

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