

## 4. ACCESSIBILITY STRATEGY

### 4.1 Background

In February 2003, the Government's Social Exclusion Unit published its report 'Making the Connections: Final Report on Transport and Social Exclusion'. This report examines the links between social exclusion, transport and the location of services and facilities. In particular, it focuses upon six issues which need to be tackled to improve the quality of people's lives and their life chances:

- Lack of access to work;
- Lack of access to education;
- Lack of access to healthcare;
- Lack of access to food shops;
- Lack of access to social, cultural and sporting activities; and
- The impact of traffic on deprived communities.

Improving accessibility is now one of the Government's top transport priorities and so local authorities have been tasked with producing 'accessibility strategies' through a process called 'accessibility planning'. Accessibility is the term used to describe how easy it is for people to get to the services that they need. Accessibility planning involves finding out how easy it is for people to get to work, education, healthcare and other services and finding ways of improving accessibility. Through this process it should become clear which people find it difficult to access which services and how these problems can be overcome.

Accessibility has been identified as an important issue for the people of Herefordshire too. The public consultation that was undertaken during preparation of the draft Local Transport Plan 2 asked people to rank key outcomes in order of importance. Accessibility came third out of seven (after safety and congestion).

### 4.2 The Vision

Before the advent of 'accessibility planning', accessibility had already been identified as a key priority in Herefordshire. Through the work of the Herefordshire Partnership, the Herefordshire Plan was developed. The Herefordshire Partnership brings together organisations, groups and service providers to achieve a common vision. Partner organisations include:

- Business Link (Herefordshire and Worcestershire);
- Herefordshire Association of Local Councils;
- Herefordshire Primary Care Trust;

- Learning and Skills Council (Herefordshire and Worcestershire);
- Herefordshire Council;
- Voluntary Organisations; and
- West Mercia Constabulary.

#### The Herefordshire Plan:

- provides a framework within which local groups and agencies can plan their work;
- provides a focus for other plans and strategies being developed by Herefordshire Council; and
- provides a reference point for local people and organisations to judge how well Herefordshire is doing in achieving its ambitions.

One of the Herefordshire Plan's objectives is:

*'To create fair and thriving communities which will be inclusive for all allowing equal and full access to opportunities and services.'*

And, because it is one of the guiding principles for the work of Herefordshire Council and its partners, this objective has been adopted as the Accessibility Strategy's vision.

The Herefordshire Plan also sets out a number of guiding principals and ambitions, many of which relate directly to accessibility planning:

- To build an equal and inclusive society;
- To improve the health and well being of Herefordshire people;
- To reduce poverty and isolation;
- To develop an integrated transport system; and
- To provide excellent education, training and learning opportunities in Herefordshire for all ages.

Improving accessibility is, therefore, firmly imbedded in the work of all of those involved in the Herefordshire Partnership.

Within Herefordshire Council itself, accessibility is a key priority across the full spectrum of service areas. Education, Environment, Health and Care, and Housing all list accessibility as being a key objective as illustrated in Table 4A:

Table 4A: The Importance of Accessibility in the Work of Herefordshire Council

Work area	Objective
<b>Children's Services (Education)</b>	For children and young people to engage in further education, employment or training on leaving school; are ready for employment; live in decent homes and communities; have access to transport and material goods; and live in households free from low income.
<b>Environment</b>	Promote sustainable and integrated transport solutions that meet the needs of the County
<b>Health and Social Care</b>	'Encourage access and the promotion of choice'
<b>Strategic Housing</b>	Enable people to access community services; e.g. doctors, dentists, library etc Advice to enable people to be involved in their community and take part in social activities*
<b>Leisure</b>	To encourage participation in culture and leisure by breaking down barriers to involvement, meeting the wide range of needs and aspirations of the Herefordshire community
<b>Transport</b>	A sustainable and integrated transport system which recognises the distinctive characteristics of Herefordshire's rural and urban areas and provides for the transport needs of residents, visitors and the business community*  *the accessibility implications of wider transport strategies and policies are discussed in more detail in the next section.

#### 4.2.1 Herefordshire's Wider Transport Policies and Accessibility:

Improving accessibility is a core element of this plan which will build upon the first Local Transport Plan. Through implementation of the strategy the Council is aiming to achieve better access to jobs and services and a reduction in road casualties. Accessibility is woven throughout LTP and projects that will be progressed include:

- Access improvements for pedestrians in Hereford, the market towns and rural areas;
- Development of the public transport network and improved facilities for bus users;
- Continued development of cycle facilities;
- Safer routes to schools;
- Business and school travel planning initiatives;
- Review of the rural transport network; and
- Road safety measures.

Herefordshire Council has a proven record of weaving accessibility into other transport policies over recent years.

The way in which bus services are subsidised in Herefordshire already takes into account accessibility issues and this regime will continue.

As a general rule of thumb, bus subsidy is allocated to services on the basis of cost per passenger. Subject to available funding, a service qualifies for funding if the cost per passenger is less than £2.20. In the case of services that are provided through the Rural Bus Subsidy Grant, a cost per passenger of £5 is accepted in recognition that they are additional services and will take some time to establish a customer base. Experience to date has shown that many RBSG supported services can achieve a cost-per-passenger that would qualify them for core funding if it were available. Where a service fails to meet the criteria, account can be taken of the journey purposes of passengers. In such cases, work-related and hospital visiting journeys are weighted accordingly. Where a service is the last remaining facility to a community, it will normally continue to qualify as long as it doesn't cost more than the cost of carrying the remaining passengers by community transport.

A review of rural bus services, carried out concurrently with the development of this accessibility strategy has utilised Accession (accessibility planning software) so that accessibility is considered alongside value for money criteria. This will help to ensure that future decisions on service support will be taken in the light of an even more detailed evidence base and deliver an effective network.

## 4.3 Developing The Strategy

The table below outlines the main stages that Herefordshire Council has gone through to develop this accessibility strategy:

**Table 4B: Development of the Accessibility Strategy**

Stage	What was involved
<b>Review of Council Policy</b>	Ensuring that policies across all of the Council's key areas will contribute to improved accessibility
<b>Consultation</b>	Review of existing consultation material and arrangements to inform development of the strategy Development of the Herefordshire Accessibility Partnership
<b>Analysis of existing data</b>	Review of existing Council data and anecdotal evidence via consultation exercises and through members of the Herefordshire Accessibility Partnership
<b>Accession work</b>	Utilising Accession software to identify accessibility issues to be addressed. Consultants JMP have been commissioned to review Herefordshire's contracted public transport services and identify public transport accessibility using Accession.

All of the above stages have informed the development of the accessibility strategy and, in particular, have resulted in the development of an action plan and set of accessibility targets.

Herefordshire Council's transport planning team is coordinating the Herefordshire Accessibility Strategy. Accessibility is not just about transport though, it is also concerned with the location of services and how they are delivered. It is essential, therefore, that we work with a wide range of organisations and the local community to identify instances of poor accessibility and the best ways to tackle them.

Before beginning work on the Accessibility Strategy we established the Herefordshire Accessibility Partnership to inform and guide the process. The Accessibility Partnership is a subgroup of the Herefordshire Partnership (our Local Strategic Partnership) and, as well as different departments from within Herefordshire Council; the Accessibility Partnership brings together a wide range of external organisations with responsibility for different types of services. The following are involved in the work of the group:

- Jobcentre Plus;
- Herefordshire Hospitals Trust;
- Herefordshire Primary Care Trust;
- Herefordshire Rural Transport Partnership;
- Ambulance Trust;
- Halo Leisure; and
- Community Transport Providers.

The group also has two members that represent the views of disabled people and who act as independent 'witnesses' to the work of the group. Group members have made statements of intent outlining their support for involvement in the Accessibility Partnership. These are set out in the Technical Annex.

As well as being guided by the Herefordshire Accessibility Partnership, we have also woven in issues that have been raised through a range of consultation exercises and community projects from both within and outside the council. For example, the development of taxi bus services to areas that have requested a bus service but are unable to sustain a viable conventional service.

The Local Transport Plan consultation asked respondents to indicate which measures they would like to be included in the LTP for Hereford City and for rural Herefordshire. Interestingly, accessibility improvements didn't appear at the top of the list for Herefordshire (a bypass for Hereford, 'none', and Park and Ride were the top three improvements listed) but in the rural area, 'public transport improvements' ranked second after 'none' and way in advance of any of the other suggestions (166 responses compared to 40 for the next most popular option, 'smaller buses').

In parallel with the development of the draft accessibility strategy, Herefordshire's Local Transport Plan strategy has also been developed - through this process the strategies contained in each have influenced and informed the other so that accessibility is an integral part of the LTP. A wide range of projects, included in the Hereford and Rural Transport Strategies, that will be implemented over the 5 years covered by the Local Transport Plan (2006-2011) will improve accessibility, including:

- Cycling and walking improvements;
- Accessibility improvements for disabled people;
- Public transport and community transport improvements;
- Travel marketing and information provision; and
- Road safety improvements.

## 4.4 Accessibility Analysis

To ensure that the accessibility strategy and action plans that are developed tackle the right issues, we have undertaken a systematic analysis of accessibility issues across the county. As well as reviewing existing evidence that the Council holds (Census data, responses to consultation exercises etc), we have called upon the expertise of our partners to identify accessibility issues in their areas of work. Where gaps in the knowledge base have been identified, additional work has been undertaken.

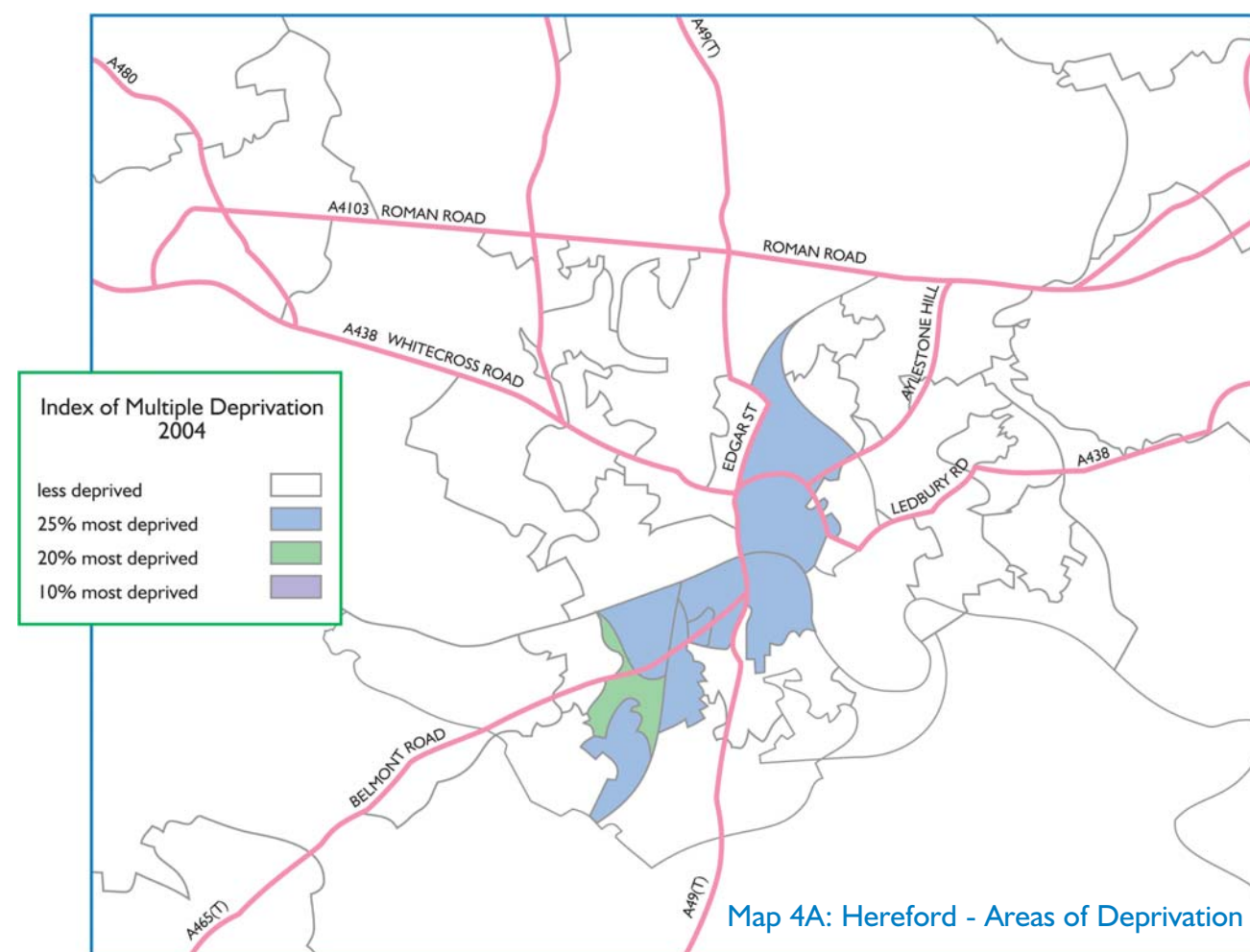
### 4.4.1 Overview of the Area Covered by the Herefordshire Accessibility Strategy

Herefordshire has a population of 175,000. Half live in Hereford and the five market towns, the other half in the rural

area. Herefordshire shows relatively low levels of deprivation when compared with England and Wales. As a whole, Herefordshire has low levels of unemployment (2.7% in 2001) and sickness compared to other counties. Educational attainment is slightly higher than the average for England and Wales. Overall, health in the county is good compared with the national average with lower levels of limiting, long-term illness. The county has an older population than the average for England and Wales with 26% of the population being over 60 compared with 21% for England and Wales.

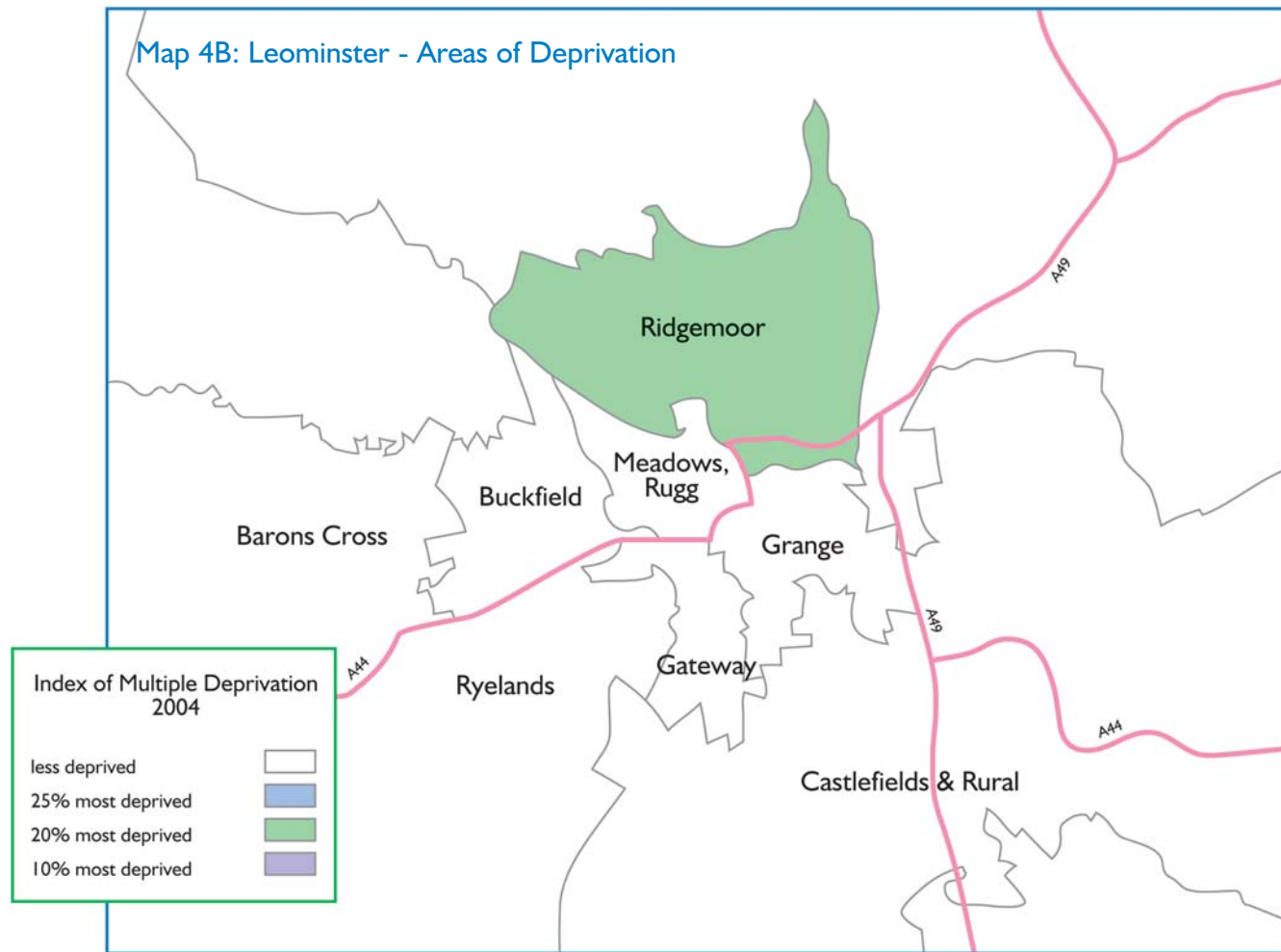
### Index of Multiple Deprivation

In 2004 the Government produced an Index of Multiple Deprivation showing the rank within England of each small area (smaller than a ward and containing approximately 750 people). The Index of Multiple Deprivation was created by combining data on a variety of deprivation indicators: income; employment; education; health; access to suitable housing; geographical isolation; living environment; and crime. Income contributes most to the ranking. There are no areas in Herefordshire that fall within the most deprived in England (areas within the 10% most deprived). There are, however, areas which fall within the 20% most deprived in England - Hereford (City Centre and the South Wye area south of the river) and Leominster (Ridgemoor area). See Maps 4A and 4B.



**Map 4A: Hereford - Areas of Deprivation**

# 4. ACCESSIBILITY STRATEGY



However, the County has the lowest average income within the West Midlands, which means that for those living in the rural areas, car dependency often represents a high proportional cost to households.

Although none of Herefordshire's rural area has a high score in the overall Index of Multiple deprivation, in terms of geographical access to services, most of rural Herefordshire is very deprived in terms of geographical access to services (one of the components of the Index of Multiple Deprivation) - 74 of the County's 116 areas are in the most deprived 10% in England for this domain. This poses a major problem for people without access to a car.

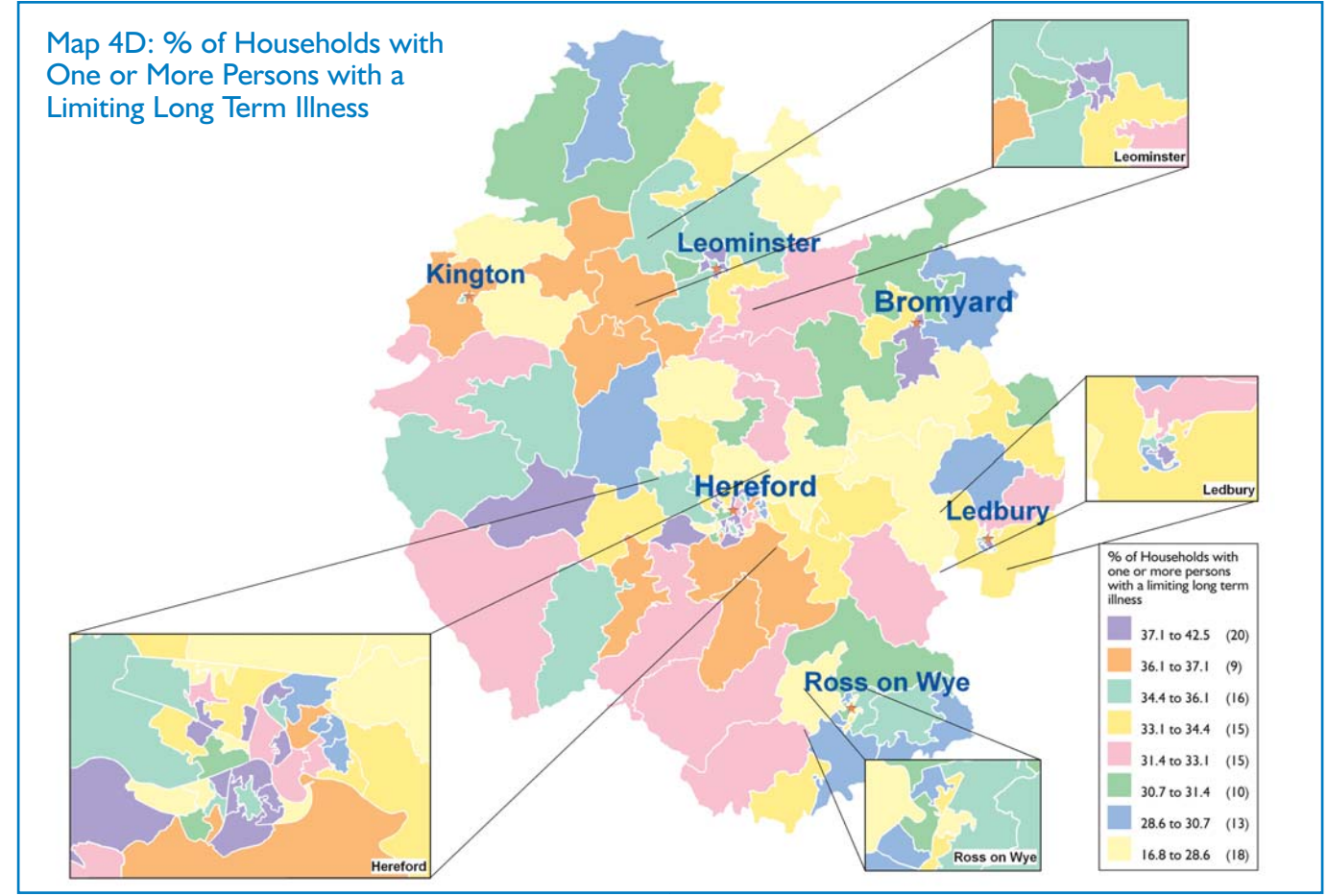
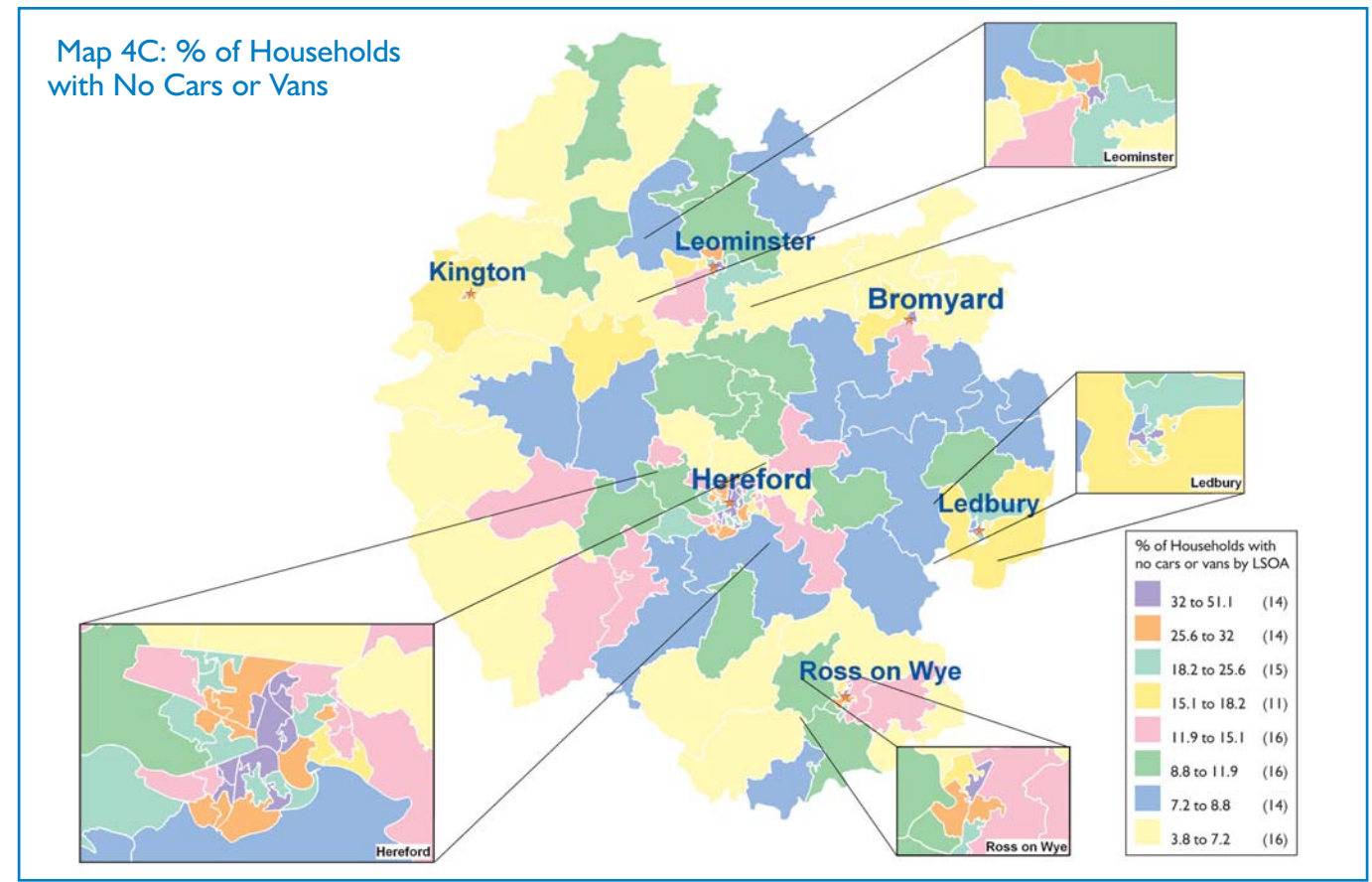
### Car Ownership

Herefordshire has higher than average levels of car ownership with 82.8% of households having at least one car. The average for England and Wales is 73% and for the West Midlands 75%. As you would expect, car ownership increases with increasing rurality. For example, the percentage of households without a car in Hereford City is 28%, in the market towns is between 24% and 21%, and for the rural area is lower still. Despite Hereford City having higher than average car ownership, car usage is lower for trips to work. This gives some indication of the accessibility of the city and its employment opportunities.

### Limiting Long Term Illness

The percentage of the population with a limiting long term illness is another key indicator of deprivation. 17.2% of residents in Herefordshire have a limiting long term illness, slightly lower than the average for England and Wales (18%). It is interesting to note that, while nationally the proportion of residents with limiting long term illness tends to correlate with the proportion of elderly residents. This is not the case in Herefordshire - there is a greater proportion of elderly people in Herefordshire than the average for England and Wales but a slightly lower percentage of residents with limiting long term illnesses.

Hereford and the market towns, where access to health services is better, tend to have higher proportions of households containing one or more persons with a limiting long term illness than the rural area. There are a couple of exceptions - part of the rural area between Leominster and Kington (the wards of Golden Cross, Weobley, Castle and Pembridge) and Peterchurch (between Hereford and the Welsh border). Of particular significance for accessibility planning is the area between Leominster and Kington which does not have good coverage of bus services. However, car ownership in both these areas is high (over 82% of households have at least one car).



## 4. ACCESSIBILITY STRATEGY

### 4.4.2 Accession - Accessibility Planning Software

Accession is a specialist computer software package that has been developed for the Department for Transport. It can be used to map current accessibility levels (how easy it is to reach services by different transport modes) and to consider the effect of options for improvements.

Herefordshire Council has used Accession to undertake a strategic analysis of Herefordshire during preparation of our accessibility strategy. Analyses have been undertaken to assess journey opportunities to education, work, healthcare and food shopping.

Herefordshire Council has used Accession to undertake a strategic analysis of Herefordshire during preparation of this strategy. It has further emphasised that public transport accessibility decreases with increasing rurality. The Map 4E shows which areas have the best levels of accessibility by bus and which have the worst. It is important to note that the two most deprived areas in Herefordshire (in the north of Leominster and south of Hereford) are both contained in the highest category of bus access with buses of a 0-15 minute frequency. Another of the issues that the accession work has highlighted is that, while access into each of the market towns from their immediate hinterland is good, access between most of them is poor. Journeys that are least well served are between Bromyard and Leominster.

### 4.4.3 Accessibility of the transport network

#### Walking and Cycling

Hereford itself is relatively accessible on foot and by bike because of the compact urban form and large proportion of residents within a short walk or cycle of the facilities in the city centre. Travel to work data indicates that Hereford and the market towns are accessible in practice as well as in principle - the number of people walking to work in Hereford, Bromyard, Kington, Ledbury, Leominster and Ross (ranging from 16.7% in Hereford to 23% in Kington) is significantly higher than the national average (10%) and the average for the West Midlands (9%). The average for Herefordshire is 12%. 4% of people cycle to work in Herefordshire compared to the England and Wales average of 3%. This rises to 9% for the city of Hereford.

Herefordshire has a growing network of cycle routes - the majority are either in or near to Hereford. This is because the population of Hereford and the location of services and facilities offer the greatest opportunities to encourage significant numbers of people to cycle.

There are severance issues associated with the A49 trunk road going through the middle of Hereford (for example, a subway with long approaches is the only traffic free way of crossing the A49 from the West of the City) - studies to identify ways of reducing the dominance of the A49 and improving crossing opportunities are ongoing.

Providing improvements to the cycle and pedestrian networks will continue to play an important role in increasing the accessibility of services in Herefordshire.

#### Bus

The bus network in Herefordshire is provided by a mixture of commercial and subsidised bus services (the conventional network) complemented by community transport schemes. Statutory transport provision also provides an important part of the network for education and social care journeys.

60% of the conventional bus network is provided on a commercial basis with 26 operators. There is not a predominant operator but 6 are significant players in the market. The commercial bus network is concentrated within Hereford and between Hereford and the four largest market towns.

As you might expect, with increasing rurality, bus frequencies decrease. Hereford's compact urban form supports a frequent and comprehensive urban bus network with routes typically have a 15 minute frequency (following recent reductions in service). Interurban routes have an hourly or two-hourly service. There are no commercial journeys after 19:00hrs or on Sundays. Other routes away from the main corridors have less sparse services with some having none at all.

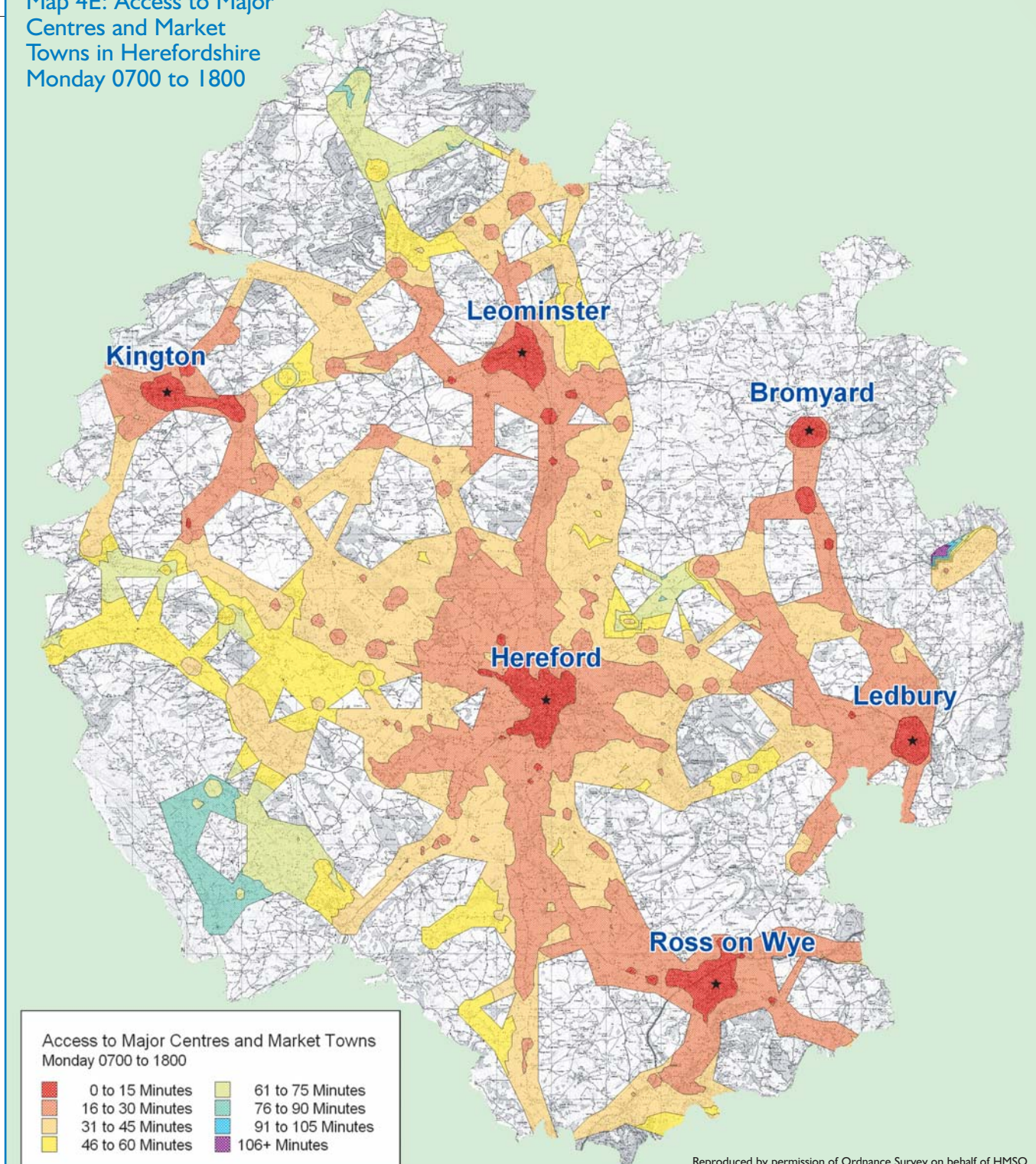
The low profitability of the commercial network, however, does not appear to justify substantial investment, for example in new vehicles. And poor vehicle quality on urban commercial services combined with above inflation fares increases has contributed to declining bus patronage which has prompted commercial operators to reduce the frequency of services in recent years.

The Council supports the remaining 60% of bus services. As well as providing enhancements to commercial services (for



The Rural Low Floor Bus Project has led to increased passenger journeys

Map 4E: Access to Major Centres and Market Towns in Herefordshire Monday 0700 to 1800



Reproduced by permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of HMSO. © Crown copyright and database right 2005. All rights reserved. Ordnance Survey Licence number 100024168.

example by providing journeys in the evenings and on Sundays), the Council supports the rural network through its own revenue and through the Rural Bus Subsidy Grant. These services carry 30% of all passengers in Herefordshire. The Council's extremely successful Rural Low Floor Bus Project has transformed the quality of these services and almost all contracted rural bus services are now operated with low-floor buses, meeting the latest accessibility specifications. This has now led to a reversal of the trend of declining patronage on such services.

Community transport services are provided throughout the county in order to cater for people who are unable to use conventional bus services (either because of a disability or lack of an available bus service). Services are generally only provided in the daytime. Services cater for a wide range of journey purposes but health-related journeys account for 60% and this figure is increasing. This is an issue that has come through accessibility discussions - health-related journeys are putting an increasing financial burden on Community Transport Services and this is a pattern that may not be sustainable in the

## 4. ACCESSIBILITY STRATEGY

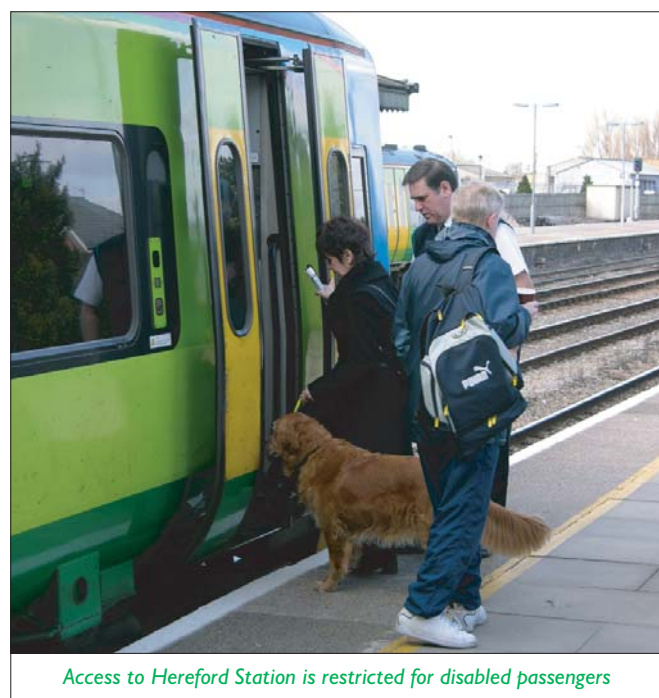
longer term. Discussions need to take place between health providers and community transport operators to ensure that the best use is being made of all the resources available.

There are two bus stations in Hereford - one for Hereford urban services and the other for services coming in from outside of the city. Both are located close to a variety of services with the Country Bus Station next to the Hospital and a short walk from the railway station.

A review of Herefordshire's bus network is currently taking place. The review started after work had already begun on the Accessibility Strategy. This gave us the opportunity to put accessibility planning at the heart of the review. The review will not be complete when LTP2 is submitted to Government so the priorities and action plan in this strategy are draft and will be finalised when the outcomes of the review are known. Accession has been used for this work.

### Rail

Herefordshire has only four railway stations - at Hereford, Leominster, Colwall and Ledbury. Local services serve all four with longer distance routes from Hereford and Leominster. These services support journeys to work, education, health and leisure facilities on a daily basis and hence ensuring that these services are accessible is important. Hereford has a good rail service which is within a short walk or cycle of lots of Hereford's residents. The railway station is also on the city's bus network with a half hourly service linking with the City Centre, hospital and bus stations. Rail ticket holders are allowed free travel on this service to enable them to complete their journeys to/from the centre of Hereford. Most of the rural area, however, does not have easy access to rail services.



Access to Hereford Station is restricted for disabled passengers

Access for people with disabilities and other mobility impairments (parents with buggies, or people with heavy luggage, for example) is not ideal at Herefordshire's railway stations. The two platforms at Hereford station, for example, are linked by a footbridge (with lots of stairs) or a barrow crossing (boards across the railway tracks themselves). There is no barrows crossing at Leominster which means some passengers have to travel to Ludlow to access services in the opposite direction. An accessibility study has recently been commissioned to identify how accessibility at the stations themselves can be improved. The two platforms at Hereford station, for example, are linked by a footbridge (with stairs) or a barrow crossing (boards across the railway tracks themselves). Neither of these options is ideal for people with mobility difficulties. Through the accessibility planning process, this accessibility study will be extended to include access to the stations (for example, walking and cycling routes).

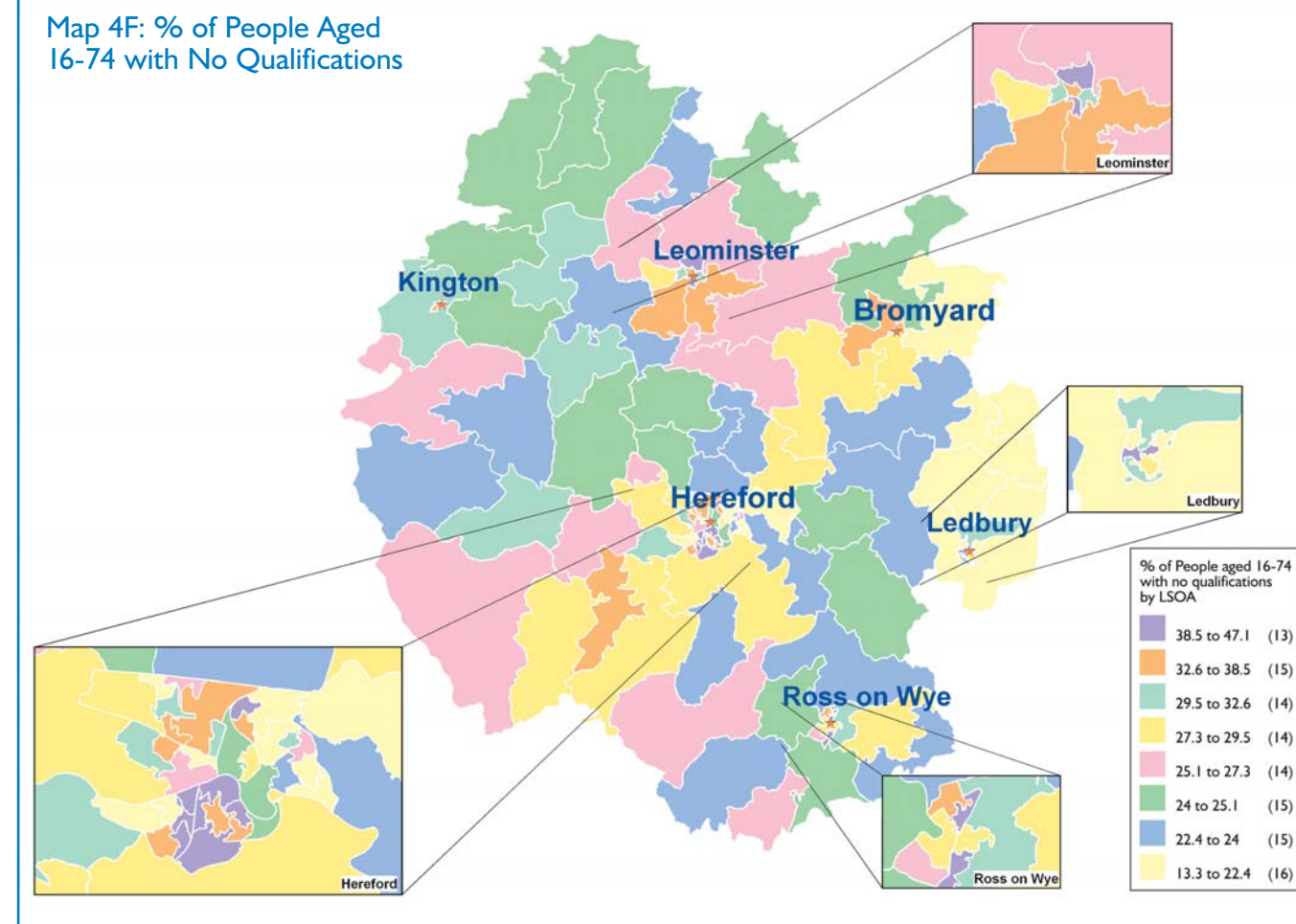
### 4.4.4 Access to Education

Herefordshire Council has a Lifelong Learning Development Unit which supports and facilitates the work of the Herefordshire Learning Partnership. Part of the Herefordshire Learning Partnership's work is involved in developing forums of local organisations, community groups and providers of lifelong learning opportunities in order to coordinate resources and focus on local area needs. The Lifelong Learning Development Unit also provides a range of adult and community learning courses.

Post-compulsory education is provided by a range of institutions in Herefordshire. There is an FE college and a separate College of Art in Hereford itself, a land-based college just outside (it used to be an agricultural college but has expanded the range of courses that it has on offer so now appeals to a wider student-base), an adult education service provided by Herefordshire Council and by the WEA (Workers Educational Association). The University of the 3rd Age is very active in Herefordshire and the University of Birmingham offers a part-time degree and accredited short courses. Over the border in Worcestershire, University College, Worcester provides vocational courses. The Open University is the largest provider of degree level courses in Herefordshire because there isn't a university in the county. There are 3 Learndirect centres (in Hereford, Leominster and Kington) and further access points, 2 in Hereford, 3 in market towns and 2 in villages.

Accessing education in the rural area can be problematic because of geographical isolation. A great many of the courses provided in rural Herefordshire are IT or IT based. These are popular with providers because funding is often more readily available for such courses and they are often requested by potential participants who are aware of the emphasis placed on acquiring IT skills by the Government. The county's adult education service has run a number of family IT courses in rural primary schools and they have proved an effective way of engaging learners. These courses have also been a good way of

Map 4F: % of People Aged 16-74 with No Qualifications



attracting learners with basic skills needs which can then be diagnosed in the IT sessions.

IT is often seen as an effective way to engage learners who will then move on to other activities but the experience of a sample that has been interviewed was that they often had to take a whole suite of IT courses if they wanted to go on attending classes because IT was all that was on offer.

One of the reasons for limited choice, which has been well documented in much research on rural learning, is the problem of critical mass and local provision: i.e. not enough people wanting to pursue any one course to make it cost effective. Alternative solutions have been identified in some areas, for example, Herefordshire Lifelong Learning Partnership's 'learning tubes' which broadens the appeal of a course by covering a wide range of related subjects to a wide age range in one class.

Accessibility planning is already at the heart of the work of the Herefordshire Learning Partnership. It is committed to developing and supporting access to learning opportunities for adults within the county. It is especially keen to ensure that access is available to all, and not restricted by geography, ability, personal or financial circumstances.

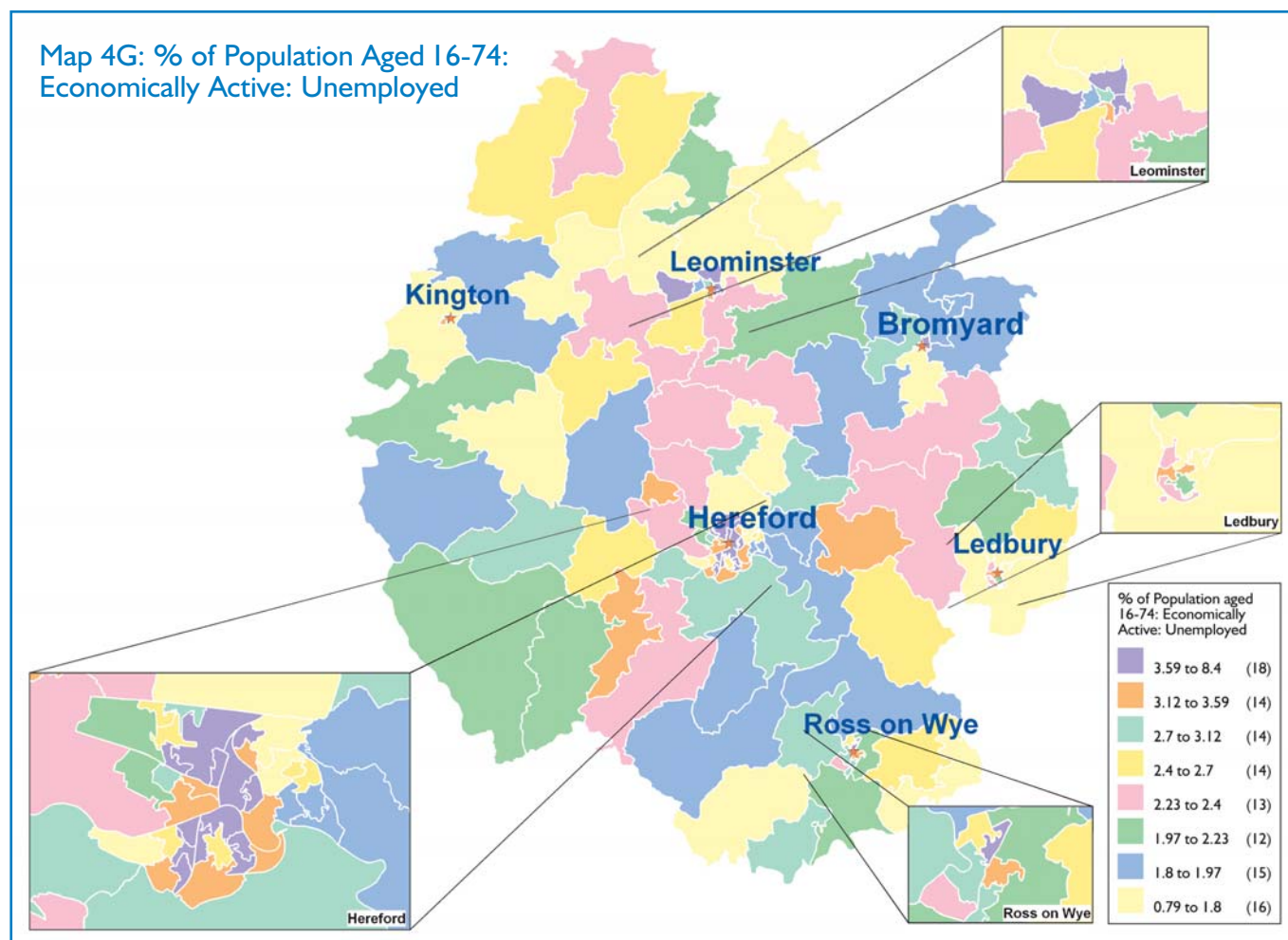
### 4.4.5 Access to Work

Unemployment in Herefordshire is low. The areas of Herefordshire with highest levels of unemployment are concentrated in Hereford and the market towns where access to work is relatively good. Unemployment is lowest in the rural areas so in this case, poor public transport isn't correlating with poor work opportunities.

Hereford benefits from a high degree of employment self-containment and, on top of this Hereford has a small number of large employers which employ a significant proportion of the workforce. This is good news for accessibility planning because working with a small number of organisations could bring benefits to a disproportionately large number of people.

The Government office for the West Midlands has identified Herefordshire as having a low wage economy. In the indigenous population many people make their livings from work in agricultural or agriculture-related industries including food processing, and in industries related to forestry and timber processing. Many of the agricultural enterprises are family run and there are a large number of family run Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and micro businesses. There are some large farms and hatcheries which employ workers on a seasonal basis. Many skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled manual

## 4. ACCESSIBILITY STRATEGY



workers live within close reach of other family members and where house prices or lack of work result in younger people moving away to access work and other life opportunities. Usually the market towns and, less frequently, to Hereford. This contributes to the changing nature of the rural area.

There are, however, accessibility issues with manufacturing companies and other employers located on industrial estates and, in recent years, there has been a migration of certain types of company out of Hereford and the market towns to these estates. The industrial estates in Herefordshire tend to be located away from centres of population and with poor access by bike, walking and public transport, this poses accessibility problems for people without access to a car. This is an issue that is highlighted in the Council's Economic Development Strategy and is key to improving access to the Rotherwas Industrial Estate in Hereford and maximising the benefit of the expanded Leominster Industrial Estate.

### 4.4.6 Access to Health

The General hospital that serves Herefordshire is based in Hereford itself. It is served by a number of bus routes and is a short walk from the county bus station (which is the terminus for services from outside of Hereford). The rail station is a short walk away but is linked by a half hourly bus service.

There is a mobile breast cancer screening service that visits the market towns and plans are progressing for a other mobile scanning facilities. At a national level, the development of NHS Direct and NHS TV should improve access to health information for Herefordshire residents. The Hospital Trust also provides a 'Traveller Health Project' which provides a supplementary GP and nurse link to mainstream services via a mobile unit that visits Traveller sites.

Some of the Primary Care Trust's clinics are run from a facility in the south of Hereford which is more accessible to people living in this locality who do not have access to a car.

The Herefordshire Hospitals Trust is keen to improve the accessibility of its services and has identified patient access to the hospital, in particular, as being an issue. This is an area that the Council will explore further with the Trust through the implementation of the Accessibility Planning Action Plan and through the Travel Planning work that will be carried out through the Local Transport Plan programme.

An issue that has come through the consultation process for this strategy is that the proportion of community transport journeys that are health related are increasing sharply putting an increasing burden on providers.

### 4.4.7 Healthy Living - Access to Food Shops and Leisure

Hereford's compact City Centre has a wide variety of food shopping and leisure activities. Consistent land use planning policies over the past fifteen years have allowed for only limited edge/out of town commercial development. This has helped to protect the vitality and viability of the city centre and to maintain a broad range of services in a location that is accessible to most people that live in Hereford and the County as a whole, via reliable bus services linking to the market towns. While most people that live in Hereford are within a short walk or cycle range of food shopping and leisure activities, the city's bus network radiates from the city bus station. The bus station is located within a short walk of major supermarkets and the city centre's other shopping and leisure facilities.

Out in the rural area, access to food shops and leisure can be more difficult, particularly for those without access to a car. The five Market Towns of Bromyard, Kington, Ledbury, Leominster and Ross on Wye offer a range of facilities which are accessible to people living near by and those further afield with access to private or public transport. In addition, the libraries service provide a mobile library service to meet the needs of remote communities and the housebound.

For those people who live out in the more remote parts of the rural area without access to a car or public transport, access can be more difficult. Community transport services cater for some of these needs and through the Accessibility action plan work will be undertaken to further promote transport services that are available and gaps in the network will be identified.

### 4.4.8 Community Safety and the Fear of Crime

An audit of levels of crime, disorder and drugs in Herefordshire was carried in 2004. The audit highlighted that Herefordshire residents generally feel safe in both daylight and evenings but there is some concern when visiting town centres at night. Herefordshire's overall levels of crime in 2004 were lower than the rest of the West Mercia Police Force area (incorporating Shropshire, Worcestershire and Telford & Wrekin), the West Midlands, and England and Wales. Herefordshire also experienced a decline in the overall level of crime between 2002 and 2004, whereas the rest of the force area and national levels were experiencing a rise. Compared with most similar Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership areas, Herefordshire is well below the average crime rate. The most common community safety concern is being burgled, followed by having property vandalised and being in a road traffic accident while driving (despite a reduction in actual casualties). Drink driving has also decreased since 2001.

Through the implementation of the Local Transport Plan, a programme of road safety improvements together with educational and promotional activities will help to address local people's fears of being involved in a road traffic accident.

Although other significant community safety and fear of crime issues haven't been identified through accessibility planning analysis, we will continue to review the situation so that if problems do occur, we can seek solutions. In addition, through the implementation of the Local Transport Plan programme, community safety considerations will be included when new schemes are built.

### 4.4.9 Groups in Danger of Being Excluded

A number of groups have been identified as being at risk of being excluded: older people, young people and people with disabilities.

#### Older People

The rate of increase in the numbers of people over 65 years, and particularly people over 80 years is likely to be very rapid in Herefordshire and this has particular implications in the remoter parts of the rural area, away from market towns and frequent public transport services.

The report carried out by Help the Aged 'In the Right Place, Accessibility, local services and older people' notes that the importance of access to the following services has been identified through consultations with older people:

- Food shops;
- Health services (hospitals, GPs and pharmacies); and
- Post offices.

We have already started to identify the ways in which we can improve accessibility for older people through the accessibility planning process. For example, the model that is being developed to assess the accessibility implications of our contracted bus services will pay particular attention to the needs of older people.

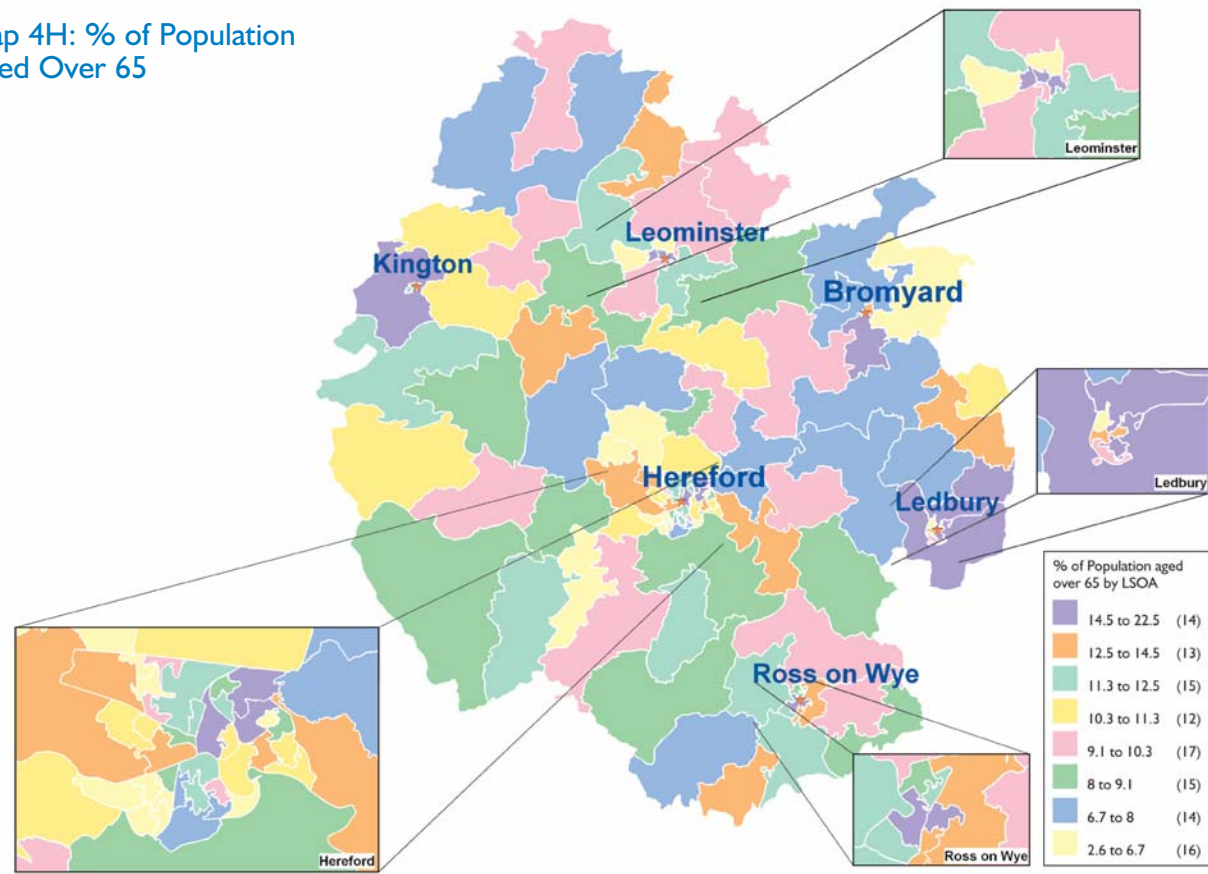
#### Young People

For many young people leaving school there are good opportunities for higher education, employment and training in Herefordshire. The 14-19 Inspection, 2005, stated that performance was 'good' in all areas apart from one, which was rated as 'satisfactory' (Access to and participation in education and training). Connexions (careers advice service) exceeded its key target for achieving a 10% reduction in the percentage of 16-18 year-olds not in education, employment or training (NEET).

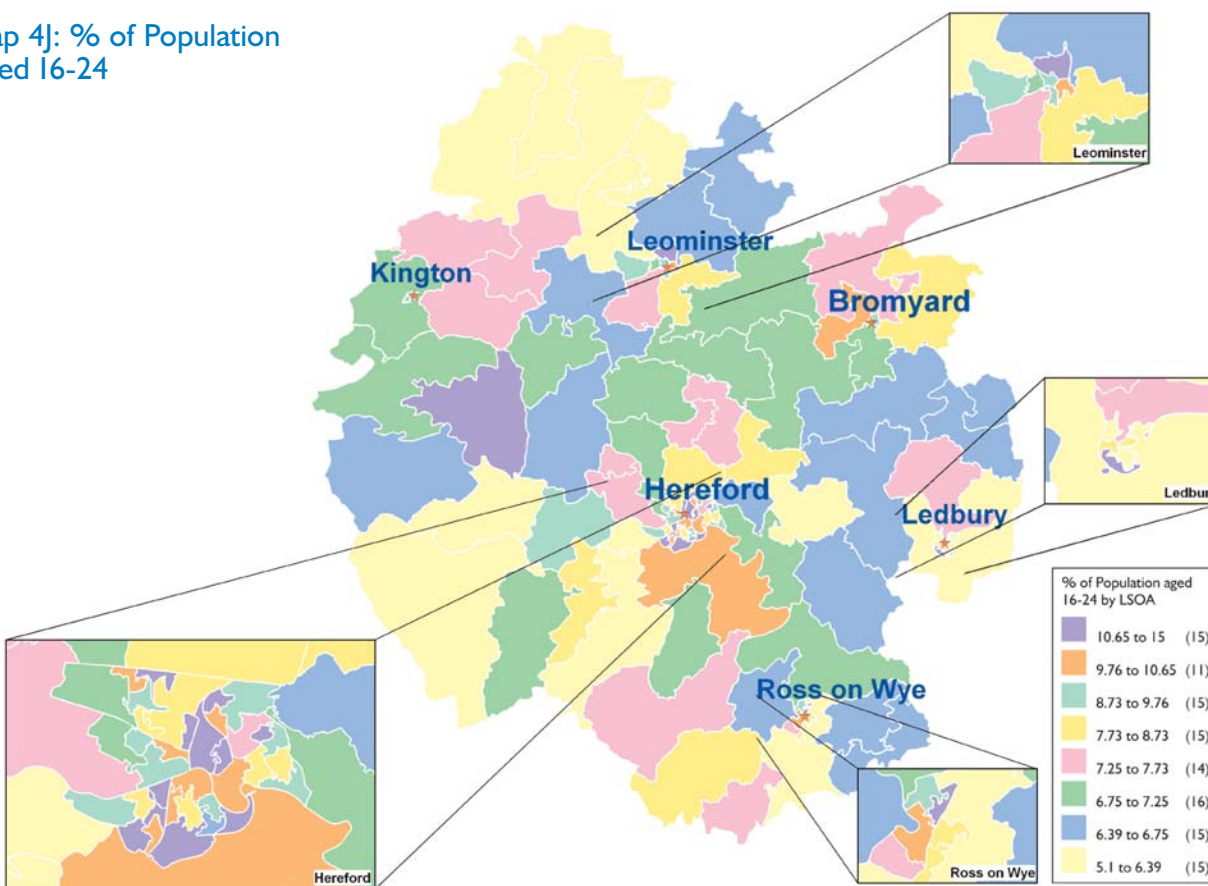
Herefordshire's Community Youth Service delivers youth work from nine Council owned youth centres and outdoor education facilities located across the County. In rural areas youth work is delivered, either through rented locations such as village halls, or via mobile provision. In 2004-5 the Youth Service worked with 1,785 young people aged 13-19 year-olds.

## 4. ACCESSIBILITY STRATEGY

Map 4H: % of Population Aged Over 65



Map 4J: % of Population Aged 16-24



The Youth Service provides information and services for young people via the internet and a range of mobile services. For example, a 'rural health bus' visits Kingstone High School 1 day a week, and Way2Go and Student Information Service via text, freephone and book.

In 2005 a postal survey was sent to a sample of 13-18 year olds in Herefordshire, 'The Youth Survey 2005' and 3,124 surveys were returned. Access to transport came forward as an important issue and the young people surveyed felt that it needed a lot of improvement. Specific questions were asked about the role that cycling could play in improving accessibility for young people. 72% of those surveyed cycle. The main reasons given for young people not cycling were:

- Distance (journeys too short or too long);
- Safety on the roads; and
- Security of bikes.

A pilot project is going to be implemented through the Accessibility action plan to see how effective cycling can be at improving accessibility for younger people.

Access to work has been identified as a particular issue for young people. One of the reasons why there is a migration of young people out of the rural area and into Hereford and the market towns is because employment opportunities and this is often due to location and lack of available transport. Access to industrial estates in the rural area has been identified as problematic for rural residents.

### Disabled People

Herefordshire's Supporting People Programme (ODPM initiative) aims to help vulnerable and disabled people to have a better quality of life, by planning and funding housing-related support services.

The types of support that these services might give include:

- Advice to enable people to claim welfare benefits;
- Support with budgeting;
- Enable people to access community services; e.g. doctors, dentists, library etc;
- Support to enable people to develop life skills such as cooking and cleaning; and
- Advice to enable people to be involved in their community and take part in social activities.

The Supporting People Team will have 'reviewed' all of the services in Herefordshire by March 2006 and the outcomes of this work will inform the implementation of this accessibility strategy.

This means that checks will be made to ensure that the services meet a certain level. This includes talking to staff and to people who use the service. If the service does not meet this level, the Supporting People Team tell the service how they should improve and agree how and when the improvements will be checked.

### 4.5 Prioritisation Of Issues And Objectives

The most deprived areas in the county (in terms of the Index of Multiple Deprivation) are in Hereford and Leominster. These areas, however, are situated close to a range of services and are well-served by public transport. There are also a range of initiatives already in existence to assist people living in these areas.

Through the analysis of socio-economic data and accessibility of transport services, it becomes clear that accessibility is most likely to be a significant issue in the rural area and, in particular for people with disabilities, for young people and for older people.

#### 4.5.1 Herefordshire's Rural Area

It is widely recognised that accessibility problems do exist in rural areas - but that these problems tend to be more scattered and less visible so can be difficult to identify and subsequently address.

Herefordshire is a very rural county, the second (after Northumberland) most sparsely populated in England. This brings with it a large geographical area and a sparse population. Approximately half of Herefordshire's 175,000 population lives outside of the city of Hereford and the five outlying market towns.

The idyllic, rural appearance of Herefordshire combined with higher than average levels of car ownership conceals pockets of real poverty and deprivation. Across the West Midlands there has been migration to rural areas but incomers to Herefordshire's rural communities tend to fall into two categories - older, middle class people (often retired) or, younger, middle class people who are engaged in creative activities or in running micro businesses from home. The flip side of the coin is that there is an out-migration of young people to the market towns and Hereford. This presents the Council and other service providers with a significant challenge - how to target resources effectively to improve access for a small, and reducing, proportion of isolated individuals.

Herefordshire has a substantial rural area. People living out in the rural area of Herefordshire often need to travel further than people in the city and market towns in order to reach employment, education, retail, medical and leisure facilities. High car ownership levels are a function of need rather than affluence with high levels of dependence upon the car for

## 4. ACCESSIBILITY STRATEGY

Table 4C: Core Rural Transport Partnership Projects in Herefordshire

Project	Brief Description	Area Served	Target Group
<b>Ledbury Market Towns Bus Service</b>	An accessible bus service linking areas of medium density housing with the town centre and other rail and bus services.	Ledbury town	General public
<b>Low Floor Buses Project</b>	The provision of new, low floor buses on all Herefordshire Council subsidised rural services, to make the services accessible to many more people, reducing social exclusion, and to attract more people on to the network by improving service quality.	Rural Herefordshire	General public
<b>North and South Herefordshire rural bus service enhancements</b>	Improved levels of rural bus service provision across the County in terms of increased frequency, combined with extensions to the operating day. Route extensions were also introduced, bringing public transport to additional communities in line with LTP targets.	Rural Herefordshire	General public
<b>Wheels to Work</b>	This project offers a range of transport options to people seeking access to employment and training opportunities including travel advice, moped and bicycle loads and car repair grants.	Herefordshire	People wanting to access employment and training
<b>Green Transport Promotions</b>	A project designed to increase awareness and promote the use of public and community transport, cycling, walking and other green forms of transport.	Herefordshire	General public
<b>Community Transport Development</b>	This project has introduced a range of measures to boost the capacity of the County's community transport services and raise service quality, including providing paid coordinators for all schemes, staff training, some new vehicles and improved publicity.	Most of Herefordshire	People without access to conventional public transport or private transport
<b>Community Wheels</b>	The capacity of the Community Wheels volunteer car scheme has been boosted in the North West of the County, in an area very poorly served by public transport. Volunteer recruitment has been improved, additional staff hours provided and better office systems.	North West Herefordshire	People without access to conventional or private transport
<b>Car Free Tourism</b>	A range of measures designed to promote alternatives to the private car for people wanting to explore the countryside and local tourist attractions including workshops for local hoteliers, events supported by public transport, walking festivals and mini-fleet cycle hire.	Herefordshire	Tourists
<b>Ross Transport Links</b>	A one-stop shop for travel advice and assistance with a project worker who provides advice, identifies gaps in services, recruits volunteers and provides training for local organisations	Ross and surrounding parishes	People without access to conventional public transport or private transport
<b>Jumpstart</b>	Through the provision of a new vehicle this project is now able to deliver pre-school play facilities in village halls in the Ross area more effectively. The number of people and venues served has increased and new play assistant posts have been created. Staff retention has also been improved.	Ross and surrounding parishes	Parents and toddlers
<b>Out and About</b>	This enables service users of Herefordshire Mind to access a range of support and educational opportunities. A new project was set up offering advice and support for using public and community transport, inhouse transport provision for clients unable to use mainstream services and discretionary travel tokens for those on low incomes.	Herefordshire	People with mental health problems
<b>Mobile Day Centre</b>	Age Concern Hereford offers a range of services through its mobile day centre projects, which take the services out to users in rural areas. Services include lunch clubs, craft activities, foot care, hairdressing and trips to local attractions.	South of Hereford	Older people
<b>Lifeline Social Car Scheme</b>	Following an increasing number of enquiries from people living in the villages and parishes surrounding the city of Hereford for assistance with transport, a new social car scheme was set up to provide access to local businesses and services. The Scheme is hosted by an established community transport provider based in the City and is aiming to cover all 39 parishes in its catchment area within 2 years of operation.	Parishes surrounding Hereford	People without access to conventional public transport or private transport
<b>Kidz First</b>	Provision of a new minibus has enabled this project to offer its after school activities to children living in more rural areas. Children with disabilities are picked up from school and taken to an after school club offering inclusive play and social activities, together with an invited sibling or friend. The project then drops them off at home afterwards, enabling a number of parents to pursue full time jobs. Saturday and holiday clubs are also provided.	Hereford and surrounding area	Children with disabilities
<b>Completing the Jigsaw</b>	In order to assess the place of demand responsive transport schemes as part of the current range of provision, 4 pilot services have been established to look at different models for this type of service. The first to be set up was the Mortimer Link service in the Northwest of the County, using 3 accessible minibuses with paid drivers, operating under a Section 19 permit, to provide a mixture of fixed route, contract and fully demand responsive services. The project is hosted by an experienced CT operator who is able to combine this service with a range of established ones to offer better coverage of the area	Four pilot areas	People without access to conventional public transport or private transport
<b>Volunteer Driver Development Project</b>	To help boost the capacity of the County's community transport schemes, this initiative was set up to: try out innovative ways of recruiting volunteers; promoting good practice in recruitment, training, support and retention of volunteers and raises the profile of Community Transport in the county.	Herefordshire	People without access to conventional public transport or private transport
<b>Transport Coordination Project</b>	A new vehicle sharing scheme was developed in the South of the County to complement the one already established in the North. A pool of vehicles already operating in the area, in the statutory, commercial and community sectors, was built up which could be made available in their downtime to local not-for-profit organisations needing affordable transport. In practice both schemes have struggled to get the concept off the ground and the level of usage did not justify the continued employment of 2 co-ordinators. Both services are continuing as a part of other CT services in the area and informal vehicle sharing is also beginning to take place.	Herefordshire	Support for Community Transport Schemes

access to jobs and services. Unemployment, however, is low in rural Herefordshire and, overall there are not problems of deprivation. That being said, a significant number of rural residents are reliant on public transport, in particular elderly people, disabled people, and those living in one car households without the use of the car (for example, young people).

Through the implementation of LTP1 and the successful Rural Transport Partnership (RTP), Herefordshire has already implemented lots of schemes that have improved accessibility in the rural area. The final RTP progress report (September 2005) identified that, for every £1 spent on RTP services, £3 of benefits were generated for the exchequer and local business.

### Development of the Herefordshire Access to Services Partnership

It is important to note that funding for Rural Transport Partnerships ceases at the end of March 2006. Responsibility for funding has now transferred from the Countryside Agency to Advantage West Midlands (the West Midlands Regional Development Agency). We have been working closely with AWM to help develop a project which meets their objectives in terms of economic outputs and helps tackle local accessibility issues, building on the best work developed through the Rural Transport Partnership. AWM commissioned a study in autumn 2005 to help identify the strengths and best practice established through the work of RTPs and the Council played an important role in guiding the study through representation a steering group. This has proved to be valuable work as AWM has announced that it intends to fund Rural Access to Service Partnerships for the period 2006/7 to 2008/9. After having submitted an initial outline project proposal we have received an indication from AWM that the Herefordshire Access to Services Partnership could receive up to £785k funding support for the project over the period. It is anticipated that final approval for the project will be granted in July 2006.

The table left shows the core projects administered by the Rural Transport Partnership and the areas that they cover.

There are still accessibility problems and, as mentioned earlier, access to work for young people is a particular problem. Another major issue for the rural area is the way in which community transport schemes are funded. Community transport schemes plug important gaps in the public transport network but the funding is on a short-term basis. Funding through the Rural Transport Partnership supports community transport projects up to the end of March 2006. After this date, funding should be available through Advantage West Midlands but, like the Rural Transport Partnership funding, this is guaranteed only for a few years.

## 4. ACCESSIBILITY STRATEGY

### 4.5.2 Priorities and Objectives

Through accessibility analysis and the Accessibility Planning Partnership, a number of objectives and priorities have been identified. In terms of over-arching priorities, maintaining and, where appropriate, improving access to services in the rural area will be the main area of work for the partnership.

Through the development of the accessibility strategy, the following objectives have been identified:

- To improve accessibility for vulnerable and disadvantaged groups through improved transport (public transport, walking and cycling) and the better delivery of services.
- To work with partner organisations and neighbouring local authorities so that accessibility improvements are delivered in a coordinated and efficient way.
- To continue to consult with the community so that the accessibility strategy is 'owned' by local people and so that the strategy continues to evolve, reflecting current, local concerns.
- To continue to work with partners to integrate accessibility considerations fully into other policy areas, for example, health, education, social services etc.
- To increase public transport patronage, so that existing networks don't contract further.
- To improve access to information so that the services that are available reach the widest audience.

These objectives have been translated into a number of priorities (see table below):

Table 4D: Key Priorities for the Accessibility Partnership

Priority	Partners involved
To improve travel information and awareness to encourage greater use of all available transport options	All Partners
To reduce the need to travel to services where appropriate (by delivering services into the community and/or by using technology such as internet access)	All Partners
To further improve the physical accessibility of public transport networks	Herefordshire Council/Bus and Rail Operators
To improve walking and cycling networks	Herefordshire Council/user groups
To better integrate public transport information, services and ticketing.	Herefordshire Council/Transport Operators

### 4.6 Targets and Indicators

There has been much debate both locally and nationally about accessibility indicators and, in particular about the need to identify indicators that reflect most effectively, the accessibility needs of local people and the level to which these are being addressed. The Department for Transport has identified a number of indicators which can be used to measure social exclusion. These are:

- % of a) pupils of compulsory school age; b) pupils of compulsory school age in receipt of free school meals within 15 and 30 minutes of a primary school and 20 and 40 minutes of a secondary school by public transport
- % of 16-19 year olds within 30 and 60 minutes of a further education establishment by public transport
- % of a) people of working age (16-74); b) people in receipt of Jobseekers' allowance within 20 and 40 minutes of work by public transport
- % of a) households b) households without access to a car within 30 and 60 minutes of a hospital by public transport
- % of a) households b) households without access to a car within 15 and 30 minutes of a GP by public transport
- % of a) households; b) households without access to a car within 15 and 30 minutes of a major centre by public transport

Through the development of the draft accessibility strategy and provisional LTP2, planning process, an accessibility indicator was developed for inclusion into the final LTP2 and Accessibility Strategy (see table right).

### Access to Major Centres: % of all rural households without access to a car within 60 minutes of Hereford or one of the main Market Towns.

In Herefordshire, a wide range of services and facilities are provided in Hereford and the larger market towns (such as shopping, health, leisure, employment and education). So the indicator above provides a picture of access to a range of important services.

In addition to this, individual projects that will be implemented through the Accessibility Planning Action Plan will be closely monitored so that we can identify the kinds of activities that bring with them the greatest benefits in terms of accessibility. We are also considering the use of a number of secondary indicators. The development of these will be informed by the

recommendations of the Public Transport Review which is currently ongoing and, if adopted, they will be reported on in future progress reports.

### 4.7 Accessibility Action Plan

Although this is Herefordshire's final Accessibility Strategy, the action plan contained within it will continue to evolve as further work is done and as the issues surrounding accessibility in Herefordshire change.

By setting up the Herefordshire Accessibility Partnership, we have established good links with a wide range of stakeholders and interest groups. We feel that the best way forward is to progress particular actions with smaller groups of partners.

Table 4E: Accessibility Strategy Action Plan

Issue	Action	Partners involved	Timescale
Sustaining eligible projects/services formerly funded through the Rural Transport Partnership	To establish new Access to Service Partnership Project funded through AWM	Herefordshire Council/Advantage West Midlands (AWM)	2006/7
Improving access to work	Review access to industrial estates	Herefordshire Council/AWM	2006/7
To further prioritise contracted bus services using accessibility planning considerations	To implement recommendations of public transport review	Herefordshire Council/Community Transport Projects/AWM	2005/6 to 2010/11
Improving access for young people	To develop, via the Extended School in Weobley, a Beacon Site for demonstrating the improvements in the ability to access services via bike	Herefordshire Council/Weobley Village/Youth Service	Ongoing
Improving access to the rail network	Implement accessibility improvements at Hereford station	Arriva Trains Wales/Herefordshire Council	2010/11
Improving access to the rail network	Implement accessibility improvements at Ledbury station	Arriva Trains Wales/Herefordshire Council	2006/8
Improving access to services and facilities for rural residents	Extend rural cycle network and cycle parking facilities	Herefordshire Council/Cycle user groups	2005-2011
Improving access to services and facilities for rural residents	Rural footway and Rights of Way improvements including better access for people with disabilities	Herefordshire Council	2005-2011
Improving access to bus services	Improving physical access to the bus network	Herefordshire Council/Community First	2005-2011
Improving access to, and awareness of, the full range of transport services	To raise public awareness of available travel options and services/facilities that are available without the need to travel	Herefordshire Council/AWM/and partners	2005-2011
Reduce fear of road traffic	To implement educational and engineering	Herefordshire Council and West	2005-2011
Accidents	Measures to reduce road casualties	Mercia Constabulary	Ongoing