

Shaping Our Place 2026

Local Development Framework

Core Strategy

Policy Direction Paper

Housing - Type, Mix and Density

January 2010



## CORE STRATEGY POLICY DEVELOPMENT

Core Policy Area (s): Type and Mix and density of housing

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### Preferred Policy Direction

#### Density

A general policy providing guidance to emphasise that the efficient use of land is an important element in determining planning applications.

For each strategic site, a specified housing target included within the Core Strategy Place Shaping Policy to ensure the efficient use of land.

Targets on smaller sites will be included in the Hereford and Market Towns and Rural Areas Plans taking into account further information from the evidence base.

#### Type and Mix

The Core Strategy should include criteria within the specific Place Shaping Policies for each strategic site, requiring an appropriate range, type and mix of housing on the site in accordance with up to date information for the area; and in particular aiming to meet the needs of an increasingly elderly population.

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### 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This report provides background information and evidence to support the policies directions that will form part of the Core Strategy Place Shaping Paper. The full policy wording will form part of the pre-submission Core Strategy.
- 1.2 The Core Strategy will set out the vision and objectives for the Herefordshire Local Development Framework (LDF), together with the 'place shaping policies' at a strategic level, explaining how the county as a whole is expected to develop up to 2026.
- 1.3 The remainder of this report seeks to address the following questions:
  - What is the current situation (issue)?
  - What is the national, regional and local policy framework?
  - What is the available evidence base indicating?

- What can the Core Strategy do?
- What were the results / indications for the Developing Options Consultation?
- What further consultation has taken place?
- What conclusions can be drawn?
- What happens next?

## **2.0 The need for the policy.**

### Density

- 2.1 The demand for additional homes by 2026, the limited amount of previously developed land and the competing demand for uses put increasing pressure on land and require innovative approaches to help deliver high quality housing. Providing for more efficient use of land means development at reasonable densities that protect valuable open space, respects privacy and maintains character of areas.
- 2.2 The density of housing can have an affect on local character and distinctiveness. Any density set should reflect local circumstances. Higher densities can assist in urban and rural regeneration by increasing possible population numbers to support communities and social facilities and public transport, as well as reducing greenfield land requirements.
- 2.3 The Unitary Development Plan contains a set of density requirements. In urban areas of Hereford and the market towns, housing developments will be expected to achieve a net overall density of at least 30 homes per hectare. On town centre or adjacent sites with good accessibility, it is expected that higher densities should be achieved of between 30 and 50 homes per hectare.
- 2.4 The Annual Monitoring Report 07/08 highlights that 41% of homes built were of a density below 30 dwellings per hectare. Of the 233 dwellings completed on sites of over a hectare in the urban areas of Hereford or market towns, the average density was 40 per hectare.

### Range and Mix of housing

A commitment to provide for balanced and sustainable communities in Herefordshire mean that we need to look at the existing housing stock and

consider what is required in the area to enable the community to change and grow sustainably and to provide for all member of the community.

- 2.5 The State of Herefordshire Report<sup>1</sup> identifies that Herefordshire has a higher proportion of detached houses or bungalows than regionally or nationally. Consequently, the county has a lower proportion of semi-detached and terraced houses and flats. This in particular, has led to a high demand for affordable 1, 2 and 3 bedroom social properties throughout Herefordshire and a demand for all types for housing within Hereford City.
- 2.6 It also identifies that the combination of high proportions of pensioner households and an ageing population may result in an increasing demand for certain types of suitable accommodation. The proportion of pensioner couples is higher within rural towns and rural villages. By comparison, the proportion of single person households is higher in urban areas, and the proportion of married couples with or without children is higher in rural villages and rural dispersed locations.
- 2.7 This trend has been highlighted within the State of Herefordshire Report as a 'threat or a challenge' for the future to ensure there is the appropriate range and mix of housing available.

### **3.0 The policy framework**

- 3.1 Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing (PPS3), published in November 2006, provides a national policy framework for planning for housing and sets out what is required at regional and local levels to deliver housing within sustainable communities.
- 3.2 The objectives of PPS3 are:
- (i) to ensure that a wide choice of housing types is available, for both affordable and market housing, to meet the needs of all members of the community;
  - (ii) to deliver a better balance between housing demand and supply in every housing market and to improve accessibility where necessary;

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<sup>1</sup> The Herefordshire Partnership, "The state of Herefordshire Report", 2009

- (iii) to create sustainable, inclusive, mixed communities in all areas – developments should be attractive, safe and designed and built to a high quality, and located in areas with good access to jobs, key services and infrastructure
- 3.3 With reference to Local Planning Authorities (LPAs), site allocation development plan documents should always include at least **five years supply of land** for development from the date they are adopted. In determining which sites to include in the five year land supply, LPAs should have regard to the sustainability appraisal of the site allocation development plan document. The priority for development, and beyond the five year land supply should the LPA choose to do this, is developable brownfield land.
- 3.4 LPAs should develop **density policies** for their plan. The presumption is that in developing density policies, the minimum should be no less than 30 dwellings per hectare. PPS3 sets out an approach which suggests minimum densities for city centre, urban, suburban and rural locations.
- 3.5 PPS3 says that LPAs should have regard to the relevant sub-regional housing market assessment and regional and local housing strategies in **determining the overall mix** of different household types and sizes. A broad mix of housing should be provided on large sites. On smaller sites, a mix should be provided that contributes to the creation of sustainable communities.
- 3.6 The current planning policy framework for the Housing Market Area is Regional Planning Guidance for the West Midlands (RPG11), which was adopted in June 2004 and became Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) with the commencement of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
- 3.7 Policy SR2 of the regional plan includes a requirement to achieve sustainable communities with an appropriate size, scale density and mix within the Settlements of Significant Development. Policy CF8 makes clear that the needs of different groups should be taken into account in determining the mix of new housing provision.

- 3.8 Some aspects of the current RSS are being reviewed and the second phase of that review – housing, employment, transport and waste – is now under way and an Examination in Public has recently been completed. This does not change the vision and objectives, but it does affect decisions about where new development should occur, in what form and on what scale.
- 3.9 The Review has to reflect the Government's aim for a one third increase in the level of house building by 2016. This is in response to the new 2003 based household projections, which give higher increases in the West Midlands than in many other parts of the country.
- 3.10 It also needs to reflect the monitoring evidence of the extent to which the key aims and objectives of the RSS are being met so far:
- There is early evidence that the rate of migration from the conurbation has slowed down, and that the required changes to the patterns and levels of housing development are beginning to take place
  - Provision of affordable housing has failed to show any progress towards the doubling that would be required to meet the RSS target of 6,000 to 6,500 p.a.
- 3.11 The implications of the housing growth discussed in background papers for the RSS and the outcomes in terms of the Preferred Option are discussed in Chapter 6, *The Future Housing Market*.
- 3.12 *Delivering Advantage*, the West Midlands Economic Strategy for 2004–2010<sup>2</sup>, sets out a Vision for transforming the West Midlands into a world-class region by 2010. An updated West Midlands Economic Strategy was published in December 2007, which looks forward to 2020 and sets out what more the region needs to do to continue to improve its economic performance.
- 3.13 The key challenges facing the Region that relate to housing include:
- (i) to link housing availability and quality to employment opportunities to support the creation of conditions for growth

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<sup>2</sup> Delivering Advantage: The West Midlands Economic Strategy and Action Plan 2004-10, WMRA/Advantage West Midlands

(ii) to regenerate communities through economic inclusion, particularly in areas of the region experiencing social exclusion and underperforming economies, such as North Staffordshire and the Black Country.

3.14 Regenerating Communities is a key pillar in the strategy, driving actions to counter unemployment, poor skills, low income, poor housing, high crime rates, poor quality environment and all areas of economic inclusion. To facilitate this, partners will link opportunity to need, and develop capacity and sustainability for communities.

#### *Community Strategy*

3.15 The Community Strategy<sup>3</sup> sets out the county's aspirations up until 2020 and its vision is that:

*“Herefordshire will be a place where, organisations and businesses working together within an outstanding natural environment will bring about sustainable prosperity and well being for all.”*

3.16 The key issues relevant to housing type and mix and density targets which were identified in partnership with local people are: a safe and pleasant environment to live and work in, affordable housing, reducing crime and anti-social behaviour and support to live independently.

3.17 Five guiding principles, within the Community Strategy, aim to work towards the county becoming more sustainable and address these key issues. These principles are to:

- Realise the potential of Herefordshire, its people and communities
- Integrate sustainability into all our actions
- Ensure an equal inclusive society
- Build on the achievement of partnership working and ensure continual improvement
- Protect and improve Herefordshire's distinctive environment

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<sup>3</sup> The Herefordshire Partnership, The Community Strategy for Herefordshire “A Sustainable Future for the County”, 2006

- 3.18 The Community Strategy has themes and those most relevant to housing type and mix and density targets are: developing stronger, more inclusive communities and creating a safer and greener place to live, work and visit.
- 3.19 The Local Area Agreement (LAA)<sup>4</sup> is agreed through partnership working and aims to demonstrate how the county's priorities will be addressed to aid a better life. It has the same themes as the Community Strategy with an additional theme on the environment following the decision to split the combined theme "safer and stronger communities". The priorities relevant for housing type and mix and density targets under these themes in the LAA are to: increase the availability of appropriate, decent and affordable housing; encourage thriving communities where people are able to influence change and action to improve their area, regardless of their background; and to further reduce the already low levels of crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour in the county and to reduce disproportionate fear of such.
- 3.20 In order to avoid a policy vacuum until the Local Development Framework is adopted the Council has submitted proposals to save appropriate UDP policies. This process suggests that the policies related to housing type and mix and density targets, this includes policy S3, H8, H9, H10 and H15, set out in the UDP should be saved<sup>5</sup>.

#### **4.0 Evidence base**

- 4.1 The relevant evidence for this policy direction is currently still ongoing, this includes the Local Housing Market Area (LHMA). This will be detailed further as the evidence base is completed.
- 4.2 In July 2007, the West Housing Market Area Partnership (WHMAP) commissioned [Outside](#) to undertake a comprehensive Strategic Housing Market Assessment to:
- contribute to the forthcoming RSS 'partial review' and the Comprehensive Spending Review 2007

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<sup>4</sup> The Herefordshire Partnership Herefordshire Story of Place Local Area Agreement 2008-2011

<sup>5</sup> 15<sup>th</sup> May 2009 Planning Committee Report, Herefordshire UDP Saved Policies

- inform Local Development Framework requirements and local and regional Housing Strategies
- inform the Sub Regional Housing Strategy for the West Housing Market Area

4.3 The Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) provides a detailed sub-regional market analysis of housing demand and housing need, identifying the key drivers in the West Housing Market Area. Recommendations coming from this assessment for the type and mix of housing and the density targets are as follows:

- Higher density dwellings in the housing market sectors disproportionately dominated by detached dwellings, in particular the rural areas and market towns with the exception of Ledbury;
- An adequate supply of smaller units of accommodation where they can be shown to make a valuable contribution to mixed sustainable communities;
- To support the private rented sector offer where it is contributing to the mix of occupied housing and encourage the growth of private rented and sub-market rented accommodation;
- To note the changing household structures in the future (particularly the significant growth in smaller households) and ensure that future development is mindful of the need for appropriate living space for these different household sizes; and
- To note that in all areas the differences between the towns and the villages in terms of house type and tenure and price are extreme, making the acute affordability pressures felt most keenly in the rural areas.

#### *Local Housing Market Area Assessment*

4.4 Herefordshire has been divided into 7 Local Housing Market Areas (LHMAs) which are centred on Hereford city, the five market towns and a rural area predominately the Golden Valley.

4.5 This study will look at the range and mix and density of housing within these market areas; however the final study will not be available until later in 2010..

- 4.6 This means that the specific area detail required to devise any variation in density targets or range and mix of housing by location will not be available prior to the Place Shaping consultation.

#### *Urban Characterisation Study*

- 4.7 The aim of the Hereford Rapid Townscape Assessment is to contribute to the housing land availability assessment for the City of Hereford settlement area and to provide a consistent overview of the area's historic and townscape character.
- 4.8 The study identified that all residential areas within the city were of high density, and there were a variety of housing types dependent upon the location within the city. The study did not however, make reference to specific density levels within the city or reference to areas outside of Hereford City.

### **5.0 What can the Core Strategy do?**

- 5.1 The Core Strategy, Developing the Vision and Objective background paper, January 2010<sup>6</sup> sets the vision for the county as seeking "...sustainable development fostering a high quality of life for those who live, work and visit here...interdependence of social progress...and environmental quality with the aim of increasing the county's self-reliance and resilience." A policy on housing type and mix and density targets should relate to this in order to address the key issues, also set out in the January 2010 paper, of "ensuring appropriate housing provision and affordability" and "ensuring high quality, locally distinctive sustainable design and construction."
- 5.2 The social progress objectives, objective 1 and 2 of the Core Strategy paper, "to meet the housing needs of all sections of the community (especially those in need of affordable housing)..." and "to improve the health, well-being and quality of life of all residents by...positively contribute towards better access to, provision and use of ... facilities."

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<sup>6</sup> The Core Strategy Developing the Vision and Objective background paper January 2010 is available at

[http://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/docs/Vision\\_and\\_Objectives\\_January\\_2010\(1\).pdf](http://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/docs/Vision_and_Objectives_January_2010(1).pdf)

5.3 The Environmental quality objective 10 of the Core Strategy Paper, “to achieve sustainable communities...by delivering well-designed places, spaces and buildings which use land efficiently, reinforce local distinctiveness...” and objective 11, “to address the causes and impacts of climate change by ensuring new development: uses sustainable design and construction methods...”

5.4 Within these objectives no specific site proposals are identified however potential criteria for the policy would satisfy these objectives and the key issues.

## **6.0 Developing Options Consultation Results**

6.1 Public engagement is an important element of developing the Core Strategy and a Developing Options consultation took place through the summer of 2008 in order to help the council decide upon which options to look at in more detail.

6.2 The consultation period ran from 16<sup>th</sup> June to 8<sup>th</sup> August 2008 and the people of Herefordshire, along with statutory consultees and key stakeholders, were encouraged to examine and comment upon (amongst other things), the council's draft spatial vision and objectives.

6.3 The Developing Options consultation question 51<sup>7</sup> on density of housing asked:

What level of density targets should Herefordshire set?

1. Single Standard density across the county;
2. Apply different standards to different parts of the county; and
3. Determine density for each site based on character of surrounding area.

6.4 The most favoured option was Option 3. The least favoured option is Option 1 – a single standard density across the county.

Number of respondents 823

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<sup>7</sup> Core Strategy Developing Options Results Report Survey Report July 2008, January 2009

Option 1: 6%

Option 2: 32%

Option 3: 62%

Number of no opinion / answer not provided – 159

- 6.5 The Developing Options consultation question 52<sup>8</sup> on type and mix of housing asked:

What types and mix of housing does Herefordshire need?

1. Allow a market led approach;
2. Ensure all schemes have a mix of housing types in accordance with up to date housing needs information; and
3. Devise a policy which gives priority to specific housing types

- 6.6 The most favoured option was Option 2, however option 3 was also supported. Option 1 'to allow a market led approach' was not supported.

Option 1: Number of respondents 472

Yes – 40%

No – 60%

Number of no opinion / answer not provided – 510

Option 2: Number of respondents 586

Yes – 80%

No – 20%

Number of no opinion / answer not provided – 396

Option 3: Number of respondents 618

Yes – 74%

No – 26%

Number of no opinion / answer not provided – 445

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<sup>8</sup> Core Strategy Developing Options Results Report Survey Report July 2008, January 2009

6.7 There were 223 additional comments<sup>9</sup> on the housing provision section that suggested improvements to the options. The comments that relate to type and mix of housing and density of housing included:

- Provide affordable and social housing where a proven need exists;
- Housing policies that respond to local demand initially
- A mix of housing is required tailored to that locality based on robust forecasting;
- All housing and estates should be more eco-friendly;
- Avoid poor design and cheap construction;
- Priority for local people with affordable housing in rural areas; and
- Plan for adequate elderly and retirement housing provision including care villages.

6.8 The Government Office for the West Midlands detailed the need for better integration of economic and social issues with housing policies. Natural England made the comment that they feel housing policies should be developed so that it responds to local demand initially. Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) stated that a mix of housing is required, tailored to that locality.

6.9 There did not appear to be an identifiable alternative to the options raised by the responses to the Developing Options consultation.

6.10 The consultation responses would suggest that the policy direction on Type and mix of housing and density of housing should consider the following:

1. ensure that the housing needs are met within the county;
2. ensure all schemes have a mix of housing types;
3. priority to certain housing type according to the need identified; and
4. density levels should be in accordance to the character of the surrounding area for each site.

6.11 The Sustainability Appraisal<sup>10</sup> showed that for Q51, the density targets, options 2 and 3 are considered the most sustainable but Option 1 is moving

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<sup>9</sup> Core Strategy Developing Options Analysis Schedules March 2009

away from sustainability because it would not be locally distinctive. The Sustainability Appraisal showed that for Q52, the type and mix of housing, Options 1 and 3 are the most sustainable, but Options 2 and 3 would need to be supported by evidence.

6.12 In terms of Habitat Regulation Assessment<sup>11</sup> the higher density targets in specific locations could place greater disturbance pressure and air quality concerns on certain sites. The Habitat Regulation Assessment also identified that through the type and mix of housing; the housing growth in general will place pressure on water levels, quality and air quality.

6.13 No clear alternatives from the SA or HRA assessment process were identified. However, the Sustainability Appraisal identified a need for further evidence to support options 2 and 3 for the type and mix of housing, this further evidence should be covered within the Local Housing Market Assessment which is due to be completed in September 2009.

## **7.0 Further consultation undertaken and Sustainability Appraisal**

7.1 The established preferred policy direction for the Core Strategy, will be available for consultation within the Place Shaping Paper in January 2010.

7.2 It is proposed to consult the following organisations in developing the policy wording, Parish Councils, Home Builders Federation, Malvern Hills AONB and Wye Valley AONB, CPRE, Natural England, West Midlands Regional Assembly with involvement of the council's Development Management and Strategic Housing sections and Herefordshire Partnership.

7.3 SA and HRA assessments will be undertaken to assist in developing the policy wording.

## **8.0 Conclusion**

### *Density*

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<sup>10</sup> Core Strategy Developing Options Paper Sustainability Appraisal June 2008 (amended March 2009)

<sup>11</sup> Core Strategy Habitat Regulation Assessment June 2008 (amended March 2009)

- 8.1 PPS3 sets out national indicative minimum densities for city centre, urban, suburban and rural locations but makes it clear that detailed policies should be included in Local Development Documents such as Core Strategies which, where justified, can be different from the national indicative figure.
- 8.2 The Unitary Development Plan contains a set of density requirements. In urban areas of Hereford and the market towns, housing developments will be expected to achieve a net overall density of at least 30 homes per hectare. On town centre or adjacent sites with good accessibility, it is expected that higher densities should be achieved of between 30 and 50 homes per hectare.
- 8.3 A steer from the Developing Options consultation on density policy favoured option 3 whereby a site density requirement should be allowed based on site assessments and character of the surrounding area. The blanket densities were not popular.
- 8.4 At the time of drafting this paper detailed area information is not available from the Local Housing Market Area Assessment. A number of characterisation studies are being undertaken for Hereford and the market towns which will give further specific area information regarding the character of the areas and appropriate design and density for an additional development.
- 8.5 The Core Strategy should include specific density requirements for each of the strategic sites within the specific Place Shaping policy. A general policy, similar to that within the UDP, should be included to indicate density targets for any applications to be dealt with by the Development Management process. These targets will be set when further information becomes available.

#### *Range and Mix of housing*

- 8.2 The housing mix had a similar support for options 2 and 3 in the consultation. A high majority supported schemes having a mix of house types in accordance with up to date housing needs information. There was also a

majority support for a policy which gives priority to specific housing types in particular areas in order to balance the housing types across the county.

8.3 Again, this specific detail would be contained within the Local Housing Market Area Assessment.

8.4 The Core Strategy should include criteria within the Place Shaping Policy for each strategic site requiring an appropriate range and mix of housing on the site in accordance with up to date information for the area.

## **9.0 Way forward**

9.1 Whilst Herefordshire Council needs to demonstrate that there are clear mechanisms for monitoring the outcomes of policies (including type, mix and density policies) within its Core Strategy, it is not possible within this report to propose indicators as the evidence base is yet to be completed.

9.2 The impact of housing mix and density policies will be closely monitored to ensure that they are having the desired effect of delivering the type, mix and density required, and as detailed within the evidence base. The results will be collected from the details on planning applications and will be included in the Annual Monitoring Report.

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