

- 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.

in places with good, sustainable transport links and jobs and services, thereby reducing the need to travel by private car. Climate change is specifically addressed in the environmental quality theme of the spatial strategy. The spatial strategy is represented in the **Key Diagram** at the end of this section of the document.

Achieving social progress

- 3.24 Social progress and improved quality of life will be delivered through identifying areas for growth and the general strategic policies which will address issues of housing need and demand; improving movement around the county; working towards improving health and education; improving access to services; and delivering sustainable communities with the necessary infrastructure.

Policy SS2 - Delivering new homes

A supply of deliverable and developable land will be identified to secure the delivery of a minimum of 16,500 homes in Herefordshire between 2011 and 2031 to meet market and affordable housing need.

Hereford is the focus for new housing development to support its role as the main centre in the county. Outside Hereford, the main focus for new housing development will take place in the market towns of Bromyard, Kington, Ledbury, Leominster and Ross on Wye, on existing or new allocations to enhance their roles as multi-functional centres for their surrounding rural areas. In the rural areas new housing development will be acceptable where it helps to meet housing needs and requirements, supports the rural economy and local services and facilities and is responsive to the needs of its community. In the wider rural areas new housing will be carefully controlled reflecting the need to recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.

The use of previously developed land in sustainable locations will be encouraged. Residential density will be determined by local character and good quality design. The target net density across the county is between 30 and 50 dwellings per hectare, although this may be less in sensitive areas.

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

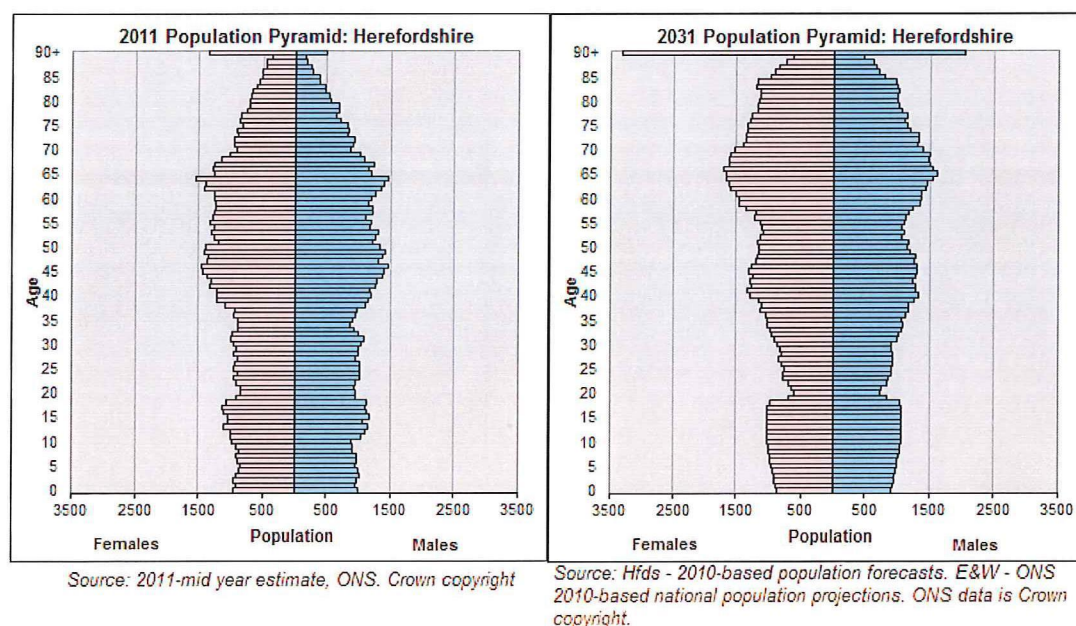
Place	Facilities	New Homes
Hereford	Wide range of services and main focus for development	6,500
Other urban areas – Bromyard, Kington, Ledbury, Leominster, Ross on Wye	Range of services and reasonable transport provision – opportunities to strengthen role in meeting requirements of surrounding communities	4,700
Rural settlements – see list in Place Shaping section	More limited range of services and some limited development potential but numerous locations	5,300
Total		16,500

Providing high quality homes

- 3.25 The Core Strategy housing provision requirement in Policy SS2 is based on the recommendations of the independent research from the *Local Housing Requirements Studies (2011, 2012 and 2014)*. These reports provided evidence-based guidance on the future level of housing needed in the light of changing economic and social trends. The provision of 16,500 homes over the period 2011 to 2031 will meet the objectively assessed need for the county set out in the 2014 study.

- 3.26 In 2011 Herefordshire had an estimated population of 183,600. The population grew by almost 5% in the period 2001-2011. However, the population structure has an above average proportion aged over 50 and a particularly low proportion aged 15-34, relative to the regional and national picture. Over the last 30 years, the proportion of the population aged over 34 has been increasing, whilst the numbers aged 15-34 has been declining. Population growth has been driven by growth in the number of people aged over 35. Looking at the components of population change 1999-2009, the death rate has generally exceeded the birth rate by an average of 240 persons per year resulting in natural decrease. This has been countered by net in-migration which averaged over 900 per annum and which has therefore driven population growth. Household size has been generally decreasing in recent years following the national trend for increasing single person households.
- 3.27 The level of housing provision proposed will support growth in the number of people in the working age population thereby supporting economic growth. Such a level would go towards addressing the imbalance in the population structure of the county by providing an appropriate mix of housing including encouraging the building of new homes for people of working age and younger families. However, this is an issue which will also need to be addressed beyond 2031 in subsequent plans.
- 3.28 Figure 3.3 shows the age structure of the population at 2011 and what it is projected to be following the implementation of the spatial strategy in 2031. The age structure of the population will still be top-heavy with the biggest increase in the over 65's, but this will not be uncommon with the rest of the region and the country as a whole.

Figure 3.3 - Age Structure of the population 2011-31



- 3.29 More specific details of the strategic locations regarding house types, density and design are included in the Place Shaping section. The Hereford Area Plan, the Bromyard Development Plan, the Rural Areas Site Allocations Development Plan Document and Neighbourhood Development Plans will identify non-strategic sites and will also consider the question of whether or not to define settlement boundaries in developing planning policies.

- 3.30 In terms of distribution of housing, Hereford is the service and economic centre of the county reflecting its higher population (58,500 people) and, being the most sustainable settlement, it should take the most growth. Therefore, strategic locations for new homes and employment land have been identified around the city in areas considered acceptable in environmental terms.
- 3.31 The decision to focus the largest single allocation of new homes to Leominster has been based on the recognition of its economic importance, located on the A49 Corridor, its excellent public transport links, including a railway station, and the fact that an urban extension will bring transport benefits in the form of a southern link road. The latter will benefit the centre of the town in terms of reducing congestion and improving air quality. Relative to the county's other market towns, Leominster is also the least constrained environmentally.
- 3.32 The quantity and type of development, in terms of housing and employment land, allocated to Ross on Wye, Ledbury, Bromyard and Kington reflects their respective roles, needs, opportunities and environmental development constraints. Ledbury and Ross on Wye (larger in scale and population terms) will support quantitatively more development than Bromyard and Kington. This is explained further in the Place Shaping section.
- 3.33 The plan seeks to encourage new developments which support and enhance access to local services and tackle issues of rural housing affordability, giving consideration to the introduction of neighbourhood planning. The location and level of development allocated to settlements will be determined through the preparation of a Rural Areas Site Allocations Development Plan Document or Neighbourhood Development Plans.
- 3.34 The National Planning Policy Framework states, as one of its core principles, that the planning system should encourage the effective use of land by re-using land that has been previously developed, provided that it is not of high environmental value. Given the level of growth planned for this plan period, it will not be possible to achieve development of a high percentage on brownfield land, but this will continue to be encouraged for future development proposals. The target net density in Policy SS2 has been based on a balance of issues, including the encouragement of the efficient use of land and the need to protect the county's environmental assets.

Meeting specific housing needs

- 3.35 The council has produced a *Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2008* and a *Local Housing Market Assessment 2013*, which indicates that there is an urgent need to increase the provision of affordable housing in the county. However, whilst there is a very high need, this has to be balanced against the outcomes of the *Affordable Housing Viability Study 2011* and the *Economic Viability Study 2014*. Whilst affordable housing is a priority for the county, the need for new infrastructure to help economic growth is another priority. Levels of affordable housing and percentages and thresholds required, have been set to reflect the viability of achieving both priorities. In terms of delivery, a strategy focussed on growth and development of strategic sites is considered the best approach in order to get affordable homes built in the county over the plan period. The council has been looking at other forms of affordable housing delivery, including using public sector land assets and supporting direct delivery through Registered Providers. The place shaping policies and the general policy on affordable housing will deliver this part of the strategy.
- 3.36 A report on the *Housing and Support Needs of Older People 2012* in Herefordshire has highlighted a growing need for suitable homes for older people to live independently, as well as a need for specialist

housing with extra care to be built. These issues are addressed within place specific policies in the Place Shaping section and within policies on social progress in the General Policies section of this document.

- 3.37 *The Gypsy and Travellers and Travelling Showperson Accommodation Assessment, 2015* highlighted a need for further permanent pitches in the county. A Travellers' Sites Document will be prepared following on from the Core Strategy to allocate pitches, but in the meantime an interim policy is set out in the policies on social progress in the General Policies section of this document.
- 3.38 The council recognises that individual or group self and custom build projects will contribute to the delivery of homes over the plan period. These may be in the form of affordable, low cost market and open market housing. The council will encourage and support this type of development where the proposals are in line with the relevant policies of the Core Strategy and neighbourhood plans. Specific sites may be allocated for this type of development in Area and Neighbourhood Development Plans where a demand for this type of development has been demonstrated.

Housing trajectory

- 3.39 In respect of the housing target for Herefordshire the expectation is that the highest rate of housing completions will be towards the latter end of the plan period.
- 3.40 Overall the delivery of the housing levels and distribution proposed in the Core Strategy is dependent upon necessary infrastructure being funded and delivered. A detailed trajectory is set out in Appendix 4. The delivery of housing will be monitored throughout the plan period and may need further re-adjustment and added detail to reflect progress on the delivery of the strategic housing sites and key elements of infrastructure.

Policy SS3 - Ensuring sufficient housing land delivery

A sufficient supply of housing land will be maintained to ensure the delivery of the Core Strategy housing target as set out in Policy SS2 over the plan period. The rate of housing delivery and supply will be assessed through the annual monitoring process. If monitoring demonstrates that the number of new dwelling completions is below the cumulative target figure over a 12-month monitoring period (1 April to 31 March) as set out in the housing trajectory in Appendix 4 the Council will prioritise increasing housing supply in the following monitoring periods using appropriate mechanisms which, depending on the scale and nature of potential under-delivery, will include:

- A partial review of the Local Plan – Core Strategy; or
- The preparation of new Development Plan Documents; or
- The preparation of an interim position statement and utilising evidence from the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment to identify additional housing land.

A range of strategic housing proposals are identified which are key to the delivery of the spatial strategy. In addition there are elements of key infrastructure which will need to be provided to enable full delivery of the strategic housing targets. The council will work with developers and other stakeholders to ensure the timely development of these strategic proposals and the key infrastructure requirements.

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Policy SS3 - Ensuring sufficient housing land delivery continued

Appendix 5 sets out the relationships between the delivery of housing and the timing of the main infrastructure requirements. It also identifies actions necessary to safeguard the integrity of the River Wye Special Area of Conservation (SAC) from adverse effects. The council will actively monitor the relationships identified in this appendix. Any material delays in the implementation of identified infrastructure or environmental safeguards and which will lead to under-delivery of housing supply will inform the implementation of the range of measures set out above to ensure plan-led corrective measures are put in place.

- 3.41 The delivery and supply of new housing will be monitored on a regular basis and through the annual monitoring process in particular. Appendix 4 sets out an indicative trajectory for total housing completions, which will provide a basis for monitoring completions over the plan period. In the event that the monitoring process demonstrates that the rate of completions have fallen below targets, an early assessment will be made as to the most appropriate mechanism to boost housing delivery depending upon the scale and nature of the issue. The stepped target of 600 dpa for the first five years of the plan (2011-2016), 850 dpa for years 6-10 (2016-2021), 900 dpa for years 11-15 (2021-2026) and 950 dpa for years 16-20 (2026-2031) would be the basis for monitoring and assessing land supply (including the five year housing land supply) throughout the plan period. For calculation of the five year housing land supply, due to persistent under delivery a buffer of 20% is considered appropriate.
- 3.42 To achieve the Core Strategy housing target there is a need to ensure that appropriate and necessary infrastructure is co-ordinated with the development. This will be particularly the case in respect of major elements of infrastructure such as the Hereford Relief Road.
- 3.43 In addition, the River Wye SAC currently includes sections where the water quality exceeds phosphate level targets and this prevents sections of the river from achieving favourable condition. It is also necessary to ensure that sections of river currently meeting the water quality targets do not fail as a result of new development. Natural England and the Environment Agency have prepared a Nutrient Management Plan (NMP) which sets out to control and reduce phosphates in the SAC. The implementation of the actions in the NMP will facilitate the delivery of new development. Policy SD4 deals specifically with wastewater treatment and river water quality.

Windfalls

- 3.44 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) indicates that local planning authorities should draw on information from Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments (SHLAA) to identify:
- sufficient specific sites to deliver housing in the first five years of the plan period with an additional buffer of 5% to ensure choice and competition in the market for land; and
 - a further supply of specific, developable sites or broad locations for years 6-10 and where possible, for years 11-15.
- 3.45 It goes on to say that sites with planning permission should only be included where there is robust evidence that the sites are developable and viable and are likely to contribute to housing delivery at the point envisaged. In respect of sites not specifically identified, the NPPF advises that allowances for 'windfalls', can be included in the five year supply if there is robust evidence of consistent local circumstances and reliable future supply.

- 3.46 In Herefordshire there is longstanding evidence that housing on 'non-allocated' sites has made a significant contribution to meeting housing needs and requirements. Such housing has not only come forward within urban parts of the county but also has been the major element of new housing in rural areas, where the conversion of agricultural buildings have contributed significant numbers of new homes.
- 3.47 It is therefore important to consider how windfalls, including the conversion of rural buildings, should be reflected in the housing land supply and residential targets for the county. The preparation of the SHLAA should mean that a higher proportion of sites will be identified as part of the supply figures and so only a modest windfall allowance is included within the housing targets of 2,000 dwellings, equating to 50 dwellings a year in rural areas with the same allowance for urban parts of Herefordshire.

Movement and transportation

- 3.48 The approach of the strategy for movement and transportation is two-fold. Firstly, the spatial strategy itself aims to direct the location of significant new development proposed through the plan to the more accessible locations in the county to promote the use of existing nearby services and facilitate the use of active travel (walking and cycling) as well as public transport. However, this principle needs to apply to all new significant development proposals that may come forward through the plan period. It will also require policies to minimise the impact of additional highway demand generated by new development on the transport network, so that journey times, journey time reliability, public realm and highway safety in the county do not deteriorate.
- 3.49 Secondly, the approach is to work with developers, the Highways Agency and transport providers to improve transport infrastructure, connections and choices in our main centres and rural areas (where reliance on the private car is often the only option). This is particularly important for local journeys in Hereford where a balanced package of measures including more walking and cycling, bus transport and a Relief Road would improve connectivity and travel choice, reduce congestion, enhance the public realm and foster local enterprise and tourism.
- 3.50 Herefordshire is a diverse county incorporating both rural and urban communities. The scale of the county, alongside its historic settlement pattern, places significant importance on movement and transportation. As recognised in the National Planning Policy Framework, transport and movement can play a positive role in contributing to sustainable development; whether through providing opportunities for greater public transport, or delivering air quality improvements by removing vehicular movements from pedestrian areas. Alongside this, the following pro-active strategic policies on movement and transportation can build upon objectives and policies within Herefordshire Council's Local Transport Plan (LTP) to improve journey time and connectivity across the county. In partnership with the LTP the strategic policies are designed to deliver Herefordshire Council's Core Strategy objectives of improving movement and transportation across the county.

Policy SS4 - Movement and transportation

New developments should be designed and located to minimise the impacts on the transport network; ensuring that journey times and the efficient and safe operation of the network are not detrimentally impacted. Furthermore, where practicable, development proposals should be accessible by and facilitate a genuine choice of modes of travel including walking, cycling and public transport.

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Policy SS4 - Movement and transportation continued

Development proposals that will generate high journey numbers should be in sustainable locations, accessible by means other than private car. Alternatively, such developments will be required to demonstrate that they can be made sustainable by reducing unsustainable transport patterns and promoting travel by walking, cycling and public transport.

Proposals to provide new and improved existing public transport, walking and cycling infrastructure will be supported. Where appropriate, land and routes will be safeguarded as required in future local or Neighbourhood Development Plans and developer contributions, which meet the statutory tests, sought to assist with the delivery of new sustainable transport infrastructure, including that required for alternative energy cars.

Herefordshire Council will work with the Highways Agency, Network Rail, bus and train operators, developers and local communities to bring forward improvements to the local and strategic transport network to reduce congestion, improve air quality and road safety and offer greater transport choices, including the provision of the following major schemes:

- ESG Link Road (safeguarded route) and Transport Hub;
- Hereford Relief Road;
- Leominster Relief Road;
- Connect 2 Cycleway in Hereford;
- Park and Choose schemes; and
- other schemes identified in the Local Transport Plan and Infrastructure Delivery Plan.

Proposals which enable the transfer of freight from road to rail will be encouraged. Development proposals incorporating commercial vehicular movements that could detrimentally impact on the environmental quality, amenity, safety and character of the surrounding locality will be expected to incorporate evidence demonstrating how the traffic impacts are to be mitigated.

- 3.51 Herefordshire Council's Local Transport Plan sets out programmes of work for achieving the council's objectives for transport, accessibility and pollution control which positively contribute to addressing climate change. Development arising under the Core Strategy can play a positive role in delivering the objectives of the LTP; developers should provide evidence showing how their proposed developments will deliver against those objectives. Accordingly, development proposals will be supported where they respond to the opportunities and constraints detailed within the LTP.
- 3.52 By influencing the location of new development, land use can reduce the need to travel particularly by private car, and minimise its impact on the environment. At the same time the planning system must respond to the need for new transport infrastructure and recognise the challenges faced by rural settlements, where reliance on private motorised transport, for many people, is the only realistic option for travel. Accordingly, strategic developments will be located on or have access to existing passenger transport networks so that they are convenient, accessible, safe and attractive to use. Where appropriate, development proposals should be accompanied by travel plans and transport assessments outlining alternatives to private motorised transport use.

Pedestrians and cyclists

- 3.53 The role of walking and cycling in creating liveable places, promoting health improvements and social inclusion has not always been recognised. Despite this, almost all journeys include an element of walking. Ensuring that there is safe and convenient access to housing, jobs, education, health care, other services and local facilities for pedestrians and cyclists is an essential part of promoting social inclusion and the delivery of sustainable development. Consequently, Herefordshire Council will advocate developments which promote pedestrian and cycle friendly access, avoiding conflict with private motorised vehicles, and provide appropriate links to the green infrastructure network where possible.

Public transport

- 3.54 Connecting improvements to pedestrian and cycling facilities with public transport facilities provides greater transport opportunities and alternatives to reliance on private motorised transport. Herefordshire Council will work in partnership with the Highways Agency, Network Rail, bus and rail operators, developers and the community to achieve improvements to the public transport network. This may include improving both the quality and quantity of the service on offer. Land and routes will be safeguarded from inappropriate development and identified in site specific plans. Where appropriate, developer contributions will be sought to deliver improvements to the public transport network.

Major transport schemes

- 3.55 The strategically important schemes, including ESG Link Road, Transport Hub, Hereford Relief Road and Connect 2, are explained further in the Hereford part of the Place-Shaping section. The Leominster Relief Road is explained in detail in the Leominster part of the same section. The funding required for these schemes is detailed in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan.

Freight

- 3.56 Road freight will continue to be the dominant mode of transport for freight distribution within Herefordshire due to its flexibility and accessibility. The county's railway network is limited and few of its key industrial networks are adjacent, or in close proximity to, the four passenger railway stations. The existing railhead for minerals transport at Moreton-on-Lugg will continue to be protected. It is however, important to encourage increased movements by rail to alleviate the additional pressure that growth will place on the county's roads, and to minimise any increase in carbon emissions associated with transport.
- 3.57 During the plan period, advancements in technologies may bring forward alternative transport technologies. Where such developments are not covered by national legislation, Herefordshire Council will support their development. Such proposals must be in accordance with the principles of other policies of the Core Strategy and demonstrate their contribution towards delivering sustainable transport solutions.
- 3.58 In order to deliver the strategic objectives outlined above, development proposals will be expected to demonstrate how they have incorporated the criteria contained within policy MT1 in the section on general policies.
- 3.59 Partnership working will ensure all major housing and employment sites are served by public transport and that rail services and infrastructure within Herefordshire is improved over the long term and that smarter travel choices are promoted in the short term. The place shaping policies and the general policy

on traffic management, alongside the Local Transport Plan, will also work towards delivering this part of the strategy.

Education and Skills

- 3.60 Improved and expanded higher education provision in Herefordshire is envisaged as part of the strategy to help retain our young people and improve the skills base of the county. The place shaping policies and the general policy on community facilities will deliver this part of the strategy. Significant recent work has been undertaken to bring about the establishment of a university in Herefordshire. This proposal has widespread support in the Council, the wider community and with local businesses. The emerging proposal will do much to consolidate the role of Hereford as a traditional county town and which provides a vibrant and diverse range of services. Depending on the state of the project at that time there will be an opportunity for it to be included in greater detail in the Hereford Area Plan.

Health and wellbeing

- 3.61 Health services are being developed through an integrated approach of providing for an increased need for age appropriate services (Understanding Herefordshire). This includes; access to community centres, keeping people independent in their own home and personalised services such as the provision of extra care homes and supported housing generally. Other objectives of this plan, such as improving the provision of open space to help combat obesity and mental health problems, and the provision of improved broadband technology to facilitate access to services, will all work together to provide for improved health and wellbeing in the future. The place shaping policies and the general policies on community facilities and housing will help to facilitate this approach.

Access to services

- 3.62 Historically, Herefordshire performs poorly in national assessments measuring the accessibility to services for the population (see Herefordshire Context section). This is because of its size and very sparsely populated nature. It is envisaged that the strategy of focussing most growth to urban areas, coupled with improvements in technology, such as broadband availability alongside council initiatives such as Locality working, will address this issue. Some nine 'natural communities' or 'localities' have been identified as forming the basis for engagement and providing the opportunity to deliver joined-up customer access points for people.

New and/or improved infrastructure

- 3.63 Necessary community infrastructure including transport, green spaces, leisure uses, health, emergency services and education facilities will be delivered alongside new homes through planning conditions and developer contributions or the Community Infrastructure Levy. This will ensure that sustainable communities are created and maintained and that health and well-being is promoted. The type and phasing of infrastructure required to support the growth strategy is set out in the accompanying Core Strategy Infrastructure Delivery Plan or IDP. This is backed up by a separate evidence base on Economic Viability, which reports that the infrastructure listed in the IDP to support the projects and proposals in the Core Strategy, are viable at the time of writing for developers to want to build.
- 3.64 Significant infrastructure projects are required to: deliver the strategy; ease congestion, improve broadband speeds and availability to foster economic growth; and improve the county's sewerage treatment to prevent adverse effects on water quality. These projects will require joint working by a range

- 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.

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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:-