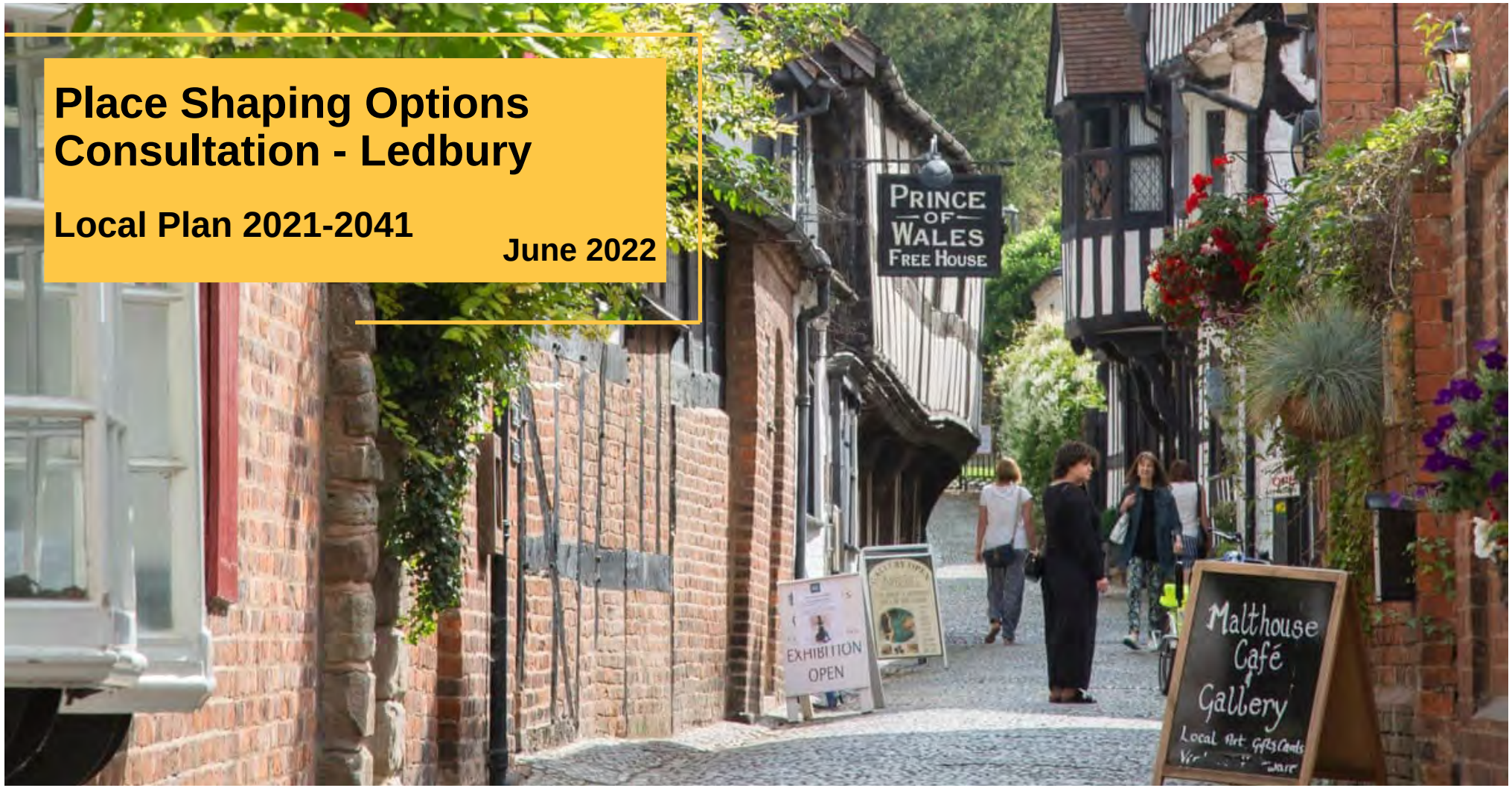
Herefordshire Council

Place Shaping Options Consultation - Ledbury

Local Plan 2021-2041

June 2022



Ledbury Place Shaping Options

Background

Ledbury is a market town in the east of Herefordshire. It has a population of 10,100 (2019 Mid-Year Estimate) and is a service centre for over 20,000 people across some 20 parishes in Herefordshire, as well as neighbouring Gloucestershire and Worcestershire. The town has good rail links to regional cities and towns as well as commuting routes to London. The vibrant town centre is mainly based on trade and tourism. In addition, Ledbury attracts many visitors drawn to its history, festivals and other seasonal events.

Current and emerging policy background

Core Strategy

The Core Strategy proposed that Ledbury would accommodate:

- A minimum of 800 new homes balanced with a minimum of 15 hectares of new employment land.
- Majority of new housing development was focussed to the north of the town and the strategic location for new employment of around 12 hectares to the west of the town (south of Little Marcle Road).
- The employment land will be a major area for future economic growth but to date has not progressed.
- The Land north of Viaduct has since achieved outline planning permission.

Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP)

The Ledbury Neighbourhood Development Plan was Made in January 2019 and includes the Strategic site (north of the Viaduct) as well as two other sites with permission for housing, Land South of Leadon Way (275 dwellings) and Land at the Full Pitcher (93 dwellings). There is no settlement boundary identified for the town in this Plan.

- Ledbury Town Council have now embarked upon a review of the NDP to respond to the changing pace of future development coming forward in the town. The Ledbury NDP review had its first consultation in January 2022.
- The NDP includes the above mentioned sites, with additional land further east and south of Leadon Way which has planning permission (140 dwellings).
- The draft review NDP identifies approximately 20 hectares of employment land adjacent to the Heineken factory on Little Marcle Road. The land north of the Viaduct also includes permission for 3 hectares of employment land.
- Lawnside and Market Street are proposed within the NDP for regeneration. The area is considered suitable for mixed use development including residential. The GP practices in the area have indicated a need to expand in response to the recent growth in the town. A suitable site has yet to be identified
- To enable better and enhanced facilities, the town's cricket ground was relocated to the Ross Road in 2017. The Swifts Football Club are keen to relocate as their current site has limitations within a residential area .

- Land adjacent to the Rugby Club has been identified for this purpose within the reviewed Ledbury NDP. There is the potential to achieve a suitable shared access with the proposed employment land from the Ross Road.
- The railway station is identified as an area for improvement to accessibility, facilities and additional cycle and car parking.

Market Town Investment Plan

The Ledbury Investment Plan 2021 proposes a series of projects to encourage investment in the town and to support the local economy. This includes:

- Viaduct site – 3ha employment allocation intended for innovation/ tech businesses and micro-businesses.
- Employment Land at Little Marcle Road - Adjacent to the Heineken brewery, this site is a 6.7 acres brownfield land for employment use. Heineken has identified land as surplus to operational requirements.
- Rail parking and access - additional car parking at Ledbury Station as well as opening up pedestrian access (including disabled access) to the east bound platform.
- Conversion of Town Council offices to tourist destination. This will add to the wider tourism/local facilities and will help generate revenue and add to the towns heritage tourism offering.
- Relocation of Playing fields, The aim is for an upgrade of pitch type and facilities to support strong community involvement in sports – requires circa 5ha identified potentially on land adjacent to Little Marcle employment site.
- Viaduct student accommodation. There is potential for student accommodation with accessibility via Ledbury rail station to learning centres in Hereford.

Other local documents

Ledbury Landscape and Visual Baseline Assessment January 2022 is a comprehensive study, undertaken by the Town Council, of the land within and around Ledbury. It provides the baseline information to inform the policies drafted in the Ledbury NDP Review 2022 and inform Ledbury Town Council's input into the Local Plan update.

Topic Paper 2 Business Needs including Employment Land Final produced by the Town Council, the purpose of the paper was to review business and employment proposals within the first NDP and recommend changes that may be required as a consequence of needs arising since its adoption.

Ledbury Neighbourhood Plan Design Guide January 2018 includes specific design improvements and references that has underpinned the Ledbury NDP Review 2022.

Issues from the Spatial Options Consultation

The following comments were made during the spatial options consultation:

- New development around Ledbury threatening to change the character of the town.
- Need to be investment in the supporting infrastructure, employment opportunities and public transport improvements.

- Concerns about the design of new builds being approved.
- Both Ross and Ledbury benefit from being more closely located to the motorway network.
- However, others argued that these market towns have already had their fair share of development and have not seen the supporting infrastructure to support this level of development.

Spatial option growth for Ledbury

The preferred spatial option suggests an indicative housing growth target of approximately 600 units within Ledbury for the period up to 2041. In addition there were approximately 970 commitments (planning permissions in April 2022).

Capacity for development

Built April 2021- April 2022	Commitments at April 2022
75	approx. 970

Opportunities and constraints

Key constraints to development in Ledbury are:

- Flooding on the western edge of Ledbury from the River Leadon.
- The western edge to the town is marked by Leadon Way which runs north to south alongside the River Leadon which will be further enhanced by the route of the Hereford and Gloucester canal through the new development to the north of the Viaduct.
- Further west is Walls Hill Fort which is a Scheduled Ancient Monument.
- Malvern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). This covers a large area to the east of the town.
- Lack of unused brownfield sites within the built up area.

There are more specific weaknesses and opportunities in relation to certain sites/areas:

- The Lawnside and Market Street area has been identified for regeneration but the potential housing that could come forward in this area has yet to be established. If the area could be reconfigured then there are opportunities for better visibility and connection with linkages from the park and recreation area through to the town centre.
- The railway station continues to be a popular choice of travel but it is constrained by access and it has limited capacity for parking at the station. This causes on street parking in the nearby roads and residential areas.
- The restricted access at the station for journeys eastbound to Malvern/Worcester causes difficulties for those unable to comfortably use the footbridge to access the platform.

Other opportunities:

- Opportunities to maintain the town's high visitor levels with its proximity to the Malvern Hills AONB and central Conservation Area.
- Adequate land availability to facilitate comprehensive development incorporating strong well planned linkages to nearby areas.
- Opportunities to deliver better access and improved parking provision at the station.

Options

Strategic housing growth options

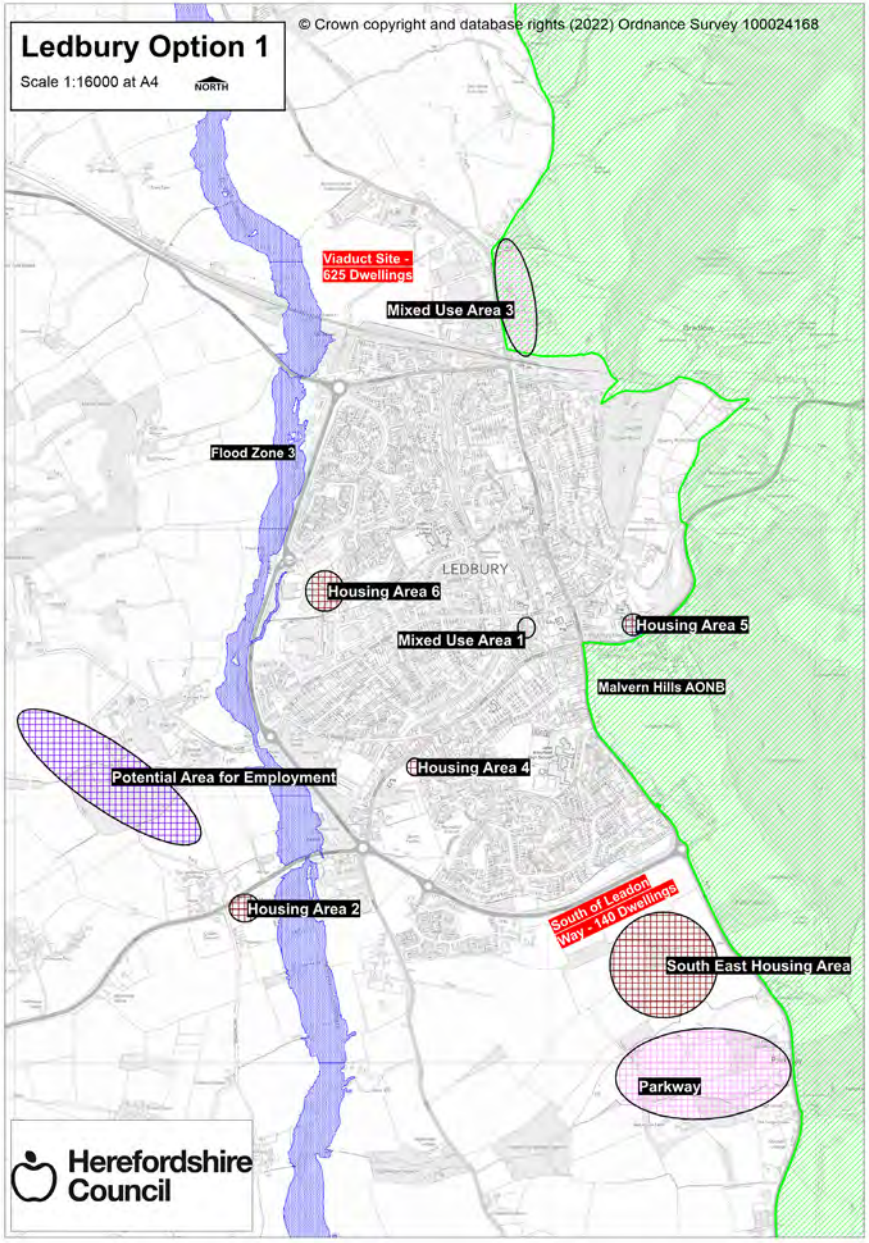
There are three main options for future directions of strategic growth. Due to the constraints of the Malvern Hills AONB and the eastern side's issue with flooding and accessibility, these all lie to the southern side of Ledbury and within the town's built form. For ease of reference, they are labelled on the maps as follows:

- Land to the south east including small sites (Option 1)
- Land to the south west including small sites (Option 2)
- Land to the south east and south west (Option 3)

The Options 1 and 2 would requires a number of smaller areas to come forward to achieve the indicative housing target. The third option suggests both southern areas (either in part or in whole) could be brought forward to deliver the housing target.

Added to this, there is potential for regeneration in the Lawnside and Market Street area situated on the periphery of the town's principal shopping area. Regeneration could include replacement of existing housing which will lead to improvements in the housing stock.

A summary of the opportunities and constraints for each direction of growth is provided below. This will be followed by a more detailed breakdown of the key points in relation to a number of place-based topics.



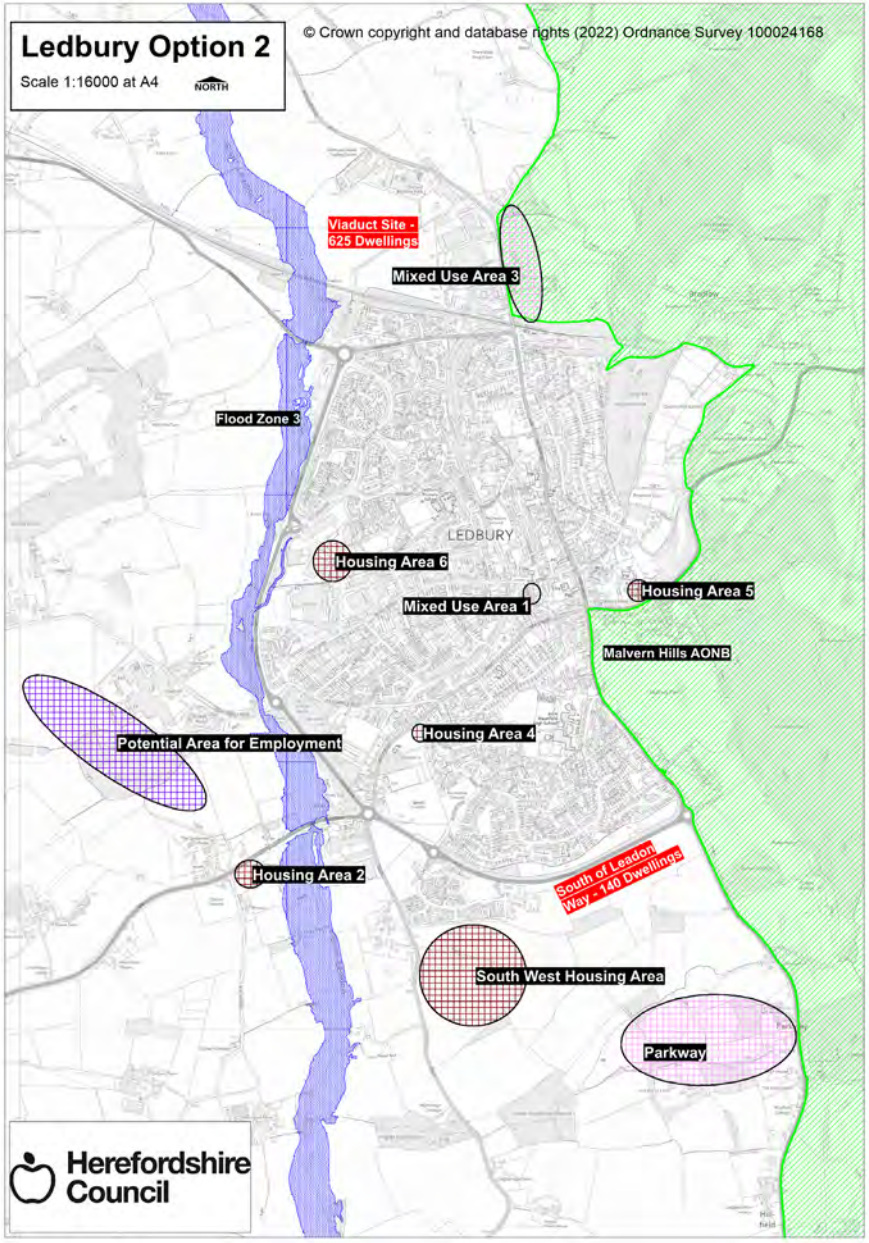
Option 1: Land to the South East of Ledbury

Opportunities:

- Located directly adjacent to the A417, therefore providing opportunities for good road access links.
- Potential to link in with adjacent planned development.
- Opportunities to incorporate safe accessible pedestrian/cycle links into the town centre.
- Opportunity to bring forward more eco housing
- The area known Parkway is approximately 1.5 miles south of Ledbury town centre. Given the constraints to new development in and around Ledbury, this area could provide an opportunity to consider a comprehensively planned sustainable development in the longer term which could enable growth beyond the plan period of 2041.

Constraints:

- The area is within the setting of the Malvern Hills AONB which will require a considered approach to reduce the landscape impact.
- The A417 limits the ability to traverse into town therefore safe and accessible routes will need to be possible.



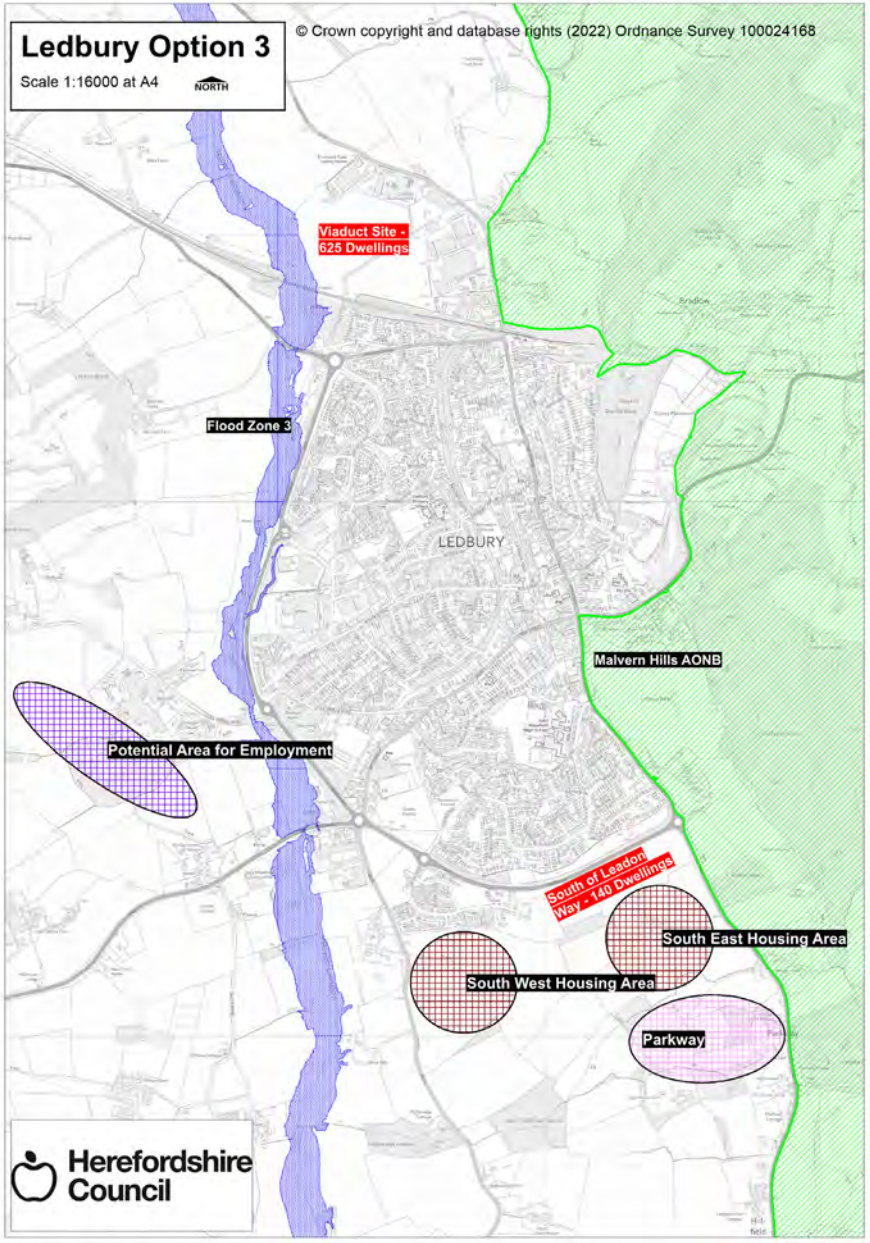
Option 2: Land to the South West of Ledbury

Opportunities:

- It could be linked in with the housing development currently being built to the north.
- The primary access could be via the housing site currently being developed.
- It is a large tract of land that could bring forward wider benefits such as open space and potential local facilities.
- Good connections to nearby areas for the successful delivery for this area.

Constraints:

- This area is further away from the town and travel by non-vehicle movement will be a greater distance than other locations.
- Dymock Road is more rural in nature and does not offer a suitable main access and concern about increase in traffic.



Option 3: Land to the South East and South West

Opportunities:

- Located directly adjacent to the A417, therefore providing opportunities for good road access links and opportunities to incorporate safe accessible pedestrian/cycle links into the town.
- Potential to link in with adjacent planned development.
- As a larger site it has potential to bring forward wider benefits.
- The area known Parkway is approximately is approximately 1.5 miles south of Ledbury town centre. It could provide an opportunity to consider a comprehensively planned sustainable development in the longer term beyond the plan period of 2041.

Constraints:

- Larger development within the setting of the Malvern Hills AONB which will require a considered approach to reduce the landscape impact.
- The A417 limits the ability to traverse into town.
- Travel by non-vehicle movement into Ledbury will be greater for parts of this area.
- Dymock Road is more rural in nature and does not offer a suitable main access and concern about increase in traffic.

Both Options 1 and 2 would include some additional town locations. These could include the following:

Lawnside and Market Street Area Regeneration Area (area 1 on map)

Opportunities:

- Potential to add to the town centre vitality and viability.
- Close to the town centre site which would be attractive to businesses, community and residents.
- Opportunity to improve existing housing by making the stock more accessible.
- Underutilised potential of existing buildings.
- Opportunity to improve green infrastructure and pedestrian/cycle access to both the recreation area and town centre.
- Possibility for innovative design which will contribute to the character of Ledbury.
- Strong public support for this in the NDP Review.

Constraints:

- The area will have a number of landowners making delivery more complicated.
- There would be a need for a co-ordinated approach to the regeneration of the area.

Land adjacent to the new Cricket Ground (area 2 on map)

Opportunities:

- Potential to link in with existing housing.

Constraints:

- The land does not have a strong relationship with any built form.
- It is separated from the town.
- Nearby risk of flooding from Flood Zone 3.

Land North of the railway station (area 3 on map)

Opportunities:

- Potential to open up land to enable an additional access point to the eastbound platform of the railway station.
- Potential for a mixed use development close to good transport links.
- Provides additional parking for railway station.

Constraints:

- It is within the highest quality landscape of the Malvern Hills AONB whereby the scale and extent of development should be limited.
- The nature of the topography is such that even small scale development can have a significant visual impact.
- Identifying a suitable access for major development may require alterations which will need identifying.

Other potential sites include:

Ledbury Town Football Ground for approximately 40 dwellings. This is reliant on the successful relocation of the football ground elsewhere around the town (area 4 on map).

Police Station, Worcester Road for approximately 15-20 dwellings, although there are no immediate plans to vacate the site there could be potential in the longer term if a site for a combined blue light services was identified (area 5 on map).

In the longer term, and in combination with a new employment area South of Little Marcle Road there may be the potential to relocate existing businesses for the employment land at Lower Road Trading Estate to more appropriate premises and re-use the vacated areas for housing development (area 6 on map).

Environment:

Open Space:

- Ledbury Town Football Club is seeking relocation and provision of a site has not been finalised. Therefore this will be a consideration in the allocation of sites.
- Strategic sites will need to accommodate open space as part of any new development coming forward.

Green Infrastructure:

- A review of the Herefordshire Green Infrastructure Strategy will be produced later in the year.
- The Ledbury NDP Reviewed Plan has also added to the Green Infrastructure local enhancement zones and local strategic corridors.
- It should be noted that some of the growth options identified within this paper are within these zones.
- A green infrastructure corridor is identified close to Lawnside and Market Street Regeneration Area and therefore opportunities exist to enhance this element if this site comes forward.

Renewable energy:

- It is possible to include more energy efficient and eco style homes as part of any large development in the option areas identified.

Community:

Community facilities:

- The Ledbury NDP Review highlights the shortage of community facilities and expresses that proposed developments should contribute to addressing deficiencies in community facilities and/or allow for improvements to promote sustainable development.
- The large scale areas of housing development to the south east and west of Ledbury provide an opportunity to deliver new community facilities within the area and address the identified deficiencies in community facilities.

Public Realm:

- There is an opportunity to add well designed public realm areas as part of the larger option sites. Lawnside area is another opportunity to improve the public realm.
- The town centre of Ledbury is vibrant and has strong retail core based on trade and tourism. Therefore the public realm will be a key factor in maintaining this position and positively adding to it where possible.

Education:

- Ledbury Primary School (500 pupils) and John Masefield High School and Sixth Form Centre (800 students).
- The Ledbury NDP specifies its ambitions to develop further education facilities and is willing to partner with developers to deliver higher educational facilities including a particular interest in developing a campus in Ledbury for the New Model in Technology and Engineering (NMITE) or science and research – based training associated with Malvern Science Park.

Healthcare:

- Medical facilities in the Ledbury area are at capacity and have expressed interest in expanding. They have highlighted a need to find an appropriate site.

Economy:

Employment land:

- Land south of Little Marcle Road was identified in the Core Strategy for around 12 hectares.
- The Ledbury NDP Review proposes increasing this to approximately 20 hectares south of Little Marcle Road.
- This is also identified in the Market Town Investment Plan.

Transport facilities/car parks/cycleways:

- Suitable cycleway within the growth areas could form part of a wider future network around the town and to the surrounding areas.
- The canal provides a safe off road footpath and cycling route that could extend from Staplow to the southern parts of the town.
- With the land to the north of the railway, there is an opportunity for increased car and cycle parking provision and better accessibility to the railway station. This is supported in the Ledbury NDP Review.

Tourism:

- The town centre will benefit from regeneration of the Lawnside and Market Street Area. Improvements will make way for better design, layout and connections with the built and natural environment which will add to the town's vibrancy.
- There is scope to improve the town centre's accessibility with the use of shared space and disabled friendly surfaces.