

# ALMELEY PARISH

Neighbourhood Development Plan  
2011-2031



January 2019

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## Acknowledgements

Thanks go to Almeley Parish Council NDP Group, previous NDP Groups, Bill Bloxsome, Data Orchard and Herefordshire Council's Neighbourhood Planning Team.

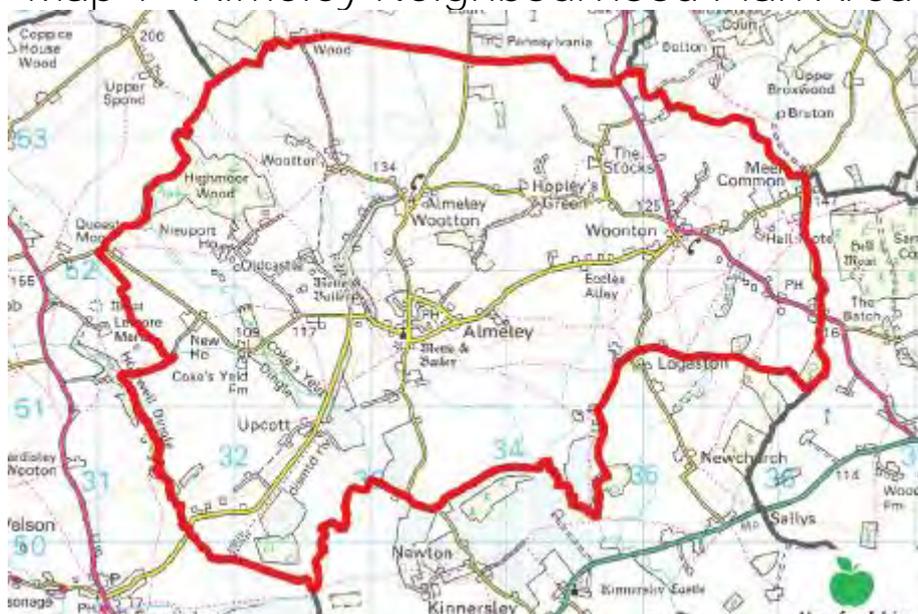
Photographs courtesy of Paul Charles and Barry Hall

Front cover – The two features that epitomise the character of Almeley village and parish - cricket on Spearmarsh Common with uninterrupted views across to the Black Mountains

# 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Almeley Parish Neighbourhood Development Plan (the NDP) is a new type of planning document introduced by the Localism Act of 2011. It enables local communities to make a major contribution to planning decisions that will be needed in order to meet the requirements for development.
- 1.2 Almeley Parish Council has agreed to prepare a Neighbourhood Development Plan. It made a formal submission to Herefordshire Council to designate the Parish as a Neighbourhood Plan Area under the Localism Act 2011 on 17<sup>th</sup> May 2012, with the intention of preparing this NDP. Following a consultation period this was designated on 6<sup>th</sup> July 2012 by Herefordshire Council. A Steering Group was established to prepare the plan. This draft NDP has been prepared following the adoption of Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy by Herefordshire Council on 16<sup>th</sup> October 2015.
- 1.3 Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy sets a range of strategic policies for development of the County up to 2031. It aims to balance environmental issues with economic and social needs of communities to ensure that development is sustainable and does not cause harm to residents. This NDP must conform to these requirements and ensure that where necessary it does so positively in order to contribute to the aims of the Core Strategy document.

Map 1 –Almeley Neighbourhood Plan Area



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- 1.4 This draft NDP has been prepared on the basis of the evidence gathered from surveys undertaken in respect of residents' views on future housing needs and quality of life issues, the Parish Plans, parish consultation events held between 2015-2017 and where issues and opinions were gathered, and a parish questionnaire survey

undertaken during 2014. In addition, other evidence including that used as the basis for Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy and other information arising from issues raised through consultation with the local community and by the Steering Group. The NDP is considered to comply with the broad criteria for sustainable development **within Government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)** and with Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy.

- 1.5 **Policies and proposals are set out in this document prefixed by 'ALM' (i.e. Almeley).** These will become part of the development plan guiding what might receive planning permission as well as indicating what measures are to be promoted to guide new development.
- 1.6 This draft NDP was approved by Almeley Parish Council as the basis for consultation with residents and other stakeholders in November 2017.

## Community Involvement

- 1.7 Almeley Parish Council established a Steering Group to prepare the NDP which included members from the community involved in addition to parish councillors. Local neighbourhood plan consultation events were held during 2015-2017 in order to identify issues of concern to residents and other interested parties. A general household questionnaire was circulated in the parish during 2014. The response to the general questionnaire was 46%.



Figure 1: NDP Presentation Event

- 1.8 The Steering Group consists of 2 members from the Parish Council and 9 members from the wider community.
- 1.9 The Steering Group has written these policies with professional support from Bill Bloxsome MRTPI of Data Orchard and Herefordshire Council's Neighbourhood Planning Team.

## 2. Background to the Plan Area

- 2.1 Almeley Parish covers a large rural area of some 1,400 hectares within north Herefordshire some 18 miles to the north-west of Hereford, 13 miles south-west of Leominster and 7 miles south-east of Kington. It is bounded by the A4111 Road that runs through Eardisley just to the west of the Parish, and the A4112 that runs just beyond its southern edge. The A480 runs through the east of the parish and the hamlet of Woonton. The Parish's **principal settlement is Almeley village which sits** approximately within its centre. Woonton is the next sizeable settlement around 1 mile to the south-east of Almeley. A number of small hamlets are located throughout the Parish.

### Its People

- 2.2 The Parish's **population was 601 in 2011, having** been a small increase in population of 4% upon the 579 present in 2001. The Parish sits in Castle ward and the 2011 Census shows the age structure for this ward has a higher proportion of elderly present compared to the County as a whole. In turn Herefordshire has a higher proportion of elderly compared to England and Wales. Herefordshire Council has recognised this to be a significant issue in terms of the long-term health and well-being of County residents. Around half of Parish residents live in the central village of Almeley, with the majority of the rest living in hamlets across the Parish.
- 2.3 There is a primary school in Almeley serving a wide area. Most secondary age children travel to Kington and some travel to Weobley. The village also has a village hall, local shop within a public house, one church, a Quaker meeting house and a substantial area of local green space at its core that comprises Spearmarsh Common, which is used as public open space, cricket pitch and school sports field. There are no facilities at Woonton, except for a post-box and hourly bus service. Residents of the Parish can choose to travel to Hereford or either of the nearby market towns for weekly shopping. Hereford offers major shopping outlets.
- 2.4 There is no large employer within the Parish although agriculture is an important sector in terms of land use. The recent sale of Council smallholdings may alter the current balance within this sector as the Castle ward contains a high number of such farms. Residents must travel to the nearby towns for work although there are also notable employment areas in the nearby villages of Eardisley and Lyonshall. Working from home presents an alternative for some, and the range includes self-employed craftsmen, agricultural sub-contracting, technical and professional services.

### History and Settlements

#### Almeley Parish

- 2.5 There is evidence of continuous occupation within the parish for more than 4,000 years through archaeological finds. Historically Almeley parish had a number of

notable settlements, and in addition to Almeley village there is physical evidence of shrunken settlements at Woonton, Almeley Wootton, Hopley's Green, Upcott and Logaston, numbering more than 100 buildings. Nieuport House, located just to the north-west of Almeley village, was originally the location for a medieval house demolished sometime after 1712 when its estate was bought by Lord Foley of Great Witley. By 1718 it had been replaced by a grand Georgian house and a walled garden added later in that century. Substantial extensions were added in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In 1919 it was converted into a TB hospital and remained so until 1953 when it became a Latvian Home. It is now back in private hands and has been extensively renovated, its gardens re-designed and a woodland returned to the estate, having been bought back from Herefordshire. **The gardens are now included in the English Heritage's Register of Parks and Gardens.**

### Almeley village

- 2.6 Almeley is recorded in the Domesday Book as a manor. Much of the present village is built around a triangle of roads, with St Mary's parish church to the south, and on the edge of the built area. The Oldcastle, on the north-west side of the village and Almeley Castle just south of the church are of historical interest and a brook ran past both castles providing them with a reliable water supply. The parish church of St Mary is largely 14-century and is a Grade I Listed Building. Almeley is notable as the birthplace of Sir John Oldcastle, a Lollard sympathizer who was eventually executed for treason in 1417; he is presumed to be the basis for Shakespeare's character of Falstaff. Almeley railway station, just to the west of the village, was opened in 1874 and worked by the Great Western Railway. The GWR closed the station in 1917, reopened it in 1922 and closed it again in 1940. The railway line has since been dismantled.

### Woonton hamlet

- 2.7 Woonton is the largest of the shrunken settlements within the Parish and contains its third castle, near The Mere at a place called Hall Mote. The conjectural line of Offa's Dyke cuts across the north east of Woonton crossing Mere Lane and Camp Lane. There are four listed timber-framed houses in Woonton and many of the other dwellings are conversions including a Quaker Meeting House, Church Mission Hall, a forge, a stone pub and timber and stone barns. Woonton is bisected by the A480.

### Other Hamlets

- 2.8 Other hamlets include Almeley Wootton, Logaston, Upcott and Hopley's Green in addition to a number of smaller concentrations.
- 2.9 Almeley Wootton is centred on the junction of lanes from Almeley, Woonton, Lyonshall and other Woottons. It is at the head of the batch dingle which contains a handful of dwellings and was once a very active area with a brickworks and mill. It falls within Almeley Conservation Area. One of the early Quaker meeting houses is in Almeley Wootton. It was given to the Quakers in 1672 by its owner, Roger Prichard, and is still in use by Quakers today. Two of the Quakers who worshipped there, Edward Prichard, and Edward's brother-in-law, John Eckley, were involved with William Penn in setting up the colony of Pennsylvania in 1682. The Meeting House together with Summer

House Farmhouse, a cottage on the Green and the Malthouse all fall within the central triangle of the hamlet and are Listed Buildings. There are also a number of other houses, several barns and a disused chapel within the hamlet although it is more widely spaced than Woonton and interspersed with trees. The central triangle of lanes reinforces its sense of place as does its sense of isolation amid the wide sweep of open fields to the north, east and south. Being near the top of the Parish, the distant views to the south are spectacular.



Figure 2: Quaker 17<sup>th</sup> Century Meeting House, Almeley Wootton

- 2.10 Logaston is an isolated hamlet spread over half a mile, off the lane from Woonton to Sallys on the A4112. It contains around 10 buildings and a few barns. Logaston Common Farmhouse and barn, Little Logaston Cottage and Rosemary Cottage are Listed Buildings. A number of dwellings are dotted around Logaston Common. Other buildings straddle the road towards Woonton and are too scattered to form a coherent group. Distant views are limited through the hamlet being at the bottom of a slope although you soon emerge from the hamlet for longer distant views towards Upcott.
- 2.11 Upcott is located where Cokes Yeld Dingle crosses the road from Almeley to Eardisley. It is an ancient settlement which the Domesday Book records as supplying labour to Almeley. It consists of a farm and a limited number of other dwellings sitting on high land above the road. They are constructed with a range of materials comprising timber frame, red brick, grey stone, metal and timber cladding. Little Upcott Cottage and Lower Upcott farmhouse are Listed Buildings. The group of buildings sits on the line of an old green lane from Logaston to Eardisley running diagonally across the line of the current road.
- 2.12 Hopley's Green comprises around half a dozen houses and farms along a rural lane with a concentration around a common.
- 2.13 Still smaller groups of houses are located at The Stocks, Upper and Lower Wootton, Oldcastle and New House.

## The Environment within the Parish

- 2.14 The underlying bedrock of the area consists of the Raglan Mudstone Formation of the Lower Old Red Sandstone. This material has long been used in the construction of a wide range of buildings and boundary walls throughout the area. The bedrock is overlain by deep, coarse loamy soils, typical argillic brown earths, that support cereals and short-term pasture, and some fruit and potatoes. In **'The Batch'**, superficial geological deposits include sand and clay suitable for brick and tile making.
- 2.15 Agricultural land within the parish falls within the very good quality classification. Despite small scale historical use, there is no indication of any present day workable minerals reserves within the Parish. The Parish possesses a number of small streams, mainly flowing southwards to the River Wye. A notable area within the south of the parish is shown to be prone to flooding although this is some distance from either of the two main settlements. No notable areas of brownfield land are apparent.
- 2.16 The landscape of most of the Parish is described as Principal Timbered Farmlands<sup>1</sup>. **Both the parish's settlements fall within this landscape**, together with most of its hamlets. Its characteristics are rolling lowland landscapes with occasional steep sided hills and low escarpments. They have a small scale, wooded, agricultural appearance characterised by filtered views through densely scattered hedgerow trees. It has a mosaic of small to medium sized fields, irregularly shaped woodlands and winding lanes. There is strong tree cover through woodlands, hedgerow trees, and linear tree cover associated with streams and watercourses which create its scale and enclosure. Woodlands are usually species rich, complex habitats supporting a wide range of flora and fauna as well as the numerous hedgerow trees. The scale and shape of the woodlands is also important, ranging in size from small field corner copses to those of a size exceeding that of the surrounding fields. The irregular outline of many of the woodlands, together with the pattern of hedgerows and winding lanes, contributes to the overall organic character of this landscape. A densely-dispersed pattern of farmsteads and wayside cottages is typical with a notable number of buildings constructed out of brick and timber. A dispersed settlement pattern would be most appropriate.
- 2.17 Two other landscape types are present, both within the southern portion of the Parish and only to a small extent. Wet Pasture Meadows<sup>2</sup> lie to the south of Almeley village. These are flat, low lying and largely uninhabited landscapes previously protected from change by the difficulty of cultivating soils with such poor drainage. Further to their east are Wooded Estate Lands<sup>3</sup>. These are wooded agricultural landscapes of isolated farmsteads, clusters of wayside dwellings and occasional small estate villages. Its woodland component is the critical element in defining its character together with prominent hedgerows. Ornamental grounds and parkland associated with large estates can be a noticeable feature in these landscapes. It is not an intimate landscape and, due to its fairly-large scale, can sometimes appear rather functional.

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1 See Herefordshire Landscape Character Assessment  
([https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/media/268536/landscape\\_character\\_assessment.pdf](https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/media/268536/landscape_character_assessment.pdf))

2 Ibid

3 Ibid

- 2.18 Although there are many and changing attractive views throughout the Parish, most are local or of medium distance, filtered through the irregular woodland and hedgerows. There are nevertheless a number of striking long-distance views, especially southwards across the broad Wye floodplain to the Brecon Beacons and Black Mountains beyond. The landscape views from the southern edge of Almeley village are particularly striking, not just because of the mountains in the distance, but also the generally uncluttered pastoral qualities of their foreground with its organic hedgerow pattern.
- 2.19 A number of other important landscape features are identified within the Parish. Three streams cut deeply through its western portion in the form of dingles. Holywell dingle, along its western boundary, is managed by Herefordshire Wildlife Trust as one of its reserves. Cokes Yeld dingle runs just to the south of Newport House and connects with Holywell dingle right on the edge of the southern Parish boundary. The Batch dingle just to the west of Almeley village contains a much-used footpath. All three are considered important landscape features that need to be protected and sensitively managed. Three other streams run through the Parish at a shallower depth. These are important in terms of land drainage.
- 2.20 There is one large wood within the Parish, Highmoor, which forms part of a Registered Historic Park and Garden. There are three smaller woods at Roughmoor, Cockshute and Kymin together with a number of coppices, all of which add to the local landscape. These are added to by hedgerows, which provide the vast majority of field boundaries, and hedgerow trees.
- 2.21 Commons are another important feature. The Parish also contains an unusual amount of commons and these are listed in Appendix 2 as heritage assets. In addition to Spearmarsh Common in the centre of Almeley village there are seven smaller commons – Meer Common, Tan House Common, Hopley's Green Common, Logaston Common, The Green at Almeley Wootton, Pool Common at Woonton and Tomkins Green. The last three comprise very small areas.
- 2.22 There are no nationally or internationally designated habitats within the Parish although eight locally important sites were identified in surveys undertaken in the 1970s and updated during the 1990s. Of particular note is The Batch which runs north-south along the western edge of Almeley village and has been included within its Conservation Area. The Batch is identified as a core area corridor upon Herefordshire **Council's Ecological Network diagram. A number of other small core areas and wildlife 'stepping stones' are also identified.**
- 2.23 A range of heritage records are available for locations across the parish, although they are more extensive at Almeley village and Woonton. Notable references are also shown at Almeley Wootton. A concentration of Listed Buildings is found in Almeley village, and again some further small concentrations in Woonton and Almeley Wootton. Some 23 historic farmsteads are revealed within the Parish as a consequence of work undertaken by the Herefordshire Historic Farmstead Project. This rich assemblage of identified heritage assets suggests further may exist in unexplored locations.



Figure 3: Almeley Church

2.24 Almeley Conservation Area was designated in 1987. It includes not only the historic portion of Almeley village but also The Batch and Almeley Wootton. Herefordshire Council prepared a draft appraisal for this area in 2006 although did not adopt this.

## 3. Issues for the Plan

- 3.1 The background information above provides an initial basis to inform the plan. Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy, prepared by Herefordshire Council, has an extensive evidence base which has also been used. Parts of this evidence base will be referred to where necessary and relevant to issues which this plan seeks to address.
- 3.2 **In addition the residents' survey has provided valuable information** and views, for example upon what the communities consider the approach to addressing housing provision should be.
- 3.3 Issues have been drawn substantially from those raised within the Parish survey, community consultation and matters identified as relevant to the parish within Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy.

### Local Environment

- 3.4 The need to accommodate development sensitively within environmental constraints is given a high priority. There are a range of such constraints and they vary across the plan area. The majority of new developments will occur within or adjacent to the two plan area settlements identified within Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy – Almeley and Woonton.
- 3.5 The character of Woonton is very much that of small scale, with individually designed, mostly traditional buildings, including a number converted from redundant rural buildings. Originally a small hamlet based upon farmsteads, it has received some limited development but generally on a small scale through individual buildings. The hamlet sits mainly within an enclosed setting although there are impressive far-reaching views from Pool Common towards Ladylift and the Black Mountains. There is one notable industrial building on its west side, accommodating a general industry workshop. The hamlet does not have mains drainage and local knowledge suggests soil structure may not readily accommodate notable amounts of new development. Evidence to show waste water from any new housing can be successfully accommodated will need to be provided. The issue is compounded by localised flooding within parts of the hamlet and the ability to cope with storm water needs to be determined. An integrated approach to addressing both foul and storm water from any development should be promoted. Highway safety is a concern given the alignment of the A480 and the speed of traffic through the hamlet. There are two Listed Buildings within the core of the hamlet with three further on its periphery. The original Little Woonton Farm, whose outbuildings were converted to two residential properties in 2002, falls within its core area and is included within the Herefordshire Historic Farmstead Characterisation Project. Woonton Farm, with its Grade II listed farmhouse, is similarly included.
- 3.6 Almeley, by contrast is a larger village with a number of distinct parts. On the western side of the village sits its historic core, around the cross roads beside St Mary Parish Church and the earthworks marking the location of Almeley Castle, a Scheduled Ancient Monument. The high architectural and historic quality of this area is reflected by the fact that it forms the eastern part of an extensive Conservation Area that extends to the south, west and, more especially northwards to include The Whittern

Farm, The Batch and Almeley Wootton. Appendix 1 sets out a more detailed appraisal of the Conservation Area.



Figure 4: Rural setting of Woonton hamlet

- 3.7 Preserving the rural character of and historic environment within the wider Parish is also considered extremely important. The approach to accommodating all new development across the Parish should retain local character and distinctiveness; ensure the level of new development is in keeping with these; and promote high quality design in particular in terms of scale, appearance and quality of materials.
- 3.8 Protection of heritage sites and buildings should be supported, as should efforts to increase public accessibility and provision of information in relation to the environment.
- 3.9 All five notable hamlets within the Parish have historic farmsteads associated with them that have been identified within Herefordshire Historic Farmstead Characterisation Project (See Appendix 2). The need to retain the particular characteristics and beauty of each of the hamlets will require any new development to be located and designed with extreme care, especially any large farm buildings, and the present relationship with its surrounding open fields preserved.

#### Economic Development

- 3.10 Although welcoming new business enterprises there is concern that these should generally be small scale to reflect the nature and character of the rural area. There is support for the conversion of rural buildings to accommodate small businesses.

- 3.11 The need to protect good quality agricultural land is recognised as important for the retention of the existing pattern of land-use and to support farming and other associated agricultural enterprises. Similarly support for agriculture is strong. Nevertheless, there is also a strong commitment to ensuring the scale of any buildings and infrastructure should respect the landscape and settlement pattern. The quality of the landscape is considered to be high, especially within that part of the Parish that provides generally undisturbed and extensive panoramic views across to the Black Mountains and Brecon Beacons National Park. Its protection will support local tourism enterprises and diversification of the local economy. Public consultations, including in relation to the NDP, revealed considerable community concern over the potential harmful effects of intensive livestock operations to public health and the environment. Support for traditional farming is, however, strong.
- 3.12 Facilitating improved and faster broadband services outside Almeley village including Woonton is considered a priority.



Figure 5: The Bells, Almeley

## Housing Need

- 3.13 A number of questions about housing were asked in a Residents Survey undertaken in 2014. This identified that residents saw the greatest need to be for private 2 and 3 bedroomed houses. There was generally greater support for than opposition to most housing forms although there appeared to be mixed views upon the need for social housing and semi-detached bungalows. A preference was also shown for single plot and small-scale developments of up to five houses. The most appropriate approach was considered to be to seek sites outside of the previously defined settlement boundary. Only Almeley village had previously had such a boundary.
- 3.14 Herefordshire Council has set a minimum target of 33 houses to be built over the period 2011 to 2031. The Council also advised that between 2011 and April 2017 some 18 houses had been built or had planning permission. The minimum

outstanding requirement to be met through this plan therefore amounted to 15 dwellings.

- 3.15 Most of the new dwellings are to be located within or adjacent to the built-up areas of the two settlements within the parish, i.e. Almeley village and Woonton hamlet. However, an allowance can be made for dwellings built away from these settlements such as dwellings needed for agriculture, converted rural buildings, dwellings needed to support rural enterprises and affordable housing on exception sites. Any allowance needs to be based on past trends and in relation to Almeley Parish such trends indicate a modest total of around 12 dwellings might be expected. Of the dwellings receiving planning permission since 2011, four were outside the two settlements and hence a further 8 might come forward if the expected rural windfall allowance were to materialise. Given the extent of farmsteads, with associated rural buildings, this figure is considered realistic although it is recognised that this assessment may not provide the level of certainty required by Herefordshire Council. However, it should be taken into account as part of the strategy for the Parish to show that a positive approach to planning for housing has been adopted.
- 3.16 Taking the above information into account a minimum 7 new dwellings would need to be provided for through this NDP to meet Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy's minimum housing requirement. Two sites, each of 5 houses, have been identified through the NDP process, leaving only 5 to accrue by windfall. This windfall target is considered to be highly likely to materialise during the period up to 2031.
- 3.17 Although housing is recognised as an important issue, the outstanding target requirement to be met is relatively small. There is currently, however, no detailed analysis of local housing need, although it is recognised that the sale of Council smallholdings, of which a number are located within the Parish, may result in the need for a form of housing to accommodate residents who may wish to continue to live and work locally within the industry through contracting. The provision of rural enterprise live/work units may provide for such a need.
- 3.18 In terms of providing housing for local needs, the approach that is most likely to be favoured is considered to be those providing for local workers such as agricultural dwellings, and opportunities for self-build.
- 3.19 There is concern that new dwellings should be well designed, reflect local character, and achieve high levels of sustainability especially through energy conservation. Although the preference is for small developments, the opportunities for this at Almeley village is limited while Woonton has recently experienced a relatively significant expansion of more than 50% the size of the hamlet, and to the extent that any further growth in this location would amount to development at a scale that would significantly harm the form, layout, character and setting of the settlement.
- 3.20 Almeley village possesses all the community facilities and services within the Parish although it has seen very little growth with only 6 dwellings being built within it since 2001. Herefordshire Core Strategy indicates that it is the location where the majority of development should be focused.
- 3.21 Residents have expressed support for limited development within its smaller hamlets. This would not generally be permitted unless one or more of a limited range of

exceptions is met.

## Highways and Transport

- 3.22 There are localised areas where there are potential dangers from traffic, such as through high speed and inappropriate size of vehicles along narrow lanes. Increased traffic due to additional housing will exacerbate this problem. Addressing these issues where possible would be welcome. New development should be accommodated safely. Locations where improvements may be needed should be monitored with the intention that should the need arise Herefordshire Council might be pressed to address these.
- 3.23 Both settlements suffer from the absence of pedestrian footpaths although this is most acute in Woonton hamlet where the danger to pedestrians appears to be greater due to the A480 running through Woonton.

## Community, Social and Health Needs

- 3.24 There is a village hall in Almeley and this is well used although offers further potential. Access to a range of high quality recreational facilities is limited although there is a cricket pitch on Spearmarsh Common. There is no local surgery within the Parish. Almeley Primary School, which also contains a nursery, is located in the south of the village on the edge of Spearmarsh Common. There is no public footpath linking the school to residential parts of the village.
- 3.25 The Parish has an extensive public rights of way network with many footpaths radiating from Almeley village and Woonton. They also have the potential to provide circular walks around the two settlements, although there are gaps that might usefully be filled.

## Other Infrastructure

- 3.26 No areas within the two principal settlements are shown to be within Flood Risk Zones 2 and 3. There are, nevertheless, areas in Woonton that have been affected by storm water flooding and any new development should not exacerbate flood risk from this source. There is evidence that the water table is high within the hamlet. Should opportunities arise that would reduce such flooding then this would be a benefit.
- 3.27 Almeley village has a mains sewer although sewerage is pumped to the Waste Water Treatment Works (WwTWs) at Eardisley. Welsh Water has indicated there is sufficient headroom to accommodate development limits set within Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy although it may need to consider including works to achieve Best Available Technology within its investment programme for 2020 to 2025 because flows will be within 10% of its consent limit. Herefordshire Council has allowed development in excess of the required proportion growth within Eardisley so it may be necessary to allow for further development that would utilise that WwTWs to be deferred until any necessary improvement works take place. There is no public sewer within Woonton. New development would need to ensure that foul drainage can be accommodated without causing pollution and any measures required might usefully be undertaken through a co-ordinated approach taking into account drainage from other properties where necessary.

3.28 There is no street lighting within either settlement and no desire for its provision.

## 4. Development Options

- 4.1 An option not to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan but rely upon Herefordshire Core Strategy, developer pressures and any subsequent Rural Areas Local Plan that Herefordshire Council might produce, was rejected at an early stage as not being in **the community's best interests. It was decided to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan** on the basis that the community wished to contribute more fully to determining how the required level of proportional housing growth should be accommodated within the Parish.
- 4.2 The choice of options has been influenced by:
- The small number of dwellings required to meet the required housing target;
  - The potentially conflicting desire by the community to seek small scale developments while also supporting the need for a range of housing types, especially 2 and 3-bedroom family housing; and
  - The nature of sites that are **available as indicated through Herefordshire's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment and the local 'Call for Sites'**.
  - The contribution that the Parish might make towards improving the age-profile within the County.
- 4.3 The options considered for development concentrated upon where new housing might be located. The following options were considered:
- Option 1 – small amount of new housing development in Almeley, with no more development in Woonton.
- Option 2 – retain current settlement boundary for Almeley village, restrict development in Woonton and rely on Parish windfall.
- Option 3 – extend Almeley settlement boundary to incorporate a site large enough for affordable housing, with no more development in Woonton.
- Option 4 – extend Almeley settlement boundary to incorporate a site large enough for affordable housing and limited further development in Woonton.
- Option 5 – retain current settlement boundary for Almeley village, while allowing limited development in Woonton.
- Option 6 – small extension to Almeley village settlement boundary with limited further development in Woonton.
- Option 7 – not to prepare a NDP.
- 4.4 At the time of the survey complete reliance on windfall development Option 2 was thought to be a viable option. Subsequently it became clear that it was not, as it entailed more expectation than firm proposal and would be unacceptable to the Planning Authority and the Independent Examiner, causing rejection of the Plan. Although a small majority of residents expressed a preference for Option 2, in order to meet the level of certainty required that the necessary growth would be met, the parishioners second choice of Option 6 was considered the most practicable while respecting community wishes. In this regard, the combination of the community's expressed wish for no new development to exceed 5 houses, Herefordshire Council's Policy that Almeley village and Woonton were identified as locations for development, and the Government's indication that Neighbourhood Plans would be stronger if they

contained housing land allocations, it was considered that the identification of two small sites would meet these aims. The balance of no less than 5 additional houses from windfall was considered to be wholly realistic hence the proposal enshrined in this NDP. Options 3 and 4 received the least community support. Not to prepare an NDP would allow developers to bring forward sites in both settlements as they see fit which might exceed significantly the target for new housing set for the Parish. Alternatively, it would rely upon Herefordshire Council including the two settlements within its Rural Areas Sites Allocation DPD upon which the community would have less influence.

- 4.5 There is no strategic requirement to allocate land for employment and no expressed local need for any such sites. Consequently, a flexible approach supporting Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy policies RA5, E3 and E4 has been adopted and no options considered.

## 5. Vision, Objectives and Strategic Policy

- 5.1 In preparing Almeley NDP the following vision sets the basis for what it is hoped to achieve through the planning system by the end of the plan period:

*" In 2031, Almeley Parish will remain an unspoilt, rural and scenic part of Herefordshire, providing homes for its families and elderly residents, supporting local businesses, such as small family farms, and an increase in home working through a fast-**broadband network.**"*

- 5.2 To achieve this vision the following objectives have been set:

Objective 1: To maintain the rural character of the Parish, its village and hamlets. This means:

- a) Landscape character, views and features of the Parish have been preserved, especially the views southwards across to the Brecon Beacons National Park.
- b) The historic aspect of the village, especially its Conservation Area, and hamlets have been preserved or enhanced.
- c) The **Parish's** commons and open spaces have been protected, conserved and maintained.
- d) The contribution made by agriculture to the community and local environment has been recognised and is supported.

Objective 2: To minimise the effect of further developments on the countryside and landscapes. This means:

- a) There has been no net-loss in biodiversity and the opportunities to enhance wildlife have been taken.
- b) The rural nature of the parish has been maintained.
- c) Any new development has been sensitively integrated to blend with existing buildings, settings and the landscape.
- d) Land has been used efficiently.
- e) High quality agricultural land has been protected.

Objective 3: To support the rural economy within the Parish through:

- a) Enabling diversification of businesses where this is in scale with the character of the area;
- b) Supporting home-working;
- c) Encouraging live-work units;
- d) Protecting high quality agricultural land.

Objective 4: To provide housing opportunities for existing and future residents of the parish, including affordable, private and self-build homes. This means:

- a) The amount of new housing meets the strategic requirements of Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy.

- b) A mix of housing, including housing for older people, has been provided;
- c) Affordable and self-build homes are available to meet local needs, particularly those with a local connection.
- d) New development is of a scale that fits sensitively into the relevant settlement.
- e) New housing has been designed to a high standard in terms of appearance and sustainability.

Objective 5: To accommodate future development within the capacity of local infrastructure. This means:

- a) Local services such as the village school, village hall, shop and church have been supported where possible through any new development.
- b) New development has not resulted in on-street parking or road congestion and road safety problems have been improved where possible.
- c) The capacity of utility services, local drainage and the highway network has not been exceeded.
- d) Residential and local amenity has not been adversely affected by new development.
- e) Alternative means of transport to cars, in particular local bus services and shared transport have been encouraged.

5.3 The community expressed overwhelming support for these objectives<sup>4</sup>.

## Strategy for Sustainable Development

5.4 **Sustainable development seeks to ensure proposals are advanced that will “meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”<sup>5</sup>.** It covers social and economic factors as well as the environment so that the community is provided with sufficient and appropriate housing, jobs, opportunities for enterprise, and access to community facilities which will help to maintain healthy and thriving communities as well as protecting our natural and historic environment, all of which contribute to our quality of life.

5.5 Although based upon policies for the environment and housing, this plan brings forward measures intended indirectly to benefit suitable economic activity and community infrastructure. The following policy forms the basis for the overall approach being pursued.

## Policy ALM1: Promoting Sustainable Development

Positive measures that promote sustainable development within Almeley Parish will be supported where they meet the principles and policies set out in this Neighbourhood Plan. Where development proposals are advanced, they should, in particular, address the following high-level priorities that are considered essential by the local community for maintaining sustainable development within Almeley Parish:

- a) The highest priority will be given to retaining the rural character of the

<sup>4</sup> See evidence base at <http://almeleypc.org/council-business/neighbourhood-development-plan/>

<sup>5</sup> National Planning Policy Framework, page 2.

Parish and its settlement pattern through requiring development to:

- Fit sensitively into the landscape;
  - Maintain the dispersed settlement pattern of frequent roadside dwellings and farmsteads that avoid clusters of modern houses;
  - Protect views across the River Wye Flood Plain to the Brecon Beacons National Park and Black Mountains;
  - Protect and enhance landscape features such as broadleaved tree cover and mixed species hedgerows;
  - Conserve the organic pattern and character of the local lane network;
  - Strengthen the ecological network of wildlife corridors and patchwork of small wildlife habitats;
  - **Maintain or restore the character of the Parish's** historic farmsteads, through innovative approaches.
- b) Preserve or enhance the character and appearance of Almeley Conservation Area.
- c) Support local economic development appropriate to the capacity of the highway network, the local landscape and the existing settlement pattern.
- d) Meet the specific local housing needs in terms of house types and tenures.
- e) Be capable of being accommodated within the capacity of local infrastructure, while supporting the retention of existing services and facilities.

Development proposals must comply with the policies in this Neighbourhood Plan and any decisions should reflect the **community's sustainable** development priorities set out in this policy. Where there are overriding material considerations that indicate these policies should not be followed then compensatory or mitigation measures will be sought as part of the development proposal to ensure the priorities set out in this policy are still met.

- 5.6 The high-level criteria within this policy reflect the overall objectives set out above. **They represent the community's aspirations for development within the Parish yet** comply with national and Core Strategy policies. They are also based upon an assessment of local distinctiveness and pertinent issues described in sections 2 and 3 of this NDP.
- 5.7 Section **38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004** requires all planning applications to be determined in accordance with the adopted Development Plan **unless material considerations indicate** otherwise. This overarching strategic policy sets out the essential sustainable development requirements which the local community considers important to achieve its vision. In particular, the provisions within this

Neighbourhood Plan will be measured against this policy. Where exceptional reasons **are such that the community's expression of priorities might be overridden then the** effects upon the principles that this policy sets out should be mitigated or compensated for.

- 5.8 Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy indicates a preference for settlement boundaries to be defined within which development might take place. This might incorporate any site allocations as well as individual sites or small plots that could be accommodated satisfactorily as infilling. The approach to the location of development **to meet the community's aspirations for and contribution to sustainable development** while complying with the provisions of Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy will be in accordance with the following policies.

## 6. Environmental Policies

- 6.1 Protecting and enhancing the landscape, natural environment and local heritage, is given a high priority by the local community. There are specific environmental features within the Parish that the community values and which it acknowledges as contributing **to its sense of 'place'**. The community is fully aware of those parts of its surroundings that should be preserved or enhanced. In addition, the need for high quality design is strongly supported by the community and it is considered that this would include sustainability elements that would help mitigate the effects of climate change. The following policies seek to address the environmental objectives set out in this NDP.

### Policy ALM2: Maintaining and Protecting the Landscape and its Features

Measures to maintain, restore and enhance the natural environment and landscape character and features within Almeley Parish will be promoted wherever possible.

To ensure development contributes positively to the **area's rural character** and does not adversely affect it, proposals should:

- a) Retain the landscape character of the areas within the Parish, in particular ensuring the features contributing to their identification as Principal Timbered Farmlands, Wet Pasture Meadows or Wooded Estate Lands<sup>6</sup> as appropriate, are conserved, restored or enhanced through measures consistent with their particular characterisation.
- b) Maintain and preferably extend tree cover, adding to the natural assets of the Parish where opportunities are available.
- c) Include appropriately detailed landscape schemes to enhance landscape character that should be carried out in association with development proposals.
- d) Protect landscape views across to the Black Mountains area of the Brecon Beacons National Park.
- e) Contribute towards the wider ecological network with measures, in particular, to maintain and enhance the ecological corridors formed by watercourse habitats and small woodland habitats throughout the Parish, utilising development where appropriate to improve their ecological value.
- f) Protect the biodiversity value of local sites and green infrastructure within the Parish, in particular, around its settlements.
- g) Retain important natural habitats and landscape features such as ponds, orchards and hedgerows, while ensuring there is no net loss of biodiversity through providing offsetting for any loss and adding to the

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6 See Herefordshire Landscape Character Assessment  
([https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/media/268536/landscape\\_character\\_assessment.pdf](https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/media/268536/landscape_character_assessment.pdf))



Figure 6: Traditional Orchards add significantly to local biodiversity

- 6.2 The landscape and wider natural environment of the Parish should be given a high priority, not just in terms of its protection, but its restoration and enhancement. Paragraphs 2.9 to 2.17 describe those characteristics, features and other elements that combine to create an extremely high-quality local environment. This policy, and a number that follow, address those environmental issues identified within paragraphs Section 3.5 to 3.8. The basis for this policy is to **maintain and reinforce the Parish's** natural areas, features and landscape. Although there are no nationally or internationally designated landscape or nature conservation sites within the Parish, it does make a valuable contribution to such features just to the south of its boundary, i.e. the River Wye Special Area of Conservation and the Brecon Beacons National Park. There is a range of locally important habitats and features which are **fundamental to the Parish's environment**, especially traditional orchards; these are described and mapped in the Almeley Parish Biodiversity Conservation and Enhancement Plan: June 2018. The need for positive works is also a significant concern which developers and others should address. There should certainly be no net loss in biodiversity and landscape character and where features must be removed full compensatory measures must be proposed within any planning application and preferably additional measures included where either or both landscape character and biodiversity need to be restored. In addition to this policy and Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy policies LD1 and LD2, there is guidance included in Herefordshire Landscape Character Assessment Supplementary Planning Document<sup>7</sup> that needs to be considered and the **Council's Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Guidance**<sup>8</sup>. The use of landscape impact assessment techniques to show how developments will fit into the landscape and reflect local landscape character may be required. Statements providing supporting ecological information and analysis should indicate the

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7 Ibid

8 See [https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/media/268309/biodiversity\\_spg.pdf](https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/media/268309/biodiversity_spg.pdf)

importance of an area and what measures are necessary to enhance the local ecological network. This should be informed by the biodiversity audit and associated recommendations for conservation, restoration and recreation of habitats; the protection and recovery of important species; and the enhancement of the ecological network of sites, wildlife corridors and stepping stones for the Parish current at the time<sup>9</sup>.



Figure 7: Unspoilt view across to the Brecon Beacons National Park from Almeley Primary School

### Policy ALM3: Protecting Heritage Assets

The significance of heritage assets and their settings within the Parish will be conserved and enhanced through:

- a) Not permitting development that would adversely affect Almeley Castle and Oldcastle Twt Scheduled Ancient Monuments and their settings.
- b) Requiring appropriate development proposals affecting heritage assets to be accompanied by a Heritage Impact Statement or full archaeological investigations, and in the event of significant and/or extensive remains being found they should be preserved in-situ wherever possible.
- c) Ensuring all development within Almeley Conservation Area preserves or enhances its character and appearance, paying particular regard to the analysis set out in Appendix 1.
- d) Not permitting development that adversely affects features and settings of Listed Buildings and other similar heritage assets.
- e) Ensuring every effort is made to retain and conserve buildings and heritage assets of local importance, including traditional rural buildings, and groups of buildings that contribute to the character and appearance of Almeley

<sup>9</sup> See <http://almeleypc.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Almeley-Parish-Council-Nature-Conservation-Plan-June-2018.pdf>

Conservation Area.

- f) Resisting development that would adversely affect the significance of Nieuport and Broxwood Court Registered Park and Gardens.
- g) Only allowing development within Lemore unregistered park and garden to proceed if an assessment has shown the effects of works will fit sensitively into the garden design. The contribution that this park and garden makes to the wider landscape will be relevant to this consideration.
- h) Preserving the network of commons through only allowing development that might affect them where this fits sensitively into their character and appearance and protects their biodiversity value.

6.3 The **area's heritage is reflected in the presence of a number** of Scheduled Monuments, Listed Buildings, Almeley Conservation Area and other locally important monuments, buildings and other heritage assets. It is difficult to foresee that any significant development within the Conservation area can be accommodated while ensuring its character and appearance is maintained. There are also historic landscapes that **contribute to the area's character and may also be archaeological** remains. These assets and, where appropriate, their settings<sup>10</sup> are important and need to be preserved. Listed buildings, especially those within Almeley Conservation Area, often form groups with other buildings of local interest and these latter buildings are also important to the **Parish's** local distinctiveness, as well as contributing to local economy and cultural heritage. The contribution of locally important buildings, archaeology, parks and gardens and other assets are recognised for their contribution **to the Parish's** landscape character and Almeley Conservation Area. This policy may restrict development and influence the approach taken and may, where possible, stimulate development, for example where re-use and regeneration brings benefits. Where a proposal is likely to affect a heritage asset, developers will be required to demonstrate what these effects might be and how they will be mitigated. It will be a requirement that, in appropriate instances, a Heritage Impact Statement be prepared to support planning and related applications.



Figure 8: Almeley 15<sup>th</sup> Century Manor House

- 6.4 To preserve or enhance Almeley Conservation Area, the analysis set out in Appendix 1 must be taken into account.



Figure 9: Remains of Almeley Motte and Bailey – Scheduled Ancient Monument

#### Policy ALM4: Protection of Local Green Space

The following areas are designated Local Green Space. Development that would result in the loss of these sites will not be permitted. Proposals for any development on these sites will be resisted unless they are related to their retention, management or enhancement of the green space and there is no significant adverse effect on residential amenity:

- a) Land at Spearmarsh Common.
- b) Pool Common.

- 6.5 The Steering Group carried out an assessment of potential areas for inclusion as Local Green Space in the NDP and this is set out in <http://almeleypc.org/local-green-space-assessments>. The areas identified in this policy are considered important green space and special to the whole community. Development is not totally restricted within these, **but any proposals should be for the benefit of the site's current use. Designation as Local Green Space does not indicate a right of public access if it is not already public space, neither does it change the current use.** The reasons advanced for the designation of each site are as follows:

- i) Spearmarsh Common: This designation continues protection afforded in the former Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan and previous planning policy documents. The common serves not only as an informal green space of considerable amenity and informal recreation value at the heart of Almeley village but also as formal recreation area, containing the village cricket pitch, and also as the playing field for Almeley

Primary School.

ii) Pool Common, Woonton: This is an area that presents itself as a small village green in front of Pool House and Pool Cottage. Pool House is a Grade II Listed Building and the common is important to its setting. Woonton Farmhouse, just to its south-west, and separated from the common by the Almeley Road is also a Listed Building and their interrelationship is important. Consequently, Pool Common is special to the community as a heritage asset and visual amenity which also allows far-reaching panoramic views stretching from Yazor Woods in the south-east to the Brecon Beacons in the south-west.



Figure 10: Pool Common, Woonton

## Policy ALM5: Design

New development will be required to achieve good standards of design and architecture throughout the Parish but especially where there is a need to respect local distinctiveness and the traditional qualities of its rural settlements and buildings. This will be achieved by requiring development to:

- a) Respect the traditional character, where appropriate, by adopting a design approach utilising a range of materials and architectural styles that are sympathetic to the **development's surroundings, and** incorporating appropriate locally distinctive features;
- b) New innovative design or features should be of high quality and fit sensitively within the street scene, village setting or rural location;
- c) Respect the scale, massing, density and character of existing properties in the vicinity;
- d) Be similar to established building heights, frontages, massing and plot

- sizes;
- e) Protect the amenity of adjacent existing residential properties and ensure new residential development avoids locations where residents may suffer significant adverse effects from adjacent operations;
- f) Preserve existing trees, boundary hedges, ponds, orchards and hedgerows and make provision for tree planting with native species.

These criteria will apply equally to alterations and extensions to existing properties where proposals require planning permission.

- 6.6 This policy complements other environmental policies, and together with Policy ALM7, seeks to expand upon Herefordshire Core Strategy Policy SD2 relating to sustainable design. Policy ALM3 c) is also relevant in terms of promoting high quality design within Almeley Conservation Area, in particular through its reference to appendix 1. The criteria within Policy ALM5 relate to the built environment, visual design and appearance within the wider setting to ensure the retention of local distinctiveness. Design should consider the need for a generally consistent approach in relation to surrounding development and aspect, for example through ensuring dwellings face onto the main village street or rural lane where this is a characteristic.
- 6.7 The local community has expressed significant support to measures to ensure the character of its main village, hamlets and rural area is retained and for high quality design to be achieved.

### Policy ALM6: Sustainable Design

An integrated approach to achieve a high standard of sustainable design will be required to, in particular, achieve the maximum possible reduction in the carbon footprint of any development. Development proposals should contain a co-ordinated package of design measures which, in addition to regulatory requirements, include:

- a) Utilising physical sustainability measures associated with buildings that include, in particular, orientation of buildings, the provision of energy and water conservation measures, storage for bicycles and storage for waste including provision for recycling, broadband infrastructure, and renewable energy infrastructure such as photovoltaic panels where these do not detract from any historic fabric or settings;
- b) Seeking on site measures that support energy conservation such as through tree planting and other forms of green infrastructure to provide shade and shelter, the maximum use of permeable surfaces, and minimising the use of external lighting to that which is necessary;
- c) With regard to housing development the new homes are fully integrated into the existing neighbourhood and support a more pedestrian and cyclist friendly environment through convenient links to local facilities and public transport connections which are suitable for pushchairs, wheelchairs, walking with aids or using a mobility scooter;
- d) Assisting offsite measures such as supporting infrastructure to promote sustainable travel and enabling a sustainable drainage system to serve a wider range of properties where opportunities exist;
- e) Where external lighting is required it should be appropriate to its

purpose and supported by a lighting plan that demonstrates that it will not have an adverse effect through unnecessary glare, light trespass, scenic intrusion or sky glow;

- f) Minimising construction traffic and reducing waste;
- g) Where there is good reason to believe that contamination of land may exist on any site, including through agricultural processes, ensuring an assessment is carried out to establish the extent and nature of the contamination, and effective measures taken to ensure potential occupiers, and the wider environment, are not put at unacceptable risk.

Where new innovative sustainable design or features are incorporated they should fit sensitively within the street scene and incorporate a number of locally distinctive features to maintain the areas cohesive character.

- 6.8 The community of Almeley Parish is concerned to promote sustainable design and this should carry the same weight as retaining local distinctiveness. High quality design should be capable of enabling both policies to be achieved. In all instances the approach to sustainable design should be undertaken in an integrated way addressing measures related to individual buildings, site layout and landscaping and support for off-site measures where these are necessary such as links to the public footpath network and supporting public transport for example by provision of a bus shelter. The community is concerned about the effects of increased lighting upon the tranquillity of the area and the night sky and would wish to see the effects of any external lighting kept to a minimum. This is also reflected in the desire for no street lighting within the Parish. The concerns in this regard are to retain visibility of the night sky, protect local amenity, safeguard important habitats and biodiversity species, and preserve the character of the area.

## 7 Economic Development

- 7.1 There are no major employers or businesses within the Parish and the emphasis is upon supporting agriculture, promoting diversification of local businesses, promoting tourism and enabling home working. Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy policies RA5 (Re-use of Rural Buildings), RA6 (Rural Economy), E3 (Home working) and E4 (Tourism) are generally positive in covering these issues and need not be duplicated. The re-use of rural buildings and their use, where possible and appropriate as live/work units will be particularly beneficial to the Parish where the sale of Council smallholdings may result in a demand for opportunities to undertake agricultural contracting. Policy RA5 generally relates to the use of the building and does not establish criteria that might be required where uses may involve the use of notable external areas. In addition, although there is widespread support for agriculture and diversification, it is considered necessary to define what scale is appropriate to the Parish in terms of associated buildings given its environmental quality, the potential impact on the water environment, and quality of life and amenity to nearby residents.



Figure 11 – Farming is key to the economy of Almeley Parish

### Policy ALM7: Diversification through Live/Work Units

The change of use of large country houses and farmsteads, and development in association with the re-use of redundant or disused rural buildings for rural business or enterprise, including live/work units, will be supported provided:

- a) The nature and scale of the use reflects the rural landscape and highway network;
- b) Where the use requires external storage to support the rural based activity, external screening is provided to fully mitigate the effects upon

the local landscape from all publicly visible locations;

- c) The residential amenity of adjacent properties is not significantly affected;
- d) Limited additional buildings may be provided to support the enterprise or reduce external storage where these reflect small scale traditional agricultural buildings within the landscape;
- e) Where the rural buildings involved comprise a historic farmstead, such buildings under d) should be informed by an analysis of the historic form of the complex.

7.2 This policy supports the use of large properties as well as redundant rural buildings for employment uses. The benefits are considerable in that providing jobs and new houses go hand in hand in supporting the retention of rural facilities such as schools, shops, public houses, which in turn support the overall sustainability of the countryside. Although Herefordshire Council acknowledges certain types of businesses assist rural diversification such as the knowledge based creative industries and environmental technologies, there are other forms of traditional activities that may be equally acceptable for rural buildings such as those that support the agricultural industry itself. They may not be as tidy as more modern economic activities but are no less essential. Examples of those traditionally found in the area include agricultural contracting, machinery repair, food preparation, and small-scale farm building manufacture. They should be encouraged where their adverse effects on the environment can be mitigated through location and design. This is particularly relevant at this time within the Parish where an anticipated loss in farm-based agricultural employment is likely.



Figure 12: Farming is integral to the character of the Parish and its settlements.

7.3 There are some 23 historic farmsteads within the Parish in addition to modern complexes and some of these may have potential to accommodate businesses, either

through substantial changes to new uses or diversification. Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy Policy RA5 would enable such changes, including small scale extensions, and this policy seeks to clarify the requirements in terms of extensions and, more particularly, outside storage which can be an issue in relation to the more traditional rural based enterprises. Flexibility continues to be provided but with appropriate safeguards, especially for historic farmsteads.

## Policy ALM8: Intensive Livestock Units

Intensive livestock units and associated structures will only be permitted where:

- a) they do not intrude unacceptably into the landscape or adversely affect important views or landscape character. Proposals seeking to utilise tree screening and choice of materials to reduce adverse visual and landscape effects should only be permitted where these can achieve effective mitigation of the adverse impact.
- b) any traffic generated can be accommodated safely upon the local highway network.
- c) proposals involving intensive livestock units and/or associated walled storage compounds or lagoons should be sited no closer than 400m from a protected building or residential property which is not associated with the operation. Where it can be demonstrated that a small-scale operation will have no impact at a closer distance due to the size of the operation or other factors, then this distance requirement may be reduced.
- d) there are no other potentially polluting effects from traffic, noise or smell upon local amenity.

Where proposals for intensive livestock units are likely to give rise to the handling, collection, storage, treatment, transportation and disposal of manure waste or other waste materials arising from the intensive livestock units, they should ensure that due consideration has been given to the waste they will generate and include appropriate measures to protect public amenity, human health and the environment, which can be implemented and enforced. Such proposals will require sustainable and efficient management measures which should:

- i) require the location of manure disposal or manure spreading areas for waste arising from intensive livestock units to be located where they would not have an adverse effect on the River Wye Special Area of Conservation. The in-combination effects of a number of such operations will also be a consideration.
- ii) require any planning application for an intensive livestock unit to be accompanied by a working method statement that includes clear details on the number and quantity of animals and by-products, methods of dealing with inputs and outputs from the process and pollution controls, transportation requirements and any other relevant matters as specified by the local planning authority. The in-combination effects of a number of such units on the environment should also be considered.

- 7.4 Support for the retention of agricultural businesses where these meet a range of criteria is provided through Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy policy RA6. This policy does not seek to restrict such development but ensure it protects the

environment and local amenity. Scale is considered to be important, but additional criteria are also included that effectively cover traffic generation, maintaining water quality and associated environment, and effect on residential amenity. This policy clarifies, more specifically, related concerns. Reference has already been made to the importance of views across the Wye Valley to the Brecon Beacons National Park. The **importance of the area's landscape** character and appearance must be recognised in terms of its wider economic benefits, especially for tourism and this should be given significant weight. In addition to design and location being important potentially polluting effects need to be considered, such as noise, smell, dust, late night working and lighting. A working method statement setting out provisions and appropriate agreements is necessary to ensure the provisions of NPPF paras 120-124 are taken into account and this should cover all forms of pollution including noise, emissions to air and light pollution. Normally a protective distance of 400m should be maintained as the protective distance around isolated dwellings that are not associated with any intensive livestock operation.

- 7.5 Where development is proposed within this protection zone, it must be clearly demonstrated that there will be no significant adverse effects on residential amenity. In this regard it should be borne in mind that the other regulatory regimes may not properly protect such amenity. A distinction needs to be drawn between the requirements of the planning system to protect amenity and that of the environmental regulatory or permitting regimes. The systems and tests are different and DEFRA guidance indicates that potential problems should be addressed at the planning stage because those that arise later may not be fully addressed by the Environment Agency Permitting regime in terms of effect on amenity. When determining effect on amenity regard should be had to the sensitivity of the local population<sup>11</sup>. In addition, it may be necessary to restrict hours when certain activities are undertaken to ensure residential amenity is protected. These considerations affect not only general amenity, but also human health, the natural environment and the potential sensitivity of the area (NPPF paragraph 120).
- 7.6 Special regard is given to the need to protect local watercourses, all of which flow into the River Wye, which is a Special Area of Conservation. This nationally important river already suffers from high levels of phosphates to the extent that it is in an unfavourable condition and a Nutrient Management Plan is being prepared to address this concern.
- 7.7 This policy will contribute towards measures aimed at ensuring agriculture does not add further to the current phosphate and other nutrient loads. Amenity may also be affected by noise, for example from extractor fans, lighting and traffic (as opposed to the ability of the network to accommodate vehicles). In addition, it is important that any proposals do not harm the **parish's heritage assets** or its community facilities and services in accordance with other policies in this NDP.

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11 See document at (para 6), <http://www.ciwem.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Control-of-odour.pdf>

## 8 Housing Policies

8.1 Table 1 below shows how it is intended that Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy housing target should be met through the approach adopted. Consequently, a flexible approach has been adopted that, although relies substantially upon the development management process, provides stronger guidance than would be the case without this NDP.

HC Core Strategy Requirement 2011 – 2031: minimum 33 Dwellings		
		Number of Dwellings
1	Number of Completions or dwellings with planning permission 2011-2017	18
2	Housing allocation within Almeley village	5
3	Housing allocation within Woonton (Site now has planning permission)	5
4	Estimated Built Dwellings 2011-2031	28
5	Potential Parish windfall allowance including development in hamlets (see para 3.15)	8
6	Estimated Total Dwellings	36 (9% over target)

Table 1: Achieving the Housing Target 2011-2031

8.2 Additional housing development for local needs may also be required in order to meet the need for affordable housing through proposals brought forward under Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy H2 should this be necessary. The most appropriate location for this would be close to Almeley village. That policy allows for both affordable and intermediate housing<sup>12</sup>. Currently there is no up-to-date evidence about the level and type of local need within the Parish and it would assist provision greatly should an appropriate survey be undertaken. Given the quality of the local environment, it is important that such accommodation meets the needs of the local community to support social and economic needs of residents.

<sup>12</sup> Affordable housing comprises 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 house prices. Social rented housing is owned by private registered providers. It may also be owned by other persons and provided under equivalent rental arrangements to the above, as agreed with the local authority or with the Homes and Communities Agency. Affordable rented housing is let by private registered providers of social housing to households who are eligible for social rented housing. Affordable Rent is subject to rent controls that require a rent of no more than 80% of the local market rent. Intermediate housing is homes for sale and rent provided at a cost above social rent, but below market levels subject to the criteria in the Affordable Housing definition. These can include shared, other low cost homes for sale and intermediate rent, but not affordable rented housing.

8.3 The current significant level of commitments in terms of planning permissions is such that only a small amount of additional provision is needed to meet the minimum housing target set by Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy. It should also be recognised that the demographics of an elderly population of Almeley Parish will result in greater than normal numbers of existing houses becoming vacant during the planned period. Almeley village and Woonton are the two settlements where new housing should be located. Almeley is the larger settlement and intended to be the focus for most of the new housing. Although it contains a mains sewer it only has a limited range of other facilities. Woonton is no more than a hamlet although it has recently seen a number of planning permissions granted that would result in a notable expansion, arguably in excess of what might be considered to reflect its scale, character, environment and status within policy RA2. The lack of mains drainage in Woonton must be considered a limiting factor in assessing further development. With the hamlet of Woonton being identified as a location for new housing, the local community had commented upon whether other similar hamlets within the Parish might also be able to accommodate some provision. Housing provision since 2011 has not reflected local needs as expressed by the community which is for 2/3 bed family houses, self-build opportunities and dwellings for the farming community. Availability of sites within the Parish **has been sought through 'Calls for Sites' both by Herefordshire Council and in association with this NDP.** The following policies seek to address both the housing target set through Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy and expressed local needs.

#### Policy ALM9: Housing Development in Almeley

New housing within Almeley village will be restricted to sensitive infilling within the settlement boundary and the site allocated to the north of West View (ALM10). Within the settlement boundary infilling will be permitted where it meets the following criteria:

- a) Development shall preserve or, where necessary, enhance the character and appearance of Almeley Conservation Area, including its boundary.
- b) Dwellings shall be of a scale, massing, density, building line and layout compatible with the character, size and form of the particular part of the settlement within which they are located and not adversely affect the amenity of adjacent properties.
- c) Development shall not result in the loss of important features such as trees, hedgerows, or significant frontage gaps or green spaces that contribute to the unique character of the village.
- d) Development shall not adversely affect heritage assets within the village, including their settings.
- e) There should be safe access for vehicles, and parking arrangements should not detract from the village street scene but be an integral part of the overall design.

8.4 Almeley village has had a settlement boundary defined for it in a number of previous development plans. That proposed in this NDP reflects those previous boundaries and a site identified as suitable and available through the assessment of sites put forward

within the local 'Call for Sites'.

## Policy ALM10: Land to north of West View

The development of 0.6 ha (1.5 acres) of land to the north of West View identified on Almeley Policies Map is allocated for housing development subject to the following criteria being met:

- a) The public right of way running along the southern edge of the land should be retained;
- b) The entrance to the development site should be designed to reflect the rural character of the village with appropriate landscaping including hedgerow and tree planting;
- c) A line of structural tree planting of variable depth should be provided to the west of the site in order to protect the setting of the settlement when viewed from that direction and also to protect the setting, character and appearance of The Batch which is a specific character area within Almeley Conservation Area
- d) Landscape proposals should form an integral part of the design for the development and include measures to protect and enhance the entrance to the village and biodiversity;
- e) Buildings should be designed to avoid repetition of form and detail that would result in an urban appearance, and utilise a mixture of materials, styles and aspects that reflect the existing village character;
- f) New housing development should provide a mix of house types, with an emphasis upon family accommodation comprising two and three-bedroom properties;
- g) Support will be given to proposals comprising custom built and/or self- build dwellings and live/work units where this would not adversely affect residential amenity of existing properties.

- 8.5 This land is sited to the north-west of Almeley village at its entrance. It is a small site that can accommodate around 5 dwellings through a sensitively designed layout. The **site's southern edge contains a public right of way that should be retained. Although** lying outside of the Conservation Area, it is close to both its boundary and the core area to the south and The Batch to the west. The latter has a particular character and appearance for which the open aspect and setting surrounding it is important and needs to be preserved. To ensure this open, rural aspect is retained, some structural tree planting away from its edge will be required. In addition, it is important to ensure the rural appearance of the entrance to the village from the north is treated sympathetically. As such it is important that the design, layout and landscape elements reflect the rural nature of the village as a whole, especially its setting. The accommodation provided upon this site should meet a range of needs in terms of house sizes in accordance with Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy policy H3 in order to support a balanced and inclusive community. Herefordshire Council has undertaken a Housing Market Assessment<sup>13</sup> that should inform the overall provision within the Kington Housing Market Area that includes Almeley Parish.

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13 [https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/directory\\_record/2090/local\\_housing\\_market\\_assessment\\_2013](https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/directory_record/2090/local_housing_market_assessment_2013)

## Policy ALM11: Housing Development in Woonton

New housing within Woonton will be restricted to sensitive infilling within a settlement boundary, sites already granted planning permission and the site allocated at Woonton Farm (ALM12). Within the settlement boundary infilling will be permitted where it meets the following criteria:

- a) Dwellings shall be of a scale, massing, density, building line and layout compatible with the character, size and form of the particular part of the settlement within which they are located and not adversely affect the amenity of adjacent properties.
- b) Development shall not result in the loss of important features such as trees, hedgerows, or significant frontage gaps or green spaces that contribute to the unique character of the settlement.
- c) Development shall not adversely affect heritage assets within the settlement, including their settings.
- d) There should be safe access for vehicles, and parking arrangements should not detract from the street scene but be an integral part of the overall design.
- e) Provision should be made for storm water drainage on site and should not lead to or increase flooding of other properties and the highway.
- f) Special attention shall be given to ensuring foul/waste water drainage does not cause pollution, affect the amenity of other land or properties, or the integrity of any important wildlife habitats.

- 8.6 Woonton is a small hamlet with no facilities or services. It had not previously been a location for housing development and was considered open countryside and has never previously had a settlement boundary defined for it. Although its inclusion within Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy policy RA2, table 4.15 indicates that it might now accommodate new housing development, the policies requirements are such that it should be proportionate growth, and must respect its form, layout, character and setting. However, there have been a number of recent planning permissions granted that will provide 9 new dwellings in locations that pay no regard to proportionality or the design requirements. A redevelopment opportunity advanced **through the NDP 'Call for Sites'** has arisen that would create environmental benefits, including enhancing the setting of Pool Common. Only limited infill opportunities exist within this boundary given the design requirements for the hamlet which has a form based upon relatively low density individually designed properties associated with a number of historic farmsteads and individual cottages of varying scale and juxtaposition. The settlement boundary reflects the current built up area of the hamlet; the need to retain its character, scale, form, layout and setting; the areas granted planning permission and redevelopment opportunity; and these meet the current requirement to provide for the social well-being of the settlement. Developers will be required to pay particular attention to ensuring foul/waste water drainage can be accommodated satisfactorily, given the presence of a high water table and poor soil porosity. Unless Best Available Technology can be shown to be capable of accommodating development effluent to avoid causing pollution or adverse effects on amenity, then proposals will not be able

to proceed.

## Policy ALM12: Redevelopment of Land at Woonton Farm

Land amounting to some 0.55 hectares (1.35 acres) on the north side of Woonton Farm comprising a steel framed agricultural building and former brickyard and identified on Woonton Policies Map, is allocated for redevelopment for housing provided, in addition to meeting criteria listed in policy ALM11, the design, materials, landscaping and boundary treatment can be shown not to adversely affect the setting of Pool Common that forms a village green in front of Pool House, but results in an enhancement to its setting.

- 8.7 This site comprises a steel framed agricultural building and former brickyard. The first is no longer required as part of the agricultural holding and the second represents brownfield land and in combination they afford the opportunity for redevelopment that would enhance the character and appearance of the hamlet. **The site's current** use previously generated some traffic and its regeneration to a limited number of houses will have a marginal effect on the adjacent Lane. The criteria in policy ALM11 will cover most development requirements. However, its proximity to Pool Common requires a sensitive design to protect the rural setting of this part of the hamlet, including screening any external domestic infrastructure. The contribution this site will make to the required level of proportional growth is expected to be 5 dwellings, **representing the landowner's current intention.** The need to respect the attractive character of the hamlet suggests a low-density appearance.

## Policy ALM13: Residential Use Associated with Historic Farmsteads

Sensitively designed housing development of buildings comprising Historic Farmsteads, especially those within the hamlets of Almeley Wootton, Hopley's Green, Upcott and Logaston, will be supported. New dwellings associated with such farmsteads, where these respect the historic character of the complex, will be supported where the proposal comprises:

- (a) single or multiple dwellings to meet a local need for affordable housing, such as key-worker accommodation;
- (b) enabling development that would ensure the retention or repair of one or more designated heritage assets;
- (c) a combination of live and work units of an appropriate scale to the farmstead complex; or
- (d) the re-instatement of the form and layout of a historic complex of buildings identified by Herefordshire Historic Farmstead Characterisation Project where the design of the proposal is of exceptional quality or innovative nature.

- 8.8 Historic England has sponsored a project to characterise the historic farmsteads within the County and it is understood it would like to see a positive approach to their conservation. Historic farmsteads are particularly important to the local settlement

pattern reflecting its dispersed character. The project has identified that **Herefordshire's** landscape has one of the most intact ancient enclosed landscapes with farmsteads comprising loose courtyard forms within its lowlands and regular courtyard plans on its great estates. The agency promotes designs that will conserve, protect and sustain these forms, protecting their features, settings and cultural significance. Although commons are protected through other legislative provisions, there may occasionally be development requirements that are necessary to support functions on their periphery. These should be carried out sensitively.

- 8.9 The presence of many such farmsteads has already been referred to<sup>14</sup>. The hamlets named are additional settlements as defined in this NDP under Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy RA3. This policy would enable such farmsteads to accommodate affordable housing where there is a particular local need in that location. The need should be identified in consultation with Almeley Parish Council and provision may include intermediate housing as opposed to social rented properties according to the evidence of need collected. It might also be accompanied by an element of market housing where this subsidises the affordable housing.
- 8.10 In addition, the particular character of the Parish should not just be perceived as that set by Almeley village and the hamlet of Woonton. Its rural hinterland comprises a number of small hamlets based on historic farmsteads and it is understood Historic England is keen to see such farmsteads maintained, considering the landscape of Herefordshire to be among the most ancient enclosed landscapes with large arable based farmsteads based on courtyards. Individual free-standing historic farmsteads are also present. Their protection, and that of other heritage assets, might be enabled by allowing some development that would release funds for their repair. In addition, particular patterns of farmsteads were evident in the past and these may have been lost. Their conservation by way of both preservation and enhancement, and through new buildings associated with them must be carefully considered. There are significant issues in terms of re-use and dereliction, so where the form is important, evidence of previous structures may inform change. By utilising information for the Historic Environment Record and County Archive, this may provide an understanding of their heritage value and enable additional buildings to be added based on previous historical layout. These might be presented in a form that would comply with Herefordshire Core Strategy Policy RA3 (6). In addition, high quality schemes that reflect their historic form might also meet the provisions of Paragraph 55 of the National Planning Policy Framework. This historic form, represented by the character and setting of the settlement concerned, should determine both the principle of development and the form it should take.
- 8.11 Achievement of Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy proportional housing growth target does not depend to any great extent upon dwellings resulting from this policy although it may make a small contribution. Its purpose is primarily to achieve benefits to **the Parish's heritage**. Dwellings coming forward through policy ALM13 would be included under the modest estimate for rural windfalls as a reflection of the extent of rural buildings within the Parish.

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14 See Appendix 2

## Policy ALM14: Providing for Local Housing Need

Where affordable or intermediate dwellings are provided or to be retained for that purpose under Section 106 agreements, the priority for their allocation, on the first and all subsequent lettings, should first be given to those demonstrating a local housing need within Almeley Parish. Should at the time of allocation there be nobody with such a connection the accommodation may be allocated to those from the adjacent parishes and subsequently to those within the Kington or Leominster Housing Market Areas, and then Herefordshire.

For the purposes of identifying a local need these shall be:

- (a) Those who live within the Parish.
- (b) Those who have lived within the Parish within the past 6 out of 12 months and 3 out of 5 years.
- (c) Those who work or are coming to work within the Parish.
- (d) Those with an essential need to support or be supported by a current resident within the Parish.

- 8.12 Criteria to ensure local housing needs are met, in particular that of local people unable to compete within the general housing market, should apply to dwellings provided for that purpose. Those set out in this policy are considered generally consistent with the approach adopted across Herefordshire. Developers are encouraged to assist in meeting local housing needs and may wish to provide such housing, even should sites fall beneath the threshold set by Government for this purpose. There is significant support for self-build dwellings within this Parish and it is hoped that elements of such provision can be included upon sites that will address local needs. This approach increases flexibility within the local housing market to the benefit of the wider community.

## 9 Parish Infrastructure

- 9.1 The ability of certain infrastructure to cope with growth remains a local concern, particularly in relation to the local highway network, water supply, drainage and high-speed broadband. In terms of local services and community facilities that are important to the health and well-being of the community, these are limited. Although limited in potential, policies aimed at safeguarding or enhancing infrastructure, services and facilities are considered necessary.

### Policy ALM15: Highway Requirements

Development proposals should ensure:

- a) There is safe access onto the adjacent roads, and this should not adversely affect existing pedestrian movement;
- b) Proposals would not result in on-street parking but should provide adequate parking for residents and visitors;
- c) Proposals should not lead to a significant increase in speed or the volume of traffic travelling through the parish on roads that do not have sufficient capacity.
- d) Residential and environmental amenity is not adversely affected by traffic;
- e) There is no adverse effect upon the highway, Public Rights of Way network or adjacent properties from storm water drainage flowing along any roads or parking areas; and
- f) Proposals should not lead to the urbanisation of the village and hamlets within the Parish by requiring street lighting.

Proposals that cannot meet the above requirements will not be permitted.

- 9.2 This policy is for development management purposes and sets out the highway criteria which developers will need to comply with to receive planning permission. The need to ensure the safety of all users of the highway and to promote sustainable transport is recognised although the ability to promote active travel is limited by the limited footpaths general absence of any cycleways to connect to. This policy supplements design policies set out ALM6 and ALM7.

### Policy ALM16: Sewage and Sewerage Infrastructure

Should there be a temporary lack of capacity at Eardisley WwTWs the development of sites within Almeley village may need to be delayed until such time as works are carried out to provide sufficient sewage treatment capacity. Developers may be required to contribute towards remedial works to the WwTWs to expedite measures to address any under-capacity to advance their proposals more swiftly.

- 9.3 This policy is considered consistent with Herefordshire Core Strategy policy SD4 given the particular circumstances at Eardisley WwTWs, to which sewerage from Almeley village is pumped. Dwr Cymru/Welsh Water has identified works may be necessary although they are not in its current programme. The review of the programme will

consider whether such works may be included in the 2020-2025 period. There may, as a consequence, be a temporary shortfall depending upon development rates within the WwTWs catchment and this is a precautionary policy. There are understood to be no current problems with the mains sewer. It is understood that where foul drainage can be connected to the village sewerage system, alternative arrangements should be avoided, and it is understood the Environment Agency would object to such arrangements in any event. For development that cannot connect to the village sewerage system, appropriate provision for the treatment of foul drainage should be utilised in accordance with Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy policy SD4. This will include development in Woonton, and care will be needed to ensure no pollution will arise from this source. The absence of any public sewer and treatment works at Woonton remains a concern in view of the high water table and poor soil porosity with the potential for foul/waste water to cause pollution. Policy ALM11 includes a specific requirement for development to address this issue.

## Policy ALM17: Protection from Flood Risk

New development in areas at risk of flooding shall be subject to the Flood **Risk 'sequential' and 'exception' tests set** out in the National Planning Policy Framework and Herefordshire LPCS Policy SD3. Where other forms of development are necessary in areas at risk of flooding full and effective mitigation measures must be provided. No development will be permitted that will result in increased flood risk to properties elsewhere.

Development should not cause or increase surface/storm water flooding or risk of pollution. With specific regard to development at Woonton, appropriate evidence should be provided that foul and storm water drainage can be accommodated without causing pollution or flooding to properties and land. In addressing the management of drainage, developers should ensure any proposed scheme that meets the above requirement is fully implemented before development is brought into use. Opportunities to address existing storm flooding problems should be taken where available.

Where flood risk is identified as an issue, developers shall undertake full and detailed flood risk assessments, including taking into account climate change, to inform decisions on planning applications.

Where the management of drainage needs to be addressed, developers should utilise or contribute to sustainable drainage systems (SUDs) where this is practicable, including measures to support biodiversity.

- 9.4 Few areas where development might be expected within the Parish fall within areas identified by the Environment Agency to be at risk of flooding. Such areas are primarily in the south of the Parish and most likely to affect limited small-scale development in the countryside. This reinforces Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy Policy SD3.
- 9.5 Surface water run-off is a greater problem, including from fields and the highway.

There is a particular problem in Woonton where flooding has occurred occasionally in the past. It is therefore important that storm water drainage from development does not increase the level of run off and that these reflect greenfield flows. Evidence that the water table is close to the surface is such that exploratory work should be undertaken to inform planning decisions and ensure storm and foul water can be disposed of satisfactorily. Consequently, developers should ensure sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) are utilised so that run-off levels and pollution control is acceptable. Such systems can have biodiversity benefits and measures to benefit wildlife are to be encouraged. It may be that solutions to potential problems would involve serving existing properties through combined arrangements.



Figure 13: Almeley Village Hall

## Policy ALM18: Protection and Enhancement of Community Facilities and Services

Existing community facilities and services shall be retained and protected from development that might restrict unreasonably their current use. The retention of key facilities will be supported where possible through enabling development that would enhance their viability.

Proposals to enhance existing or provide new or additional community facilities and services within the Parish will be supported where they comply with other policies in this plan.

The loss of key services or facilities through the change of use of premises to an alternative will not be supported unless it is clear that the service or facility concerned is no longer viable or an alternative is provided to meet the community's needs.

- 9.6 The valued community facilities to be protected include Almeley Primary School, the **Bell's public house, the village hall and Spearmarsh Common Cricket Pitch**. Their utility and effectiveness should not be reduced through, for example locating new development where this might result in calls for restrictions on community use. Currently there are no firm proposals, through sites being identified and funding arranged, for new facilities. It is unlikely that new facilities will be expected to arise during the plan period as a consequence of growth although this should not be discounted and improvements to those that exist may be sought. This policy enables sites and proposals to be brought forward in the future subject to appropriate safeguards.

## Policy ALM19: Contributions to Community Services, Youth Provision and Recreation Facilities

Where appropriate new development within Almeley Parish should contribute towards necessary community infrastructure in order to address the demands that such development places on the area and to support the social dimension of sustainable development. Contributions should be made through Section 106 Agreements, CIL or other developer contribution mechanisms that may be available during the period of the Plan.

- 9.7 Increasing demands resulting from growth will put pressure upon existing facilities, requiring their enhancement and improvement to ensure continued performance of their function. Additional facilities may also be required. Herefordshire Council intends to introduce a charging system for the Community Infrastructure Levy during the plan period. Currently it operates a system for related payments through Planning Obligations. The pressure from growth will have effects upon community infrastructure such as Almeley village hall, Spearmarsh Common and associated car parking. Contributions should be made towards their improvement either through the CIL process, should this come into operation, or in accordance with sections 3.4 and 3.9 of Herefordshire **Council's** Supplementary Planning Document on Planning Obligations, in particular, paragraphs 3.4.8. and 3.9.12. The ability to use CIL contributions for wider purposes will also be possible after its introduction. The Parish Council will use the contribution it receives from either of these sources primarily to ensure its existing facilities are improved, maintained or capable of meeting increased pressures in accordance with the legislative requirements. Herefordshire Council should seek advice from the Parish Council upon what contributions are needed towards local community facilities and infrastructure at the time any relevant planning application is made.
- 9.8 In relation to open space provision associated with new development Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy polices OS1 to OS3 are considered relevant although it is recognised that currently there are no adopted standards and consequently it is felt that for development within Almeley Parish, developers should take into account the **'Fields in Trust' Guidance for Outdoor Sport and Play**<sup>15</sup>.

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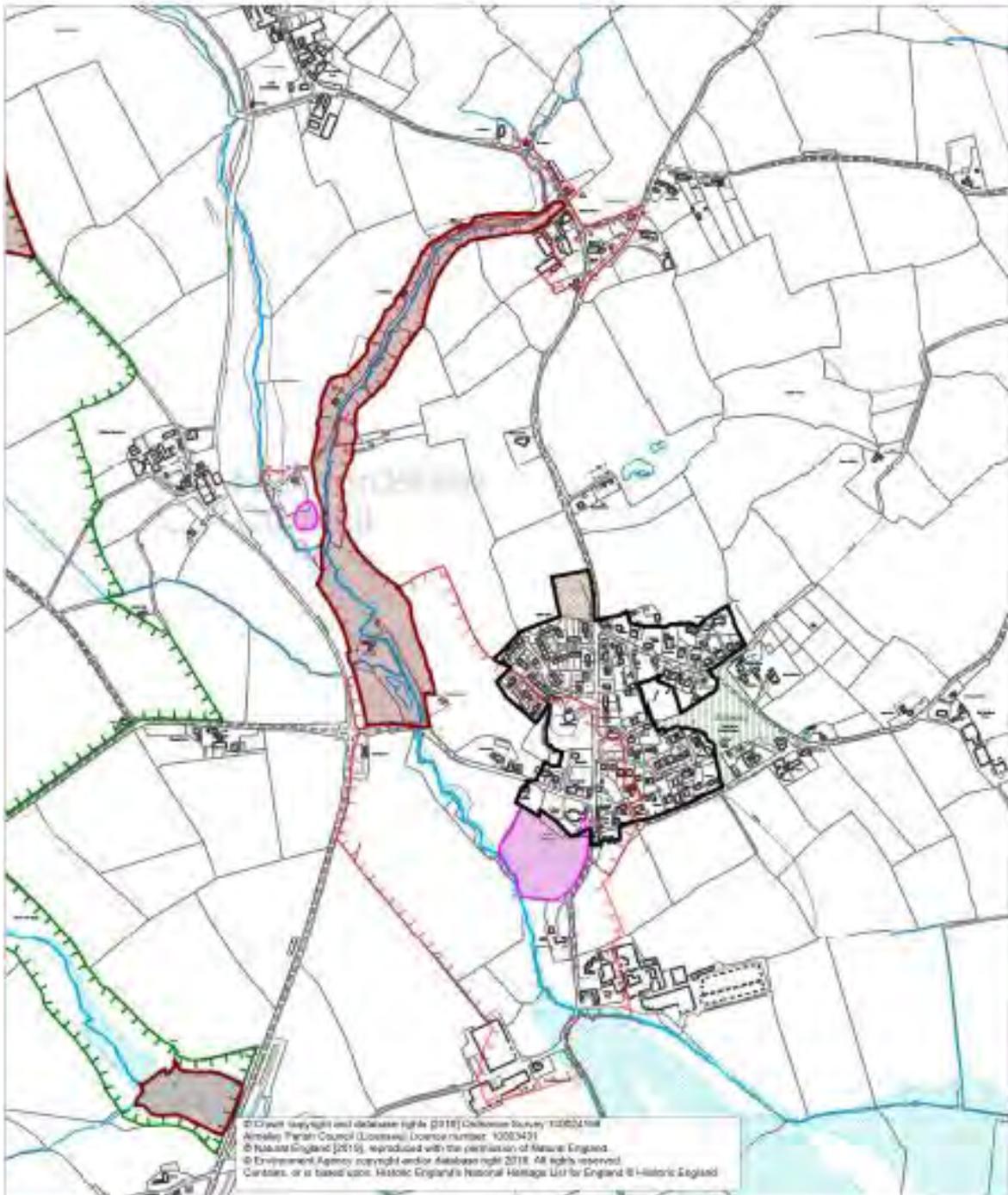
15 <http://www.fieldsintrust.org/Upload/toolkit/pdfs/Guidance-for-Outdoor-Sport-and-Play-Oct-2015.pdf>  
Almeley Parish Neighbourhood Development Plan 2011-2031 January 2019

## 10 Delivering the Plan

- 10.1 **Almeley NDP will run concurrently with Herefordshire District Council's Core Strategy** and apply until 31 March 2031. The Plan covers a range of developments covering social, environmental, economic and employment needs. Although the needs and aspiration of the local community have been understood today, it is acknowledged that changes may occur during the Plan period. Almeley Parish Council will be responsible for monitoring the effectiveness of this NDP on an annual basis and revisiting the Plan to ensure its continued relevance to the community.
- 10.2 Landowners and developers will deliver most of the proposals that are expected to come forward through policies in this Neighbourhood Plan.
- 10.3 Almeley Neighbourhood Plan will be implemented primarily through Herefordshire Council as the local planning authority determining planning applications for development within the Parish. Such determinations should be in accordance with this Plan.
- 10.4 While the local planning authority will be responsible for development management, Almeley Parish Council will also use this Neighbourhood Plan as the basis for making its representations on planning applications. In considering all planning applications within Almeley Parish, the Parish Council will use this NDP as the basis for determining the advice it gives to Herefordshire Council. The Planning Authority will determine planning applications in accordance with policies in this NDP unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The Parish Council will publicise those planning applications that are not covered by policies in this Neighbourhood Plan or depart from it so that the community is able to respond appropriately. In both instances and where necessary, Herefordshire Council will be asked to extend the time within which responses are required so that publicity can be given before the Parish Council considers the proposal.
- 10.5 Herefordshire Council is required to monitor the achievement of its targets for a range of development types including any sites that may come forward for development. The Parish Council will also monitor the effectiveness of the approach it has taken to the various issues it has covered in the neighbourhood plan policies. This will be done through its annual report. That report will indicate:
- i. The number of dwellings granted planning permission within the Parish, including a running total covering the plan-period 2011-2031;
  - ii. A list of other planning applications for other matters received during the year indicating whether they are covered by policies in this **Neighbourhood Plan, the Parish Council's representations made, and** whether they have been determined in accordance with the plan.
- 10.6 It is anticipated that a review of the Neighbourhood Plan will be needed, most likely when Herefordshire Core Strategy is also reviewed. In the unlikely situation that the strategy and approach in relation to housing does not deliver the level of housing required to meet the target for the Parish, discussions will take place with Herefordshire Council upon whether an early review is necessary.

- 10.7 **Herefordshire Council's Statement of Community Involvement**<sup>16</sup> recognises that there will be certain developments that will generate public interest and where developers should consult the community before an application is submitted. The Parish Council would urge developers and landowners to consider whether their proposals might generate local interest and if so to instigate discussions with the local community. This may be through the Parish Council or other suitable process, such as a public meeting. In this way, the community is better informed about what is proposed and may be able to offer advice that would improve a proposal **to everyone's benefit**. Almeley Parish Council may assist landowners and developers to identify groups and individuals who may be affected and advise upon appropriate consultation arrangements.
- 10.8 Almeley Parish Council is seeking to obtain land, including the vesting of commons, through asset transfers from Herefordshire Council, and may seek funds through Policy ALM19 to secure improvements and enhancements, particularly where this will benefit amenity and biodiversity. Should Herefordshire Council introduce the Community Infrastructure Levy, then this may also produce funds that would also contribute towards the operation and maintenance of community infrastructure. Almeley Parish Council will, from time to time, consider what projects for new or improvement of existing facilities are required to support the community as a consequence of growth required by Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy. **Other forms of potential funding will also be investigated, and this will be in association with relevant local organisations. A detailed list of appropriate projects to support growth will be maintained and updated as required in order to inform relevant heads of agreement where Herefordshire Council proposes to enter into planning obligations with developers.**

# ALMELEY VILLAGE POLICIES MAP

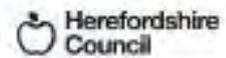


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- |   |   |
|---|---|
|  Land liable to Flood                |  Proposed Housing Site (ALM10) |
|  Conservation Area                   |  Local Wildlife Site (LWS)     |
|  Almeley Settlement Boundary (ALM8)  |  Scheduled Ancient Monuments   |
|  Local Green Space (ALM4 a)          |   |
|  Registered Historic Parks & Gardens |   |

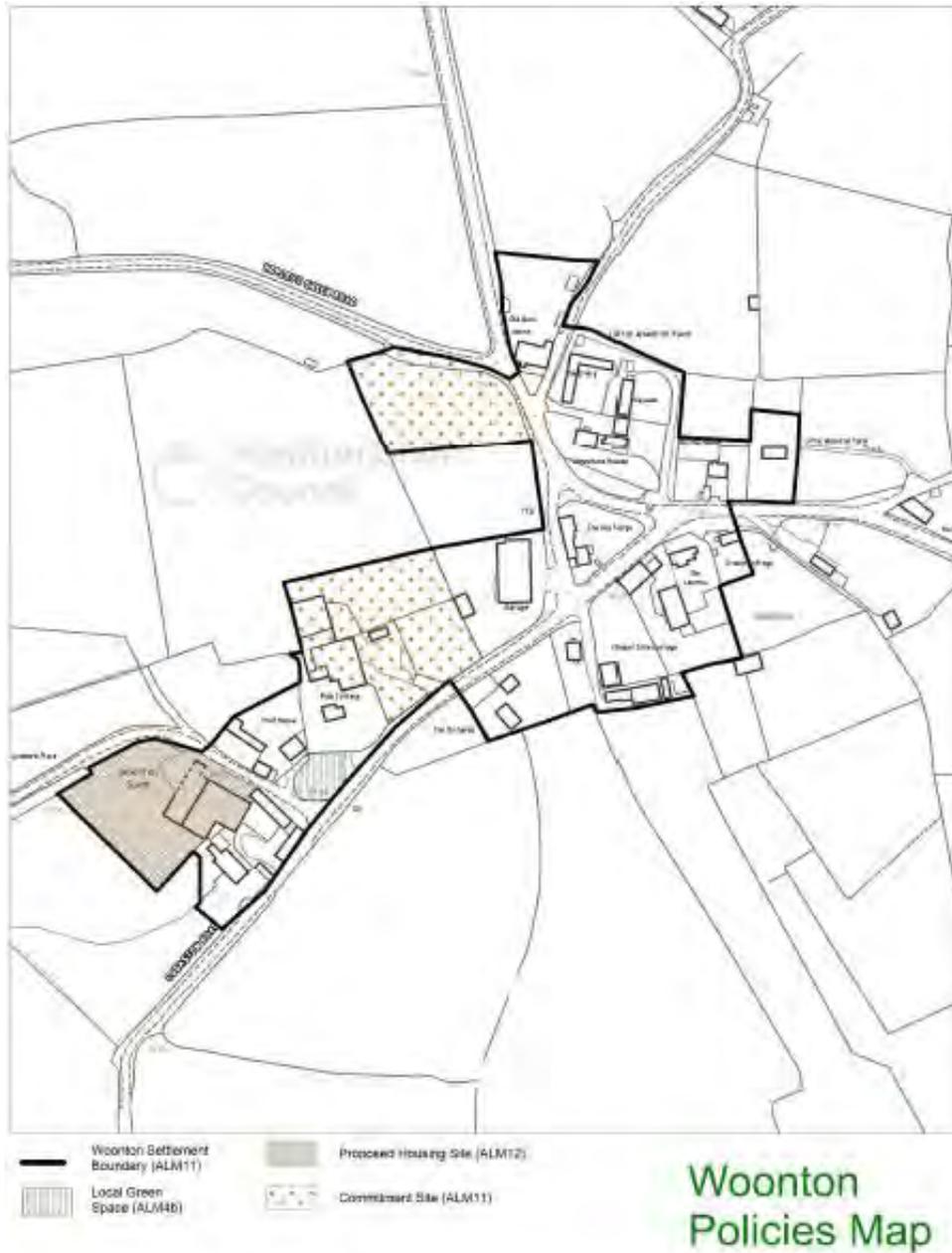
## Almeley Policies Map

Scale 1:8,500  
at A4 size



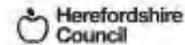
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# WOONTON POLICIES MAP



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 at A4 size



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# Appendix 1: Almeley Conservation Area – Assessment of Character and Appearance

- A1.1 This Assessment has been prepared to support Almeley Neighbourhood Development Plan, both in its preparation and the interpretation of its policies so far as they apply to the requirement to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of Almeley Conservation Area.
- A1.2 Herefordshire Council has prepared a draft Conservation Area Appraisal and this statement is based substantially upon that. It is considered that this Assessment is consistent with that Appraisal and should be a material consideration when considering proposals within the Conservation Area, having been consulted upon through the neighbourhood plan preparation process.
- A1.3 Almeley Conservation Area can be divided into a number of character areas for the purposes of describing those elements that contribute towards its importance. The character areas are based upon identifying their historic origins and group value of those heritage assets which contribute towards its special character. A simple characterisation<sup>17</sup> has been undertaken in accordance with good practice relating to neighbourhood plans produced by Heritage England<sup>18</sup>. The broad character areas are shown on Diagram 1 and comprise:
- Almeley Village
  - Rural Southern Edge
  - The Batch
  - Almeley Wootton



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Diagram 1 – Almeley Conservation Area – Character Areas

17 Approach based upon English Heritage advocacy of Rapid Townscape Assessments.  
18 English Heritage - [http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20140328084622/http://cdn.environment-agency.gov.uk/LIT\\_6524\\_7da381.pdf](http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20140328084622/http://cdn.environment-agency.gov.uk/LIT_6524_7da381.pdf)  
and <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110118095356/http://www.cabe.org.uk/files/character-and-identity.pdf>  
Almeley Parish Neighbourhood Development Plan 2011-2031 Consultation Draft Plan – November 2017

## *Almeley Village*

- A1.4 Only a small proportion of Almeley Conservation Area comprises buildings and their curtilages, and an even smaller proportion sits **within Almeley's settlement boundary**. The density of development within that part of the village falling within the Conservation Area is lower than that within the village development outside. The character of this part of the conservation area is formed significantly by its present density and there is no capacity to accommodate other than minor extensions to properties where these can satisfy the test of maintaining the character and appearance of the area, or such other requirements, for example in relation to Listed Buildings.
- A1.5 Almeley Village conservation area is the southern-most part of the village, and the largest of the four character areas. This area is predominantly rural; it includes several large fields given over to pasture and includes the oldest part of the village. Within the area there are seven listed buildings and one scheduled ancient monument, Almeley Castle, which survives as an earthwork monument only. The earliest standing building is the parish church of St Mary (Grade I Listed) dating to the 13th and 14<sup>th</sup> Century. The earliest secular building, the Castle Frome barn, dates possibly to the 14th Century. This timber-framed building of cruck construction may have been built as a hall. The barn, also a Listed Building, is now part of Castle Frome House. Other timber-framed houses, dating to the 16th or 17th Century, include Almeley Manor (Grade II\* Listed), The Old Shop and Manor Cottage. Agricultural buildings (barns) dating to the 17th and 18th Century were built of sandstone rubble with weather-boarded timber frame and pitched roof. These include Church House Barn and Bridge Farm Barn (both Listed).
- A1.6 Changes in design and materials are observed in houses dating to the 18th or early 19th Century. Almeley House (Listed) is dated to the late 18<sup>th</sup>/early 19th Century and an imposing three-storey brick house. It is symmetrical in design with a central gable and outer hipped roofs. Church House appears to be of 18th or early 19th Century construction. This Georgian two-storey house is symmetrical in design with rendered front elevation where the central bay breaks forward, and with a shallow hipped roof.
- A1.7 Three notable 19th Century buildings include The Old Vicarage, The Whittern Farmhouse and the railway station. They are built of stone and slate. The availability and popularity of these materials is due to the construction of the railway (and the earlier tramway).
- A1.8 The earthworks marking the site of Almeley Castle lie at the centre of character area. The earthworks take the form of an impressive motte (earthen mound) surrounded by a wide ditch. On the north side of the motte lies the bailey, an open area formerly surrounded by a ditch and bank. On the east side of the castle is the site of two medieval fishponds originally fed by the Wootton Brook. The parish church and churchyard lie immediately to the north, on higher ground. The church and tower are built of sandstone rubble with sandstone dressings and stone slate roofs. The sandstone base and shaft of a cross (possibly of 14th Century date), surmounted by a short oak shaft (17th Century), are in the churchyard. The church and tower provide a focal point for the area. At this location, a sense of space is emphasised by

sweeping views to the south-east, over the tops of trees lining the Wootton Brook, to distant hills. To the south, the view is punctuated by the wooded motte. To the east and north, however, there is a sense of enclosure.

- A1.9 Three buildings crowd onto the Kinnersley Road to the east of the churchyard; all are now residential premises. They include the 17th Century Church House Barn, Church House (18th to early 19th Century) and Motte House, is a former public house. To the north of the churchyard is Almeley House standing immediately behind a high brick wall with wrought iron gates. North of Church House Barn, houses on the Kinnersley Road are more widely spaced. The most prominent is The Old Shop. Further north, on the edge of the character area, is The Old Vicarage, a large stone-built residence constructed c. 1837, standing in extensive grounds and shielded from public view by mature trees and shrubs.
- A1.10 One of the most prominent buildings in the Conservation Area is Almeley Manor, located several hundred metres west of Almeley House. This is a two-storey timber-framed house with brick infill, probably of 15th Century date. The house and grounds are surrounded by agricultural land. To the south, an area of sheep pasture falls quite steeply to the Wootton Brook. A lynchet (terrace) following the contour of the slope indicates that at least part of this area was previously arable.
- A1.11 Two types of boundary treatment are characteristic of the area. In the vicinity of the parish church and Almeley Manor, sandstone rubble walls are prevalent. Elsewhere, mature hedges are used, particularly as field boundaries. Some exceptions can be seen, including the high brick wall in front of Almeley House, and iron railings between the castle field and the extended graveyard.
- A1.12 A number of unlisted buildings and structures make a positive contribution to the special architectural and historical interest of the conservation area. The following are considered to be buildings of local interest:
- The Old Shop: 17th Century or earlier, single storey with attic, sandstone rubble and timber-framed with brick infill, roof raised and enlarged several times;
  - **Manor Cottage: 17th Century of or earlier, single storey, timber-framed** with brick infill, modern extension, replacement windows;
  - **Church House; 18th or early 19th Century**, two-storey house, symmetrical front elevation where the central bay breaks forward, rendered, shallow hipped roof;
  - **The Bells Inn: 18th or early 19th Century**, two-storey, stone built, pitched roof with slate tiles, extended;
  - **Motte House: 19th Century or earlier**, former inn, two-storey, brick and stone construction, steep pitched roof, altered and extended;
- A1.13 Several other features, including street furniture, add to the rural character of the area and promote a sense of continuity. These include:
- **A war memorial: a statue of a soldier set on a plinth in a small garden** with iron railings, located near the parish church;
  - **A wooden bench** with iron frame, and a cast iron pump and trough, on the grass verge near Almeley House;
  - **Two cast iron** direction signs attached to Motte House;

- **A 1930s Automobile Association enamelled sign attached to Church House Barn;**
- **A red cast iron telephone box** (an information point) near The Old Rectory.

### *Rural Southern Edge*

A1.14 South of Motte House, the area has a very rural character separated from the main village by a noticeable gap. The Kinnersley Road in this area is a deeply cut hollow way with pasture on either side, including the castle earthworks bordered by mature hedges. On the west side of the road stands Castle Frome farmhouse with a cast-iron pump outside. Two working farms are located at the southern end of the character area, Bridge Farm on the east side of the road with its Grade II Listed barn, and The Whittern Farm on the west side, a symmetrical two storey stone-built farmhouse probably of late 19<sup>th</sup> Century date. The latter has a noticeable wooden railing fence.

### *The Batch*

A1.15 This narrow, steep-sided valley with abundant tree and plant growth is, today, a Special Wildlife Site. Its nature conservation value stems from it being a wooded dingle with rocky outcrops, and a stream with adjoining wet areas. Notable species present include yew, opposite-leaved golden saxifrage and several species of fern. There is one Scheduled Ancient Monument within the character area but no Listed Buildings. A public footpath with several small bridges follows the valley floor beside a fast-flowing stream. A driveway gives access to Batch Cottage from the south end of The Batch. A trackway gives access to other cottages in the valley from the north end.

A1.16 **The landscape of The Batch has the appearance of 'Wild Nature', and a sense of intimacy and enclosure is pervasive.** The Oldcastle Twt (Scheduled Monument) survives as a small steep-sided hill thickly covered in trees and shrubs with streams flowing around two sides. Very little obvious evidence remains of the industrial activities of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

A1.17 Cottages and gardens dotted along the valley add to the charm of the character area. They also promote a feeling of remoteness that may bring to mind the hardship of rural life in previous centuries, particularly at the time of the enclosure of common open fields.

A1.18 The course of the dismantled railway line extends along the western edge of the character area. The small stone railway station and platform (now a private residence) are located alongside, and the stone piers of the dismantled railway bridge are located a short distance to the north. The area is predominantly agricultural pasture.

A1.19 Several unlisted cottages make a positive contribution to the special architectural and historical interest of the conservation area. The following are considered to be buildings of local interest:

- **Batch Cottage:** 17th Century, single-storey with dormer windows, timber-framed, steep pitched roof, may have originally been thatched, altered and extended;
- **Ross Cottage:** 17th or 18th Century, two-storey, sandstone rubble and light timber frame, stone chimney at north gable, steep pitched roof, may have originally been thatched.

- **Railway Station, platform and bridge piers: 19th Century, stone built, station** is single storey, brick stack, pitched roof, slate tiles, outshut building partially demolished.

### *Almeley Wootton*

- A1.20 Almeley Wootton is the northern-most part of the conservation area, and the smallest of the four character areas. It consists of a cluster of buildings—residential, agricultural and ecclesiastical—set in an agricultural landscape that extends beyond the conservation area. The character area contains five listed buildings or features.
- A1.21 The character of the area is essentially rural. There are no broad vistas or focal points. The narrow country roads lined by mature hedges generate a sense of intimacy and enclosure. Generally, the buildings are effectively screened by trees and hedges, and can only be seen from the immediate vicinity.
- A1.22 The most prominent building is Summer House, which is a Listed Building, a two-storey timber-framed/brick infill farmhouse whose gables can be seen just above the hedgerows from the east. Its cobbled yard in front of the farmhouse contributes significantly to the historic setting of the buildings. The Friends Meeting House, also Listed, stands nearby, and continues the timber-frame construct that that plays an important role in the historic landscape Almeley Wootton. The Malthouse, again **another of the hamlet’s Listed Buildings, stands opposite** the Summer House Farm site. This single-storey building, with 19th Century cast iron pump and mature hedges and plantings, is fairly unobtrusive. The sandstone rubble boundary wall has an attractive texture that, together with its overhanging plants, enhances the rustic appeal of the area.
- A1.23 On the north-east side of the area is an unexpected Victorian influence. The red-brick Methodist Chapel and Ladylift Villa, both with polychrome dressings and brick boundary walls, add to a sense of historical continuity.
- A1.24 The characteristic boundary treatments of this area are mature hedges and sandstone rubble walls. Brick walls can also be seen at Summer House, the Methodist Chapel and Ladylift Villa. All contribute to the rustic charm of the character area.
- A1.25 Two unlisted buildings or structures make a positive contribution to the special architectural and historical interest of the conservation area. The following are considered to be buildings of local interest:
- **Methodist Church: 19th Century**, brick with sandstone and polychrome brick dressings, steep pitched roof, brick boundary wall at front entrance;
  - **Telephone Box: 1930s, cast iron, painted red, K6 design by George Gilbert Scott**
- A1.26 Several items of street furniture add to the rural character of the area and promote a sense of continuity. These include:
- **The red cast iron 1930s telephone box, near The Malthouse;**
  - **A red cast iron Victorian post box set in the boundary wall of Summer House.**

### *Prevalent Building Materials and Local Details*

A1.27 The buildings of Almeley are constructed of two vernacular styles and materials. In Almeley village there is a concentration of stone buildings that would appear to date from the 18th and 19th centuries although the church is much earlier. The other style which is predominant throughout the area is that of timber framed buildings which follow the English vernacular developments from the 15th century onwards although there is possibly some Welsh influence due to its proximity to the Welsh border. The occasional brick building with typical 19th century detailing can be found in both Almeley and Almeley Wootton.

### *Other Conservation Area Issues*

A1.28 **Herefordshire Council's draft appraisal identified a number of locations where** revisions to the Conservation Area boundary might take place. These include:

- Including Spearmarsh Common – this is an important open space and was a significant component of the medieval farming system. Encroachment of the common by cottages and gardens probably took place during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries, and the pattern of encroachment is still evident today in the layout of houses and gardens, and paddocks. A number of 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> Century cottages occupy original plots.
- The boundary might be re-aligned to follow recognisable boundaries without any significant loss to the Conservation where it:
  - (i) crosses a field to the east of the Eardisley Road
  - (ii) cuts through Bridge Farm
  - (iii) crosses a field south of The Whittern Farm.
- **Excluding the small area** of modern housing on the north side of the village where a small part of a housing development encroaches into the conservation area. It is not in character with the conservation area. At the same time the Victorian coach house of the Old Vicarage might be included.
- **The boundary.** There is some confusion over the actual alignment of the boundary in the vicinity of the Bells Public House which was defined before the houses at Bells Orchard were built. This should be clarified to include the Bells Public House and all its curtilage, and to follow a realistic and rational boundary that is visible on the ground.
- **At Almeley Wootton, it is suggested that re-aligning the boundary be re-aligned to include Green Common, and The Green House and water pump.**

A1.29 Discussions with Herefordshire Council to review the Conservation Area boundary in the light of these boundary issues might usefully be undertaken.

## Appendix 2: List of Heritage and Natural Assets

### HERITAGE ASSETS

#### *Listed Buildings*

Grade I: Buildings of national importance and exceptional interest.

- **Church of St Mary, Almeley**

Grade II\*: Particularly important buildings of more than special interest.

- **Almeley Manor**, Almeley
- **Friends' Meeting House**, Almeley Wootton

Grade II: Buildings of Special Interest

- Churchyard Cross, Almeley
- Almeley House, Almeley
- Nieuport House Park and Garden, Almeley
- Pump 20 yards east-south-east of Almeley House
- Barn attached to north side of Bridge Farmhouse, Almeley
- Castle Frome, Almeley
- Pump 3 yards north of Castle Frome
- Church House Barn, Almeley
- The Malthouse, Almeley Wootton
- Summer Wootton, Almeley Wootton
- Barn 10 yards west of Summer House
  
- Crispin Cottage, Woonton
- Ferney House, Woonton
- Pool House, Woonton
- Oak Hall, Woonton (previously Rose Cottage)
- Old Forge, Woonton
- Woonton Farmhouse, Woonton
- Logaston Common Farmhouse and barn, Logaston
- Little Logaston Cottage, Logaston
- Rosemary Cottage, Logaston
- Little Upcott Cottage, Upcott
- Lower Upcott Farmhouse, Upcott
- Hopley's Green Farm Barn, Hopley's Green
- Lower Sticks and Barns, Woonton
- Barn near Meer Common, Woonton
- New House Barn

#### *Scheduled Monuments*

- **Oldcastle Twt**
- **Almeley Castle**

## *Herefordshire Sites and Monuments Record*

- Churchyard Cross, Almeley
- Manor House, Almeley
- **Almeley Castle**
- **Oldcastle Twt**, The Batch
- Vaynor House, Almeley
- **Castle Frome, Almeley**
- **Summer House, Almeley Wootton**
- **Fishponds, Almeley Castle**
- **St Mary's Church, Almeley**
- **Neolithic Axe (find)**, Almeley
- Romano-British Pottery (find), Almeley
- Post-medieval House, Almeley
- **Shrunken Village, Almeley**
- **Mill (site), Almeley**
- Church House, Almeley
- **Almeley Station, Almeley**
- **The Vicarage, Almeley**
- **Primitive Methodist Chapel, Almeley Wootton**
- **Friends' Meeting House, Almeley Wootton**
- **Brick Kilns, The Batch**
- **Mill Leat, Almeley**
- **The Malthouse, Almeley Wootton**

## *Historic Farmsteads*

The following are recorded within the Parish as part of the Herefordshire Historic Farmstead Characterisation Project within Herefordshire Historic Environment Record and are therefore considered to be of local importance (NB some may contain **buildings that are 'Listed'**):

The Stocks  
Lower Upcott, Almeley  
Lower Wootton Farm, Almeley  
Tan House, Almeley  
Station View Farm (Old Castle)  
Woonton Farm  
Peartree  
Box Bush  
Sunnymead  
Corner House  
Spearmarsh Cottage  
The Old Villa  
Rainbow Cottage  
Little Woonton Farm  
Bridge Farm  
New House Farm  
Logaston Common Farm  
Upcott

Brick House Farm  
Meer Farm  
Logaston Farm

*Registered and Unregistered Parks and Gardens*

Nieuport (Registered)  
Broxwood Court (Registered)  
Lemore (Unregistered)

*Other Buildings of Local Interest*

Some buildings of local interest are listed in Appendix 1 within the Conservation Area Assessment. Further such buildings may be identified from time to time through assessments of historic and architectural character, historical association, group value, features and detailing.

NATURAL ASSETS

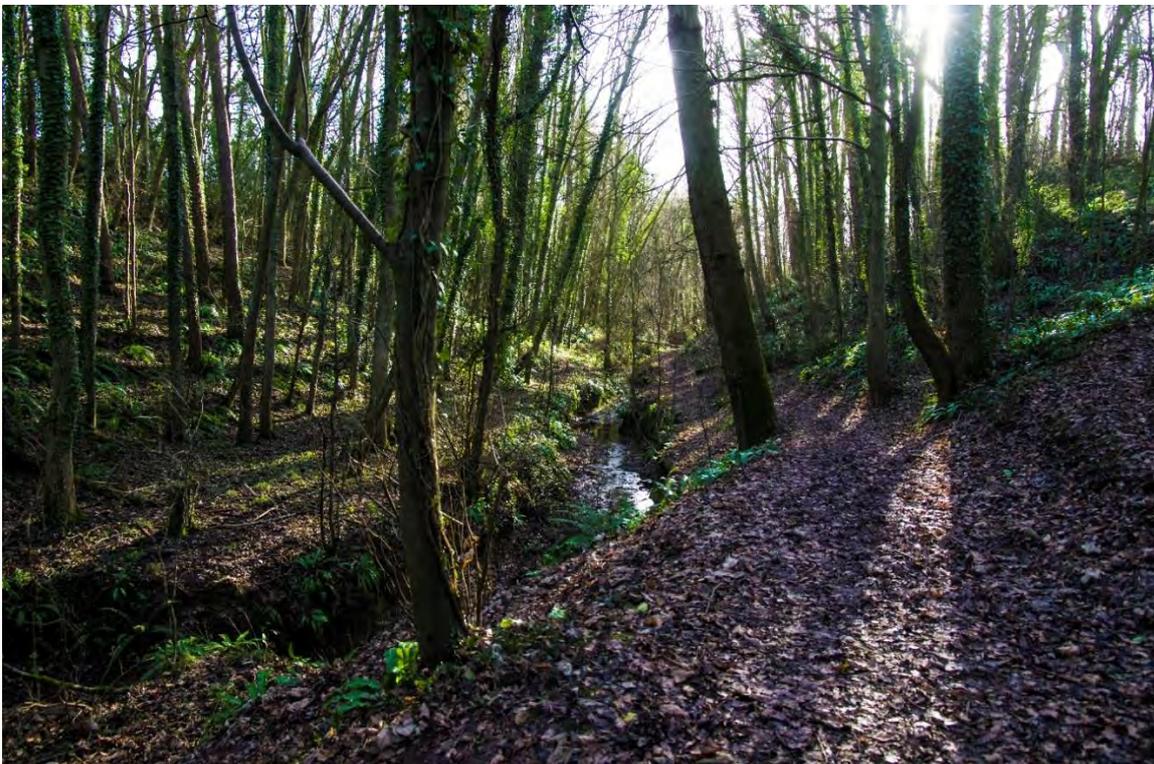


Figure 14: The Batch, Almeley

*There are no national or internationally designated sites within the Parish*

*Local Sites*

Highmoor Wood  
Holywell Dingle  
Pool near Old Castle  
Pool near Upcott  
Hopleys Green Common  
Land at Rose Cottage

The Batch  
Pool near Shawl Farm

*Ancient Woodlands*

Highmoor Wood  
Longclose Coppice  
Pennsylvania Wood  
Buttington Wood  
Rough Moors  
Unlabelled plot of land by Holywell Dingle

*Parish Commons*

**Hopley's Green Common**

Spearmarsh Common  
Tan House Green Common  
Tomkins Green  
Meer Common  
Logaston Common  
Pool Common (once a pond)  
The Green at Almeley Wootton

*Dingles*

The Batch  
Cokes Yeld Dingle  
Holywell Dingle

The above natural assets and location of traditional orchards can be seen on an ordnance survey base at:  
<http://almeleypc.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Almeley-Parish-Council-Nature-Conservation-Plan-June-2018.pdf>