the parish woodlands by the vicar of Aymestrey the Rev. Thomas Woodhouse published¹⁴ in 1870:

"Considerable quantities of charcoal are made here. The charcoal burners pitch their rude huts on some clearing in the woods, and often remain there throughout the summer. The level patches on which the heaps are burnt, blackened with small fragments of charcoal, are familiar features of these woods. I have known Aymestrey long enough to remember this phenomenon occurring in almost all parts of these extensive woods."

Woodhouse observed the cyclical flush of ground flora: *"The underwood chiefly consists of hazel and young oaks. The coppice wood is generally cut down and cleared off at intervals of about twenty years, some taller standards being spared; and as this process is going on every year in some part or other of the many hundred acres of wood which this parish contains, one is always sure of finding some open spaces amidst the "Boundless contiguity of shade". From such clearings the eye catches the most charming glimpses of woodland, hill, and valley; and underfoot they are often carpeted with flowers of the gayest hues."*

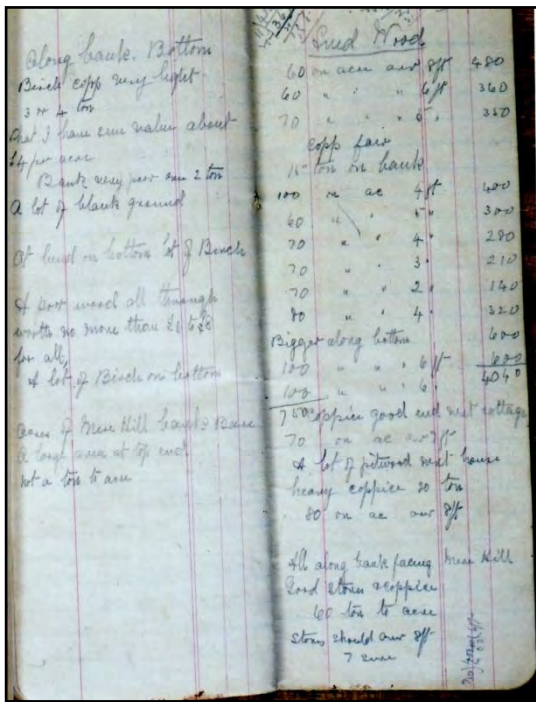
Pre-dating contemporary debates about forestry and the environment by well over a century, Woodhouse observed *"Such woodlands as these are immeasurably more picturesque than the formal coverts and plantations of the modern improver"*. His concerns about the effects of conifers on ground flora may be the first in print when he described conifers in general as *"gloomy in colour, monotonous in outline, and fatal to all undergrowth"*. One is reminded of 15 to 35 year old

¹⁴ Transactions of the Woolhope Naturalists Field Club 1870

Douglas Fir (DF) where not even a bracken frond survives, for example compartment 1820b 1982 DF see below.



Woodhouse's eloquent description of the Aymestrey woods, of which these woods comprise a majority, is confirmed by an inventory of the quantities and value of the growing coppice and trees of these and other woods on NW Herefordshire in 1899 in the form of a notebook¹⁵ by an agent or his assistant employed by the Brampton Bryan estate.



Shobdon Hill Wood is accounted as 518 acres having 7,000 tons of wood growing on it which is valued at £14 per acre. Mere Hill wood had 2,100 tons and Sned 5,000 tons. Of particular interest is the insight into the structure of the wood from the agent's 60 or so 1 acre samples throughout the three woods. The numbers of "stores" [stems left to grow on after a coppice fall], varied from 30 to 100 to the acre. They were quite small trees averaging about 6 hoppus feet¹⁶ in volume (about 0.2 cubic meters) varying between 3 and 8 and could hardly have been more than two coppices cycles old (about 40 years). The 'stores' are sometimes described as 'pitwood' showing that the mines and the railways had become a significant factor in the wood market at this time. For Sned wood, the stores were typically at a density of 70 trees/acre and 5 hoppus foot/tree or just over 15 tons per acre and their crowns would have occupied at most 15% of the canopy. Only very occasionally is a mature tree of (for example) 40

hoppus foot mentioned.

The coppice was measured separately in the sample acres and varied greatly between 2 and 30 tons/acre depending on quality and at what period within in the coppice cycle the sample was

¹⁵ Gloucester Records Office D9249/1/7

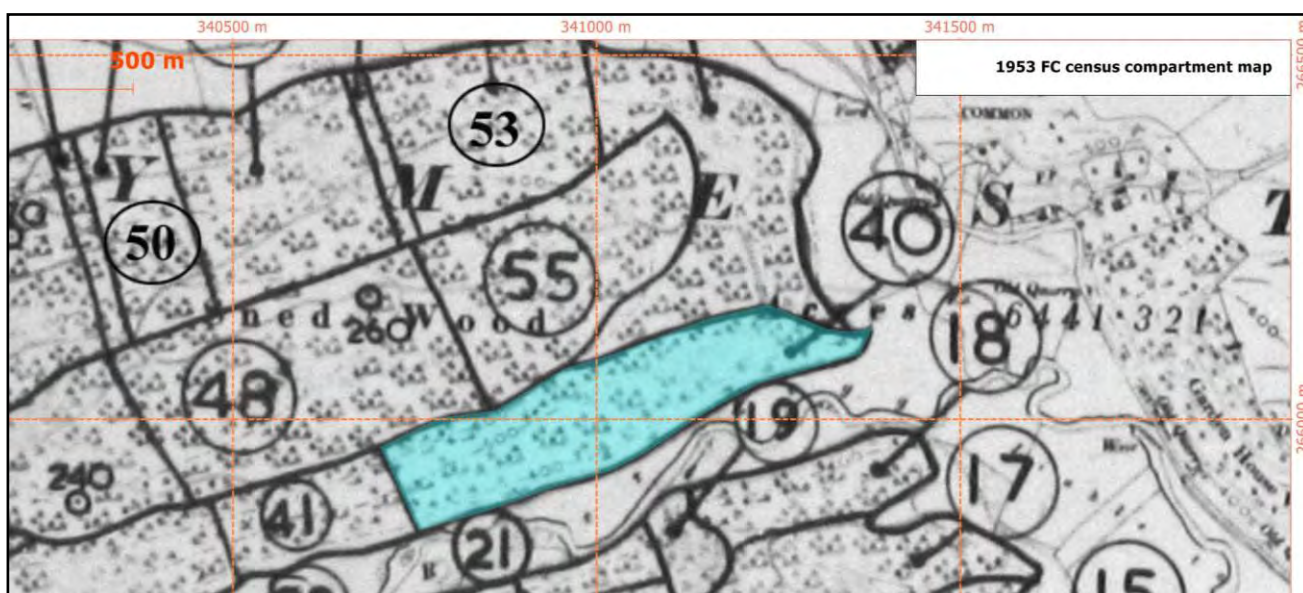
¹⁶ 'Hoppus foot' is a practical and traditional measure of the useful volume of a tree. It is the length in feet times the square of the quarter girth in inches taken in the middle of the stem and divided by 144. This is 1.27 times a true cubic foot so takes account of the conversion losses when sawing into planks or beams. There are close to 31 hoppus foot in one cubic meter.

taken. Occasionally the notebook gives the coppice location, for example "All along bank facing Mere Hill [are] good stores & coppice 60 ton to the acre stores should average 8 foot".

Here we have a detailed description of the workings and economy of the classical 'coppice with standards' system which would have been continuing for some centuries previously over all the woods. As a habitat this would have been ideal for a wide range of species

Shortly after WWI the Forestry Commission acquired the three woods on a long lease from a descendant of the Bateman family (who retained the game rights but allowed the Commission to deal with rabbits) and the first plantations were established in 1922/23 and by WWII most of the three woods had been subject to conifer plantation forestry although belts of the original coppice derived oak were retained as fire breaks. This lattice network (see air photos below) remains significant landscape and ecological feature especially in Shobdon Hill wood.

As with other FC woods the second World War severely reduced the available manpower to manage what were then mid-rotation plantations and their quality was not helped by a freak ice storm that hit north Herefordshire in the winter of 1941 .



The 1953 Forestry Commission census paints a picture of plantations of variable quality with quite a lot of native broadleaves having grown up through them.

For example, the south facing slope of Sned Wood surveyed in 1899 above was planted in 1924 with 21 acres of Japanese Larch and 8 acres of Douglas Fir, which, by 1953, the census surveyors recorded "requires immediate thinning" and that the "odd hardwood having grown naturally". The Larch in compartment 40 (see map above) had 10% of its canopy recorded as Ash, Oak and Elm. When this plantation was finally felled in the early 1980's the Commission **didn't** try to plant it again and it is now a species rich semi-natural stand with lime, ash, elm, hazel, field maple over a moderately rich ground flora. It is difficult to believe it had previously been a conifer stand for 55 years (see the Lime coppice over the page).



Lime coppice regenerating on the SE facing slope of Sned Wood following the felling of the JL/DF stand in 1980, compartment 40 in the 1953 census and now 1822h

Between the wars many estate owners, for whose woods the Commission were offering long term fixed rate leases, were pleased to receive a guaranteed revenue at a time of a severely depressed land market and the worst economic depression in living memory. The gambling habits of the Shobdon estate's absentee owner, the 3rd baron Bateman, brought especially severe financial problems upon the estate which fell onto the shoulders his younger brother Captain Hanbury who agreed in 1922 to lease Shobdon Hill, Sned and Mere Hill to the Commission on at fixed-rate of £142 a year (equivalent to 2/6d per acre) for 999 years. Due to subsequent complexities regarding the ownership of the freehold it **wasn't** until 1991 that FC finally bought the freehold for £35,000 (about £30 per acre)¹⁷.

By the **1980's** FC had established many areas of Shobdon Hill, Mere Hill and Sned with second rotations of conifer crops but rides and regeneration areas of recently felled first rotation plantations provided ecological continuity and some broadleaved regeneration. In 1984 the Nature Conservancy Council (now Natural England) produced the '**Ancient Woodland Inventory**' (AWI) for Herefordshire which classified Shobdon Hill (except the southern part), Mere Hill Wood and Sned Wood as ancient wood but then most FC managed ancient woodlands had already become '**Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites**' or PAWS, a subset of ancient woodland. In 1985 the Government introduced the '**Broadleaves Policy**' which formally recognised the importance of ancient woodland including conifer PAWS for which the policy guidelines included "*management should seek to conserve the broadleaves present and their associated flora and fauna*" and further that "*owners may choose to replace conifer by broadleaves*"¹⁸. While not mandatory, the Policy raised the aspiration of restoring PAWS, yet FC ancient woodland compartments of the '**Mortimer beat**' continued to be replanted with conifers up until 2004. For example, the Shobdon Hill wood PAWS compartments 1831d+e+f, 1834b+d, 1835e, 1836a, 1837a and 1838a were replanted with conifers between 2002 and 2004 despite most of them having luxuriant native flora, regeneration of birch and Wood Whites (I was conducting a survey for Butterfly Conservation in 2006/7). It was only when the '**Keepers in Time**' policy was introduced to apply to FC managed woods in 2005 (20 years after the Broadleaves Policy) that conifer restocking in compartments on the AWI ceased in this **region's** FC woods.

¹⁷ A History of Shobdon by Ivor Pfuell 1994 ISBN 0-95247900-1 privately published

¹⁸ Guidelines for the Management of Broadleaved Woodlands, page 14. Forestry Commission 1985



Northern flank of Shobdon Hill wood 2007 observation of Wood White colony on ride then recently planted with Larch. BAP moth Drab Looper also recorded

More recently coupes have been restocked with native broadleaves:
This is compartment 1834a Shobdon Hill Wood (2014):



Lepidoptera records (2007 - 2009)

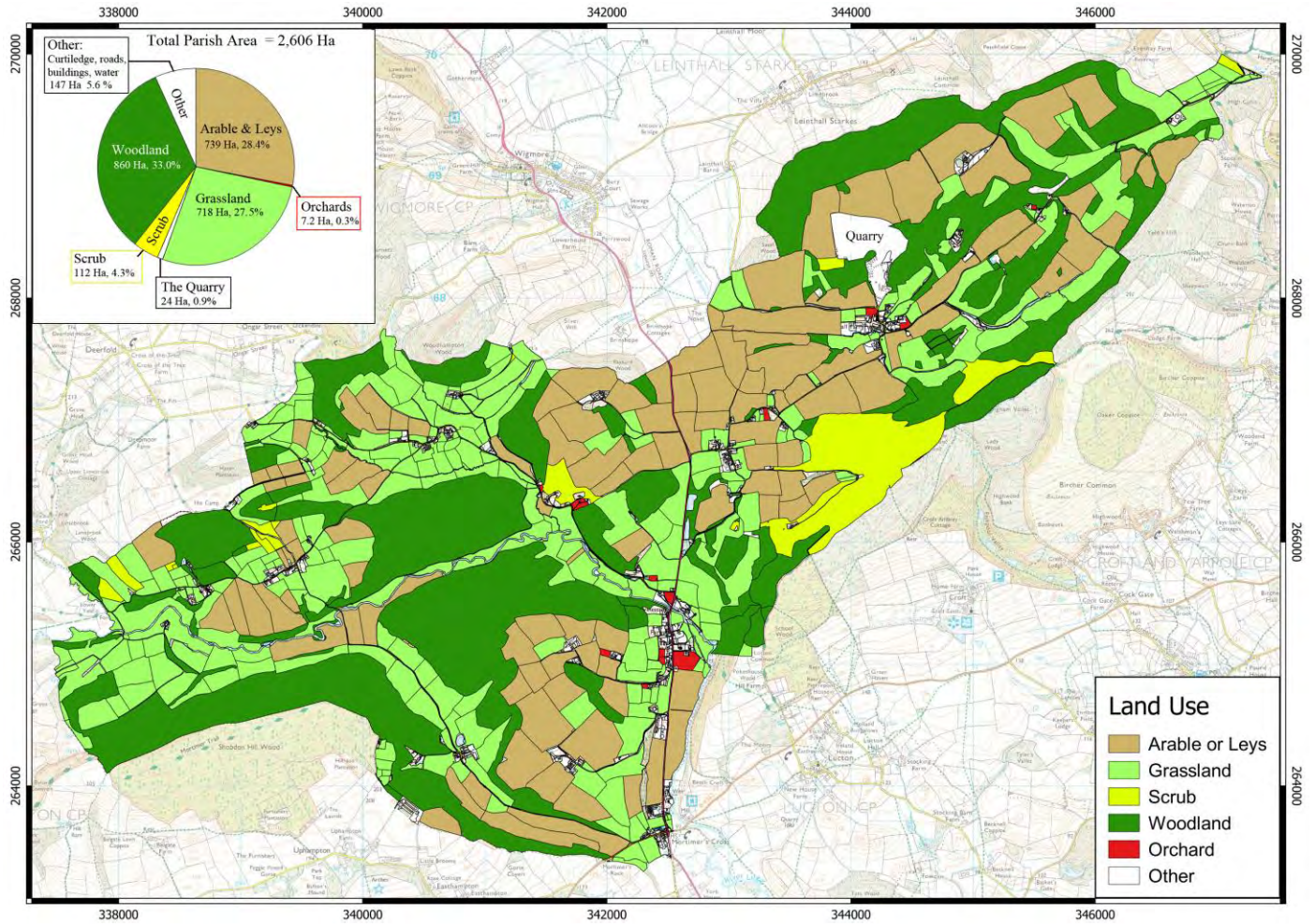
A combination of the Butterflies for the New Millennium project (BNM) and the Herefordshire BRC records show that the woods retain populations of three UKBAP butterfly species: the Wall, White Letter Hair-streak and the Wood White, the latter being recorded in all 3 woods.

Moths have been recorded for all three woods during light trapping throughout 2007 with encouraging results with over 200 species recorded including a number of UKBAP moth species and those regionally scarce. These moth surveys were conducted by lepidopterist Jeff Rush with assistance from David Lovelace.

These results are all listed in accompanying spread sheet files:

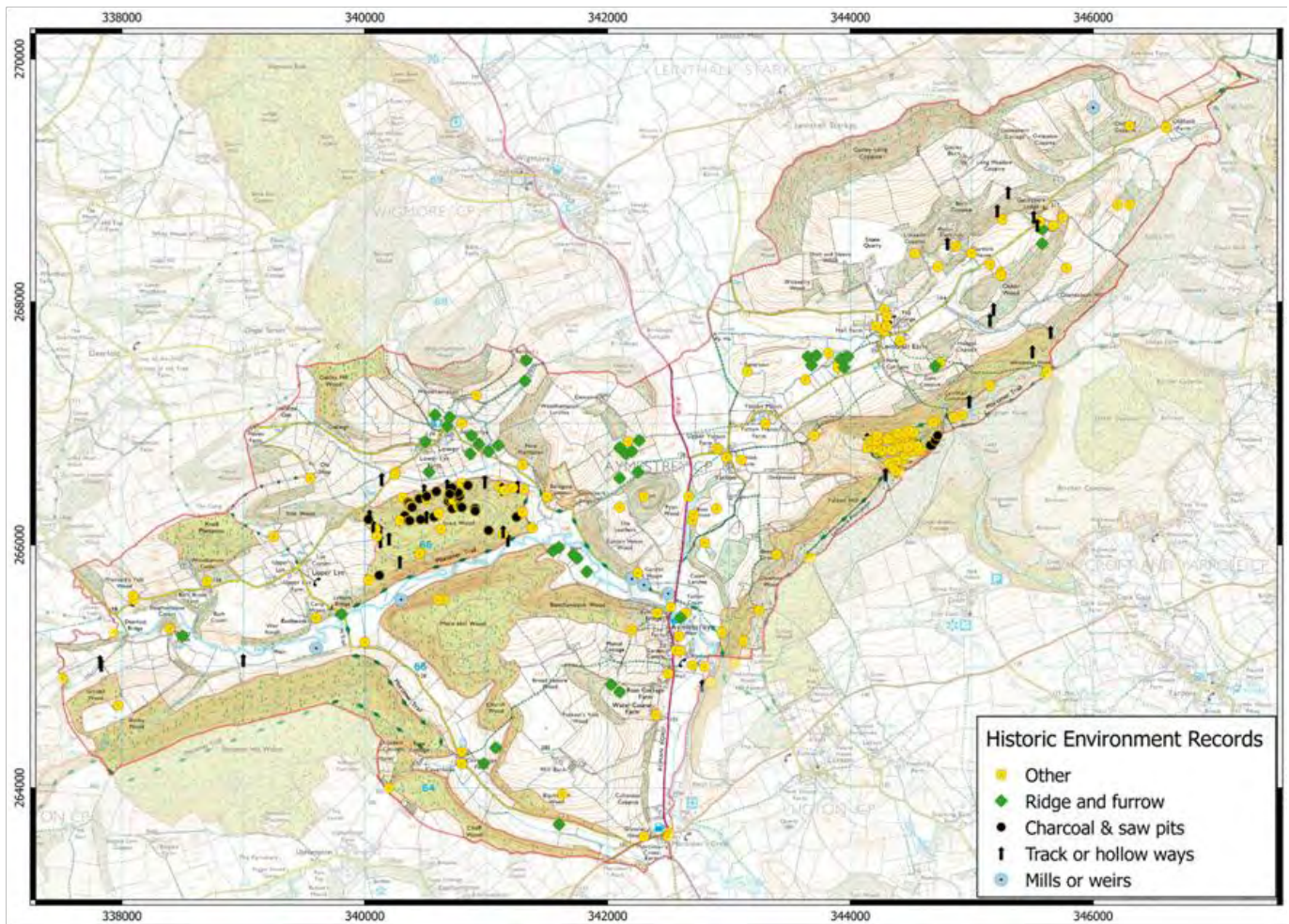
SnedMere&ShobdonButterflies.xls
MereHillWood_moths_2009.xls
ShobdonHillWood_moths_2007&2009.xls
SnedWood_moths_2007.xls
See:
www.mortimerforest.net

Environmental Survey Maps



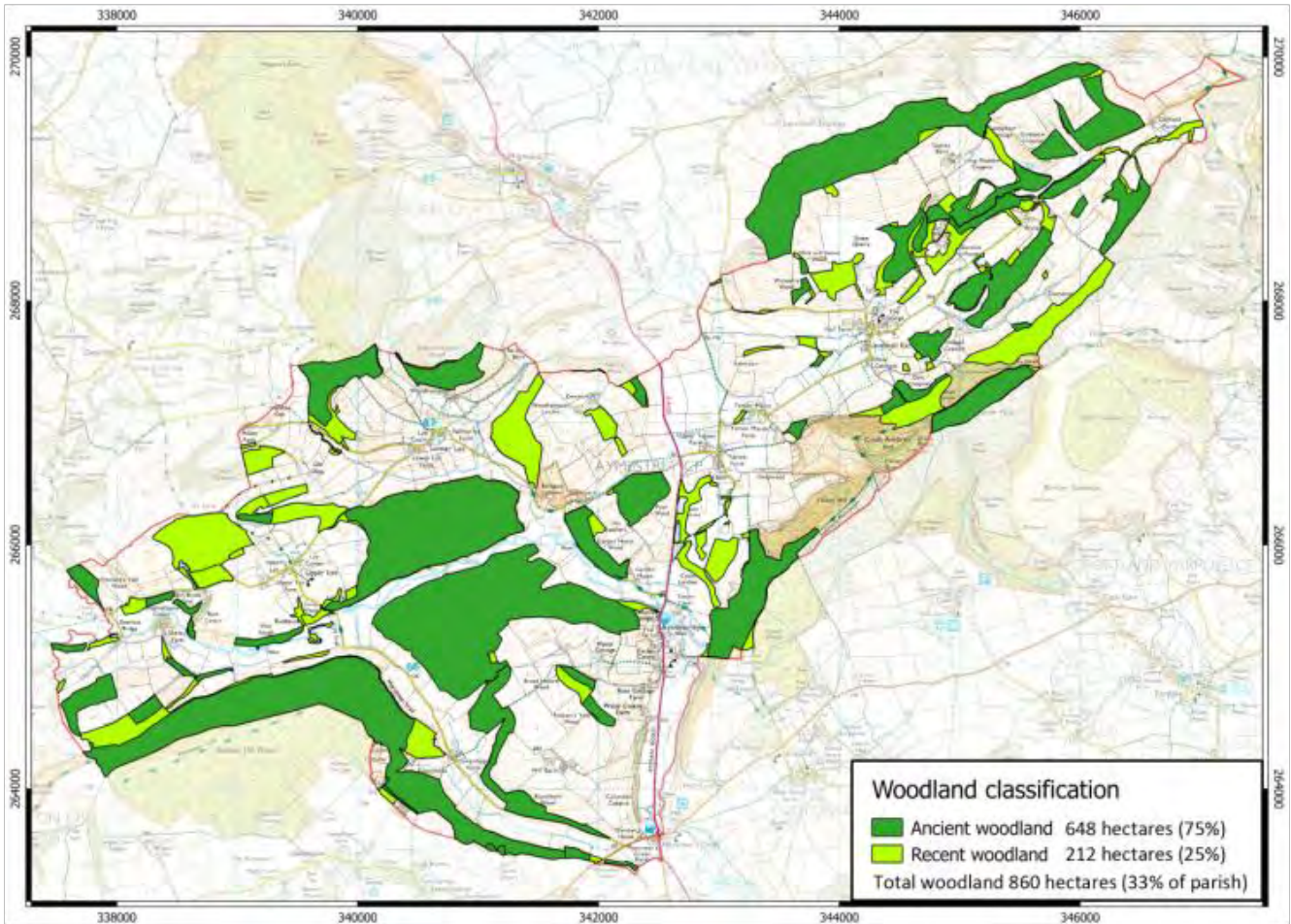
Env Map 1

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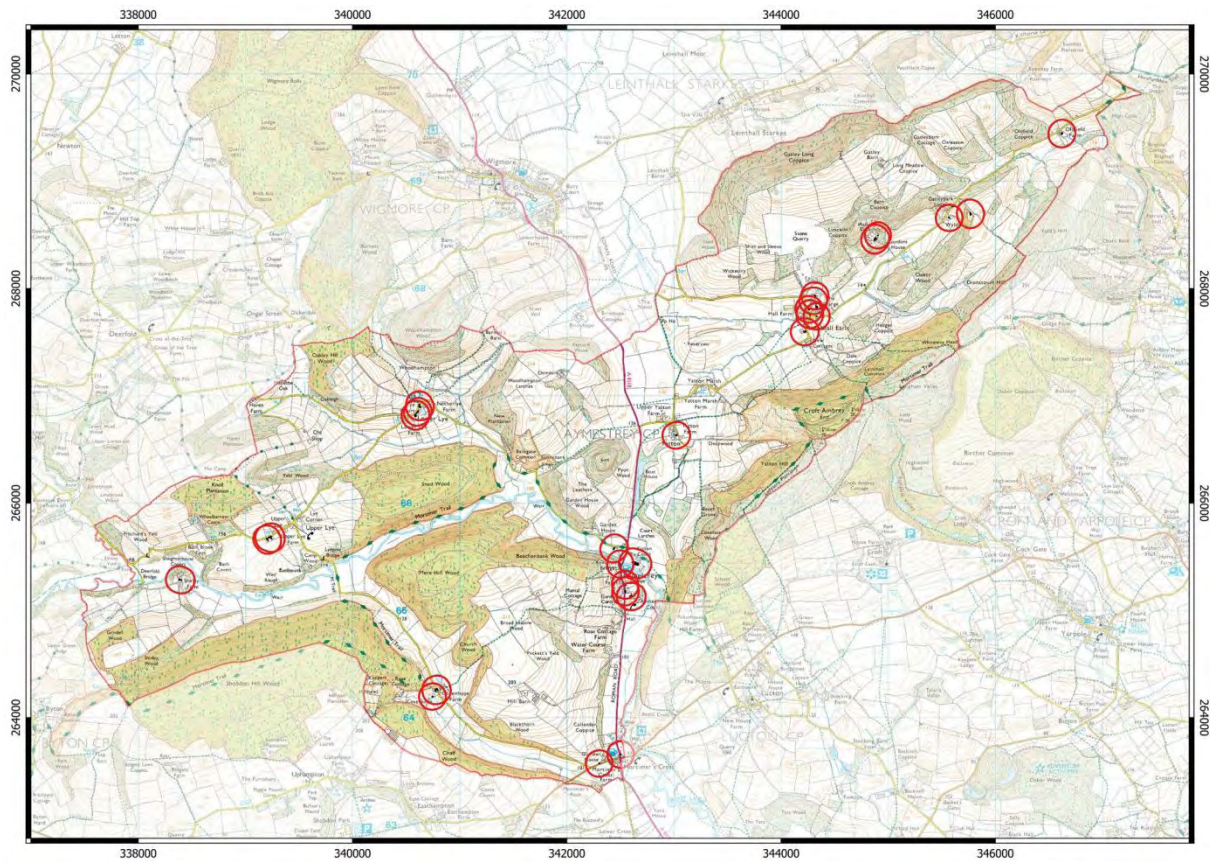
Env Map 2

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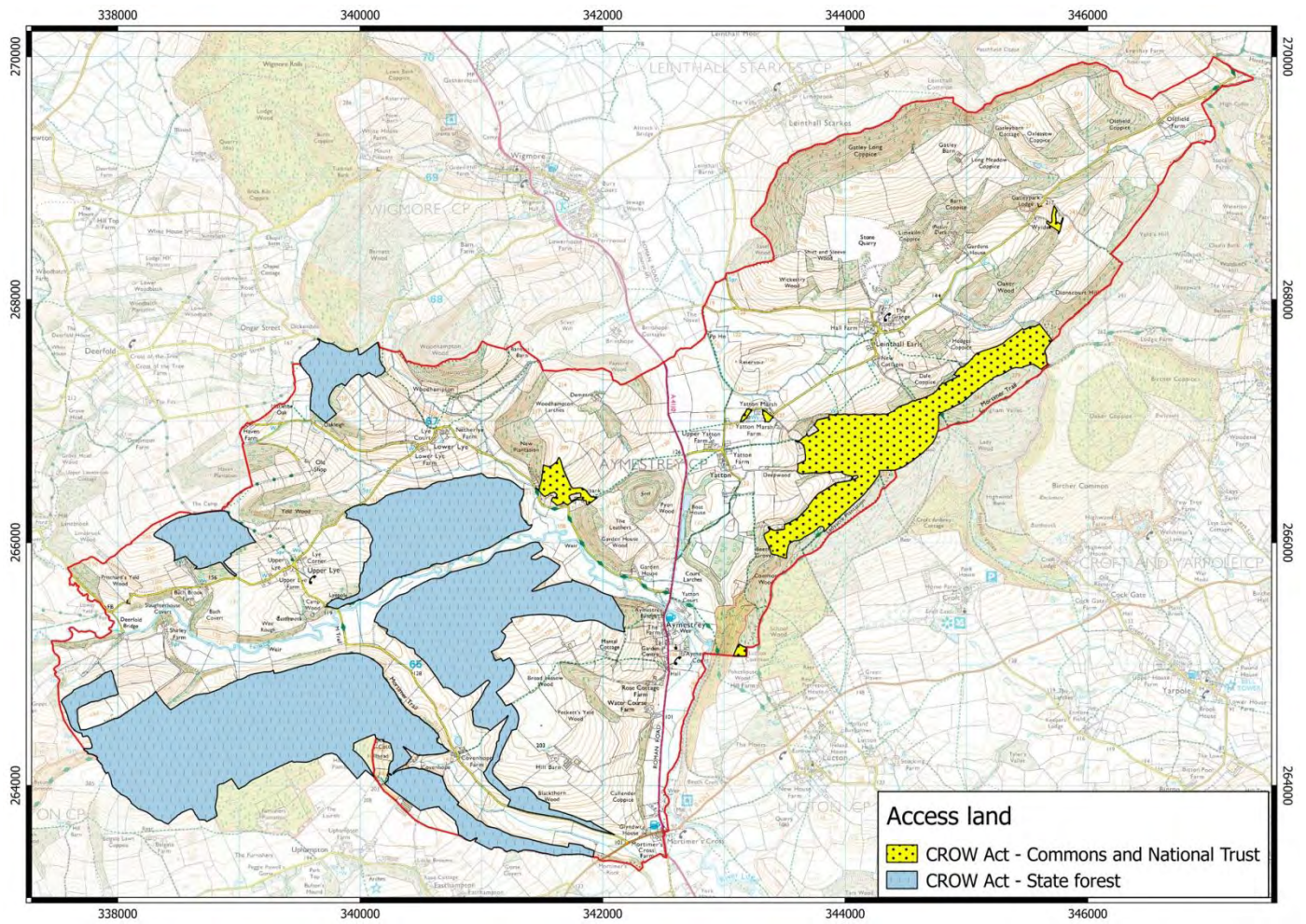
Env Map 3

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Env Map 4 - Listed Properties

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Env Map 5

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Appendix 1: Land adjacent to Mortimers Cross Inn Development Brief and Design Guide

1. Object of the Brief and Background

To set out the principles for the design and development of the land adjacent to the Mortimers Cross Inn so that new housing contributes positively to the settlement. It indicates how matters should proceed towards the granting of planning permission.

Mortimers Cross is a small hamlet located in north-west Herefordshire at the cross roads junction of roads leading to Wales and along the Welsh Marches. It is not typical of a rural village or hamlet in that it comprises a range of different uses which visually do not present the form or appearance of a residential settlement. Given that Herefordshire Council has determined Mortimers Cross is a settlement where housing development might take place, it is proposed that the development of this site should seek to give the settlement a greater residential character and form. Although there are no locally distinctive residential forms and features within the settlement that might influence design, care should still be given to achieve high quality architecture, layout and surroundings.

The settlement has very limited community facilities within relatively easy reach, but they do include a public house on adjacent land, a village hall in the adjacent hamlet of Aymestrey and limited shopping to the south in the village of Kingsland. The nearest primary schools are in the villages of Kingsland, Shobdon and Wigmore. Secondary education is available at Wigmore High School and Earl Mortimer College, Leominster. The market town of Leominster is within relatively easy reach. Mortimers Cross is out of the whole parish the best served hamlet for public transport having more regular buses than any other part of the Parish.

The provision of new housing for young families, particularly those with local connections is a high priority.

2. Drawings and Information

Allocation of this site for housing within Aymestrey Neighbourhood Development Plan means that any planning applications should take account of this Development Brief and Design Guide.

Outline Stage – Should applicants consider certain matters need to be determined in advance of a fully detailed submission, an outline application could be submitted, but it should be recognized that this Development Brief and Design Guide sets out the local **community's** wishes for the site.

Detailed Stage – Applicants should submit plans and particulars showing detailed proposals for the following aspects of development that may not have been submitted at any outline stage where relevant and when required by the local planning authority:

- i) A proportionate flood risk assessment indicating the extent of the allocated site that can be developed and any requirements for flood protection of properties, including those located off site affected by any scheme;

- ii) The layout, including position and width of roads and footways (if proposed), and the details of design and materials for paved areas;
- iii) Layout of foul and surface water drainage, including sustainable drainage measures;
- iv) Landscaping and biodiversity protection and enhancement measures. An adjoining area comprises water meadow and appropriate ecological studies should inform measures to retain important features, enhance biodiversity and the arrangements for the permanent maintenance of landscaped areas;
- v) Means of access to buildings;
- vi) Siting and design
- vii) Provision for parking of vehicles;
- viii) Sufficient information to demonstrate the effect of the development on the landscape and adjoining development is acceptable.

3. The Site and Its Background

The site comprises a parcel of agricultural land within the north-west corner at the cross roads around which the hamlet is centred. The field parcel is larger than the site allocated for housing and measures some 1.05 hectares (2.6 acre) in area. The area allocated for housing amounts to around 0.5 hectares (1.2 acres) and reflects the form character and setting of the settlement. The remainder of the site will be needed to accommodate foul and storm water drainage measures given its location in relation to the river Lugg flood plain. The wider site is generally level although the area to the rear (west) comprises the lower slopes of the hill that rises sharply to the west, and this slope contributes to the poor land drainage that is experienced on the site. The housing area is located on the front (east) of the field parcel where it has access directly from the A4110. The adjoining land parcel to the south contains the Mortimers Cross Inn which is an imposing building on the cross roads and development of the housing site should not restrict its current use. To the immediate north is a single dwelling whose garden extends beyond the depth of the housing site and beyond that a **builders'** merchants at the back of which are a number of park homes. Much of this area falls within flood risk zones defined on the Environment **agency's** flood risk map.

Aymestrey Neighbourhood Development Plan Policy AYH1 allocates the site for housing and this Brief contributes towards its implementation. There are a number of special site-specific requirements and these are expanded upon in this Brief.

4. Development Requirements

4.1 Addressing Flood Risk

Land immediately to the north is shown to fall within Flood Zone 2 (1000-to-1 risk of flooding in any 1 year) as defined on the Environment **Agency's** Flood Map. Areas relatively close to the site fall within Flood Zone 3 which has a higher likelihood of flooding. It is essential that a detailed flood risk assessment of the site is carried out to identify whether the extent

of the area liable to flood extends into the housing site. This should take into account potential increase in flooding as a consequence of climate change.

Any development should not lead to the increased likelihood of flooding to other properties either as a consequence of building upon the site or through increased run-off. Consequently, measures are considered likely to be required to ensure greenfield flows are maintained through soak-away provision on adjacent land within the field parcel. The land is understood to hold water including as a consequence of drainage from the steeply sloping land to the west. These conditions should also be taken into account within the assessment to inform water protection measures.

The use of a Sustainable Drainage System (SuDs) of soakaways, filters or similar is expected to be needed and it may be beneficial to the local community, subject to agreement and survey, that any such SuDs could include adjoining properties.

The preservation of water meadow and other biodiversity net gains may be achieved in association with any SUDs scheme provided under paragraph 4.1 above. This habitat creation may be achieved within an enlarged site incorporating land to the west as a local compensatory and net-gain **"off-site"** measure.

4.2 Foul Drainage

Mains drainage is unavailable in **Mortimer's** Cross. Provision will need to be made for a package sewage treatment works or other appropriate system. Developers may wish to investigate the use of a **'wet system'** that could benefit biodiversity and consider whether it was feasible to link to any SUDs. It is imperative that there is no potential pollution effect arising from any foul water treatment measures to the river Lugg and a precautionary approach must be taken.

4.3 Development Principles

Applicants should set out a detailed design concept within their supporting statement for the development of the site taking into account the following requirements. Proposals should demonstrate that it creates a form, layout and character that will create a settlement form and pattern for the wider area, that fits sensitively into the **area's** landscape and setting, and will be of a suitable scale. The following development principles should be adopted:

4.3.1 Protection of Surrounding Uses

Mortimer's Cross Inn sits adjacent to its southern boundary and as a rural hostelry relies upon vehicle-borne customers and events, both of which have the potential to cause a degree of noise and light pollution. The design and layout of the site should seek to mitigate the effects on any residents to an acceptable degree. In this regard the provision of acoustic fencing and protective measures from light glare must form part of the proposal.

4.3.2 Landscape Design

Policy AYEnv1 indicates that development proposals shall include a landscape scheme to ensure it integrates with its surroundings and offers enhancements, including to bio-

diversity. As such any scheme should form an integral part of the design for the development. An element of the water meadow should be preserved within the field parcel outside of the development site.

Boundary planting of trees and hedging will be important especially along the southern and western perimeters of the site, the first to ensure a screening to complement any acoustic fence which in combination should protect the amenity to any new dwellings from the public house, while retaining the continued use of that premises. Along the western edge, tree planting should soften the appearance of development. The tree planting might extend into the adjacent area to be used to address drainage requirements. Some tree planting should be extended around the remaining peripheries of the site and within the development, again to soften the effect of development and reflect the rural setting of the village. Additional structural tree planting should be provided at the western end of the field parcel to reduce run off down the steep slope beyond. The planting should be with native species.

As much of the hedgerow along the **site's** frontage with the A4110 should be retained as possible, consistent with ensuring highway safety. Any hedgerow removed should be compensated for.

Urban fencing forms should be avoided within the site, particularly along road frontages, with the emphasis being upon hedgerows and stone walls in order to reflect the rural location.

Landscape measures should be shown to complement the ecological network within and around the settlement.

4.3.3 Highway matters

A single point of vehicular access from the A4110 should be created at a safe distance from the A4110 – B4362 junction. Limited cutting-back of existing vegetation should provide a visibility splay as safe and unobtrusive as possible.

The access road and street layout should avoid any suburban appearance but reflect a rural street scene with the road being of minimum width, a rural footway and no street lighting. Unobtrusive off-street parking to meet Herefordshire **Council's** parking standards should be provided and this may best be achieved through a number of well screened courtyards associated with housing blocks.

4.3.4 Numbers and Density

Factors affecting the extent to which the site might accommodate development include: ensuring properties both on-site and off-site are protected from flood risk, providing foul water drainage, protecting adjacent uses and enabling an appropriate access onto the A4110. The density of development will also be influenced by the need to provide a range of family sized homes.

The design concept for the site involves:

- Development reflecting the rural location of the settlement and the historic characteristics of the other settlements within the Parish where dwellings have a varied relationship with the **'street'**.
- Strict avoidance of regimentation of house design and high density.

- Provision of reasonable sized gardens that also provide adequate privacy in order to provide play space for children and for growing of food
- A layout comprising small groups/blocks of cottage scale dwellings

To achieve these objectives, together with the other constraints highlighted above, it is considered that approximately 12 dwellings could be accommodated upon the site.

4.3.5 Dwelling Type

A mixture of house types must be provided with an emphasis upon 2 and 3 bed-room dwellings or as otherwise evidenced through up to date local housing needs data or survey. In this way there will be an emphasis on meeting the need of housing for young families. The provision of dwellings meeting the needs of those with mobility problems (such as **'lifetime homes'**) and to enable elderly people to downsize would be welcome.

4.4 Design Criteria

Detailed design elements shall seek to unify yet avoid over regimented or repetitive form across the site as a whole. Although innovative design will be encouraged, the overall effect should fit sensitively into the local settlement pattern and landscape and continue the pallet of features and materials that unify settlements within north Herefordshire. To achieve this, the following detailed design elements should be incorporated into any proposal.

- i) Building-lines should ensure dwellings address the main street and will not be set back too far from the road edge. Buildings can however sit behind frontage planting and small front gardens.
- ii) Frontage housing should have as low a roof-line as possible with a simple and uncluttered elevation.
- iii) Materials and features traditionally used in this area are favoured. A suitable mixture of both will be expected although the variation should be subtle and not overly complex.
- iv) Subtle variations in styles and aspects that reflect local village character will be encouraged between different groups of properties
- v) Chimneys should be included and might usefully be shared or gable ended.
- vi) Window design and placement should contribute to traditional form and where appropriate provide variety. The use of dormer windows may be acceptable where appropriate to the design and of suitable scale.
- vii) Some variation in roof and eaves heights should be considered and properties should have well-defined eaves.
- viii) Porches should be consistent with the design of properties, especially where these are of traditional designs. They may be used to add subtle variations within groups of houses.

- ix) The design and layout of dwellings should maintain the mix of house sizes to meet local needs, restricting the need for extensions that would result in the loss of light and garden areas.
- x) Wiring for electricity and telephones should be provided through underground ducting within the development of the site to avoid clutter and intrusion into the landscape.

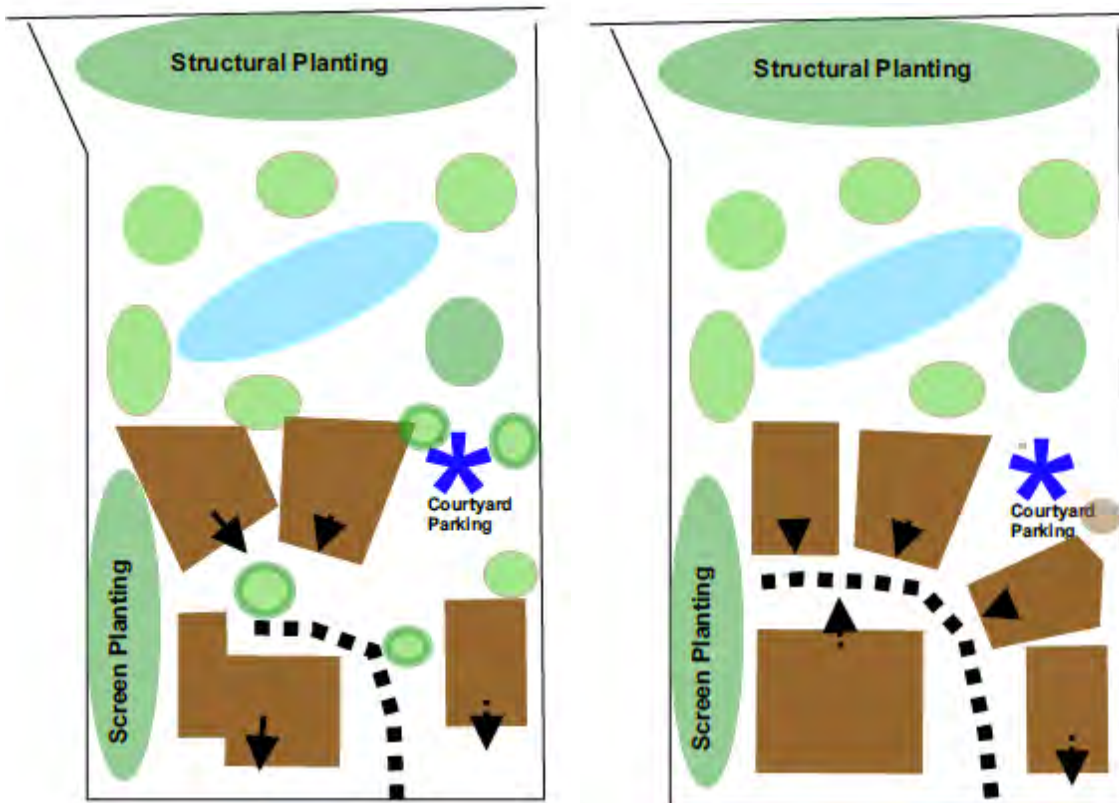
Useful Examples

The following photographs provide examples of designs that fit well within their respective rural locations. It is not suggested that they be copied but they indicate the use of layout and design features that are relatively sensitive to a rural location



Planning Concept Diagrams – Indicative Designs

The following diagrams indicate the layout concept being promoted for the site within the guidance above.



5 Implementation

An applicant may wish to consult Herefordshire Council, as Local Planning authority, and the community, through Aymestrey Parish Council, upon proposals for the site in advance of making any planning application. Applicants will be expected to work closely with those directly affected by their proposals to evolve designs that take account of the views of the community. Proposals that can demonstrate this has influenced the design of the new development will be looked upon more favourably.

Any information provided does not in any way absolve an applicant from satisfying him/herself that all necessary information on the requirements and policies of the various authorities and organisations is correct at the time. Neither does it restrict any amendment nor varying of such information contained in this Brief before a planning application is determined. Developers should satisfy themselves on the accuracy of the information provided and it should be understood that any potential applicant is legally responsible either in contract or in tort for any inaccuracies, errors or omissions whether arising from inadvertence or negligence or any other cause.

REPORT END