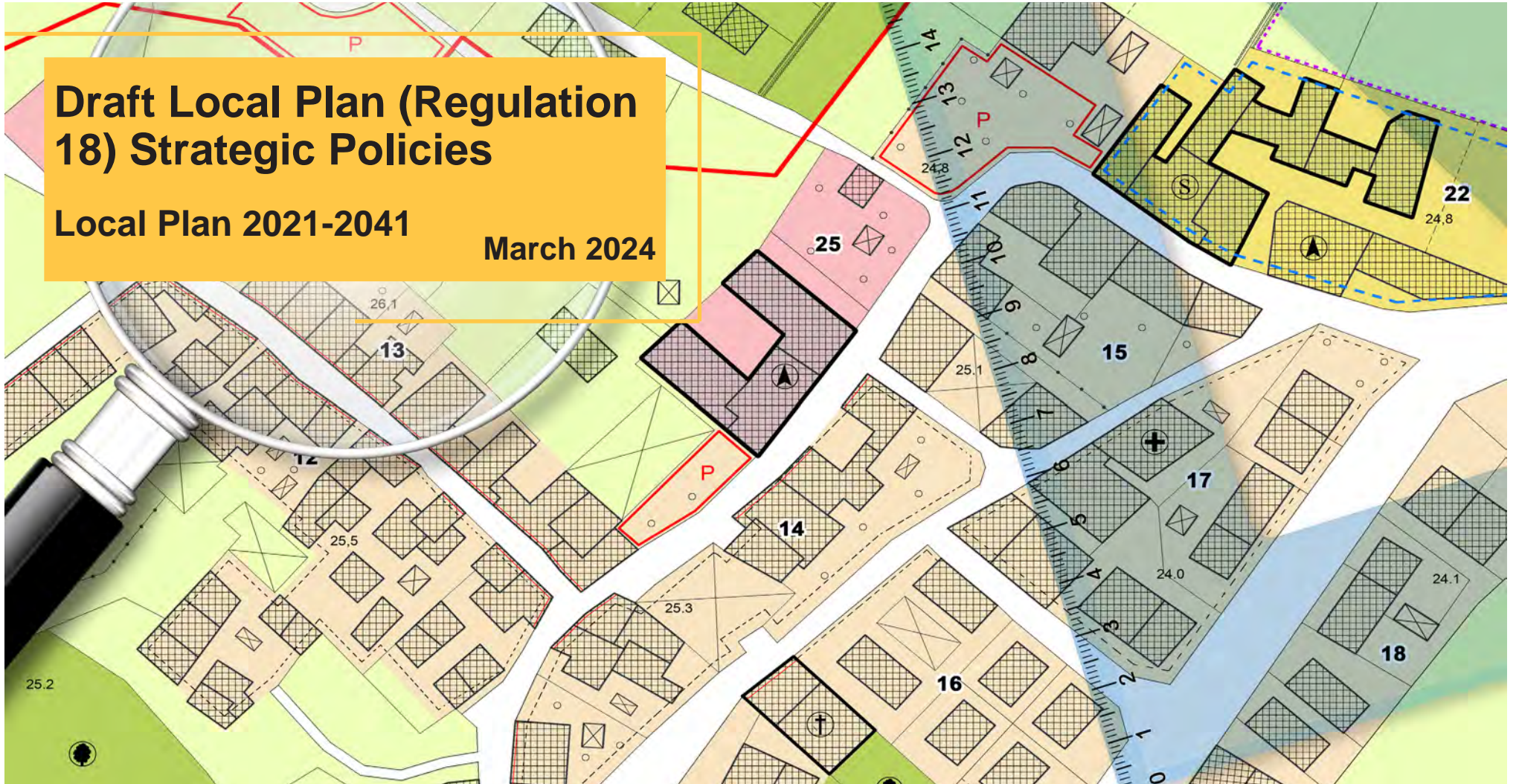


Draft Local Plan (Regulation 18) Strategic Policies

Local Plan 2021-2041

March 2024



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Introduction



Herefordshire Council is required by the Government to have an up to date Local Plan which sets out a sustainable pattern of development that meets the county's need for housing and other land uses.

The current [Core Strategy](#) was adopted in 2015. Government guidance, as set out in the [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (NPPF), advises that Local Authorities should review their Local Plan documents every five years to see if they need updating. Herefordshire Council has done this and [decided in November 2020](#) that an update of the Local Plan was required. A number of factors were taken into account in reaching this decision, including proposed changes to the planning system by the Government, updated housing figures, and the declaration by Herefordshire Council of a [climate and ecological emergency](#).

The Local Plan will cover the period between 2021 and 2041. It is an important document as it provides the basis for all planning decisions that are made in the county and a framework within which town and parish councils can prepare their own Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs).

**It is therefore important for people to get involved in this process
to help shape the future of Herefordshire.**

The Government's NPPF requires Local Plans to have a positive vision for the future of the county, a framework for addressing housing needs and other economic, social and environmental priorities. The Local Plan process also provides the opportunity for local people to get involved in shaping their surroundings.

The Local Plan must also ensure that adequate infrastructure is provided to support new development and that strong policies are in place that will improve the environment as well as mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change.

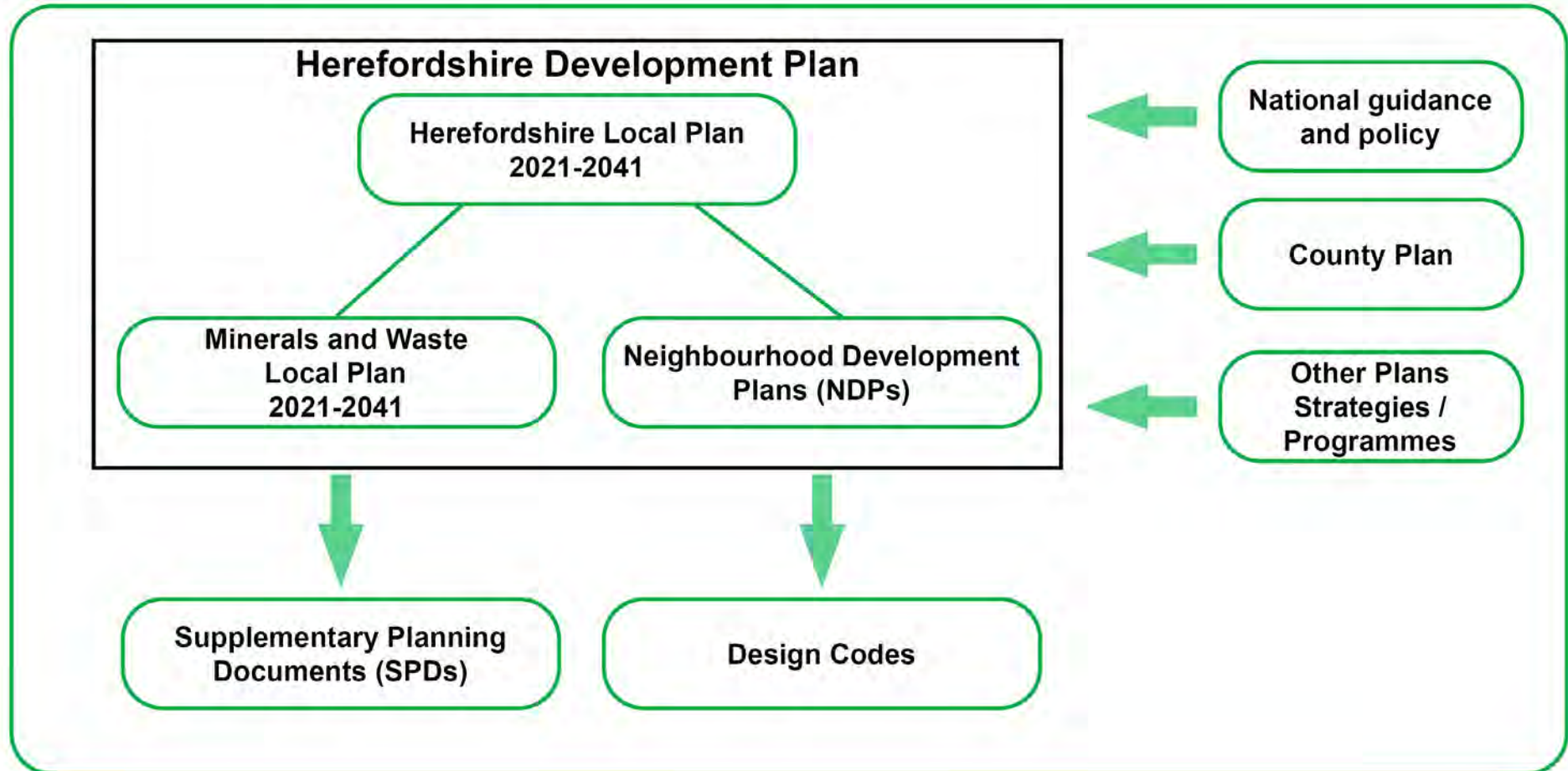
Ultimately the aim is for the Local Plan to provide the policies that will contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. This includes the provision of homes, employment land, and supporting infrastructure whilst also protecting and enhancing the attractive and distinctive character of the county. This will result in sustainable development which is central to government policy as set out in the NPPF.

Sustainable development, in short, is about meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. This encompasses many issues, including addressing the climate and ecological emergency and creating environments where people can live in a healthy, sustainable way. It is also about protecting and enhancing the many assets and features that make Herefordshire a unique place to live, work and visit.

Development Plan hierarchy

The Local Plan forms part of the development plan for the county, which will be made up of the following documents shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Herefordshire Development Plan document hierarchy



County Plan

The Local Plan has been prepared to date within the context of Herefordshire Council's [County Plan 2020-2024](#). A new County Plan is being prepared. Once this has been finalised the plan will be updated to align with the key themes. The County Plan's ambitions focus on the following areas and the Local Plan uses these as overarching principles

- **Environment** – To protect and enhance our environment and keep Herefordshire a great place to live
- **Community** – To strengthen communities to ensure that everyone lives well and safely together
- **Economy** – To support an economy which builds on the county's strengths and resources.

These clearly accord with good planning principles and the Local Plan seeks to deliver these broad ambitions in relation to the council's role as the Local Planning Authority.

Development Plans

The emerging [Minerals and Waste Local Plan](#) (MWLP) sets out planning policies relating to mineral resources and waste management development across the county, and any land allocations for this purpose up to 2041 and beyond. The Minerals and Waste Local Plan (MWLP) is still in its formal period of Examination. Examination hearings took place in November 2022 and the Inspectors compiled a list of proposed Main Modifications to the MWLP. These underwent an eight week public consultation between June and August 2023, following which, the Planning Inspectors published their Report. Subsequently, the MWLP is expected to proceed to Full Council with the recommendation that it be adopted in March 2024.

The [Local Development Scheme](#) sets out further details about the Development Plan Documents and Supplementary Planning Documents currently in use.

Since 2015 many town and parish councils have produced their own [Neighbourhood Development Plans](#) (NDPs). These documents provide more detailed local planning policies for their areas. Just under 90% of all Herefordshire Parish Councils have been engaged in producing local level planning policies with input and support from their communities. There are currently over 90 adopted 'made' NDPs in the county that are now used by the council when determining planning applications.

NDPs will continue to form part of the Development Plan for their areas, guiding development at a local level. However, once the Local Plan is adopted, it will supersede any parts of existing NDPs which do not comply with the revised Local Plan. Therefore it is recommended that new and developing NDPs take account of the Local Plan update and that 'made' plans are reviewed in light of the emerging Local Plan. The council will continue to support communities going through this process.

NDPs will continue to have a key role to play in bringing forward development sites in the rural settlements and in the market towns. Sites will be selected and allocated by NDP groups, informed by available technical evidence such as the [Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment](#) (HELAA) and the preferences of local people. NDPs will need to demonstrate that any sites they propose are suitable, available and achievable to be brought forward for development within the plan period.

Saved policies

When adopted, the Local Plan will replace most Core Strategy policies. However, some of the policies included in the Core Strategy will be saved. Saved policies are planning policies that remain part of the statutory development plan and can still be used in determining planning applications. These policies can remain in force for 3 years or until replaced by Neighbourhood Development Plans or the National Development Management Policies. Four other planning documents will also be saved as follows:

- [Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document](#) (Adopted 2021)
- [Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document](#) April 2008
- [Polytunnels Planning Advice 2018](#)
- [Travellers Sites Development Plan Document](#) (Adopted 2019)

The full list of policies and documents that will be saved can be found in Appendix 4 of the Local Plan Appendices document. The Government's National Development Management Policies are due to be published. These may be finalised before the Regulation 19 version of the Local Plan is published in which case the list of saved policies will be amended accordingly.

The draft Local Plan

The draft Local Plan includes:

- A vision for Herefordshire at 2041;
- A set of objectives to deliver that vision;
- A strategy which explains the approach to all development in the county;
- Strategic policies that set out requirements for how development must be delivered across the whole county;
- Place shaping policies which are specific to development for Hereford, for the market towns and in the rural areas.

This draft Local Plan has been informed by:

- A number of [public consultations](#) carried out in 2022 (see Consultations to date section below);
- Discussions with the town and parish councils; and
- Available information from the emerging [evidence base](#).

Consultation to date

A number of consultations have taken place over the development of the draft Local Plan and feedback from consultation periods have helped form the approach taken throughout the plan in regard to ensuring the right homes and employment sites are delivered in the right places. The table below outlines these:

Table 1: Previous public consultations

Local Plan Section	Dates	Stage of Local Plan production and topic area
Spatial Options	17 January to 28 February 2022	Issues and Options: 5 options for distribution of growth across the county including a new settlement option and 4 rural growth distribution options
Policy Options	4 April to 16 May 2022	Issues and Options: County-wide planning policies on social, economic and environmental, infrastructure, housing and design matters.
Place Shaping	13 June to 29 July 2022	Issues and Options: Site options for development in Hereford, Market Towns and Rural Settlements in a new Rural Settlement Hierarchy.

The current draft Local Plan consultation, known as Regulation 18, is for 8 weeks between 25 March 2024 and 20 May 2024. This is an opportunity to comment on the Local Plan. All documents are available online, where you can also sign up for regular updates. There are a number of drop in events around the county. Details of these can be found on the webpage. Printed copies of the Local Plan can be found in the libraries and customer service centres around the county.

The above three consultations in 2022 were carried out under Regulation 18 consultation rules. This updated March 2024 version has refined the plan further combining all strategic matters into one Plan. It gives the public a further opportunity to comment at this early stage. In legal terms, this consultation also forms part of our consultation under Regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.

The Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) for the Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan are also published for consultation alongside this document.

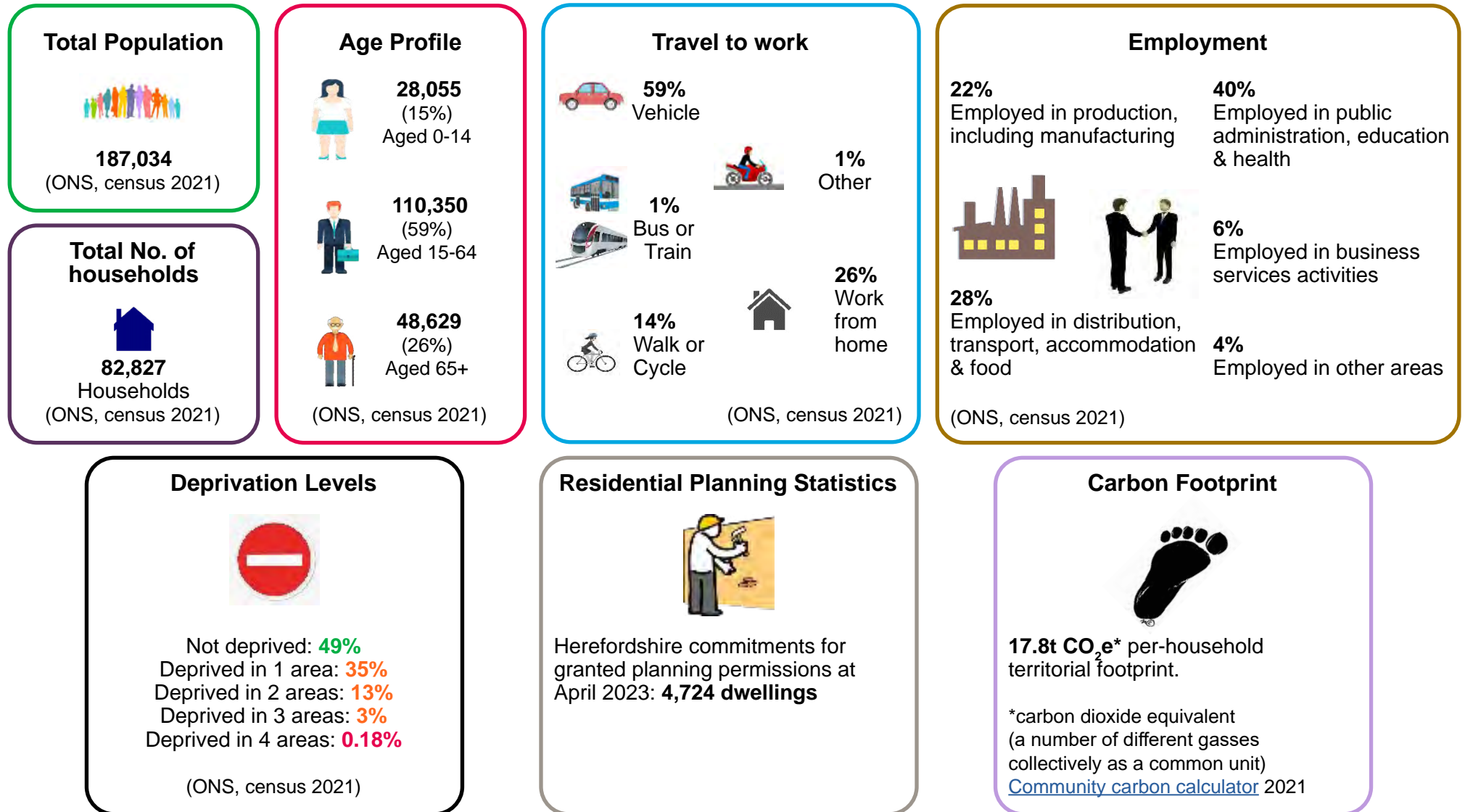
Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)

A Sustainability Appraisal (SA) evaluates the long-term social, economic, and environmental impacts of strategies and policies in the Local Plan to assess to what extent they align with sustainable development objectives. It is developed alongside the Local Plan to maximise the contribution that a plan makes to sustainable development and minimises any potential adverse impacts. The SA incorporates the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), the purpose of which is to provide a high level protection of the environment, and identify policies which are likely to have significant effects on the environment. The SA [Scoping Reports](#) and SA recommendations have been prepared for each stage in the production of the Regulation 18 draft Local Plan.

Habitat Regulations Assessments (HRA) explores the impact of plans and projects on international sites, there are three classifications of international sites. There are Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Areas (SPA), and Wetlands of International Importance (known as RAMSAR sites). Any policy or strategy with the potential to impact these sites must undergo a HRA and they can only be permitted if no negative impacts (known as 'adverse effects') on the integrity of international site(s) can be demonstrated. In the same way that the SA has informed the draft Local Plan, the HRA [Scoping Reports](#) and HRA recommendations have also had an impact on the development of policies and allocation of sites throughout the process.

Figure 2: Herefordshire key facts

Figure 2 identifies some key facts for the county which provide the context for the Local Plan.



Vision

The vision for the Local Plan sets the scene for how the county will be at 2041. It is based on the three themes of Environment, Community and Economy. The vision provides the framework for the objectives, from which all the Local Plan policies derive.

The overall vision for the county at 2041 is:

Environment

Herefordshire will be carbon neutral, and nature rich. The county's distinctive landscapes, cultural heritage and natural environment will be protected and enhanced for the benefit of people and wildlife. The county's residents' quality of life will be enhanced by ensuring they are able to live in more environmentally sustainable ways.

Community

The county will have resilient, well connected communities where new development is beautifully designed and inclusive. The health and wellbeing of the county's residents will be enhanced by everyone having the opportunity to live in a decent home with access to community facilities and services.

Economy

Herefordshire will be prosperous, with a diverse and sustainable economy. The county's farming heritage and sustainable tourism sectors will continue to play an important role in the rural economy. Hereford and the market towns will be thriving centres and popular places to live, work and visit. Hereford will be recognised as a centre for education as well as a place where innovative businesses can invest and thrive.

Objectives

The objectives are based on the vision and reflect the issues that the plan is seeking to address. They form the basis for the strategic and place shaping policies.

Table 2: Local Plan objectives

		Local Plan Policies that meet the objectives
Environmental objectives		
1	To ensure that development requires significantly less energy use and to increase the amount of energy generated from renewable sources, with a requirement for all new developments to be carbon neutral.	CC1, EE2 Place shaping policies
2	To protect communities from the worst impacts and dangers of climate change, including from flooding and heat stress.	CC1, EE1, RURA1, HSC3
3	To significantly improve water quality and ensure that all watercourses in the county are classified as 'good' quality'.	HSC3, EE1, EE2, RURA5
4	To protect the Wye Valley and Malvern Hills National Landscapes whilst, at the same time, valuing the county's whole ecology and landscape.	HSC3, EE1, EE2, AG3, ROSS2, RURA1, RURA2
5	To maximise biodiversity, enhance and extend Herefordshire's natural capital, green and blue infrastructure and nature recovery networks while significantly increasing tree cover in Hereford and the market towns.	HSC3, HSC4, EE1, ROSS1, ROSS2, HERE9
6	To ensure high quality and sustainable design of buildings and spaces taking into account local character and protecting local heritage assets and their settings.	EE2, AG3, BROM2, KING2, ROSS1, RURA1, RURA2, HERE2
7	To create a sense of place and local distinctiveness.	EE2, HERE1, BROM1, LEDB1, LEOM1, KING1, ROSS1, RURA1, RURA2

		Local Plan Policies that meet the objectives
Environmental objectives		
8	To minimise and carefully manage the use of natural resources, including minerals, land, and water and to encourage the reduction, reuse and recycling of waste, to achieve a circular economy.	EE1
9	To significantly improve air quality.	EE1, HSC1, HERE1, LEOM1,
Community objectives		
10	To provide inclusive connectivity, development and infrastructure for all.	AG6 BC1 BC2 BC3 HSC1, HSC2, BROM2, KING2, LEDB2, ROSS2, RURA4
11	To ensure that all new development supports the health and wellbeing of its occupants in accordance with the Healthy Home Principles.	CC1, HSC2, RURA4, ROSS1, ROSS2
12	To ensure that all residents are well connected to nearby services and facilities for daily requirements.	CC1, HSC1, HSC2, AG1, AG2, AG3, BROM2, LEOM2, RURA1, RURA2, RURA4, LEDB3, KING2, ROSS2
13	To create good quality, attractive places to live and work.	EE1, HSC3, HERE1, BROM1, LEDB1, LEOM1, KING1, ROSS1, PE1
14	To support good health and wellbeing, through easy access to open space, sports facilities, and active travel options.	CC1, HSC1, HSC2, HSC3, EE1
15	To ensure the provision of high-quality education easily accessible for all and increase skills and qualifications.	HSC1, HSC2, HERE3 ROSS2, LEOM2, LEDB4
16	To ensure residents feel safe in Herefordshire from crime and climate change events.	CC1, EE3
17	To enhance access to cultural heritage and heritage tourism.	EE2, PE2, PE3, LEDB3

		Local Plan Policies that meet the objectives
Economic objectives		
18	To support and encourage sustainable economic growth in the county.	PE1, LO1, ROSS2, LEDB1, LEDB3, LEOM3 BROM3, HERE3
19	To strengthen the role of Hereford City as the central hub of the county where people have easy and equitable access to good quality business, leisure, cultural, retail and employment opportunities.	PE1, PE2, PE3, PE4, PE5, HERE1, HERE3, HERE4
20	To support the increased vitality and viability of the Market Towns including renewal of the county's high streets and town centres.	PE3, EE2, HERE3, BROM1, LEDB1, LEOM1, KING1, ROSS1
21	To support a strong rural economy including appropriate farm diversification and modernisation to strengthen the agricultural sector and its role in the rural economy.	PE1, PE5, AG5
22	To ensure that all new development is accompanied by fast and reliable digital connectivity.	HSC2, RURA1, RURA2, PE2
23	To support the transition to a carbon neutral and circular economy, and the creation of 'green' jobs.	CC1, BROM3 PE2
24	Through employment land provision, facilitate well paid skilled jobs, which retain and attract working age people to live in the county.	PE1, ROSS1, LEOM1, LEOM3, HERE3
25	To support the small business sector, help independent businesses to thrive, and encourage the creation of local business identities.	HSC1, LEDB2, LEOM2, BROM3, PE2, PE4
26	To encourage and support responsible tourism that contributes to the county's economic diversity, whilst respecting its historic and natural character.	PE2, PE3, PE4, EE1
27	To strengthen the hospitality sector and to promote a diverse night time economy which offers a safe and enjoyable experience for all.	PE3, PE4, HERE2

Context for the strategy

Addressing the climate and ecological emergency

A key factor in developing the strategy and planning policies is addressing the climate and ecological emergency. In response to increasing awareness of the impacts of [climate change](#), Herefordshire Council declared a [climate emergency](#) on 8 March 2019 where it resolved to accelerate a reduction of emissions and aspire to become carbon neutral by 2030/31. In December 2019 this declaration was strengthened to a 'climate and ecological emergency', which demonstrates the council's commitment to protecting Herefordshire's natural environment, biodiversity and wildlife. This declaration was reaffirmed in July 2023.

To enable the council to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030/31, a [Carbon Management Plan](#) and associated [Action Plan](#) have been produced. This builds on the work of previous Carbon Management Plans and aims for a 75% carbon reduction by 2025/26, against the baseline recorded in 2008/09.

To drive action to achieve carbon neutrality and becoming nature rich by 2030, the council helped establish the [Climate and Nature Partnership Board](#). A 16-strong board who bring a wealth of expertise and knowledge through their roles in conservation, wildlife, architecture, farming, the media, community energy, research, land management, agricultural policy and running businesses. The board has developed a [Climate and Nature Action Plan](#). The plan of action focuses on six key areas including sustainable housing and buildings, energy, transport, food consumption, land use and farming, and waste management.

The causes and impacts of climate change are well documented. The Local Plan has an extremely important role to play in how the county can both mitigate and adapt to climate change. There are many issues that the Local Plan can influence in relation to future development, for example, by ensuring that development is located where it is well connected to other land uses to enable people to have realistic travel alternatives that do not contribute to greenhouse gas emissions. Furthermore, development should be built to higher environmental standards which are consistent with the council's recognition of the climate and ecological emergency and the goal of a carbon-neutral Herefordshire.

The proposed growth strategy and the strategic policies aim to ensure that the county plays its role in the global challenge to address climate change as well as strengthening local resilience to its impacts.

The Local Plan also aims to contribute to a nature rich Herefordshire, where biodiversity is protected and enhanced, and nature is integrated into new developments. The county's natural environment supports a wide range of habitats and the richness of its biodiversity is reflected in the number of protected wildlife sites it contains.

Nutrient levels in the River Wye Special Area of Conservation.

The council is facing particular ecological pressures in relation to nutrient management and the River Wye Special Area of Conservation (SAC). Regular monitoring of water quality has identified high, but fluctuating, levels of nutrients, particularly phosphorus, and sediment as a problem, with the River Lugg part of the River Wye SAC continuing to exceed legal limits for these potentially harmful factors. Furthermore, stretches of the upper Wye continue to be at risk of failure to stay below statutory limits. This is a significant issue in relation to water quality and ecological issues and has resulted in restrictions being placed on various types of development that could lead to an increase in the levels of phosphorus present in the SAC. Since Spring 2019, this has significantly limited housing and employment development and has had consequent detrimental effects on the local building industry and the wider economy. The restrictions in place in the Lugg catchment cover approximately 40% of the county's administrative area.

A Nutrient Management Board and, more recently, a Cabinet Commission, have been set up to address river pollution and poor water quality in sensitive watercourses in Herefordshire and neighbouring SAC catchments. The council has also approved the provision of a number of integrated wetlands in Herefordshire. These will address point source pollution from water treatment works and provide mitigation for new residential development, through the trading of a proportion of the phosphate credits generated by the operation of the wetlands. Together these initiatives will unlock the current restrictions on housing development in the River Lugg catchment and also contribute directly towards river betterment. The Local Plan has been prepared on the presumption that the restrictions will be lifted at an early stage in the plan period.

The council's joint working on innovative plans and projects related to tackling sources of pollution, has informed and influenced the formulation of the Local Plan's policy in relation to improving water quality and environmental protection, whilst enabling sustainable growth.

Affordable housing

A key part of the overall strategy is to increase the amount of affordable housing delivered over the plan period to ensure that everyone has access to decent and affordable housing within their community. There is a significant need for affordable housing within Herefordshire and the potential to facilitate the delivery of as much affordable housing in the county over the plan period has been a key driver in terms of how growth is distributed across the County. The need for and potential to deliver affordable housing across the county has been informed by the [Herefordshire Housing Market Needs Assessment](#) (HMANA) and the Viability Assessment which can be found on the [evidence base](#) webpage. This evidence has shown that the highest potential for affordable housing is likely to be achieved in the towns of Hereford, Ross on Wye, Ledbury and Bromyard as well as some of the rural areas with only relatively low levels likely to be achievable in Leominster and Kington. Therefore the housing distribution focuses on those areas where the greatest amount of affordable housing can be achieved. This means that Leominster and Kington have been allocated relatively low levels of housing. In taking this approach regard has been had to locally held data regarding waiting lists in these areas.

The council is keen to increase the amount of affordable housing in the rural areas to meet local needs. The council has applied to the Secretary of State to designate some areas of the county as a Rural Area under section 85 of the [Housing \(Right to Buy\) \(Designated Rural Areas and Designated Regions\) \(England\) Order 2016](#). When designated this will allow the council to lower the threshold requirement for affordable housing to be delivered and therefore increase the amount of affordable housing availability overall. Further information on this can be found in the Balanced Communities chapter.

Travel

It is essential that proposals in this Local Plan are aligned with existing and proposed transport infrastructure. The Local Transport Plan (LTP) is in the early stages of being updated to align with the Local Plan. Herefordshire Council has a statutory requirement to have a LTP which sets out its vision for future transport and travel infrastructure. The previous LTP was developed in 2016 but is no longer up to date for today's challenges and opportunities. The LTP provides the policy and strategy context for major transport projects to enable Herefordshire Council to bid for Government funding. Detailed plans for the implementation of transport infrastructure will come forward during the lifetime of the LTP and these will be developed so that the proposals taken forward have a strong business case and thus represent value for money.

The LTP will set out the council's approach to ensuring that residents have access to as wide a choice of modes of travel as possible. As well as an emphasis on active travel measures there will be plans for new strategic infrastructure to address traffic issues and to enable new growth and development of Hereford and the market towns. In relation to Hereford, specifically this is expected to include a new relief road to ease traffic congestion in the city and improve journey times on the wider network. Further work will be undertaken to establish a route corridor and delivery mechanisms for this key piece of infrastructure.

Spatial Strategy

Amount of housing required

One of the main starting points for the Local Plan is the provision of new housing between 2021 and 2041. The Government wants to increase the supply of new housing across the country and Local Planning Authorities should use its formula known as the '[standard method](#)' to determine how many dwellings need to be delivered every year. The outcome of the standard method is an advisory starting-point for establishing a housing requirement for the area. There may be exceptional circumstances, including relating to the particular demographic characteristics of an area which justify an alternative approach to assessing housing need; in which case the alternative approach should also reflect current and future demographic trends and market signals. The Government is continuing to use the 2014 based household projections for determining housing requirements. This approach will be reviewed following the release of the 2021 Census based household projections in 2024. The approach to the standard method will be reviewed at that time.

Under the present system, the standard method shows that around 805 dwellings per year over the next 20 years are required in Herefordshire to meet current housing need. This adds up to 16,100 dwellings during the plan period. (The plan period covers 20 years starting from 2021.) However, 6,512 homes have either already been built or granted planning permission since April 2021. Therefore, this means that the Local Plan needs to provide for only approximately 9,608 dwellings up to 2041, as shown in Figure 3. The number of dwellings with planning permissions and the number of builds that are finished will change over time and therefore this figure will be reviewed annually.

Figure 3: Herefordshire housing requirement



Infrastructure and services

Housing is just one element of the plan; there are numerous other issues and land uses that are addressed through the strategic policies of the Local Plan. The council is committed to ensuring that an extensive range of infrastructure and services, such as health, transport, sport and education, are provided to support new development. The council continues to work closely with infrastructure providers and the community to identify these requirements and to ensure that a sufficient and appropriate mix of infrastructure is provided to serve any new development.

The exact requirements for different services and facilities is presently being identified through working with other service areas of the council, external organisations as well as from detailed assessments as set out in Appendix 1 of the Appendices document. The infrastructure requirements are set out in the place shaping policies and will be detailed within an Infrastructure Delivery Plan which will accompany the submission version of the Local Plan.

The impact on the environment is also carefully considered. The strategic and place shaping policies set out criteria to ensure that any negative impacts are minimised and opportunities for environmental enhancements, including Biodiversity Net Gain, are maximised.

The strategic and place shaping policies set out the overall scale of development in Herefordshire up to 2041, the infrastructure that will be needed to support it and sets out high standards for new development for the benefit of the county's residents and the environment.

Well connected neighbourhoods

The Local Plan strategy is based on locating development in areas that currently have the best access to existing services and facilities and which have the greatest potential to support sustainable and inclusive growth.

By doing this there is greater opportunity to create well connected places where new housing is located and designed in a way which provides many benefits. Well connected and well designed homes and neighbourhoods, which incorporate the Town and Country Planning Association's (TCPA) [Healthy Homes Principles](#), provide the opportunity for people to safely walk, wheel, cycle or use public transport for everyday activities. This will help to reduce car journeys, particularly for short trips resulting in fewer greenhouse gas emissions but will also help people to live healthier and more active lives. This approach also encourages more opportunities for social interaction which is important in combatting loneliness and isolation, resulting in stronger more resilient communities. There is also an emphasis on enhancing and incorporating green and blue infrastructure as integral elements in the design of new places to help create a nature rich Herefordshire and to ensure people have easy access to open spaces.

By ensuring that new development is provided in this way, it not only helps to address the climate and ecological emergency but at the same time creates opportunities to improve health and wellbeing in accordance with the council's emerging [Health and Wellbeing Strategy](#). These are the central threads of the Local Plan.

Designing beautiful and healthy places in Herefordshire through design coding.

The policies of the Local Plan seek to achieve good quality design of new buildings. A countywide Herefordshire Design Code will be produced by the council to complement the Local Plan. This will cover the strategic and larger-scale themes of the [National Model Design Code](#) in relation to Herefordshire. This will provide clear guidance for applicants and developers to adhere to, from the conception of their development scheme. Design Codes should reflect the character and appearance of the area taking into account a number of factors including the local topography, heritage assets, and green spaces and how people move around. Development proposals will be required to take account of the guidance set out in these documents.

The Design Code consultation runs alongside the Local Plan consultation, informing the public on what Design Codes are, the proposed Design Code hierarchy in Herefordshire and setting out how we deliver Design Codes on a strategic and local scale. The consultation will set out what the Herefordshire Design Code will cover and what the design coding process will involve. The Hereford Design Guide and Code will help inform future development and growth in Hereford City Centre. It is expected that the market towns and identified settlements within the Rural Settlement Hierarchy will develop a local Design Code through their Neighbourhood Development Plans or as a standalone document. These local codes should be reflective of their local area.

Distribution of development

The proposed locations for strategic development in the county are shown in Figure 4 Herefordshire Key Diagram and further explained in Table 3.

Figure 4: Herefordshire Key Diagram

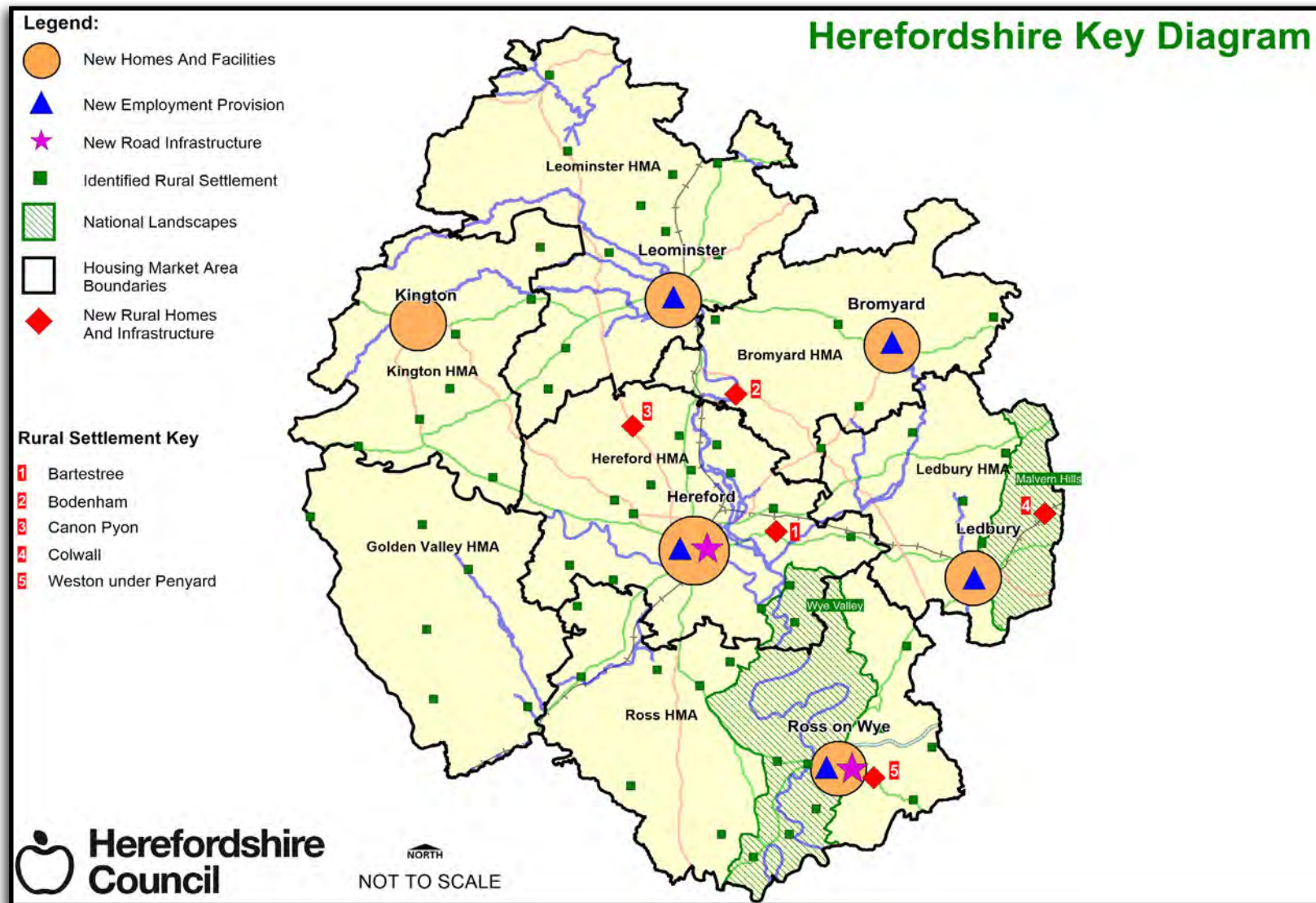


Table 3: Proposed broad distribution of development

Place	New Homes gross (total requirement from 2021)	New Employment Land gross (total requirement from 2021)
Hereford	5,600	80 ha
Market Towns (Bromyard, Kington, Ledbury, Leominster and Ross on Wye)	5,200	92 ha
Urban areas combined (Hereford and the market towns)	10.800	172 ha
Rural areas	5,320	Small scale employment

The place shaping policies provide more information about the locations and scale of growth. The policies also include requirements for infrastructure and facilities that will be necessary to serve the new development.

A significant proportion of the housing target will be met from the homes already built in the county since 2021 and existing planning permissions. In addition, there will continue to be an element of ‘windfall’ development and sites promoted via Neighbourhood Development Plans. Windfall sites are those that are not specifically identified in a Development Plan. The place shaping section sets out details of the likely contributions of new homes from these sources and takes them into account in identifying land for new development. In the same way, there are completed buildings and existing permissions for employment uses and there will also continue to be windfall employment sites as the plan progresses.

Table 3 shows that the proposed housing growth in rural areas is around 5,320 dwellings during the plan period. However, around 3,000 of these are already accounted for either through being completed in 2021-2022 or they are existing sites with planning permission as of April 2023. This means that the net figure to be found for the rural areas is just over 2,300 dwellings up to 2041.

In addition, Herefordshire has around 92 ‘made’ Neighbourhood Development Plans, many of which contain site allocations which have yet to be developed. In recognition of the work undertaken by Parish Councils and their communities, the intention is to continue with those allocations within the identified settlements in Table 4.

Historically rural housing has come forward on smaller sites and will continue to be provided through conversions or open countryside exceptions. As indicated within the NPPF, a modest allowance has been made for sites which obtain planning permission but have not been identified in the Local Plan or NDPs windfalls across the wider rural areas based on past rates.

Hereford

Hereford is the largest settlement in the county, with the greatest range of facilities and services along with the largest centre of employment and retail provision. As such it has the greatest potential to deliver sustainable urban living over the plan period and has the best opportunities to maximise active travel use. Therefore the highest number of new dwellings and employment land will continue to be located in and around the city.

This will strengthen its role as a sub-regional shopping, employment, educational, leisure and cultural centre. A range and mix of new housing types will help address inequalities regarding access to housing. There will be increased employment and education opportunities which will help create higher skilled residents and higher value jobs and will improve the county's economic competitiveness in the wider region.

Opportunities for city centre and brownfield development will be maximised to create well connected urban neighbourhoods. But in order to provide sufficient housing, it is still necessary to create sustainable urban extensions beyond the current built environment boundaries of the City. These provide an opportunity to build comprehensively master-planned new areas of housing with a range of services and facilities to support them. They will be well designed, nature rich environments which are well connected to the surrounding countryside and into the city centre.

The market towns

There are five market towns in the county, Bromyard, Kington, Ledbury, Leominster and Ross on Wye. They vary in size and in relation to the level of services and facilities they have. However, they are each important places for their residents as well as serving the surrounding rural areas.

As in Hereford, opportunities to maximise any town centre brownfield sites have been explored in each market town. However there is a limited number of such suitable sites, and these generally tend to be smaller in scale and can therefore be identified through the Neighbourhood Development Plans for each town.

Given the limited availability of large town centre sites, it has been necessary to identify options for sustainable urban extensions or strategic housing allocations for all the market towns. Sustainable urban extensions beyond the edges of the existing built forms will provide an opportunity to build comprehensively planned new areas of housing with a range of services and facilities to support them. They will be well designed, nature rich environments which are well-connected to the surrounding countryside as well as the town centres.

[Investment Plans](#) for each of the market towns have been produced. These identify each area's strengths and suggest a number of projects that will help to enhance their role. The Local Plan place shaping policies seek to support the strategic projects identified in the Investment Plans. Strategic level policies will also be able to provide the policy framework where a particular need has been identified for example the co-location of emergency services or any new health care provision. Other smaller-scale proposals will be supported by the relevant Neighbourhood Development Plans.

Further information on the proposed location and amount of development in each market town can be found in the Accommodating future growth strategic Policy AG1. Details of individual strategic allocations for new development and associated requirements can be found in the Place Shaping Policies.

Rural areas

The county's rural areas are extensive and there are numerous villages and hamlets distributed throughout the county. These vary in size and function and some settlements play an important role as local service centres for their rural catchments.

The strategy for the rural areas is to enhance the role of some of these settlements while at the same time reducing the need for residents to travel by focusing housing and employment growth on a relatively small number of settlements. In this way, it will be possible to locate new developments which will create a land use pattern that enables people to live in a more sustainable and an active way in the countryside.

A key part of the strategy is to enable people to live and work in the rural areas. It is recognised that since the Covid-19 pandemic and advancements in technology, the number of people who are working from home for all or part of the week has significantly increased. This means that there will be more demand for local services, which should help to strengthen the local economy and improve the viability of local shops, and both boost and diversify the local economy in general. This is a positive opportunity that rural communities will embrace for the multi-functional benefits it brings. Key to this is the availability of good quality broadband to homes and businesses. It is also recognised that some community, educational and health services can now be delivered digitally. This reinforces the need for high quality digital connection to be available to every household in Herefordshire to enable social inclusion, improved mental health and wellbeing support, education delivery and job opportunities.

A Rural Settlement Hierarchy (RSH) has been produced and this is described in terms of 5 levels, as follows:

1. **Hubs.**
These settlements have a primary school, employment and access to public transport and/or potential for better public transport in the future.
2. **Hubs with environmental constraints.**
These settlements are those that meet the rural hub definition in respect of their role and range of services but are located where promoting a significant level of new development would risk damaging environmental designations, such as National Landscapes or Conservation Areas or exacerbate existing environmental problems e.g. flood prone areas.
3. **Service Settlements.**
These have a more limited range of services e.g. may have a school but no employment or vice versa.
4. **Service Settlements with environmental constraints.**
These are similar to the service settlements but also have environmental issues.
5. **Open countryside.**
Here, only limited development will be allowed, e.g. affordable housing and sites for Travellers and Travelling Show People.

This hierarchy has been produced by working closely with Parish Councils in order to help identify those services and facilities that are considered to be important for a healthy sustainable community. Parish Councils have also confirmed the existence of certain facilities and services in their areas, which has been fundamental in ensuring a robust evidence base for this work.

The allocation of settlements to the different levels of the hierarchy has also been subject to an analysis of the distance of key facilities and services to existing and potential future development areas, with a preference for locations with greater access to these. This has been done in accordance with the [Healthy Homes Principles](#), one of which requires all new homes to *'be built within places that prioritise and provide access to sustainable transport and walkable services'*. This includes access to public transport, taking into account the frequency of those transport services, to enable rural residents to have an alternative means to the car to travel to Hereford or the market towns to access a wider range of services and facilities. Although it is recognised that rural public transport is presently very limited in some areas of the county, by using this approach it allows for a time within the plan period when public transport services may be more frequent and desirable as the cost of private car travel becomes more economically and environmentally prohibitive. The scale, quantity and distribution of Rural Hubs and Service Settlements is considered to broadly meet this approach.

The rural settlement strategy has recognised that some settlements have already significantly contributed to housing growth under the Core Strategy. Therefore, it has been taken into account within this plan period.

The approach to identifying settlements is explained in detail in the Rural Areas Background Paper.

Role of Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDP)

National guidance outlines that Neighbourhood Development Plans must be in general conformity with the strategic policies contained within the adopted Development Plans. They should not duplicate or repeat local or national policies but include additional local distinctive policies and proposals to support the delivery of strategic policies. In this regard, the Local Plan 2021-2041 is defined as *'the strategic policies contained within the development plan for the area'* in terms of Paragraph 8 Schedule 4B of the Town and County Planning Act (1990).

The NPPF highlights that Local Planning Authorities should provide specific housing requirements to Neighbourhood Areas for them to address. Proportional growth figures have been provided to Parish Councils undertaking a Neighbourhood Development Plan since 2015.

Policies AG1 and AG2 (Accommodating future growth) highlight the urban area non-strategic growth and Policies RURA2 and RURA3 indicate the Rural Settlement Hierarchy and the parish proportional growth figures for 2021-2041. The proportional growth figures and the monitoring of progress will be reported annually within the [Authority Monitoring Reports](#).

Future monitoring of NDP provision

Herefordshire has more NDPs in place or in development than any other planning authority in England. It is anticipated that communities' enthusiasm for Neighbourhood Planning will continue, meaning that a number of existing Neighbourhood Development Plans will need to be reviewed and updated to continue to be in conformity with the updated strategy.

However, to ensure delivery, monitoring of progress will take place. For areas without a Neighbourhood Development Plan or where their preparation has stalled, further consideration will be given to the production of a site allocation document if this is considered necessary.

Longer term growth - Potential new settlement

This Local Plan identifies sufficient sites and locations to meet the growth requirements of the plan period. However, with options for further growth for many settlements diminishing, a new settlement may be required in the longer term beyond 2041. The advantages of delivering growth through a highly sustainable and well planned new settlement are recognised, particularly where this could be linked to a strategic public transport network. As can be seen in Table 1, the potential of a new settlement was considered in earlier consultation documents. This is not being taken forward as a specific proposal in this draft Local Plan, given that the housing requirement can be met through the proposed distribution of growth. Furthermore, there is no certainty at this stage about land availability for and deliverability of a new settlement. To date, no sites or locations have been put forward for consideration. However, the council will continue to explore options to identify a location for a new settlement in advance of the next update of the Local Plan. Early planning for a new settlement will allow for flexibility towards the end of the plan period if, for example, issues regarding river quality have not been resolved as anticipated.

A specific call for potential new settlement sites is taking place at the same time as the public consultation of this plan. The call for sites information sets out some criteria to be considered when putting forward a possible site. These include, but are not limited to, the following considerations:

- Be able to achieve some degree of self sufficiency
- Will not impact from existing service centres
- Outside the County's National Landscapes
- Outside areas at risk of flood
- Access to a railway line or other public transport
- Provide an opportunity for a high quality living environment

This approach is consistent with the NPPF which states that strategic policies should anticipate and respond to long-term requirements and opportunities, including larger scale developments such as new settlements given the long timescales for delivery of such communities.



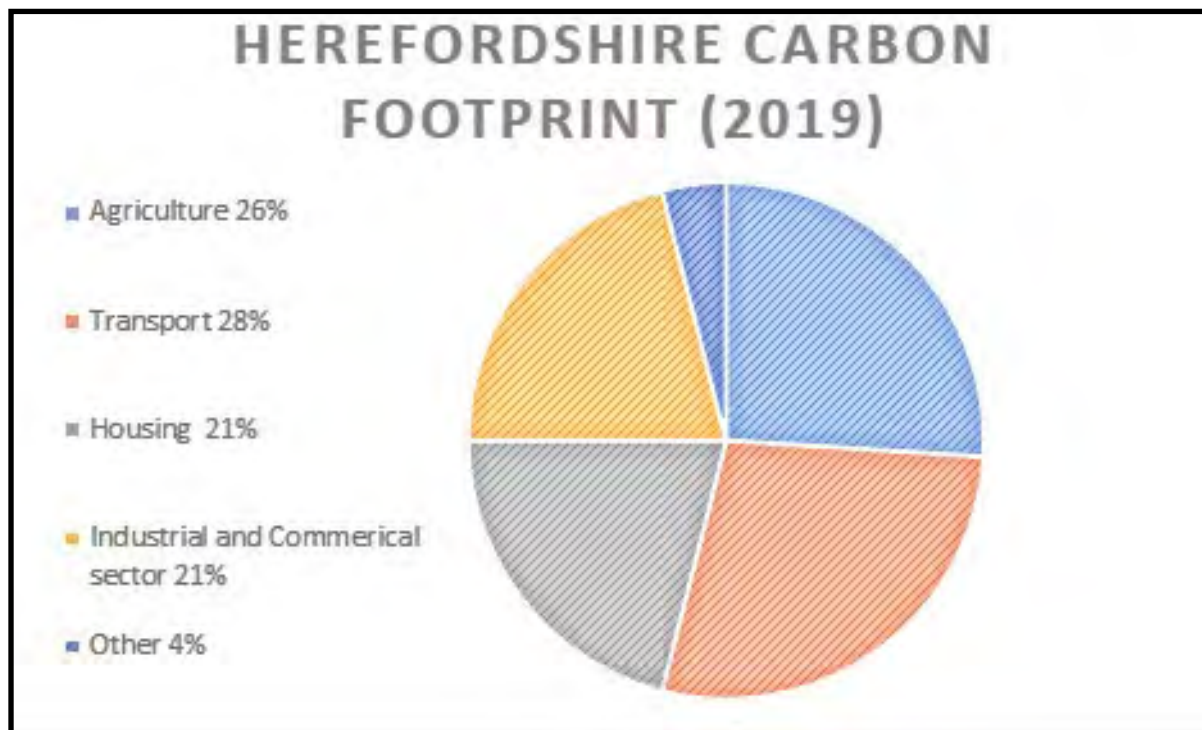
Tackling climate change

Herefordshire Council declared a climate emergency in March 2019, which was later strengthened to a climate and ecological emergency in December 2019. This declaration was reaffirmed in July 2023. This has highlighted the urgent need for the county to radically reduce carbon emissions and improve the resilience of communities against the current and future impacts of climate change. The council has committed to achieving carbon neutrality for the county by 2030 and is implementing measures to meet this target, whilst also ensuring that residents are able to enjoy an exceptional quality of life and that biodiversity can thrive.

Herefordshire's carbon footprint amounts to [1,998kt CO₂e](#) (2019). As shown in the pie chart below, agriculture, transport, housing, and the industrial and commercial sectors are the largest contributors to the county's carbon footprint, and therefore opportunities to radically reduce emissions in these areas should be prioritised.

At the national level, the Climate Change Act 2008 requires the UK government to set five-yearly carbon budgets. The sixth carbon budget was introduced into law in 2021 and sets a target for the UK to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 78% by 2035.

Figure 5: Herefordshire Carbon Footprint



Policy CC1: A carbon neutral Herefordshire

To achieve a carbon neutral Herefordshire, appropriate mitigation for the environmental and climatic impacts of development should be embedded within all development proposals from the outset. Developments should be located and designed in such a way that they are resilient to the impacts of climate change over their lifetime. Measures taken will vary depending on the location, such as whether in relation to an urban setting in Hereford or the market towns or in the county's rural areas.

Development proposals will seek to contribute by:

Mitigating climate change

1. Demonstrating operational carbon neutrality on-site, through a fabric-first approach to its design, low carbon technologies, on-site renewable energy generation and carbon offsetting. Measures should be taken to minimise carbon emissions across the full lifecycle of the development before carbon offsetting is considered;
2. Maximising opportunities to secure significant reductions in carbon emissions for residential developments, by achieving energy efficiency standards in line with statutory and regulatory requirements. Major non-residential developments should demonstrate how they achieve Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Methodology (BREEAM) 'Excellent', or an equivalent or better methodology;
3. Maximising opportunities to generate energy from renewable sources on-site, such as from wind and solar. Neighbourhood Development Plans are strongly encouraged to support the provision of new community-owned energy schemes;
4. Maximising opportunities to source and/or generate energy from renewable sources off-site. Where evidence demonstrates that this is feasible, strategic sites should be connected to a District Heat Network. Where feasibility is not demonstrated, new homes should be built with the necessary infrastructure in place to enable such connections to be easily integrated in the future. In particular, opportunities should be sought to connect commercial development, producing sufficient levels of waste heat, with residential development where they are located within close proximity. District Heat Networks should be planned from the outset. Large-scale renewable energy schemes and diversification of renewable energy schemes with other uses will be supported where landscape and environmental impacts are considered acceptable;
5. Designing to provide an improved choice of transport modes. This can be facilitated by making it as safe and easy as possible to walk, wheel and cycle to essential facilities and services, and by locating within walking distance of public transport nodes. Active travel should be facilitated through design, such as the creation and enhancement of walking and cycling links in accordance with the principles of well-connected neighbourhoods. These should be integrated with new and existing green and blue corridors, wherever possible. Extensive measures to encourage active travel and micromobility within Hereford will be supported alongside any new road or other transport infrastructure, to reduce traffic in the centre of the city. Similar measures will also be supported in the market towns;

6. Delivering high quality, interconnected and multifunctional green and blue infrastructure, which will be designed to provide 'carbon sinks', sequester carbon and improve air quality. Green and blue infrastructure should be seen as an integral part of development and planned from the outset. To improve air quality, tree planting and other carbon sequestering habitat types should be prioritised alongside busy roads;
7. Ensuring that electric vehicle (EV) charging points are installed in every new home with off-street parking, and outside commercial developments, village halls, community facilities and services. This should be supplementary to active travel and public transport infrastructure;
8. Supporting the transition to a circular economy by minimising waste, maximising the reuse of materials, and prioritising low embodied carbon materials. Where possible, developments should use local resources and locally sourced materials;
9. Ensuring that commercial development is located close to active travel routes which link to residential development. Such development should provide secure bicycle parking and showering facilities for employees;
10. Minimising detrimental impact on the county's soils, recognising their importance in sequestering and storing carbon;
11. Supporting proposals for battery energy storage systems, where they are appropriately located and designed in accordance with relevant policies of the Plan. Such developments should minimise and mitigate any potential risks arising to the environment and public safety;

Adapting to climate change

12. Being designed to be resilient and adaptive to the future impacts of climate change to ensure people's safety, taking into account the known physical and environmental constraints, over their lifetime. Buildings must be able to withstand the impact of extreme conditions, such as from flooding and heat exposure. Schemes should minimise the risk of overheating, now and in future, through the careful design, the placement and orientation of buildings. Appropriate low energy ventilation measures should also be incorporated to maximise people's comfort in a changing climate;
13. Being located in accordance with the Sequential Test and the Exceptions Test (where appropriate) and have regard to the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment. Areas at risk of flooding, both now and in future, should be avoided and development should contribute to reducing flood risk on site without exacerbating flood risk elsewhere;
14. Incorporating natural flood management features, such as Sustainable urban Drainage Systems (SuDS), into its design to reduce surface water runoff. SuDS should be designed to provide amenity value through natural habitats for wildlife which should be considered at the earliest stage of development; and
15. Incorporate water efficiency, water recycling, and rainwater harvesting measures to mitigate the impact of drought and reduce resource and associated energy consumption. To minimise adverse impacts on water quantity and quality, new residential developments must achieve water efficiency targets of: a minimum of 110 litres per person per day in areas outside the Rivers Wye and Clun Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and 100 litres per person per day within these SACs. Non-residential development is expected to achieve a minimum of 3 credits under the measure "Wat01" of the BREEAM New Construction Standard.

Mitigating climate change

Herefordshire Council's target of enabling the county to become carbon neutral by 2030 demands strong planning policy. This is why this Local Plan requires all new development in the county to be carbon neutral.

'Carbon neutral' means that total greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions produced would be balanced by measures to offset them, such as through either; reducing or removing these from the atmosphere. When applied to a building it means that all residual greenhouse gas emissions, after first minimising demand and installing on-site renewable energy technologies, are offset through contributions to a carbon offset fund, used to finance measures to remove carbon from the atmosphere (such as through tree planting or retrofitting existing homes). Consideration should be given to the emissions associated with its construction, use, maintenance, refurbishment and end-of-life scenarios (i.e. embodied carbon of materials used). To achieve this, a carbon offset fund could be established as a mechanism for capturing financial contributions from developers equal to the extent of residual emissions associated with a development. While onsite reductions in energy use should be maximised as far as possible, the developer is expected to make cash-in-lieu contributions to the carbon offset fund, proportionate to the residual emissions. The money raised can then be used to fund a variety of projects which help to reduce carbon emissions.

From 2025, new residential development will be required to comply with rigorous energy efficiency standards under the Future Homes and Buildings Standard. These requirements aim to decarbonise new homes by improving heating and hot water generation and significantly reducing waste heat. The changes will ensure that all new homes are 'net zero ready', which means that they will be net zero carbon once 100% of the energy used to power and heat them comes from renewable sources.

Passive solar and ventilation measures can help to reduce energy input further by maximising solar gain during the winter months and cooling the building down during the summer months. Further guidance on this will be set out in the Herefordshire Design Code. To achieve carbon neutrality, it is essential that a significant proportion of existing housing stock is retrofitted to a high standard. Herefordshire Council's [Net Zero Retrofit Guide](#) sets out how the county's housing stock can be retrofitted to support the transition to carbon neutrality.

Large-scale renewable energy schemes may include but are not limited to, District Heat Networks, solar PV farms, and wind farms. Community energy schemes help to ensure that profits generated stay within the local community. They support self-sufficiency and increase the resilience of local communities by putting the means to generate clean and affordable energy into their hands and eliminating the profit-making motive of private energy companies. Any profits made from the generation of community energy can be reinvested back into the community, such as on projects to tackle fuel poverty.

District Heat Networks are able to reuse waste heat from other sources (such as commercial or industrial premises) to heat homes which is distributed via an underground network of heavily insulated pipes. If there are no appropriate sources of waste heat close to the intended end-users then a renewable or low carbon heat source may be installed as part of the scheme.

Transport is responsible for over a quarter of all carbon emissions in Herefordshire. It is therefore essential that new development is located and designed in a way that encourages sustainable forms of transport, such as walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport, as this helps to reduce the

sector's overall carbon footprint. In Hereford, new road infrastructure will be developed to draw traffic away from the city centre, reduce congestion and free up space for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport vehicles. Stringent measures to improve air quality in the market towns will also be required, including at the Bargates junction in Leominster.

Green and blue infrastructure can also play a key role in sequestering carbon from the atmosphere, helping to mitigate climate change. If designed carefully, green and blue infrastructure situated close to busy roads can help to filter out air pollutants.

While modal shift remains a priority, the rural nature of Herefordshire means that, in more remote locations, it may not be possible to significantly reduce the use of the private car. However, by ensuring that EV charging points are widely available in every rural settlement, those with no option but to travel by private car are more likely to switch the vehicle they use to an electric vehicle.

Development can play an important role in mitigating climate change by making provisions to minimise waste during construction, prioritise the reuse of construction materials, and to source materials which have low embodied carbon. Reusing materials and diverting them from landfill accords with the principles of the circular economy; helping to reduce carbon emissions associated with the manufacturing, recycling, and disposal of materials. Carbon sequestering habitats are any natural vegetation which act as a 'carbon sink', withdrawing carbon from the atmosphere and thus mitigating climate change. Such habitats include peatlands, woodlands, wetlands, marshes, and diversity-rich grassland, among others. These habitat types should be both protected and created to maximise the amount of carbon sequestered from the atmosphere. If properly implemented and managed, the creation of such habitats can offset residual carbon emissions across the county.

The county's soils store large quantities of carbon and, if disturbed by development, can release this into the atmosphere. It is therefore important to ensure that developers consider the impacts their proposals may have in this regard.

Large scale Battery Energy Storage Systems are proposals which can be of benefit to the wider community, and the national grid. Such proposals include commercial and energy production uses, beyond that of individual uses. Applications for larger scale facilities should take into consideration; noise, visual impacts, local environment, and local amenity. Access is a crucial part for energy storage sites, including; highways, national grid connections, and suitable infrastructure. Proposals should be situated near energy production sites and suitable connections to the national grid. Best practice must be applied in terms of safety, safe distancing between units, design, landscaping, and operational management. Associated facilities and ancillary works will be supported where they support the operation and safety of the facility. They should not exacerbate issues to the local community and the environment.

Smaller scale battery energy storage systems can be beneficial for local community uses, such as schools and community facilities; such proposals will need to accord with the relevant policies of the Plan.

Battery storage can pose risks of fire, due to the chemistry of the batteries. Therefore all proposals for energy storage facilities will be expected to have regard to the service position statements: [Battery Energy Storage Systems](#) (BESS) from Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service. Proposals must be accessible to emergency services and have access to a reliable water supply, capable of 1,900 litres per minute for at least 2 hours or the latest recommended guidance.


Adapting to climate change

Whilst it is important to achieve carbon neutrality to minimise the severity of climate change over time, it is equally as important to recognise that we are already locked into a degree of global heating, which will result in increasingly prevalent extreme weather events, such as overheating and flooding. Extreme weather events pose a significant risk to people's health and safety. It is therefore essential that new developments take this into account when designing buildings to ensure they are resilient to such weather events and that people's long-term safety is secured. Green and blue infrastructure such as street trees, green roofs and green walls are effective in mitigating the urban heat island effect during warm weather. The urban heat island effect is the name given to the way in which urban areas tend to become warmer than rural areas during warm weather as hard surfaces, such as concrete, radiate heat from the sun.

Sustainable urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) can also be incorporated into the design of developments to minimise flood risk. They do this either by 'soaking up' excess water during periods of heavy rainfall or by balancing water flows using various water storage methods.

Flood risk will worsen over time due to climate change and therefore it is important for development to pay regard to predicted future peak river flows (see the Environment Agency's climate change allowances).

It is predicted that the UK will experience hotter, drier summers as a result of climate change, and therefore extreme weather events such as drought will become more common. Therefore it is important that all development incorporates measures to minimise the use, and maximising re-use, of water on site over the course of its lifetime.



**Protecting and enhancing
the natural, built and historic
environment: A high quality
Herefordshire**

The landscape and townscape are cherished environments for residents in Herefordshire, helping provide an exceptional quality of life. Landscape, ecology, archaeology, and the built heritage are intertwined in the environment and are often dependent on each other. Herefordshire's rich natural, built, and historic environment and its setting will continue to be protected and valued for all to enjoy.

Development proposals should conserve and enhance those environmental assets that contribute towards the county's distinctiveness. Areas of the county with landscape, nature, and heritage designations must be protected and enhanced. Green and blue infrastructure must be integrated into development proposals, taking account of people, place and nature.

Policy EE1: Protecting and enhancing the quality of the natural environment

All development proposals should provide and consider their effect upon the following aspects:

1. Recognise and facilitate the positive impacts the natural environment has with respect to climate change mitigation and the declared ecological emergency;
2. Protect, conserve and enhance statutory and locally designated landscape, ecological and geological sites;
3. Protect and conserve priority habitats and protected species;
4. Protect, conserve and enhance landscape features, habitats and ecological connectivity, extending Herefordshire's natural capital, green and blue infrastructure, and nature recovery networks;
5. Protect and enhance key natural assets of agricultural soils, water, wetlands, woodlands, river meadows, or any scheme that could impact habitat diversity;
6. Improve water quality and restore and enhance riparian habitats;
7. Demonstrate that they will not result in an adverse impact on the integrity of any National Site Network Site (Special Area of Conservation, Special Protection Areas or Ramsar) through additional nutrient and pollution pathways. In parts of the River Wye SAC which are failing to meet their conservation targets, developments must demonstrate at least nutrient neutrality. Proposals should show how pollution will be prevented or mitigated. In other parts of the SAC which are not failing to meet their conservation targets, developments must demonstrate how best available technology has been applied, in line with Council guidance, to reduce nutrient, sediment and pollution outputs as far as feasible and how those measures are sufficient to ensure that National Site Network Sites will be protected from harm, in accordance with the Habitat Regulations Assessment process;

8. Achieve a minimum of 20% biodiversity net gain on strategic sites allocated in the Local and Neighbourhood Development Plans. All other residential development sites are expected to achieve a minimum of 10% biodiversity net gain. Commercial development sites of at least 1,000 square metres, or which are more than 1 hectare in size, are also required to achieve a minimum of 10% biodiversity net gain;
9. Have special regard for the Malvern Hills and Wye Valley National Landscapes in the county valuing their distinctive ecology, character, tranquillity, and landscape character;
10. Utilise green space to help mitigate and reverse the effects of climate change and biodiversity loss through habitat creation and management, increase tree establishment, water management schemes and other appropriate measures;
11. Identify, protect and strengthen the local treescape and hedgerow network;
12. Contribute to help increase canopy cover in urban and rural settlements;
13. Promote, maintain and increase the intrinsically dark landscapes and dark skies of the county. Schemes should avoid superfluous outdoor lighting to help reduce light pollution and protect dark skies and the night-time environment;
14. Avoid and minimise air, water and noise pollution and manage effects on habitats and species improving air, water and noise quality to ensure wildlife and natural habitats thrive;
15. Encourage and support the long term management of all features in the natural environment; and
16. Ensure better access to nature, nature-rich areas and the green environment.

Protecting and enhancing the quality of the natural environment is vital for the survival and wellbeing of wildlife and people. This is crucial in a changing climate, by restoring and enhancing the natural environment we can help tackle the climate crisis by improving conditions for wildlife and human health. We need to work with nature ensuring better management and use of natural resources can help to improve conditions for wildlife and people. It is important to consider the recreational pressures of all areas in Herefordshire, especially within Special Areas of Conservation and National Landscapes. Effective management of tourism and recreation development within these will ensure there is no detrimental impact on the county's varied natural and heritage assets or on the overall character and quality of the environment.

Nature networks and green and blue infrastructure have an important role in adapting and mitigating the effects of climate change. Networks of green wildlife corridors and spaces allow animals, plants, seeds, nutrients and water to move around allowing the natural world to change and providing habitats for wildlife so they can feed, grow and thrive. In order to support the flora and fauna of Herefordshire we need to treat the natural environment as one.

Statutory and locally designated sites for landscape, ecology and geology

In accordance with the national policy great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in the county's National Landscapes (previously known as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)) (the Malvern Hills and Wye Valley). The scale and extent of development within these designated areas should be limited, while development within their setting should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated areas. The Management Plan and associated guidance documents for each National Landscape should be considered as part of development proposals. The development proposals must also consider the setting of the adjacent counties designated sites; the Shropshire Hills National Landscape and the Bannau Brucheiniog (Brecon Beacons) National Park.

There are a large number of historic parks and gardens across the county that contribute to the richness and quality of the landscape. These creative landscape features also support large, varied and long-standing habitats for much flora and fauna.

- Registered Parks and Gardens have been recognised by Historic England as being of national importance and should be protected from development which would destroy, damage or otherwise adversely affect the historic structure, character, appearance, features or setting (including any designed visual envelope).
- Un-registered Parks and Gardens are of local historic importance and have been surveyed jointly by Herefordshire Council and the Hereford and Worcester Gardens Trust. The historic structure, character, appearance, features or setting (including any designed visual envelope) should be given due consideration in any development proposals.

Green and blue infrastructure

Without a good quality network of green and blue infrastructure (GBI), we undermine nature's ability to be productive, resilient and adapt to a changing climate. To protect, enhance and expand the ecological resource during the timescales of the Local Plan, it will be necessary to ensure existing habitats are resilient to the effects of climate change and form a coherent nature network. The provision of GBI in Herefordshire should be informed by the need for natural spaces to become bigger, better and more joined up. It must also recognise variation in local character (including biodiversity imperatives and duties) and broaden the complexity and reach of biodiversity through the urban areas of the county.

GBI is a natural capital asset that provides multiple benefits, at a range of scales. For communities, these benefits can include enhanced wellbeing, outdoor recreation and access, enhanced biodiversity and landscapes, food and energy production, urban cooling, and the management of flood risk.

For GBI to serve multiple functions it needs to be recognised that at some locations there will be a difference in the importance or weighting of each function. This will be particularly relevant where differing purposes conflict with each other. For example, the delivery of biodiversity enhancements (favourable status of statutorily designated sites or species) at select locations should be balanced with the need for active transport or recreation.

The latest [Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy](#) 2023 presents the county wide strategy for how GBI can form part of the county's growth for this plan period. Biodiversity net gain (BNG) policies, nutrient neutrality requirements, design codes and developer checklists should be used as levers to ensure high-quality interventions. Therefore, these combined mechanisms offer a significant opportunity for delivering multifunctional GBI.

Biodiversity and nature recovery

Biodiversity refers to all living organisms including animals, insects, plants, bacteria and fungi. Biodiversity is fundamental to wildlife and human life. Sadly there has been a decline in wildlife, plant species, and vegetation in the last century. Despite certain sites and species being protected, there are challenges as there are limited tools to value, maintain, enhance and create wildlife habitats beyond protected sites. This presents an opportunity to retain and enhance habitats to be able to connect and thrive. There is a great deal of data about unprotected species also and the sites they occupy and these can add a wealth of diversity to nature. By recognising these sites, it will help to produce better quality environmental reports which will better inform planning decisions. [Biodiversity net gain](#) (BNG) is an approach to development, and/or land management that aims to leave the natural environment in a measurably better state than it was beforehand. BNG should be delivered on-site in the first instance in line with the mitigation hierarchy. This can be delivered through improving biodiversity by creating or enhancing habitats in association with development. BNG can be achieved on or off-site, or through a combination of both. BNG can help address some of the challenges caused by the climate emergency such as by improving flood resilience, and place-making, and by strengthening green and blue infrastructure and green spaces which help improve the health and wellbeing of inhabitants.

The [Environment Act 2021](#), strengthens the legal duty for public bodies to conserve and enhance biodiversity, new biodiversity requirements for Local Authorities and mandatory spatial strategies for nature. The Act also sets out a requirement that from 2024, all planning permissions will have to deliver at least 10% biodiversity net gain. This will be measured using Defra's metric and habitats will need to be secured for at least 30 years. This will be beneficial for biodiversity and wildlife with more habitats and green infrastructure easier for wildlife to live and travel, especially in built-up areas.

People's demand for housing, transport, and resources such as water and food, has placed a strain on our natural world. Nature Recovery is a new approach set out by the government that aims to restore the health of the natural world and reverse its decline. There will be a requirement for Local Nature Recovery Strategies, each of these areas will be set by Defra, the Secretary of State. These strategies will encourage direct change in how all public authorities act as decision-makers, regulators and landowners.

The Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy 2023 makes the recommendation that developments should achieve 20% BNG on strategic sites. Policy EE1 therefore requires that all strategic allocations outlined in this Local Plan achieve a minimum 20% BNG. Such a requirement has been assessed in the Local Plan's Viability Assessment using the Government's biodiversity net gain and Local Nature Recovery Impact Assessment. When BNG costs are factored in on a new development, with an increase from 10% to 20% provision, there is a marginal increase in cost to the overall development. Therefore it is considered to be a viable option to seek 20% BNG on the strategic allocations in this Plan. However, such an increase is considered to be more challenging for smaller sites and therefore non-strategic allocations are expected to achieve the statutory minimum of 10% BNG. Commercial developments of at least 1,000 square metres, or with a total site area of at least 1 hectare, must achieve 10% BNG, while those under this size are exempt.

This policy requires that developers achieve BNG and that losses and gains are measured systematically and consistently using a nationally-approved biodiversity metric tool. The policy is aligned to other policies in the Plan that seek to address the climate and ecological emergencies.

There are 3 ways schemes can achieve 10% or 20% BNG:

1. They can restore and enhance biodiversity to the required level entirely within the boundary of the development site. This should be the preferred method, wherever possible;
2. If the site can only partially accommodate the required level of BNG, they can deliver BNG through a mixture of on-site and off-site measures. In this instance, developers can use the metric tool to calculate what off-site gains are needed, and either deliver these on other areas of land they own or purchase off-site units from another landowner; or
3. If BNG cannot be achieved on-site or off-site, they must buy statutory biodiversity credits from the government. However, this should only be used as a last resort. The government will use the revenue raised from the sale of biodiversity credits to invest in habitat creation in England.

There are a few exemptions to BNG which are set out in Government Guidance.

Water quality and nutrient neutrality

The water quality of Herefordshire's main rivers and their tributaries is a matter of strategic importance. The River Wye and its tributaries are designated a Special Area for Conservation (SAC), recognised as being of international importance for their unique character and wildlife, requiring the highest level of protection, management, enhancement and, where appropriate, restoration. The River Clun SAC has the same level of importance in the north of the county.

Therefore improving water quality is a priority on a national and local level, therefore the Local Plan needs to take significant steps to restore and improve our rivers and waterways. Nutrient pollution is a significant issue in Herefordshire, particularly in the internationally important water bodies of the Lugg and Wye river catchment areas. Increased levels of nutrients (nitrogen and phosphorus) can disrupt the natural habitats and processes devastating wildlife and biodiversity. It also can have a significant impact on the built and historic environment affecting archaeology and the setting of historic assets.

Herefordshire Council has taken a lead role in the effort to support the restoration of its rivers and watercourses. As an interim measure, it has been developing the UK's first phosphate calculator, delivering integrated wetlands in the Lugg catchment and striving to improve nutrient levels in rivers.

Agricultural policy has also changed considerably in the past few decades, and farm/agricultural land owners and owners of other land-based rural businesses are increasingly seeking to diversify their economic activities to make more profitable use of their land and buildings. More intensive farming of livestock, arable, and horticulture in the county has developed in recent years. The result of this can have a significant impact on the natural environment on land, wildlife, and on our rivers. Therefore it is important new developments actively set out measures demonstrating how they will minimise their impacts on wildlife and biodiversity and set out ways to mitigate these.

Air quality and pollution

Air quality is important for the natural environment's flora and fauna as well as for people's health and quality of life. Development should avoid and where necessary, mitigate exposure to indoor and outdoor pollutants and should sustain and contribute towards compliance with relevant limit values or national objectives for pollutants, and take into account the presence of Air Quality Management Areas, and the cumulative impacts from individual sites in local areas. Moving towards a modal shift will help reduce congestion and emissions leading to improving air quality in our city and market towns. Development should provide opportunities to improve air quality such as through traffic and travel management, and green infrastructure provision and enhancement.

Another aspect of air quality is light pollution, excess light at night can contribute to air pollution which has a devastating impact on wildlife and their habitats, disrupting their natural pattern and behaviours as well as increasing CO₂ in the atmosphere. Our dark landscape is an important and unique natural resource that should be protected in the interest of nature conservation. Therefore any development should avoid superfluous outdoor lighting where possible, helping to mitigate the brightness of the night sky and near cities.

Pollution and contamination are important to consider when developing schemes. Schemes should consider the circular economy and aim to reduce waste to a minimum by reusing, repairing, refurbishing and recycling existing materials and products to limit waste and overall pollution. Schemes will need to consider whether the placement, size and scale of the site is suitable for development in terms of land contamination, ground conditions, noise, light pollution, and its impact on local amenity.

Management of features of the natural environment

Landscape management is the care of land to ensure that landscapes can fulfil needs and aspirations in an effective and sustainable manner for present and future communities of users. Identification of who is responsible for the long term landscape management is important, particularly for areas of public open space or communal use. The management will ensure that the natural environment vision is realised through a programme of regular maintenance that will deliver the objectives of the design. Management should be considered from the outset, to ensure that proposals are achievable in the long term, not only through the initial establishment phase but with appropriate aftercare of the scheme in perpetuity.

The historic environment

Herefordshire is rich in heritage. For example, the high number and wide range of Scheduled Ancient Monuments and listed buildings in the county depict the political, economic and social history of this county. The historic environment not only contributes to the beauty and character of a place but also portrays a rich connection to history that is beneficial socially and economically. The historic environment is of cultural value as historic buildings have a social value and can act as focal points for local communities as well as being important for tourism. Therefore development proposals should avoid detrimental impacts on heritage assets and their settings whether nationally, locally designated or non-designated, including archaeological features as set out in Policy EE2:

Policy EE2: Protecting and enhancing the quality of the historic environment and its setting

To conserve and enhance the quality of the historic environment and their setting, development proposals will be required to:

1. Create high-quality, well-designed places that are sympathetic that are informed by the local character, heritage assets and their settings in order to create attractive, accessible and inclusive spaces;
2. Demonstrate that adequate assessments of the historic environment have been carried out as required to enable a sound decision to be made on the merits of the proposal, having sufficient regard to any harm that may result and incorporate design based mitigation which will minimise any potential negative impacts and reduce the risk of harm;
3. Conserve, enhance, and record heritage assets and their settings through well-informed, adequately detailed, and considered proposals, respecting the significance, character and appearance of the heritage assets and elevate and where relevant record the role of these assets in providing a sense of place and local character;
4. Conserve and enhance the character and appearance of Conservation Areas and contribute to the character and local distinctiveness of the wider townscape, environment, and setting;
5. (In the case of development proposals which involve works to listed buildings), elevate the role of the asset in providing a sense of place and local distinctiveness; and
6. Evaluate the archaeological importance of the area in order to ensure appropriate protection of heritage assets and inform the detailed development proposals.

The scope of the works required to protect, conserve and enhance heritage assets and their settings should be proportionate to their significance. Development schemes should emphasise the original form and function of any asset and, where appropriate, improve the understanding of and public access to them.

The historic environment not only contributes to the beauty and character of a place but also portrays a rich connection to history that is beneficial socially and economically. Therefore development proposals should avoid harm to heritage assets and their settings whether nationally, locally designated or non-designated, including archaeological features. The historic environment, heritage assets and their settings are particularly vulnerable to climate change.

The high number and wide range of designated assets, including Scheduled Ancient Monuments, listed buildings, Registered Historic Parks and Gardens, and Conservation Areas in the county depict the political, economic and social history of this county, and contribute to the economic well-being of the County and a sense of place. The historic environment can play a positive role in how housing and employment growth can be sensitively accommodated, to ensure the sites are deliverable and any harm to heritage assets can be mitigated. Heritage Impact Assessments of the strategic allocations have helped to inform the place shaping policies and have identified where it will be necessary to carefully consider the impact of development on heritage assets and their settings. They have identified mitigation strategies where required to minimise impacts and risk of harm and should be referred to as site proposals are worked up in more detail.

The Historic England [Heritage at Risk Register](#) (2023) has identified Ross on Wye and Kington Conservation Areas as at risk. Additional care should be taken to ensure that proposals do not add to harm, and aim to conserve and enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Areas. Proposals should take in acknowledging nearby heritage assets that have been identified on the Historic England Heritage at Risk Register (2023), and provide additional efforts to the above policy.

The quality of the built environment

Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs) and Design Codes will help to identify locally significant heritage assets and provide development guidance in rural settlements. It is expected that the market towns and rural settlements will develop a Design Code through their NDPs or as a standalone document.

Policy EE3: Enhancing the quality of the built environment

To enhance the quality of the built environment development proposals will be required to:

1. Contribute towards the county's distinctiveness including settlement pattern, landscape, biodiversity and heritage assets and where relevant record especially those with specific environmental designations;
2. Create an informed sense of place and enhance local distinctiveness reflective of its context;
3. Produce high-quality, resilient and safe buildings and spaces through place-specific Design Codes and an overarching Herefordshire Design Code;
4. Ensure that the townscape connects and fits into the natural landscape setting and is connected to green and open spaces. Where possible development proposals should be permeable and provide ease of access for all, connected footpaths and cycle routes;
5. Deliver safe communities, by designing out crime through considered design, maximising opportunities for natural surveillance, appropriate materials and placement of schemes;
6. Require less energy through the orientation and siting of buildings;
7. Strive to be carbon neutral and where possible follow low carbon principles in its design, materials and placement; and
8. Adhere to the guidance set out in Design Codes on a county and local level.

Herefordshire Council will set a countywide Design Code to ensure developments are appropriate to their setting and context.

Protection of landscape and townscape

Herefordshire is one of England's most rural counties and its distinctive and varied landscape are a defining part of its rural character and its heritage. Landscape and townscape are the backdrop to our everyday lives and help to create good places for wildlife and people to inhabit, as well as attracting visitors and investment.

Development schemes will need to be sensitive and in keeping with the existing landscape, settlement and enclosure pattern as well as taking into consideration woodland tree cover patterns. The [Landscape Character Assessment 2023](#) has taken a holistic approach in landscape guidance helping to identify and distinguish the rich and diverse landscape types as well as its sub-regional character areas. The nocturnal landscape and Herefordshire's dark skies are key attributes in its character, therefore schemes need to minimise light pollution on our dark landscape creating healthier places for people and wildlife.

Herefordshire includes several historic market towns and a historic cathedral city, all are diverse in historic character setting and settlement pattern. Townscape and building design vary throughout the county, in its towns and villages which have been shaped and developed over time and are all locally distinctive. It is key for a development proposal to consider local distinctiveness and character in the design and placement of their schemes.

Development proposals should reference the latest Herefordshire Landscape Character Assessment and respond to the relevant information for the setting. This information should be used to create a development that contributes to beautiful and distinctive places with a consistent and high quality standard of design. Significant adverse landscape and visual effects, either individually or cumulatively with other relevant proposed or existing developments, will be a material consideration in determining planning applications. All site allocation policies that involve the loss of greenfield land could seek to encourage efficient layouts and steps to minimise land taken to support efficient layouts and use of resources.

Beautiful and sustainable places

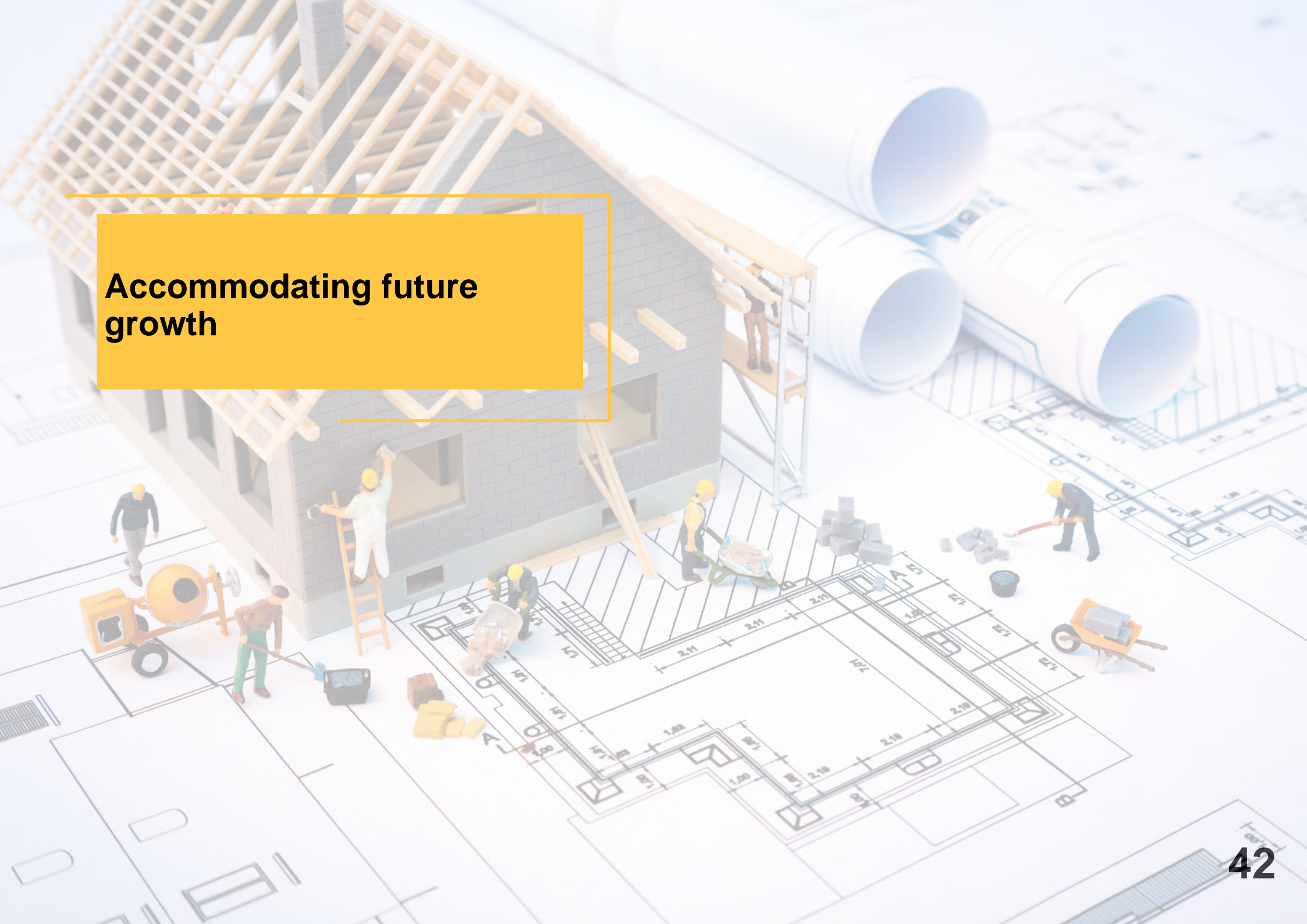
The Government has recently increased its focus on design quality, wishing to see an improvement in the design of new development and to put “beauty at the heart of the Planning System” in response to the Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission (BBBBC).

The National Design Guide and the National Model Design Code (NMDC) demonstrate the government's priorities for well-designed places setting out how beautiful, well-designed places can be achieved in practice. The guide sets out ten characteristics of well-designed places and demonstrates what good design means in practice. Design coding is a tool to help define high-quality design. This tool can be utilised by Local Planning Authorities, developers and local communities.

It is expected that a countywide Design Code will cover the strategic and larger-scale themes of the NMDC in relation to Herefordshire. This will provide clear guidance for applicants and developers to adhere to from the conception of a scheme. For Hereford City, the Hereford Design Guide covers the smaller-scale aspects of urban design guidance. It is expected that the market towns and rural settlements will develop a Design Code through their Neighbourhood Development Plan or as a standalone document. Development proposals will have to adhere to the guidance set out in these documents that will be developed in partnership with Herefordshire Council and by local communities.

Good design is a key tool in creating more accessible, healthier and sustainable places that will improve people's quality of life. The design of buildings and places not only has a key role to play in the aesthetics and sense of place and character but also a response to the climate emergency to mitigate and adapt to a changing climate. Herefordshire's spaces and places should be resilient and safe being about to adapt to a changing climate and designing out any opportunities for crime. Well-designed places can help promote patterns of sustainable development, influence layout and the siting of development, materials used as well as efficiency and amount of energy used helping to reduce carbon emissions and waste.

Accommodating future growth



The [Herefordshire Housing Market and Needs Assessment](#) (HMANA) 2021 established a baseline housing requirement for the next 20-year period of around 17,000 dwellings. This figure is reviewed annually using the government's 'standard method' for calculating needs based on future population projections. In 2023, this revised the requirement down to 16,100 dwellings for the period 2021-2041. Delivery of this target will be proportionally distributed between Hereford City, the county's five market towns, and across the identified settlements in the rural areas.

Policy AG1: Accommodating housing growth

A supply of deliverable and developable land will be identified to secure the delivery of a minimum of 16,100 new homes over the plan period 2021-2041 to meet the market and affordable housing need.

The broad distribution of new dwellings in the county will be a minimum of:

Place	Target number of dwellings (rounded)	Already delivered and committed in the plan period*	Net number of dwellings target	Average growth per annum over 18 years
Hereford	5,600	1,109	4,491	250
Bromyard	750	102	648	36
Kington	150	22	128	7
Ledbury	1,700	1,098	602	33
Leominster	800	417	383	21
Ross on Wye	1,800	755	1,045	58
Rural areas	5,320	3,009	2,311	128
Totals	16,100 (rounded)	6,512	9,608	

. * Approx permissions and completions since April 2023 at the time of publication

Hereford provides a focus to support its role as the main centre in the county. A significant proportion of the growth in Hereford and the five market towns will be delivered through strategic site allocations set out in this plan. Further residential and mixed-use allocations may come forward through Neighbourhood Development Plans to contribute to their requirements.

In rural areas, growth is to be focused on the most sustainable settlements identified based on their range of services, facilities, connectivity, infrastructure, employment provision and environmental constraints. Taking into account these environmental constraints, the majority of the development will be away from these locations. The most sustainable settlements in the rural areas will have rural strategic sites identified, and the remainder of development in the identified settlements will be identified through Neighbourhood Plans.

Areas outside of defined settlements in the plan will be considered open countryside in planning policy terms. In these locations, residential development will be limited to specific exception criteria in Policy AG4 and AG5.

Sites will be developed at densities that are appropriate to their locations, based on their surrounding environmental characteristics, and their access to sustainable transport, services and facilities. The use of previously developed land in sustainable locations will be encouraged.

Spatial distribution of new homes

The focus for meeting this growth target will be Hereford city, and the county's five market towns. This will allow for larger developments that can deliver affordable housing, greater facilities and infrastructure contributions. With the greater economies of scale achievable with larger plan-led developments, this considers sustainable integrated forms of development.

Apportionment of growth between Hereford and the market towns must take into consideration environmental constraints such as flood risk and Conservation Areas. These will be identified by the rigorous assessments found in the evidence base to support this Local Plan.

City and market towns

Hereford

The city of Hereford is the main economic, service and transport hub located centrally in the county. It also benefits from direct rail links to Birmingham, Manchester, Cardiff and London. It is the most sustainable location in the county to accommodate growth. Therefore Hereford will receive a higher level of growth than any other settlement in the county.

Bromyard

One of the smaller market towns, Bromyard enjoys a good level of local services and a small localised employment market. For these reasons, it has been allocated a lower proportion of the county-wide growth target.

Kington

The smallest of the county's market towns, Kington has a role as a key service centre for its rural hinterland. Its employment market is very small and localised. It is also the most environmentally constrained of the market towns. Therefore it has been allocated the lowest proportion of the county's growth target.

Ledbury

Ledbury is a thriving town, with a good range of services and multiple employment sectors operating in the area. It also has visitor appeal, with an attractive centre and access to the Malvern Hills. It benefits from direct rail links to Hereford, Birmingham and London. It has been allocated a moderate proportion of the overall housing target for the plan period. This is to take account of the fact that the town has delivered significantly over and above its housing targets in the last plan period.

Leominster

Leominster acts as a service centre for many of the rural parishes in the north of the county. It benefits from direct rail links to Hereford, Cardiff, and Manchester. It has numerous employment sites, including the Enterprise Park to the south which has the capacity for expansion. It has been allocated a lower proportion of the housing target to take account of evidence that suggests delivering large scale housing growth here would have limited viability and would not achieve suitable levels of affordable housing.

Ross on Wye

One of the larger market towns in the county, Ross on Wye is an attractive centre with tourist appeal, located within the Wye Valley. It has a good range of services, several employment sites and excellent road links to Gloucester, the Midlands and South Wales. It has been allocated a high level of the county's growth target among the market towns.

Rural areas

Herefordshire's rural settlements are greatly varied in size, connectivity, access to services, and environmental constraints. Historically, the rural areas of the county have delivered new housing to meet their growth requirements, with some settlements exceeding them. The strategy for this plan period will focus development on the most sustainable locations of Hereford and the market towns, and the rural apportionment to settlements which provide key services for their rural hinterland.

The 68 rural settlements identified for growth have been selected using a hierarchical approach, based on their services, facilities and environmental capacities.

In consultation with parish councils, the following key services have been identified as helping to reduce the need to travel daily or encourage more sustainable means of travel:

- School;
- Pre-school/Nursery;
- Play area;
- Village Hall/Community Hall;
- Shop;
- Pub;
- Doctors/medical provision;
- Access to public transport (5 return journey availability);
- Within 5km of an employment site (as identified in the [Employment Land Study 2012](#)); and
- Access to public electric vehicle (EV) charging.

Policy AG2: Strategic rural housing distribution

In Herefordshire's rural areas around 5,320 new dwellings will be provided over the 2021-2041 period to contribute to the county's rural housing needs. New housing development will be primarily focussed on 68 identified settlements across Herefordshire's rural areas.

An indicative housing growth target for each identified settlement will be used as a basis for the production of Neighbourhood Development Plans within the county and will take into account existing site allocations and commitments.

Policy AG3: Rural housing growth in Rural Hubs and Service Settlements

Proposals for new development should be located in accordance with the county's Rural Settlement Hierarchy. This will ensure that development reduces the need to travel and promotes sustainability of community services and facilities. Development on the use of previously developed land will be encouraged.

Neighbourhood Development Plans will allocate land for new housing or otherwise demonstrate delivery of the required housing growth. Indicative growth targets for each settlement within the hierarchy will be used to inform Neighbourhood Development Plans.

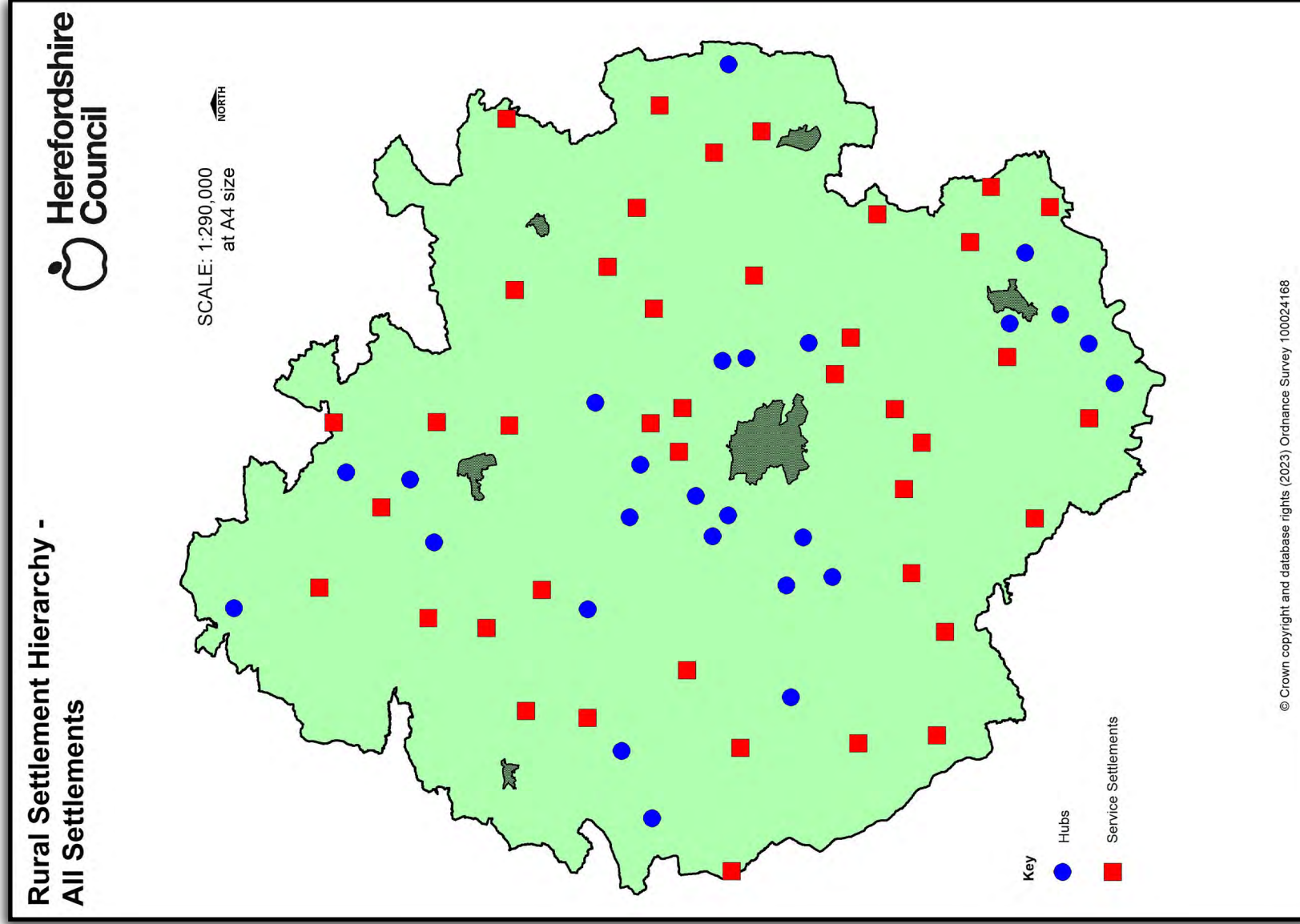
If a Neighbourhood Development Plan is not in existence, housing proposals will be supported if:

1. They are located within or adjacent to the built form of the settlement named in Table 4;
2. The development proposal is proportionate to the growth strategy for the settlement outlined in Policies RURA1 and RURA3;
3. Regard has been taken to the level of outstanding commitments within the settlement; and
4. The development proposal has considered the cumulative impact arising from the development, especially on infrastructure provision.

Table 4: Identified Rural Hubs and Service Settlements

Rural Hubs	Bartestree	Clehonger	Madley	Withington
	Bodenham	Credenhill	Peterchurch	
	Burghill/Tillington	Kingstone	Stretton Sugwas	
	Canon Pyon	Leintwardine	Weston under Penyard	
Rural Hubs with environmental constraints	Bridstow/Wilton	Eardisley	Luston	Weobley
	Colwall	Goodrich	Orleton	Whitchurch
	Coughton/Walford	Kingsland	Wellington	
Service Settlements	Bishops Frome	Cusop	Moreton on Lugg	Whitbourne
	Bosbury	Ewyas Harold	Much Birch	Wigmore
	Bredenbury	Gorsley	Much Dewchurch	Wormbridge
	Brimfield	Holme Lacy	Shobdon	
	Burley Gate	Kimbolton	Staunton on Wye	
	Cradley	Lea	Stoke Cross	
	Crow Hill/Upton Bishop	Lyonshall	Tarrington	
Service Settlements with environmental constraints	Almeley	Little Dewchurch	Much Marcle	Wellington Heath
	Dilwyn	Llangrove	Pembridge	Yarpole
	Dorstone	Longtown	Peterstow	
	Fownhope	Marden	Stoke Prior	
	Garway	Michaelchurch Escley	Sutton St Nicholas	

Figure 6: Distribution of rural settlements



Rural settlement exceptions

To provide increased support for communities that have a locally identified and evidenced need to deliver affordable homes, sites which are within or adjacent to existing settlements outside of the identified Rural Settlement Hierarchy will be supported where they comply with Policy AG4 and other relevant policies. These could be brought forward as Neighbourhood Development Plan allocations, or a Neighbourhood Development Order, Neighbourhood Priority Statements or through the development management process. These sites can be delivered in a variety of ways by private developers, registered affordable housing providers, and community led housing groups.

Policy AG4: Rural settlement exceptions for affordable housing, entry level homes, self and custom build housing and community led housing

In settlements outside of the Rural Settlement Hierarchy the provision of sites for affordable housing, including self and custom build and community led housing will be supported where they meet the following criteria:

1. There are at least 3 key services and facilities within 1 km from the centre of the settlement;
2. The settlement is not wholly within Flood Zone 3 or access to the settlement is restricted by significant flooding of the settlement road; and
3. The location of the settlement offers a choice of modes of travel for accessing employment, education and services.

Key rural services within this policies are described as:

- School;
- Pre-school/Nursery;
- Play area;
- Village/Community Hall;
- Shop;
- Pub;
- Doctors/medical provision;
- Access to public transport;
- Within 5km of an employment site;
- Access to public electric vehicle (EV) charging.

The criteria for the allocation of a rural exception housing site is contained within saved Policy H2 of the Core Strategy or a successor in National Policy.

Countryside

Areas outside of Hereford, the county's market towns and identified rural settlements will be considered to be open countryside in planning policy terms. To protect the intrinsic value of Herefordshire's countryside and prevent development in unsustainable locations, residential development in these locations will be restricted to limited exceptions.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) outlines the exceptional circumstances that isolated homes are permitted within the open countryside as:

- An essential need for a rural worker, including those taking majority control of a farm business, to live permanently at or near their place of work in the countryside;
- The development would represent the optimal viable use of a heritage asset or would be appropriate enabling development to secure the future of heritage assets;
- The development would re-use redundant or disused buildings and enhance its immediate setting;
- The development would involve the subdivision of an existing residential building; or
- The design is of exceptional quality, in that it:
 - Is truly outstanding, reflecting the highest standards in architecture and would help to raise the standards of design more generally in rural areas; and
 - Would significantly enhance its immediate setting and be sensitive to defining characteristics of the local area.

[Planning Policy for Traveller Sites \(PPTS\)](#) 2015 allows for small scale affordable traveller sites as rural exceptions in small rural communities that would not normally be used for traveller sites if there is a lack of affordable land to meet local traveller needs. These should seek to address the needs of the local community and should be retained in perpetuity. This is in line with the saved [Core Strategy Policy H4](#) .

Policy AG5: Open countryside

Those areas outside of a settlement boundary or the built form of a named settlement within the settlement hierarchy outlined in Policy AG3 will be classified as open countryside.

Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Show People

In the same way that the Local Plan makes provision for housing as outlined in Policy AG1, Local Planning Authorities are required to set pitch targets for Gypsies and Travellers and plot targets for Travelling Show People which address the likely permanent and transit site accommodation needs of Travellers in Herefordshire over the plan period. It is important to ensure that there is an adequate supply of pitches and plots for all groups of Travellers on authorised sites in the county. Without a permanent site, it is difficult for traveller families to access basic health care, support and education services. Policy AG6 seeks to address this issue.

Policy AG6: Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Show People

Proposals for new pitches for Gypsies and Traveller and new plots for Travelling Show People that help to meet the requirement set out in the latest Gypsy and Travellers Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) and are in line with saved policy H4 and the Traveller Site Development Plan Document 2019 will be permitted.

Existing authorised and allocated Traveller pitches and plots will be safeguarded from other forms of development.

A [Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment](#) was finalised in 2022 and provides evidence about future needs for pitches and plots for the Local Plan. In relation to new Gypsy and Traveller pitch requirements, the assessment provides two sets of figures: first, a needs figure based on ethnic identity; and second, a figure based on the definition included in the Government's [Planning Policy for Traveller Sites](#) (PPTS) (2015) guidance which was the relevant guidance at the time. However, in December 2023 the PPTS definition was updated alongside the revised NPPF which confirms that the ethnic definition contained in the GTAA should be used as the basis for estimating need.

On this basis, the requirements for new pitches and plots as stated in the 2022 GTAA are as follows:

Table 5: Gypsy and Traveller pitch requirements:

Time Period	Number of Pitches required
2021-2026	14
2026-2031	8
2031-2036	9
2036-2041	10
Total 2021-2041	41

(Source table S1 GTAA 2022)

The requirement shown in Table 5 is in addition to the allocations included in the [Travellers Site Development Plan Document \(DPD\)](#). Planning applications for Gypsy and Traveller sites will be assessed again using saved policy H4 of the [Herefordshire Core Strategy 2015](#) and the saved [DPD](#).

Table 6: Travelling Show People plot requirements:

Time Period	Number of plots required
2021-2026	6
2026-2031	1
2031-2036	1
2036-2041	1
Total 2021-2041	9

(Source table S2 GTAA 2022)

At this stage, it has not been possible to include any allocations for pitches or plots to help meet the identified need. The council will continue to investigate the possibility of identifying a number of deliverable sites to meet the requirement as the Local Plan proceeds to the next stages. In the interim, the approach is to consider suitable new pitches and plots through the development management process, and against the saved Core Strategy policies and the DPD.

In order to help meet the requirement for Travelling Show People plots, which generally require space for maintaining and storing equipment as well as living quarters, a more flexible approach to identifying suitable sites needs to be taken. This could include considering land that may be suitable for employment to be used for this purpose, given the residential and work mix that is characteristic of such sites.

The council continues to welcome submissions regarding suitable sites for pitches and plots. These may be in the form of extensions to existing sites or new sites.

Safeguarding of authorised sites

To ensure the levels of accommodation for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Show People are maintained and that a range of sites exist, current authorised sites with permanent planning permission will be safeguarded. Sites allocated in the DPD will also be safeguarded unless there are exceptional circumstances as to why a site cannot come forward and in this case, alternative provisions should be made for the same number of pitches elsewhere to ensure no net loss of future provision. Any other non-allocated sites that receive permanent permission in the future will also be safeguarded.

Temporary stopping places/negotiated stopping

It is important that there is sufficient provision to meet the requirements of Gypsies and Travellers passing through the county but who need to stop over for a few days. Without this, Gypsies and Travellers often resort to having to stop in unauthorised places such as car parks or road sides which lack access to basic facilities and are generally unsuitable and unsafe places for families to stay. This situation can also lead to tension with settled communities. Therefore it is important to ensure there is an adequate supply of sites for temporary stops when the need arises.

A temporary stopping site near Leominster is allocated in Policy TS3 of the saved Travellers Sites Development Plan Document 2019 and this is retained as an allocation. The 2022 GTAA does not quantify the need for additional temporary stopping places for the new Local Plan period up to 2041 but instead recommends a flexible approach to this which is known as 'negotiated stopping'. Therefore the Local Plan does not allocate other temporary stopping sites in addition to the allocation in TS3.

Negotiated stopping is where land can be used as authorised short-term (generally less than 28 days) stopping places. If they are to be used for fewer than 28 days in a year they may not require planning permission and are therefore not included as a policy requirement at this stage. The requirement and opportunities for negotiated stopping will continue to be investigated and the number of unauthorised encampments will continue to be monitored as the plan progresses towards examination.



Creating balanced communities

It is important that everyone living in Herefordshire has the opportunity to live in a decent, safe and affordable home which is suited to their needs, promotes good health and is located in an area with access to community services and facilities. The Herefordshire [Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2021](#) identifies that although Herefordshire is a desirable place to live, with relatively low levels of poverty and deprivation, there are some vulnerable cohorts of people who are at risk of poor outcomes. Providing access to decent and affordable homes for all is key to helping address some of these inequalities.

Housing mix and range

To help achieve balanced and sustainable communities in Herefordshire it is important to ensure that a good mix of housing is provided in terms of size, types and tenures of homes to meet the need. This is particularly important to ensure that there is a supply of properties to suit all households regardless of age, vulnerabilities or financial situation. Therefore it is proposed that all developments should provide a mix of housing units that meet the needs of the local community.

Policy BC1: Housing mix and range

To ensure balanced and inclusive communities housing developments will be required to deliver a range and mix of house types, tenures and sizes to meet the needs of all households in Herefordshire.

All housing should be built to the following standards:

1. Comply with the Nationally described space standards;
2. Be delivered to Building Regulations 2010 Optional requirement M4(2): Category 2 - accessible and adaptable homes and that 5% of all new homes meet M4(3) Category 3-wheelchair user dwellings; and
3. Accord with the Healthy Homes Principles.

In addition there is a particular requirement to meet the housing needs of:

1. Students, in order to meet the growth requirements of the County's higher education establishments;
2. Older people and those with additional care needs; including providing specialist accommodation; and
3. Other specialist housing requirements.

Mix of housing units

Whilst it is recognised that meeting specialist needs are more likely to be achieved on larger sites, this policy does not include a threshold of the number of dwellings in order to maximise opportunities to provide for a mix and range. Reference should be made to the [Housing Market Area Needs Assessment](#) (HMANA) to identify the requirements for the different housing market areas. The supply of housing should be diverse enough to address issues of supply for different household sizes and requirements. For example, the supply of additional smaller bungalows would encourage older people to downsize but in the absence of such accommodation, these households remain living in their larger accommodation.

Space standards

In 2015, the government published [Technical housing standards - nationally described space standard](#) for individual planning authorities to decide whether or not to adopt the standard based on a number of considerations. The purpose of these national standards was to bring some conformity to this issue across the county but individual Local Planning Authorities must adopt them officially if they are to apply these standards. In recent years, there has been a decrease in some of the quality of the proposals for living accommodation e.g. proposals for new dwellings with inadequate internal and storage space and often incorporating inadequate natural light. Therefore the council has decided to adopt these in the Local Plan to improve the quality of housing proposals and in line with the Healthy Homes Principles described below.

Healthy Homes Principles

The TCPA's [Healthy Homes Principles](#) provide a robust, evidence-based framework that local planning authorities can apply to new development to ensure that every new home is of a decent standard. There are a total of eleven principles which, together, define what constitutes a healthy home and neighbourhood. These are listed below:

- a. All new homes should be safe in relation to the risk of fire;
- b. All new homes should have, as a minimum, the liveable space required to meet the needs of people over their whole lifetime, including adequate internal and external storage space;
- c. All main living areas and bedrooms of a new dwelling should have access to natural light;
- d. All new homes and their surroundings should be designed to be inclusive, accessible, and adaptable to suit the needs of all, with particular regard to protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010;
- e. All new homes should be built within places that prioritise and provide access to sustainable transport and walkable services, including green infrastructure and play space;
- f. All new homes should secure radical reductions in carbon emissions in line with the provisions of the Climate Change Act 2008;
- g. All new homes should demonstrate how they will be resilient to a changing climate over their full life time;
- h. All new homes should be secure and built in such a way as to minimise the risk of crime;
- i. All new homes should be free from unacceptable and intrusive noise and light pollution;
- j. All new homes should not contribute to unsafe or illegal levels of indoor or ambient air pollution and must be built to minimise, and where possible, eliminate the harmful impacts of air pollution on human health and the environment; and
- k. All new homes should be designed to provide year-round thermal comfort for inhabitants.

All the above principles accord with other policies in this plan, and these are considered to be a useful checklist to ensure that good quality homes and neighbourhoods are delivered.

Accessibility and adaptability

A growing older population is expected to result in an increase in people with mobility restrictions (of 4,800) and with dementia (of 2,170) by 2041. The HMANA advises that the council is therefore justified through policy in requiring new homes to be delivered as 'accessible and adaptable' homes as defined in Part M4(2) of The Building Regulations. [Requirements M4\(2\) and M4\(3\)](#) are optional requirements as defined in the Building Regulations and currently only apply where a condition that one or more dwellings should meet the relevant optional requirement is imposed as a planning condition. The HMANA also advises that at least 5% of all dwellings should meet M4(3) standards in relation to wheelchair users and has been subject to viability testing. The delivery of this 5% requirement will be rounded up to the nearest whole number. The government have signalled a change that M4(2) will apply to all dwellings and therefore this requirement is included in Policy BC1.

Specialist housing for older people

The HMANA evidences a notable growth in the population of older persons aged over 65 years in Herefordshire in the period up to 2041. An increase in the number of older persons, particularly in the older age groups, will generate a need for the provision of housing with support and housing with care. The assessment indicates a need for around 3,500 housing units with support (sheltered/retirement housing), particularly in the market sector; a need for around 1,400 additional housing units with care (e.g., extra-care), around 43% in the affordable sector; as well as a need for additional residential and nursing care bed spaces to 2041. It is therefore important that the council's planning policies support the delivery of specialist housing.

The provision of a choice of attractive housing options to older households is a component of achieving a good housing mix. The availability of such housing options for the growing older population may enable some older households to downsize from homes which no longer meet their housing needs or are expensive to run. The provision of specialist accommodation can also improve quality of life by providing on-site support and social networks allowing people to live with a greater degree of independence for longer and provides significant benefits for society as a whole.

Higher education student accommodation

In Hereford, higher education establishments offer degree and university level qualifications. These attract students from outside the county and therefore it is important that adequate accommodation is provided for students to ensure that this does not negatively impact on the housing supply for the general population and also to increase the desirability of the offer from these establishments. The HMANA states that the [New Model Institute of Technology and Engineering](#) (NMiTE) may require up to 1,000 new bed spaces of student accommodation up to 2031. However, it is understood that demand is more likely to be in the region of 200-300 units some of which could be met by houses in multiple occupations (HMOs). Additionally, there may also be an increased demand for students from outside the county studying at the [Hereford College of Arts and Wye Valley Trust](#). Evidence on this will be updated at regular intervals to ensure that the up to date demand is taken into account.

Other specialist housing

In addition to providing a range of housing to meet the needs of all households policy BC1 should reflect the housing needs for other cohorts where there is new or updated evidence which demonstrates the requirement for specialist housing. For example, these could include but are not exclusive to, children where Herefordshire Council has a corporate parental responsibility in line with the Council's [Placement Sufficiency Strategy](#), people with disabilities and providing for the needs of refugees and hospital health care workers from overseas.

According to the Ministry of Defence, approximately 1,950, members of the Regular Armed Forces are stationed in Herefordshire including civilian personnel. Herefordshire Council signed the [Armed Forces Covenant](#) in 2012 and is a member of the Herefordshire Armed Forces Covenant Partnership (HAFCP). This requires conscious consideration of the needs of the Armed Forces community when accessing healthcare, housing and schools. The HMANA states that there is now sufficient amount of accommodation for the existing and future service personnel in Herefordshire. Therefore at this stage, there is no requirement to make particular provision for this. However, this will be kept under review during the plan period.

The requirement for additional Traveller accommodation is addressed in the Accommodating Growth chapter.

Affordable housing

There is a significant need for affordable housing within Herefordshire and this need is set out in the [HMANA](#). The 2021 [Joint Strategic Needs Assessment](#) (JSNA) states that Herefordshire is the worst area within the West Midlands region for housing affordability. Therefore affordable delivery should be maximised where opportunities arise. The threshold of affordable housing has been informed by the viability assessment. Affordable housing is defined by Government as housing for sale or rent, for those whose needs are not met by the market. It is the council's strategic aim to increase the provision of affordable housing in the county. Therefore Policy BC2 seeks to ensure that development proposals make provision for this where appropriate in line with government guidance and local evidence.

Policy BC2: Affordable housing - thresholds and targets

All new open market housing proposals will be expected to contribute towards meeting affordable housing needs on:

1. Sites of more than 5 dwelling in the Designated Rural Areas and Wye Valley and Malvern Hills National Landscapes; and
2. Sites of more than 10 dwellings or larger than 0.5 hectares outside the areas referred to in 1) above.

The amount and mix of affordable housing including those on strategic housing sites will vary depending on evidence of housing need as identified through the latest housing market assessment. The following indicative targets have been established based on evidence of viability in the county's housing value zones:

- Value Zone 1 Hereford & Ledbury and Value Zone 3 Bromyard, Ross-on-Wye & rural – 35%
- Value Zone 2 Kington & Leominster – 15%

All affordable housing will be required to be available in perpetuity,

Affordable housing can be delivered by developers, registered providers and [community land trusts](#). It is important that the tenures of affordable housing meet the particular requirements of the county. The [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (NPPF) states that at least 10% of the total number of homes should be available for affordable home ownership although there are exemptions to this requirement. First Homes are the government's preferred discounted market tenure and should account for at least 25% of all affordable housing units delivered by developers through planning obligations. In Herefordshire, the priority is the delivery of affordable rented housing at social rent levels to provide homes for low income working households in particular. The HMANA 2021 evidence continues to justify maintaining this approach in the Local Plan update.

The amount and mix of affordable housing including those on strategic housing sites will vary across the county depending on evidence of housing need as identified through the latest Housing Market Assessment, and, an assessment of the viability of the development and is included in the individual place shaping section.

The council will always seek the provision of affordable housing onsite except in very exceptional circumstances. This assists in providing affordable housing on sites in line with national and local policies. In exceptional cases, however, the Council may be prepared to enter into agreements to accept affordable housing through contributions of commuted payments towards the provision of land and affordable units elsewhere. This will be where both parties agree that on-site provision of affordable housing will not be viable or practical and it will be difficult to meet the requirements for affordable housing because of special market or site considerations.

Herefordshire Council has adopted an [Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document](#) (SPD) June 2021 as part of an update to the Planning Obligations SPD. This provides further guidance to support the implementation of the affordable housing policies in the adopted 2015 Core Strategy and covers a number of detailed matters including local connections, affordability, viability matters, accessible housing and vacant building credit. The SPD will need to be reviewed and updated to be in line with the new policies in this local plan 2021-2041. Policies H1 and H2 of the Core Strategy and the 2008 and 2021 SPD will be 'saved' until the new Local Plan is adopted.

Designated rural areas

The NPPF states that affordable housing can only be sought on major developments where 10 or more new homes will be provided or are larger than 0.5 hectares or more. However, development opportunities within rural areas tend to be smaller, lower density sites. In 2021/2022, as an example, 60% of all rural housing commitment sites were under 10 units and 76% of all rural housing completions were on sites of under 10 units. This means in the absence of a formal 'rural area' designation, national planning policy does not allow affordable housing contributions to be sought on any of these sites. This has a significant impact on the ability of the council to respond to affordable housing need across our rural communities. Earlier consultation on the emerging Local Plan and work on producing our significant number of neighbourhood development plans demonstrate that communities are in favour of lowering affordable housing thresholds. This would allow more flexibility to provide a range and mix of housing tenures in some villages.

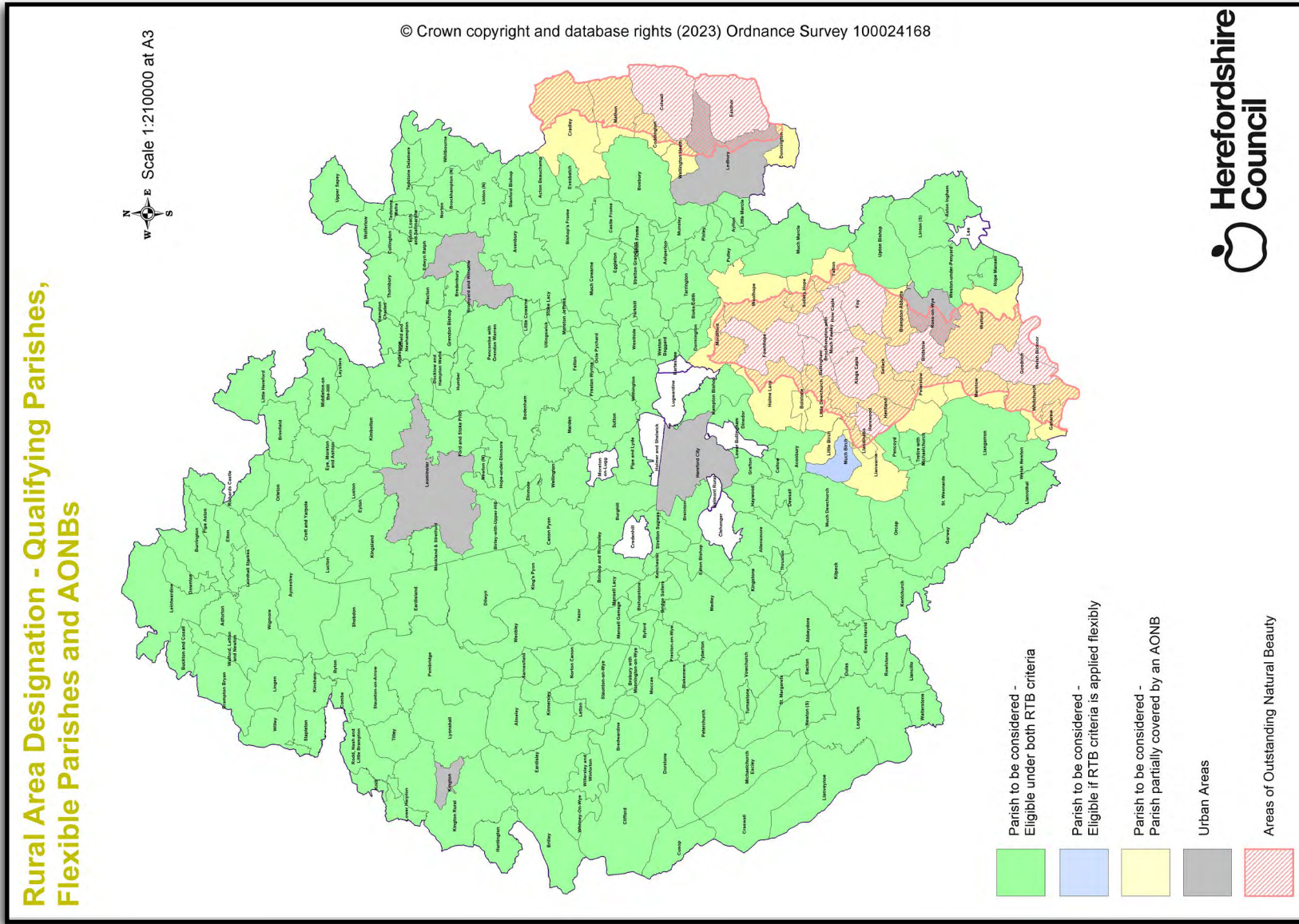
Therefore the Council has formally applied to the Secretary of State for Levelling up, Housing and Communities to designate parts of the county as 'designated rural areas' under the Housing Act 1985 which will help to increase the provision of affordable housing in these areas by lowering the threshold. Although not formally enacted at the time of publishing, the Council understands that the application for this designation has been accepted in principle. The legislation also allows the lower threshold to be applied in National Landscapes (formerly known as AONBs).

The primary purpose of the rural designation under Section 157 of the [Housing Act 1985](#) is to restrict the consequences of the Right to Buy. It allows the local authority to put restrictive covenants in place so that any homes can only be sold on to someone who has been living or working within the parish for 3 years. Alternatively, the local authority may require the tenant to offer the home back to them if the tenant wishes to sell within 10 years of buying.

Discussions are taking place with the Registered Providers within the county so that the implications are understood and they can formulate policy accordingly. At this stage, the application to designate only gives the flexibility to apply a covenant as shown in Figure 7. This map shows the extent of the Rural Area Designation.

This positive approach to facilitating affordable housing in rural areas is further supported by policy AG4 which enables Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs) to allocate affordable housing as rural settlement exceptions subject to a number of criteria.

Figure 7: Rural area designation map



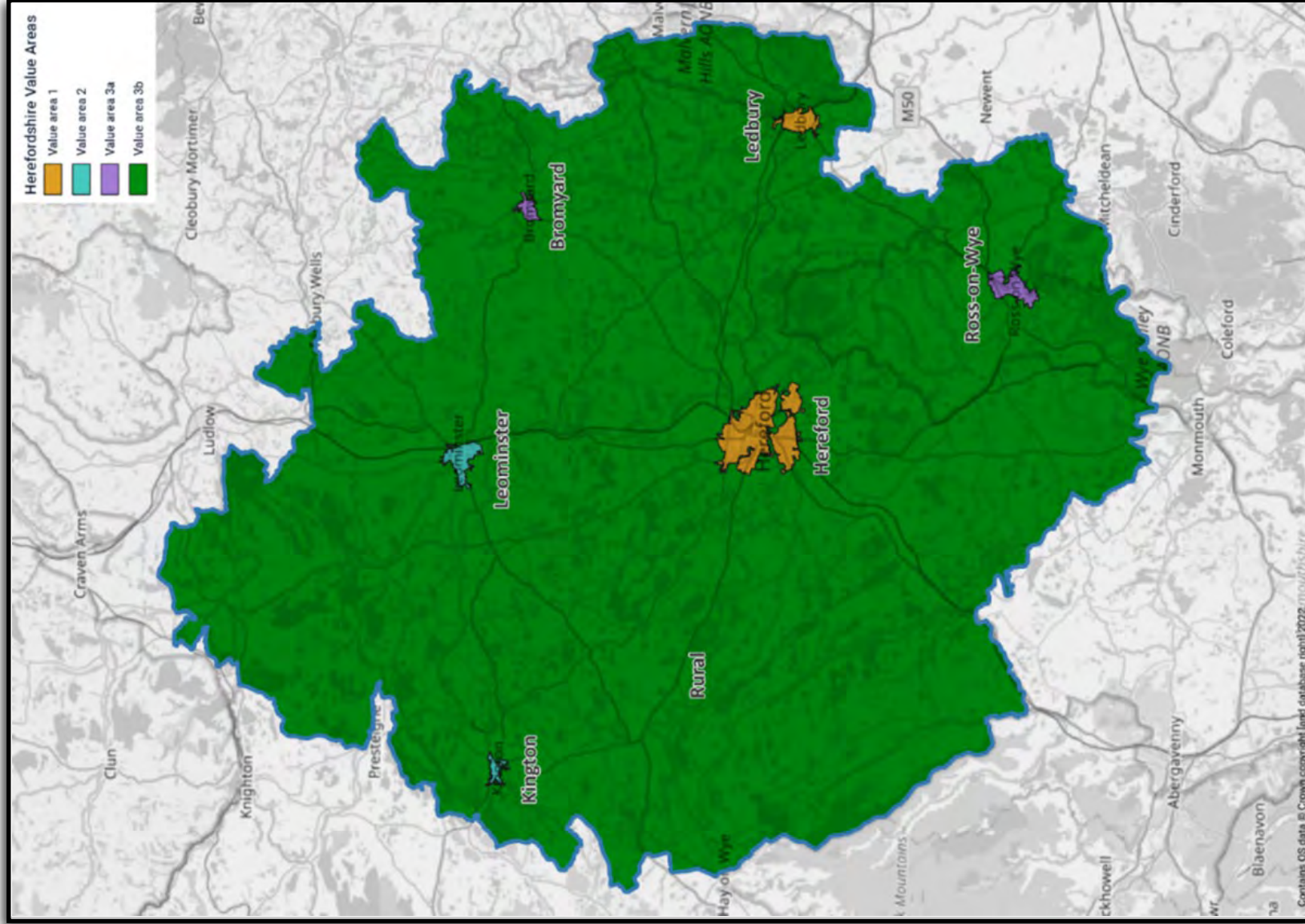
Value zones

Policy BC2 refers to affordable housing targets in the different value zones. These have been identified as part of the county wide viability assessment that can be viewed on the [evidence base](#) webpage. These are simplified into three residential value zones rather than the 7 submarket areas that have been used previously in the adopted Core Strategy. This is on the basis that there is insufficient current evidence to split the rural locations into different value areas, and where values for different settlements are similar it is reasonable to group them. However, it is acknowledged that within these value zones, there will be some localised variations.

For the purposes of affordable housing targets, Value Zones 1 and 3 are the same. However, there is a need to differentiate between the two zones for consideration around the introduction of a community infrastructure levy or similar in the future. Nonetheless, it should be noted that this is not being introduced or consulted on at this time. Value Zones 3a and 3b are there to distinguish the towns from the rural areas for that value zone.

The boundaries of the value zones are shown in Figure 8 below:

Figure 8: Herefordshire value zones



The findings of the Herefordshire [Housing Market Areas Need Assessment 2021](#) (HMANA) have also been taken into account. Although in Value Zone 2 the HMANA identifies a greater percentage need for affordable housing than shown in Policy BC2, the viability assessment found that in these areas higher levels than 15% are unlikely to be achievable. Therefore in light of this evidence, and to maximise the overall provision of affordable housing in the County, the strategic allocations within Value Zone 2 have been adjusted to reflect this. The council has also considered local and current data related to affordable housing waiting lists in these areas and this information has helped to support the strategic approach to housing distribution in the county. The supporting evidence will be maintained by updating the HMANA and the Viability Assessment as appropriate. Regard will also be had to data from housing registers, NDPs and parish surveys where available.

Diversity of housing delivery

Increasing the diversity of housing supply will be an effective way to increase the mix and choice of housing types and tenures, and can have the potential to increase the delivery of innovative and highly sustainable developments in a cost effective manner. Adopting a diverse range of construction types can also help to address the building material supply issues.

Policy BC3: Diversity of housing delivery

The council will encourage a greater variety of ways of delivering housing. This will be achieved through:

1. On sites of 20 or more dwellings, a minimum of 5% of dwellings being made available as dedicated serviced plots for self or custom build housing to suit a variety of incomes and housing needs;
2. Sites allocated for market and affordable self and custom build and community led housing in Neighbourhood Development Plans;
3. Community led housing schemes being encouraged as standalone sites or as part of a larger housing scheme where proposals meet local housing needs; and
4. Self and custom build, and community led housing schemes that meet the definition of affordable housing on rural exception sites in accordance with Policy AG4.

Self and custom build

Self and custom build development encompasses many different routes to delivering your own home. It varies from an individual acquiring their own land and building the property or managing the construction of their home from beginning to end, to projects where individuals commission their home, making key design and layout decisions, but the home is built ready for their occupation. In accordance with the self and custom housebuilding legislation, the council holds a [register](#) of people who would like to self or custom build in the county. Herefordshire has a relatively high demand on its

register and therefore seeks to encourage greater provision of self and custom build opportunities to meet the overall level of demand. Traditionally, Herefordshire has been a place where many people have, and continue to, self-build through the acquisition of plots of land and delivering homes on an individual basis. Whilst the council is keen to continue to support this type of development in principle, it also wants to encourage greater amounts of self and custom build to come forward as low cost or affordable housing.

In order to encourage self and custom build the Policy BC3 sets a requirement for sites of over 20 homes to allocate suitable land to provide 5% self-build on the sites. The justification for this threshold is supported by a report commissioned by the council in the [Self and Custom Housebuilding Study Technical Report](#) July 2023. This policy requirement will ensure that self-build becomes more of a mainstream type of housing development across the county. Given the interest in the self build register, demand for such plots is expected to be high. However, where plots have been made available and marketed appropriately for at least 12 months and have not sold, the plot(s) may either remain on the open market as custom or self build or be built out by the developer.

Self and custom build can provide the opportunity not only to build a home to meet personal requirements, but it can be a more cost effective way of delivering a home and therefore can be a more affordable way of securing a home. The council is keen to encourage this type of development where it provides the opportunity for local people to remain in areas where they have a support network and local connections. A positive approach to this type of development could help to free up larger family housing for older people who want to downsize and also often represents an opportunity to build an energy efficient home. The council is committed to promoting this type of development particularly where it seeks to address housing inequalities.

Self and custom build can also be delivered through enablers on sites which are 100% self-build and such schemes are encouraged by the council.

Community led development

[Community Land Trusts](#) (CLTs) are not for profit organisations based in and run by the community who provide affordable housing, sometimes as self-build schemes which often have some shared facilities. CLTs can provide housing that meets specific housing needs, such as groups wishing to provide mutual self-support and usually wanting to build new homes that meet high environmental standards.

Given the growing interest in this type of housing delivery and the associated benefits, the council is keen to promote community led housing (CLH). Therefore the policy is supportive of CLH as standalone schemes or where they are part of a larger development where they can contribute to affordable housing needs. CLTs can deliver mixed use developments or other types of development such as renewable energy or small scale employment sites and the council is, in principle, supportive of such schemes.

A large, leafy tree with a thick trunk and many green leaves dominates the foreground and middle ground. In the background, a colorful playground with slides, climbing structures, and other equipment is visible. The scene is set in a park with green grass.

Creating healthy and sustainable communities

Planning decisions can help to reduce inequalities to ensure that every resident in Herefordshire can grow up, live, work and retire in an area where they can lead healthy and fulfilling lives.

A healthy and happy life can be impacted by a number of environmental factors such as:

- High quality open space provision;
- Availability of community and health facilities;
- Walkable safe neighbourhoods;
- Dark skies;
- Green and blue infrastructure corridors;
- High quality infrastructure; and
- Digital telecommunications.

Currently, the provision of these is not distributed evenly across the county. The least deprived neighbourhoods generally have better access to these than the most deprived areas.

Green and blue infrastructure (GBI) is an important community asset that supports sustainable and healthy communities. It serves multiple functions for communities, such as mitigating and enabling them to adapt to climate change. Extensive green infrastructure in urban areas will be vital for providing shading and cooling neighbourhoods as average summer temperatures increase due to climate change. If planned for in the right way, it can also either prevent or reduce the extent of flooding, which will become increasingly prevalent in future. It also serves many other functions such as providing access to green spaces for recreation and access networks which serve as walking, cycling and wheeling routes and accommodate spaces for people to exercise, socialise, reconnect with nature and improve wellbeing. Open spaces need to be accessible and inclusive and to reflect the needs of the local community.

It is vital that new developments are well connected by offering a choice of transport options to encourage healthier ways to travel.

Suitable infrastructure is also vital for supporting residents and capitalising on the economic and social benefits of infrastructure and digital connectivity. The county's infrastructure will also need to be adapted to improve its resilience against a changing climate and support an increasing population. This will need to be done in a sustainable way whilst supplying communities with the services and amenities they need to live comfortably.

Promoting health and wellbeing

Policy HSC1: Promoting health and wellbeing

Where appropriate, development proposals will be required to:

Community facilities

1. Provide new community and health facilities which reflect the needs of the local population, where required, and that bring different groups together by ensuring accessibility and inclusivity and by supporting local strategies to tackle social and health issues including tackling health inequalities;
2. Protect against the loss of existing facilities and use developer contributions to strengthen, refurbish and/or extend these where the need is created by new development;
3. Explore the co-location and dual-use of various facilities where this would deliver benefits to a community and enable stronger connections between different service providers;
4. Secure the long-term management of facilities at an early stage in the planning process that ensures future generations can benefit from the support that these services provide;

Health

5. Contribute to better health outcomes for all residents by encouraging improved access to open space, sport and exercise facilities, walking, cycling and wheeling routes and natural environments;
6. Large scale schemes should conduct a Health Impact Assessment (HIA) to identify their likely health impacts. The HIA will be expected to consider impact on health inequalities for the local area. Proposals must consider opportunities for improvements;
7. Ensure easy and safe access to good quality open space for both new and existing residents;
8. Ensure that habitable rooms have access to natural light, year-round thermal comfort, are safe in relation to the risk of fire and minimise unsafe levels of indoor or outdoor pollution. Developments should not have a significant impact on neighbouring properties access to natural light and ensure appropriate distances between schemes.
9. Pay regard to the safe and accessible storage of waste and battery powered modes of travel;

Open space and sports facilities

10. Provide open space with biodiversity net gain as an integral part of their design. Multi-functional open space should be provided close to new and existing residents' homes and be accessible and inclusive to suit everyone's needs at every stage in life;
11. Protect against the loss of open space unless it has been shown that a replacement has been identified nearby which would improve current provision, and the benefits of the new development outweigh the current use of the open space;
12. Promote healthy food environments that have positive impacts by providing opportunities for community food growing through the retention and provision of allotments, community orchards and local markets;
13. Mitigate impact arising from new development on sports facilities through developer contributions;
14. Ensure that the long-term management of open space and sport facilities is safeguarded;
15. In cases where on-site provision is not possible, actively explore and contribute to the provision of off-site alternatives for open space and sports facilities that are accessible and convenient for the community;

Dark skies

16. Take account of light pollution to reduce impacts that high intensity lighting has on people's health and wellbeing, without compromising on safety and the need to minimise crime and fear of crime;

Education and training

17. Ensure that early years, primary, secondary and special educational provision are easily accessible for all children; and
18. Facilitate further and higher education learning for all.

Community and health facilities encompass a large range of uses including village halls, community centres, public houses, schools and colleges, primary and secondary health facilities, libraries, sports facilities, arts and cultural facilities and youth club buildings. Essentially, these include any building that has significance for a community in terms of their ability to support the local population's educational, mental and physical health, and recreational needs. For all residents to benefit from the different services that these facilities provide they need to be designed to be fully accessible and inclusive. These need to be situated within a safe walking, cycling and wheeling distance from people's homes.

It is also recognised that some community, educational and health services can now be delivered digitally. This highlights the need for fast digital broadband in every Herefordshire community to enable social inclusion, improved mental health and wellbeing, and access to education and job opportunities. A good broadband connection provides the opportunity to work from home which allows people to live more flexibly according to their circumstances.

Much of Herefordshire is rural and sparsely populated. The road network is therefore not always suitable and accessible for emergency services and large vehicles, which can make it difficult to deliver goods and services in parts of the county.

The increased consequences of climate change mean more unpredictable and severe weather events. Significant areas of Herefordshire are low-lying and liable to flooding. This increased risk of flood events highlights the importance of development proposals being safe and accessible for residents. (See Policy CC1).

Protecting community facilities

Community facilities are an essential component of new development. It is therefore important to protect existing facilities unless an improved alternative is proposed in a similar place and where disruption to service provision is avoided.

Co-location and management of public assets

The co-location and efficient management of public assets is one way of ensuring improved coverage of shared community facilities.

For example, existing facilities such as schools can provide a space for community and activity groups to meet in the evenings and weekends. By bringing different public services together under one roof they can be run more efficiently and can act as a community hub for local residents. By concentrating services together in this way, residents are encouraged to make regular journeys to the same location and are therefore more likely to interact and connect with each other in person, which is an important factor in improving wellbeing and social cohesion.

Herefordshire Council's [Talk Community](#) approach brings these elements together and empowers communities by giving residents control over the running of their services. By operating under one roof and including residents in the design and delivery of the facility, better connections between individuals and groups can be forged which boosts the quality of life of local residents by promoting a sense of collective ownership.

Health

Herefordshire has high levels of obesity in children and adults compared to the national average. 64.7% of the adult population in Herefordshire are overweight or obese. More than 1 in 4 children are already overweight or obese by the time they start primary school and there is a long-standing pattern of levels of obesity doubling by Year 6.

Food is a key driver of health inequalities such as obesity and diet-related ill health. The ever-changing food system has meant that there is an increased availability of cheap, processed foods and a healthier diet has become more expensive which limits the access to healthier foods for those in the most deprived areas. It is recognised that consuming locally produced food is a much healthier and a more nutritional option which can encourage a healthier diet. Growing food in community gardens and allotments can also encourage a healthy diet, improve community engagement and promote social connections and sustainable food practices.

There are many different aspects of the built and natural environment which shape people's health and wellbeing. Accessible walking and cycling routes linking residential areas with important local amenities provide the opportunity for people to maintain an active lifestyle. Even small increases in physical activity have been shown to reduce the chance of developing chronic diseases and can improve people's quality of life.

Mental health is an issue of national and local concern. Social isolation and loneliness have negative impacts on mental health. Developments should incorporate features that foster wellbeing through the provision of high quality green spaces, access to community facilities that encourage social cohesion and the provision of active transportation options, all of which create a positive environment for the community.

The quality of the homes in which people live is also a key determinant of health. The extent to which homes are safe and insulated, proximity to neighbouring nuisances such as odour and noise, internal space available and level of natural light are just a few of the design considerations that affect people's health and wellbeing. The Town and Country Planning Association's (TCPA) [Healthy Homes Principles](#) fully illustrate the minimum design standards required to ensure that people can live healthy lives.

Deprived communities are less likely to have access to environments which are conducive to healthy living which can exacerbate health inequalities. A Health Impact Assessment provides a mechanism for judging whether a development would contribute positively to the health and wellbeing of prospective and existing residents and the ways in which it might widen or narrow health inequalities.

Developments must prioritise the secure storage and accessibility of waste and battery powered modes of travel to eliminate hazardous risk of fires and ensure overall safety.

Open space

Accessible, inclusive and high quality open spaces that include areas for growing food are crucial for the health and wellbeing of communities. They provide spaces for people to exercise and socialise with others. Open spaces include, but are not limited to, recreation grounds, children's play areas, playing pitches, parks, gardens, allotments and civic spaces.

There is an identified need for both the provision of new and enhancement of existing sports facilities across the county such as football, rugby and hockey. Proposals will take into account the priorities established in published evidence and strategies relating to open space, playing pitch and outdoor sports and indoor and built sports facilities.

Open space will also be planned in alignment with the council's [Physical Activity Strategy](#), which supports the following four outcomes; active environments, active communities, healthy individuals and partnerships and collaborative working.

[The Open Space Assessment](#) (2023) highlighted the need for more natural and semi-natural open spaces, for strong footpath networks to open spaces, to strengthen access for pedestrians and the need for enhanced management of open spaces. The assessment also indicated that there is an under provision of allotments across Herefordshire with access to allotments limited due to most communities being outside the allotment catchment area. The local initiative to become a [Sustainable Food Place](#) must be considered when planning for open space. The partnership aims to increase allotment provision, green space, edible landscapes and brownfield sites for food growing, supporting a healthy food environment.

Developer contributions, along with other funding mechanisms, will help address deficiencies in open space provision and facilitate access to new open space. The long-term management will be co-ordinated in a way which means that local communities are at the forefront of decisions that are taken and facilities are safeguarded for future generations to enjoy.

Dark skies

Herefordshire's rurality is a unique feature which is attractive to both residents and visitors to the county. The county benefits from reduced levels of light pollution in comparison with many parts of the UK and therefore dark skies are a particular attraction. In fact, it has the '*third most pristine dark skies in England*' according to Campaign to Protect Rural England's (CPRE) [Night Blight Report](#). Development should carefully consider the protection of dark skies, particularly in rural areas.

Intensive outdoor artificial lighting can be detrimental to people's health and wellbeing as it can affect sleeping habits, physiological and neurocognitive function. Stargazing, made easier by lower levels of light pollution, relieves stress, provides an opportunity to reconnect with nature and can boost tourism. Under UK law, artificial light emitted from premises which has a negative impact on people's health or causes a nuisance is considered a statutory nuisance.

In such cases, the Local Authority has the power to take action if excessive lighting breaches a particular threshold. In terms of economising energy and costs, outdoor lighting can also be highly inefficient.

While it is important to minimise excessive lighting this should be balanced against the need for lighting in certain locations to improve safety and security after dark. For example, some walking and cycling routes should be well-lit to enable people to use them safely in the evenings and during the night. Lighting also enables people to work throughout the night where sectors, such as logistics, require this. The angle and colour of lighting should be carefully considered to achieve this balance.

Training and education

Access to good quality schools for all children, regardless of their needs and circumstances is essential and can improve their life chances. Schools should be situated close to where people live to allow children to walk or cycle there safely. The primary aim is to create an integrated and sustainable school system which will enable children to attend their nearest school or special school confident that their health and educational needs can be met. Herefordshire will need to accommodate increased demand arising from development across the plan period. New provision will be provided through financial contributions and/or new school provision. The individual place shaping policies set out the particular requirements for each strategic allocation.

The benefits that come from walking, cycling or wheeling safely to school do not only include improved physical and cognitive development, but they also lower levels of air pollution along school routes.

Developers should consider how community facilities provide flexibility to ensure that buildings can adapt to the wider lifelong educational needs of the community. Where it is possible and appropriate, the dual-use of facilities, such as community centres, will be encouraged to provide educational courses closer to where people live.

The provision of further and higher education facilities will be an important consideration throughout the plan period. These types of services and facilities provide the opportunity for life-long learning, allow people to achieve formal qualifications and develop vocational skills, and can help to attract young people to live and work in Herefordshire. The New Model in Technology & Engineering (NMiTE) is a recently established university which specialises in 'hands-on' education, whilst Hereford College of Arts offers 'university-level' courses in the arts. Proposals that support the ability of these institutions to deliver a high level of service, to the residents of Herefordshire and elsewhere, will be encouraged.

Infrastructure delivery

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that development is supported by the timely provision of the social and physical infrastructure necessary for sustainable communities to function effectively.

Policy HSC2: Infrastructure delivery

The council will continue to work with relevant stakeholders to ensure that infrastructure is delivered, in the right place, at the right time, to meet the needs of the county and support the levels of development identified in the Local Plan.

Infrastructure will be provided in step with new development and co-ordinated through the Infrastructure Delivery Plan in order to:

1. Ensure that any necessary improvements are brought forward in a co-ordinated and timely manner;
2. Contribute toward the provision of infrastructure necessary for the development; and
3. Seek developer contributions towards strategic infrastructure through national planning policies and other relevant legislation.

A Planning Obligations Guidance Note will provide details of the type and scale of obligations that may apply.

This policy is concerned with the timely provision of the social and physical infrastructure necessary for sustainable communities to function effectively. This encompasses a range of different types of infrastructure including:

- Highway and transport infrastructure, including public transport services, walking and cycling facilities, electric vehicle charging and parking provision;
- Education, community safety, and health and social care;
- Emergency and essential services, including waste services;
- Green infrastructure and biodiversity enhancement/mitigation;
- Open green spaces, recreation, sport and leisure and other community facilities; and
- Drainage, flood prevention and protection, utilities, such as water supply and drainage, waste water treatment, gas, electricity and telecommunications.

Future development within the county will place pressure and demand on existing infrastructure.

The council will continue to work with relevant service providers, partners, neighbouring councils, developers, parish councils and stakeholders to ensure that infrastructure is delivered, in the right place, at the right time, to meet the needs of the county and support the levels of development identified in the Local Plan.

Developers working in conjunction with the council and service providers should demonstrate that there is adequate capacity both on and off-site for all forms of infrastructure that are necessary to support the new development and that it would not lead to problems for existing users. It will be necessary to provide infrastructure in a timely way that meets the needs of the new development as it comes forward. The co-ordinated delivery of adequately funded infrastructure at the right time and in the right place is key to ensuring that local services, facilities and the transport network can cope with any added demand that arises from housing growth and other new developments.

Most infrastructure providers work to statutory requirements and have set short-term planning cycles and Asset Management Plans. As part of the plan-making process, the council is therefore engaged with a range of infrastructure providers to understand the essential infrastructure needed to support the development strategy. Development which comes forward cannot solve existing infrastructure problems, but it will be essential that new development which does take place does not create any additional burdens. In addition, opportunities to actively deliver new facilities or services which benefit existing as well as new residents, and that potentially offset current infrastructure issues should be investigated.

The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a charge that local authorities in England (known as “charging authorities”) can place on new development in their area. The money generated through the levy will contribute to the funding of infrastructure to support development growth. The council currently does not have a Community Infrastructure Charging Schedule in place. The recently produced Viability Study indicates that there is evidence to develop a charging schedule that would be viable. The future levy would need separate consultation and examination to test any proposed rate. It is important that any proposed levy rate strikes an appropriate balance between the additional investment needed to support development and the potential effects on the viability of development. Further work in this area will be required to develop a charging schedule where levies can be collected from new developments.

Infrastructure Delivery Plan

The future mechanism for delivering developer contributions will be informed by changes made to the national planning system and informed by an updated Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) and Viability Study.

The IDP will identify key infrastructure needs, costs and any gaps in funding. It will also consider the funding mechanisms required to secure infrastructure in a timely manner and facilitate growth. Policies will also need to reflect any new infrastructure policy requirements in the plan.

Where particular requirements of sites allocated for development are known they are identified in the Place Shaping Document.

The delivery of development may need to be managed through the use of review mechanisms to ensure the necessary infrastructure is provided to meet needs. Conditions or a planning obligation may be used to secure this. The delivery of key infrastructure through other funding sources, including national government investment schemes, will be investigated and bids will be made where this is appropriate.

One Public Estate

One way of co-ordinating the co-location of facilities is through the [One Public Estate](#) (OPE) programme, which is a partnership of public sector stakeholders that work together to explore how public assets can be best utilised to deliver benefits to the community.

The public sector partners in Herefordshire work together under the banner of the One Public Estate (OPE) programme. This programme aims to support public services to ensure the best use of resources whilst meeting individual organisational objectives.

The Local Education Authority has identified a need for educational facilities to meet the future needs arising from the proposed housing growth. Monitoring the supply and demand for places in all schools, including specialist schools, will continue to determine when additional provisions should be made.

In some parts of the county, existing health facilities may not be sufficient to have on-site expansion therefore relocation is the next best option.

Some services such as the Fire Brigade and Police are exploring the possibility of co-location on one site in the county's city, towns and some villages. Co-location can result in reduced running costs with a better integrated customer-focused service.

Digital technology

Over the plan period, it is expected that the use and demand of digital connections in homes and businesses will continue to grow. It is therefore important that new developments are 'future-proofed' with appropriate digital infrastructure that will meet existing and future communication needs. This can help reduce the need to travel and hence reduce vehicle emissions and congestion, for example by enabling home working. It also enables the development of 'real time' driver information systems which can lead to better use of roads through reduced congestion and help to avoid flood-hit areas.

Electric vehicle charging

The Government has planned for the phasing out of new petrol and diesel cars by 2035 with the likelihood that electric vehicles (EVs) will become the norm towards the latter half of the plan period. Rapid EV charging points will be particularly important in the public domain. This places an emphasis on electric vehicle charging points (EVCPs) in new homes. In addition, domestic properties and commercial premises need to provide the opportunity to charge vehicles close to where they are usually parked. It is important therefore that new development proposals respond to this essential change. Herefordshire is predominantly rural, therefore, reliance on private cars is high. Providing EVCPs in these areas will contribute to better energy choices with travel.

Green & blue infrastructure

Green & blue infrastructure (GBI) is integral to place-making underpinned by the qualities of successful places and therefore must be part of the design process from the outset, providing water management, access networks, habitat enhancements, open space and climate change functions. It is a strategically planned network of natural and semi-natural green and blue areas which are intentionally designed to deliver multiple environmental, economic, and health and wellbeing 'functions' or benefits for both wildlife and local communities. For example, a park or green space may provide opportunities for people to exercise, natural habitats for wildlife, and alleviation from surface-water flooding in urban areas by 'soaking up' water during periods of heavy rainfall.

GBI plays an important role in adapting and mitigating the effects of climate change. It can also contribute to active travel improvements. GBI can include features such as street trees, green roofs and Sustainable urban Drainage Systems (SuDS). When planning for GBI, retaining and enhancing existing assets and creating new infrastructure and connections within the site and surrounding setting must be considered.

Policy HSC3: Green & blue infrastructure

To ensure that the county is able to maximise the benefits delivered by green and blue infrastructure for people and wildlife, developments are expected to:

1. Take forward the objectives and priorities presented in the most recent Herefordshire Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy, as set out in the three themes of 'People', 'Place' and 'Nature';
2. Create new and protect and enhance existing green and blue infrastructure on-site, and link to existing green and blue infrastructure nearby. New green and blue infrastructure, such as open space and/or recreational space, should be designed and managed to attract walkers and dog walkers. This will minimise adverse impacts on the River Wye SAC and Wye Valley Woodlands SAC;
3. Help provide better links between urban and rural landscapes, creating accessible and attractive places for communities to make regular contact with the natural environment;
4. Address the aspects of 'People', 'Place' and 'Nature'. Ensure that green and blue infrastructure is designed to support the delivery of wider landscape-scale green networks including through tree planting, biodiversity net gain enhancements and natural and semi-natural green space provision;
5. Support the provision of active travel networks, and be located within easy walking distance of green space, wherever possible. Where it is not possible to locate development close to existing green spaces, new high quality accessible and multifunctional green spaces should be created nearby;
6. Allow, where applicable, for blue infrastructure to take account of existing wetland habitats, watercourses and ground water, as well as new proposals for surface and foul water drainage;

7. Incorporate nature based solutions to minimise surface-water runoff such as multifunctional Sustainable Drainage Systems;
8. Design green and blue infrastructure in such a way as to provide formal and informal sport, recreation and play, and as an outdoor education resource for multiple user groups ; and
9. Ensure that long-term management & maintenance arrangements are put in place for new green and blue infrastructure.

It is important that GBI is seen as an integral part of development and not simply an 'add-on'. It should be at the heart of plan-making, reinforcing the value of adopting a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing the network whilst also planning for the enhancement of natural capital. GBI helps to overcome the pressures of climate change and promotes healthy and safe communities.

It is therefore essential for developers to consider its design at the pre-application stage to ensure that it is of high quality, delivers multiple benefits, and is delivered in a way that maximises its longevity. 'Multifunctionality' refers to the capability of GBI to deliver multiple benefits to both people and wildlife. The themes, 'People', 'Place', and 'Nature' are identified in, at the time of writing, the most recently published Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy.

From January 2024, large scale developments will be legally obliged to achieve biodiversity net gain (BNG), and small scale sites by April 2024 Strategic Policy EE1 details the council's position on BNG. The diversity of natural habitats and the way these connect is particularly beneficial to wildlife. A biodiverse and thriving natural environment is conducive to people's good health and wellbeing. GBI should also be planned for in a way that maximises opportunities to sequester carbon from the atmosphere, such as by protecting existing and providing new 'carbon sinks'.

Studies have repeatedly shown that deprived communities are less likely to live close to a green space and therefore do not benefit from the recreational and wellbeing opportunities they provide. To reduce health inequalities, it is essential that all new development is located close to a green space of a decent size. Everyone should also have the opportunity to either grow their own food or access food grown locally. However, when selecting food growing sites, consideration should be given to whether there are any risks from land contamination.

Nature based solutions, such as SuDS, should be provided to minimise the risk of flooding during periods of heavy rainfall. Where possible, these should be multifunctional, allowing opportunities for recreation and habitats for wildlife.

The linear form of access networks provides an opportunity to establish functioning green and blue corridors for wildlife to move through. The integration of GBI with active travel routes may also encourage more people to use them. The safeguarded Herefordshire to Gloucestershire Canal provides an opportunity to establish a high quality long-distance active travel route for all.

The inclusive design of GBI should be carefully considered to ensure that all users and age groups can enjoy its benefits. For example, this might include providing benches in green spaces so that disabled and elderly people have opportunities to sit down as and when they need to.

As natural infrastructure, it is imperative that arrangements are made to effectively manage and maintain it over the long-term. Failure to do so may result in the loss of some or all of the benefits it delivers to people and wildlife.

Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal

Policy HSC4: Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal

1. The historic route of the Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal together with its infrastructure, buildings, towpath and features shall be safeguarded with a view to its long-term re-establishment as a navigable waterway. Where the original alignment cannot be re-established, a corridor allowing for deviations will be safeguarded.
2. New development proposals within or immediately adjoining the safeguarded corridor will be required to incorporate land for canal restoration.
3. Development that would prevent the restoration of any section of the canal will only be permitted where the benefits outweigh the safeguarding of the canal corridor and a rerouting of the canal can be accommodated. In this instance, the new route must be agreed with the third party prior to permission.
4. Proposals will be permitted that are designed to develop the canal's recreational and nature conservation potential, in particular, the use of the old line of the canal for walking, cycling and interpretation. Such proposals must demonstrate that there is no unacceptable risk to ecology, flood risk, water resources and water quality.

The disused Herefordshire and Gloucestershire canal corridor is the subject of a long-term restoration project with the aim of re-opening the canal link between Hereford and the River Severn at Gloucester, terminating in a canal basin in Hereford. Some sections have already been restored. The recreation, tourism, community and economic potential of the project are recognised and the canal corridor will continue to receive protection from development through Policy HSC4.

The canal route's potential as a high-quality long distance walking, wheeling and cycling route, and as a green corridor, is also recognised, and therefore the policy supports development that seeks to fulfil this. Where projects whose benefits are considered to outweigh the safeguarding of the canal corridor are proposed on the safeguarded route, a decision on the rerouting and deviation of the canal may be necessary to allow such schemes to come forward. These are schemes which will generally be in the public interest, are of benefit to the local community and contribute towards the location's long-term environmental, social, and economic sustainability.

A street scene in a town featuring a prominent timber-framed building, a clock tower, and people walking. The timber-framed building is white with dark wood beams and has two bay windows. To the left, there is a clock tower on a building. In the foreground, there are people walking, a bench, and flower beds. The sky is blue with some clouds.

Promoting a prosperous economy

Sustainable development is at the heart of planning for Herefordshire, the Local Plan aims to set out a clear vision for its future economy, supporting sustainable economic growth in Herefordshire. The county's current largest economic employment sectors are health, manufacturing, wholesale and the retail trade. In Herefordshire, 90% of enterprises employ nine people or less, which is in line with proportions nationally. With the rural nature of the county, agricultural employment in wider Herefordshire is of significant importance. Further information regarding these statistics can be found on the [Understanding Herefordshire](#) web pages under Economy and Place.

The county of Herefordshire's productivity level is two-thirds of the UK average and the lowest economic output of any county in England, with it delivering 19% below the national average. Although the county benefits from relatively low unemployment levels, it does however have a low wage economy and a deficit of higher-level skills, an overall shortage of labour as well as an aging population according to the [latest data from the ONS](#).

The [median weekly pay](#) within Herefordshire is consistently lower than in other areas of the country. However, in 2021, the earnings of women in Herefordshire were 4% lower than men's earnings, which was less than the average of the West Midlands Region, which was a 10% gap. The average full-time [median workplace earnings](#) within Herefordshire stands at £537 per week, compared to £585 within the wider West Midlands Region, and £613 within England as a whole. The average resident earnings in Herefordshire are higher at £565 per week compared to the figure for workplace earnings, indicating that Herefordshire residents may be commuting outside of the county to obtain higher-paid work.

In order to boost Herefordshire's economic growth, the county will accommodate growth through supporting small-sized employment sites and identifying larger scale employment sites in Hereford City, market towns and some of the rural areas. Making the most effective use of brownfield land (also known as 'previously developed land') where possible will be encouraged. Development that focuses on improving the area's economic prosperity, delivering new jobs, retaining key employers and maximising high value employment opportunities through the right employment sites will be key to future growth.

Economic development

Policy PE1: Accommodating economic growth

Alongside housing growth and smaller scale employment sites, 182 hectares (ha) of new strategic employment land will need to be identified within the plan period.

Employment land will be identified and distributed as follows:

Location	Land Requirement (ha)	Current Supply (ha)	Net Land Requirement (ha)	Allocations (ha)
Bromyard	4	0.27	3.73	4 (BROM3)
Hereford	80	23.26	56.74	22 (HERE3)
Kington	1	0.25	0.75	0
Ledbury	22	6.03	15.97	17 (LEDB3)
Leominster	20	5.24	14.76	10 (LEOM3)
Ross on Wye	45	8.04	36.96	33 (ROSS2)
Other	10	N/A	10.00	0
Total	182	43.09	138.91	86

Policy PE2: Principles for economic growth

The economy of the county will be strengthened and diversified through:

1. Providing a range of suitable sites for new employment that are attractive to the market in terms of accessibility, environmental quality and size;
2. Safeguarding existing strategic employment sites for business, industrial and distribution or storage uses, with restrictions categorised under employment uses (Use Classes E – Office, B2 and B8);
3. Encouraging additional employment allocations within Neighbourhood Development Plans;
4. Encouraging economic development in association with local educational institutions, and the cyber security sector; and
5. Support the redevelopment of brownfield sites by releasing poor quality, underused or poorly located employment sites for other purposes.

The council is committed to developing a sustainable, diverse and resilient economy, supported by the availability of sufficient and appropriate employment land. The council will support proposals that contribute to the delivery of economic growth in Herefordshire and where they deliver economic prosperity, job growth, tourism, and inward investment. A number of strategic employment allocations, as identified in Policy PE1 will help to support the development of highly paid, high skill jobs within green industries and attract working age people to live in the county. The strategic sites will be delivered through the plan period.

Farming, food and drink manufacturing contributes towards the national food security and self-sufficiency and will continue to be supported. Whilst this is a very important part of the rural economy, the transition to a net zero carbon economy will need to be reinforced to enable the sustainable growth and expansion of all businesses in the rural areas ensuring Herefordshire's resilience to the changing climate.

Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) and Health Impact Assessments (HIAs) should be required for all major employment projects and/or those where cumulative impacts could arise. Cumulative impact and effect arise as a result of several different factors and combined changes. These generally fall into three categories:

- Cumulative effects arising from the combination of the different environmental topics;
- Cumulative effects arising from a range of developments (projects), occurring at different locations or over a period of time. Separately, such individual projects may not create an unacceptable degree of adverse impact, but collectively the results may potentially be significant; and
- Cumulative effects caused by the proposed development (project) in conjunction with other developments that occurred in the past, present or are likely to occur in the foreseeable future.

For EIAs, this will largely apply to agricultural development, but also this equally applies to all industrial, civic and residential development. For HIAs, the focus and context will be on addressing public health improvement as well as public health protection

Strategic employment sites

The [Employment Land Study](#) (2022) has set out a range of objectively assessed needs for employment land within the plan period using different forecast models, and forms part of the evidence base of the Local Plan. There are also currently over 40 hectares of employment land with permission within the county.

There are a number of existing strategic employment sites within Hereford and the market towns. These are listed below:

Hereford:

- Hereford Enterprise Zone (>120 ha)
- Westfield Trading Estate (25 ha)
- Three Elms Trading Estate (3 ha)
- Holmer Road (16 ha)

Within the market towns:

- Leominster Enterprise Park, Leominster (15ha, with an additional 5-10ha expansion)
- Southern Avenue, Leominster (33ha)
- Land between Little Marcle Road and Ross Road, Ledbury (17ha)
- Model Farm, Ross-on-Wye (10ha)

The following are additional strategic sites, as referenced in Policy PE1, proposed for allocation for employment. Further details are outlined within each of the relevant Place Shaping sections. At this stage, all of the suggested sites have not yet been subject to detailed assessments beyond the principle of their availability.

- **Hereford - Rotherwas Extension.** This is located adjacent to the existing Enterprise Zone in Rotherwas and will offer further provision of employment land at this popular location.
- **Hereford - Land east of Cattle Market.** This is located adjacent to the existing Cattle Market at Three Elms and will contribute towards meeting the employment land requirement for Hereford.
- **Bromyard - Land West of Linton Trading Estate.** This is located adjacent to the existing Linton Trading Estate and has previously been identified as potential employment land within the [Bromyard Market Town Investment Plan](#) (2021).
- **Ledbury - Land South of Little Marcle Road.** This site has mainly come forward from the [Ledbury Neighbourhood Development Plan](#) (2023). The site is proposed for employment within Use Classes B2, B8 and E (g). This site is 2ha larger (17ha) than the Employment Land Study indicated was required for Ledbury. The additional provision would potentially reduce the level of commuting outside of Ledbury. Planning permission has already been granted for 1ha of employment development on this site and this is anticipated to form part of the allocated site.

- **Leominster - Land South of Owen Way, Leominster Enterprise Park.** The extension of the Leominster Enterprise Park will contribute toward meeting the employment land requirement for Leominster within the plan period and is also identified within the [Leominster Town Economic Investment Plan](#) (2021).
- **Ross on Wye - Land adjacent to the east of Ross.** This will deliver a comprehensively planned mixed-use sustainable urban extension. The overall quantum of development within Ross will allocate at least 35 hectares of employment land within the plan period.
- The employment land need within **Kington** of 1ha is considered too small to be regarded as strategic. However employment land located on smaller sites can be identified within the Neighbourhood Development Plan.

Use classes

The Government revised the Use Class Order classifications in September 2020. Uses formerly classed as B1 (offices, research and development industry, light industry) now fall under “Class E” for the purposes of permitted development in change of use planning applications. Changes to the Use Class Order in September 2020 now mean that some employment uses such as offices and light industrial units can now be changed to shops, leisure restaurants and cafes without the need for planning permission. This could result in some existing employment uses being vulnerable and a balance is required to protect strategic employment sites whilst promoting flexibility.

Retail development and town centres

In recent years town centres have undergone significant structural changes. The Covid-19 pandemic has seen a decline in physical retail purchasing and subsequently the closure of retail units, in part, due to the accelerated trend and convenience of online shopping. Currently, Hereford, Kington and Leominster town centres have vacancy rates above the UK national average of 13.8%, with Bromyard, Ledbury, and Ross on Wye sitting below the national average with their vacancy rates.

There has also been a decline in hospitality venues and the night-time economy post Covid-19, and due to rising cost of living associated with rising energy prices and inflation. Through policy, there is a need to ensure that retail is supported and strengthened with hospitality and the night time economy adding to the enhancement, vitality and viability of town centres. Policy PE4 outlines guidance related to tourism.

In addition to the guidance relating to town centre boundaries within the policy, the NPPF requires Local Planning Authorities to set thresholds to determine the requirement for an impact assessment for applications for retail, leisure and office development outside of town centres.

Policy PE3: Enhancing town centre vitality

Town centres will be the focus for a range of uses that contribute to their vitality and viability. This includes primarily retail, commercial, hospitality and support to strengthen the night-time economy. Within town centres, tourism will be addressed through Policy PE4.

Proposals for such uses will be supported where:

1. The vitality and viability of the retail centres within the county will be enhanced through widening the range of uses whilst maintaining a strong retail character and function; and
2. They strengthen and support hospitality and the night-time economy ensuring public safety measures are incorporated, in line with licencing and associated guidance.

Residential or office conversion above ground floor retail or hospitality related units will be supported where:

3. The primary function of the building is retained and/or enhanced in line with the criteria listed above; and
4. The historic fabric of the building and its significance is considered and proposals are of an appropriate design and scale in line with design coding, in order to maintain the character of the historic core and in line with town centre boundaries as identified within the specific Place Shaping policy for the market town in question.

Town centre boundaries will be identified within Place Shaping policies or in Neighbourhood Development Plans where evidenced.

Policy PE3 has been informed by the findings of the [Town Centre and Retail Assessment](#) (2022), which outlines the retail, office and leisure needs of Hereford and the five market towns. The study has identified a need for flexibility in centres, which needs to be adaptable to a number of uses to address a wide range of future needs. A quantitative requirement for additional convenience (goods that are bought frequently) floor space authority wide, with a minimum floor space requirement of 2,000 square metres in 2022 (3,300 maximum), to 4,900 minimum sq. metres (8,200 maximum) by 2041 has been identified. In terms of comparison trading (products which are of a higher value and purchased more infrequently), the assessment identifies a need for between 11,600 to 18,200 square metres for the county by 2041. This does not result in a direct need for additional retail units to be built out, as the current vacant floor space is in excess of the future need identified. The priority should therefore be to reoccupy existing vacant floor space in Hereford city and the town centres.

Proposals for development outside the town centres will only be permitted if it can be demonstrated that the requirements of the sequential test have been met and that the proposal would not have a significant adverse impact on the vitality and viability of the centres. An application will be refused if it fails the sequential test or an impact assessment. The NPPF sets out the sequential approach to development, and the town centre impact tests, and must be referred to when assessing the above factors.

Retail thresholds

It is considered appropriate to apply a range of thresholds in accordance with the type of centre the proposed development is near. The thresholds should not only apply to new floor space but also to changes of use and variations of conditions to remove or amend restrictions on how units operate or trade in practice. The impact test should be undertaken in a proportionate and locally appropriate way, and consistent with the scale of development proposed. These thresholds are lower than the national impact threshold of 2,500 sq. metres. By identifying a lower threshold this will retain appropriate control of the potential development to impact on the future health of Hereford city and the market town centres.

Additional retail provision should follow a sequential approach. In order to safeguard town centres, thresholds at which impact assessments for retail and leisure have been set for Hereford and the market towns are as follows:

- Hereford 500 sq. metres
- Ledbury 300 sq. metres
- Leominster 300 sq. metres
- Ross-on-Wye 300 sq. metres
- Bromyard 200 sq. metres
- Kington 200 sq. metres

Impact assessments for retail, leisure and commercial proposals outside of the town centres may be required to assess their impact on the vitality and viability of the town centre, depending on the scale and location of the proposal, as specified within Place Shaping policies.

Due to the recent changes within the retail sector, the threshold for impact assessment applications has been revised in order to maintain the viability and vitality of the town centres. The level of detail will typically be agreed upon during the pre-application process. The distance of 800 metres is comparable with the potential walk-in catchments of similar centres as being the maximum acceptable walking distance to a centre. Consideration will be needed to apply restrictive conditions to edge and out of centre Class E development when such development has been considered with reference to the sequential and/or impact tests.

Evidence will be required to demonstrate that all available town centre opportunities have been thoroughly assessed, and transparent reasons provided as to why the town centre sites are not suitable and available, before land and/or buildings in the edge of the centre and then out of centre locations are considered.

Town centres

The town centre boundaries for Hereford and the market towns are defined in the relevant Place Shaping sections of this document. A review of these boundaries may be undertaken as part of Neighbourhood Development Plans where appropriate but should take into account recommendations within the [Town Centre And Retail Assessment](#) (2022).

The NPPF requires Local Planning Authorities to define the extent of town centres and primary shopping areas, however there is now no specific requirement to identify primary and secondary frontages. Previously this referred to primary frontages, which included a high proportion of retail uses, and secondary frontages, which were made up of uses with greater diversity, such as restaurants and cinemas. The NPPF defines a town centre as an area defined on the Local Authority's policies map, including the primary shopping area and areas predominantly occupied by main town centre uses within or adjacent to the primary shopping area. The centres are generally compact and the diversity of uses present adds to their character and attraction. In all of the market towns there is no requirement to differentiate between a primary shopping area (PSA) and a wider town centre boundary, therefore to encourage a more positive and flexible approach in town centres due to the rapid changes within the retail and leisure industries, and the change of use classifications, it is now appropriate for the removal of defined frontages within Herefordshire.

Hospitality and the night-time economy

Hospitality and the night-time economy play a crucial role in the vibrancy and economic vitality of Herefordshire. These sectors contribute significantly to the county's economic growth by fostering business opportunities, creating jobs and providing social and recreational experiences for residents and visitors. Therefore, it is important that these sectors continue to grow and thrive. The safety of the public, particularly at night is crucial and priority should be given to incorporate appropriate security measures such as outdoor lighting and CCTV where required.

Sustainable tourism

Tourism is a key part of Herefordshire's rural economy and many visitors are drawn to the rich distinctive heritage and unspoilt landscape, which span two National Landscapes, the Wye Valley and the Malvern Hills, unspoilt countryside and attractive settlements.

The [Herefordshire Scarborough Tourism Economic Activity Monitor \(STEAM\) Report 2021](#) is a tourism economic impact model that indicates the volume of visitors attracted in Herefordshire, how much they spend, their wider economic impact and the number of local jobs this supports. The report shows that tourism is an important contribution to the county's economy. Herefordshire had over 3.9 million visitors in 2021. Although there has been a decline in visitors compared to 2019, there has been a significant increase and indication of progress in recovery from the impact of the pandemic in 2020. In 2021 the tourism industry generated over £470 million into the local economy, 35% of that spend was generated through food and drink sectors and over 6,000 full-time equivalent jobs have been supported by tourism spend.

The [Market Towns Investment Plans](#) (MTIPs) have outlined the need and the subsequent lack of provision for the tourist economy within Herefordshire's Market Towns. The investment plans identify a weak visitor economy in all five of the Market towns. Multiple needs have been identified to improve the tourist provision in the Market towns, for example, visitor accommodation provisions and projects that include walking route improvements.

[Hereford City BID](#) and [Herefordshire County BID](#) aim to improve the tourism offer in Hereford City and Herefordshire by working with local businesses to improve the local visitor economy and the business environment. Herefordshire County BID is currently applying to be part of the Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) which is developed and administered by Visit England. The programme is creating a national portfolio of strategic and high-performing LVEPs working in collaboration locally, regionally and nationally on shared priorities and targets to support and grow the visitor economy.

One of the outcomes of Herefordshire's [Big Economic Plan](#) is to provide a 'dynamic and year-round tourism offer' by promoting a place marketing strategy and building on our strong visitor economy offer through the work of Herefordshire BID and the MTIPs.

Given the importance of tourism for Herefordshire's economy, it is essential that visitor facilities, particularly visitor accommodation, are provided, safeguarded and enhanced.

The council have committed to achieving carbon neutrality for the county by 2030, therefore, encouraging the local tourism industry to embrace sustainability practices can ensure there is a balance between the economic and social benefits of visitors to the county and the impacts of existing recreational pressures on the natural and historic environment.

Sustainable tourism is defined as tourism that 'maintains economic viability, generates local benefits and supports local businesses and communities whilst ensuring the long-term protection and preservation of the landscape character and the natural and historic environment.

Policy PE4: Sustainable tourism

Development proposals, will be supported where they deliver a high-quality, sustainable tourism experience that is accessible for the diverse range of visitors to Herefordshire, and ensure proposals benefit local communities and businesses whilst protecting the unique natural and historic environment, provided that they comply with the following criteria below.

Sustainable tourism proposals

Sustainable tourism proposals will be supported where:

1. There is no detrimental impact on the county's varied natural, landscape and heritage assets or on the overall character and quality of the environment. Particular regard will be had to conserving and enhancing the landscape and scenic beauty in the National Landscapes and Conservation Areas; and
2. They would be of appropriate scale to their location and to their accessibility by a range of transport modes; and
3. They are within or well related to the settlement form of a Market Town or settlements identified in the Rural Settlement Hierarchy; or
4. They can demonstrate that the proposal will contribute to the diversification of an existing agricultural or land-based rural business; or
5. They are located within or adjacent to an existing visitor attraction or accommodation site.

Holiday accommodation

Caravan and camping

Proposals for new or extensions to existing caravan and camping sites (including chalets, yurts, tepees, log cabins, huts, tree houses, pods and any other similar structures) and any associated buildings and facilities will only be supported for short-term holiday letting, and where:

6. They improve the quality and diversity of existing visitor/tourist facilities, attractions, accommodation and infrastructure;
7. It is consistent with the landscape character and does not cause any unacceptable impacts; and
8. The site has the necessary infrastructure capacity, it is well-related to the existing road network and where possible the site can be readily and safely accessible by a range of transport modes (see Policy CC1)

Proposals for year round occupancy on caravan and camping sites will not be permitted.

Hotels and guest houses

Proposals for hotels and guesthouses to support the need for new visitor accommodation in Herefordshire will be encouraged and supported where:

9. They are within or well related to the settlement form of Hereford or the market towns or settlements identified in the Rural Settlement Hierarchy; or
10. They are located within or adjacent to an existing visitor attraction or accommodation site.

Change of use of hotels to other uses will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated there is no demand for it and this is evident through a comprehensive assessment and active marketing of at least 12 months.

The majority of visitors to Herefordshire stay for a day rather than overnight. Retaining and enhancing existing, and encouraging new accommodations and attractions throughout the county can help to diversify the tourist provision, extend the tourist season and increase the number of visitors staying overnight. Tourist developments that support day trips and short-term stays should ensure that existing recreational pressures are not exacerbated. Developments that support overnight stays are encouraged as they are vital not only for local businesses, workers and residents but also to alleviate recreational pressures associated with increased visitor numbers to existing sites

There are various types of visitor accommodation across Herefordshire. In particular, there is a need for the provision of new hotels, therefore, proposals for new hotels in Hereford and the market towns will be encouraged. Applicants will be encouraged to provide a 'Hotel Needs Assessment Report' to support their proposals. This assessment will inform whether the right standard of hotel is proposed with respect to market demand and need, demonstrating its economic benefit to the area. To support the provision of hotels and guesthouses, change of use of these types will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated there is no demand for it and this is evident through a comprehensive assessment and active marketing of at least 12 months.

In recent years, glamping accommodation has become increasingly popular. Glamping includes short-term letting structures such as chalets, yurts, tepees, log cabins, huts, tree houses, pods and any other similar structures as well as static, touring and tented accommodations. These types of accommodation fall under the term 'caravan and camping' in the policy. This change in demand for different types of visitor accommodation creates

continual pressure on traditional accommodation types. To ensure the economic benefit of visitor accommodation is retained and the natural and historic environment is protected, these types and any other types of accommodation mentioned in the policy should be temporary in nature and not permanent structures and must comply with the definition of what a caravan is under the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960.

It is also important that these types of accommodation are not used as permanent residential accommodation, therefore, the removal of occupancy conditions on holiday accommodation that has been built or converted for that purpose will not be permitted and restrictions will be placed on the length of occupancy periods permitted. (see Policy EE1).

Rural economy

Policy PE5: Supporting a strong rural economy

The vitality and viability of the rural economy will be supported through;

1. The growth of the agricultural sector, by supporting development that aids the operations and functional need of agricultural businesses. Development should be proportionate in scale to the associated agricultural enterprise to which it relates and where possible located in close proximity to existing buildings within the rural landscape. Reference should be made to Policy EE1: Protecting and enhancing the quality of the natural environment;
2. Managing proposals for new and expanding intensive livestock units and buildings, and polytunnels, which are expected to take into consideration the cumulative effects of other units within the locality;
3. Enabling alternative uses of redundant agricultural buildings, where they do not cause an increase in demand for alternative units;
4. Supporting the diversification of agricultural businesses into non-agricultural activities, that enhance the viability of the business. Such developments should not cause adverse impacts on the community, or local environment;
5. Safeguarding existing rural businesses outside of the agricultural sector, and supporting the expansion and establishment of such sites at an appropriate scale; and
6. All proposals should where applicable:
 - Implement best practice for; siting, design, carbon neutrality, nutrient neutrality, and methods of operation proposed;
 - Actively seek to mitigate any impacts to public health, local amenity, community, and the environment;
 - Ensure that the development is of a scale which would be commensurate with its location and setting within the landscape;
 - Not generate traffic movements that cannot be safely accommodated within the local road network;
 - Should mitigate against any harm upon the immediate setting of its rural location and aim to deliver an enhancement where possible; and
 - Avoid the loss of best quality and most versatile agricultural land where alternative land is available.

Being predominantly rural, Herefordshire's rural-based economic activity is vital to the overall prosperity of the county. Development of an economic nature in rural settlements and the countryside has the potential to meet local needs and enable prosperous, sustainable communities. This includes the re-use and adaptation of existing rural-based businesses and employment land as well as the development of new ones. Businesses in rural areas often directly serve local communities and their development, diversification and expansion can help to support the local economy.

The majority of rural businesses are made up of those within the agricultural sector, accounting for around 20% of businesses in the county, providing around 5,000 positions. The agricultural industry contributes roughly 8% to the county's Gross Value Added, which is above the average in England of 1%. ([Understanding Herefordshire](#) 2021)

There are also other types of facilities such as those for military, tourism, community use and recreation that may benefit from a countryside location and these should be encouraged where they would not conflict with other aims in the interest of supporting the rural economy. Development in some rural areas is restricted by certain environmental designations and accessibility constraints. Nevertheless, certain types of economic development that may, subject to careful assessment against local and national planning policies, be suitably achieved without damaging rural Herefordshire's unique environmental qualities and character. The conversion of existing buildings and well-designed, beautiful buildings will be supported for sustainable growth and expansion of rural businesses.

Any proposals that produce large quantities of waste must demonstrate intended arrangements for the disposal of waste, in accordance with Policy W3 (Agricultural waste management including for livestock units) of the Herefordshire Council Minerals and Waste Local Plan (2024).

The changing use of agricultural buildings has the potential to release pollutants such as nitrates, phosphates, and antibiotic resistant bacteria. Therefore all proposals that risk the release of pollutants into the environment are required to take measures to reduce the risk of impact to the environment.

For a building to be considered redundant, it is important that the original use of the building for that purpose is no longer active.

Rural diversification

Rural diversification schemes help to strengthen a sustainable economy for rural businesses including that of the agricultural sector. There are many ways in which the rural economy can benefit from diversification schemes, such as; creating new employment opportunities, strengthening the viability of a rural business, and aiding neighbouring businesses.

Non-agricultural diversification can include operations such as visitor accommodation in accordance with Policy PE4, live-work units, business hubs, and other rural businesses.

Such diversification proposals should aim to enhance the rural economy, the local community, and the local environment.

Intensive livestock units

Intensive livestock units are those for the permanent indoor housing of pigs, poultry or cattle and also those for housing such livestock indoors for only part of the time if a slurry system is to be adopted.

Intensive livestock unit proposals will be considered both in terms of their individual impact and having regard to the cumulative effect of other existing and proposed units within the locality, which has the potential to exacerbate existing adverse effects. Such units can give rise to a wide variety of concerns and impacts, including; noise, odour, public health issues, air pollution, traffic generation, insects, impact on the landscape and, pollution of biodiversity features, watercourses and groundwater. Through careful design, siting and landscaping, drainage, and good management, such impacts can be minimised.

Detailed assessments will be required to form part of the application. Careful assessment is required to outline the harmful effects to the River Wye SAC (Special Area of Conservation), mitigation must be used to avoid harmful effects. Additional documents should include a Traffic Management Plan, assessment of noise, smell, and lighting, intended arrangements for the disposal of waste, and other relevant documents outlined through the Local Plan 2021-2041.

New proposals for Intensive Livestock Units within 400 metres of a protected building, will be carefully assessed for the potential risk of nuisance. Subsequently, it is important to carefully assess new protected buildings within 400 metres of established intensive livestock units. The term 'protected buildings' includes residential and other permanent buildings such as schools, hospitals and offices that are normally occupied by people.

Cumulative effect

The term cumulative effect looks at the effects of other existing and proposed units within a locality can have upon a set issue. The presence of multiple units has the potential to exacerbate impacts. With intensive livestock units and polytunnel developments, it is most often the large scale, cumulative effect, phosphates, and visibility of such schemes that causes harm to the environment and landscape character. The effect on the environment and landscape can be significant and therefore the cumulative effect of intensive livestock units and polytunnel developments will be fully considered.

Agricultural businesses will be encouraged to use the Herefordshire Council's [Polytunnels Planning Guide](#) (2018), for further information on polytunnels and issues related to cumulative effects of such developments, see paragraphs 4.20-4.21.

Environmental effects

There are issues with high levels of phosphates and ammonia discharge across Herefordshire's rural landscape, which can have harmful effects on the local environment and to human health.

Agriculture is the dominant source of ammonia emissions, arising from the storage and spreading of manures, slurries and fertilisers. Other common sources include free range chicken ranging areas and intensive livestock units for example.

It is recognised that diffuse pollution from some agricultural operations can significantly increase phosphorus levels, added to by the impacts of new development. This is of particular importance with the River Wye Catchment SAC, and other SACs.

Any development should take into account, the effect of the development on the environment and the impacts of the cumulative effects of other developments, units and other buildings/uses in the catchment. All proposals must take into account Policies EE1 and CC1.