

Shaping Our Place 2026

Local Development Framework

Core Strategy

Policy Direction Paper

Tourism, Culture and Leisure

January 2010

CORE STRATEGY POLICY DEVELOPMENT

Core Policy Areas: Tourism, Culture and Leisure

Preferred Policy Direction

The Core Strategy will:

- Focus larger scale, active and sustainable tourism, cultural and leisure development in Hereford, the market towns and, where appropriate, rural service centres (RSCs).
- Enable sustainable tourism, cultural and leisure opportunities in a way that adds value to the local economy, reflects the outcomes of the Green Infrastructure Strategy and capitalises on the value of local food, drink and crafts without harming the local distinctiveness and historic environment.
- Promote the development of quality visitor accommodation especially within accessible and sustainable locations. This would contribute towards Herefordshire as an overnight visitor destination without detracting from the character of the area.
- Take a positive approach to rural diversification for tourism, leisure and cultural uses where they are in accordance within sustainable development objectives.

There is no identified need for a new strategic tourist or cultural attraction in the county such as a theme park.

This policy direction is focussed on Option 2 of the Developing Options Paper but does allow for some elements of other options to influence the eventual policy. (See Developing Options Paper Q47).

Background to this policy direction is contained within the Tourism, Culture and Leisure Policy Development Paper.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This report provides background information and evidence to support the policy direction which 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 2009 Local Development Scheme timetable anticipates the Core Strategy will reach adoption during 2011.
- 1.4 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 which emerged from 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.

- 2.1 The Herefordshire economy relies heavily on tourism as one of its largest earning sectors of the economy. However, in the absence of an Alton Towers or NIA or similar high level regional venue, the attraction of Herefordshire is typically its high environmental qualities and wide range of small scale attractions. Tourism, culture and leisure have strong links to economic development and tend to be focussed on the county's natural and historic heritage assets. Thus, there is a strong relationship between the quality of the environment and the types and levels of tourism which prosper in Herefordshire.
- 2.2 The following commentary and targets from the current Visit Herefordshire Business Plan 2007-2010 give a sense of the significance of tourism to the county's economy:

The visitor economy in Herefordshire is currently worth in excess of £290 million. The rate of growth is around 2% per annum. The table below illustrates the growth that is required to meet the economic impact target of £313 million by 2010.

The region is attracting around 4.8 million visitors per year, of which 93% are day visitors and the remainder are staying visitors – either in serviced or self-catering accommodation, or staying with friends/relatives.

Year	Number of visitors	Total Spend
2006	4.8 million	£291 million
2007	4.89 million	£295 million
2008	4.99 million	£301 million
2009	5.0 million	£307 million
2010	5.1 million	£313 million

- 2.3 For the above purposes "Culture" and "Tourism" are indivisible.
- 2.4 There is, however a potential conflict when considering climate change effects with regard to tourism related development. Much of Herefordshire's tourism is dependent on the private car, and the promotion of tourism in rural areas in particular may come at a high carbon cost. For this reason significant new development for tourist accommodation should be focussed in Hereford and the Market Towns.

- 2.5 The key issue, therefore, is to ensure that the high quality of the environment, and the cultural assets of the county, are maintained in order to develop the tourist economy. The maintenance of this balance is the key policy issue.

3.0 The policy framework

National Policy

- 3.1 The wide ranging nature of Tourism, culture and leisure is such that several PPGs and PPSs are relevant including those currently under review and about to be replaced. The following are particularly relevant:

PPS 1	Delivering Sustainable Development
PPS6	Town Centres
PPS7	Sustainable Development in Rural Areas
PPS9	Biodiversity and Geological Conservation
PPG13	Transport
PPG15	Planning and the Historic Environment
PPG16	Archaeology and Planning

- 3.2 Note that the former PPG 21 – Tourism, was cancelled in 2006 and replaced by a Good Practice Guide, the latest version of which dates from 2007. It is also significant that PPG4 is in process of review, widening its interest from just industrial and commercial development to replace PPG4 itself, along with PPS6 - Town Centres, and most of PPG7 - Rural Areas. Partly as a result of this the consultation copy of PPS4 tends to be “Urban-centric” suggesting that significant new tourism development should be focussed in town and city centres. The two PPGs on the historic environment, 15 and 16 above, are also about to be combined into a new PPS on Heritage Assets.
- 3.3 The Good Practice Guide on Planning for Tourism contains a number of statements of relevance including:

“Where specific tourism policies are included in a plan, they should aim to:

- maximise the benefits of tourism, in particular ensuring that the development is able to reach its potential to contribute to tourism in the area and for local communities to enjoy those benefits;
- identify optimal locations, for example to maximise synergies with other tourist attractions and to promote opportunities for access by public transport;
- integrate development with its surroundings both in terms of design and layout and in the way that the service or facility is able to function;
- and avoid adverse impacts, for example by disturbance to activities on adjacent land.”

“The provision of essential facilities for visitors is vital for the development of tourism in rural areas. Tourism can:

- be a key element in rural and farm diversification;
- help to revitalise market towns and villages;
- support important rural services and facilities;
- and underwrite environmental schemes and improvements to the built and natural environment.”

Regional Policy

- 3.3 The adopted Regional Spatial Strategy dates from 2004 and is under review. Policy PA10 concerns Tourism, culture and leisure and is part of the Phase 3 Review for which the intended programme includes submission of the preferred options and Examination in Public during 2011. This process may, however, be overtaken by events as regional planning is due to be transferred to a new Single Regional Policy also during 2011. Policy PA10 seeks to encourage development for culture, sport and tourism whilst protecting the key assets in the built and natural environment upon which tourism depends.
- 3.4 The recent consultation (summer 2009) on Phase 3 of the RSS has focussed on the question of whether the RSS Policy should continue to identify certain key Regional Assets – or whether a more generic approach is better. The Herefordshire Council response favoured the latter although, if a list approach is adopted, it was suggested that the Wye Valley should be identified as a key Regional Asset for tourism, culture and leisure.

Community Strategy and LAA Targets

- 3.5 There are no targets specific to tourism, culture and leisure but several relating to such connected themes as the economy and the wellbeing of the population.
- 3.6 The Herefordshire Tourism Strategy was initially created to counter the effects of Foot and Mouth Disease in 2000 when severe restrictions on non-essential movement in rural areas effectively prevented many aspects of rural tourism and recreation taking place. No more recent update of the strategy has been published.

Unitary Development Plan

- 3.7 The Recreation Sport and Tourism policies in the UDP have not been challenged to any significant degree through the appeal process. All are due to be “saved” apart from one relating to golf courses.

4.0 Evidence base

- 4.1 There have been no evidence base studies on the specific topics of tourism, culture and leisure, although other elements of the evidence base have a relevance including the Green Infrastructure Study, the PPG17 study and the Retail Study (which included consideration of leisure development). The strong relationship between a thriving tourism industry and the economic wellbeing of the county is also significant although it was not addressed in the Employment Land Study (which was focussed on office and industrial development needs).

5.0 What can the Core Strategy do?

- 5.1 The Core Strategy could seek to achieve the following outcomes (based on the themes of the Sustainable Community Strategy)

Health and wellbeing

- Encouragement of ‘green’ and ‘active’ tourism
- Enabling a diverse range of activities for all people of all abilities
- Tourism as a means of protecting and enhancing local distinctiveness

Combating climate change

- 'Green tourism' reducing need for private car
- Considering location of attractions, accommodation, etc
- 'Green' building methods and design, that make best and most efficient use of energy and resources, and where possible utilise recycling opportunities (including water) and alternative and complimentary sources of power generation

Safer communities

- Vibrant and sustainable communities
- Tourism that supplements and supports existing local businesses
- Employment opportunities beyond low skill/ low pay tourism type jobs
- Tourism and associated facilities supplementing and enhancing local facilities

Social inclusion

- Tourism job opportunities not limited only low skilled/ low paid
- Requiring tourism development to be suitably integrated into the local community
- Tourism facilities to be accessible and available to all
- Supplying sufficient range and types of facilities in locations where there is need and demand
- Using tourism to reinforce local distinctiveness

Economic Development

- Providing sufficient types and range of facilities, at a range of pricing levels, available to all levels of tourists
- Locating facilities in locations which minimise the need to travel or dependency on the private car in order to minimise road congestion, which in turn affects the economy
- Promoting local attractions, shops, businesses and facilities

6.0 Developing Options Consultation Results

6.1 The Developing Options Paper presented five options as follows:

1. Devise a policy to limit the growth of tourism in Herefordshire in order to protect existing environmental assets
2. Devise a policy to strongly promote the growth of tourism across Herefordshire to help create a vibrant economy
3. Focus tourism development on key assets within Herefordshire for example Hereford, the Black and White villages or Symmonds Yat; to maximise the growth of tourism and attract more visitors
4. Focus tourism development only on those areas accessible by public transport, or
5. Concentrate on promoting Herefordshire as a centre for green tourism

- 6.2 The consultation response showed a clear rejection of option 1 (supported by only 23%), with general support for options 3 (59%) and 5 (75%). Option 2 was supported by 83% of those who responded and is therefore used as the basis for taking this work forward.

7.0 Further consultation undertaken and Sustainability Appraisal/Habitats Regulations Appraisal

- 7.1 There has been no additional consultation work undertaken or evidence reports on these specific topics, although other evidence studies as identified above are relevant in part.

- 7.2 The Sustainability Appraisal at the Developing Options stage identified a neutral effect for options 1 and 2, with options 3, 4 and 5 moving towards sustainability. The Habitats Regulations Assessment identified option 1 as having a beneficial effect, with the other options being potentially neutral. In all cases a detailed assessment of an individual project may identify more specific effects.

8.0 Conclusion

- 8.1 Building on option 2 above and taking into account the relevant elements of the other evidence base studies, it is appropriate for Hereford and the Market Towns to be the main focus of tourism, culture and leisure development (which is suggested to an extent by both options 3 and 4). Outside those main centres the role of tourism in rural areas is related very closely to the rural economy and farm diversification. In addition much tourism is focussed precisely on the rural amenities and assets in locations such as the Wye Valley (for sport and tourism in particular) and the natural and built environmental qualities of the county. Thus there is a need to promote the development of sustainable tourism, cultural and leisure opportunities (option 5) that add value to the local economy and increase overnight stays – without harming the specific characteristics (option 1) of Herefordshire which make it attractive in the first place. Therefore, there are elements contained in all the options that could be used to develop a preferred policy direction.

- 8.2 The promotion of tourism facilities in particular must strike a balance between promotion of the economy and too much dependence on private transport. Thus there is a need for the promotion of visitor accommodation *within* accessible and sustainable locations where such development can take place without detracting from the qualities of the area.

- 8.3 The policy development must also take account of related strategies such as the Green Infrastructure Strategy through the promotion of green transport corridors.

9.0 Way forward

- 9.1 Whilst Herefordshire Council needs to demonstrate that there are clear mechanisms for monitoring the outcomes of policies (including culture, sport and tourism policies) within its Core Strategy, it is not the purpose of this report to propose indicators to measure their success or otherwise.

- 9.2 The range of possible indicators which could be used to monitor policies will be developed through further consultation with key stakeholders and other interested bodies throughout the development plan process.