

Shaping Our Place 2026

Local Development Framework

Core Strategy

Policy Direction Paper  
Design

January 2010



## CORE STRATEGY POLICY DEVELOPMENT

Core Policy Area: Design

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### Preferred Policy Direction

The results of the 2008 Developing Options consultation have provided an emerging set of preferred directions for policies dealing with design issues.

The Core Strategy will contain a Local Distinctiveness Policy which will include aspects of design and sustainable construction and other design issues such as reducing crime and improved safety. From this policy more specific policies can be developed as part of the Hereford Area Plan and the Market Towns and Rural Areas Plan.

The Design Code, a county-wide SPD on design issues will also be developed, and will present the opportunity to reference Parish Plans and Village Design Statements from within the Local Development Framework so that those elements directly relevant to the design of development can be taken into account and given a specific profile for planning purposes.

Design measures should also be introduced that take climate change issues into consideration, for example flood issues, water saving measures and carbon reduction.

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### 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This report provides background information and evidence to support the policy directions that will form part of the Core Strategy Place Shaping Paper. The full policy wording will form part of the pre-submission Core Strategy.
- 1.2 The Core Strategy will set out the vision and objectives for the Herefordshire Local Development Framework (LDF), together with the 'place shaping policies' at a strategic level, explaining how the County as a whole is expected to develop up to 2026.
- 1.3 The current Local Development Scheme timetable anticipates the Core Strategy will reach submission by the end of 2010 and adoption during 2011.
- 1.4 The remainder of this report seeks to address the following questions:
  - What is the current situation (issue)?
  - What is the national, regional and local policy framework?
  - What is the available evidence base indicating?
  - What can the Core Strategy do?
  - What were the results / indications for the Developing Options Consultation?

- What further consultation has taken place?
- What conclusions can be drawn?
- What happens next?

## **2.0 The need for the policy.**

2.1 Good design fosters civic pride, a sense of place, improves and enhances the existing environment and also attracts business and investment. Architecture and design are both significant to development in urban and rural areas and require an understanding of the context in which new development takes place. Both are matters of public interest and material to the determination of planning applications and appeals.

2.2 Creative site planning is a crucial element in the provision of high quality living and operational environments, and the best way to promote successful and sustainable regeneration, conservation and place-making is to think about urban design from the start of the planning and development process.

2.3 At the local level, the design concept should be to provide an interesting and individual development that complements and enhances the area. The aim is to achieve a balance between individual and community needs, privacy, safety and convenience and environmental protection and enhancement. Access and safe movement particularly by means other than car, siting, density and design of buildings and spaces all harnessing site opportunities are issues to be addressed. Within major developments the provision of public art will also be expected as an integral part of the overall design to enhance identity and culture.

## **2.4 The role of the Planning System**

2.4.1 Many factors determine or influence the outcome of the design process and the sort of places we make. However success largely depends on:

- a clear framework provided by development plans and supplementary guidance delivered consistently, including through development control;
- a sensitive response to the local context;
- judgements of what is feasible in terms of economic and market conditions;
- an imaginative and appropriate design approach by those who design development and the people who manage the planning process.

2.4.2 The planning system has a key role to play in the creation of sustainable communities, and in particular, the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE - the government's advisor on architecture, urban design and public space), advocates that planning authorities should seek to:

- include a clear strategy and vision in their local development framework
- expect good quality schemes
- use pre-application discussions, design and access statements and ensure the planning application contains sufficient detail
- secure quality through planning conditions and legal agreements
- access design skills in-house, through consultants or via design review panels

- review design quality in an annual monitoring report using Building for Life standards.

## 2.5 Design in Herefordshire

2.5.1 Herefordshire has beautiful unspoilt countryside, market towns of distinctive character and a wealth of varied landscapes. High standards of design and local distinctiveness which builds on the existing character of Herefordshire is therefore important, not only on the appearance of the area but also on the creation of safer environments, promoting sustainable developments and the more efficient use of resources and local materials.

## 3.0 The policy framework

### 3.1 National Policy

3.1.1 There are a number of policies and strategies at national, regional and local levels that address the issue of design. The following list identifies the current key national drivers for local action:

- By Design - urban design in the planning system towards better practice: This guide was published in 2000 to promote higher standards in urban design and provide sound, practical advice to help implement the Government's commitment to good design, as set out in the now superseded Planning Policy Guidance Note 1 General Policy and Principles. It encourages those who influence and shape development decisions to think more deeply and sensitively about the living environments being created.

The three central messages of the guide are:

- Good design is important everywhere, not least in helping to bring rundown, neglected places back to life.
- While the planning system has a key role to play in delivering better design, the creation of successful places depends on the skills of designers and the vision and commitment of those who employ them.
- No two places are identical and there is no such thing as a blueprint for good design. Good design always arises from a thorough and caring understanding of place and context.

The guide is relevant to all aspects of the built environment, including the design of buildings and spaces, landscapes and transport systems. It has implications for planning and development at every scale: in villages as well as cities and for a street and its neighbourhood as well as regional planning strategies.

- Planning Policy Statement 1 – Delivering sustainable development: This makes it clear that local planning authorities should promote high quality inclusive design in the layout of new developments and individual buildings, and that design which fails to improve the character and quality of an area should not be accepted.
- Planning Policy Statement 3 - Housing: This states that good design is fundamental to the development of high quality new housing, which contributes to the creation of sustainable,

mixed communities. Reflecting policy in PPS1, it states that good design should contribute positively to making places better for people. It requires local authorities to monitor design quality.

- Planning Policy Statement 6 – Planning for Town Centres:  
This states that it is essential that town centres provide a high-quality and safe environment if they are to remain attractive and competitive; and that policies for the development of town centres, should promote high quality and inclusive design - in order to improve the character and quality of the area in which such development is located and the way it functions.
- Planning Policy Statement 7 – Sustainable development in rural areas:  
This advocates that planning authorities should take a positive approach to innovative, high-quality contemporary designs that are sensitive to their immediate setting and help to make country towns and villages better places for people to live and work. It goes on to state that planning authorities should ensure that development contributes to a sense of local identity and regional diversity and be of an appropriate design and scale for its location, having regard to the policies on design contained in PPS1 and By Design.
- Planning Policy Guidance 13 – Transport:  
This states that local planning authorities should actively manage the pattern of urban growth to make the fullest use of public transport, and to seek by the design and layout of developments and areas, to secure community safety and road safety. It goes on to advocate that the needs and safety of all in the community should be considered from the outset, taking account of the importance of good design.
- Planning Policy Guidance 15 – Planning and the historic environment:  
This states that the design of new buildings intended to stand alongside historic buildings needs very careful consideration, and that in general it is better that old buildings are not set apart, but are woven into the fabric of the living and working community. It goes on to state that new buildings do not have to copy their old neighbours in detail, and that some of the most interesting streets include a variety of building styles, materials and forms of construction, of many different periods, but together forming a harmonious group.
- Planning Act 2008:  
The Planning Act 2008 introduced two new statutory requirements for Local Planning Authorities: the issues of Climate Change must now be addressed in local development documents, and the definition of “Sustainable development” for planning purposes has been amended by the addition of “the desirability of achieving good design

### **3.2 Regional Policy**

- West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy:  
Policies UR1 (Implementing urban renaissance); UR3 (Enhancing the role of City, Town and District Centres); QE3 (Creating a high quality built environment for all); and EN2 (Energy conservation) of the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy, specifically refers to the need for high quality design.

In particular, the strategy states that Development Plans should follow the principles in PPG3 (now PPS3) and the good practice in the 'By Design' guide and 'Better Places to Live: By Design' to ensure the most efficient use of land without compromising the quality of the environment. Attention should also be paid to energy efficiency and to securing safe neighbourhoods, and Development Plans and other strategies should promote the creation of high quality built environments as part of urban and rural renaissance and the regeneration strategies for the Region's cities, towns and villages.

### 3.3 Local Policy

- Streetscape Manual – Herefordshire Council:  
This manual will provide a basis to establish a co-ordinated approach to the design, management and maintenance of Hereford's streets and public spaces. It forms a key part of the vision for Hereford, clarifying the key principles and practical details that will guide and inform future investment in the public realm.
- Hereford City Centre Regeneration Strategy:  
The Hereford City Centre Regeneration Strategy has been produced by Herefordshire Council working with Hereford City Partnership. The strategy outlines a ten year plan for the City Centre, outlining key schemes and projects that aim to establish the City as a thriving and prosperous place to live, work and visit. An action plan has been produced to track the delivery of priority projects which will be updated quarterly.
- Community Strategy  
The Community Strategy presents a vision of a sustainable future for the county. It looks at developing stronger and more inclusive communities alongside the development of a safe and pleasant environment in which to live and work.
- Local Area Agreement:  
Under the theme of Stronger Communities, this highlights the need to improve the availability of sustainable services and facilities and access to them. The indicator set, relates to greater engagement in the public arts.
- Unitary Development Plan  
Design Guidance in Herefordshire is currently (2008) based on the general policies encouraging good design in the Unitary Development Plan 2007 (UDP), the Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG), Design and Development Requirements, 2004 and good practice generally. The SPG was adopted as supplementary to the UDP which was, at the time, in draft form. The status of the document is not, therefore, as high as it would have been if its "Chain of conformity" had been with an adopted plan. The UDP was adopted in 2007 and is, therefore, 'saved' only until March 2010 and will be replaced by the relevant elements of the emerging Local Development Framework in due course. There is therefore, an opportunity to ensure that the policy basis for good design in the county is

kept up-to-date and effective in the light of the changing status of the more 'senior' planning documents.

Other significant changes in circumstances since the 2004 SPG include the highways design guidance in Manual for Streets (which replaced Design Bulletin 32) and the evolving nature of the Building Regulations which include various matters relevant to climate change and access to buildings.

Policy DR1 of the UDP is proposed to be a saved policy, as submitted to the Government Office for West Midlands

## **4.0 Evidence base**

4.1 This section provides a summary of the information held within the key evidence base, with respect to design issues.

### **4.2 Herefordshire Landscape Character Assessment (2004)**

4.2.1 The Landscape Character Assessment SPG provides the guidance necessary to comply with the landscape policies of the current Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan (UDP). It is intended to promote the use of landscape assessment as part of the development control process, to increase awareness of the countryside's character and to ensure that future development is compatible with that character. It is a powerful tool that can direct land use change in ways that will prevent the destruction of the inherent landscape character or take advantage of opportunities to strengthen the character and thus enhance local distinctiveness.

4.2.2 The assessment advocates that a strategic vision is needed in order to make rational decisions about how best to accommodate change in the countryside; as historic patterns of settlement and woodland cover, for instance, are a key determinant of landscape character, and it is important that land use change should, where possible, respect these patterns. It goes on to state that in some landscape types, the elements of landscape character are particularly sensitive and the impact of land use change, particularly new development, should be subjected to rigorous examination and resisted where that impact is seen to be unacceptable. In terms of design, the assessment states that the detailed design of any new development should respect the inherent character of the local landscape and seek to strengthen rather than weaken that character; and that new housing development should seek to be sympathetic to the traditional vernacular in terms of style, materials and layout.

### **4.3 Green Infrastructure Study (2008)**

4.3.1 The completed Green Infrastructure Study, published in April 2008, aims to ensure that the natural and cultural landscape features and functions are placed at the heart of planning for sustainable development within Herefordshire.



- 4.3.2 The study advocates the following:
- The developing green infrastructure should be in sympathy with the landscape character, as well as in sympathy with current knowledge and policy on archaeology, history and culture.
  - That the identification of publicly accessible space is a key theme to developing a green infrastructure network that encourages healthy activity and a sense of wellbeing.
  - That transport networks form a key element that allows for the movement of humans and a contributor to the movement of other species, therefore opportunities for creating new links and enhancing existing corridors especially in urban areas should be considered.
  - That to adapt to change, green infrastructure enhancement and effective planning are required to protect the existing green space and develop better connected green space in cities. The provisions of green corridors to contribute to a reduction in environmental stress are considered a priority.

#### **4.4 PPG 17 Open Space Assessment (2006)**

- 4.4.1 Strategic Leisure Limited (SLL) was appointed in January 2005 to undertake an assessment of open space, outdoor sport and recreation facilities (PPG17 compliant) to identify local needs for provision, and opportunities for enhancement, development or replacement of current facilities.
- 4.4.2 The resultant study advocates that the county should aspire to provide 'good quality facilities,' for which adequate resources would need to be allocated in order to improve those open spaces that fall below that standard. Future provision will also need to be compliant with the recommended Disability Discrimination Act accessibility guidance.
- 4.4.3 The recommended standards for open space have been developed using current provision per typology measured against the total population. The exception to this has been for natural and semi natural greenspace (where the English Nature 2ha per 1000 population has been applied).
- 4.4.4 Specific recommendations outlined within the report are as follows:
- As a bare minimum standard of provision, every site that the public use and that is owned by the council should have signage, and if used for recreation, should have a bench and a bin, be clean and well maintained.
  - An Open Space Strategy should be developed for the county using the results, issues and recommendations from the Sport, Recreation and Open Space Study.
  - The county's footpath network should be further developed and linked into wider footpath networks outside of the county
  - Awareness of the opportunities for walking in the county need to be increased.
  - The use of both open space and sport and recreation facilities should be linked with travel awareness initiatives.
  - Identified provision deficiencies of natural/semi-natural greenspace must be addressed as a priority in the production of a Local Development Framework (LDF).
  - A strategic approach to the development and provision of cycling routes across the county needs to be taken.

- A policy should be established to ensure that all multi-pitch sites are served by good quality changing facilities. Pitch provision should also be reassessed using the 'Toward a Level Playing Field' methodology and on a rolling 5 year cycle to ensure that changes in demand and supply are considered.
- The council should adopt a policy of providing 'good' quality sites; should prioritise improvements to quality in the areas where the average quality is below the county average, and should involve young people in the design and choice of provision.
- Planning policy needs to redress the surplus and deficiencies on an area by area basis; and also needs to consider the disposal of sites in areas above the minimum standard, in order to cater for the deficiencies in other typologies or to ensure that disposal secures funding for outdoor sport and open space facilities.
- The county needs to implement area focused protective policies guided by the local development framework for those areas low in provision; and as a key priority, the council needs to consider redressing deficiencies in provision both in terms of quantity and quality.
- A consultative Steering Group should be established, involving representatives from both sport and leisure, and planning; in order to consider specific site development proposals relating to existing, former and proposed sport and leisure provision. This interdepartmental group should be established to share, and utilise the expertise of leisure and planning officers, to ensure that specific site development issues are fully considered, and the implications shared, before a planning decision is made.

#### **4.5 Hereford Rapid Townscape Assessment (HRTA) (ongoing)**

- 4.5.1 The Hereford Rapid Townscape Assessment (HRTA) is based on a model developed by English Heritage for the structured and systematic appraisal of townscape and the historic environment. The results of the assessment include the identification of areas of local interest, of sites of potential development and enhancement, and of factors that contribute to loss of character.
- 4.5.2 The aim of the HRTA is to contribute to a housing land availability assessment for Hereford City, and to provide a consistent overview of the area's historic and townscape character. The results of the HRTA are presented through individual character area appraisals; as a result therefore, the findings of the study will be used for developing further area specific Development Plan Documents, such as the Hereford Area Plan.

### **5.0 Core Strategy Consultations**

#### **5.1 Key Issues**

- 5.1.1 The Herefordshire Core Strategy Issues Paper was published for consultation in September 2007, which outlined 14 key issues facing the county. Views and comments were invited on these issues in order to help determine their importance, to see if any issues had been missed and to help develop a vision of Herefordshire up to 2026.

5.1.2 From the 14 key issues identified, the issues that relate to design are as follows:

- Addressing the impacts of climate change
- Protecting and enhancing environmental assets; and
- The regeneration of the county

5.1.3 The results of the consultation highlighted five key 'sub-issues' for each of the key issues identified, and included: the need for more energy efficiency/conservation; carbon neutral developments; reductions in CO<sub>2</sub> output; more green spaces in towns; and regeneration throughout the county, in particular the Edgar Street Grid . Full details of these results can be found in Appendix 2 of this paper.

5.1.4 In addition to those issues detailed in appendix 2, two additional issues were introduced as a result of consultation responses, which suggested the need to celebrate and highlight the distinctiveness of Herefordshire and to reduce crime; these are:

- Key Issue 13 - Reducing the opportunities for crime and anti-social behaviour
- Key Issue 14 - High quality, locally distinctive, sustainable design and construction

## 5.2 Developing Options

5.2.1 As part of the second stage in the production of the Core Strategy – the 'Developing Options' stage, suggested policy options were set out for dealing with the 14 key issues identified for Herefordshire ran from 16<sup>th</sup> June to 8<sup>th</sup> August 2008 and the public, alongside key stakeholders, were encouraged to examine and comment upon the council's draft spatial vision and objectives, and to help the council decide upon which options should be looked at in more detail. The following sections provide a summary of the comments made that had specific reference to design issues – in response to the 'Vision' for the county, the Objectives and the Policy Options. The results of the consultation have provided an emerging set of preferred directions for policies dealing with design issues.

### Objectives

5.2.3 The objectives have been substantially reworded since the Developing Options Paper (June 2008). The main differences in the final version of the objectives relate to the creation of two further objectives, which were formed as result of splitting original objectives 7 and 9, to create separate objectives on Hereford, the Market Towns and Rural Areas and on the issue of climate change. The objectives which specifically relate to design highlight the need to achieve sustainable communities and protect the environment by delivering well-designed places, spaces and buildings; and to address the causes and impacts of climate change by ensuring new development: uses sustainable design and construction methods to conserve natural resources.

5.2.4 Further details on how the Vision and Objectives for the Herefordshire Core Strategy have been developed so far, can be seen in the Vision and Objectives Background Paper - available on the Council's website [www.herefordshire.gov.uk/ldf](http://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/ldf).

### **5.3 Policy Options**

5.3.1 The Policy Options identified in the Developing Options Paper incorporate important issues, which reflect the need to bring about changes in the way we deal with development. High standards of design and local distinctiveness which builds on the existing character of the local area is important not only on the appearance of the area, but can also have an effect on creating safer environments, promoting sustainable developments and the more efficient use of resources and local materials. Key areas addressed were renewable energy, minerals, waste management, flooding, water use and the design and construction of buildings.

5.3.2 With reference to design, the Developing Options questionnaire posed the following question:

#### **How can we make Herefordshire distinctive in terms of design?**

1. Devise a local design policy incorporating all aspects of design and sustainable construction.
2. Integrate design elements into other policies such as renewable energy, flooding and housing provision.
3. Rely on the regionally defined sustainable design and construction policy.

5.3.3 The results of the developing options consultation reveal that option 2 gained the strongest support amongst respondents at 54%, with option 1 coming second at 34% and option 3 being the least popular at 13%.

5.3.4 Some respondents also decided to take the opportunity to make 'free-text' detailed comments; these highlighted the need to promote high quality design and the use of energy efficient local materials; to preserve the balance between landscape, biodiversity and the historic and built environment; to protect green space, open views and orchards; and to limit development to brown-field sites and urban areas. None of the comments made however are considered to represent alternative options.

### **5.4 Sustainability Appraisal and Habitat Regulation Assessment**

5.4.1 The Sustainability Appraisal showed that options 1 and 2 were seen as the most suitable, with option 3 the least.

5.4.2 In terms of Habitat Regulation Assessment, options 1 and 2 are favoured. Possible impacts identified relate to air pollution, water level & quality, run off, nitrogen enrichment, sedimentation, erosion, disturbance and flood defence.

### **5.5 Preferred Policy Direction**

5.5.1 In terms of policy development, the Core Strategy will approach design aspects within an overarching 'Locally Distinctiveness Policy.' This will provide the basis from which more specific policies can be developed, for example as part of other Development Plan Documents such as the Hereford Area Plan and the Market Towns and Rural Areas Plan. It will also be important to incorporate design elements into other policies such as those

addressing renewable energy, flooding and housing provision, which is an approach favoured by those responding to the 2008 Developing Options consultation.

- 5.5.2 The Design Code, ie a county-wide SPD on design issues will also be developed, which will present the opportunity to reference Parish Plans and Village Design Statements from within the Local Development Framework, so that those elements directly relevant to the design of development can be taken into account and given a specific profile for planning purposes.
- 5.5.3 The development of the new Design Code SPD could take a portfolio format so that different elements of design guidance could be prepared as practice and legislation changes, and as resources permit to incorporate such specialist elements of design as shop front guides, designing for and with heritage issues and landscape design. The common features to these would be that they would comprise design guidance at the site-by-site level and be distinctive to Herefordshire.

## **6.0 Opportunities for a way forward**

- 6.1 The next stage for the Core Strategy is to formulate policy wording, comments received to the Place Shaping Paper, evidence base and the corresponding Sustainability Appraisal, will assist in forming policy wording.
- 6.2 Whilst Herefordshire Council needs to demonstrate that there are clear mechanisms for monitoring the outcomes of policies (including design policies) within its Core Strategy, it is not the purpose of this report to propose indicators to measure their success. The range of possible indicators which could be used to monitor policies will be developed through further consultation with design practitioners and other interested bodies, as appropriate to local circumstances.
- 6.3 Over the next few months, the council will be undertaking further consultation with external organisations in order to finalise the policy wording. The list of consultees can be found at Appendix 3 of this report.
- 6.4 The council will also be undertaking SA workshops. Once complete, the results of these will be used to help refine the policy wording.

## Appendix 1 - Evidence Base Reports

Herefordshire Landscape Character Assessment (2004)

Green Infrastructure Study (2008)

PPG17 Open Space Assessment (2006)

Hereford Rapid Townscape Assessment (ongoing)

## Appendix 2 - The top five Sub-Issues arising from the Key Issues

	<b>Top 5 sub-issues</b>				
<b>Protecting and enhancing environmental assets</b> 376 comments were made in relation to this issue	<b>Promote the protection of native wildlife species</b>	<b>More listing of buildings and protection of trees</b>	<b>More green spaces in towns</b>	<b>Improve access to the countryside</b>	<b>Controls on polytunnels</b>
	<b>Number of comments</b>				
	104 (28%)	54 (14%)	20 (5%)	19 (5%)	19 (5%)
	<b>Top 5 sub-issues</b>				
<b>The regeneration of the county</b> 249 comments were made in relation to this issue	<b>Edgar Street Grid</b>	<b>Improve vitality of the market towns</b>	<b>Hereford</b>	<b>Rural regeneration</b>	<b>Improved public spaces</b>
	<b>Number of comments</b>				
	38 (15%)	31 (12%)	27 (11%)	25 (10%)	22 (9%)
	<b>Top 5 sub-issues</b>				
<b>Addressing the impact of climate change</b> 561 comments were made in relation to this issue	<b>More energy efficiency/conservation</b>	<b>Better use of public transport</b>	<b>Reduce traffic</b>	<b>Encourage more recycling</b>	<b>Carbon neutral developments</b>
	<b>Number of comments</b>				
	87 (16%)	79 (14%)	72 (13%)	67 (12%)	58 (10%)

### Additional Key Issues

Two additional Key Issues were introduced as a result of consultation responses, these are:

**Key Issue 13** - Reducing the opportunities for crime and anti-social behaviour

**Key Issue 14** - High quality, locally distinctive, sustainable design and construction

## Appendix 3 - Internal and External Consultees

### *External consultees*

#### **Organisation**

Advantage West Midlands  
 Campaign to Protect Rural England  
 Chamber of Commerce Herefordshire and Worcestershire  
 CLA Country Land & Business Association  
 Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment  
 Dwr Cymru Welsh Water  
 English Heritage  
 Environment Agency  
 Friends of the Earth (Herefordshire)  
 Government Office West Midlands  
 Highways Agency  
 Home Builders Federation Ltd  
 Hyder Consulting (Drainage)  
 Marches Energy Agency  
 Natural England  
 Severn Trent Water Ltd  
 Sustrans West Midlands Office  
 West Midlands Regional Planning Body (West Midlands  
 Regional Assembly)  
 Emergency services
 

- West Mercia Police Authority
- Hereford and Worcester Ambulance Services
- Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service

### *Herefordshire Council Internal Consultees*

Catherine Taylor	Asset Management and Property Services
Trish Marsh	Sustainability Unit - Environment and Culture
Debby Klein	Development Management – Minerals and Waste
Mike Willmont	Development Management
Chris Jenner	Building Control
Harry Fitch	Strategic Housing
Jane Thomas	Strategic Housing
Richard Wood	Waste Management
Bill Bloxsome	Conservation
Bruce Chartres	Environmental Protection
Philippa Lydford	Herefordshire Partnership
Steve Burgess	Highways and Transportation