



# Lea Draft Neighbourhood Development Plan 2011-2031



Photograph: Annabelle Heenan

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## Section 1: Introduction

The Localism Act 2011 was introduced with a view to giving communities more control in terms of how their neighbourhood should develop. A central part of the Localism Act is the right of communities to produce a Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP), allowing people to shape the future of where they live.

Such NDPs allow a 'local say' in terms of future development proposals in their area, but the plan must conform to the Local Authority Plan and with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

Once the plan has been made, following a favourable referendum Lea Neighbourhood Development Plan will have force of law and, as an integral part of the Hereford Council's Core Strategy, will become the starting point for deciding what development should and should not take place in the parish.

The NDP area (i.e. Lea parish) was designated by Herefordshire Council on 13 May 2014, following a statutory period of formal consultation. Discussions at a Lea Parish Council meeting led to the adoption of the Lea NDP Project Brief in January 2015, with a small Steering Group set up in February 2015.

Following a public event in 2015, the Steering Group circulated a questionnaire to all households during October of that year, seeking views on the parish and its amenities, and on what development people would find desirable or acceptable. A public meeting was then held in January 2016 to discuss the initial results.

Progress was temporarily interrupted due to the death of a member of the Steering Group and the resignation of the Chair on ill health grounds. A new Steering Group was set up in August 2016.

In October 2016 the group was successful in obtaining a grant of £2,500, which has enabled significant progress and allowed it to engage a professional research consultancy to assist with an in-depth analysis of the questionnaires and the identification of initial priorities and issues. These were presented at two public open meetings in Lea village hall on 10<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> February 2017.

The six-week consultation on the draft plan took place between 4<sup>th</sup> September and 16<sup>th</sup> October 2017. The draft plan has now been amended to take account of any outstanding comments and comments received during the consultation period.

The Lea Neighbourhood Plan has been approved by the Parish Council and has reached submission stage. It will now be consulted upon for six weeks by Herefordshire Council. After this six-week consultation, the Lea Neighbourhood Plan will be amended to take account of any representations made during the submission consultation and sent to an independent examiner who will scrutinise the plan to see whether it meets the “basic conditions” of the Town and Country Planning Act.

If the Lea Neighbourhood Plan is passed at examination it will then be put to a public vote, a referendum, of all those on the electoral roll within the parish. If they vote for the Lea plan it will be made part of the statutory development plan system for Herefordshire.

The submission plan is accompanied by a Basic Conditions Statement and a Consultation Statement that are available on the Herefordshire Council website.

The Lea Neighbourhood Plan has also been assessed for any environmental impacts it may have through a Strategic Environmental Assessment and a Habitats Regulation Assessment. These assessments have assisted us in drawing up the plan.

## **Evidence base overview**

The analysis, objectives and proposals in this neighbourhood plan have drawn on a variety of sources:

- Data on such things as population, employment and housing was obtained largely from the Office of National Statistics;
- General parish information was sourced from the Rural Community Profile for Lea (ACRE October 2013).
- Landscape information was obtained from the Initial Habitats Regulations Assessment and Strategic Environmental Screening Notification (April 2014).

- Strategic Environmental Assessments Screening Scoping Report (March 2015).
- Flood risk data was obtained from Lea Flood Study, prepared by Parsons Brinkerhoff for Herefordshire Council (October 2014).
- Lea Flood Alleviation Feasibility Study, prepared by Balfour Beatty Living Places (July 2016).
- Lea Neighbourhood Area Environmental Report (August 2017).
- Lea Neighbourhood Area Habitat Regulations Assessment (August 2017).

Various local evidence throughout is quoted from the questionnaire survey, comprising a residents' survey, a business survey and from comments received at various consultation events in the village.

More detailed information on this extensive evidence base, including reports on the village consultations, can be found on the Lea Parish Council website: <http://www.theleaparishcouncil.org.uk>

## Section 2: Parish description

In 1870-72, John Marius Wilson's *Imperial Gazetteer of England and Wales* described Lea like this:

*LEA, a village and a parish in Ross district, Hereford. The village stands adjacent to the Hereford and Gloucester railway, near Mitcheldean-Road r. station, and near the boundary with Gloucestershire, 4¼ miles ESE of Ross; and has a post office under Ross. The parish comprises 702 acres. Real property, £1,271. Pop, 226. Houses, 49. The property is divided among a few. The living is a p. curacy in the diocese of Gloucester and Bristol. Value, £68. Patron, the Vicar of Linton. The church is ancient, has a tower and spire, and was recently restored. There are a parochial school and charities £6.*

## History

The parish of Lea is situated on the A40 between Ross-on-Wye, four miles to the west, and Gloucester which is 12 miles to the east. The small rural parish comprises the village of Lea, with countryside – which is principally farmland – around it. The population is approximately 600.

The parish covers 284 hectares northwards from the county border, with the Forest of Dean to the south. The A40 runs roughly east to west through the parish.

The village has always been referred to by the inhabitants as 'The Lea', rather than simply Lea. Early transcriptions of old documents of the 17th century call the village 'The Lake', or 'La Lea'. The old English word *Laecc* or *Lec* denoted a stream, and as the Rudhall Brook runs through the village at its lower end, there is the probability that at one time this broadened out into a lake. There is certainly swampy ground at one point.

Another theory is that the name is derived from *Lacu*, the name of an ancient family who were the principal landowners in the 11th and 12th centuries.

Lea owes its existence to the fact that it has always bordered a thoroughfare. Even from Roman times it was on the route between Gloucester (*Glevum*) and Weston-under-Penyard (*Ariconium*) and the Forest of Dean, where the Romans obtained the iron ore which they smelted at *Ariconium*.

Some of the oldest village houses have at some time or another been inns. One reference in an old document tells us that a hostel or 'hospital' existed on the crossroads at Lea. This house still stands and although it now has a fine Queen Anne façade, medieval building is still discernible at the back and it was probably built on an even older foundation.

The Crown Inn also dates from medieval times. According to village legend, on dark still nights the clatter of hooves, the creaking of springs and the crack of a whip may be heard, as a phantom coach and horses rounds the corner near the Crown onto the old coach road. There is a lane about a mile away called Cut-throat Lane which certainly puts one in mind of highwaymen or footpads.

St John the Baptist church in Lea is built of the local red sandstone, now mellowed to warm pink. It began life as a chapel of ease in the 12th century. The tower was begun in the 13th century and the slender spire was added in the 14th century. It was not consecrated for burials and baptisms until 1418.

Inside there is a most unusual font, made of Italian marble and estimated to be about 900 years old. How it came over to this country is not known, but it was given to Lea church in 1907 by the daughter of Sarah Decima Bradney, in commemoration of her mother.

After the second world war new housing development increased the population to some extent, but in recent years there has been a spate of new building.

An estate of 14 executive-type houses has been built on the site of Mitcheldean Road Station through which the Hereford-Gloucester railway ran until 1965; while alongside the road to Aston Ingham there is a new estate of 40 houses.

In the early 1970s, a mobile home park was developed and became Lea Villa Residential Park, adding some 50 homes to the village – all to be

occupied by persons 50 years of age or over. In 1990 the new village hall was built together with six houses alongside.

These developments have had a beneficial effect on the parish, bringing new life to it. Central are a thriving village stores, post office, garage, primary school and public house.

Part of the original Royal Forest of Dean borders the village on the south-east side. This woodland area is called 'Howley Grove' or 'The Wild Wood'. The lords of Lea claimed rights in the forest and control over certain territory or bailiwick. Even today, part of this district is known as Lea Bailey and lies within the parish of Lea.

Lea is located at the base of a rolling valley of the principal settled farmland of Herefordshire. The parish has sandy soils over Herefordshire old red sandstone, within the catchment of Rudhall Brook which flows into the River Wye. Beyond the principal settlement area to the west is an undulating expansive rural landscape, to the east the settlement is enclosed by the ridge line of Crews Hill.



Looking East from Rock Lane

There is a variety of house types in the village of Lea; a mix of 19th century detached and semi-detached rendered and local stone houses with slate roofs, several small late 20th century modern housing estate developments of render/brick construction with cement tiled roofs, and a small number of larger detached properties/farmhouses of stone/render construction with associated working agricultural buildings.

Much of the countryside is used for arable farming. Stewardship arrangements provide encouragement to manage hedges, with field corners managed for small mammals and insects and for grass buffer strips around arable fields.

### **Listed buildings** (see Appendix A for further details)

Within the village there is a total of nine listed buildings.

Two of these have been granted important Grade II\* status:

**Castle End** – This house, originally the property of the Dukes of Kent, passed to the Nourse family in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century; the enlargement and modernisation was probably carried out on behalf of the Bristol merchant Philip Nourse, who retired there until his death in 1742.



St John The Baptist Church, Lea

**St John the Baptist church** – Late 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup> and early 15<sup>th</sup> century. Extensively restored in 1854. Sandstone rubble with tile roofs. Comprises a west tower with spire, nave, lower chancel, north aisle under a pitched roof, north chapel, and north porch. The lower stage of the tower

is 13<sup>th</sup> century and has a window of one trefoiled light to each side.

The other seven have Grade II status:

**Dovecote, approximately 55 yards north of Castle End** – Probably 17<sup>th</sup> century. Rubble with pyramidal tile roof. Octagonal plan.

**The Crown Inn** – Public house. Probably 15<sup>th</sup> century with 17<sup>th</sup> century and later alterations. Rendered timber-framing and rubble with slate roof.

**Brook House** – Probably early 18<sup>th</sup> century with 17<sup>th</sup> century remains.

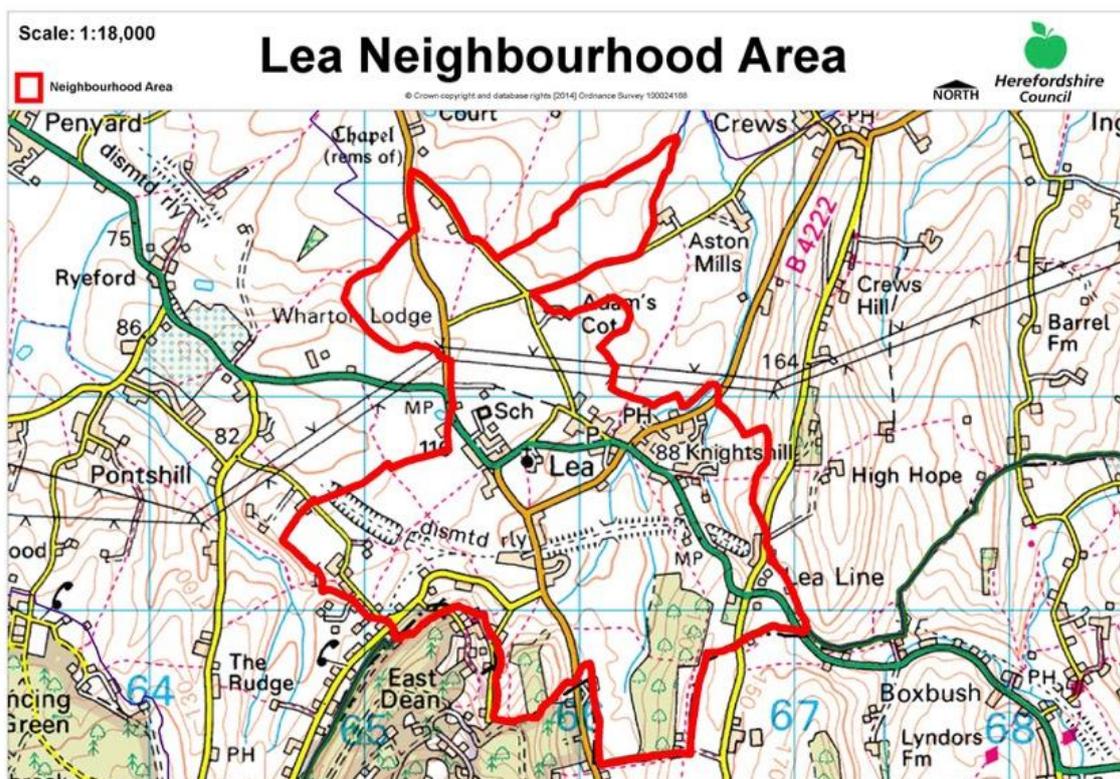
**Barn immediately north of Lea House** (*known as Crown Inn Barns*) – The barn is a typical threshing barn of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

**Three tomb chests** near to St John the Baptist church.

Other significant buildings and sites include:

- Holloway at Frog's Bottom;
- The Old Rectory;
- eight historic farms, present on the Ordnance Survey First Edition.

## Lea parish



Ordnance Survey PMSA Licence No: 0100056744

## The people of the parish

The parish's population has slightly increased over recent years; between the 2001 and 2011 censuses the population rose from 646 to 695.

Age profiles remain unchanged, with 57% of the population aged between 16 and 64, 19.8% under 16, and 23.2% aged 65 or over. Parishioners fall primarily into four groups: A significant number of young people 18 or under (150, 46%); people living and working in the parish; people living in the parish and working elsewhere; and retired people, living in parish for 'quality of life' reasons.

The large majority of people living in the parish appreciate its rural character, and regard this as a major attribute. This is also the case for new arrivals to Lea.

## Health

In the 2001 census residents of Lea (572 of the total population) rated themselves as healthy; 80% rated their health as good or very good compared to 81% for both Herefordshire and England.

In the 2011 census there appears to have been an improvement in health. Of the 649 responding (i.e. 93% of the total population) 314 are in very good health, 232 are in good health and 103 consider their health to be fair.

## Education

Educational attainment in the parish is average, with 27.6% of residents aged 16 and over having a level 4 qualification (degree or professional qualification) compared with 27% for Herefordshire and 27% for England. A correspondingly high 28% of parishioners had no qualifications, compared with 23% for Herefordshire and 22% for England.

## Housing

The number of dwellings has increased proportionate to the population, with 273 and 290 recorded in the two censuses (2001 and 2011), but 2014 figures from Herefordshire Council indicate 307, with a further five commitments.

None of the dwellings in the parish are shared between different households. 42.3% of dwellings are detached houses, 34.9% semi-detached or terraced, and the remainder are flats or maisonettes.

In Lea, 66% of dwellings are owner-occupied, 10% privately rented, and 24% social affordable housing. This compares with Herefordshire figures of 68%, 15% and 13% and England figures of 63%, 17% and 18%, respectively.

Thus, Lea parish has relatively low numbers of privately rented dwellings, and a relatively high number of affordable housing dwellings compared with the rest of Herefordshire and England. The parish is generally suitable for short-term tenancies, with most being holiday lets.

## Industry

The main industry within the parish is agriculture. The largest farm engages in a variety of enterprises, including potato and raspberry growing.



There is an industrial unit engaging in light railway engineering and a few diverse businesses such as domestic, design, building and administration (see Appendix B). Of the five responses to a questionnaire sent to businesses in the parish, all live within the parish.

## Employment

There is a slightly higher proportion of residents in higher managerial and professional occupations at 41% of the population compared with 38% for Herefordshire and 41% for England. Unemployment is at 3.9 %, which is similar to Herefordshire at 3.3% but lower than the national figure of 4.3%.

The 2011 census shows that 7.1% of Lea's population work from home, while 5.4% travel less than a mile and a half to work and 7.4% travel over 25 miles to work. Responses to the parish survey indicate that of those who did respond 10% worked in the parish and 38% outside. 11% work within five miles of home and a further 20% between five and 25 miles of home. 12% work at home while 51% are retired.

During the summer period a significant number of seasonal workers are recruited, often from overseas, to cater for agricultural needs.

## Transport

Public transport is restricted to daytime Monday to Saturday. Although there are several routes which serve the parish they are few and far between. There are also limited school buses.

The parish is too remote to enable pedestrian access to towns and there are inadequate footways. Cycling can be dangerous, with small

unclassified roads being predominant. It is impossible for cyclists to avoid using busy main roads and small minor roads and there is a complete absence of cycle paths. Parishioners are mostly reliant on private transport.

## **Schools and healthcare facilities**

A primary school is located within Lea parish. Secondary schools are located in Ross-on-Wye, four miles away, and in Mitcheldean in Gloucestershire, some two miles away, along roads totally inadequate for walking or cycling.

The nearest GP surgery is in Mitcheldean, two miles distant, (for those with their own transport) others can be found in Ross-on-Wye, four miles away. There is a community hospital in Ross-on-Wye and county hospitals in both Hereford and Gloucester.

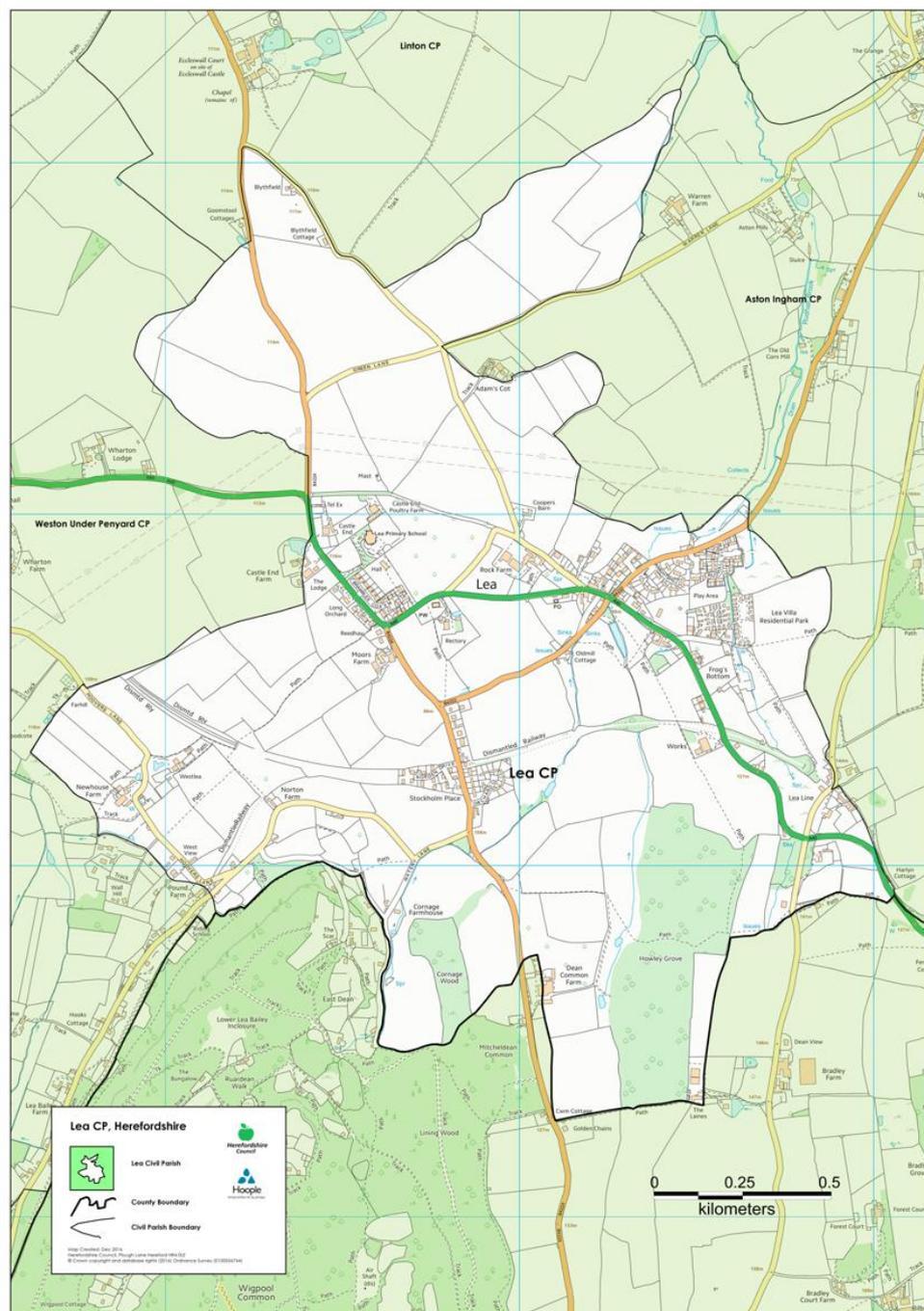
## **Other infrastructure**

- There is mains electricity and mains water.
- There is mains drainage to most properties.
- Fibre-optic broadband is available in the village, but only as far as roadside cabinets.
- Mobile phone coverage is generally good.
- No parts of the parish are supplied with mains gas.

## **Relationship with neighbouring communities**

The nearest urban hub is Ross-on-Wye, four miles from Lea, while Mitcheldean is two miles away in Gloucestershire.

## Map of Lea parish showing neighbouring parishes



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There is no consistent architectural style within the parish. Most houses are two-storey buildings of varying construction, from traditional brick, stone and timber framed to more modern brick and rendered walls. Compared with Herefordshire and England as a whole, houses are generally larger, with more bedrooms and total number of rooms (see paragraph on housing above).

## **Section 3:**

### **Plan methodology**

A steering group, made up of members of the community, has managed the progression of the Neighbourhood Development Plan and has arranged a number of consultation events which have helped inform it.

The plan sets out the views and concerns of the parishioners, from which a vision for the parish has been developed. The plan identifies issues arising from the consultations and then sets objectives which underpin the vision and policies to support and achieve each objective.

## Section 4: Neighbourhood Development Plan issues

In July 2015 at Lea's summer village fete, the Steering Group took a stand to promote the forthcoming questionnaire, and used the opportunity to ask searching questions of members of the younger generation who attended.

These findings have been included in the results, to represent their views especially in light of the poor response to the questionnaire from this age group, i.e. age 10-30 years.

Comments at the fete consisted mainly of remarks about the poor leisure facilities to be found in the village.

NDP questionnaires were circulated to all households in the parish and surrounding properties in autumn 2015. According to the 2011 census the total number of households in Lea parish was 292, and responses were received from 93 of these, i.e. 32%.

Just three of these returns were from parishes adjacent to Lea, leaving 97% coming from Lea residents. The returns showed that 193 people live in the houses that responded, with the largest age category represented in the 50-69 years group. It was noted, too, that no responses were received from anyone aged 25 years or younger.

Despite a questionnaire for the young being available and distributed via e-mail and through a consultation event, no returns were received.

As a result of consultations, the following plan issues have been identified. Lea's NDP should:

- maintain the rural integrity, identity and character of the community;
- ensure that developers keep in mind the character of the village by providing good quality homes that reflect our needs and historical features, incorporate locally-distinctive features and traditional materials and provide a mix of house types and tenures, with an emphasis on family accommodation, accommodation designed for the elderly, starter homes for first-time buyers and affordable housing where there is an established need;

- seek to alleviate drainage and flooding issues for homes and businesses;
- protect and enhance the local environment for the existing and expanding population, including air and water quality, green and open spaces, orchards, ponds, woodland and hedgerows, wildlife, footpaths, cycleways and views;
- meet the needs of small and home-based businesses and seek out possible employment sites, increasing opportunities for more local jobs while being sensitive to the landscape of the parish;
- build greater cohesion across communities by supporting new community facilities and encouraging more leisure activities for all ages;
- enhance the safety of inhabitants, improving where possible pavements and footpaths;
- support upgrades to local infrastructure, including public transport, road and pavement improvements and the introduction of a gas supply;
- be aware of the needs of the agricultural industry and of large-scale farming units/polytunnels that may impact on the local environment;
- develop tourism through B&B provision and other local small-scale businesses/initiatives.

## Section 5: Neighbourhood Development Plan vision

To preserve and enhance Lea's unique rural settlements, up to 2031, as a thriving, cohesive, secure community set in open countryside in harmony with the landscape and nature.

### Expansion to vision

- **Thriving:** the communities should be able to sustain themselves financially and socially. This implies flexibility within the overall vision to allow adaptation to meet changing circumstances.
- **Cohesive:** the community should see itself as a single entity, united by its endeavours and supportive of the vision and community functions, e.g. Parish Council, Parochial Church Council.
- **Secure:** the community should be secure in respect of economic and environmental sustainability, and free from environmental and health and safety endangering or degrading activity.
- **Community:** this includes the domestic and economic (agricultural and other) communities that live and/or operate within the parish.
- **Landscape and nature:** meaning the natural environment.

## **Section 6: Neighbourhood Development Plan objectives**

### **Lea Objective 1: To maintain the rural integrity, identity and character of community**

To achieve objective 1, and to support the health, social and cultural well-being of the community, development should be of an appropriate scale and level of growth for the parish and village overall, as proposed in Herefordshire Council's Core Strategy. Future development will need to be in keeping with and sympathetic to surrounding buildings, setting and topography, in respect of location, design, size/mass, build style and materials.

### **Lea Objective 2: To meet local housing requirements**

To achieve objective 2, the NDP recognises that the minimum new dwelling requirement set in the Core Strategy (43 dwellings) has already been met. At April 2017, no houses had been built in the parish since April 2011 but 101 had planning permission. Compared with the existing number of households in the parish (290), this level of development represents a 35% increase, well in excess of the 14% indicative housing growth target in the Core Strategy. Further applications for new housing development will need to demonstrate that the additional proposed growth is proportionate and appropriate, having regard to the Core Strategy; that they would support the health, social and cultural well-being of the community and that they represent sustainable development.

The plan will support replacement/conversion opportunities that meet the housing needs of the village, respect Lea's drainage and flooding issues and are sympathetic to the character of the village and its historic features.

### **Lea Objective 3: To protect and enhance the local environment – air and water quality, green and open spaces, woodland and hedgerows, wildlife, footpaths and cycleways, and views**

To achieve objective 3, all future proposals will need to consider the impact on the holistic aspects of the environment; there should be limited impact.

#### **Lea Objective 4: To meet the needs of large/small and home-based businesses**

To achieve objective 4, the plan will ensure that any development is as environmentally sustainable as possible and accords with this plan. The needs of small home-based businesses will be met on previously developed sites, on existing farms and employment sites and within/adjacent to the built form of Lea without compromising the character of the parish and amenity of residents.

This to include the consideration of flooding issues currently on-going in the village through run-off and inadequate sewerage/drainage, which affects the premises of existing businesses in the centre of Lea.

#### **Lea Objective 5: To support tourism through B&B provision and other local small-scale initiatives**

To achieve objective 5, the plan will support appropriate, small-scale tourism enterprises to strengthen the rural economy of the parish.

#### **Lea Objective 6: To improve local infrastructure, including public transport, road improvements, gas supply installation, and telecommunications**

To achieve objective 6, the plan will include policies which will support improvements to local infrastructure. The Parish Council will engage fully with providers of services to ensure they are aware of local requirements, that the community understands what is possible and to encourage suppliers to upgrade facilities.

#### **Lea Objective 7: To enhance highway/transport safety**

To achieve objective 7, the plan will encourage developers to improve pavements, and the community and landowners to improve and maintain public footpaths.

#### **Lea Objective 8: To provide support for small-scale renewable energy opportunities linked to individual developments**

To achieve objective 8, the plan will support the inclusion of small-scale renewable energy proposals linked to individual applications or to appropriately-sited community initiatives which have direct benefit only to the parish community and are in accordance with this plan. The plan

does not support the provision of large-scale commercial renewable energy projects in the parish due to their impact on the local environment.

**Lea Objective 9: To provide support for existing and new community facilities, e.g. shop, post office, garage, school, pub, church and allotments**

To achieve objective 9, the plan will support sustainable/innovative social/community enterprises.

## **Section 7: Neighbourhood Development Plan policies**

This section of the plan identifies specific policies which seek to deliver the plan's objectives and overall vision provided in sections 5 and 6 of this plan.

These policies have arisen from the information provided by the residents of the parish in responding to the various plan consultations. These policies need to be read in conjunction with the Herefordshire Core Strategy and National Planning Policy Framework.

Collectively, these documents provide the Local Development Framework for the area and contain the policies which will guide and inform future development in the parish.

### **7.1 The right housing in the right place**

#### **Background**

In 1871 there were 46 houses in the village reflecting the rural nature of the parish. However, since the end of the second world war the village has expanded dramatically, from a small, rural, agricultural-based parish, to where it now includes several small to larger residential developments, in addition to individual new properties.

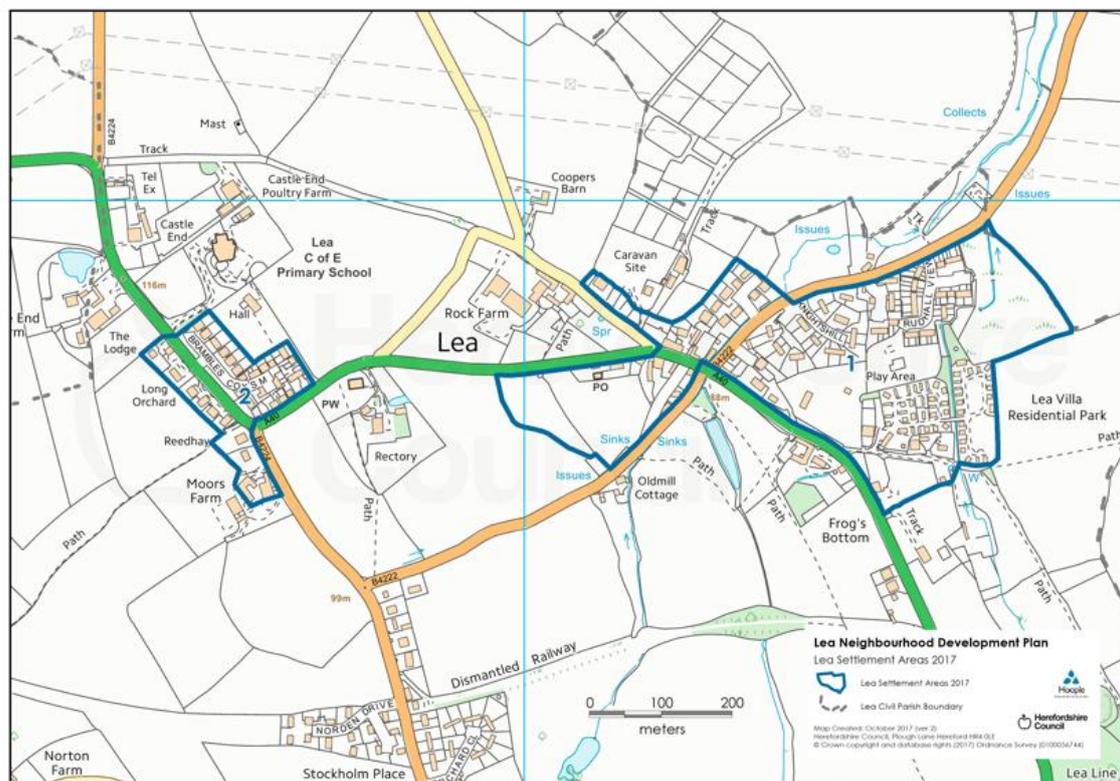
Looking forward, Lea NDP supports the proportional policy approach being taken to residential development in the Herefordshire Core Strategy through policy RA2.

Herefordshire Council's Core Strategy for 2011 to 2031 requires a proportional minimum housing growth target of 14% for the Housing Market Area of Ross-on-Wye, which encompasses the parish of Lea. As Lea had 290 properties in 2011, the minimum additional dwellings required in the parish is 43.

At the end of April 2017 full and outline planning permission existed for 101 dwellings within Lea. These are listed at Appendix C.

Development at Lea, as evidenced by recent growth and the high level of commitments, has reached the stage where further applications for new housing development will need to demonstrate that the additional proposed growth is proportionate and appropriate, having regard to the Core Strategy; that they would support the health, social and cultural well-being of the community and that they represent sustainable development. For this reason, the Lea Neighbourhood Development Plan has not sought to allocate new development sites.

The settlement boundary for Lea village as shown on the following map, has been reviewed in the light of comments received during the consultation process and the criteria for drawing settlement boundaries in Herefordshire Council's Neighbourhood Planning Guidance Note 20.



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The plan will support replacement/conversion opportunities and proposals for proportionate extensions and outbuildings that meet the housing needs of the village (respecting Lea's drainage and flooding issues) which are sympathetic to the character of the village and its historic features.

Should exceptional infill applications be considered, it would not be appropriate to use general design criteria. Each case would need to be compliant with the Core Strategy and sit well in its adjacent surroundings.

Any planning application currently approved in outline terms or subsequently submitted will need to meet the criteria set out in this plan. In particular, any new development should offer a design that seeks to reflect local distinctiveness and the aesthetic qualities of traditional rural settlements and buildings found in South Herefordshire, and more specifically to the village of Lea. The proposal must respect and relate to the scale, density and character of the existing properties in the parish.

Nearly all of the questionnaire respondents (97%) felt that any future development in the village should be in keeping with the existing landscape and character setting. This plan welcomes the siting of community orchards in housing developments in Lea.

Lea has several sites where houses were built in the past – their separateness being amplified by a wide variety of styles. It would be desirable for new developments to have similar features to the existing core of the village, so that they do not stand out as yet another “different” development, but become an extension of the existing village.

The majority of residents (60% or higher) felt that the NDP should aim to protect and enhance the quality of the built environment by promoting the following:

- green space and trees within settlements;
- allocating areas for open space, amenity, recreational or leisure facilities;
- design that respects the scale of the existing area;
- developments to be built in a style and with materials, in keeping with existing local traditional buildings;
- minimum standards for living space in dwellings;
- better pedestrian and cycling access to local facilities/public transport pick up points;
- signage, advertising and street furniture that respects the locality.

## Types of homes

The types of homes which the majority of questionnaire respondents preferred for new developments in the village were accessible homes and bungalows (63% and 60% respectively). The high percentage of older people residing in Lea would support this need.

The majority of respondents were aged 50-69 years old (55%) followed by 70-84 years old (24%) then 26-49 years old (18%). There were no responses from those aged 25 years old or younger.

Some 43% were in favour of affordable homes for sale, or for rent through housing associations.

The requirement for affordable homes is likely to be achieved with sites larger than 10, in line with policy H1 of the Core Strategy and the smaller areas will fall under H2 of the Core Strategy.

The next most highly-favoured category was 'private semi-detached or terraced houses (two or three bedrooms)'.

The types of homes which a clear majority of respondents did not favour were:

- houses for multiple-occupancy (53%);
- holiday accommodation (48%);
- the same types of homes grouped in separate locations (34%).

### Policy Lea 1 – The right housing in the right place

- Lea NDP supports the development of homes already having the agreed full or outline planning permission at April 2017 which alone will more than fulfil the housing needs of the village from 2011- 2031.
- Further applications for new housing development will need to demonstrate that the additional proposed growth is

cont'd on next page/

### Policy Lea 1 cont'd/

proportionate and appropriate, having regard to the Core Strategy; that they would support the health, social and cultural wellbeing of the community and that they represent sustainable development.

- Land which falls outside the settlement boundary will be regarded as open countryside and will need to comply with policy RA3 of the Herefordshire Core Strategy.
- The plan will support replacement/conversion opportunities and proposals for proportionate extensions and outbuildings that are sympathetic to the character of the village and its historic features.
- Developers will be encouraged to provide the recognised need for accessible houses and bungalows, and provision of affordable homes, for sale or rent, for local people.
- Proposals for new development should offer a design that seeks to reflect local distinctiveness and the aesthetic qualities of traditional rural settlements and buildings found in South Herefordshire, in particular to the village of Lea. Innovative designs will be supported where they respect their surroundings.
- All proposals must respect and relate to the scale, density and character of existing properties in the parish. Appropriate landscaping must be considered for each site.
- Future development will need to be in keeping with and sympathetic to surrounding buildings, setting, and topography, in respect of location, design, size/mass, build style and materials.
- Some unity in materials, together with careful use of open space and tree planting, is needed to provide an overall and unique identity.

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### Policy Lea 1 cont'd/

- This policy supports a sustainable approach to development in rural areas which is locally responsive, reflecting local housing needs with an emphasis on supporting services, employment and facilities in our village, avoiding new isolated homes in the countryside.
- Redevelopment, alteration or extension of historic farmsteads and agricultural buildings within the parish should be sensitive to their distinctive character, materials and form. Due reference should be made and full consideration be given to the Herefordshire Farmsteads Characterisation Project.
- Developers will be encouraged to maintain habitat linkages for bats (associated with the nearby Wye Valley and Forest of Dean bat sites SAC) and dark corridors, particularly linear features such as hedges.
- Future developers and/or landowners are responsible for securing safe developments where a site is affected by contamination as specified within the NPPF.
- Developers are required to protect the amenity of existing and future residents.
- No proposal to develop Lea Garage, Post Office, church or school sites for residential use will be supported.
- Development that does not meet the above will not be supported.

## Flood protection

### Background

Lea is situated in the lower Wye catchment and has the highest risk fluvial flooding in the county. It therefore requires a holistic integrated approach to flood risk management.

Recently surface water run-off has significantly increased as rainfall has become more intense and energetic, causing flash flooding. Much of the surface area on which rain falls has been engineered to shed water quickly into adjacent streams, overwhelming the watercourses and causing a high risk of flooding to low lying land and vulnerable properties.

Slowing water down to allow it to soak away and be released slowly into the water courses is considered best practice. Mitigating measures can include buffer strips along water courses, new ephemeral ponds, sustainable drainage systems (SUDS) and tree and hedge planting. These measures also reduce phosphates and other compounds from entering watercourses. Water quality is a threat to the Wye SAC into which streams from Lea flow.

Other flood prevention measures include:

- maintaining the existing drainage culverts by the Parish Council employing a lengthsman;
- monitoring drainage facilities maintained by Herefordshire Council, such as highway grips and gullies, to ensure that they remain serviceable.

In the recent past, the village has been affected by surface water run-off to such an extent that properties in the centre of the village were flooded on a number of occasions, together with the closure of the A40 road.

To find a solution, Herefordshire Council – working with the Parish Council – commissioned a study into flooding in Lea, which provided a number of options. These were debated at a public meeting, after which a feasibility study was commissioned to further investigate the preferred options. The Lea Flood Alleviation Study results were presented to the Parish Council in August 2016.

Substantial funding has been provided by condition attached to the approved housing development commenced in June 2017 by Bell Homes. Funding from other sources may still be needed.

The majority (95%) of residents who responded to the questionnaire wanted the NDP to promote improved flood prevention measures.

Flooding is also an issue raised in the responses to the business questionnaire as a barrier to expanding or locating to Lea.

## **Policy Lea 2 – Surface and foul water drainage**

### a) Surface water drainage

- Development should not increase the risk of surface water flooding and the associated risk of pollution. Where these risks have been identified as potential problems, appropriate measures to mitigate the effects of them will need to be included within any planning applications.
- Any risk arising from inadequate drainage or excessive run-off from fields will need to be addressed by or on behalf of the landowner.
- Implementation of the proposed Lea Flood Alleviation Scheme will be supported.
- Where practical developers should utilise or contribute to SUDs, including measures to support biodiversity.

### (b) Public sewerage network and waste water treatment works

- Development that may result in the capacity of the public sewerage network and/or the Lower Cleeve Waste Water Treatment Works (WwTw) becoming overloaded will not be supported.

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### Policy Lea 2 cont'd/

- Provision of alternative sewage disposal facilities should accord with the requirements of Herefordshire Council and the Water Authority.
- These policies support Core Strategy policies SD3 and SD4.

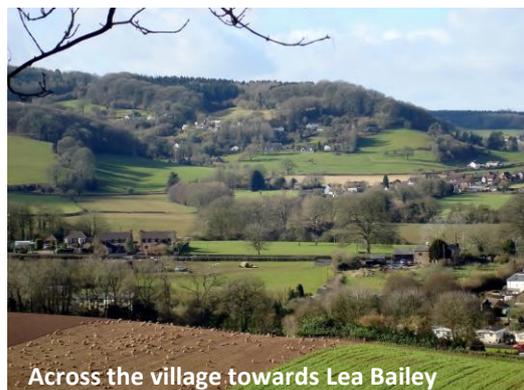
## 7.2 A valued environment in which to live

### Background

Lea is the first village in Herefordshire to be encountered when leaving Gloucestershire via the A40, and should be regarded as an example for the county with sympathetic development. It is also a popular destination for holiday visitors who enjoy its rural setting as well as the other local attractions.

The landscape of Lea comprises settled farmlands over almost all of the area and principal wooded hills in the far south and south east. The agricultural land around Lea is almost all classed as very good, with small areas of good to poor in areas to the south and south east.

There are a number of views in and around the parish which should be protected; some long distance and some created by the undulations in the landscape (see pictures). Those highlighted in our questionnaire and noted in the Data Orchard report are shown in Appendix D.



The village dates back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century and nestles into the terrain, sheltered on one side by Lea Bailey Hill, with Crews Hill also providing a backdrop. Lea is situated in rural countryside, maintaining its rural roots.

The village is fortunate in that it has retained, to date, open spaces within its heart giving an open feel. Any new developments should not encroach on these spaces nor reduce the unrestricted and unspoilt views of the surrounding countryside.

The general character of the parish needs to be protected. Therefore, any housing development proposals will need to be sensitively-sited to maintain and enhance the valued environment of the parish and include comprehensive landscaping schemes as part of any application to reduce potential visual impact.

Housing materials should also be selected to blend in with the village feel and not adversely impact upon its character. For example, Orchard Close, built in the early 1950s comprising 12 dwellings, stands well back off the main road. The Lea Park Villas development was also sensitively-sited and is unseen from the main road.

These are two examples of how provision of housing can be achieved and at the same time have minimal impact on its surroundings through screening and using the natural contours of the land. Similarly, Lea Primary School, opened in 2004, is sympathetically-sited.

In addition to the views, such as those towards Lea Bailey Hill, there are many areas of valued open spaces within the parish which the community enjoys – accessed via footpaths and bridleways – that should be protected from development. Also, the trees and hedges are of intrinsic value to the village ambience.

### **Designated ‘local wildlife sites’**

**Howley Grove SO62/15** – An ancient semi-natural woodland area of some 50 acres which has two public footpaths running through it. The woodland is mainly oak with a scattering of sweet chestnut and other trees.

**Fields near Norton Farm SO62/11** – These are two unimproved meadows where wild daffodils and primrose are abundant. They are

designated a 'Special Area of Conservation' (SAC) and a 'Site of Special Scientific Interest' (SSSI), in the initial SEA/HRA screening.

Outside the parish, both Wye Valley and Forest of Dean Bat Sites SAC and the Wigstone Ironstone Mine SSSI are locally important, with bats from both sites using Lea airspace for foraging, both sites being south of Lea in Gloucestershire.

## Other sites

**Cornage Wood** – Another area of ancient semi-natural woodland amounting to some seven acres with no public access, again mainly an oak woodland.

**Gypsy Lane** – Part of the former road from Ross-on-Wye to Gloucester, this is an open access area of some 530 metres by 10 metres regularly enjoyed by locals and visitors alike. Along the lane are a large number of interesting trees and shrubs, together with attendant birds.

**Old railway** – The line of the former railway runs across the parish and is largely undeveloped, acting as an important wildlife corridor. The entrance to a former railway tunnel is just inside the parish and is not generally accessible.

**Rudhall Brook** – The brook runs from Mill Lane towards Aston Crews, and has been responsible for serious flooding in the centre of the village from time to time. However, it is a significant green space with a good number of alder and other trees, where a large variety of birds have been seen, including Little Egret. Otter and water vole are known to have visited the brook.

**Hedges** – Within the parish there are an estimated 15-20km of field hedges, many of which can be described as ancient. They are mostly maintained by regular flailing. The hedges are most valuable wildlife corridors providing nesting and shelter for a wide range of birds and small mammals.

## Local wildlife

Lists of the wide-ranging species of birds and mammals that have been noted locally are available as annexes to 'A Village Guide' to be found at [www.theleaparishcouncil.org.uk](http://www.theleaparishcouncil.org.uk).

Underpinning all aspects of this Neighbourhood Development Plan is the overall desire to preserve and enhance the natural environment of Lea parish.

The majority of respondents wanted the NDP to promote:

- improved flood prevention methods;
- increased provision of trees and green space within new development;
- protection of historic features;
- management of the existing local wildlife and creation of new habitats;
- protection and enhancement of trees and open spaces currently existing in Lea parish.

Development proposals will need to protect the valued, tranquil, natural environment of the parish.

Nearly all of respondents (97%) felt that any future development in the village should be in keeping with the existing landscape and character setting. The majority of residents (60% or higher) felt that the NDP should aim to protect and enhance the quality of the built environment by promoting the options below:

- green space and trees within settlements;
- design that respects the scale of the existing area;
- developments built in a style, and with materials, in keeping with existing local traditional buildings;
- better pedestrian and cycling access to local facilities/public transport pick-up points;
- signage, advertising and street furniture that respects the locality;
- minimum standards for living space in dwellings.

### **Policy Lea 3 – A valued environment in which to live**

- Measures to preserve and enhance the landscape and the setting and character of Lea will be promoted, and development should positively contribute to the village's rural nature, not adversely affect it.
- Development must protect or enhance panoramic views and the area's landscape quality. (See Appendix D.)
- Development must conserve mature trees and hedgerows, incorporating these features into landscaping scheme where possible.
- Local orchards and woodland are safeguarded from development.
- Within new developments native tree species are to be provided.
- Sustain local habitats and biodiversity. The creation and maintenance of the green infrastructure is particularly important for bats using the area.
- These policies support Core Strategy policies LD1 and LD2.

### **Polytunnels**

During the drop-in events, concerns were raised over the siting of polytunnels, and more specifically over the potential development of large-scale polytunnels that might block views across the natural landscape of Lea.

While it is acknowledged that polytunnels are an important part of the agricultural and horticultural economy, local residents are keen to ensure

that any significant impact on the wider landscape and/or the amenities should be avoided.

#### **Policy Lea 4 – Large-scale polytunnels**

Proposals for large-scale polytunnels will not generally be supported due to their impact on the environment and the limitations of the local highway network. Any applications will need to demonstrate that there is an economic need and fully address the impact of the proposal on the following areas:

- the landscape, visual impact and historic built environment of the area;
- ecological issues;
- access and highway safety;
- drainage and flooding areas;
- public rights of way; and
- residential amenity.

Any large-scale proposal must ensure that impacts are minimal and accord with the requirements of Herefordshire Core Strategy.

## **Sustaining green spaces and gardens**

### **Background**

Over many years, agriculture has created large areas of cultivated fields that surround Lea. The centre of the village still benefits from extensive open fields which, together with the verdant setting around the church, maintain the rural nature of the area. There are extensive gardens at Castle End, which are occasionally opened to the public.

Public open space is provided by the play area surrounding the village hall. There is potential to enhance other open green spaces for the benefit of the community and the environment.

96% of respondents wanted to protect and enhance areas of trees and open green space throughout the village, with 92% suggesting an increase of provision of trees and green space within new developments.

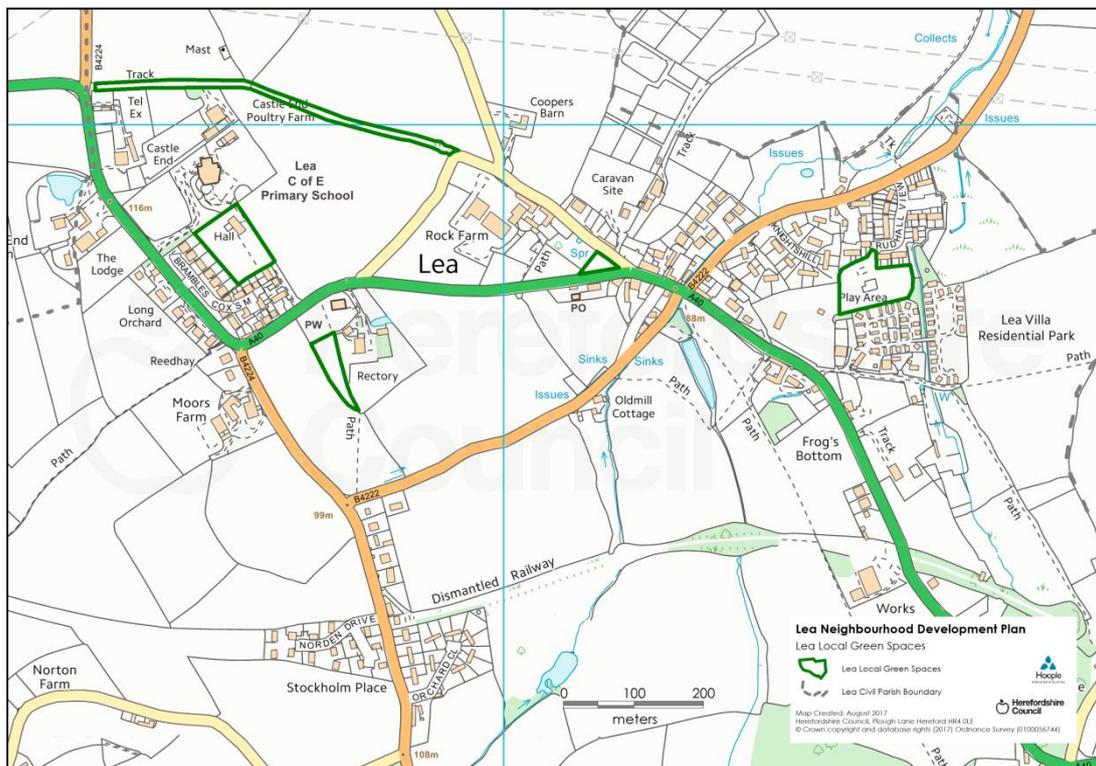
The table below and the following map demonstrate how local green spaces, considered to be important by the community, comply with NPPF Para 77. In summary:

- all the local green spaces are in or adjacent to the village of Lea. They offer a variety of formal and informal recreation, visual amenity, countryside access and food growing services and benefits to the local community, to which they are in close proximity;
- by virtue of the uses they represent and benefits they offer, they are all special to the community, for the reasons described below, and of local significance; and
- they are all local in character and none is extensive in area.



Location	Close proximity to the community	Special to the community	Local in character
Village hall surrounding grounds	This adjoins the school with housing to the west and south and lies between the two main residential areas of the village.	This provides the only children's play area and space for ball games or other outdoor activities in this part of the village. It is on the route to school and frequently used. It is also used for community events such as the Lea Fete and other activities at the village hall.	This site is 0.4.ha excluding car parking for the Hall and for parents dropping off children at school.
Gypsy Lane	This linear feature follows the line of the old A40 and provides a green corridor from the centre of the village to the outskirts. It is maintained by the Parish Council.	It is well used by residents and visitors as it provides a tranquil setting for observing the abundant local wildlife and affords panoramic views over the surrounding countryside.	The lane runs through adjacent fields and wooded borders for 550m. Being of restricted width and limited length it is not an extensive tract of land.

Location	Close proximity to the community	Special to the community	Local in character
Triangle of land at the bottom of Rock Lane	This is in the centre of the village.	This open area is visually significant to the community, being at the junction of Rock Lane and the A40. It is believed locally that it was once the village green/common. It forms part of an area of traditional orchard identified in the Priority Habitat inventory. As such it contributes to the village's identity and rural sense of place, speaking of the former importance of cider production to the local economy. its status as a recognised priority habitat points to a complementary importance for local wildlife.	This is a small but locally distinctive green space 0.1ha. in area.
Play area RudhallView	This was provided as part of the Guinness Housing Association estate in the main residential area.	It is demonstrably special and locally significant because it provides safe and informally-supervised recreation facilities for children living on the estate. It is the only play area in this part of the village and significant for this reason.	It is an integral part of the residential development which it serves and is 0.6 ha. in extent.
Village allotments	These are on land adjoining St John the Baptist Church, which is on the A40 between the two main areas of residential development.	The allotments are of significance to the local community as they provide a tranquil rural location for growing fruit, vegetables and flowers with all the associated mental and physical health benefits. They border a well used public footpath that runs through the churchyard into open countryside with extensive views to the surrounding wooded hillsides.	The allotments cover an area of 0.25 ha. between the Old Rectory and open farmland.



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## Policy Lea 5 – Sustaining open green spaces

- The areas listed above and shown on the map are designated within this plan as Local Green Space, as defined in the NPPF, and are therefore protected from development. This is in accordance with paragraph 77 of the NPPF.
- In the event of significant and/or extensive archaeological remains being found, Policy LD4 will apply and the land surrounding the remains will be considered at a future review stage of the plan for designation as Local Green Space.
- Developers will be expected to provide or contribute to the provision of open space in accordance with the requirements of Herefordshire Council's open space standards.
- Where such space cannot be provided on site, contributions should be made to Lea Parish Council for the provision, improvement/replacement, operation or maintenance of open space and play areas elsewhere within the parish.

## 7.3 Supporting a thriving rural economy

### Background

Lea is a small, rural parish and agriculture plays a key role in the health of the local economy.

Food and drink represent key growth areas for the county and agricultural enterprises should be allowed to grow and develop. However, such development should not compromise their equally-important role as stewards of the landscape or be disproportionate in size when compared with the rest of the village.

Lea is also home to a wide variety of small-scale businesses covering areas such as engineering, vehicle repair, transport, leisure, catering and retail. This plan supports their further development and would welcome the arrival of other businesses operating on a similar scale.

It also supports the further development of small-scale home-based businesses along with the conversion of suitable existing buildings to employment uses and appropriate farm diversification.

Better broadband is a priority so far as business development is concerned, with 54% of villagers who responded to the NDP questionnaire contending that it would encourage new businesses to locate in the village. However, employment facilities must be compatible with residential surroundings according to 51% of those polled, with 47% happy to see houses with workshops attached for cottage industries.

Only one-third felt that the construction of more purpose-built business premises would help, and only 31% wished to see specific areas of the village allocated to business development.

Some 46% of respondents stated that existing employment sites should not be sacrificed in favour of housing development and that they should be protected against change of use. That compares with 11% who stated that such protection is not necessary.

There are currently few employment opportunities in Lea. Businesses such as the village shop, Lea garage, Alan Keef Ltd, Castle End Farms and Green Acre Stables need to remain to maintain a balance within the community

and help to reduce the increased air pollution that would result from increased journeys to work.

Lea's residents believe that existing businesses and those seeking to locate here must do all they can to minimise their environmental impact. Of those questioned, 66% would be content to see solar panels on the roofs of agricultural buildings.

Almost 50% would support the provision of hydropower from local streams, an initiative which could also benefit environmentally-conscious businesses.

Existing businesses in their questionnaires, supported the encouragement of social enterprise, food and drink production, tourism and leisure, community services, light industry and manufacturing. However, any major industrial developments which would alter the character of the village, including food processing, would not be welcomed.

The plan supports appropriate proposals which are located within or adjacent to the built form of Lea, especially if they:

- utilise previously-developed land;
- result in the revival of a redundant rural or industrial building;
- are located on farm complexes;
- relate to a small extension to an existing dwelling or business.

Business questionnaire replies support the use of existing buildings or brownfield sites for allocation of employment development, especially in or around Lea in general.

The built form, and thus the development limit of the settlement, is outlined elsewhere in this document.

Lea Neighbourhood Development Plan does not support new development of large-scale industrial or agricultural enterprises, as their likely impact is not considered to be consistent with the plan's overall vision. However, additional development of existing agricultural and industrial enterprises will be supported provided there is no adverse effect on the community.

There is a strong emphasis on the need for purpose-built workshops/

offices to rent or buy, and the possibility for workshops/offices to be converted from older properties. These are seen as factors to encourage new businesses to locate to Lea by those responding to the business questionnaire. Although better broadband was also cited, this is now present in the majority of the village.

One further point worthy of mention from businesses is the flooding issue in the centre of Lea. The lack of improvement in surface water issues, and the inadequate sewerage and drainage which affects them is a deterrent to putting increased funds into expansion.

The plan supports the promotion of sustainable tourism within the parish and notes that Lea is already home to a B&B, a public house which incorporates a restaurant and accommodation, self-catering accommodation, a camp site and a riding centre.

The plan seeks to encourage the provision of further tourism facilities, with the proviso that they are small-scale and sustainable and do not result in a growth in the provision of holiday accommodation that could alter the character of the village. This includes unspoilt countryside, viewed as important by 75% of villagers, and pleasant physical environs, regarded as important by 57%.

### **Policy Lea 6 – Supporting a thriving community**

- Herefordshire's Core Strategy seeks to strengthen the rural economy by providing flexibility for new and expanding businesses, subject to their being of an appropriate scale and location and not significantly impacting on the environmental quality of the area. The plan supports this strategy and conforms with policies RA6, E1, E2, E3 and E4 of the Herefordshire Local Plan.

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### Policy Lea 6 cont'd/

- The plan recognises the importance of supporting the local economy through small-scale initiatives, home-based businesses and proportionate extensions to existing established businesses as well as farm diversification opportunities. Youth employment and quality apprenticeships will be encouraged.
- Existing employment sites, as listed earlier, should be protected against change of use in accordance with Core Strategy policy E2.
- Conversion of existing buildings to employment uses will be supported. The plan will support the promotion of sustainable tourism opportunities in the parish and the provision of sensitively located small-scale B&B self-catering tourist accommodation.
- However – and in line with Herefordshire Local Plan policy LD1 – this must always be balanced against protecting the local environment which is greatly cherished and valued by the local community and plays a vital role in underpinning tourism.
- The landscape and historic built environment of the area, drainage and flooding issues, access and highway safety, ecological issues and residential amenities must be considered in developing Lea's future thriving community.
- Any proposals must ensure that impacts are minimal and to the satisfaction of the Parish Council and Local Planning Officer.

## 7.4 Delivery of local infrastructure

### Background

Through the plan consultations, residents have agreed that the parish needs utilities (or access to them) to ensure longevity; these include:

- power – gas (should it come to the village in the future), electricity;
- public transport – regular, reliable bus services to Ross-on-Wye, Hereford and Gloucester along the A40, and Mitcheldean;
- infrastructure – roads, footpaths, cycleways, bridleways, including adequate maintenance;
- broadband –including superfast fibre;
- small-scale renewable energy opportunities, as addressed later in this plan;
- sewage pumping station – adequate capacity and maintenance.

The majority of residents responded negatively to statements about roads, bridleways, cycle paths, pavements and footpaths. Half did not feel that the current roads through the parish are adequate for the traffic they may carry over the next 20 years.

Nearly two-thirds do not feel the roads through the village are currently safe, with local pavements, footpaths and public rights of way being unsatisfactory or insufficiently well-maintained.

Only a quarter of respondents felt there were sufficient bridleways, while half felt there are insufficient footpaths or cycle paths.

Road traffic is a matter that greatly concerns most residents, and road safety was raised several times during the drop-in event. A recent study showed that while speed of traffic through the village had reduced, the volume of traffic had increased. While road safety and the improvements of roads, footways and cycleways is not a matter for policy in this plan, all new developments should prioritise any possible transport measures which promote positive sustainable impacts for the benefits of residents.

Businesses feel the current road network is inadequate, and cannot cater for the large farm machinery necessary to sustain the expansion of the

fruit and vegetable production in our fields. Better understanding of modern agriculture would enable farms to develop and thrive, creating room for more local employment. However, pedestrian safety is also a concern which needs to be addressed.

Residents were asked if public transport could be improved, and how this could be achieved. Respondents mostly favoured more convenient services to Gloucester and Hereford, followed by connections to other surrounding towns.

Additionally, a quarter felt cheaper fares were needed. Respondents also mentioned evening services, times to fit in with working hours, and connections to other public transport such as trains. Since that time, bus services through the village have reduced.

Proposals to improve access to a quality broadband service and mobile phone signal were also identified by the local community. These have subsequently been improved with services by fibre-optic cabling to roadside cabinets.

These are key components in delivering rural employment growth and the development of sustainable tourism proposals and will be supported in the plan.

In addition, the community did not support the delivery of large-scale commercially-led renewable energy projects due to the impact of these on the local environment. However, they would support smaller initiatives directly linked to individual development proposals, or community initiatives which provide benefit to those living in the parish.

## **Energy, water and waste**

Two-thirds of respondents would support solar panels on agricultural and other industrial buildings roofs and solar panels on domestic roofs to provide a localised renewable energy supply.

There were higher proportions who were opposed to:

- domestic wind turbines powering a single home;
- solar panels on designated fields;

- wind turbines powering multiple homes.

### **Policy Lea 7 – Delivery of local infrastructure**

- Development proposals will need to be supported by appropriate high quality infrastructure to contribute to the local community through developer contributions and the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), especially in the areas of improved drainage and sewerage, public transport and highways, including pavements. New and improved footpaths should be provided, not just within new developments but with appropriate extensions to create safe pedestrian routes to the key locations in the village.
- The development of high-speed broadband infrastructure to serve the parish will be supported where it is sympathetically designed and located.
- Mobile phone infrastructure proposals will be supported where they are sensitively located, are of an appropriate type and scale which protect local amenity, will have minimal environmental impact and will be of direct benefit to the community.
- This plan will support the inclusion of low carbon renewable energy initiatives including solar, heat pumps and water power within individual proposals or to sensitively-sited community renewable energy schemes which directly benefit the community. Proposals for commercially-led renewable energy schemes will not be supported within the parish unless it can be demonstrated that the proposal will not have a detrimental impact on the local environment through the submission of information appropriate to the scale of development relating to the impact of the proposal on:
  - landscape appearance and character;
  - traffic and transport;

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### Policy Lea 7 cont'd/

- wildlife and ecology;
  - residential amenity, and
  - flood risk.
- 
- Good site planning will also aid greater energy efficiency in new development, for example, by seeking to maximise solar gain.
  
  - Lea NDP welcomes the introduction of cycleways in the county, and where possible the ability to join up with such schemes will be encouraged.

## 7.5 Community facilities

### Background

Lea has benefitted from a stable foundation of what might be considered as the basic amenities needed for any village to survive and grow. These include a successful village primary school (in 2004 allotted a new site and rebuild to make it fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> century), a thriving village shop, which until 2016 had been run by the same owners for 23 years, and a village pub which has in recent years diversified to keep abreast of changes in appetite, taste and drink-drive laws.

The church has always been a stalwart of local society, maintaining a sound congregation, while the village hall, built for access and amenities in around 1990, is available for all generations, having the added bonus of a play area and green space around it which is well used.

The post office and garage, both seen as essential village facilities, caused a stir when in 2015 they suddenly closed their doors. The disappointment felt at this loss by residents and those in neighbouring villages was reflected during the questionnaire period, but both facilities have since reopened and continue to be well used.

With increasing individual mobility, the viability of many rural services has declined significantly over the past 50 years. A greater percentage of local residents are increasingly using the expanded retail services in Mitcheldean, Gloucestershire (two miles away) where the nearest GP surgery can be found, and Ross-on-Wye a market town located four miles away. However, the parish community still has access to good facilities, all located in the centre of Lea.

To promote the on-going prosperity of the parish, it is essential that Lea retains and encourages local services that will sustain the vitality of the community. The community also recognises that providing housing to meet current local needs and to attract an acceptable inflow of future residents would be beneficial in sustaining the parish and its facilities.

Lea Stores, stocking a wide range of groceries, newspapers and essential goods, acts as a meeting place, and a hub for news. Some 97% of respondents said they use the shop, the highest proportions doing so daily/weekly.

Lea Primary School and pre-school group are full, and meet a vital need for the present number of families without it being necessary for young children to travel, with 94% of respondents agreeing that a good school/education is important to the village.

The post office, garage and petrol station share a joint location fronted on the A40. The garage and petrol station – used by villagers and through traffic – help maintain the prosperity of the village, with 81% of respondents saying they use it, mainly on a weekly basis.

St John the Baptist church, Lea, is a church rooted in our village, enjoying close connections with the school, which worships there weekly. The parish has a high-church tradition, with vestments and a choir. A Sunday school was restarted in 2011.

It sees regular attendance by a proportion of the village, with associated activities also organised. The church building is open every day. Some 75% of respondents attend the church, albeit the majority less than once a month.

Lea CE Primary School is situated in the quiet rural countryside, central to the village. As a voluntary-aided school, there are strong links with Lea church whose local rector visits regularly. A weekly school assembly at the

church enables pupils to participate in many of the services linked to the Christian festivals, including harvest festival, Christmas and Easter.

The current school is a relatively new building, which was officially opened on 5th November 2004 by the Reverend Tim Alban-Jones MBE. It comprises four classrooms with a central practical area, plus a well-resourced library and large kitchen. A beautiful school hall is available for assemblies, school events, lunch and physical education. The school is set in picturesque grounds with its own wildlife area, well-designed play areas, a large playing field and an astro-turf playground.

Lea Pre-school is based in the Lodge on the school site. Children are accepted into pre-school from the term before the term in which they reach the age of two.

Lea village hall is a modern, attractive, building on the main A40, standing in its own grounds with a large parking area. An essential meeting place for village committees and groups, it is also home to a children's play area, football pitch and picnic area. The hall is available to hire for private functions, wedding receptions, children birthday parties, conferences etc.

In recent years the annual Lea fete has found its home on this verdant green area. Being in close proximity to Lea Primary School, the two sites offer the perfect stage to celebrate aspects of rural life and fun for all the family.

Various activities are available in the village, some using the village hall, which has wheelchair access and disabled facilities, plus a kitchen. While 75% of respondents said they use the village hall, this was mostly less than once a month.

The Crown public house is a meeting place in the heart of the village. It incorporates a restaurant and take-away service with Indian food a specialty. Occasional quiz nights and live music take place throughout the year, with a free pensioners' Christmas lunch offered to all eligible residents, paid for by the Nourse Charity. 81% of questionnaire replies show they use this facility, but mostly less than once a month.

Greenacres Stables Riding Centre off Rock Lane provides riding lessons and equestrian activities for all ages and abilities. Here they teach in a 65 yards x 43 yards fenced arena with a picturesque backdrop, offer a quiet

canter through country lanes, or a variety of hacks lasting from 30 minutes to three hours.

Lea's countryside consists of footpaths, green spaces, trees and views around the village, which are much appreciated both for recreational walking and for daily life. The 2015 questionnaire replies highlighted the strong feeling in the village to maintain this. 94% of respondents agreed that it is important to the village.

Allotments are sited alongside the church, overseen by the Norse charity. These are a source of fresh produce for the village fete and residents. The supply of piped water to these grounds in recent years has enabled plot holders to pursue their regime of fresh air, exercise and a diet of fresh fruit and vegetables for a healthy lifestyle.

Lea is fortunate in having these community facilities at present. It is vital that any future development would be supportive and integrated with these rather than have adverse effects on them.

## **Future needs for community facilities**

In terms of sustainability, the village primary school is considered to be the most important of all the facilities listed above. The governors have concerns that the unnatural speed of village expansion is disproportionate to the size of the school. The school is full and cannot readily accommodate any more children without compromising quality of teaching and general school experience.

Lea Primary School was designed to accommodate a maximum of 110 pupils. However, by March 2017 office space had been turned into classrooms to accommodate 119 pupils. For September 2017 an intake of 23 pupils was anticipated compared with an average intake of 15 pupils.

It is considered that interest in Lea Primary School will continue to increase in the foreseeable future, as housing development increases in this village and in neighbouring parishes, particularly in the eastern areas of Ross-on-Wye, adjacent to Lea parish. Therefore, in the future the school may experience pupil demand in excess of its current capacity.

Although the original plans for the school showed the possibility of adding a further classroom, it is the financial burden of this which may be difficult to overcome.

Maintaining the green tree corridor surrounding the school is of upmost importance, as is the play area it maintains. If the opportunity to develop sports field sites and other recreational facilities for the whole community alongside the school were possible, this would fulfil many of the village aspirations for community recreation and would be supported by the Lea NDP.

In the NDP questionnaire (autumn 2015), some residents expressed the wish that there could be further improvement to:

- outdoor exercise facilities;
- leisure and sport;
- “things going on”.

For those who drive and do not rely on public transport, many look to neighbouring towns and villages for other leisure and entertainment activities. But for those who use the local bus service, where the limited timetable excludes such options, there is a distinct need for more leisure and entertainment activities within the village. This requirement needs to be addressed, as seen in the responses to our questionnaire and subsequent consultations.

## **Access to facilities**

In order for villagers to be able to attend parish activities and visit community facilities, the car park at the village hall and well-maintained pavements for pedestrians and wheelchairs are vital.

The present location of the footpaths along the A40 requires pedestrians to cross repeatedly from one side of the road to the other because pavements are only on one side, and these alternate frequently. This is far from ideal, particularly for children, the elderly and the disabled, considering the volume of traffic and poor visibility.

In the 2015 questionnaire, 33% of respondents thought that it should be made easier for disabled people to access facilities. The lack of safe

pavements was highlighted by 69% of respondents and 65% thought that the road (A40) was not safe.

A list of village organisations and activities are attached as Appendix E

Facilities which are not available in the village are listed as Appendix F. Some of the facilities are desirable but are probably unattainable for a small village, others are possible.

### **Policy Lea 8 – Community facilities**

Retention, enhancement and improvement – of existing facilities, as listed below, will be encouraged:

- Lea village shop;
- Lea garage/post office/filling station;
- St John the Baptist church;
- Lea Church of England primary school;
- Lea village hall;
- The Crown Inn;
- Lea allotments.

Future proposals for viable new community facilities will be supported in principle.

## **Section 8:**

### **Plan implementation and monitoring**

The Lea Neighbourhood Development Plan is a living document covering the period to 2031. It provides guidance for sustainable change through its vision, objectives and strategy. Flexibility will be needed as new challenges and opportunities arise during the Plan period.

As circumstances change over time, further consultation with the community will be necessary and the plan will be reviewed at least every five years to ensure that it remains relevant and serves the best interests of the village.

Parish involvement is key to the success of the plan and the Parish Council will be guided by the needs and aspirations of parishioners and their involvement in the implementation of the plan.

The Lea Neighbourhood Development Plan will be implemented primarily through planning decisions made by Herefordshire Council, in accordance with this plan and the Core Strategy, unless there are significant material reasons for deviating from their provisions. This plan will be used to steer public and private investment in infrastructure by Herefordshire Council and other agencies.

The Lea Parish Council will also use the plan as the basis for responding to planning applications and for using any funding that may come to it through planning obligations or the Community Infrastructure Levy.

## **Section 9:**

### **Next steps**

The plan will be submitted to Herefordshire Council for a six-week publicity period and will then undergo Independent Examination.

Subject to a successful examination, the plan will proceed to a local referendum and, if a favourable response is received, will be formally adopted and used to determine planning applications within the parish.

## Appendix A

### Listed buildings

Within the village there is a total of nine listed buildings.

Two of these have been granted important Grade II\* status:

**Castle End** – 17<sup>th</sup> century north range with added west range of c1730. Sandstone rubble, squared at front, with hipped slate roof. Two storeys and cellar, seven bays. Windows are boxed sashes with glazing bars, with flat stone arches. Three gabled timber attic dormers. Door in central bay, with architrave. Red brick chimney at right, with projecting stack, and at left. The north wall of the rear wing has timber cross-windows with leaded casements and two single-storey bay windows with similar glazing.

This house, originally the property of the Dukes of Kent, passed to the Nourse family in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century; the enlargement and modernisation was probably carried out on behalf of the Bristol merchant Philip Nourse, who retired there until his death in 1742.

**St John the Baptist church** – Late 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup> and early 15<sup>th</sup> century. Extensively restored in 1854. Sandstone rubble with tile roofs. Comprises a west tower with spire, nave, lower chancel, north aisle under a pitched roof, north chapel, and north porch. The lower stage of the tower is 13<sup>th</sup> century and has a window of one trefoiled light to each side.

The upper stage is 14<sup>th</sup> century and has ogee bell openings of one light and is broached to a stone spire. The south wall of the nave is of three bays separated by buttresses. The outer windows have flat heads and trefoiled lights. The middle one is late 13<sup>th</sup> century, of two lights with cusped Y-tracery. In the south wall of the chancel are two trefoiled one-light windows and a priest's door with Tudor arch.

The west window of the north aisle is of two trefoiled lights with pierced spandrel. In the north wall is a window of three trefoiled lights with flat head and hood. The porch is gabled and has an outer doorway with pointed arch chamfered in two orders. In the north wall of the chapel is a blocked doorway with Tudor arch.

The chapel east window is of three trefoiled lights with Tudor-arched head. The east chancel window is of three cinque-foiled lights under a pointed head with perpendicular tracery.

Interior: three- bay arcade of chamfered Tudor arches springing from octagonal piers. Moulded capitals carved with grotesque animals, faces, and heads. Nave roof trusses have straight braces to collars and cusped V-struts. The pointed tower arch is plastered. The chancel arch is moulded and has semi-octagonal responds. The south window of the chancel has two 19<sup>th</sup> century trefoiled inner arches with alabaster shafts and foliated capitals. The cinque-foiled piscina is also 19<sup>th</sup> century. The chancel has a boarded barrel roof.

The Tudor arch between the north aisle and north chapel contains organ pipes and a re-set 15<sup>th</sup> century screen with carved tracery decoration. The font, of c1200, is south Italian and was given to the church in 1907. The shaft is knotted in the middle and stands on an elephant.

The capital is carved with four rams' heads. The bowl has a band of Cosmati work and is carved with scrolls and figures.

The other seven have Grade II status:

**Dovecote, approximately 55 yards north of Castle End** – Probably 17<sup>th</sup> century. Rubble with pyramidal tile roof. Octagonal plan. Openings have plain reveals. On the north side is a doorway. On the west side is a second, blocked, doorway. On the south side is an opening at a higher level. Interior said to be circular with honeycomb nesting boxes in the upper parts of the walls.

**The Crown Inn** – Public house. Probably 15<sup>th</sup> century with 17<sup>th</sup> century and later alterations. Rendered timber-framing and rubble with slate roof. Half H-plan. Two storeys. Cross-wings, both of one bay, have casement windows with segmental heads. Recessed centre of two bays with casement windows. Doorway in right-hand bay and to left, the latter under a single-storey lean-to porch.

Chimneys between central bays and on side walls of wings. Side wall of left-hand wing has some exposed framing in square panels. Interior said to have 15<sup>th</sup> century moulded beam, chamfered screen doorway with pointed head, and 17<sup>th</sup> century stair with turned balusters.

**Brook House** – Probably early 18<sup>th</sup> century with 17<sup>th</sup> century remains. Brick and sandstone with concrete tile roof. Two storeys. Five bays. Façade of brick with gauged arches on ground floor, storey band, and eaves cornice. Windows boxed sashes with glazing bars.

**Barn immediately north of Lea House** (*known as Crown Inn Barns*) – Building recording and a watching brief were carried out during conversion of the barns. The barn is a typical threshing barn of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. It is a box timber frame construction built on a shallow rubble coursed stone plinth. It has one storage bay either side of the loading/threshing floor.

The original in-fill of the panels has been lost and now the exterior is clad in horizontal weatherboarding. The carpenter's marks indicate a date in the later part of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. A narrow, single-storey out-building extends south from the southern end of the threshing barn. This out-building is of four bays, and the south and east walls are composed of sandstone rubble walling. It has been interpreted as a cart shed and dates, on the basis of map evidence, to the mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> century (between 1838 and 1886).

The survey results suggest that the threshing barn originally continued southwards, where the later cart shed now stands, but it was not possible to determine how many bays have been lost. No archaeological features pre-dating the 19<sup>th</sup> century were discovered during monitoring of the trenches that were excavated for under-pinning the structures. However, it is possible that deposits relating to the earlier occupation of the site may survive further away from the building.

**Tomb Chest approx. 6 yards from St John the Baptist church**

**Tomb Chest approx. 9 yards from St John the Baptist church**

**Tomb Chest approx. 11 yards from St John the Baptist church**

Other significant buildings and sites include:

**Holloway at Frog's Bottom** – reputed to be part of the 13<sup>th</sup> iter of the Antonine itinerary and was turnpiked from 1726 to 1823. It is approximately two yards deep and has hedge on south side containing

several small-leaved lime trees, one of which is recorded as being 'ancient'. The garage to 'Sylvan' was used as a turnpike cottage but predates the turnpike. The owners have deeds from the 17th century.

**The Old Rectory** – The living at Lea was an endowed curacy annexed to the vicarage of Linton-by-Ross from an early period, until the benefice was constituted a vicarage in 1854. The parish of Lea was part of the Diocese of Gloucester from 1836 till 1975, though the civil parish was in Herefordshire.

The Rev William David Hall was appointed to the living in 1853, and it would appear that he was responsible for the erection of the parsonage house c1855-1860. The building, in stone with a tiled roof, has a Gothic porch and trefoil-headed windows.

## Historic farms

The following are all historic farms recorded as part of the Herefordshire Historic Farmsteads Characterisation Project. They are all present on the Ordnance Survey First Edition:

- Adam's Cot
- Rock Farm
- Moors Farm
- The Laine's
- Blythfield
- Lea Lawn
- Norton Farm
- Dean Common Farm

## Appendix B

### Local businesses

- Alan Keef Ltd is a family-owned and run engineering company, which manufactures, overhauls, and deals in narrow gauge locomotives, rolling stock and associated equipment. The company a widely-recognised and acknowledged authority on all aspects of narrow gauge railways both in the UK and worldwide.
- B H Savidge & Sons is a family-run farm growing raspberries, potatoes, combinable crops and apples.
- Garage, petrol station, car lot and post office all run from one site.
- Independent village shop and off-licence.

There are a number of home-based enterprises, including mail order, financial services and other consultancies.

- Self-catering:
  - Granary Barn sleeps seven;
  - Orchard Lee Cottage and Bronte Owl Cottage both sleep six;
  - Bronte Kingfisher Cottage sleeps four.
- Bed & breakfast:
  - Lea House bed & breakfast has three double rooms.
  - The Crown Inn (public house) lets out one double and one triple room on a bed & breakfast basis and has an Indian restaurant attached.
- Caravan site: Greenacres Caravan Site is a Camping and Caravanning Club Certificated Site, which accepts five caravans or motor homes and usually tents, space permitting. You must be a club member to use this site.
- Horse riding/trekking: Greenacres Stables is a small horse riding centre offering riding lessons for all abilities, and trekking in the Forest of Dean.

## Appendix C

### Full and outline planning permissions at April 2017

163970	Mill Lane:	39 houses
151565	Hunters Hall:	4 houses
161233	Aldene:	6 houses
153511	Rudhall View:	38 houses
152576	Line House:	1 house
153263	Green Acres:	1 unit
102520	Norton Farm:	1 house
HMSL016	Lea Villa:	11 mobile homes

*Total number: 101*

## Appendix D

### Views to be protected

- View up to Lea Bailey Hill and surrounding landscape.
- Lea Line views across open fields showing access to the forest.
- View of the church.
- Views into the village from both ends of the A40.
- View on the left as you leave the village going towards Aston Ingham.
- Views from Gypsy Lane over the surrounding countryside.
- Views from Mill Lane up to Lea Line.
- Views which have no buildings at all and show undulating green space.
- The meadow and stream at Millbrook Field.
- Panoramic view from Frogs Bottom looking east.

## Appendix E

### Village organisations and activities

#### At the village hall:

- Lea Brownies, ages 7-10<sup>1/2</sup>, Mondays 5.30pm-7.00pm.
- Lea Art Group, Monday 7.30pm. Lea Friday Painters ( including annual exhibition).
- Lea short mat bowling Tuesday 7.00pm, Thursday 2.00pm. All age club.
- Individual lettings for parties, conferences, exhibitions, gatherings (e.g. church Christmas fair; jumble sales, quiz nights).
- Lettings for entertainment, e.g. concerts and plays.
- Refreshments after funerals (free room hire for parish residents).
- Parish Council monthly meetings (open to public).
- NDP Steering Committee monthly meetings (open to public).

#### Facilities at the village hall:

- Kitchen
- Toilets
- Children's play area
- Football and games area
- Picnic area
- Fitness trail (proposed)
- Site for village fete
- Rooms could be used for education and training facilities if required

#### Other groups, organisations and activities:

- Lea Lines – bi-monthly newsletter. Village and church news.
- Lea Action Group – flooding, drainage and development.

- Lea Residents Association – Lea village fete. Supports many local activities.
- Lea children's church.
- Lea church flower arrangers.
- Lea baby and toddler group (meet at primary school hall, monthly).
- Lea Primary School Pre-School Group.
- Lea & District Royal British Legion Branch (parishes in the Ariconium Benefice).
- Nourse Charity – allotments and pensioners' Christmas lunch.
- Lea church entertainments committee.
- Lea Christmas fair and soup kitchen (fund-raiser for church).
- Annual steam up day at Alan Keef Ltd (fund-raiser for church).
- Walking group for local footpaths.
- Annual Lea fun ride.

## Appendix F

### Facilities not available but desirable

- GP surgery or walk-in centre.
- Public toilets.
- Social care facilities (including for elderly and disabled).
- Day centres.
- Child care facilities.
- Youth centre.
- Café.
- Gymnasium and keep-fit provision.
- Sports clubs and outdoor exercise facilities (highlighted in the questionnaire). If the playing fields at the village hall were to be upgraded, either public toilets would be required or access to the village hall facilities provided. This has maintenance funding implications for the village hall charity and/or the Parish Council.

### Projects which have been suggested during the completion of the NDP

- 'Flicks in the sticks'.
- Promotion of village assets.
- Community health project.
- Provision of pavements where parishioners currently have to use the highway and, where appropriate, widening of pavements along the A40, for the same reason.
- Provide protection against vehicles mounting pavements when navigating corners.
- Provision of play equipment within housing development sites.
- Provision of weekend activities for children/teenagers and sport activities on the village hall field.
- Provision of a youth club.

## Glossary

**ACRE** – Stands for Action with Communities in Rural England, the national voice for England's rural community councils.

**Adoption** – The final confirmation of a development plan by a local planning authority.

**Affordable housing** – Social rented, affordable rented and intermediate housing provided to eligible households whose needs are not met by the market. Eligibility is determined with regard to local incomes and local housing prices. Affordable housing should include provisions for the homes concerned to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households or for the subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision.

**Biodiversity** – The degree of variation of life forms within a particular ecosystem. Biodiversity is a measure of the health of an ecosystem. Human activity generally tends to reduce biodiversity, so special measures often need to be taken to offset the impact of development on natural habitats.

**Brownfield land** – Land that has been previously developed.

**Community Infrastructure Levy** – Allows local authorities to raise funds from developers undertaking new building projects in their area. The money can be used to fund everything from schools to improvements to the transport infrastructure.

**Core Strategy** – Shorthand for Herefordshire Council's planning policy document. The Neighbourhood Development Plan must comply with the Core Strategy and both must meet the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (see below).

**Green space** – Those parts of an area which are occupied by natural, designed or agricultural landscape as opposed to built development; open space, parkland, woodland, sports fields, gardens, allotments and the like.

**Housing association** – A not-for-profit organisation providing homes mainly to those in housing need.

**HRA** – A Habitats Regulations Assessment identifies whether a plan is likely to have a significant environmental impact on a site either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.

**Independent examination** – An examination of a proposed Neighbourhood Development Plan, carried out by an independent person, set up to consider whether or not the plan meets the basic conditions required.

**Listed building** – Any building or structure which is included in a statutory list of buildings of special architectural or historic interest.

**Local Authority Plan** – The name for the collection of documents prepared by a local planning authority (in this case Herefordshire Council) for the use and development of land and changes to the transport system.

**Local Green Space** – Introduced under the National Planning Policy Framework, it describes a mechanism under which a green space of particular importance to a community can be protected from development.

**National Planning Policy Framework** – A central government document that sets out national planning policy. Adopted in March 2012, it introduces a presumption in favour of sustainable development.

**Neighbourhood Development Plan** – A planning document created by a parish or town council or neighbourhood forum which sets out a vision for the neighbourhood and contains policies for the development and use of land in the area. Neighbourhood plans must be subjected to an independent examination to confirm they meet legal requirements and then to a local referendum. If approved by a majority vote of the local community then the neighbourhood plan will form part of the statutory development plan.

**Parish Council** – Lea Parish Council is made up of seven unpaid councillors who are either elected or co-opted. They are responsible for local government within Lea and can influence, but not determine, the outcome of planning applications.

**Parochial Church Council** – Made up of clergy, church wardens and lay representatives, it is responsible for the financial affairs of a Church of

England church and the care and maintenance of the church's fabric and contents.

**Planning permission** – Formal approval granted by a council allowing a proposed development to proceed.

**Reg 14** – Refers to Regulation 14 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012. It means that before a Neighbourhood Development Plan is formally submitted to the local planning authority (in Lea's case, Herefordshire Council) the proposed plan must be publicised to people who live, work or carry on business in the neighbourhood area. They must be given the opportunity to comment upon it as must any organisation the plan may affect.

**SEA** – The Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive is a European Union requirement that seeks to provide a high level of protection to the environment by integrating environmental considerations into plans such as the Neighbourhood Development Plan.

**Special Area of Conservation (SAC)** – A site accorded special protection under the European Union's Habitats Directive because of the flora (plants, trees etc) and/or fauna (animals) it contains.

**Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSI)** – A protected area designated as being of special interest by virtue of its flora, fauna or geological features. SSIs are designated under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 by the official nature conservation body for the area concerned.

**Turnpike** – A toll road

**13th iter of the Antonine itinerary** – Refers to the *Iter Britanniarum*. Believed to date back to the start of the 3rd century, the *Iter Britanniarum* is a road map of Roman Britain. The 13 iter describes the route from Isca Silurum (near Caerleon in south Wales and the site of a Roman legion's fortress) to Calleva Atrebatum (Silchester in Hampshire, the site of an important Roman town). It means that a Roman road may run through part of Lea.