

Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy 2011 - 2031



Adopted October 2015

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Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy 2011-2031

Please note: The Appendices to the Herefordshire Local Plan - Core Strategy are contained within a separate document.

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(including policies to be replaced by the Local Plan – Core Strategy)

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The Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy was adopted at the Herefordshire Council meeting on 16 October 2015. It represents the vision for the County to 2031 and provides the context for future work on the preparation of the Hereford Area Plan, the Minerals and Waste Local Plan and the Travellers' Sites Development Plan Document.

Cllr Philip Price
Cabinet Member Infrastructure

Herefordshire Council
October 2015



- 3.1 The Core Strategy sets out a spatial strategy for Herefordshire for the period up to 2031. This is quite different to the land use planning approach of the previous development plan (Unitary Development Plan 2007). It includes:
- a definition of what sustainable development means for Herefordshire;
 - a vision for Herefordshire towards the end of the plan period;
 - a set of objectives to deliver the vision;
 - a spatial strategy that addresses the different needs and opportunities of different parts of Herefordshire; and
 - details of how the Core Strategy proposals will be monitored.
- 3.2 The council's strategy is based on targeting future development in places where specific needs and opportunities have been identified, thereby addressing key issues raised in the Herefordshire Context section. This approach seeks to accommodate economic and population growth with new housing and supporting infrastructure, whilst protecting and enhancing the attractive and distinctive character of the different areas of the county, so that sustainable development is achieved.

Sustainable development

- 3.3 Sustainable development is about meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The Government has set three aims for sustainable development:
- contributing to building a strong, competitive and responsive economy;
 - supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities; and
 - continuing to protect and enhance our natural, historic and built environment.
- 3.4 At the heart of the Government's policy in the National Planning Policy Framework March, 2012 is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. The council intends to achieve this presumption in accordance with the following policy:

Policy SS1 – Presumption in favour of sustainable development

When considering development proposals Herefordshire Council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained within national policy. It will always work proactively to find solutions which mean that proposals can be approved wherever possible and to secure development that improves the social, economic and environmental conditions in Herefordshire.

Planning applications that accord with the policies in this Core Strategy (and, where relevant with policies in other Development Plan Documents and Neighbourhood Development Plans) will be approved, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Where there are no policies relevant to the application or relevant policies are out of date at the time of making the decision then the council will grant permission unless material considerations indicate otherwise - taking into account whether:

- any adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in national policy taken as a whole; or
- specific elements of national policy indicate that development should be restricted.

- 3.84 The scale and retail offer of the five market towns varies according to their population size and location, but in broad terms they perform similar functions and play an important role in serving their own populations and rural catchments. The strategy for each market town is outlined in the place shaping section.
- 3.85 Retail development will be concentrated in the town centre but will be complemented by other uses such as restaurants, cafes, appropriate leisure uses and businesses. Primary shopping areas, which will include both primary and secondary frontages, will be identified through Neighbourhood Development Plans or other Development Plan Documents.
- 3.86 Neighbourhood centres also play an important role in providing day to day convenience needs for nearby residential areas and generally provide small food stores, other services and community facilities. These centres also have an important role to play both as community hubs and also in helping to reduce harmful emissions by being accessible by foot and bicycle. Specific place-based policies identify where new neighbourhood centres are required to serve strategic developments.
- 3.87 In the rural areas, village shops and other facilities meet both daily shopping 'top up' needs and help to facilitate the independence of those who are not able to travel farther afield. They are important to the vitality of rural communities, acting as a focus and informal meeting place, and provide a valuable service, particularly to those without their own transport. The policies in the place shaping section and the general retail policies will deliver this part of the strategy.

Key outcomes of the strategy for economic prosperity

- 3.88 These comprise: more local and better paid employment opportunities, so limiting out commuting; business diversification and growth; a more vibrant and robust Hereford City and more economically self-contained market towns and rural areas; and a strengthened role and contribution to the economy for tourism. These deliver Core Strategy objectives 6, 7, 8, 8a and 9.

Improving environmental quality

- 3.89 The strategy for improving environmental quality will support the creation of sustainable communities through protecting existing built, heritage and natural environment assets, the better use of resources and addressing the causes and effects of climate change.
- 3.90 A high quality environment has a key role to play in delivering the spatial strategy. Herefordshire has an important cultural heritage, two Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and a river of international ecological importance. The high quality environment is important to the quality of life of Herefordshire residents and has a fundamental role in attracting visitors and investment. Green infrastructure, such as open space, biodiversity, geodiversity and other semi-natural features will be protected and enhanced, including networks of green wildlife corridors and spaces. Green infrastructure has an important role in our adaption to climate change and contributing to carbon neutral development.
- 3.91 The maintenance of the county's environmental quality and its improvement, where necessary, will be through the preservation, management and enhancement of its environmental assets and safeguarding the natural and cultural environment in an integrated way that supports the health and wellbeing of its inhabitants. Although the approach will be based upon addressing issues at a landscape scale, there will be instances where detailed features and assets should be conserved when they contribute to local distinctiveness.

- 3.92 The range of environmental factors is considerable and high quality assets extend throughout the county. Balancing the provision of necessary development requirements within such circumstances often requires a rigorous approach to determining the most appropriate option in terms of minimising adverse environmental effects. As a consequence, developers need to work with the council and local communities to assess environmental factors in an integrated manner, with appropriate information informing decisions from the outset and with mitigation and compensatory measures being advanced where necessary. In addition, where opportunities exist to improve environmental quality, these should be pursued.
- 3.93 In undertaking assessments, the values attached to local distinctiveness by communities can include social and economic perceptions as well as environmental characteristics. Where produced, local guidance should inform the design process. A series of documents exist that provide planning guidance and advice on biodiversity, archaeology and landscape character. Management plans have been prepared for both Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty within the county and conservation objectives set for sites of international and national biodiversity interest.
- 3.94 The scale of development within the Core Strategy cannot be met solely through re-using previously developed land and buildings. Accordingly, greenfield sites will be developed during the plan period but the spatial strategy will continue to direct development to the most sustainable locations. Development proposals will be expected to avoid detrimental impact to designations and locally distinctive assets. Where evidence identifies potential impact, development proposals will be required to include mitigation measures appropriate in size, scale and effectiveness. Where the nature of individual assets is site specific, off-site compensation will only be considered in exceptional cases.

Policy SS6 - Environmental quality and local distinctiveness

Development proposals should conserve and enhance those environmental assets that contribute towards the county's distinctiveness, in particular its settlement pattern, landscape, biodiversity and heritage assets and especially those with specific environmental designations. In addition, proposals should maintain and improve the effectiveness of those ecosystems essential to the health and wellbeing of the county's residents and its economy. Development proposals should be shaped through an integrated approach to planning the following environmental components from the outset, and based upon sufficient information to determine the effect upon each where they are relevant:

- landscape, townscape and local distinctiveness, especially in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty;
- biodiversity and geodiversity especially Special Areas of Conservation and Sites of Special Scientific Interest;
- historic environment and heritage assets, especially Scheduled Monuments and Listed Buildings;
- the network of green infrastructure;
- local amenity, including light pollution, air quality and tranquillity;
- agricultural and food productivity;
- physical resources, including minerals, soils, management of waste, the water environment, renewable energy and energy conservation.

The management plans and conservation objectives of the county's international and nationally important features and areas will be material to the determination of future development proposals. Furthermore assessments of local features, areas and sites, defining local distinctiveness in other development plan documents, Neighbourhood Development Plans and Supplementary Planning Documents should inform decisions upon proposals.

Creating sustainable communities

- 3.95 The strategic growth areas avoid locations at high risk of flooding wherever possible, to protect against loss of life and recurring damage to property. Flood alleviation measures will be used where flood avoidance is not possible. New development will provide for a range of type and size of sustainably constructed and well-designed buildings to reduce carbon dioxide emissions, contribute to climate change adaptation, enhance energy efficiency and respect local distinctiveness.
- 3.96 The protection of residential and local amenity is essential to ensuring local communities are and remain sustainable. Amenity considerations include such issues as noise, air quality and lighting amongst others. Within the wider context, the issues of tranquillity and intrinsically dark landscapes may also be material considerations.
- 3.97 Whilst this strategy will inevitably result in the loss of areas of open land, the approach has generally been to avoid land of high sensitivity in landscape terms or biodiversity interest or land of high agricultural value (although given the scale of development around Hereford this has not always been possible – an issue that is reflected in the Sustainability Appraisal).
- 3.98 New parks and green spaces in Hereford and the market towns will be delivered to provide facilities for recreation and sport, as well as contributing to the local green infrastructure network, promoting biodiversity and to enhance community health and well-being. Other, necessary new or enhanced community facilities including sustainable transport choices will be delivered in association with new development to improve access to services and reduce the need to travel long distances by private car. Relevant policies in the place shaping section and the general local distinctiveness policies will deliver this part of the strategy.

Protecting the environment

- 3.99 The location of new development proposed should deliver sites that, protect and/or enhance Herefordshire's natural, built, heritage and cultural assets in the county's cathedral city, historic market towns, smaller settlements and distinctive countryside. In addition Natural England has prepared conservation objectives for each Special Area of Conservation within the county; it is also consulted upon proposals that might affect Special Areas of Conservation and Sites of Special Scientific Interest, and will be aware of management principles that may be relevant to the maintenance and achievement of their favourable conservation status. Management Plans have been prepared for both the Wye Valley and Malvern Hills Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. These documents will be relevant to the assessment of effects of development upon these important assets. The most rigorous approaches to assessing the effect of development should be taken for those areas with international and national designations, including proposals in areas outside but having an effect upon them, in accordance with the protection afforded to such areas in the National Planning Policy Framework. Sites and features of local importance should also receive an appropriate level of protection when determining the effects of proposals upon the environment and local distinctiveness. Subsequent policies set out the approach that should be applied in relation to these and a number of supplementary planning documents are also referred in their supporting statement which will also be relevant. Appendix 8 provides lists of those which have been identified at the time of drafting this Core Strategy.
- 3.100 Proposals for new/improved infrastructure to protect water quality, especially of the Rivers Wye and part of the Lugg which are European protected Special Areas of Conservation, will need to ensure the special features of these sites are maintained, despite the requirement for increased sewage treatment capacity from new development.

Better use of resources

- 3.101 The percentage of previously developed land to be developed over the longer term of the plan period will be much lower than experienced in recent years (which exceeded the national target of 60%) at around 40%. This reflects the scale of strategic land release proposed during this plan period.
- 3.102 The introduction of renewable energy generation into larger development schemes will be promoted, where viable, to reduce the use of carbon producing fuels. Water management schemes and the use of sustainable drainage measures in new developments will strive towards water neutrality despite increased demands for water usage from new development.
- 3.103 Where necessary to achieve the objectives of this plan, areas of lower quality agricultural land will be utilised in preference to the best and most versatile agricultural land, in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (Para 112), where possible. Changes in agricultural practices and food supply need to be recognised in terms of supporting resilience. In addition, the utility of providing gardens and allotments to support green infrastructure, food productivity and a low carbon economy will also contribute to the vision for the county.
- 3.104 New waste facilities are to be integrated into sites suitable for industrial use close to the origin of such waste. Proposals to minimise waste, including re-use, recycling and treatment, will need to have been considered in the design of new large scale developments. The strategy of promoting better use of resources is dealt with in policies of the Place Shaping and general environmental policies sections. In addition, the Minerals and Waste Local Plan will provide guidance relating to the safeguarding of mineral resources.

Addressing climate change

- 3.105 Tackling climate change in Herefordshire will be a difficult challenge. The predominantly rural character of the area often makes access to a range of services extremely difficult and increases reliance on the private motor car. This in turn can have a major impact on CO₂ emissions, the main greenhouse gas that contributes to climate change. These emissions can also have an impact on air quality, particularly in the urban area of Hereford city centre. As well as providing more sustainable transport choices, there is a necessity to facilitate the increased use of renewable and low carbon energy sources and encourage in appropriate cases measures such as the provision of electric car charging points. Together these can go some way towards reducing Herefordshire's dependency on fossil fuels. Enabling the level of development in the strategy has to be balanced against the challenge of protecting the high quality of the built and natural environment, including our best agricultural land where at all possible. Ensuring that new development is resilient to the effects of climate change is also important, for example, including measures to safeguard water quality, reduce water consumption and deal with increased flood risk and surface water flooding. The *Climate Change Background Paper* explains the challenges facing the county, including possible effects on agriculture, flood risk, transport and so on.
- 3.106 As climate change is acknowledged as a very broad and complicated issue, government legislation will continually be reviewed in order to ensure that Core Strategy policies are demonstrating appropriate measures to reduce our impacts to climate change.

Policy SS7- Addressing climate change

Development proposals will be required to include measures which will mitigate their impact on climate change.

At a strategic level, this will include:

- focussing development to the most sustainable locations;
- delivering development that seeks to reduce the need to travel by private car and which encourages sustainable travel options including walking, cycling and public transport;
- designing developments to reduce carbon emissions and use resources more efficiently;
- promoting the use of decentralised and renewable or low carbon energy where appropriate;
- supporting affordable, local food production, processing and farming to reduce the county's contribution to food miles*;
- protecting the best agricultural land where possible;

Key considerations in terms of responses to climate change include:

- taking into account the known physical and environmental constraints when identifying locations for development;
- ensuring design approaches are resilient to climate change impacts, including the use of passive solar design for heating and cooling and tree planting for shading;
- minimising the risk of flooding and making use of sustainable drainage methods;
- reducing heat island effects (for example through the provision of open space and water, planting and green roofs);
- reduction, re-use and recycling of waste with particular emphasis on waste minimisation on development sites; and
- developments must demonstrate water efficiency measures to reduce demand on water resources.

Adaptation through design approaches will be considered in more locally specific detail in a Design Code Supplementary Planning Document.

*From field to table – a sustainable food and drink strategy for Herefordshire 2011

Key outcomes of the strategy for environmental quality

- 3.107 These comprise: recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside; respecting local distinctiveness; funding new green infrastructure; and addressing the causes and impacts of climate change. These link to Core Strategy objectives 10, 11 and 12.

Delivering and monitoring the spatial strategy

- 3.108 To implement the spatial strategy, a delivery strategy is set out in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) which accompanies the Core Strategy. This is supported by the Implementation, Monitoring and Delivery Plan in Appendix 3.
- 3.109 Where changes are made to national planning policy the annual monitoring process will be used to identify if the policies set out in the spatial strategy require review. The following monitoring indicators will be used by the council to assess the effectiveness of the strategic policies:-

Traffic management

- 5.1.52 In order to deliver the strategic objectives outlined in Policy SS4 in the Spatial Strategy, development proposals will be expected to demonstrate how they have incorporated the traffic management and safety criteria set out in Policy MT1.
- 5.1.53 Herefordshire Council's *Local Transport Plan 2013-2015* (LTP) defines the following road hierarchy across the county:
- the strategic highway network - comprising the M50, A49, A465, and A40. The strategic highway links Hereford with the market towns and provides the principal routes into and throughout the county;
 - main distributor roads which comprise mainly A class routes that supplement the strategic network;
 - secondary distributor roads which comprise mainly B and C class roads that link movements to and from the main distributor network; and
 - local distributor roads that facilitate movement between rural settlements and parishes.

Policy MT1 – Traffic management, highway safety and promoting active travel

Development proposals should incorporate the following principle requirements covering movement and transportation:

1. demonstrate that the strategic and local highway network can absorb the traffic impacts of the development without adversely affecting the safe and efficient flow of traffic on the network or that traffic impacts can be managed to acceptable levels to reduce and mitigate any adverse impacts from the development;
2. promote and, where possible, incorporate integrated transport connections and supporting infrastructure (depending on the nature and location of the site), including access to services by means other than private motorised transport;
3. encourage active travel behaviour to reduce numbers of short distance car journeys through the use of travel plans and other promotional and awareness raising activities;
4. ensure that developments are designed and laid out to achieve safe entrance and exit, have appropriate operational and manoeuvring space, accommodate provision for all modes of transport, the needs of people with disabilities and provide safe access for the emergency services;
5. protect existing local and long distance footways, cycleways and bridleways unless an alternative route of at least equal utility value can be used, and facilitate improvements to existing or provide new connections to these routes, especially where such schemes have been identified in the Local Transport Plan and/or Infrastructure Delivery Plan; and
6. have regard to with both the council's Highways Development Design Guide and cycle and vehicle parking standards as prescribed in the Local Transport Plan - having regard to the location of the site and need to promote sustainable travel choices.

Where traffic management measures are introduced they should be designed in a way which respects the character of the surrounding area including its landscape character. Where appropriate, the principle of shared spaces will be encouraged.

- 5.1.54 Development proposals should not inhibit the safe and efficient flow of the strategic network. The use of controls on access can positively contribute to the integration of sustainable modes of transport (walking,

cycling and public transport), and development proposals will be expected to demonstrate how the criteria in Policy MT1 have been incorporated within the design of the scheme in order to increase active travel across the county.

- 5.1.55 Alongside the above, development proposals should have regard to the council's LTP while promoting the principles set out in Herefordshire Council's Highway Development Design Guide for New Developments and the Department for Transport's Manual for Streets and Manual for Streets 2 – Wider Application of the Principles (2010) or subsequent documentation. Consideration will also be given to the Department of Transport Circular 02/2013 and Design Manual for roads and bridges or subsequent documentation.
- 5.1.56 Traffic management schemes should respect the local area including landscape character by providing an appropriate design solution, siting of infrastructure and use of materials as well as taking opportunities to improve the quality of the public realm as part of an integrated approach. This may include opportunities for rationalising the existing infrastructure and 'de-cluttering' the streetscape to the benefit of its appearance as well as functioning.
- 5.1.57 In appropriate locations, the use of shared space can provide an approach which can reduce delays and allow pedestrians to move more freely within the space. Shared space is a design approach that seeks to change the way streets operate by reducing the dominance of motor vehicles, primarily through lower speeds and encouraging drivers to behave more accommodatingly towards pedestrians and other vulnerable road users.

Delivery and monitoring of social progress policies

5.1.58 These policies will be delivered by:

- the development management process;
- preparation and implementation of the Hereford Area Plan, Neighbourhood Development Plans and other Development Plan Documents; and
- developer contributions and the Community Infrastructure levy.

Social Progress Monitoring Indicators

5.1.59 The following indicators (in addition to those set out at the end of the spatial strategy) will be used to monitor the effectiveness of the policies through the Annual Monitoring Report:

- life expectancy of residents – Office for National Statistics (ONS);
- affordable housing completions split by social and intermediate occupancy;
- rural exception site completion;
- house type and number of bedrooms (aspirational);
- assessment of traveller site provision against the need identified in the council's Assessment of Accommodation Needs of Gypsies and Travellers;
- recommendations of the Open Space Study and Playing Pitch Assessment which includes surveys of open space, sports and recreation facilities to assess useability, supply, access and maintenance;
- number of planning applications proposing the loss of an open space, sports or recreation facilities; and
- number of planning applications proposing new open space, sports and recreation facilities.

Tourism

- 5.2.20 The *Herefordshire STEAM Report 2011* shows that tourism makes an important contribution to the county's economy. Herefordshire has many historic and natural assets which are of national interest for example the Mappa Mundi and the Wye Valley and Malvern Hills Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Hereford, the market towns and rural areas are popular destinations for a range of different types of visits and activities. Tourism in Herefordshire can help to strengthen the economy through diversification and new business development in both urban and rural areas.

Policy E4 – Tourism

Herefordshire will be promoted as a destination for quality leisure visits and sustainable tourism by utilising, conserving and enhancing the county's unique environmental and heritage assets and by recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. In particular, the tourist industry will be supported by a number of measures including:

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

- 5.2.21 By encouraging more overnight stays and associated increased expenditure, there is potential for revenue from tourism to make a greater contribution to the county's economic well-being. The provision of new accommodation and the enhancement of existing accommodation will help achieve this goal. Many visitors to the county come to enjoy the beautiful countryside and there is likely to be a demand for new facilities and accommodations associated with this. Whilst some small scale tourism associated development may be appropriate in rural areas, any significant new development for accommodation and facilities should be focused in Hereford and the market towns to maximise sustainable transport opportunities and to protect environmental amenity. 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, so demonstrating its economic benefit to the area.

- 5.2.22 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 Severn at Gloucester, terminating in a canal basin in Hereford. Some sections have already been restored. The recreation, tourism and economic potential of the project are recognised and the canal corridor will continue to receive protection from development through Policy E4.
- 5.2.23 Policy E4 recognises the contribution that tourism makes to the Herefordshire economy and seeks to ensure that this continues and is enhanced through new developments which are of an appropriate scale, type and location.

Town centres

- 5.2.24 Policy E5 encourages appropriate town centre investment in Hereford and the market towns of Bromyard, Ledbury, Leominster, Kington and Ross-on-Wye which will contribute to and enhance the vitality and viability of these centres.

Policy E5 – Town centres

Town centres will be the focus for retail, commercial, leisure, cultural and tourism uses. Proposals for such uses which contribute to the vitality and viability of the town centres of Hereford and the market towns will be supported provided that they:

1. do not adversely affect the primary function of the town centres as shopping destinations; and
2. are of a scale and design appropriate to the size, role, character and heritage of the centre.

Proposals for development outside the town centres will only be permitted if it can be demonstrated that the requirements of the sequential test, as set out in paragraph 24 of the NPPF, 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 sequential test requires the above mentioned uses to be located within town centres. Where it is proven there are no available and suitable town centre sites, preference will be given to edge of centre sites before any out of centre site is considered. Where a sequential test adequately demonstrates that the only suitable and available site is an edge of centre or an out of centre location, preference will be given to sites that are well connected to the town centre and are easily accessible by sustainable transport modes.

An impact assessment for retail, leisure and commercial proposals outside of the town centres to assess their impact on investment in the area and on vitality and viability of the town centre may be required depending on the scale and location of the proposal, as specified in the policies in the Place Shaping section.

The use of upper floors within town centres for residential and office uses will be supported.

Within town centres, retail uses will be concentrated within the primary shopping areas (Policy E6).

- 5.2.25 The town centre boundaries are defined in the Place Shaping sections of this document. A review of these boundaries will be undertaken as part of Neighbourhood Development Plans and the Hereford Area Plan.
- 5.2.26 Policy E5 has been informed by the findings of the Town Centres Study Update 2012 which outlines the retail, office and leisure needs of Hereford and the five market towns to 2031. The report identifies

Local distinctiveness

- 5.3.2 To successfully deliver the Core Strategy vision in respect of environmental quality and local distinctiveness, this section provides a proactive strategy for the conservation, restoration and enhancement of environmental assets and the delivery of new green infrastructure to support policies SS6 and SS7.
- 5.3.3 Locally distinctive assets both natural and man-made, are finite and irreplaceable and any detrimental impacts can carry cultural, environmental, economic and social costs. A number of assets benefit from statutory designations within national and international legislation. Statutory designations range from large areas conserved for landscape, geodiversity or biodiversity importance, such as the Wye Valley and Malvern Hills Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and River Wye Special Area of Conservation, to individual statutory listed buildings which are protected for their architectural or historical significance. Appendix 8 lists the designated sites in Herefordshire at the time of adoption.
- 5.3.4 Non-statutory designations and locally determined features are equally important to Herefordshire's local distinctiveness. Working with partner organisations, Herefordshire Council has identified important assets such as local wildlife sites, local geological sites and areas and buildings of local interest which contribute to Herefordshire's unique character. Non-statutory locally distinctive buildings and green spaces will be identified through forthcoming Development Plan Documents or Neighbourhood Development Plans.
- 5.3.5 Conserving local distinctiveness is central to the purposes of designations at all levels and achieved substantially through the production and implementation of management plans, conservation strategies and objectives and guidance resulting from best practice and local assessments.

Landscape and townscape

- 5.3.6 The European Landscape Convention defines landscape as *"an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors"*. Herefordshire has a distinctive and varied landscape. Much of the area is rural in nature but varied in landscape character, including high hills, forest, commons and river meadows. Herefordshire contains a wide range of settlement patterns, different types of farmland and evidence of ancient landscape features. This diverse landscape is an integral element of Herefordshire's local distinctiveness.
- 5.3.7 Landscape is important, not just as scenery but because it links culture with nature, and the past with the present. It has many values, not all of them tangible (such as sense of place); and it matters to people – it is people who create and value landscape. All landscapes matter, not only those with national designations. They provide a range of services such as food, water, climate regulation and aesthetic enjoyment.
- 5.3.8 The concepts of conservation, restoration and enhancement have been set out as a strategic approach to landscape and townscape management. The principles are relevant when considering the management of individual sites where the landscape character may be dependent upon unique landscape features. Landscape survey and analysis are proactive tools for allowing new build developments to address the three principles. For development proposals there are often opportunities for measures to conserve landscape features such as trees, to restore features such as boundary hedges and to enhance the landscape character by other means such as woodland planting, creation of wetland areas or restoration of historic features. The preparation of landscape schemes and management plans

should address these three aspects in relation to the local landscape character and the relevant landscape type. Designated areas are detailed on the Policies Map. Specific conservation area boundaries can be found on the council's website at the planning/conservation pages.

Policy LD1 – Landscape and townscape

Development proposals should:

- demonstrate that character of the landscape and townscape has positively influenced the design, scale, nature and site selection, protection and enhancement of the setting of settlements and designated areas;
- conserve and enhance the natural, historic and scenic beauty of important landscapes and features, including Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, nationally and locally designated parks and gardens and conservation areas; through the protection of the area's character and by enabling appropriate uses, design and management;
- incorporate new landscape schemes and their management to ensure development integrates appropriately into its surroundings; and
- maintain and extend tree cover where important to amenity, through the retention of important trees, appropriate replacement of trees lost through development and new planting to support green infrastructure.

- 5.3.9 A number of landscape and townscape character assessments have been prepared supported by a Historic Landscape Characterisation and completed conservation areas appraisals. The *Landscape Character Assessment Supplementary Planning Guidance 2009* (SPD) will be reviewed during the plan period. The SPD will build upon the detailed evidence base documentation; including Natural England's Character Areas as well as more recently produced *Urban Fringe Sensitivity Analysis January 2010*, *Rapid Townscape Assessments (various)*, *Green Infrastructure Strategy February 2010* and other local studies covering the architectural and historic environment. In conjunction with the above, relevant Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plans and associated guidance also provide more place-specific guidance which should inform development proposals from the outset.
- 5.3.10 The particular importance of trees is recognised within the planning system and the extent of tree cover is important to the county's landscape and townscape. Tree surveys and arboricultural impact assessments may be necessary where it is important to assess and protect existing trees on or adjacent to sites where development proposals are being advanced.

Biodiversity and geodiversity

- 5.3.11 Biodiversity can be defined as the variety of sites, habitats and species within a specified locality and is influenced by factors such as geology, topography and climate. Geodiversity refers to the natural processes and constituent parts that have shaped the landscape and includes minerals, soils and water. Geodiversity is the variety of rock, minerals, fossils, soils, landforms and natural processes that have shaped the landscape.
- 5.3.12 Biodiversity and geodiversity assets provide an important contribution to the distinctiveness of an area. Herefordshire has a diverse range of geological features and wildlife habitats such as the Malvern Hills, the River Wye, ancient woodlands and traditional orchards. Wildlife is not confined to designated sites and many features serve as wildlife corridors, links and stepping stones. Ecological networks are vital to

the survival and dispersal of species. Herefordshire's biodiversity and geodiversity make a major contribution to the economy, supporting the tourism sector and providing a healthy and attractive environment for its residents.

Policy LD2 – Biodiversity and geodiversity

Development proposals should conserve, restore and enhance the biodiversity and geodiversity assets of Herefordshire, through the:

1. retention and protection of nature conservation sites and habitats, and important species in accordance with their status as follows:
 - a) Development that is likely to harm sites and species of European Importance will not be permitted;
 - b) Development that would be liable to harm Sites of Special Scientific Interest or nationally protected species will only be permitted if the conservation status of their habitat or important physical features can be protected by conditions or other material considerations are sufficient to outweigh nature conservation considerations;
 - c) Development that would be liable to harm the nature conservation value of a site or species of local nature conservation interest will only be permitted if the importance of the development outweighs the local value of the site, habitat or physical feature that supports important species.
 - d) Development that will potentially reduce the coherence and effectiveness of the ecological network of sites will only be permitted where adequate compensatory measures are brought forward.
2. restoration and enhancement of existing biodiversity and geodiversity features on site and connectivity to wider ecological networks; and
3. creation of new biodiversity features and wildlife habitats.

Where appropriate the council will work with developers to agree a management strategy to ensure the protection of, and prevention of adverse impacts on, biodiversity and geodiversity features.

- 5.3.13 Areas of biodiversity and geological importance and sensitivity should be protected and development should enhance local habitats and ecological networks. Development within close proximity to internationally, nationally and locally designated sites will need to incorporate sympathetic design components to enhance their nature conservation interests and to avoid or mitigate any adverse impacts. Internationally important sites present within the county include Special Areas of Conservation (SACs); nationally important sites include Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and National Nature Reserves (NNRs); and locally important sites include Local Wildlife Sites and Local Geological Sites.
- 5.3.14 Dependent upon the scale and proximity of development proposals affecting biodiversity or geodiversity features, Herefordshire Council may require developers to produce a management strategy to ensure the continued protection of the features of interest. Such management strategies may include monitoring information. This will provide up-to-date information which will shape future policy reviews as well as inform future site specific plans.
- 5.3.15 The Core Strategy objectives will be delivered through supporting development proposals that add to Herefordshire's biodiversity. During the plan period Herefordshire Council will review its Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Guidance utilising in particular the principles, opportunities and constraints detailed within the *Building Biodiversity into Herefordshire Council's Local Development Framework 2009*. Further areas of local biodiversity or geodiversity importance may be designated or extended during the plan period.

- 5.3.16 Details of the county's biodiversity and geodiversity assets and features, some of which traverse the local authority's administrative boundaries, are listed in Appendices 8e-k and further information is held at the Herefordshire Biological Records Centre. Core areas have been identified where there are clusters of biodiversity and geodiversity features of high conservation value as detailed in the *Herefordshire Ecological Network Map 2012*. Development within and adjacent to these core areas and associated buffer zones will need to be sympathetically designed to ensure there are no adverse impacts upon them. Alongside this, Herefordshire Council will seek contributions to enhance and link such core areas.

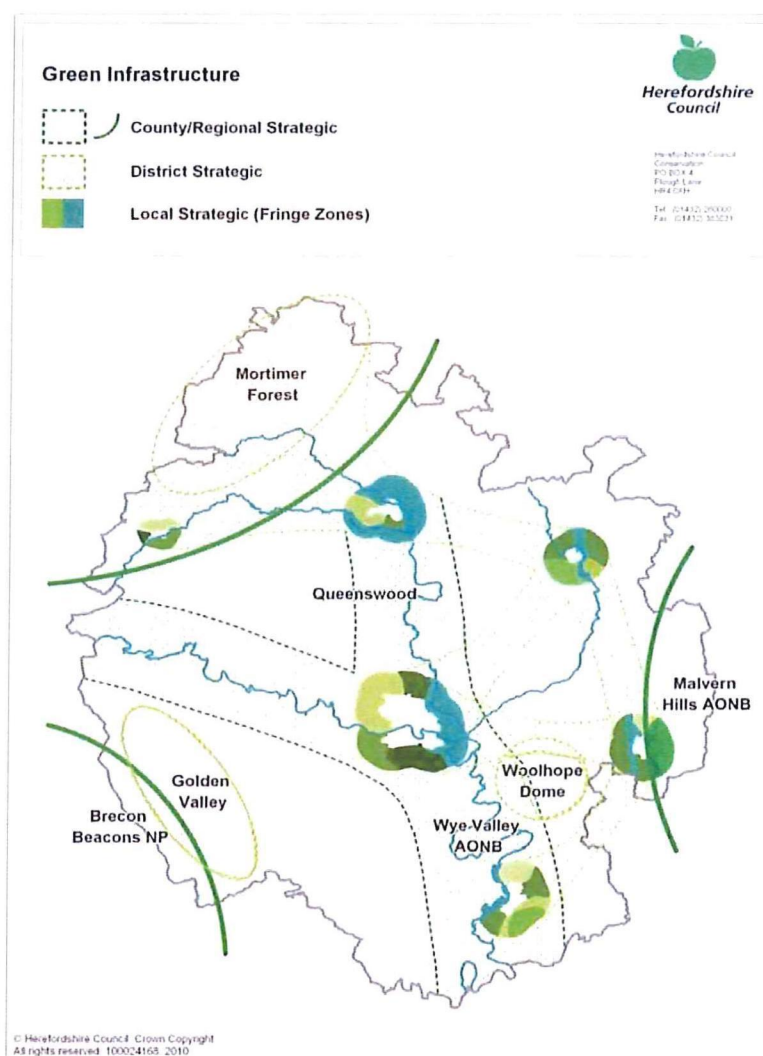
Green infrastructure

- 5.3.17 Green infrastructure is a multi-functional network of green spaces, links and assets within and surrounding the built environment, and providing connection to the wider countryside. As a major component of sustainable design it includes and contributes to health and wellbeing as well as biodiversity, culture and heritage across the county. It is not limited to urban areas and can be seen at different strategic levels as shown in the table below and the accompanying concept diagram, Figure 5.3.

Figure 5.2: Hierarchy of Green Infrastructure Assets

Geographic tier	Example of green infrastructure asset
County/Regional Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty • Sites of national and international nature conservation importance (e.g. SAC, SSSI) • Verges of trunk roads, motorways and railways
District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rivers and large streams and their floodplains • Local wildlife sites. Scheduled ancient monuments • Designed landscapes
Local	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public and private parks and gardens • Recreational grounds, cemeteries, playing fields and public green spaces • Public rights of way and cycle paths

Figure 5.3: Green infrastructure concept diagram



Source: Herefordshire Green Infrastructure Strategy, February 2010

- 5.3.18 Herefordshire Council's *Green Infrastructure Strategy 2010* sets out a vision for green infrastructure across the county. It also provides a local framework around Hereford and the five market towns by defining strategic corridors, enhancement zones and fringe zones. These are areas where through sympathetic design and planning, a functional relationship between the urban and rural environments can be created and enhanced.
- 5.3.19 The development of new green infrastructure and preservation of existing assets will provide a variety of economic, environmental and social benefits. Economic benefits can be achieved through food production and productive landscapes, diversification of farming activities and attracting tourism.

Environmental benefits include habitat provision and connectivity, landscape protection, energy conservation and mitigation of climate change impacts. Social benefits of green infrastructure include places for leisure, garden food production, recreation, sport and exercise, all of which make a major contribution to health and wellbeing. Development can include corridors for movement through foot and cycle paths. It provides opportunities for improving the management of and interpreting natural and heritage assets and how they contribute to local distinctiveness. Increased access to green infrastructure can promote physical and mental health and well-being.

- 5.3.20 Green infrastructure can provide energy production, flood attenuation, maintenance of water quality, water resource management, cooling effects and many other benefits encompassed under the concept of ecosystem services. The council is committed to working with Herefordshire Local Nature Partnership to bring forward a shared vision using green infrastructure to improve ecological networks and wider economic and social benefits as part of an “ecosystems approach”.

Policy LD3 – Green infrastructure

Development proposals should protect, manage and plan for the preservation of existing and delivery of new green infrastructure, and should achieve the following objectives:

1. identification and retention of existing green infrastructure corridors and linkages; including the protection of valued landscapes, trees, hedgerows, woodlands, water courses and adjoining flood plain;
2. provision of on-site green infrastructure; in particular proposals will be supported where this enhances the network; and
3. integration with, and connection to, the surrounding green infrastructure network.

- 5.3.21 Development proposals should identify and protect existing green infrastructure. The Green Infrastructure Strategy 2010 and associated Study identify those features that contribute to the green infrastructure network. Proposals should take account of features within the site and also on adjacent sites as integration and connection with the surroundings is a key objective. Proposals should incorporate the retention and enhancement of features such as trees and hedgerows, together with long term management.
- 5.3.22 The inclusion of new planting, wildlife enhancement, creation and links, links to the countryside and river ways, green transport corridors, open spaces and recreational facilities and sustainable drainage systems within or associated with development proposals are important and valuable contributions to green infrastructure. Landscaping of development sites should feature planting of appropriate native species wherever possible, ensuring there is sufficient space for plants to grow to maturity. Opportunities for new elements include establishing grasslands, wildflower meadows, wetlands, orchards or woodland. New green infrastructure features could include promoting and extending the public rights of way network, increasing public access and providing interpretive information.

Historic environment and heritage assets

- 5.3.23 The historic environment is defined as all aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time, including all surviving physical remains of past human activity, whether visible, buried or submerged, and landscaped and planted or managed flora. Those elements of significance with statutory protection are referred to as designated heritage assets. Policy LD4 is applicable to heritage assets throughout Herefordshire whether formally designated e.g. listed buildings

- 5.3.27 Large scale developments should embrace the historic environment rather than regard it as a constraint. Utilising existing locally distinctive heritage assets within wider regeneration proposals can help create new developments that integrate positively with their surroundings, and can reinforce existing cultural and social characteristics. Where the loss of or substantial harm to a heritage asset or its significance is outweighed by the public benefits of a development proposal which is allowed to proceed, developers shall, in a manner proportionate to its importance, record and advance understanding of the heritage asset. This evidence shall be made publicly accessible normally through Herefordshire Historic Environment Record, a museum or other local archive as appropriate.

Sustainable design

- 5.3.28 Good design embraces more than simply the aesthetics of new development and includes how buildings are used, accessed and constructed. Equally, for development to be considered sustainable, it must embrace the move to a low carbon future through designing buildings that are more energy and water efficient and increase the use and supply of renewables. Herefordshire Council will seek to ensure that future developments are designed to enhance local distinctiveness but without stifling innovation and creativity, particularly with regard to energy efficiency.
- 5.3.29 High quality design and well planned developments can enhance community cohesion through maintaining or creating a sense of place. New development should be designed to preserve and enhance locally distinctive characteristics and positively contribute to the appearance of the locality. To achieve this, it is important that new development is successfully integrated into the existing built, natural and historic environment; however recognising that architectural styles change over time. Policy SD1 does not seek to stifle architectural innovation, contemporary design or reject advances in design and technology.

Policy SD1 – Sustainable design and energy efficiency

Development proposals should create safe, sustainable, well integrated environments for all members of the community. In conjunction with this, all development proposals should incorporate the following requirements:

- ensure that proposals make efficient use of land - taking into account the local context and site characteristics;
- new buildings should be designed to maintain local distinctiveness through incorporating local architectural detailing and materials and respecting scale, height, proportions and massing of surrounding development, while making a positive contribution to the architectural diversity and character of the area including, where appropriate, through innovative design;
- safeguard residential amenity for existing and proposed residents;
- ensure new development does not contribute to, or suffer from, adverse impacts arising from noise, light or air contamination, land instability or cause ground water pollution;
- where contaminated land is present, undertake appropriate remediation where it can be demonstrated that this will be effective;
- ensure that distinctive features of existing buildings and their setting are safeguarded and where appropriate, restored;
- utilise physical sustainability measures that include, in particular, orientation of buildings, the provision of water conservation measures, storage for bicycles and waste including provision for recycling, and enabling renewable energy and energy conservation infrastructure;
- where possible, on-site renewable energy generation should also be incorporated;

Policy SD1 – Sustainable design and energy efficiency continued

- create safe and accessible environments, and that minimise opportunities for crime and anti-social behaviour by incorporating Secured by Design principles, and consider the incorporation of fire safety measures;
- ensuring designs can be easily adapted and accommodate new technologies to meet changing needs throughout the lifetime of the development; and
- utilise sustainable construction methods which minimise the use of non-renewable resources and maximise the use of recycled and sustainably sourced materials;

All planning applications including material changes of use, will be expected to demonstrate how the above design and energy efficiency considerations have been factored into the proposal from the outset.

- 5.3.30 High quality design can significantly enhance the environment and amenity for new residents. Equally, the amenity and quality of life for existing residents can be adversely affected by insensitive, poorly considered design. To address this, buildings, extensions and spaces must be designed with regard to overlooking, overshadowing and overbearing impacts. Additionally, ensuring that new development is compatible with the surrounding locality requires more than simply scale and aesthetic qualities, and includes consideration of the impacts of noise and artificial light, ground conditions and air quality.
- 5.3.31 All developments must demonstrate how they have been designed and how they have incorporated measures to make them resilient to climate change in respect of carbon reduction, water efficiency and flood risk. Carbon reduction should influence design from the outset by ensuring the fabric of the building is as energy efficient as possible, for example, attaining thermal efficiencies through construction that achieves low U values and fuel efficiencies through the use of services such as efficient boilers. Good site planning can also aid greater energy efficiency in new development, for example, by seeking to maximise solar gain.
- 5.3.32 Revisions to the Building Regulations are introducing progressive increases in the energy efficiency requirements for new buildings. In terms of energy conservation, developments in sustainable locations that achieve accredited standards of energy conservation which cover a range of sustainability criteria will be supported, particularly where the level achieved materially exceeds the relevant Building Regulations and other relevant standards in place at the time.
- 5.3.33 Large-scale developments should demonstrate how opportunities for on-site renewable energy generation and sustainable waste management have also been considered and addressed within the design of the scheme. Such details should include an appraisal of all suitable renewable energy technology. Other developments will also be encouraged to consider whether on-site renewable energy opportunities might be available. Alongside this, the council supports the provision of renewable and low carbon technologies within existing developments, subject to such proposals according with other policies of the Core Strategy.
- 5.3.34 The efficient use of land is encouraged in the design policy; however it does not specify minimum development densities; these are referenced in Policy SS2. It is recognised that in highly accessible locations development proposals may be more sustainable and viable if constructed to higher densities than usually found elsewhere in the county, provided there is no detrimental impact upon existing local amenity. However in most instances, appropriate density will primarily be informed by the local context as well as site opportunities and constraints.

- 5.3.35 Accessibility for all members of society is fundamental to achieving sustainable development and inclusive design, and must be carefully considered in all development proposals. Development layouts should be designed to provide a high degree of permeability particularly for sustainable modes of travel within the site, and provide safe connections to adjoining land uses and local community facilities.
- 5.3.36 Sustainable design principles can also contribute to reducing crime and the fear of crime. Developers should consider whether the location and form of their development should adopt the principles set out in the document 'Secured by Design 2010 (Association of Chief Police Officers)' incorporating design measures such as ensuring a high level of natural surveillance, sensitive consideration of boundary treatments and clear delineation of public and private spaces, in order to aid the creation of a safer and more inclusive environment. In addition, provision should be made to allow ease of access for emergency services.
- 5.3.37 Council Directive 96/82/EC (the Seveso II Directive) requires that the objectives of the prevention of major accidents involving hazardous substances and limiting their consequences for man and the environment are taken into account in land use planning. Within the county, certain industrial sites and associated infrastructure fall within the scope of hazardous substances controls by virtue of the nature and quantity of substances used or stored; in considering applications for development in the vicinity of such sites regard will also be had to the risks arising. It is important that the presence of hazardous substances is compatible with the existing and proposed uses of the site and of land in the vicinity. In particular, appropriate distances should be maintained between establishments where hazardous substances are present or proposed and existing or proposed residential areas, areas of public use and areas of particular natural sensitivity or interest. Full account will be taken of advice from the Health and Safety Executive and the Environment Agency in dealing with applications for both hazardous substances consent and for development at or in the vicinity of land where such substances are present.
- 5.3.38 The age structure of the county is rapidly changing with an increasing elderly population. Increasing fuel prices is resulting in residents, particularly in rural areas, reviewing their home to work travel patterns, furthermore continual advances in technology means costly refurbishments of existing buildings is often required to meet modern requirements. It is therefore important that developments are flexibly designed to be adaptable to different and future occupational and technological needs and demands. This can include measures such as meeting lifetime homes and equivalent standards in residential design, providing infrastructure to meet the growth in demand for electric vehicles, providing adequate space for internal and external plant and facilitating home working and live/work opportunities.
- 5.3.39 Design guidance will be prepared as a Supplementary Planning Document to provide baseline standards across Herefordshire; expanding on the above design principles and to inform the preparation of masterplans, other Development Plan Documents, Neighbourhood Development Plans, parish plans, village design statements and planning applications.

Renewable and low carbon energy generation

- 5.3.40 An overarching principle of the planning system is to support the transition to a low carbon future. A significant means of achieving this goal is through the use of renewable energy sources. Renewable energy covers energy generated directly from natural sources, be it sun, wind or water, or indirect sources such as biomass and geothermal heat. The Climate Change Act makes the UK the first country in the world to have a long term legally binding commitment to cut greenhouse gas emissions. The Act commits the UK to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 80%, from a 1990 baseline, by 2050. The UK