

## RURAL AND URBAN DEFINITIONS AND CLASSIFICATION 2004

### Background

**The project** was commissioned by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM), the Countryside Agency (CA) and the Welsh Assembly Government. A consortium from Birkbeck College, University of Sheffield, University of Glamorgan and Geowise Ltd carried out the work.

**The aim** was to create a new settlement-based definition of urban and rural areas that will initially be used to classify all Census Output Areas and wards in England & Wales but may be extended to other geographies.

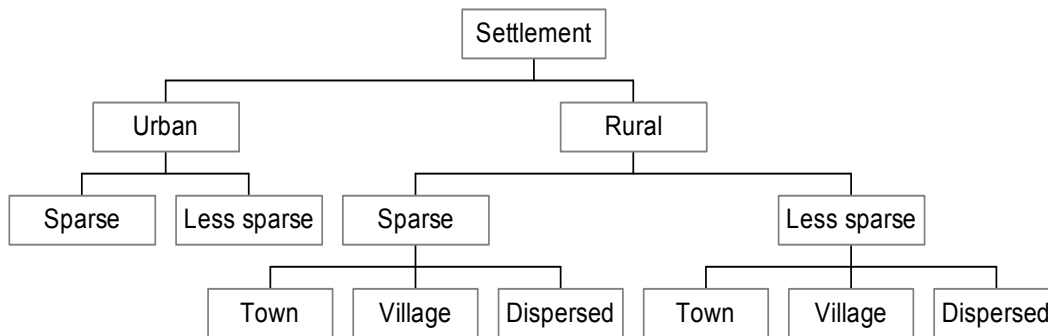
**The purpose** is to provide a framework for both the collection and reporting of statistics that will enable organisations to review delivery of services in urban and rural areas and develop policy to address issues.

### Outline of methodology

The methodology is based on a consideration of hectare squares and is quite complex. In broad terms, output areas have been classified on the basis of two factors:

- Context – whether the surrounding area is sparsely populated or less sparsely populated
- Morphology – whether the output area is predominantly urban, town & fringe, village or dispersed (ie hamlets and isolated dwellings)

Thus, as depicted below, rural output areas (< 10,000 population) are classified as one of six types (e.g. less sparse village) – see diagram below:



For example a 'sparse urban' classification would be an area with a concentration of population and settlement (urban) surrounded by an area with very low population density (sparse).

Wards have been classified in a similar way apart from 'villages' and 'dispersed settlements' which have been amalgamated into one category, since very few wards would be classified as being predominantly dispersed settlements.

A public web-based validation exercise on the methodology and results was carried out in Spring 2004. The Herefordshire Partnership Research Team responded, following discussion with other interested parties. It would appear that whilst improvements have been made to supporting documentation, the methodology and results have not been revised at this stage.

**Possible Uses of the Classification:**

Two main uses of the classification have been identified:

- As a “data marker” for adding together statistics for small areas into broad types of areas so comparisons can be made at regional or national level. For example, statistics on population structure in less sparse urban areas compared with towns in sparse areas;
- To target policies to particular types of areas.

**Classifications for Herefordshire**

Ward level classifications for Herefordshire are shown in Table 2 at the end of this report; together with maps depicting classifications at Ward and Output Area Level.

Population statistics at Output Area Level can be used in conjunction with the classifications to determine population shares by settlement type for Herefordshire; e.g. the proportion of the population in town and fringe areas surrounded by sparsely populated areas. Table 1 compares these with figures for two neighbouring authorities, Wales and England.<sup>1</sup>

<b>Table 1: Population shares by settlement type at Output Area Level</b>					
<b>Rural-urban classification</b>	<b>Herefordshire</b>	<b>Shropshire</b>	<b>Powys</b>	<b>Wales</b>	<b>England</b>
Urban / less sparse	39.4%	39.3%	5.2%	62.3%	80.4%
Urban / sparse	5.8%	0.0%	8.2%	1.9%	0.2%
Town & fringe / less sparse	8.7%	19.8%	1.5%	12.8%	8.6%
Town & fringe / sparse	1.5%	4.6%	23.3%	3.3%	0.4%
Village / less sparse	17.5%	16.3%	6.5%	7.0%	6.7%
Village / sparse	5.0%	1.9%	23.8%	5.2%	0.5%
Dispersed / less sparse	14.8%	14.3%	1.9%	3.2%	2.8%
Dispersed / sparse	7.3%	3.8%	29.7%	4.2%	0.3%

Source: Census 2001, ONS

Note: Sparsity relates to the surrounding area (see outline of methodology)

**Comments**

The concept of distinguishing between different types of rural area is welcomed; the method previously adopted by the Countryside Agency resulted in all wards in Herefordshire simply being classified as rural apart from Aylestone, Belmont, Holmer and Three Elms.

There are only two categories of sparsity; “sparse” and “less sparse”. Most of England is classified as “less sparse” (see Table 1). “Sparse” areas include the Welsh Marches, including north and west Herefordshire, north Cornwall and north Devon, areas around the Wash and the far north of England.

Some of the results for Herefordshire do not conform to local perceptions. In particular the classification of Hope End Ward as ‘urban’, which probably results from its proximity to Malvern in Worcestershire despite the presence of a range of hills between Hope End and the Malvern wards. Anomalies have been reported in other parts of the country (eg Cannock Chase AONB has been classified as urban) but it has been decided that no

<sup>1</sup> Rural and Urban Area Classification 2004 – An Introductory Guide (The Countryside Agency, DEFRA, ODPM, ONS, Welsh Assembly Government).

Available via [www.statistics.gov.uk/geography/downloads](http://www.statistics.gov.uk/geography/downloads)

changes should be made to adjust for these. Also, in responding to the consultation, we commented on the failure of the sparsity measure to adequately reflect differences between areas but again no refinements are planned at this stage.<sup>2</sup>

It is important to note that the categorization will largely be used by organisations such as the Countryside Agency to compare statistics for urban and rural areas at a national level and may well be adequate for this purpose. Some enhancements will be made but these will not affect the Output Area and Ward classifications.

Although the Rural Strategy 2004 implies that the classification will be used to target policy, as yet there are no clear indications as to what this will mean in practice.

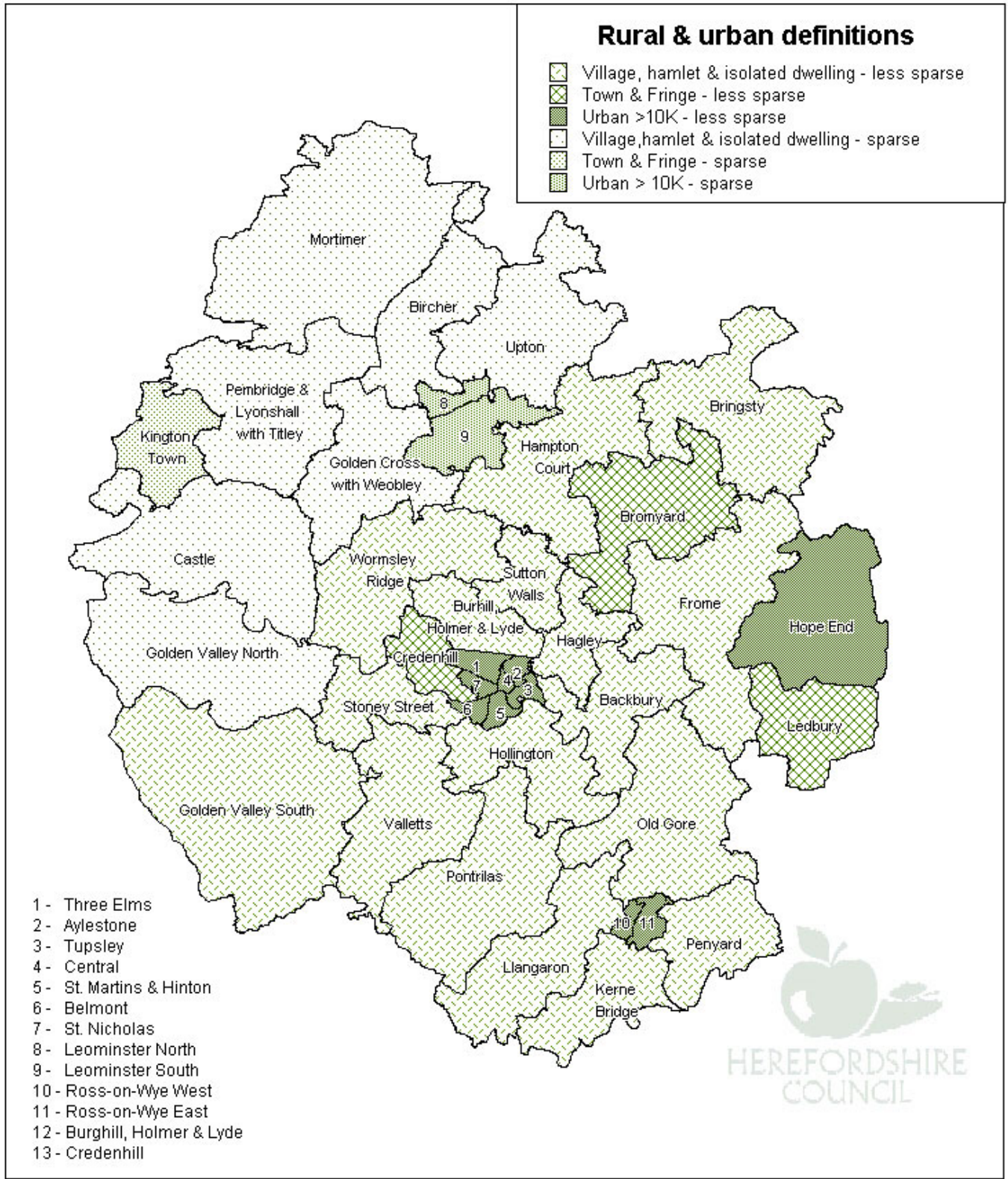
**For more information about the methodology and local results, please contact Herefordshire Council Research Team on 01432 260495**

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<sup>2</sup> Urban and Rural Definition for England and Wales: Results of the validation exercise (ONS)

<b>Table 2: Rural – urban classification for Herefordshire at Ward level</b>		
<b>Ward (2003 Boundaries)</b>	<b>Morphology</b>	<b>Sparsity</b>
Aylestone	urban	less sparse/non-remote
Backbury	village & dispersed	less sparse/non-remote
Belmont	urban	less sparse/non-remote
Bircher	village & dispersed	<b>sparse/remote</b>
Bringsty	village & dispersed	less sparse/non-remote
Bromyard	fringe & town	less sparse/non-remote
Burghill Holmer and Lyde	village & dispersed	less sparse/non-remote
Castle	village & dispersed	<b>sparse/remote</b>
Central	urban	less sparse/non-remote
Credenhill	town & fringe	less sparse/non-remote
Frome	village & dispersed	less sparse/non-remote
Golden Cross with Weobley	village & dispersed	<b>sparse/remote</b>
Golden Valley North	village & dispersed	<b>sparse/remote</b>
Golden Valley South	village & dispersed	less sparse/non-remote
Hagley	village & dispersed	less sparse/non-remote
Hampton Court	village & dispersed	less sparse/non-remote
Hollington	village & dispersed	less sparse/non-remote
Hope End	urban	less sparse/non-remote
Kerne Bridge	village & dispersed	less sparse/non-remote
Kington Town	town & fringe	<b>sparse/remote</b>
Ledbury	town & fringe	less sparse/non-remote
Leominster North	urban	<b>sparse/remote</b>
Leominster South	urban	<b>sparse/remote</b>
Llangarron	village & dispersed	less sparse/non-remote
Mortimer	village & dispersed	sparse/remote
Old Gore	village & dispersed	less sparse/non-remote
Pembridge & Lyonshall with Titley	village & dispersed	<b>sparse/remote</b>
Penyard	village & dispersed	less sparse/non-remote
Pontrilas	village & dispersed	less sparse/non-remote
Ross-on-Wye East	urban	less sparse/non-remote
Ross-on-Wye West	urban	less sparse/non-remote
St Martins and Hinton	urban	less sparse/non-remote
St Nicholas	urban	less sparse/non-remote
Stoney Street	village & dispersed	less sparse/non-remote
Sutton Walls	village & dispersed	less sparse/non-remote
Three Elms	urban	less sparse/non-remote
Tupsley	urban	less sparse/non-remote
Upton	village & dispersed	<b>sparse/remote</b>
Valletts	village & dispersed	less sparse/non-remote
Wormsley Ridge	village & dispersed	less sparse/non-remote

Note: Sparsity relates to the surrounding area (see outline of methodology)

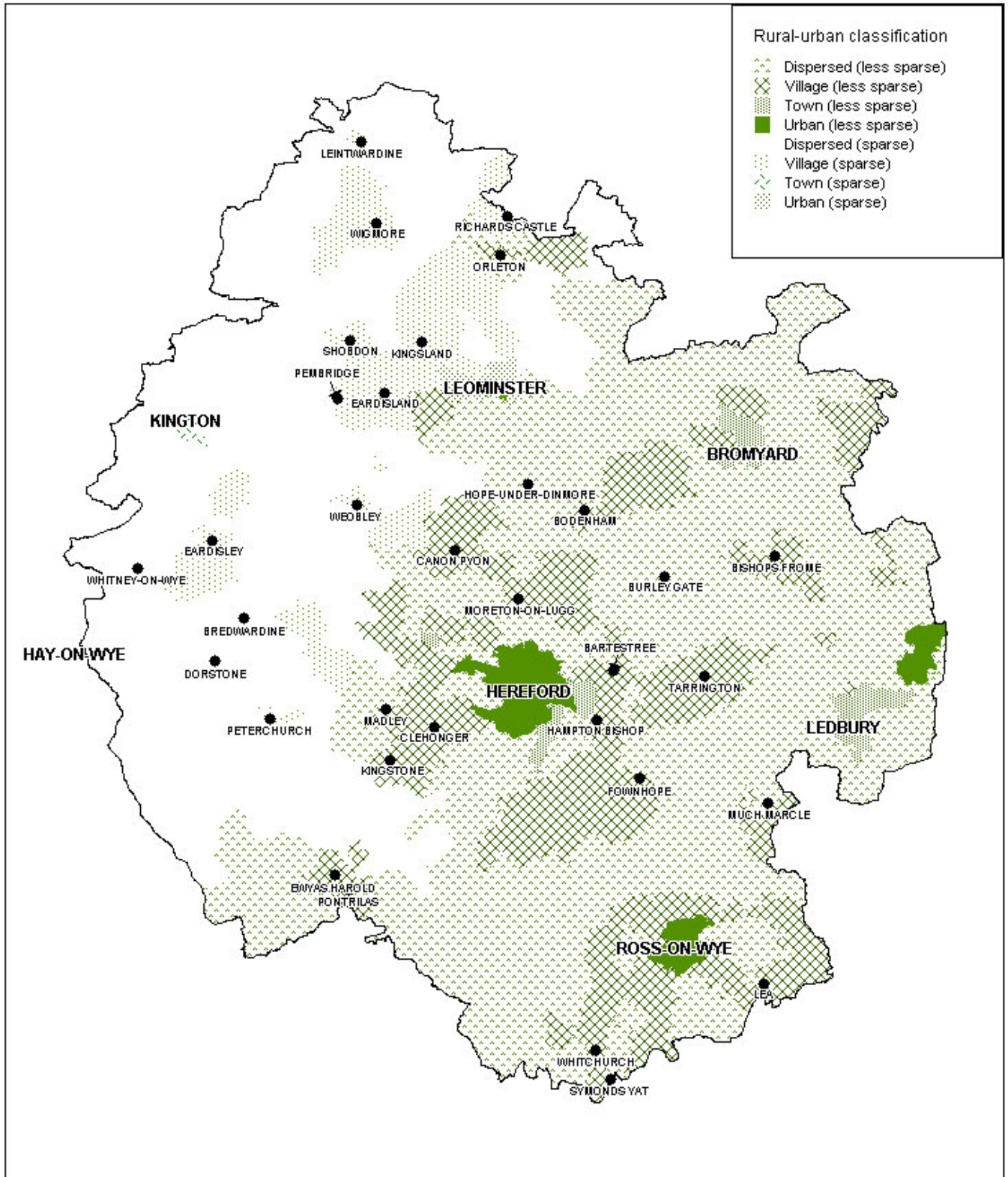


**Rural-urban definitions 2004**  
 (Source: ONS, DEFRA, CA, ODPM, WA)



**SCALE 1:325,000**

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**Rural-urban classification of  
Census Output Areas 2004**



**Scale: 1:325,000**

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