Herefordshire Council

Place Shaping Options Consultation - Rural Areas

Local Plan 2021-2041

June 2022



Rural Areas Place Shaping Options

Background

Herefordshire is a predominantly rural county with unspoiled countryside, remote valleys, rivers and distinctive heritage. The west of the county is bordered by the Black Mountains and the east is bordered by the Malvern Hills and within the Malvern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and the south features the Wye Valley AONB.

Rural Herefordshire consists of settlements, hamlets, and farmsteads that vary in character and size. Each of these is locally distinctive in size, form, historic character, and placement with various environmental constraints. Infrastructure, services, and facilities for these areas vary across the county as well as their access to public transport provision. Rural areas are primarily served by local bus services but these vary in frequency. The only rural train station is in Colwall along the Hereford to Worcester line.

Herefordshire has the fourth lowest population density in England

- Approximately 87,100 populates the rural areas.
- 53% of the county's population live in rural areas.
- Approximately 35,200 dwellings are within the rural areas
- An additional 2,846 have been built in the last 10 years (2011-2021).

Employment is predominately in manufacturing; defence and security; food and drink production and agricultural and tourism. 23% of Herefordshire residents are employed in the agricultural, forestry, fishing, food services and accommodation sectors.

At present there are more than:

- 100 educational facilities serving the rural areas including 5 secondary schools.
- 200 local amenities including shops, petrol stations, and workshops.
- 150 pubs and restaurants.
- 20 health services including GP's, dentists and pharmacies.
- Numerous community facilities such as village halls, libraries, talk community hubs, playgrounds, sports pitches and places of worship.

Current policy background

Core Strategy

The current Core Strategy seeks to distribute housing within the rural area to a listed 217 rural settlements aiming to support rural services and facilities and provide for local requirements across the county. Outside of these settlements is defined as 'open countryside' where limited housing growth opportunities exist.

The previous rural growth target of 5300 was distributed as proportional growth to each of the parishes with a named settlement within Policy RA2. These were based on the population of the parish in 2011 and a percentage growth target (established on evidence within the Herefordshire Local Housing Market Assessment). To support the Core Strategy delivery, Parish Councils were provided with these target when producing their Neighbourhood Development Plans.

As a result, the strategic rural housing policy has been supported by 113 Neighbourhood Development Plans including site allocations and settlement boundaries. Rural housing growth within the plan period has been achieved in line with the Core Strategy trajectory.

Issues raised to the current approach

In February 2022 as part of the preliminary background work to the options, Parish Councils were consulted to gather views on the effectiveness of the current housing distribution strategy within their communities.

There have been a number of issues raised:

- Some smaller settlements listed Policy RA2 are in unsustainable locations.
- Policy works against the principles of climate change.
- Policy has led to the development in remote rural areas.
- Some settlements have limited services or infrastructure to cater for more growth.
- Environmental constraints were not factored into the settlement selection.
- Led to a lack of housing mix to fulfil community's needs.
- Lack of affordable housing - smaller sites haven't delivered these.
- Policy has led to small scale schemes with few additional community benefits.
- Resulted in disproportionate amount of development in some settlements.
- Has had little or no effect retaining or enhancing existing services or infrastructure.
- There is no clear link between housing and better facilities and services.
- Has had a detrimental impact on the character, heritage assets, landscape and development has not been reflective of surroundings or local needs.
- New development has strained existing infrastructure including social infrastructure - GPs.
- Many settlements have now had bus services reduced.
- Has not effectively reduced car usage in the rural area.

Issues from the Spatial Options Consultation

Below is a summary of issues raised from the Spatial Options consultation (February 2022) with regards to the rural areas.

Transport

- The bicycle/public transport may work within towns and in their immediate surroundings, but not practicable in rural areas. There needs to be a choice to enable modal shifts.
- New developments should have access to active travel options and links to bus services, and where possible the availability of a nearby railway station.
- Interest in opening former railway stations; Ewyas Harold/Pontrilas is being explored, aspiration for Tarrington/Stoke Edith and Moreton on Lugg which are located along existing railway lines.
- Network of proposed Greenways/active travel corridors which could be used for commuting and providing routes to key services and recreational activities in and around the market towns and villages along routes.
- Extend and interconnect cycle routes throughout the county, supporting cycle infrastructure such as bike sheds should be installed where there is a demand and it is practicable to use it.

Climate Change

- Net Zero Carbon not achievable in such a rural county. The contrast of viability between rural and urban Herefordshire.

Environment

- Protection of rural nature of County and its sense of place, open, natural green space and woodland is important.

Housing Distribution

- Concerns regarding the balance of development between the north and south of the county. Too much in the south and that more development should be concentrated in the north (This view may have been affected by the current phosphate issue which covers much of the north of the county).
- Focusing growth on city and established market towns may render rural services unviable.
- Could concentrate more on the rural areas around towns for growth.
- Need to be responsive to the need to support services in west Herefordshire to stop it from ‘dying out’.
- Affordable housing threshold should be reviewed, wish for this to be triggered at 5 houses in rural areas.

Services

- Infrastructure provision should be installed before housing goes in.
- Consideration of schools, doctors’ surgeries and other medical facilities, shops including convenience shopping, community halls, pubs, employment opportunities.

Natural Environment

- Protection and expansion of AONBs, SSSIs, Local Wildlife Sites, Flood plains, orchards and woodlands.
- Protection of the landscape of the Golden Valley and Lugg Meadows.
- Expression of interest for Green Belts around Hereford, market towns and larger villages.

Heating and electricity grid systems

- Consideration of district heating and micro grids and renewable energy installation to support any new settlements and future proof shocks in the energy market.
- Accommodation for Electric Vehicle charging in the homes as well as in public places, move away from oil or LPG heating for domestic use to electric heating.

Preferred Spatial Growth for Rural Areas

Following the public consultation on Spatial Options, there was no clear preferred option emerging. There was a preference for housing growth to be concentrated in areas outside conservation areas and AONBs. Although there was no preferred option on the distribution of settlements, it was clear that there was a preference for a less dispersed settlement pattern than the current Core Strategy.

Capacity for development

Option 1: Dispersed housing growth in settlements	**Option 2 Housing growth in the larger settlements**	**Option 3 Housing growth will be developed in rural hubs**	**Option 4 Housing growth outside of AONBs and conservation areas**
23%	25%	22%	30%

Therefore, the preferred strategy for the rural areas will be a hybrid of options. It will seek to focus growth within the most sustainable settlements and be responsive to the desire to reduce the amount of growth within settlements containing a conservation area or within an AONBs. There will also be a reduced number of settlements from those current listed within the Core Strategy.

The selected settlements will be based on their range of services; facilities; connectivity (in terms of public transport, main road network and broadband); infrastructure; employment provision and environmental constraints. This will be supported by evidence gathered by an audit of rural settlements entitled Rural Settlement Services and Environmental Survey.

Rural Settlements Services and Environmental Survey

The Rural Settlement Hierarchy Background Paper outlines the background data that underpins the future settlement hierarchy of the Local Plan 2021-2041. Data has been collected using various sources of research including information held by Herefordshire Council and third party service providers, desk-based mapping and Parish Councils (consultation in February 2020 and February 2021).

A comprehensive review had been undertaken of more than 300 settlements across the rural area.

The following have been surveyed:

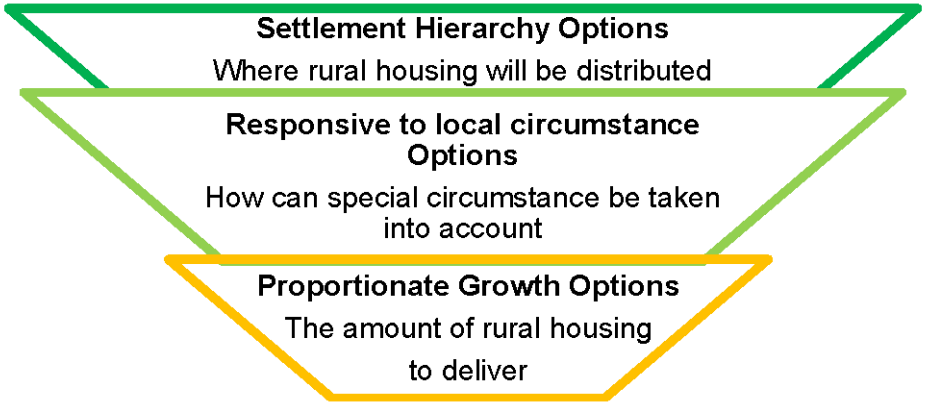
- Services and facilities
- Public transport availability
- Infrastructure and road network
- Employment provision
- Population statistics at 2020
- Environmental assets and constraints (areas at risk of fluvial flooding, drainage, areas of AONB, and conservation areas).

The information was collated and consulted with parish councils in April 2022 to ensure the data included is accurate. 60% of parish councils responded to the Rural Settlement Services and Environmental Survey consultation.

All the details can be viewed within the Rural Settlement Hierarchy Background Paper

Rural Areas Place Shaping Options

Below outlines the potential options for the rural areas. This is broken down within three sections:



Section 1 - Where will rural housing be distributed? (Rural Settlement Hierarchy)

These options are exploring how the most sustainable settlements identified within the Rural Settlement Hierarchy Background Paper will be selected to form those listed for growth within the Local Plan.

Option 1a - Housing distributed through the most sustainable settlements in the county:

This option seeks to select the most sustainable settlements across the county as a whole. These are the settlements with the largest range of services and facilities, the least environment constraints and the greatest access to infrastructure such as public transport and access to main roads.

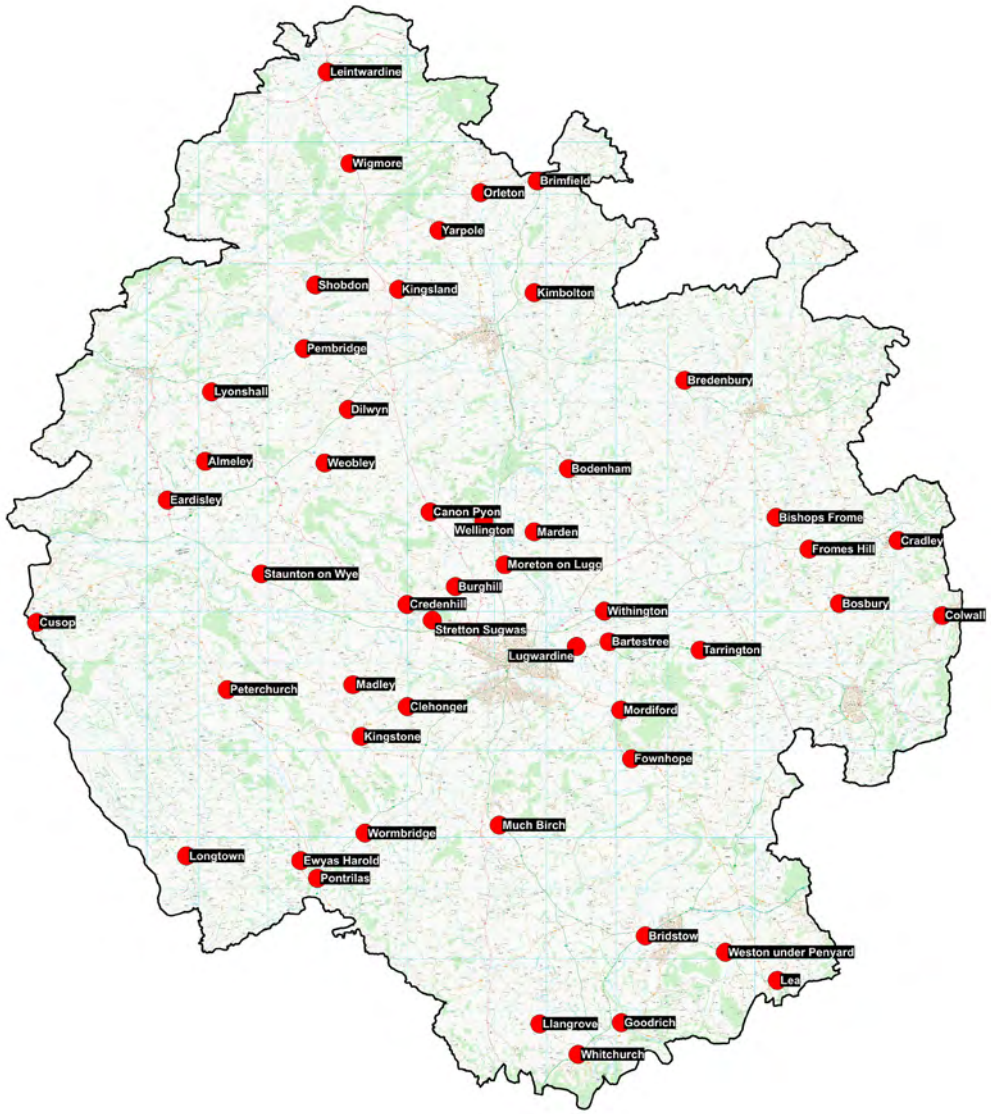
The list and the map below demonstrate which settlements would form this option. The rural growth would be directed primarily to those settlements.

Outside these settlements would be classified as ‘open countryside’ where only limited housing growth would be permitted.

Option 1a Settlements			
Almeley	Bartestree	Bishops Frome	Bodenham
Bosbury	Bredenbury	Bridstow	Brimfield
Burghill	Canon Pyon	Clehonger	Colwall
Cradley	Credenhill	Cusop	Dilwyn
Eardisley	Ewyas Harold	Fownhope	Fromes Hill
Goodrich	Kimbolton	Kingsland	Kingstone
Lea	Leintwardine	Llangrove	Longtown
Lugwardine	Lyonshall	Madley	Marden
Mordiford	Moreton on Lugg	Much Birch	Orleton
Pembridge	Peterchurch	Pontrilas	Shobdon
Staunton on Wye	Stretton Sugwas	Tarrington	Wellington
Weobley	Weston under Penyard	Whitchurch	Wigmore
Withington	Wormbridge	Yarpole	

Option 1A Settlements

Scale 1:210000 at A3 NORTH



Positives

- Targets housing to the most sustainable settlements.
- May help to reduce the need to travel as growth focussed to areas with a significant level of existing services and facilities.
- Support rural services and facilities within those locations.
- Likely to enable affordable housing opportunities in identified settlements.

Negatives

- Some areas of the county have limited housing growth.
- There are areas of the south, south west and north east with no settlements listed.
- Some existing rural services and facilities will not see increased growth to support their viability during the plan period, which may led to further decline.
- Likely to decrease the likelihood of providing affordable housing outside of identified settlements.

Option 1b - Housing to be distributed to the most sustainable settlements by Housing Market Area (HMA):

The county is divided up into seven HMAs based upon common housing characteristics including tenure, house type profile, incomes and affordability and house prices. It also reflects geographical proximity, patterns of household movement (migration), and travel to work patterns. Further background to Housing Market Areas can be found in the Housing Market Area Needs Assessment July 2021.

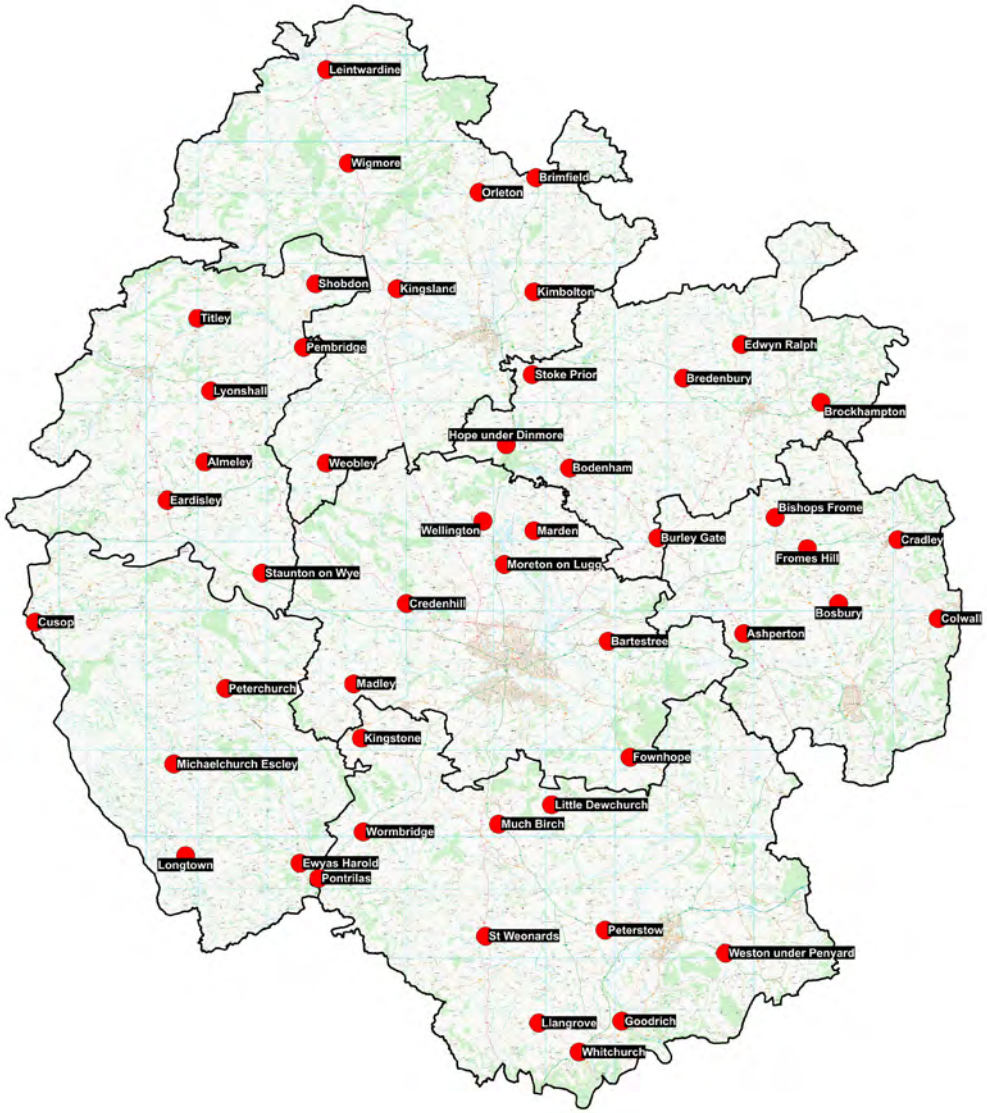
This option seeks to select the most sustainable settlements within each of the seven HMAs. This allows growth to be targeted to those settlement across the rural area which support their rural hinterland. It is responsive to the different characteristics and the local distinctiveness of the county, providing a more even distribution of settlements.

The list and the map below demonstrate which settlements would form this option. The rural growth would be directed primarily to those settlements. Outside these settlement would be classified as 'open countryside' where only limited housing would be permitted.

Option 1b Settlements			
Bromyard HMA	**Golden Valley HMA**	**Hereford HMA**	**Kington HMA**
Bodenham	Cusop	Bartestree	Almeley
Bredenbury	Ewyas Harold	Credenhill	Eardisley
Brockhampton (n)	Longtown	Fownhope	Lyonshall
Burley Gate	Michaelchurch Escley	Madley	Pembridge
Edwyn Ralph	Peterchurch	Marden	Shobdon
Hope under Dinmore		Moreton on Lugg	Staunton on Wye
Stoke Prior		Wellington	Titley
Ledbury HMA	**Leominster HMA**	**Ross on Wye HMA**	
Ashperton	Brimfield	Goodrich	St Weonards
Bishops Frome	Kimbolton	Kingstone	Weston under Penyard
Bosbury	Kingsland	Little Dewchurch	Whitchurch
Colwall	Leintwardine	Llangrove	Wormbridge
Cradley	Orleton	Much Birch	
Fromes Hill	Weobley	Peterstow	
	Wigmore	Pontrilas	

Option 1B Settlements

Scale 1:210000 at A3 NORTH



Positives

- Will be responsive to the different character of rural areas across the county.
- More evenly distributed across the rural area.
- Will support growth in settlements which provide vital services to the more remote areas of the county
- Likely to enable affordable housing opportunities in identified settlements.

Negatives

- May not support reducing the need to travel by private car in some areas.
- Will include some settlements with a smaller range of services and facilities.
- Some larger settlements in the Hereford HMA will not be identified for growth.

Section 2 - Taking account of Conservation Areas and AONBs.

The preferred rural strategy option seeks to acknowledge the desire to be reduce growth within the AONB and settlement with a conservation area. Therefore two options are suggested:

Option 2a - Focus growth only within sustainable settlements outside of the AONBs and Conservation Areas:

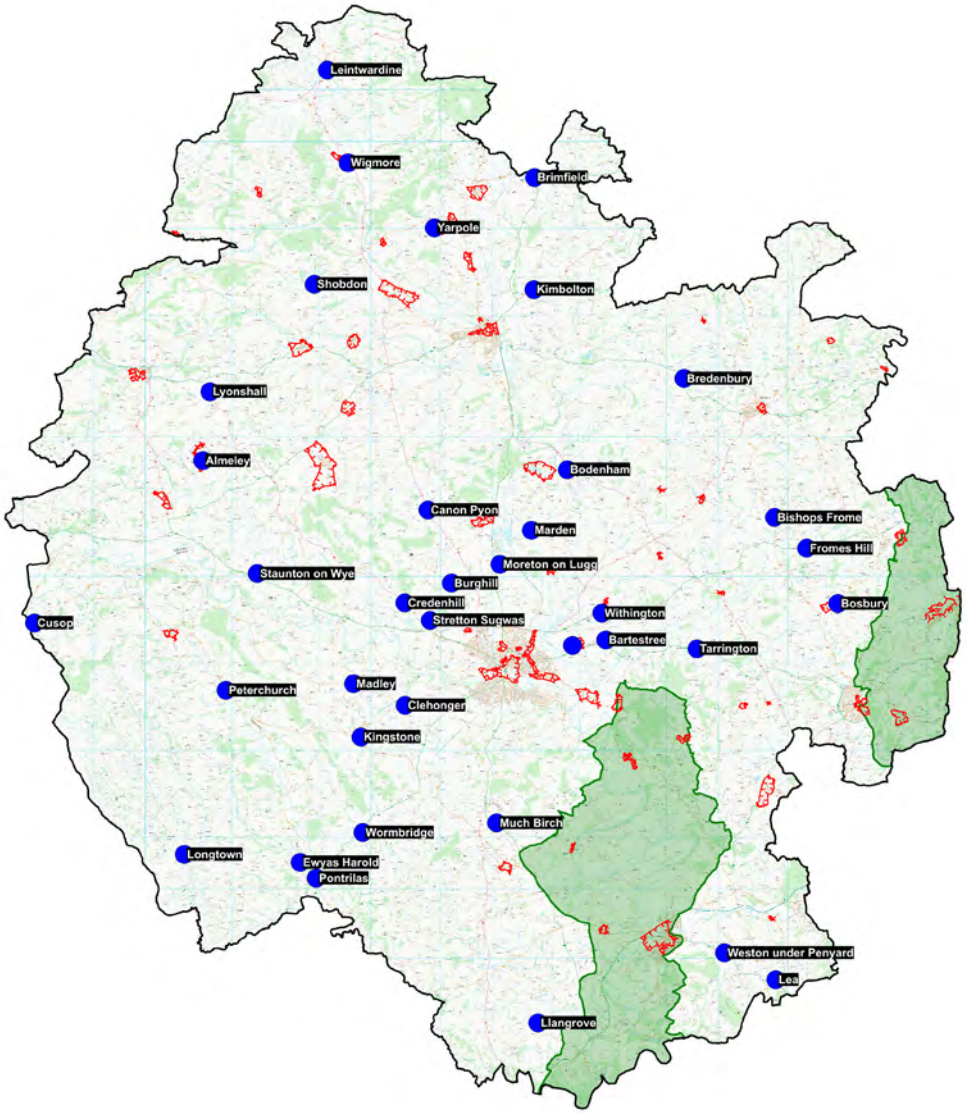
There are two AONBs and a total of 46 rural conservation areas within the county. Taking the two suggested options above (options 1A and 1B), this seeks to remove those settlements listed above which are within an AONB or have the majority of the built form within a conservation area.

- For the distribution based the most sustainable settlements across the county (Option 1a) this would remove 14 settlements.
- For the distribution based on Housing Market Areas (Option 1b) this would remove 13 settlements.

This will effectively make those settlements removed from the lists ‘open countryside’ and limit development to only specific circumstances. The rural growth would be concentrated within settlements outside of the AONB listed below.

Option 2A Settlements (Countywide)

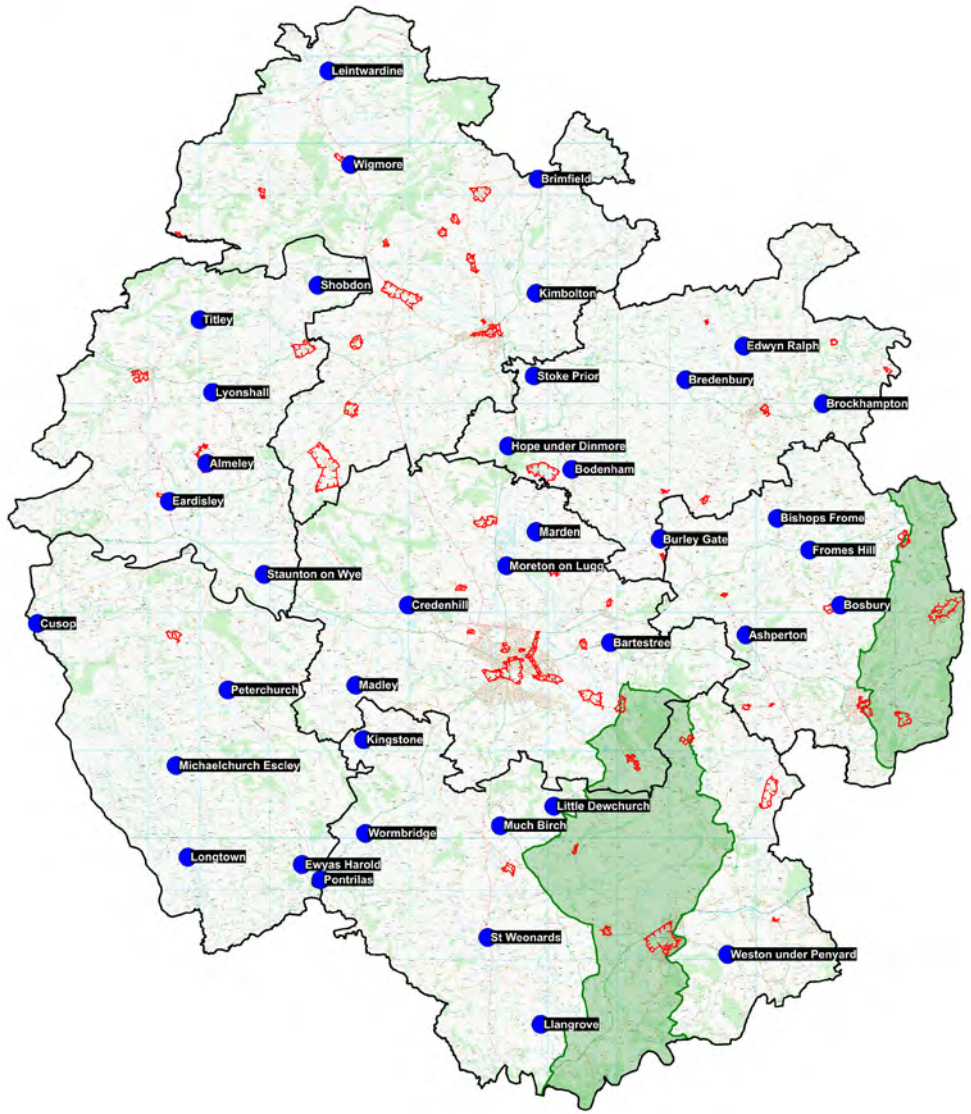
Scale 1:210000 at A3 NORTH



Option 2a Countywide Settlements	
Almeley	Bartestree
Bishops Frome	Bodenham
Bosbury	Bredenbury
Brimfield	Burghill
Canon Pyon	Clehonger
Credenhill	Cusop
Ewyas Harold	Fromes Hill
Kimbolton	Kingstone
Lea	Leintwardine
Llangrove	Longtown
Lugwardine	Lyonshall
Madley	Marden
Moreton on Lugg	Much Birch
Peterchurch	Pontrilas
Shobdon	Staunton on Wye
Stretton Sugwas	Tarrington
Weston under Penyard	Wigmore
Withington	Wormbridge
Yarpole	

Option 2A Settlements (HMA)

Scale 1:210000 at A3 NORTH



Option 2a Countywide Settlements	
Bromyard HMA	**Golden Valley HMA**
Bodenham	Cusop
Bredenbury	Ewyas Harold
Brockhampton (n)	Longtown
Burley Gate	Michaelchurch Escley
Edwyn Ralph	Peterchurch
Hope under Dinmore	
Stoke Prior	
Hereford HMA	**Kington HMA**
Bartestree	Almeley
Credenhill	Eardisley
Madley	Lyonshall
Marden	Shobdon
Moreton on Lugg	Staunton on Wye
	Titley
Ledbury HMA	**Leominster HMA**
Ashperton	Brimfield
Bishops Frome	Kimbolton
Bosbury	Leintwardine
Fromes Hill	Wigmore
Ross on Wye HMA	
Kingstone	Pontrilas
Little Dewchurch	St Weonards
Llangrove	Weston under Penyard
Much Birch	Wormbridge

Positives

- Seeks to protect the landscape and townscape of the AONBs and conservation areas.
- Retain and enhance good quality, attractive places, enhancing tourism.

Negatives

- Some of the county's most sustainable settlements are within a AONB or have a conservation area but would not be highlighted for future growth.
- May affect the viability of service and facilities in settlements within the AONB and conservation areas.
- Settlement within the AONB or conservation areas would be subject to restrictions similar to open countryside areas.
- Rural housing growth would be concentrated on fewer sustainable settlements.

Option 2b - Reduce the amount of growth within settlements in the AONBs and Conservation Areas.

This option acknowledges that some growth within AONBs and the conservation area settlements can be beneficial to support existing services and facilities. Many of these settlements are amongst the most sustainable within the county and to restrict development may have a detrimental effect on their viability or ability to provide homes for local needs within the area.

Therefore, this option seeks to introduce a lower proportional growth target in those settlements within the AONB or where the conservation area covers a substantial amount of the built form. This would mean that all the settlements highlighted in Option 1a or 1b would remain but there would be two sets of proportional growth requirements: one for those settlements within a AONB or wholly within a conservation area and a second higher figure for those outside of these designated areas.

Positives

- Would be responsive to environmental character whilst allowing some small scale development to retain viability of services and facilities.
- Would reduce the amount of development seen within these areas within the last plan period.
- Seeks to protect the landscape and townscape of the AONBs and conservation areas.

Negatives

- With lower growth target could affect the ability to provide affordable housing and community facilities within the AONBs and conservation areas.
- Rural housing growth would be concentrated on the settlements outside of AONB and conservation areas.
- Development close to conservation areas could have an impact on historic character.

Section 3 - Provision of additional tier of settlement for affordable housing, self-build and custom build housing only

Option 3a - Additional list of settlement within the Local Plan

In response to feedback, it is proposed to reduce the number of settlements highlighted within the Local Plan from those within the Core Strategy. This is to encourage sustainable development, reduce the need to travel by private car and increase the viability of those potential developments to provide a wider range of community benefits. As a result this will mean that more areas are classified as 'open countryside' in planning terms where only limited housing growth for specific reasons can take place.

This option is seeking to support growth with a second tier of sustainable settlements to allow for affordable housing, local need self-build and community led housing only. This would enable some local needs to be met in areas outside of the main settlements highlighted for growth.

These settlements would be selected from the Rural Settlement Hierarchy Background Paper as the next tier of sustainable settlements. They will have slightly fewer services and facilities than the named settlements. Their selection would be based on which of the options outlined above was preferred.

Settlements outside of the two tiers would be classified as 'open countryside'.

The settlements listed below are based on the selection criteria for Option 1a and given for illustration purposes only. The final list will be dependent on which distribution options is selected.

Option 3a Settlements			
Brampton Abbotts	Burley Gate	Clifford	Crow Hill
Dorstone	Gorsley	Holme Lacy	Hope under Dinmore
Kilpeck	Little Dewchurch	Luston	Michaelchurch Escley
Monkland	Much Marcle	St Weonards	Stoke Prior
Sutton St Nicholas	Titley	Vowchurch	Walford (s)
Woolhope			

Option 3b - Neighbourhood Development Plan allocations

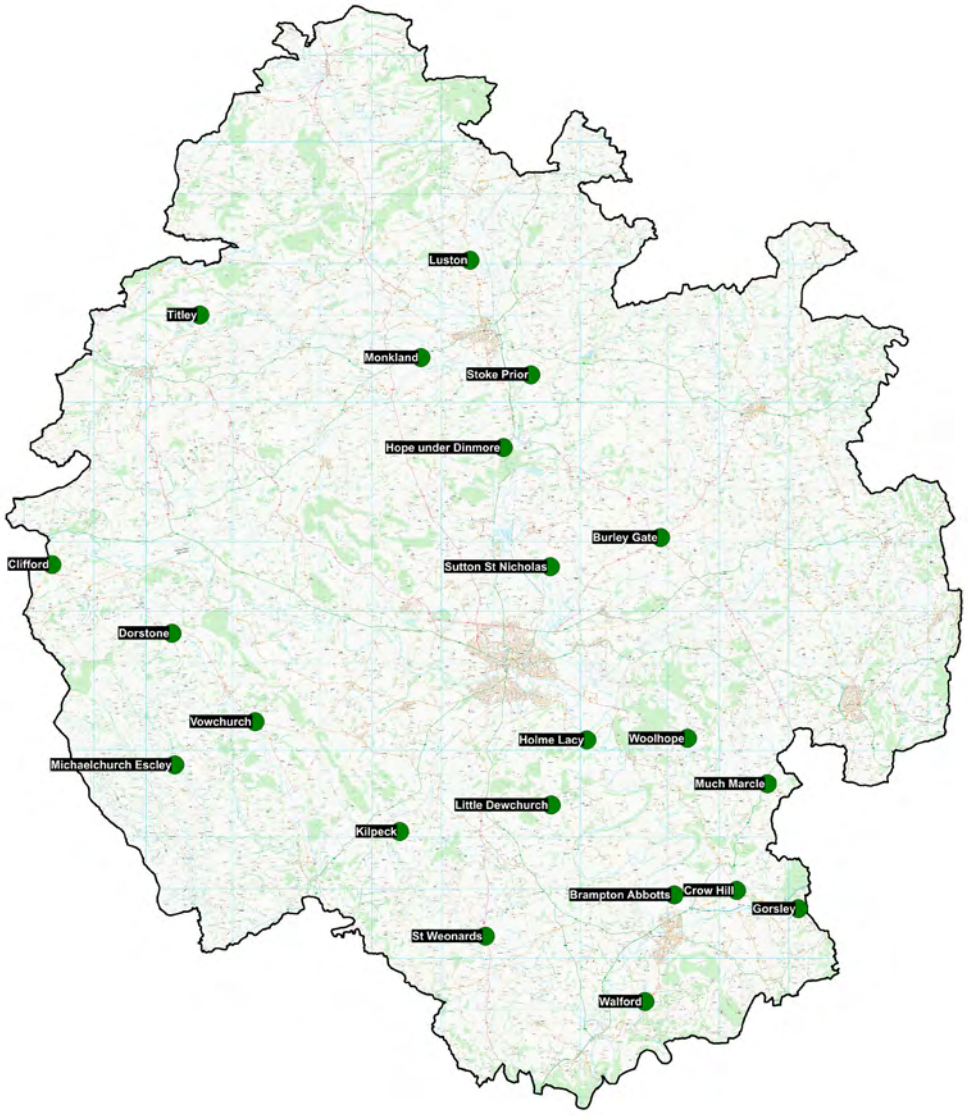
An additional alternative to this approach is to provide policy framework which would support parish councils/communities within their own Neighbourhood Development Plans to make the case to allocate site for affordable housing, self build; custom-build and community led housing schemes.

This could mean that settlements not indicated within the Local Plan list for growth could make a reasoned argument within their NDPs where there is a specific need or requirement.

This approach would support communities to provide local needs housing within their area within a local development plan led approach.

Option 3a Smaller Settlements

Scale 1:210000 at A3 NORTH



Positives

- Seeks to address local needs within the rural area.
- Provides specific opportunities for affordable housing in areas where market housing would be limited.
- Limited development would assist protecting the character of these settlements.

Negatives

- Encourages some growth in less sustainable areas.
- Potentially does not reduce the need to travel by private car.
- Not sufficient growth in these settlements to sustain rural services and facilities.
- Would need to have robust definitions of local needs, ‘self-build’ and community led housing.

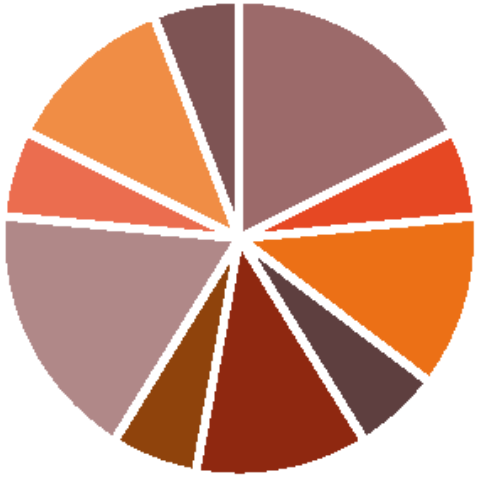
Section 4 - Proportional Growth Options in the rural areas

These options explore how the overall rural housing target could be delivered i.e. how much growth will each named settlement in the Local Plan be required to be provided. The preferred spatial option indicated around 2500 new dwellings in the rural area during the next plan period in additional to the around 2700 existing commitments within the rural area.

Two options have been suggested on how this overall figure could be distributed to those settlements highlighted for growth.

Option 1 - Proportionate Growth

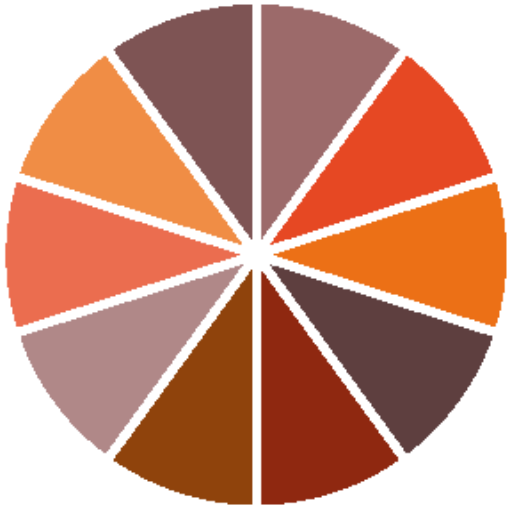
This option will seek to continue the current principle of proportional growth from Core Strategy. This is based on current settlement size at the beginning of the plan period. It seeks to ensure that any future growth requirements are responsive to the character and local distinctiveness of individual settlements. Those settlements which are larger will have a greater portion than those smaller settlements.



Size of settlement x % Proportional Growth = Future Growth target

Option 2 - Enhanced Growth

This option will be based on distributing growth evenly to named sustainable settlements regardless of settlement size. It will seek to enable growth that can provide for more than just future housing numbers. The previous approach to proportional growth has been criticised for enabling housing growth at a size that does not necessarily bring any additional community benefits, support or enhance existing services. Therefore, this potential approach will enable housing growth to be of a size that could support added community benefits such as affordable housing and community infrastructure. It would provide viable growth to support rural services and facilities.



Rural Housing growth divided by the total number of settlements = Settlement growth

Other Rural Options

Although there has been a concentration of housing growth and distribution within this paper, it is acknowledged that there are other issues within the rural areas which should be addressed.

Rural Employment

There are a number of large employment sites within the rural area which could be identified for safeguarding. For example:

- Kingstone/Madley Airfield.
- Moreton on Lugg.
- Shobdon Airfield.
- Whitestone Business Park, Withington.

Further guidance will be provided within the Employment Land Study.

Employment Place Shaping Options

Outside of any existing employment sites, should new larger scale employment provision be directed towards those settlements named within the options above?

Are there instances where large scale employment will be situated within the ‘open countryside’?

Transport

There are a number of potential opportunities to improve connectivity and transport in and around the rural area, enabling commuter and leisure travel to be made within the use of private cars. These could include:

- Long distance cycleways/greenways along old railway lines.
- Additional footpaths/rights of way along field edges connecting rural settlements.
- Safeguarding the former Herefordshire Gloucestershire canal route.

Rural Transport Options

Are there any known long distance routes which could be safeguarded within the Local Plan?