Herefordshire Local Plan

Core Strategy 2011 – 2031

October 2015

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1.0 Introduction and Background

The Local Plan

1.1 The council has prepared a **Local Plan** to guide development and change in the county up to 2031. The Local Plan is made up of a number of documents including the Core Strategy. A list of all the Local Plan documents and the timetable for their preparation are set out in the Local Development Scheme.

1.2 The Local Plan, in addition to dealing with the use of land, considers how the area functions and how different parts of the county should develop or change over the next 20 years in response to key issues, such as the need to:

- deliver more, better quality homes (especially affordable homes) to meet growing needs in this 'high house price' compared to 'average income' area;

- deliver improved infrastructure to support economic development and a growing population;

- promote a thriving local economy with successful city, town and village centres and provide sufficient employment land to meet business needs and provide higher incomes through a wider range of better quality jobs;

- protect, conserve and enhance valued natural, historic and built environments, including areas of outstanding natural beauty, special areas of conservation, open spaces as well as the county's intrinsic attractive character;

- address issues arising from an ageing population and the reducing younger age population;

- meet the challenge of climate change and adapt to its impacts such as increased risk of flooding and air pollution;

- create places that actively promote and enable healthy lifestyles;

- achieve sustainable development and reduce reliance on the private car whilst accepting the sparsely populated nature of the area and difficulty communities have in accessing services.

1.3 Working in partnership with other agencies that operate in the county is a key element of delivering the Local Plan. The Local Plan needs to show how the strategies for various sectors such as housing, employment, transport, retail, education, health, culture, recreation and climate change inter-relate and how they are likely to shape and affect different parts of the county.

The Core Strategy

1.4 This first document in the production of the Local Plan is the Core Strategy. This is a very important part of the Local Plan because it shapes future development and sets the overall strategic planning framework for the county. The Core Strategy needs to balance environmental issues with economic and social needs and ensure that development is sustainable and does not cause irreversible harm to important resources and features. It sets a vision, closely aligned with the *Herefordshire Sustainable Community Strategy, June 2010*, as to how the county should look and function and how development needs will be met up to 2031.

1.5 The Core Strategy does not allocate land directly, but proposes broad strategic directions for growth in sustainable locations. A Hereford Area Plan and other Development Plan Documents (DPD) and Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDP) are proposed to follow the Core Strategy and will allocate large, medium and small sites to meet the identified development requirements for the county. Figure 1.1 shows how the Core Strategy forms part of the Local Plan and how it relates to other planning documents and the *Sustainable Community Strategy*.

1.6 When adopted, the Core Strategy policies will replace most Unitary Development Plan (UDP), 2007 policies. However, some of the policies contained in the previous UDP have been saved (see appendix 1) and will remain in force until replaced by other Development Plan Documents and Neighbourhood Development Plans. Together with the Hereford Area Plan DPD, Minerals and Waste Local Plan, Travellers' Sites Document (DPD) and other Development Plan Documents and Neighbourhood Development Plans, the Core Strategy will form the statutory "development plan" for Herefordshire. A Policies Map sets out the strategic designations in the county.

1.7 The Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) referred to in Figure 1.1 will be supporting documents which add to or expand upon policies e.g. the policy on infrastructure contributions, but do not include site allocations. They are subject to public consultation, but are not formally examined.

Figure 1.1 - The structure of the Herefordshire Local Plan
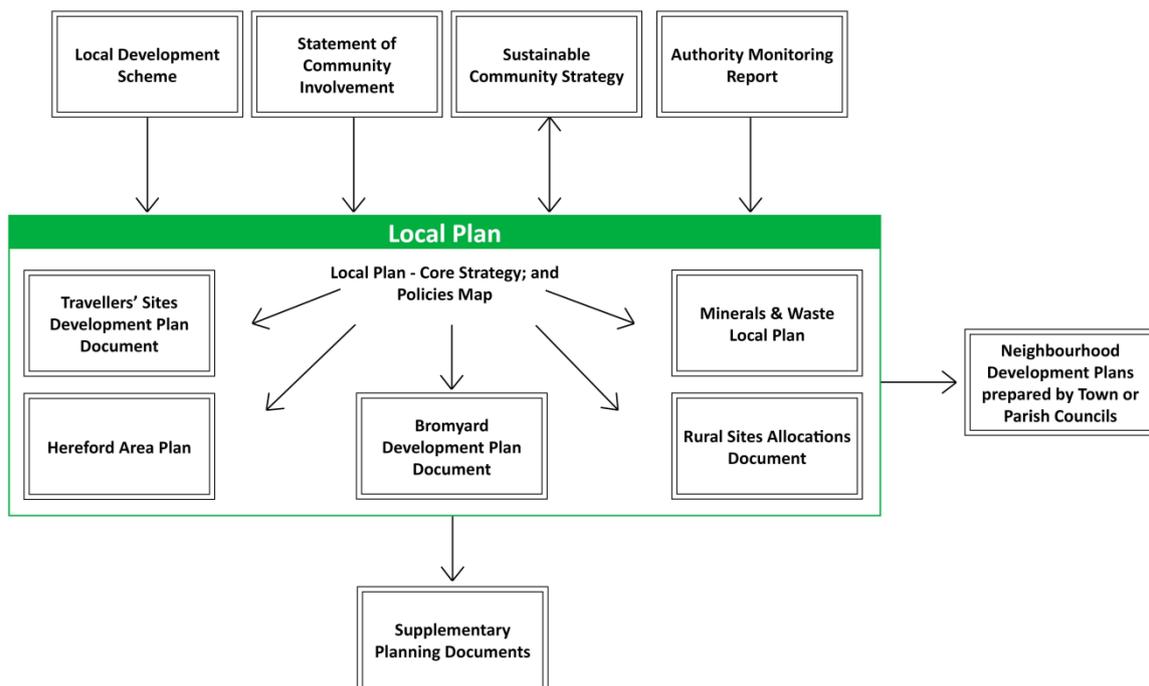
Relationship with other strategies

1.8 Planning policies for Herefordshire have been prepared in the context of national planning guidance set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG). Regard has also been had to other plans and strategies produced by the council and other organisations.

1.9 The principal role of the Core Strategy is to deliver the spatial planning strategy for Herefordshire based on the local characteristics of the area. It is based on the outcomes of the consultations that have taken place, other council plans, programmes and initiatives and also on the findings of the evidence base that has been prepared to support it. It is also underpinned by a Sustainability Appraisal which assessed the social, economic and environmental impacts of the Core Strategy throughout the development of the document and a Habitats Regulations Assessment which has assessed any impacts on protected European sites.

Minerals and Waste

1.10 Minerals and waste policies will be dealt with through a separate Minerals and Waste Local Plan development plan document (DPD). This will be produced taking account of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the minerals and waste sections of Planning Practice Guidance and up to date evidence base studies and ensuring close cooperation with neighbouring local authorities on cross-boundary issues. It will establish targets and planning policies relating to minerals and waste activities and associated development in Herefordshire to cover the plan period to 2031. The timetable for the production of this DPD will be included in a revised Local Development Scheme. Until the Minerals and Waste Local Plan is adopted, the minerals and waste sections of the Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan will be 'saved' and remain in force until replaced by the Minerals and Waste Local Plan.

Gypsies and travellers

1.11 A Herefordshire Travellers' Sites Document (DPD) will set out allocations and planning policies relating to the provision for travellers in the county to cover the plan period to 2031. This DPD is included in the Local Development Scheme.

The Sustainable Community Strategy

1.12 The *Sustainable Community Strategy* (SCS), *2010* sets out a long-term vision for the county up to 2020 and has been developed by the Herefordshire Partnership. The latter comprises a range of local people and organisations, including business groups and public sector bodies. The purpose of the SCS is to set a clear vision and direction focusing on improving the social, economic, and environmental well-being of the area, in addition to providing an overarching framework within which other local strategies will sit. The policies and proposals within the Core Strategy will help to deliver some of the SCS priorities. Equally, the themes from the SCS have helped to guide the strategic objectives of the Core Strategy.

Neighbourhood Development Plans

1.13 With the introduction of Neighbourhood Development Plans through the Localism Act, communities will be positively encouraged to produce their own development plans for their area taking on board the strategic objectives of the Local Plan - Core Strategy. The Core Strategy has been prepared to provide a strategic base for Neighbourhood Development Plans, along with other Development Plan Documents, to allocate sites for employment, housing and other uses as well as providing more locally detailed policies. Neighbourhood Development Plans will form part of the statutory development plan (but not the Local Plan) and be referred to within the council's Local Development Scheme.

1.14 Neighbourhood development plans are required to be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan for the area in order to meet 'the basic conditions' With this regard, the whole Core Strategy is defined as being 'the strategic policies contained within the development plan for the area" in terms of Paragraph 8 Schedule 4B of the Town and Country Planning Act (1990).

1.15 Significant progress is being made on a number of neighbourhood development plans across the county. However, to ensure delivery, areas without a designed neighbourhood

area by the adoption of the Core Strategy will be included within the 'Rural Area Site Allocation Development Plan Document'. Monitoring of neighbourhood plan progress will take place and consideration will be given to those areas not making progress to Regulation 14 draft by the Issues and Options stage of the Rural Area Site Allocation DPD for their inclusion within the document.

Community Right to Build
1.16 The Community Right to Build enables community organisations to progress new local developments without the need to go through the normal planning application process, as long as the proposals meet certain criteria and there is community backing in a local referendum. Communities may wish to build new homes or new community amenities, and providing they can demonstrate local support through a positive referendum result, the Community Right to Build will give communities the powers to deliver this directly. All profits derived from a Community Right to Build must be used for the benefit of the community, for example to provide and maintain local facilities such as village halls. Communities which wish to use the new powers must produce and submit a Community Right to Build Order. A proposal can be developed as part of the Neighbourhood Development Plan, or on its own.

Community Right to Bid
1.17 The Community Right to Bid enables a community to nominate assets of community value, and if any of these assets are at risk, the community has a right to delay the marketing of the asset in order to raise funds to bid to buy community buildings. For example, this could be the village shop, public house, community centre, children's centre, allotment or library.

1.18 The council will continue to work with partners, the community and the voluntary sector to ensure that provision of services and facilities is maintained and enhanced; and expanded in areas identified for population growth, in areas of relative deprivation and in areas where a deficiency has been identified.

Local Transport Plan
1.19 The council's *Local Transport Plan* (LTP) establishes the framework for the delivery of all aspects of transport and travel for Herefordshire. The development of the LTP and the Core Strategy has been a linked process. The council's LTP covers the first part of the Core Strategy period from April 2013/14 to 2015/16 and is an important local document which supports the delivery of the Core Strategy. The LTP will be updated to include key elements of infrastructure set out in the Core Strategy following its adoption.

Economic Development Strategy
1.20 The council's *Economic Development Strategy 2011-2016, November 2011* is called Enterprising County and outlines the path and direction to foster economic vitality. Its vision is to increase the economic wealth of the county through the growth of business. It aims to improve business sustainability, increase start-up and sustain growth; increase wage levels, range and quality of jobs; have a skilled population to meet future work needs; and develop the county's built infrastructure for enterprise to flourish.

Local Investment Plan
1.21 The Herefordshire Local Investment Plan, 2011-2026 has been developed by Herefordshire Council in partnership with the Homes and Communities Agency. It provides a strategic framework within which the organisations will work and invest together alongside partners in the public and private sectors to deliver the key priorities in meeting the vision for Herefordshire.

1.22 The Local Investment Plan focuses on meeting the Government's 'Total Place' agenda, which has an emphasis on a 'whole area' approach to commissioning and investment by all

partners and demonstrates how joint investment by organisations and the private sector will be prioritised through agreed spatial and thematic priorities for regeneration, including transport, health, housing and education. The emerging Core Strategy has fed into the projects, proposals and evidence base in the investment plan.

Other plans
1.23 Feeding into the Community Strategy and the Core Strategy are various other plans, such as parish and town plans and market town health checks, produced by the local communities of the county. Broadly, these types of plans identify the economic, environmental and social issues important to a particular area and set out a vision for how the community wants to develop. These plans are very useful in informing the overall proposals in the Core Strategy and by adding local detail and support to particular policies within it.

1.24 Future strategies and plans may become relevant during the plan period. In particular Herefordshire Council, as the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) for the county, has responsibility for the management of local flood risks. One of its duties is to develop a Local Flood Risk Management Strategy and its main focus will be on addressing flooding from surface water, groundwater and ordinary watercourses. In addition, Herefordshire Council is one of a number of organisations that is involved in the preparation of a county-wide Carbon Reduction Strategy in order to meet targets for reduction in line with the Climate Change Act 2008. This will seek a 34% reduction of carbon on 1990 levels by 2020.

Consultation
1.25 One of the main principles of development plan preparation is that local communities are involved from the outset. This approach is set out in national policy and in Herefordshire's Statement of Community Involvement 2007, which forms part of the Local Plan. To ensure early engagement on the preparation of the Core Strategy and the opportunity to comment and help shape it, the following key stages of consultation were undertaken:

1. Issues Paper (Autumn 2007)
2. Developing Options Paper (Summer 2008)
3. Place Shaping Paper (Spring 2010)
4. Preferred Options (Autumn 2010)
5. Revised Preferred Options (Autumn 2011)
6. Draft Core Strategy (Spring 2013)
7. Pre-submission Publication (Summer 2014)
8. Main Modifications (Spring 2015)

Working with other authorities and organisations
1.26 Herefordshire is a landlocked county that does not exist in isolation from its neighbours. The Core Strategy needs to take account of wider challenges, issues and opportunities affecting neighbouring areas, as well as in the wider region. Cross-boundary working has taken place during the preparation of the Core Strategy, both through on-going liaison with neighbouring authorities, at sub-regional level and through the review of proposals within adjoining local plans and other Development Plan Documents. This will continue with the development of the Infrastructure Delivery Plan – the document that sits alongside the Core Strategy and sets out all the infrastructure needs, funding and developer contributions required for Core Strategy projects and proposals to be realised. This on-going relationship with other authorities and organisations is essential to meet the legal requirement of the Localism Act 2011 (s110) – a 'Duty to Co-operate'.

1.27 Herefordshire shares boundaries with five English local authorities and three Welsh local authorities. The English authorities are the two strategic planning authorities of Worcestershire and Gloucestershire County Councils, both of which are responsible for waste and minerals planning. Malvern Hills and Forest of Dean District Councils are the respective local planning authorities for their two tier structure. Shropshire County is a unitary authority. The three neighbouring Welsh authorities are Monmouthshire County Council, Powys County Council and the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority.

1.28 Herefordshire contains parts of two protected landscapes of national importance: the Wye Valley and Malvern Hills Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). These adjoin Monmouthshire and Worcestershire respectively (see Figure 1.2). The emerging Core Strategy must ensure a consistency of approach to development within both areas through its planning policies, joint working via the AONB partnerships and implementation of the AONB management plans.

Figure 1.2 - Herefordshire's adjoining authorities and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

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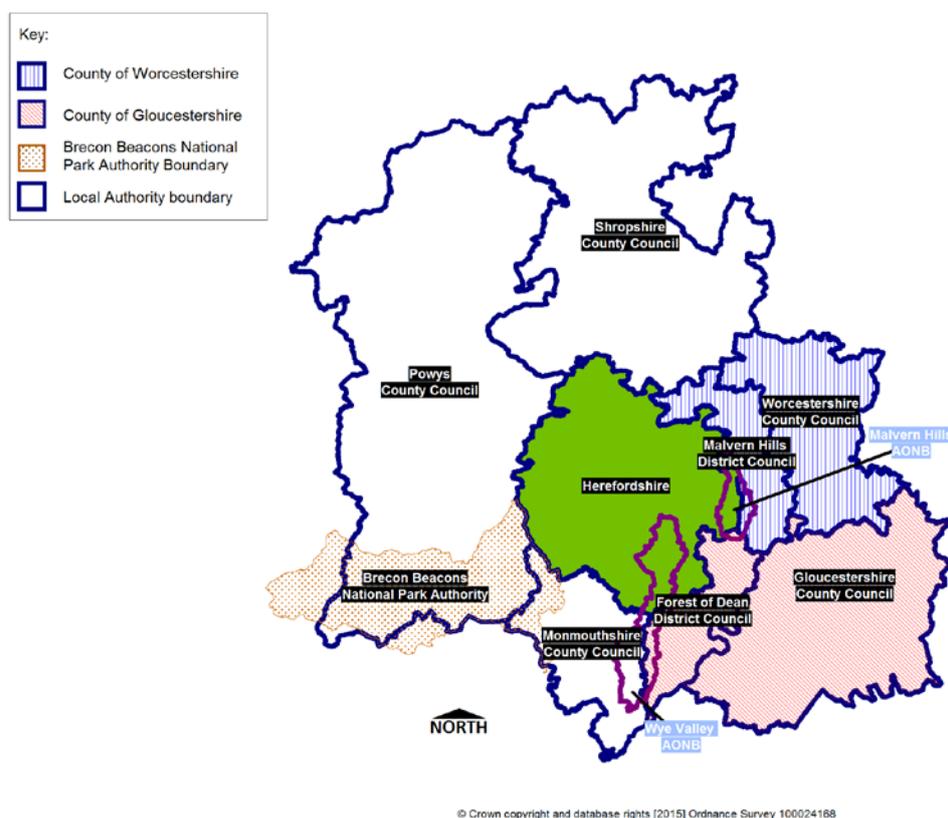
1.29 Economic influences are particularly significant in the county. The *Economic Development Strategy 2011* for Herefordshire highlights a number of objectives, some of which (such as enhanced skills, increasing wage levels and better infrastructure) are reflected in similar documents across the wider sub region. Historically, the county has a low economic output level compared to other authorities in the West Midlands and the United Kingdom as a whole. This is related to the type of businesses in the county and its relatively low wage levels, which results in less money being spent here. Herefordshire also experiences a net loss of people travelling beyond its boundaries to work. Two projects in Herefordshire linked to Core Strategy and Economic Development Strategy objectives,

which exemplify co-operation with adjoining authorities and other bodies include: 1) the Fastershire Broadband Project and 2) the setting up of the Hereford Enterprise Zone.

1) The Fastershire Project involves close co-operation with Gloucestershire County Council to utilise government and private sector funding to provide access to faster broadband.

2) Herefordshire has formed a Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) with Shropshire and Telford. The Marches LEP will be used to share resources to create benefits for local businesses and raise the profile of the area. One example of this is the creation of the Hereford Enterprise Zone at Rotherwas. The Enterprise Zone has a focus on the defence and security sector, with additional employment hubs focused on advanced technologies, environmental technologies and food and drink technologies.

Evidence base

1.30 The Core Strategy is underpinned by a robust evidence base that is regularly reviewed to inform decision and plan making. The policies and proposals must be both informed by and assessed against relevant available evidence. The list of documents and sources making up this evidence base is set out in Appendix 2.

Sustainability Appraisal, Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulation Assessment

1.31 Sustainability Appraisal (SA) is a government requirement for all Development Plan Documents. Sustainability is about ensuring the long term maintenance of well-being and the environment for our present and future communities. The process assesses the impact of the Core Strategy on the environment, people and the economy. It incorporates the requirements of the European Directive on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). Following consultation with key local, regional and national organisations such as the Environment Agency, Natural England and Historic England, sustainability criteria have been agreed covering issues such as; air quality; water quality and quantity; landscape; health and economic performance. This Core Strategy has been assessed against these sustainability criteria and the results can be found in the *Sustainability Appraisal*.

1.32 The Core Strategy has also been subject to Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) screening to assess whether there would be likely significant effects on sites of international importance for wildlife (European designated sites). Where a land use plan is likely to have a significant effect on such sites, an appropriate assessment must be carried out of the implications in respect of their conservation objectives. The screening exercise has considered potential effects on European sites within and around Herefordshire. It concluded that some uncertain effects would require appropriate assessment under the Habitats Regulations. This assessment is contained in a separate Habitats Regulations Assessment Report.

Monitoring and Review

1.33 Monitoring and review are key aspects of the approach to the preparation of Local Plans. Continuous monitoring enables an assessment of the effectiveness of the Core Strategy and the policies contained within it in terms of both delivering and controlling various types of development across the county. As part of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012, the council is required to prepare Authority Monitoring Reports containing information on all the plans set out in the local planning authority's Local Development Scheme. One of the key functions of the report is to monitor policies contained within Development Plan Documents and to report on their performance, particularly where policies are not being implemented and why and also where policies

specify a target of net additional dwellings or net additional affordable dwellings to be reached.

1.34 To assess the performance of the Core Strategy, a separate monitoring framework is set out at the end of each section and in Appendix 3 which will be implemented after adoption of the plan. This includes key plan indicators as well as those to monitor the sustainability of the plan. Where policies are not performing as intended, the annual monitoring process will suggest the actions that need to be taken to address the issues. It is intended that, in addition to annual monitoring, a five-yearly cycle of a more comprehensive review of the Core Strategy is established, with dates of 2019 and 2024. Review processes would need to commence in advance of the review dates to enable any new policies to be adopted in a timely manner.

Flexibility

1.35 The Core Strategy has been written to enable development which takes place within the context of changing circumstances both nationally and across the county. General changes could include; changes to national policy and updates to the evidence base, as well as external impacts such as changes to migration trends, fuel prices, use of the internet and so on. More specifically, situations which may arise are: housing development failing to come forward as planned, infrastructure not being provided at the same time as development and market changes adversely affecting the viability of development.

1.36 The evidence base will be kept up to date and specific studies e.g. Strategic Flood Risk Assessment will be regularly reviewed. All of the policies are written to refer to national policy rather than repeat it and to refer to the evidence base. This allows the policies to be useable even where there are minor changes to higher level policies or the evidence base. Some policies also refer to further Development Plan Documents or Supplementary Planning Documents which may also update existing policies or allow for flexibility without changing the policy itself.

1.37 With respect to housing developments, various measures are already in place to ensure that sites come forward as planned, and measures that can be taken if they do not, include:

- The *Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) 2012* is made up of a large number of smaller and medium sites with over 30,000 deliverable and developable sites identified, some of which could be brought forward if there are unforeseen constraints to larger strategic sites being developed as planned;
- A Hereford Area Plan, Neighbourhood Development Plans and other Development Plan Documents are planned to be progressed by adoption of the Core Strategy and will include residential sites which will provide more certainty for sites coming forward in the middle and later part of the period.

1.38 If monitoring shows that residential sites are coming forward more slowly than planned, the Hereford Area Plan, Neighbourhood Development Plans and other Development Plan Documents will provide the opportunity to review other designations/policies to bring further sites forward if necessary. The mechanisms set out in Policy SS3 may also be used.