

Neighbourhood Planning Guidance Note 34

Tourism

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Your Neighbourhood Development Plan could encourage or facilitate the provision and development of tourism related developments, either by allocating sites or setting out detailed planning policies. In doing so you can help to promote Herefordshire as a tourist destination and increase the economic productivity of your neighbourhood simultaneously.

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An introduction to tourism

Herefordshire has beautiful unspoilt countryside, distinctive heritage and culture, remote valleys and rivers, the Malvern Hills to the east of the county which rise to over 400 metres above sea level and the Black Mountains in the south west. Parts of Herefordshire are within two Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), the Wye Valley and the Malvern Hills.

Tourism plays an important part in the wider Herefordshire economy as one of its largest earning sectors of the economy. The attraction of Herefordshire is typically its unspoilt countryside and wide range of small scale attractions. Tourism has strong links to economic development and tends to be focussed on the county's natural and historic heritage assets. Thus, there is a strong relationship in the county between the quality of the environment and the types and levels of tourism which prosper in Herefordshire. The maintenance of this balance is the key policy issue for action through Neighbourhood Development Plans.

Why is tourism so important?

The Visit Herefordshire Business Plan 2007-2010 gave a sense of the significance of tourism to the county's economy. In 2009, the visitor economy (combining overnight tourist and day visitor spending) produced almost £416 million for the local Herefordshire economy.

The extent to which tourism plays a major role in the life of Herefordshire's communities will vary from place to place, but it is crucial for the economic and environmental sustainability of the entire county - the amount spent by tourists in 2009 (as stated above) equates to approximately £2,311 for every resident in the county per annum.

The policy framework

The wide ranging nature of tourism is such that numerous chapters within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) are relevant.

NPPF

At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. The concept of sustainable development is underpinned by

Government's belief that planning has a number of roles to fulfil including economic, social and environmental roles:

- Economic role – contributing to building a strong economy that is competitive and responsive, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation;
- Social role – supporting and involving strong, vibrant and healthy communities, and
- Environmental role – contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment.

It can be argued that tourism is reflected in these roles and, at para 28, the NPPF advises that local and neighbourhood plans should support sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments that 'benefit businesses in rural areas, communities and visitors, and which respect the character of the countryside'.

Local policy context

The Herefordshire Tourism Strategy

This was updated in 2010 and running to 2015, and discusses the opportunities for growing the visitor economy and identifies ways within which this can be achieved.

The vision of the Tourism Strategy is:

"...to firmly establish Herefordshire as a must visit rural destination for leisure and business tourism in England for both high value international and domestic tourists based upon creating a unique range of year round Herefordshire creatively presented visitor experiences.."

Herefordshire Economic Development Strategy 2011-2016

The Economic Development Strategy for Herefordshire builds on the Tourism Strategy by outlining the path and direction to foster economic vitality. Whilst the vision of the strategy is to increase the economic wealth of the county through the growth of business, one of its aims is to promote the county as a location for tourism, with certain items, namely local food and drink being cited as a significant tourism feature of the economy.

Tourism

Local Plan - Core Strategy

One of the objectives of the Local Plan - Core Strategy is to develop Herefordshire as a destination for quality leisure visits and sustainable tourism. This aim is underpinned by Policy E4 (Tourism), which aims to encourage developments that would help to conserve and enhance Herefordshire's natural strengths and unique environmental assets.

Neighbourhood planning and tourism

Many parts of Herefordshire, and villages, within the AONBs in particular, have had increased tourism related developments over the past few years. There will continue to be a need to balance the potential social and economic benefits of these proposals with protecting the countryside during the next plan period; through your Neighbourhood Development Plans. The planning system can aid relevant proposals to ensure that neighbourhoods secure appropriate developments without causing environmental problems. The NDP process can also encourage particular proposals through the use of Neighbourhood Development Orders and Community Right to Build Orders

Both the existing and emerging planning policy frameworks support the promotion of tourism across Herefordshire. There are, however, a number of specific ways in which Neighbourhood Development Plans can help deliver Tourism, not least through sites allocations and, or locally specific planning policies.

Site allocations

Further guidance on this matter can be obtained from Guidance Note 21: Guide to site assessment and choosing allocation sites, but it is possible to allocate sites solely for tourism related developments in your neighbourhood area, including visitor accommodation, thus ensuring that proposals of an appropriate size and scale are built in the right places, not where they would have an unacceptable adverse impact on residential amenity or landscape sensitivity.

There are numerous benefits of site allocations but most importantly they help the community understand the importance of the provision of tourist facilities and provide landowners and

developers with a greater understanding about the type of tourism related developments required in specific location.

If you decide to capitalise on the potential for tourism related developments or believe that a long standing demand for a particular facility (i.e. holiday lets or temporary accommodation) would be best satisfied through site allocations, the next step would involve the identification of potential land that could be included as allocated sites in the Neighbourhood Development Plan.

Further guidance on how to gather evidence is available in Guidance Note 10: Evidence base and information requirements.

Detailed Neighbourhood Plan policies

Policy E4 of the Local Plan - Core Strategy does not go into locally specific detail and so it will be down to individual neighbourhood plans to create an environment which encourages and stimulates tourism related proposals, but not to the detriment of the environment, economy and culture of the places they apply to. In the absence of policies on tourism, there will be a lack of detail to guide decisions on planning applications and so their inclusion ought to be given serious thought.

However, it is important to ensure the policies are not written in such a way that they are so detailed or site specific that businesses and entrepreneurs are unable to develop viable tourism proposals because they cannot meet the locally set criteria. Your nominated support officer can help you tailor the level of flexibility and detail in your tourism policies.

Examples of the themes which policies can cover include:

- Visitor accommodation (both small and large scale) - The provision of visitor accommodation such as new hotels, boarding houses or self-catering accommodation can bring benefits to your parish in terms of boosting local spending and helping to support local facilities. In addition, proposals for accommodation associated with walking, cycling and horse-riding, such as bunk-barns and hostels, can contribute to the Local Plan's strategy of encouraging modes of transport other than the private car.

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Relevant policies should ensure that developments are compatible with neighbouring uses, including the siting, scale and design of the proposal and the likely level of traffic and noise that will be generated. Equally, policies concerning new build visitor accommodation within open countryside will have to be just as exacting as they are for other types of development.

- Static caravans, chalets, camping and touring caravan sites – Static caravans and chalets remain on site all year round and can lead to the provision of other facilities such as swimming pools, club houses, car parks, on site shops and areas for tennis and other sports. Touring caravan and camping sites tend to require a lower level of infrastructure and associated built development and their seasonal nature means that their impact may not be so significant. The need for new facilities should be reconciled with the protection and preservation of those environments that attract tourists in the first place.

Sites for holiday chalets or static holiday caravans are often located in areas where the provision of permanent residential development would be contrary to the provisions of the Local Plan - Core Strategy. As such chalets and caravans are occupied for temporary periods; they do not require the level of infrastructure associated with a permanent residential environment. Consequently different planning considerations should be applied and allowing the conversion of a tourist facility to a permanent residential one must not come at the expense of a policy aimed at providing accommodation for visitors and supporting the rural economy.

- Rural and farm tourism development – Development which aims to meet the needs of visitors who are attracted to the countryside can help to diversify the rural economy and provide a boost to farm incomes. However, relevant policies should ensure that such developments will be sensitive to the local environment in terms of design, scale and location, so that the environmental impact and associated visitor management problems are minimised, and meet the broader aims of the Local Plan - Core Strategy.

Previous guidance on Planning for Tourism contained a number of good practice statements which could be developed further through the Tourism Policies of your Neighbourhood Plans. These include policies that should aim to:

- Maximise the benefits of tourism, in particular ensuring that the development is able to reach its potential to contribute to tourism in the area and for local communities to enjoy those benefits;
- Identify optimal locations, for example to maximise synergies with other tourist attractions and to promote opportunities for access by public transport;
- Integrate development with its surroundings both in terms of design and layout and in the way that the service or facility is able to function; and
- Avoid adverse impacts, through for example disturbance to activities on adjacent land.

These guides were also clear that the provision of essential facilities for visitors is vital for the development of tourism in rural areas. This can largely be attributed to the idea that tourism can:

- Be a key element in rural and farm diversification;
- Help to revitalise market towns and villages;
- Support important rural services and facilities; and
- Underwrite environmental schemes and improvements to the built and natural environment.

Policy E4 – Tourism

The policy on Tourism (Policy E4) within the Local Plan - Core Strategy lists the following measures that you may wish to focus on within your own NDP.

It states that Herefordshire will be promoted as a destination for quality leisure visits and sustainable tourism by utilising, conserving and enhancing the county's unique environmental and heritage assets and by recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.

Tourism

In particular, the tourist industry will be supported by a number of measures including:

- Recognising the unique historic character of Hereford and the market towns as key visitor attractions and as locations to focus the provision of new larger scale tourist development;
- The development of sustainable tourism opportunities, capitalising on assets such as the county's landscape, rivers, other waterways and attractive rural settlements, where there is no detrimental impact on the county's varied natural and heritage assets or on the overall character and quality of the environment. Particular regard will be had to conserving the landscape and scenic beauty in the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty;
- Retaining and enhancing existing, and encouraging new, accommodation and attractions throughout the county, which will help to diversify the tourist provision, extend the tourist season and increase the number of visitors staying overnight. In particular proposals for new hotels will be encouraged. Applicants will be encouraged to provide a 'Hotel Needs Assessment' for any applications for new hotels;
- Ensuring that cycling, walking and heritage tourism is encouraged by facilitating the development of long distance walking and cycling routes, food and drink trails and heritage trails, including improvements to public rights of way, whilst having special regard for the visual amenity of such routes and trails, and for the setting of heritage assets in their vicinity; and
- The safeguarding of the historic route of the Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal, together with its infrastructure, buildings, towpath and features. Where the original alignment cannot be re-established, a corridor allowing for deviations will be safeguarded. New developments within or immediately adjoining the safeguarded corridor will be required to incorporate land for canal restoration. Development not connected with the canal that would prevent or prejudice the restoration of a continuous route will not be permitted.

Other community rights

For those communities who merely wish to deliver tourist facilities or take charge of existing ones without preparing a comprehensive, detailed planning document, it is possible to prepare a Community Right to Build Order. The Localism Act (2011) gives parish councils the mandate to prepare such orders, which can be drawn up separately or as part of a Neighbourhood Development Plan.

Community Right to Build Orders allow small-scale development on a specific site to be brought forward, without the need for planning permission. To this end, they give you the ability to develop a site for tourism facilities, including visitor accommodation, to meet a proven need.

It is important to note that Community Right to Build Orders are subject to a limited number of exclusions, such as proposals needing to fall below certain thresholds so that an Environmental Impact Assessment would not be required. Proposals are subject to testing by an independent inspector and community referendum.

Neighbourhood Planning guidance notes available:

Deciding to produce a Neighbourhood Development Plan

1. Which is the right tool for your parish
2. What is a Neighbourhood Development Plan
3. Getting started
4. A guide to procedures
5. Funding

Plan Production

6. Developing a Vision and Objectives
7. Generating options
8. Writing planning policies
9. Environmental Assessment
10. Evidence base and information requirements
11. Implementation and Monitoring
12. Best practice community engagement techniques
13. Statutory consultees
14. Writing a consultation statement
15. Planning and other legislation
16. Web enabling your plan
17. Using OS based mapping
18. Glossary of planning terms

Topics

19. Sustainable Water Management in Herefordshire
20. Guide to settlement boundaries
21. Guide to site assessment and choosing allocation sites
22. Meeting your housing requirements
23. Conservation issues
24. Recreational areas
25. Renewable energy
26. Transport issues
27. Community Infrastructure Levy

Additional Guidance

28. Setting up a steering group
29. Creating a questionnaire
30. Community facilities
31. Conformity with the Local Plan (Core Strategy)
32. Examinations of Neighbourhood Development Plans
33. Guide to Neighbourhood Development Plan Referendums
34. Tourism
35. Basic Conditions
36. Your plan - Contributing to sustainable development