

# Chapter 3

## Place

Herefordshire's distinctive local character, including the interaction of physical, cultural and perceptual influences, are outlined. This theme also examines the potential of GBI as a tool for the sensitive and sustainable incorporation of development into the county's existing landscape fabric, providing resilient communities of the future.

### Strategic objectives

- *Multifunctional:* Enhance climate change resilience with good quality design of GBI in both urban and rural environments within the county to inspire great places / embrace a range of spaces and assets. Promote effective landscape management to ensure that the landscape can provide long-term resilience and fulfil the needs and aspirations in a sustainable manner for present and future communities.
- *Varied:* Promote a diversity of greenspaces; based on scale, functionality and management approach to meet strategic needs. These should reflect cultural influences and be of the highest design quality to provide vibrant places to live, work and visit.
- *Connected:* Utilise GBI to improve placemaking, enabling settlements to grow and adapt in a connected way which complements existing landscape character.
- *Accessible:* Ensure that consideration is given to gaps in the existing GBI network and the requirement for additional facilities to promote accessibility.

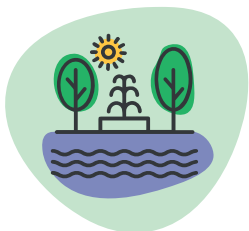
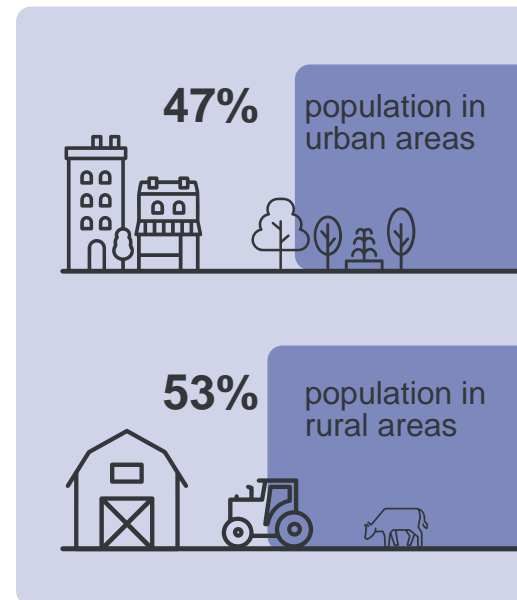
- *Responds to Local Character:* Create well-designed and distinctive GBI that responds to design cues from Herefordshire's existing landscape and townscape character (natural, cultural and perceptual attributes) to enhance the county's sense of place.

# Chapter 3 - Place Summary



## Key assets

- A varied landscape ranging from the uplands of the Black Mountains and the Malvern Hills, to the low-lying floodplain of the River Wye.
- Fertile soils have created a successful pastoral and arable agricultural landscape which is punctuated by woodlands and connected by mature hedgerows.
- An attractive local vernacular shaped by Herefordshire's underlying geology.
- The Wye Valley AONB is characterised by a meandering landscape which flows into dramatic gorges and steep wooded slopes to the south of Ross-on-Wye. The Malvern Hills AONB is characterised by a dramatic north-south ridge which hosts distant panoramic views.



**25**  
Registered  
Parks & Gardens



**64**  
Conservation  
Areas



**266**  
Scheduled  
Monuments



**6,052**  
Listed  
Buildings



**129**  
Grade I Listed  
Buildings

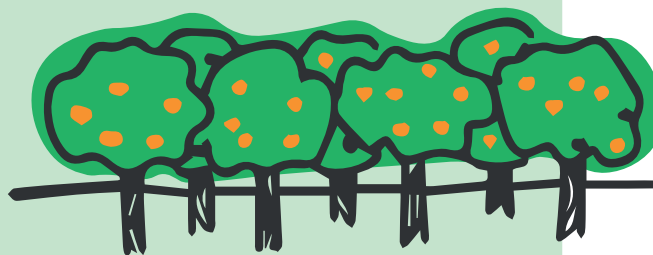
- The emerging Herefordshire Design Code outlines expectations for new development, including how GBI should be delivered.
- The route of the former Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal is still evident in the county's landscape between Hereford and Ledbury in the form of wet ditches, linear woodland belts and relics of the canal's infrastructure. The Herefordshire & Gloucestershire Canal Trust continue to take steps towards restoring sections of the canal.

**743,000** individual trees, woodlands and groups of trees

**500** Tree Preservation Orders

## Drivers and issues

- Ongoing impacts of development, flooding and drought on land quality and the need for large extents of farmland to adapt to the effects of climate change.
- Changes to and the intensification of agricultural practices has led to field enlargement, larger buildings and industrialised processes.
- The fragmentation and loss of traditional landscape features such as orchards, hedgerows and woodland can erode the strong sense of rural character across the county.
- There is a heightened need for catchment-scale wetlands to address water pollution issues across Herefordshire's river network.
- There is an increased demand for renewable energy infrastructure across the county which can have negative impacts on Herefordshire's landscape character.
- Continued growth and development squeezes the available space for greenery and trees, emphasising the need for innovative approaches to urban greening to help combat the impacts of climate change and the urban heat island effect in settlements such as Hereford.
- Maintenance success of new street trees during the establishment period can be mixed. New trees commonly rely on members of the community to water and maintain them.



### 57 heritage assets on Historic England Heritage at Risk Register



11  
Grade I Listed  
Buildings



3  
Grade II Listed  
Buildings



16  
Grade II\* Listed  
Buildings



25  
Scheduled  
Monuments



2  
Conservation  
Areas

- Remnants of the county's industrial heritage, including the Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal, are at risk of being lost from the landscape. The canal, which today largely takes the shape of wooded corridors and seasonally wet ditches, has slowly declined since its closure in 1881.
- The Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal Trust have been restoring sections of the canal since its formation in 1992.
- At present, 10% of the 34-mile route between Hereford and Gloucester has been restored or is under construction. A further 10% is under active negotiation.



# Emerging opportunities

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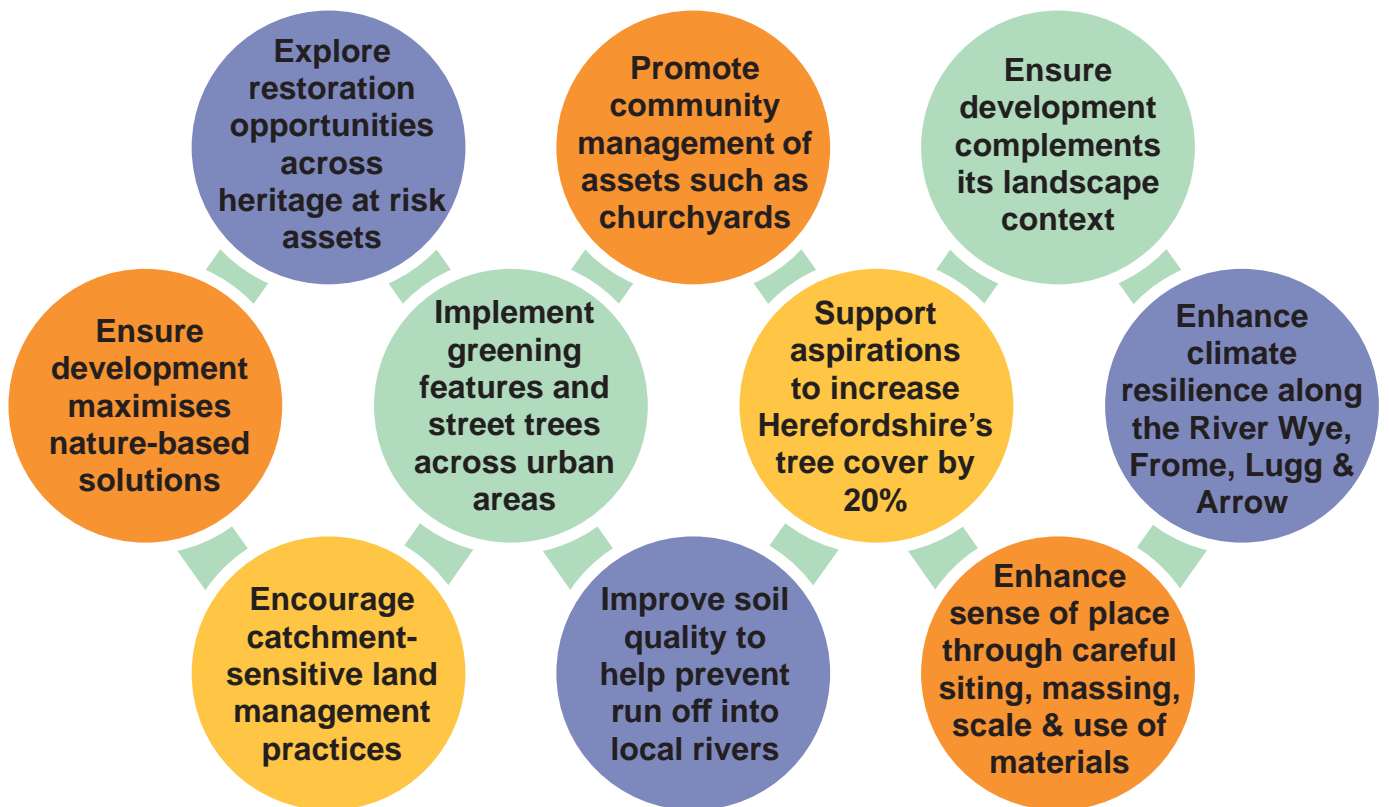
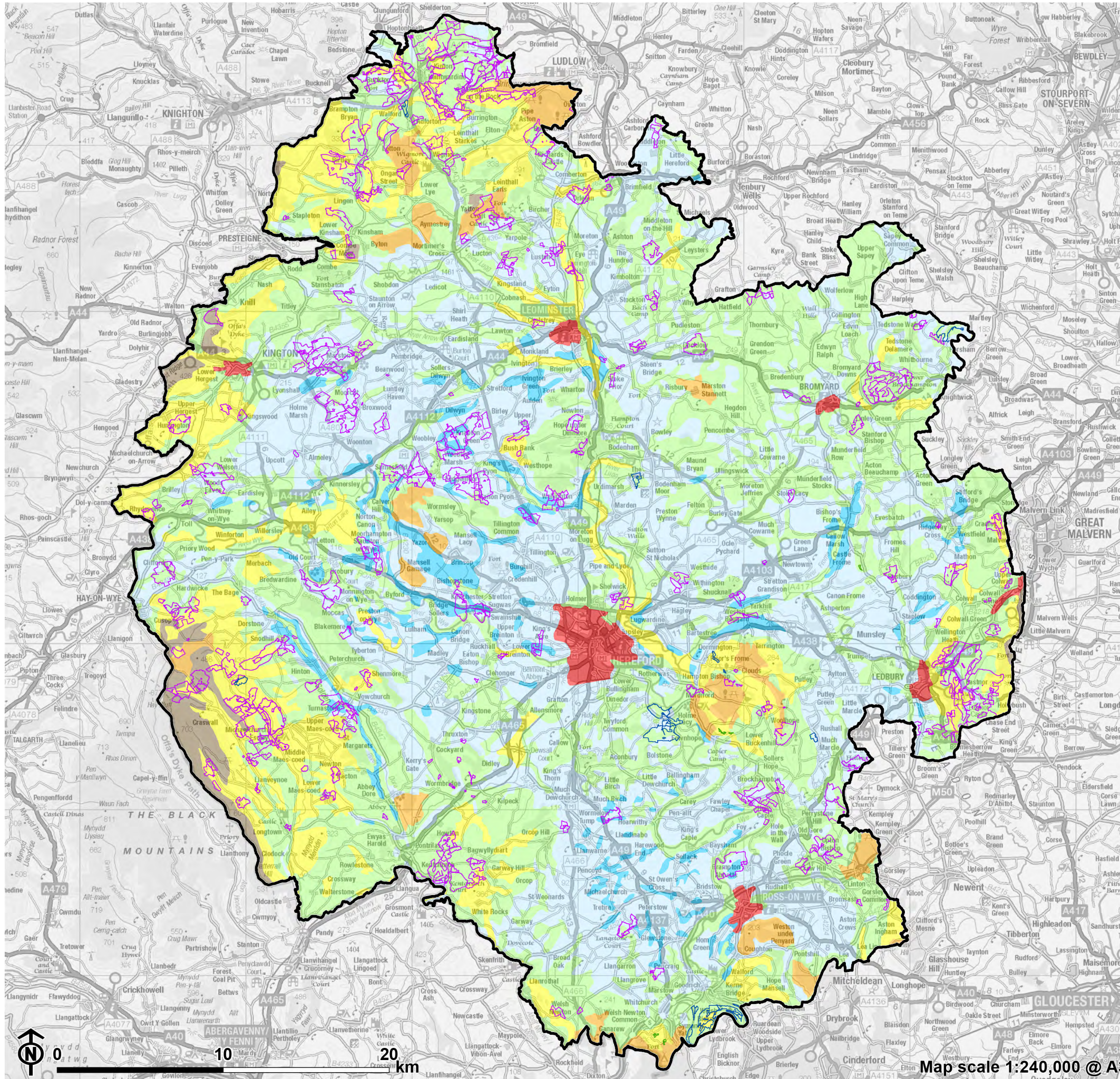


Figure 3.1: Agricultural Land Classification



Herefordshire boundary

**Agricultural Land Classification**

- Grade 1
- Grade 2
- Grade 3
- Grade 4
- Grade 5
- Non Agricultural
- Urban
- Exclusion

**Environmental Stewardship Agreement**

- Entry Level plus Higher Level Stewardship
- Higher Level Stewardship
- Organic Entry Level plus Higher Level Stewardship

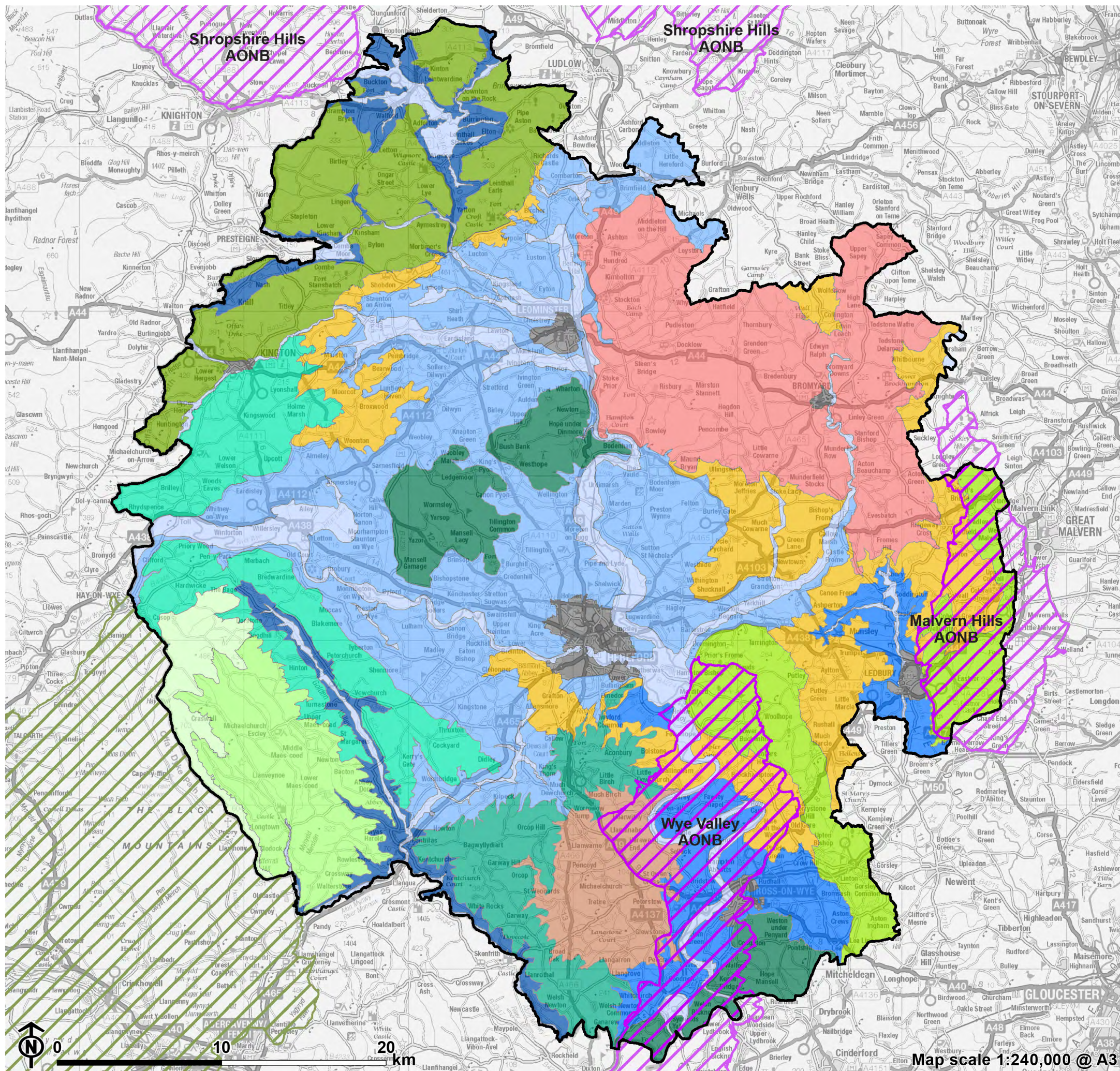


**77%** % land cover in Herefordshire which is farmed. An additional 2.4% comprises traditional orchards

**11%** % agricultural land under some form of Environmental Stewardship - this is more prominent in the north and west of the county

**44%** % agricultural land characterised as excellent or very good (Grade 1 and 2)

Source: Natural England, Ordnance Survey



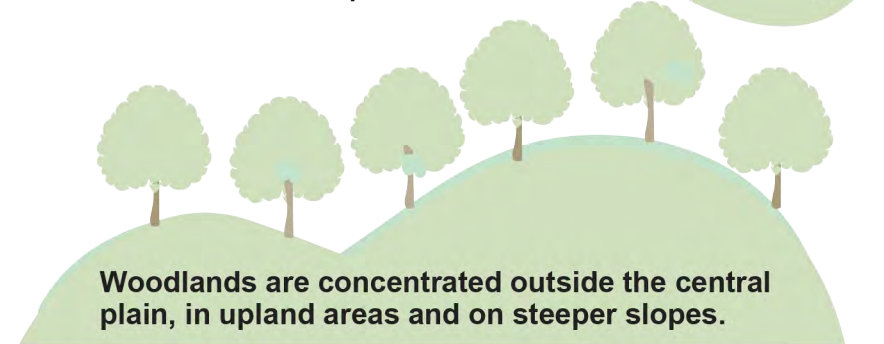
Herefordshire Natural Environment  
Evidence Base  
Herefordshire Council



**Figure 3.2 Local level Landscape Character Types**  
(for more detail, please see the *Herefordshire County Landscape Character Assessment, 2023*)

- Herefordshire boundary
  - Settlement
  - National park
  - Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- Landscape Character Type**
1. River Floodplains
  2. Lowland Farmlands
  3. Shallow Vales
  4. Enclosed River Valleys
  5. Undulating Wooded Farmland and Estates
  6. Exposed Sandstone Uplands
  7. Sandstone Upland Hills and Valleys
  8. Wooded Limestone Ridges
  9. Limestone Uplands
  10. Border Sandstone Hills
  11. Wooded Brownstone Hills
  12. Wooded Sandstone Hills
  13. Plateau Farmland and Estates
  14. Rolling Brownstone Plateau Farmlands

Agricultural land use in Herefordshire is strongly influenced by topography and soils, with livestock farming dominating the uplands, and mixed pasture and arable farming, commercial orchards and horticulture on the central lowland plain.



Woodlands are concentrated outside the central plain, in upland areas and on steeper slopes.

Source: LUC, Natural England, Herefordshire Council, Natural Resources Wales, Ordnance Survey

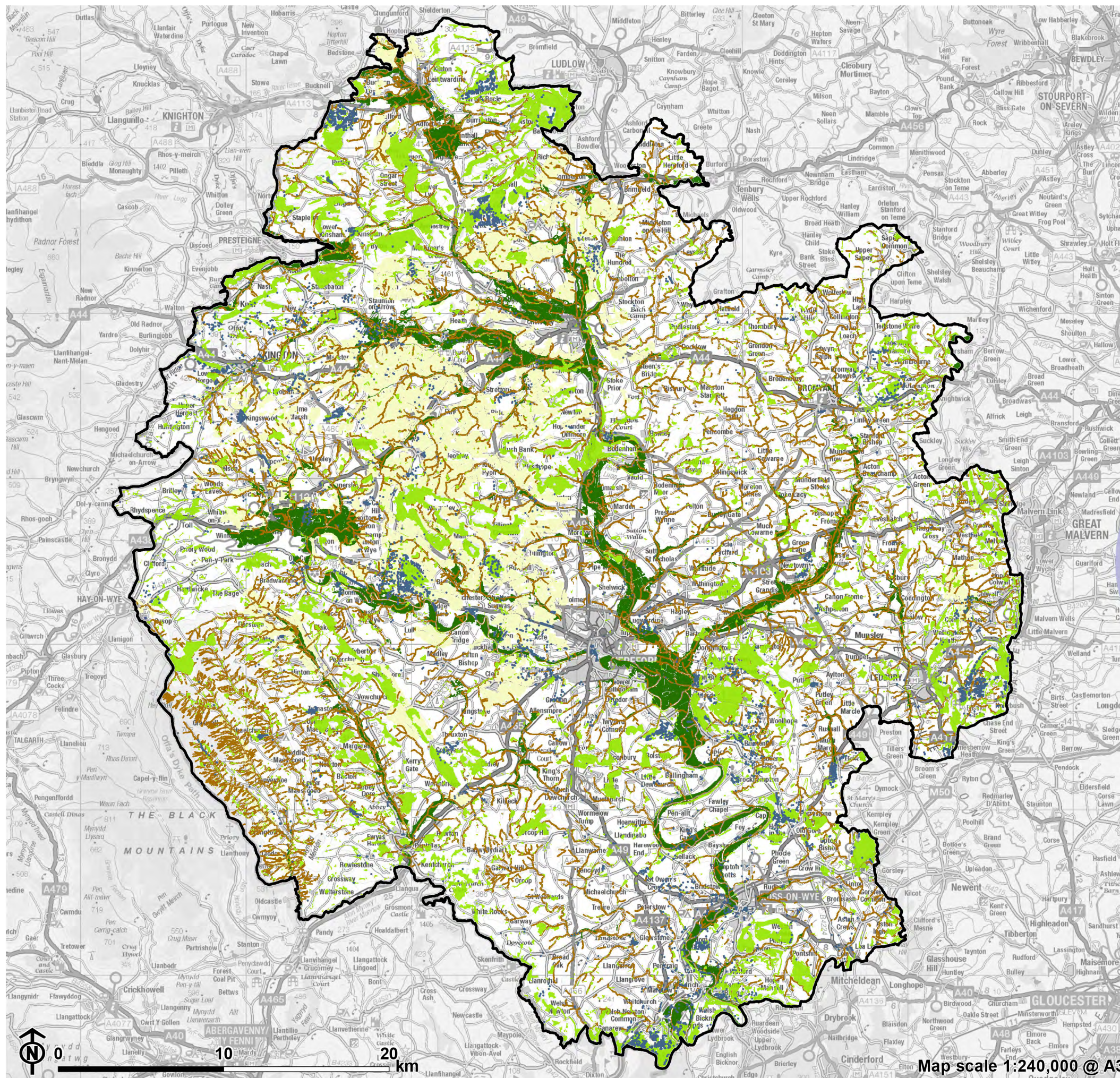


Figure 3.3: Tree and woodland cover

- Herefordshire boundary
- National Forest Inventory\*
- Priority and notable habitats:**
  - Floodplain Woodland Potential
  - Riparian Woodland Potential
  - Wider Catchment Woodland Potential

**19.1%**  
of existing woodland  
cover within  
Herefordshire  
(national average of  
17.5%)

**Herefordshire Council  
aim to increase this to  
20%**  
across the county,  
focussing particularly on  
urban areas where it is  
currently 13%

\*National Forest Inventory includes:  
Broadleaved, Conifer, Coppice, Felled,  
Mixed mainly broadleaved, Mixed mainly  
conifer and Young trees.

Source: Environment Agency, Herefordshire Council,  
Natural England, Ordnance Survey, Forestry Commission,  
and Herefordshire Biological Records Centre



## Key findings from stakeholder consultation

**3.1** The key findings from consultation and engagement (see **Chapter 1**) are listed below:

- Predicted rising temperatures pose threats to infrastructure, particularly in more urban areas within Hereford and the market towns.
- GBI should be used as a mechanism to enhance resilience through nature-based interventions and solutions, in both the rural and urban contexts.
- Explore the opportunity for the establishment of wider partnerships between the Council, agencies and other organisations to deliver GBI across the county.
- The implementation of natural flood management in priority catchment areas should be encouraged.
- The ambition exists for Herefordshire to become a sustainable food place through the expansion of domestic scale allotment provision and community growing spaces in developments.
- GBI should integrate landscape character, heritage and cultural assets into the GI network, allowing their full potential to be explored. The decline in condition of cultural and heritage assets can have a negative impact on sense of place.
- GBI interventions should be integrated within existing and proposed access networks across the county.
- Protect, restore, connect and enhance areas of traditional orchard.
- The opportunity exists to produce a county-wide soil strategy to future proof food production against climate change and tackle nutrient run-off.

## Conclusions and next steps

### Landscape character

Key issue: The principal forces for change affecting the county's distinctive landscape character include changes in agricultural practices, development pressures / settlement expansion and the effects of climate change. The protection of areas of tranquillity and dark skies also form a key consideration relating to landscape character in the county.

Next steps: In terms of development management, GBI interventions should be integrated within future development proposals to ensure that they enhance local distinctiveness and local landscape / settlement character. Interventions should reflect local character, cultural heritage and the visual distinctiveness of Herefordshire to contribute to a sense of place. Catchment sensitive land management practices should also be encouraged to address issues regarding flood risk, water quality and habitat connectivity, whilst conserving and enhancing the traditional pattern and structure of the landscape.

### Climate change

Key issue: Climate change is a major pressure on the landscapes of the county and is likely to result in increasingly unpredictable weather with hotter drier summers, more intense rainfall and longer dry periods. Herefordshire's sensitive river valleys are considered to be at high risk of flooding from watercourses. Increased frequency of flooding can lead to increased runoff of pollutants from the land, exacerbating water quality issues.

Next steps: The principles of both climate change mitigation and adaptation

should be explored within both the rural and urban contexts of the county. This includes the adoption of natural flood management schemes and responsive land management practices for agriculture. Potential interventions include proposals to alter the species composition of future planting, favouring species with lower water demand to create climate resistant woodland. Consideration should also be given to increasing incidences of pathogens. Measures to provide flood protection in river valleys should balance ecological sensitivities and the requirement for flood protection. Furthermore, Herefordshire's settlements offer the opportunity to sensitively incorporate greening interventions, providing a range of multi-functional benefits.

### **Heritage**

Key issues: There are 57 heritage assets on the Historic England Heritage and Risk Register within Herefordshire. This includes 9% of scheduled monuments and 9% of Grade I listed buildings in the county.

Next steps: Where heritage assets are in poor condition (Heritage England at Risk Register), management should work to restore and revitalise these features, create funding opportunities, and tackle the underlying causes for their decline. Opportunities to protect and enhance the setting of listed buildings, scheduled monuments, the Hereford Area of Archaeological Importance and historic parks and gardens should also be explored. Furthermore, GBI offers the potential to improve the physical access to appropriate heritage features, whilst also promoting links between related historic assets. This includes the protection and restoration of historic field patterns and traditional orchards, where possible.