Introduction



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

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

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

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

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

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

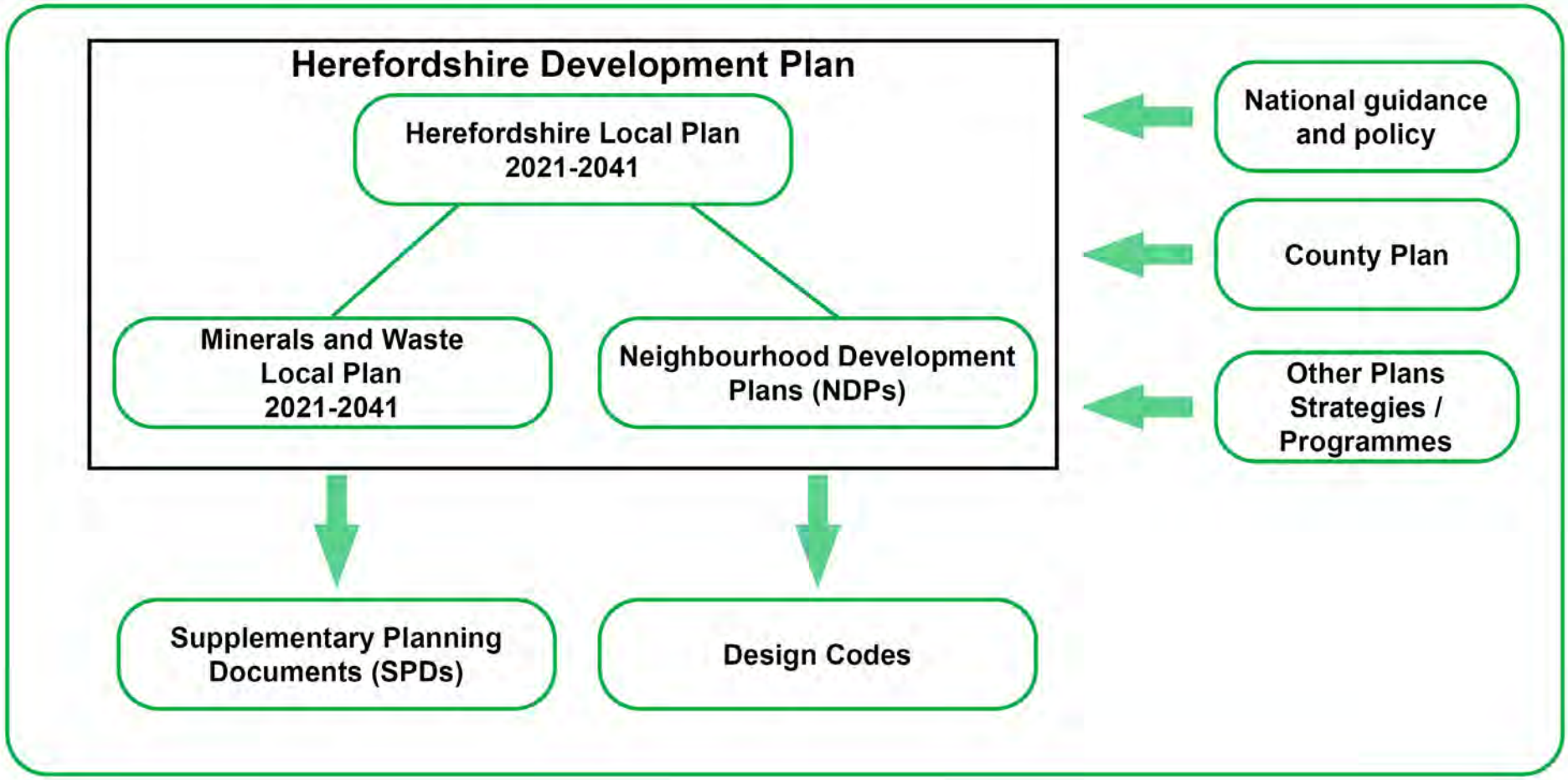
Ultimately the aim is for the Local Plan to provide the policies that will contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. This includes the provision of homes, employment land, and supporting infrastructure whilst also protecting and enhancing the attractive and distinctive character of the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

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

Development Plan hierarchy

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

Figure 1: Herefordshire Development Plan document hierarchy



County Plan

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

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

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

Development Plans

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

The Local Development Scheme sets out further details about the Development Plan Documents and Supplementary Planning Documents currently in use.

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

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

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

Saved policies

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

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

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

The draft Local Plan

The draft Local Plan includes:

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

This draft Local Plan has been informed by:

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

Consultation to date

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

Table 1: Previous public consultations

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Figure 2: Herefordshire key facts

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

Total Population



187,034
(ONS, census 2021)

Total No. of households



82,827
Households
(ONS, census 2021)

Age Profile



28,055
(15%)
Aged 0-14



110,350
(59%)
Aged 15-64



48,629
(26%)
Aged 65+

(ONS, census 2021)

Travel to work



59%
Vehicle



1%
Other





1%
Bus or Train



26%
Work from home



14%
Walk or Cycle

(ONS, census 2021)

Employment

22%
Employed in production, including manufacturing

40%
Employed in public administration, education & health





6%
Employed in business services activities

28%
Employed in distribution, transport, accommodation & food

4%
Employed in other areas

(ONS, census 2021)

Deprivation Levels



Not deprived: **49%**
Deprived in 1 area: **35%**
Deprived in 2 areas: **13%**
Deprived in 3 areas: **3%**
Deprived in 4 areas: **0.18%**

(ONS, census 2021)

Residential Planning Statistics



Herefordshire commitments for granted planning permissions at April 2023: **4,724 dwellings**

Carbon Footprint



17.8t CO_2e* per-household territorial footprint.

*carbon dioxide equivalent
(a number of different gasses collectively as a common unit)
Community carbon calculator 2021

Vision

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

The overall vision for the county at 2041 is:

Environment

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

Community

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

Economy

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

Objectives

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

Table 2: Local Plan objectives

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

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

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

Context for the strategy

Addressing the climate and ecological emergency

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

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

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

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

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

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

Nutrient levels in the River Wye Special Area of Conservation.

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

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

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

Affordable housing

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

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

Travel

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

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

Spatial Strategy

Amount of housing required

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

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

Figure 3: Herefordshire housing requirement



Infrastructure and services

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

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

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

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

Well connected neighbourhoods

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

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

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

Designing beautiful and healthy places in Herefordshire through design coding.

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

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

Distribution of development

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

Figure 4: Herefordshire Key Diagram

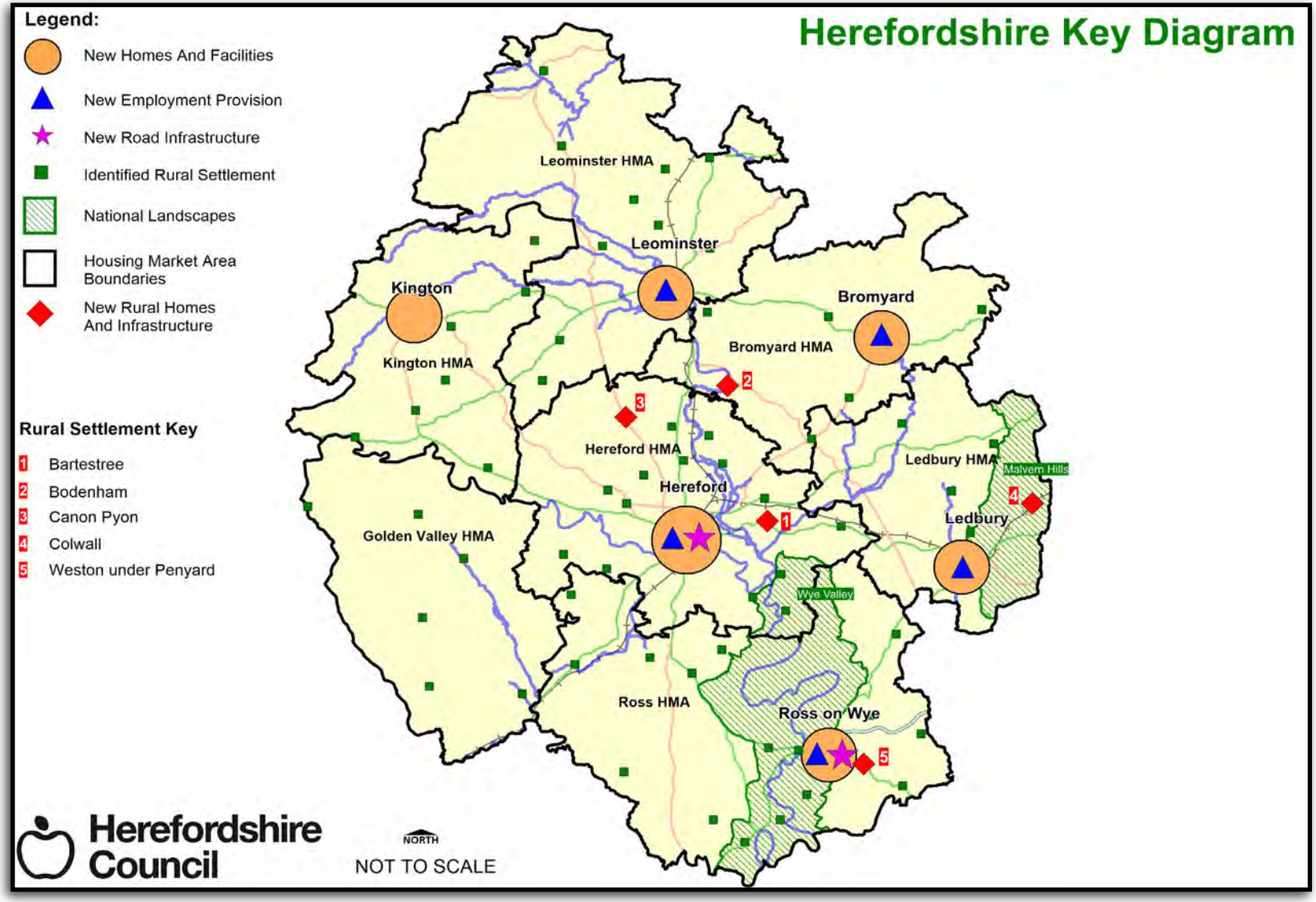


Table 3: Proposed broad distribution of development

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

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

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

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

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

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

Hereford

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

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

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

The market towns

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

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

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

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

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

Rural areas

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

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

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

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

1. **Hubs.**
   These settlements have a primary school, employment and access to public transport and/or potential for better public transport in the future.

2. **Hubs with environmental constraints.**
   These settlements are those that meet the rural hub definition in respect of their role and range of services but are located where promoting a significant level of new development would risk damaging environmental designations, such as National Landscapes or Conservation Areas or exacerbate existing environmental problems e.g. flood prone areas.

3. **Service Settlements.**
   These have a more limited range of services e.g. may have a school but no employment or vice versa.

4. **Service Settlements with environmental constraints.**
   These are similar to the service settlements but also have environmental issues.

5. **Open countryside.**
   Here, only limited development will be allowed, e.g. affordable housing and sites for Travellers and Travelling Show People.

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

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

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

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

Role of Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDP)

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

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

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

Future monitoring of NDP provision

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

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

Longer term growth - Potential new settlement

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

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

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

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