

Introduction and background

The Local Plan

The council is preparing a number of planning documents known as the **Local Plan** to guide development and change in the county over the next 20 years. Other documents, such as a Sustainability Appraisal, which form part of the Local Plan evidence base, have also been prepared. The documents being prepared and their timetables are set out in a project planning document called a Local Development Scheme.

The title of “Local Plan”, introduced through the National Planning Policy Framework, replaces the original notation of “Local Development Framework” or LDF which was in use when we started production of a replacement development plan to the adopted Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan 2007.

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 and enhance valued natural 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.

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 interrelate and how they are likely to shape and affect different parts of the county.

The Core Strategy

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.

The Core Strategy does not allocate land directly, but proposes broad strategic directions for growth in sustainable locations. A further Hereford Area Plan and other Development Plan Documents and Neighbourhood Development Plans 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 links to the Sustainable Community Strategy.

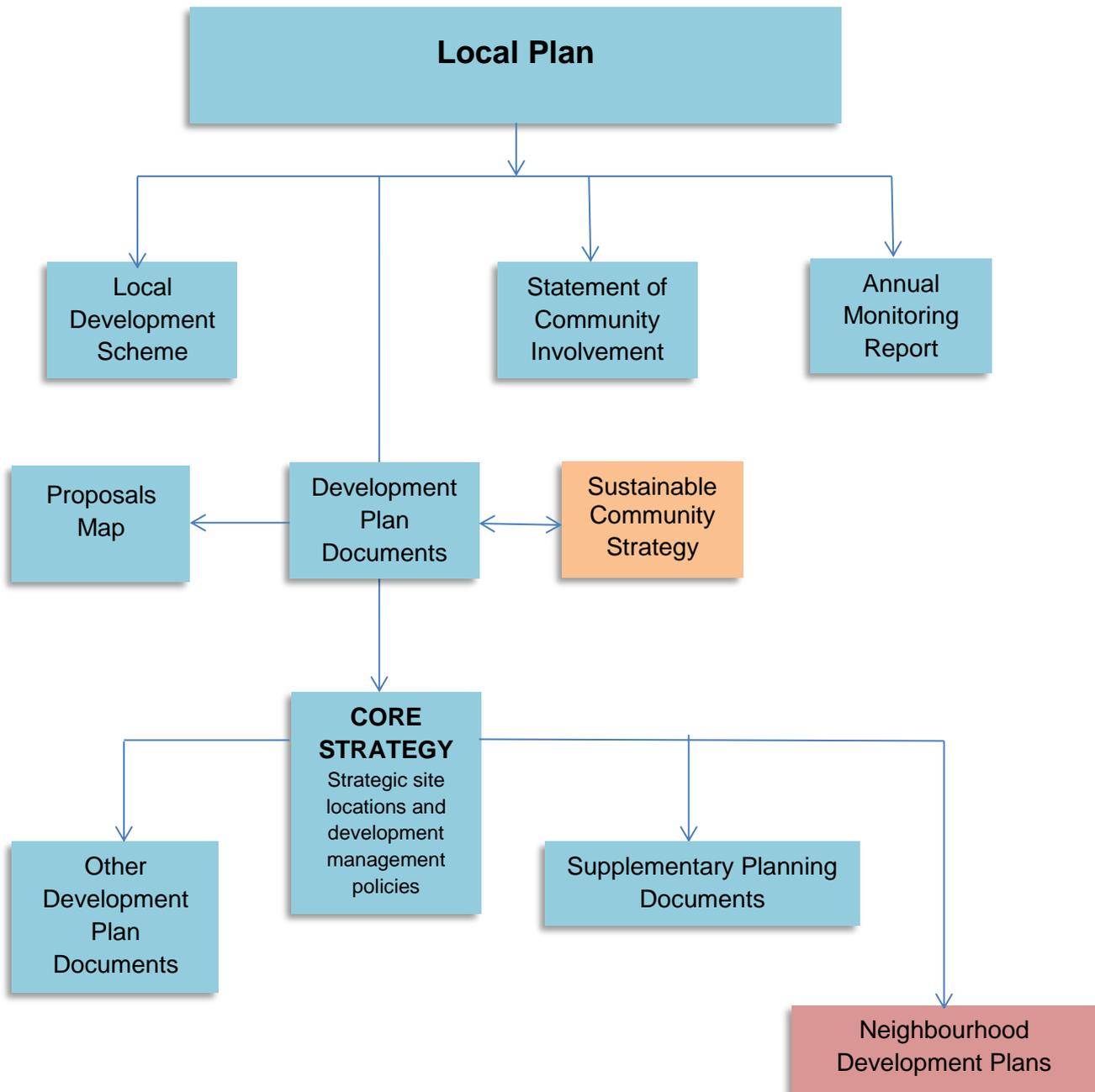
When adopted, the Core Strategy policies will replace most Unitary Development Plan 2007 (UDP) policies. However, some of the policies contained in the previous UDP have been saved (see appendix 1) and will remain in force until replaced by other development plan documents and neighbourhood development plans. Together with the Hereford Area Plan, Natural Resources Development Plan Document, Gypsies and Travellers Development Plan Document and other development plan documents and neighbourhood development plans, the Core Strategy will form the development plan for Herefordshire. A Proposals Map will set out the designations and allocations for all development plan documents, once they have been examined and adopted. In the meantime, many environmental designations continue to be shown on the adopted Unitary Development Plan 2007 Proposals Map which can be found on the council's website.

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.

Changes to the plan since the last consultation

This draft Core Strategy document includes both strategic and development management policy guidance in response to new national guidance set out in the National Planning Policy Framework 2012. This has meant a significantly revised set of policies from that set out in the Preferred Options (2010) and Revised Preferred Option (2011) stages of the plan, which set out to cover purely strategic issues. Other influences have also affected the policy writing, including the issues raised during consultation, the emergence of new or updated evidence and other external influences such as other bodies' plans and programmes. The Sustainability Appraisal Report accompanying this document details in an "audit trail" how the policies in this draft have emerged over the various stages of production. The section on "Consultation" below lists the stages in the production of the Draft Core Strategy.

Figure 1.1: The structure of the Herefordshire Local Plan



Relationship with other strategies

Planning policies for Herefordshire need to be prepared in the context of national planning policy and guidance and with regard to other plans and strategies produced by the council and other organisations. National policies on planning matters are contained in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the Technical Guidance to the NPPF.

The West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) was previously part of the planning framework, however was formally revoked on the 20th May 2013. The council does not consider that the revocation of the RSS will undermine the Core Strategy as it has produced

its own, independent evidence base regarding housing requirements and still carries through some of the original objectives of the RSS such as housing delivery and strengthening the employment offer of the county.

The principal role of the Core Strategy is to deliver the spatial planning strategy for Herefordshire based on the local characteristics of the area. The draft Core Strategy 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.

Natural resources

A Herefordshire Natural Resources Development Plan Document (Natural Resources DPD) will be prepared. This will establish targets and planning policies relating to minerals and waste activities and development for Herefordshire to cover the plan period to 2031. This DPD is included in the council's Local Development Scheme.

Gypsies and travellers

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

The Sustainable Community Strategy

The Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS): The Herefordshire Plan 2010 sets out a long-term vision for the county and has been developed by the Herefordshire Partnership. The latter comprises of a range of local people and organisations, including business groups and public sector bodies. The purpose of the Herefordshire Plan 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 Herefordshire Plan priorities. The themes from the Herefordshire Plan have therefore helped to guide the strategic objectives of the Core Strategy.

Neighbourhood development plans

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.

Community Right to Build

Through neighbourhood planning, local communities are able to choose where they want new homes, shops and offices to be built; have their say on what those new buildings should look like, and grant planning permission for the new buildings they want to see go ahead. For example, the 'Community Right to Build' programme allows communities to choose where and when to build homes, shops, facilities and businesses, depending entirely on what local people decide their community needs are. The Community Right to Build scheme

will help communities to gain planning permission for the developments they want to take place; with the benefits of development (for example profits), being managed by a community organisation, for the community.

Community Right to Bid

The Community Right to Bid gives community groups 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.

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

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 emerging LTP covers the first part of the Core Strategy period from April 2012 to 2015 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

The council's Economic Development Strategy 2011-2016 (Nov 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

The Herefordshire Local Investment Delivery Plan, January 2011, 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.

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

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.

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 new responsibilities towards the management of local flood risks. One of its duties is to develop a Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (LFRS) and its main focus will be on addressing flooding from surface water, groundwater and ordinary watercourses. The strategy is currently being prepared. 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 Carbon Change Act 2008. This will seek a 34% reduction on 1990 levels by 2020.

Consultation

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 has been undertaken:

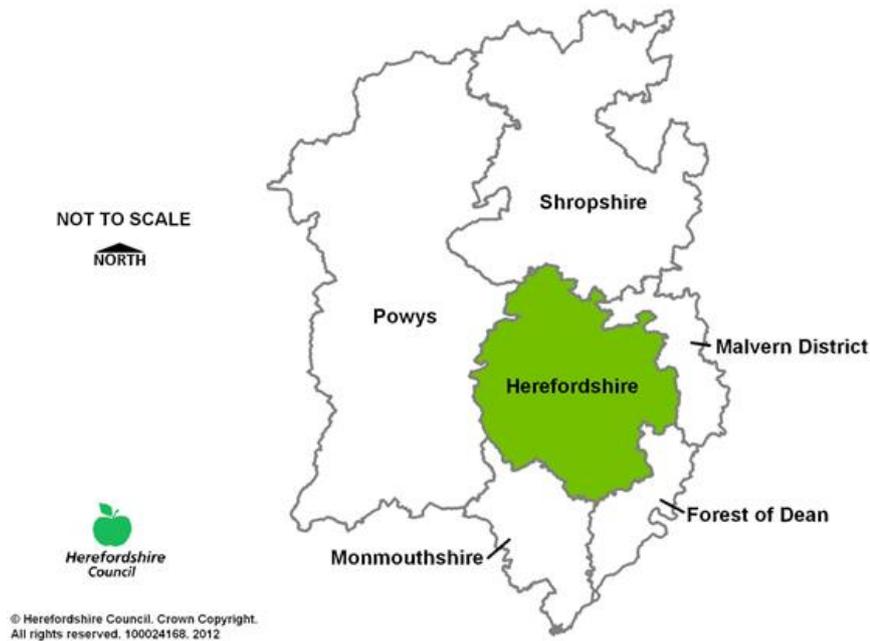
1. Issues Paper (Autumn 2007)
2. Developing Options Paper (Summer 2008)
3. Place Shaping Paper (Spring 2010)
4. Preferred Options (Autumn 2010)
5. Revised Preferred Options (Autumn 2011)

The next stage in the process of preparing the Core Strategy will be the publication of a Pre-Submission version, which will subsequently be consulted upon. Subject to consideration of the pre-submission responses, the Core Strategy will then be submitted for examination, with its final adoption anticipated in Spring 2014.

Working with other authorities and organisations

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'.

Figure 1.2 – Authorities adjoining Herefordshire



English strategic authorities adjoining Herefordshire are; Worcestershire County Council, Shropshire Council and Gloucestershire County Council, which deal with waste and minerals matters. There is a Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy (2004-2034) between Herefordshire and Worcestershire and this has had great success. Residents have helped to meet its aims through reducing the amount of waste thrown away and by increasing the amount of waste recycled.

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 Fig 1.2). The emerging Core Strategy must ensure a consistency of approach to development within both areas through both its planning policies and joint working via the AONB management boards.

Herefordshire and Shropshire Councils have worked closely together in the production of a housing evidence base including; the Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2008 for the West Housing Market Area and on a joint housing strategy. Joint working has also taken place on an assessment of the needs of Gypsies and Travellers in the area. Alongside other constituent authorities, Herefordshire has been involved in the development of the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), which is further detailed later in this section.

Although the adjoining Welsh authorities of Powys and Monmouthshire are subject to a different national planning policy framework, joint working on issues of water resources and water treatment is being carried out, since all three authorities are served by the same water company; Dwr Cymru Welsh Water. As Herefordshire is adjacent to Wales regard has also been had to Planning Policy Wales (February 2011).

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 Border UK Broadband Project and 2) the setting up of the Hereford Enterprise Zone.

- 1) The Broadband project involved close co-operation with Gloucestershire County Council to utilise government and private sector funding to provide access to faster broadband. The project area covers all homes and businesses in Herefordshire and Gloucestershire that would otherwise not have received faster broadband without government intervention.
- 2) The underlying aim of the Core Strategy of promoting regeneration in Hereford highlights a move towards creating a more sustainable county with improved employment, leisure, and cultural opportunities, thereby potentially reducing some cross boundary movements. Herefordshire has formed a Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) with Shropshire and Telford because of the common issues between the areas. 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. It is intended that the scheme will become a catalyst for enhanced economic growth throughout the towns of the Marches through the creation of highly skilled jobs and the encouragement of overseas investment. The Marches LEP Board has approved *Poised for Growth*, a high level planning and housing statement which sets out a pledge to work pro-actively with developers and businesses to create economic growth across the LEP area.

Figure 1.3 – Hereford Enterprise Zone at Rotherwas, Hereford



Evidence base

The Core Strategy must be 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

Sustainability Appraisal (SA) is a government requirement for all development plan documents. Sustainability is about ensuring the long term maintenance of wellbeing 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. Following consultation with key local regional and national organisations such as the Environment Agency, Natural England and English Heritage, sustainability criteria have been agreed covering issues such as; air quality; water quality and quantity; landscape; health and economic performance. This Core Strategy document has been assessed against these sustainability criteria and the results made available in the Sustainability Appraisal Report, to ensure that the draft proposals are those that perform most satisfactorily when evaluated against reasonable alternatives.

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

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 an Annual Monitoring Report 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.

To assess the performance of the Core Strategy, a separate monitoring framework is set out at the end of each section 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 report 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

The Core Strategy has been written to enable development which takes place within the context of i 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.

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.

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;
- 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.