

## Cultural influences

**3.25** Herefordshire contains a wealth of archaeological sites, monuments and historic assets that reflect a long history of human settlement. These assets, many of which are statutorily designated, play a large part in defining the character of the landscape and the individuality of particular settlements, and in many cases reflect the county's location as a borderland between lowland landscapes of England and uplands in Wales.

**3.26** There are 266 Scheduled Monuments covering prehistoric to modern periods, nearly 6,000 listed buildings and 64 Conservation Areas, which vary in size from Hereford's historic centre to country estates and hamlets. There are also 25 Registered Parks and Gardens, and numerous locally important parks and gardens, reflecting the importance of estates within the county. A list of the nationally important Registered Parks and Gardens is provided in **Appendix C**. These heritage features are illustrated on **Figures 3.7 and 3.8**.

**3.27** This section has been informed by reference to the Herefordshire Through Time website [**See reference 5**], relevant Herefordshire Council evidence base documents, and Hereford and Worcester Gardens Trust.

### Prehistoric (700,000 BC – 43 AD)

**3.28** Herefordshire has a long record of human occupation and activity, from the Palaeolithic (700,000 - 10,000 BC), the Mesolithic (10,000 – 4,000 BC); the Neolithic (4,000 – 2,500 BC); the Bronze Age (2,500 – 700 BC); and the Iron Age (700 BC – 43 AD).

**3.29** During the Palaeolithic human presence would have varied depending on environmental and climatic conditions. Evidence of human activities are concentrated in five small areas. Two caves in the south-west of the county at Great Doward, Arthur's Cave and Merlin's Cave, provide evidence of bone

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tools, flint and stone artefacts and human burials, along with bones of large animals.

**3.30** The Mesolithic period saw the end of the last glacial period and the gradual increase in the human population. At the beginning of the Mesolithic Britain was connected to mainland Europe. In Herefordshire activity during the Mesolithic was concentrated in the south and west of the county, on upper ground close to hills and within easy access to rivers. Woodlands were much more abundant, providing good hunting and foraging.

**3.31** Neolithic finds are more common in the lowland areas of Herefordshire, which suggest the valley floor were beginning to be cleared of dense woodland. The Neolithic was also when agriculture began, and farming communities were established. Neolithic tombs are concentrated in the Golden Valley and Black Mountains, suggesting the uplands had a religious importance.

### Arthur's Stone, a Neolithic burial monument at Dorstone



**3.32** The Bronze Age saw even greater woodland removal, and the landscape was used for grazing, arable and ritual purposes. Round burial barrows dating from the Bronze Age are common across Herefordshire.

**3.33** The Iron Age saw the beginning of permanent house and settlement building, often with a defensive purpose. There are over 30 Iron Age hillforts in the county, which were generally built on gently sloping land, with the exception of Croft Ambrey near Aymestrey and Herefordshire Beacon / British Camp on the Malverns.

### Roman (43 – 410 AD)

**3.34** The Roman occupation of Britain began in Kent in 43 AD and spread rapidly across the country. At first, more remote areas, including Herefordshire, were left alone under the protection of Celtic princes. The Romans first entered Herefordshire to subdue the rebel tribes of Wales, but also began to settle in the area. The main areas of Roman occupation were along Watling Street, which crossed Herefordshire north to south, linking Wroxeter in Shropshire with Caerleon in Monmouthshire. Leintwardine and Kenchester were Roman stations along the road, with Kenchester likely to have been a small market town. Little evidence from the Roman period survives in Herefordshire, beyond sections of straight Roman road (for example south of Leintwardine) although there were at least four further small towns and some villas.

### Anglo-Saxon (410 -1066 AD)

**3.35** The period following the retreat of the Romans is not well documented. Herefordshire, as it exists today, was at the western edge of the Roman world, and large-scale occupation by Anglo-Saxons in the county did not begin until the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> century. Archenfield and Ewias remained primarily in the hands of the Celtic Britons, despite settlement of Anglo-Saxons across the rest of Herefordshire. The two districts were not incorporated into Herefordshire until the 11<sup>th</sup> century. There has been a settlement at Hereford from around 700 AD,

and Hereford was made a diocese in the late 7<sup>th</sup> century. A stone cathedral was built between 1030 and 1040.

**3.36** Offa's Dyke is one of the most famous earthworks in the UK and marked the western edge of Anglo-Saxon control. It stretched from the mouth of the Wye near Chepstow, north to the Dee estuary. Only six miles of the dyke remain within Herefordshire, with the largest sections at Merrock Hill and Lyonshall. It is debated whether this means the dyke was not dug in Herefordshire, or that it was ploughed over.

**3.37** The Herefordshire Hoard was buried in 877-879 probably as a result of the movements and incursions of the Viking Great Army. The Hoard (illegally discovered and taken from a privately owned field at Eye, near Leominster) includes a gold arm bangle with beast head clasp, a magnificent pendant made from a rock crystal sphere encased within a gold decorative cage, a gold octagonal ring with black inlay, a silver ingot and 29 coins mostly of Alfred the Great of Wessex and Ceolwulf II of Mercia.

**3.38** As a result of the tension between rival landholdings in the area, Herefordshire was home to three pre-Conquest castles at Hereford, Ewyas Harold and Richard's Castle. Prior to 1066 Harold Godwinson owned considerable areas of land within Herefordshire, and after his death during the Norman Conquest these would have passed into the control of William the Conqueror.

## Medieval (1066 – 1540 AD)

**3.39** The vast areas of land that formed the Marches (on both sides of the current English/Welsh border) were ruled as semi-independent earldoms by the Marcher Lords. The Kings Writ did not apply in the Marches, and Marcher Lords (both Anglo-Norman and Cymro-Norman) had the freedom to impose their own forests and forest law, establish boroughs, and to build castles. The Mortimers at Wigmore were one of the biggest and most influential Marcher Lords and were enthusiastic castle builders and takers.

**3.40** The Norman administrative base for control over Wales (the seat of the Council of the Marches) was moved to Ludlow in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, from Wigmore after the decline in influence of the Mortimer family.

**3.41** The remains of over 120 earth and timber castles are found in Herefordshire, more than anywhere else in England. The more strategically important buildings were rebuilt in stone. Many deer parks were associated with castles, which later become parklands and estates, for example the motte castle at Shobdon which now lies within a Grade II registered Park and Garden. Small villages began to grow up around the castles, including Kilpeck and Richards Castle. These resulted in large tracts of woodland being cleared for settlements, and the adoption of an arable open field system.

**3.42** During the Medieval period Herefordshire became famous for its wool, due to the open moorlands on higher ground, with fertile pastures that were ideal for sheep grazing. Hereford City and the market towns flourished as trade grew. Herefordshire was also well known for its wheat and water mills, particularly on the River Wye.

**3.43** A few religious houses were founded in Herefordshire pre-Conquest, in the style of smaller eremitic monasteries such as Leominster. After the Norman Conquest a vigorous period of building large monastic houses occurred under the ecclesiastical reforms introduced by the Anglo Normans, with the greatest number from the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Many religious houses were founded by Marcher Lords often as political statements or for economic reasons. The Knights Templar and Hospitallers were also awarded extensive lands in the county. The first Cistercian monastery, Abbey Dore in the Golden Valley, was founded in 1147, and the abbey church remains in use today as a parish church.

**Red sandstone Abbey Dore in the Golden Valley**



**Post Medieval and Industrial (1540 AD to present)**

**3.44** Following the Reformation, large areas of land which had belonged to monasteries were gifted or sold to new owners. These landowners profited from land acquisition which led to the creation of many new estates, and the buildings of houses and parklands still seen within the landscape today. The fashion for the aesthetic use of land resulted in many landscaped parks, including designs by Capability Brown at Berrington Hall.

**3.45** Richard Payne Knight and Uvedale Price, landscape designers associated with the 'Picturesque' school, owned estates at Downton Castle near Leintwardine and Foxley south of Weobley which can be visited today. These

designs often resulted in estate villages being remodelled, or moved, for example Eastnor and Stoke Edith. Herefordshire contains a number of nationally important parks and gardens on the Historic England register, as well as an abundance of locally important parks and gardens of historic interest. These are recorded by the Hereford and Worcester Gardens Trust.

**3.46** Open field agriculture had a relatively short life span in Herefordshire, with enclosure taking place from the early 17<sup>th</sup> century. The fertile central Herefordshire plain was an excellent wheat growing area. Fruit production in the county dates from the 14<sup>th</sup> century, and by the 18<sup>th</sup> century 15 cider apple varieties and six pear varieties were grown in Herefordshire. Orchards are still an important part of the Herefordshire landscape and culture.

**3.47** The road pattern across the county was first developed by the Romans, then expanded and changed in the post-Roman world as was needed by the local population to link settlements. In 1645, during the Civil War, the Earl of Leven who was campaigning in Herefordshire complained to Parliament about the poor condition of the roads. In 1730 an Act of Parliament allowed local people to take over road maintenance and improvement in return for which they could charge for usage through tollgates and turnpikes. In 1774 a stagecoach route between Hereford and London resulted in improved travel within and out of the county.

**3.48** Due to its relative isolation, the county remained extremely rural even in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The rivers did not flow fast enough to drive the larger waterwheels needed for textile mills. A poor transport system did not improve matters – the Wye was unreliable for navigation and canals came too late to be of any commercial use and were soon replaced by railways. Hereford was the last cathedral city in England to gain a railway service, in 1853.

**3.49** Herefordshire retains a wide distribution of historic listed buildings, which lie both within settlements and as individual buildings. There are 64 Conservation Areas across the county, which reflects its historic character. The variety in the local vernacular provides local character, for example the timber-

framed buildings in north-west Herefordshire are known as the 'black and white' villages, and are promoted as a tourist trail feature.

**Pembridge 'black and white' village**

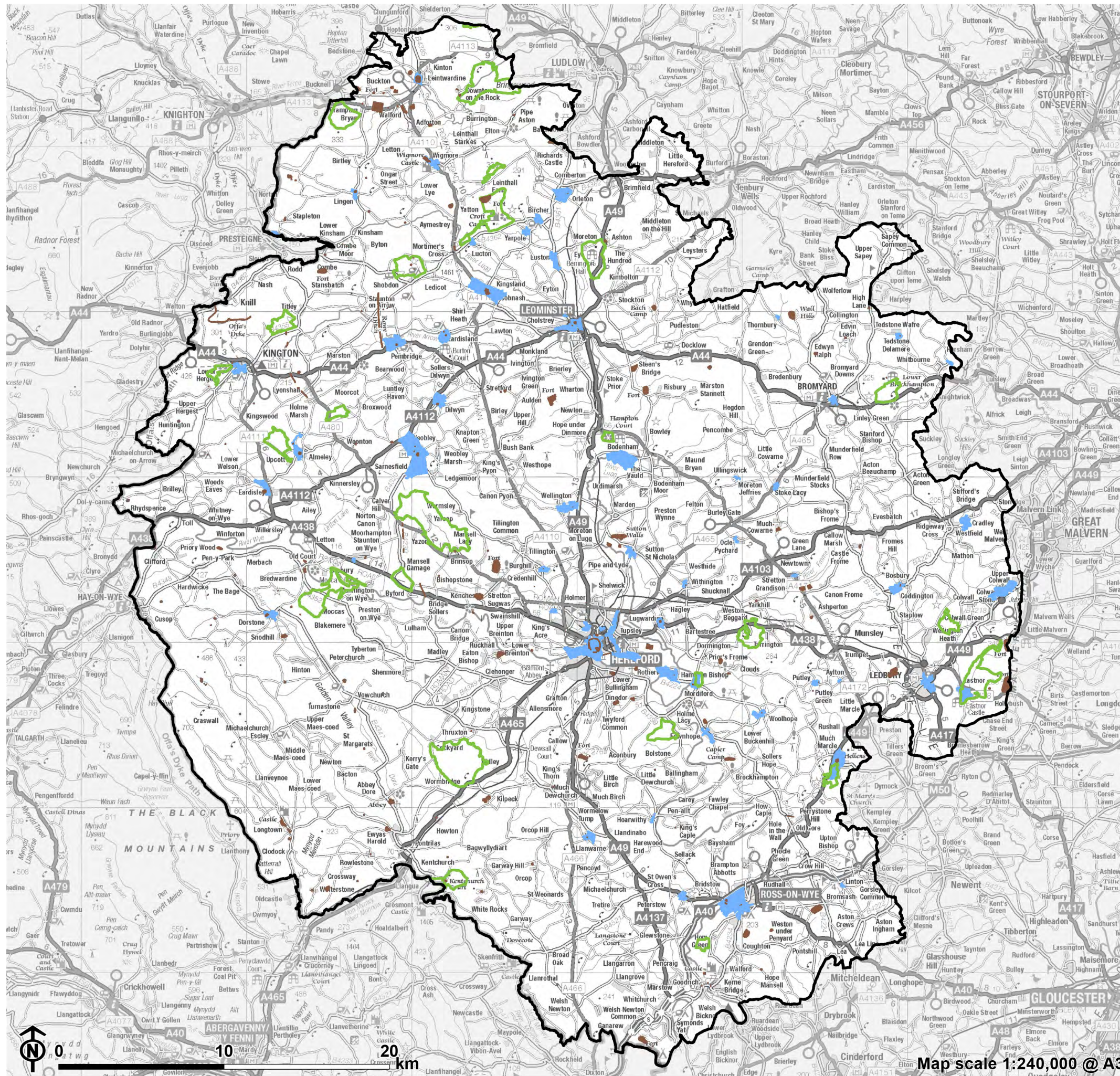


**3.50** The settlement types in Herefordshire vary. Dispersed villages are common, which may have formed from separate but neighbouring farmsteads. Estate villages are generally nucleated, clustered around the estate house or church, for example Stoke Prior. There are some linear villages, formed along roads or at river crossings, such as Peterchurch which stretches along the Dore valley floor.

**3.51** In general Herefordshire retains its rural and often remote character. In recent years, agricultural pressures have led to the increase in commercial fruit production and associated polytunnel construction and bush orchards rather than traditional orchards. A rapid increase in poultry farming in the Wye catchment and sediment run-off has contributed to a decrease in water quality in the Wye.



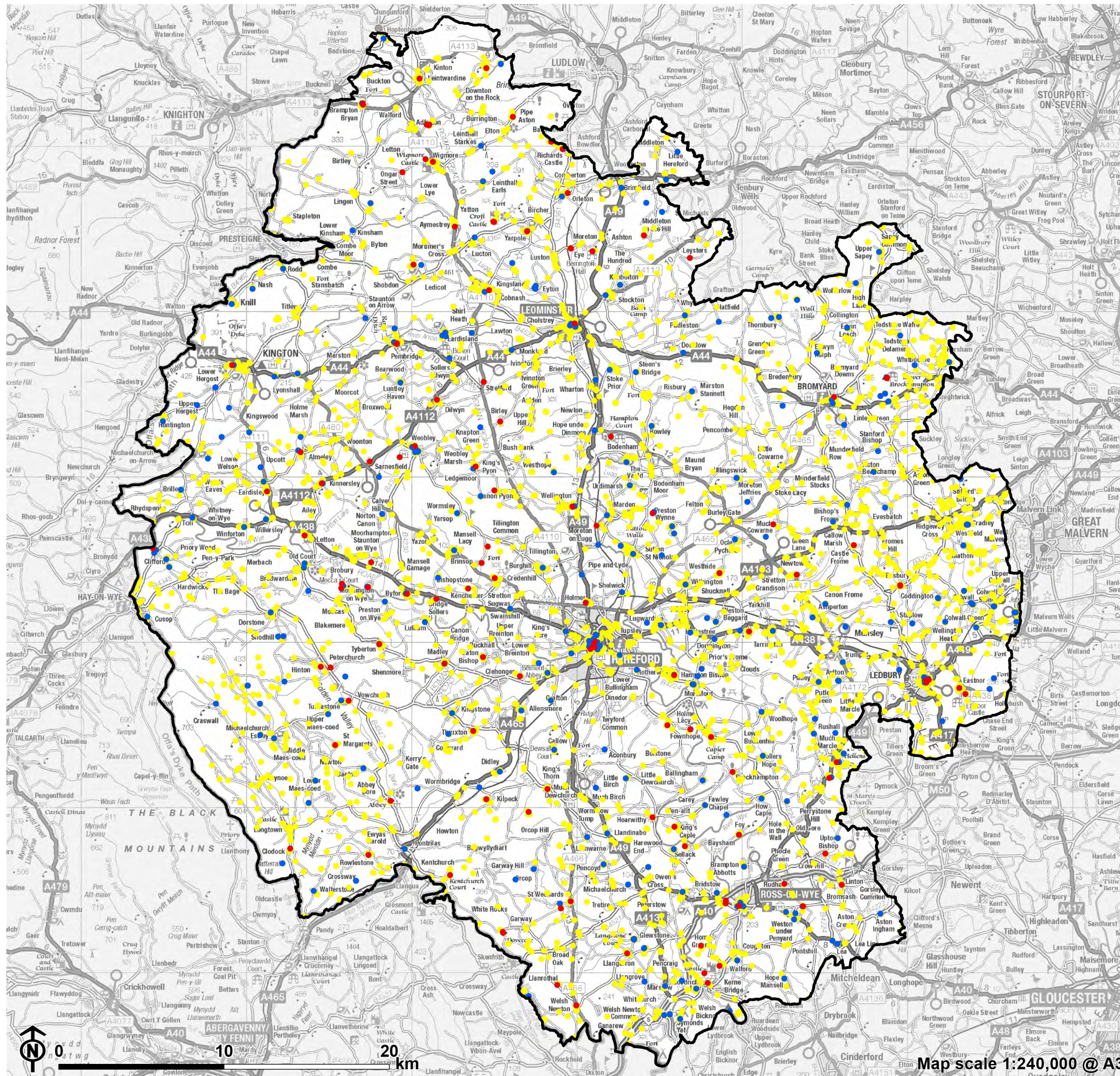
Figure 3.7: Cultural Heritage



- Herefordshire boundary
- Registered Parks and Gardens
- Scheduled Monument
- Conservation Area

Source: Herefordshire Council, Historic England, Ordnance Survey

Figure 3.8: Listed buildings



Herefordshire boundary

Listed Building

- Grade I
- Grade II\*
- Grade II

Source: Herefordshire Council, Historic England, Ordnance Survey

## Perceptual landscape

**3.52** The overall perception of Herefordshire is of a rural, undeveloped and sparsely populated county, with a strong agricultural influence and deep historic character. The tranquil, rural character of the county is one of its special qualities and it has largely escaped the pressure of modern development.

**3.53** As a transitional county located along the Welsh border, the landscape varies from west to east, based both on the changing topography and cultural differences which over time have influenced land use, enclosure and settlement patterns. The western and north-western hills and valleys along the border are more closely aligned with the neighbouring Welsh landscape, with a strong sense of remoteness on the wind-swept open hillsides from which there are panoramic views, interspersed with intimate verdant valleys. The enclosed valleys contain a network of ancient farms and field patterns linked by sunken lanes with high flower-rich hedgebanks and ancient hedgerows.

**3.54** As the landscape transitions to the gently undulating central lowlands, the perceptual and aesthetic qualities of the landscape gradually change. This is a typically English, bucolic landscape of narrow winding lanes, arable and pasture fields and orchards. The fields are bound by traditional species-rich hedgerows, often with flower-rich verges and interspersed with mature oaks. The open farmed landscape enjoys varied views, with some longer distance views to uncluttered skylines provided by the rolling wooded hills which rise in height to the north, south and east of the county. The landscape is dissected by numerous narrow brooks as well as wide river valleys which wind through the county and provide open vistas and iconic views, particularly along the lower reaches of the Wye. Herefordshire retains much of its historic built character, and is sparsely populated with hamlets, churches, manor houses and country houses surrounded by historic parklands. Time depth is added to the landscape by the varied historic field patterns and the pattern and vernacular of its traditional villages, timber-framed and stone built farmhouses.

**3.55** These aesthetic qualities create a local distinctiveness and strong sense of place, which make Herefordshire a popular tourist destination. Often

promoted as the 'blossom county', spring 'blossom trails' for both walking and cycling are promoted to visitors. The county has an important network of public rights of way including long distance walking routes (such as the Herefordshire Trail and Wye Valley Walk) and many visitor attractions, including the 'Black and White' village trail and many historic parklands managed by the National Trust. Water-based recreation on the Wye has also been increasing in popularity in recent years.

### Offa's Dyke Path long distance path



**3.56** Herefordshire has a sparsely populated and highly rural landscape, with very high levels of tranquillity compared to most counties in England (see **Figure 3.9**). Tranquillity has been mapped by CPRE, based on distance from various disturbing factors: roads, railways, airports, built up areas, mineral extraction, electrical installations, and wind turbines. In 2007 CPRE calculated that 79% of Herefordshire was 'undisturbed', compared with 74% of Shropshire and 40% of Worcestershire. The areas which are least tranquil are around

Hereford City, the market towns and along major road corridors and illustrated on **Figure 3.9**.

**3.57** CPRE have also mapped dark night skies across England, and Herefordshire scores very highly across the county (see **Figure 3.10**). The county has the third highest level of dark skies of the English counties, with 60% in the highest category, and 88% when combined with the next darkest category. Dark night skies (i.e. skies without artificial light) are important for natural rhythms of wildlife including insects and birds, as well as for people. Reducing light pollution also reduces carbon emissions, and allows for a sense of remoteness, wildness and connection to the natural world. Light pollution is emitted from Hereford City and the market towns, and from industrial estates, which are often located on the outskirts of the market towns or off the major road network, for example at Much Dewchurch.

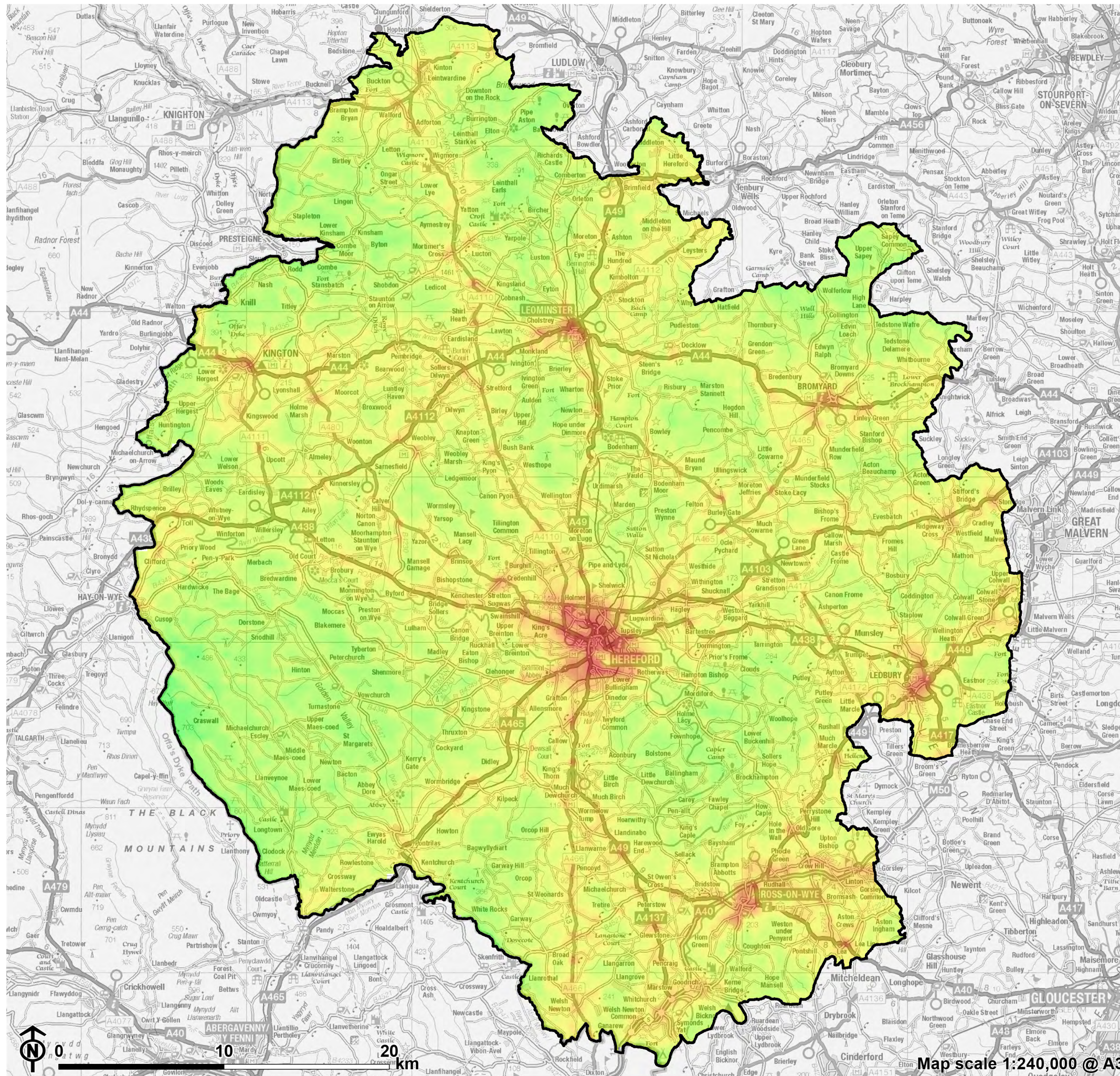
**3.58** Combining high levels of tranquillity and dark night skies, the exposed uplands of the Black Mountains in the south west and the hills in north-west Herefordshire, have a strong sense of relative wildness and remoteness, and share many of the characteristics of the adjacent Bannau Brycheiniog National Park and the Shropshire Hills AONB respectively. Long panoramic views are highly valued features of these uplands, with views both across Herefordshire and into Wales and Shropshire.

**3.59** The Wye Valley AONB and Malvern Hills AONB extend into Herefordshire in the south and east. The scenic importance of these landscapes is recognised through their designation as nationally protected landscapes. Many of the special qualities listed for the AONBs relate to their perceptual qualities, including the picturesque, extensive and dramatic views, sense of tranquillity, remoteness and relative wildness, dark night skies and strong spirit of place.

Rural, undeveloped and sparsely populated landscape viewed from Hatterall Hill



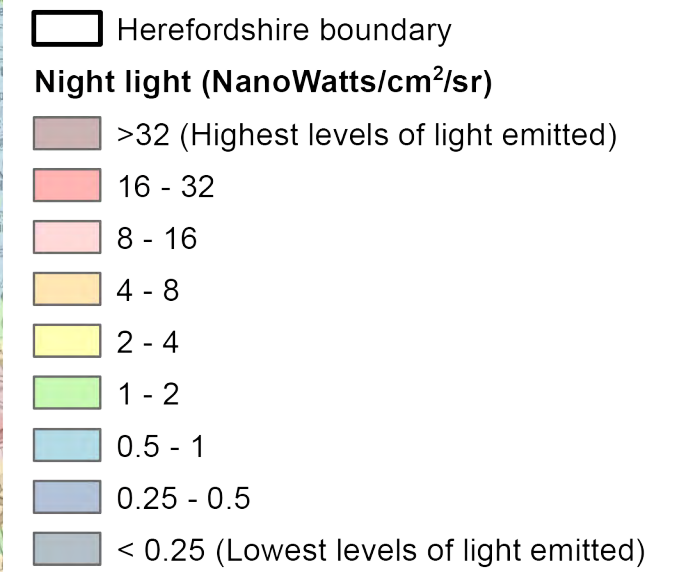
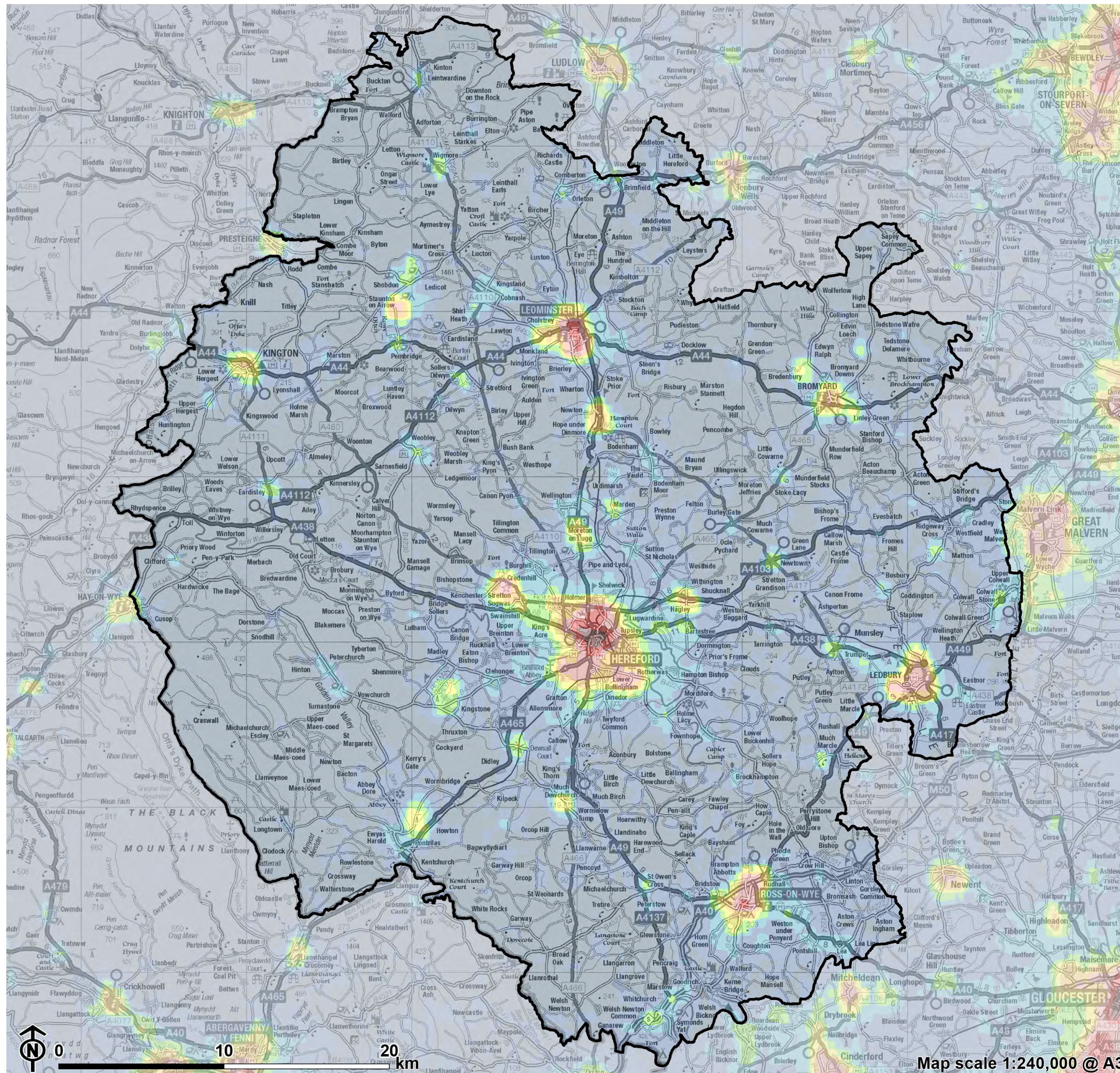
Figure 3.9: Tranquillity



□ Herefordshire boundary  
Level of relative tranquillity  
Most tranquil areas  
Least tranquil areas

Source: CPRE, Ordnance Survey

Figure 3.10: Dark skies



Source: CPRE, Ordnance Survey