



Whitbourne Neighbourhood Development Plan 2011-2031

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Contents

	<u>Page</u>
Neighbourhood Area	3
Introduction	
A Whitbourne Today	4
B The Plan	5
C Vision and Objectives	6
D Principal Centres of Housing in Whitbourne	7
E Housing Calculations	8
Part One : Land Use	9
Policy LU1 - Settlement Boundary	10
Policy LU2 - Redundant Rural Buildings	11
Policy LU3 - Conservation Area	12
Policy LU4 - Housing Strategy	14
Policy LU5 - Affordable Housing	15
Policy LU6 - Renewable Energy	16
Policy LU7 - Flooding	17
Policy LU8 - Local Green Space	19
Policy LU9 - Environmental Considerations	21
Part Two : Parish Matters	22
Part Three : Review of Effectiveness	24
Appendix A : Housing Needs	25
Appendix B : Whitbourne Through The Seasons	29

Neighbourhood Area

The Whitbourne Neighbourhood Development Plan Area is the entire geographical area covering the parish of Whitbourne.



Introduction

A) Whitbourne Today

The parish of Whitbourne is situated in the north east of Herefordshire, 5 miles from the town of Bromyard. Its eastern boundary runs along the River Teme, a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

As a rural parish (see Appendix B) there is evidence of human settlement and farming throughout the parish area going back to pre-Roman times. Although then somewhat scattered, in time an appreciable cluster of housing developed around the present site of the Norman church and more recently in the area called 'Meadow Green'.

The name Whitbourne is believed to be derived from the brook that runs through the area of the village where this early development took place and means 'at the white brook'. Adjacent to the church, Whitbourne Court also stands alongside Whitbourne Brook. This is built on the site of an early moated manor house and became a summer palace for the Bishops of Hereford.

Whitbourne as a parish still remains somewhat dispersed, comprising in addition to the two main centres of housing (detailed in Section D of this Introduction), the smaller groupings of Tedney, Rosemore, Poswick and Gaines. It also has two areas of common land, Badley Wood Common and Bringsty Common. In spite of this diversity Whitbourne is a thriving community with a church, village hall, two public houses and a shop.

The Register of Electors for Whitbourne parish in force from 1st March 2011 contained 584 names. Mutatis mutandis, much the same number would appear today.



St John the Baptist Church

B) The Plan

The Neighbourhood Development Plan for the parish of Whitbourne is important because it is the first chance a place as small as Whitbourne parish has had to influence its own future.

Under powers granted by the Localism Act 2011, the Parish Council has prepared a Neighbourhood Development Plan for the parish of Whitbourne. In essence, it concerns the use of land. If made, it must be used by Herefordshire Council as part of the planning decision-making process. The Plan will be limited in time. To fit in with the Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy, it will apply only until 2031.

It must be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Local Plan and have regard to national policy as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). It must also contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. The NPPF quotes a resolution of the United Nations General Assembly to define sustainable development as 'meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'.

We base our Plan squarely on that definition. Whitbourne itself is the product of sustainable development. Over one generation we have seen the building of Bannercroft (a social housing development), the rebuilding of the village hall, the creation and equipping of the playing area, the establishment of the community run village shop, the re-development of Poplands and Wishmore (former farm buildings) and the refurbishment of the parish church, all enterprises in which new and old residents have worked together to promote growth for the benefit of the community.

Many parishioners have stated their views about the future of Whitbourne. All these have been considered in developing this Plan.

The purpose of the Plan is clearly set out in the referendum question, to be answered by a simple Yes or No:

Do you want Herefordshire Council to use the Neighbourhood Development Plan for Whitbourne to help it decide planning applications in Whitbourne?

The Plan is in two parts - Part One deals with matters directly pertaining to land use. Part Two deals with other issues of concern within the parish. All the policies in the Plan conform to the Local Plan Core Strategy and the NPPF.

C) Vision and Objectives

Vision

By vision we mean our picture of Whitbourne Parish as we hope it will develop up until 2031. It will preserve the best of what we have inherited, both in our buildings and in our landscape, but be open to the changes necessary to enable our community to develop naturally and sustainably.

Objectives

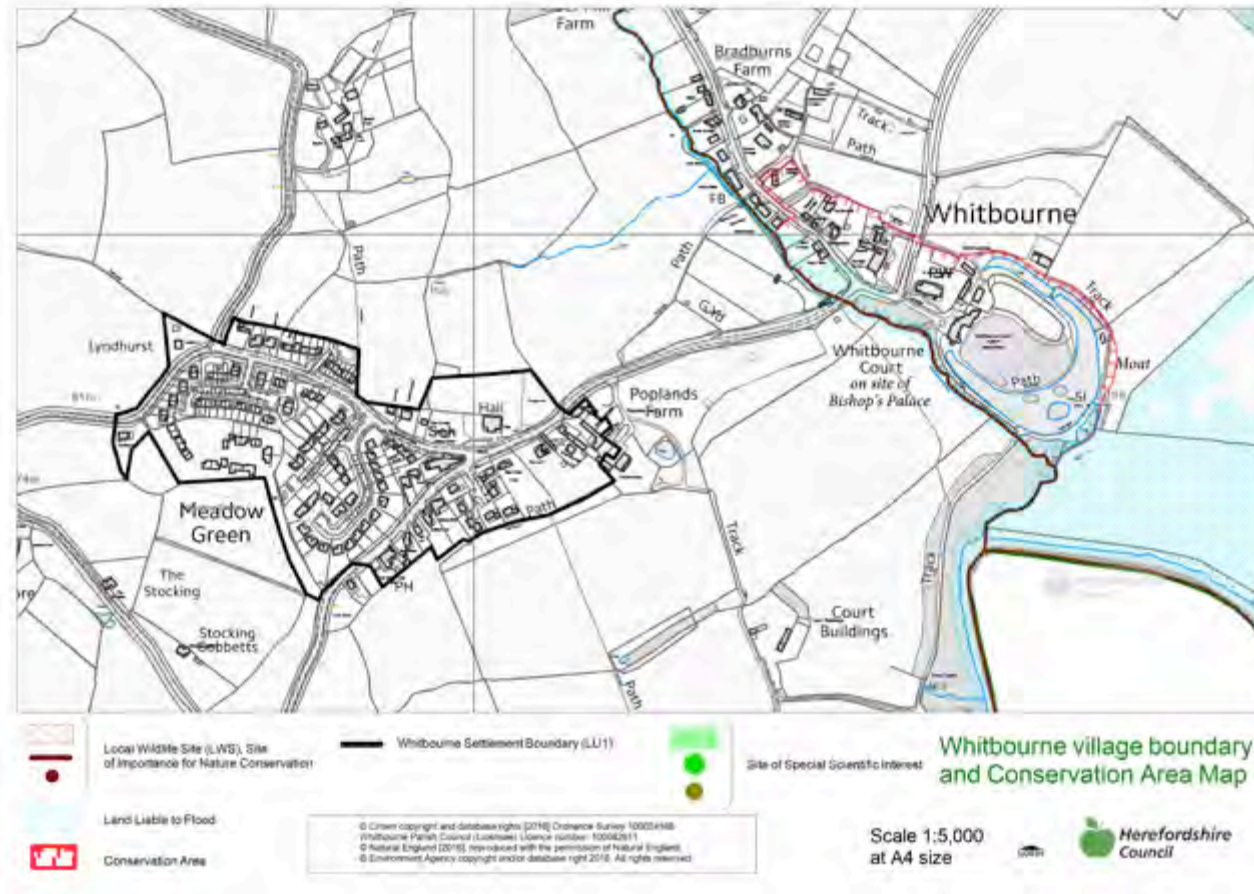
By objectives we mean the targets aimed at by the detailed measures that we should take in order to help the vision become reality.

They include steps to:

1. Promote a level of housing growth as required by Herefordshire Council that retains the rural and agricultural character of the parish
2. Protect and promote the built and environmental assets of the community
3. Protect the landscape heritage and green infrastructure
4. Ensure that new housing promotes opportunities for local people of all ages to continue to live in the parish
5. Encourage home-based employment
6. Protect open countryside and agricultural land
7. Preserve designated areas where people can refresh themselves and maintain their physical and mental well-being
8. Encourage and facilitate wherever possible the use of renewable energy
9. Ensure that land management and any proposed new building does not increase flood risk
10. Encourage employment in the parish generally

D) Principal Centres of Housing in Whitbourne

The two main centres of housing comprising the village of Whitbourne are centred around the parish church and the area designated on Ordnance Survey maps as 'Meadow Green', shown thus,-



E) Housing Calculations

In the context of future housing needs (affordable and open-market combined), Herefordshire Council's Local Plan Core Strategy requirement is based around a specified percentage increase on the current housing stock within a parish. We quote from a letter from the Herefordshire Neighbourhood Planning Team Leader, dated 17th April 2015:

"The table below indicates the potential indicative proportional growth for your parish in accordance with the proposed Modification MM036".

<i>Parish/Group</i>	<i>Settlements in fig 4.20 and 4.21</i>	<i>Number of households in parish</i>	<i>% growth in Local Plan Core Strategy</i>	<i>Number of new houses required to 2031</i>	<i>Housing Completions 2011-2014</i>	<i>Housing commitments as at 1 April 2014</i>	<i>Total housing remaining</i>
<i>Whitbourne</i>	<i>Whitbourne</i>	<i>330</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>50</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>39</i>

The figure of 39 houses is reduced to 19 by the subtraction of the 20 houses approved by the Herefordshire Council Planning Committee on 29th October 2014 (the new Ardley Meadows development adjacent to Acreage).

Furthermore there are commitments for 10 houses (see Page 26).

In addition, the parish is permitted to take windfall development into consideration. Taking into account houses built in the last 20 years, together with the potential availability of identified sites, it appears reasonable to predict that our housing needs as specified by Herefordshire Council will be comfortably met in the period up to 2031.

Please refer to Appendix A – Housing Needs, for the evidential basis for the above calculations.

*Ref: **Objective 1***

It follows that this Plan comfortably meets the requirements of the Core Strategy Policies RA1 and RA2 as now adopted.

Part One : Land Use

Obviously the Plan cannot anticipate every proposal that may be made for the use of every piece of land in Whitbourne up to 2031. What it can do is set out policies, to ensure that the objectives mentioned above are met.

So the following policies are proposed:

Policy LU1 - Settlement Boundary

A Settlement Boundary is defined for Whitbourne, as shown on the map on this page, within which will be the main focus for new development in the Neighbourhood Area.

Supporting Statement

The reason for a Settlement Boundary can be found in the meaning of the word 'settlement', namely "*a place where people establish a community*" (O.E.D). Such a place needs coherence. The alternative is sprawl, often at the expense of open countryside and agricultural land.



Policy LU2 - Redundant Rural Buildings

The conversion of redundant agricultural buildings into dwellings will be supported. Proposals should:

- i. Respect the character of existing buildings**
- ii. Where possible, facilitate home working**

This policy will not apply to the demolition and reconstruction of modern portal framed or similar agricultural, storage or commercial buildings or to the demolition and reconstruction of temporary buildings and structures.

Supporting Statements

The re-use of redundant rural buildings can benefit the environment in that derelict and unsightly ruins become houses. Moreover, an access problem should not arise because access would normally be present. However, new development proposals should be supported by adequate surveys so as to prevent adverse impact on legally protected species.



Redundant Rural Building at Lower Tedney Farm

Policy LU3 - Conservation Area

To ensure that the character of the Conservation Area of Whitbourne is preserved and enhanced, proposals should:

- i. Be in keeping with the character of their surroundings by virtue of their siting and layout**
- ii. Make a positive contribution to the Conservation Area through high quality design with buildings respecting the height, size, scale and massing of adjacent buildings**
- iii. Protect, conserve and where possible enhance heritage assets and their setting**

Supporting Statements

A 'conservation area' is defined by the Town and Country Planning Act, 1990, as *"being of special architectural and historic interest requiring extra protection in planning terms, the character and appearance of which it is desirable to conserve or enhance"*.

The Whitbourne Conservation Area is unique, given its beautiful and tranquil setting. In order to preserve the character of the Conservation Area and its immediate environs, the Parish Council will seek to encourage proposals (including those concerning development immediately adjacent to the Conservation Area) to safeguard the beauty and tranquility of the Conservation Area and its setting. The Parish Council will look to discourage proposals that will lead to an increase in traffic movements, noise and/or the loss of adjacent countryside.



Bottom Lane

Policy LU4 - Housing Strategy

The Neighbourhood Plan supports the delivery of a minimum of 50 houses in the Neighbourhood Area over the plan period.

Housing or development proposals should seek to:

- i. Be in keeping with the character of their surroundings by virtue of their siting and layout, density, scale, massing, design, landscaping and choice of materials
- ii. Deliver a range of dwelling types and sizes to meet local housing requirements
- iii. Respect the amenity and privacy of any adjoining properties
- iv. Ensure suitable and safe access to the highway



Ardley Meadows housing development



Whitbourne's rural landscape

Policy LU5 - Affordable Housing

The provision of affordable housing for rent; for shared ownership and for discounted sale will be supported.



Bannercroft

Policy LU6 - Renewable Energy

Small scale renewable energy schemes that respect local character and residential amenity will be supported.



Weir on Sapey Brook

Policy LU7 - Flooding

All development proposals with flood risk implications should:

- i. Demonstrate that flood risk is not increased elsewhere
- ii. Ensure that surface water run off does not exceed the existing rate through the use of sustainable drainage



Flooding at entrance to the village from the A44

Areas particularly prone to flooding are shown on the map.



Policy LU8 – Local Green Space

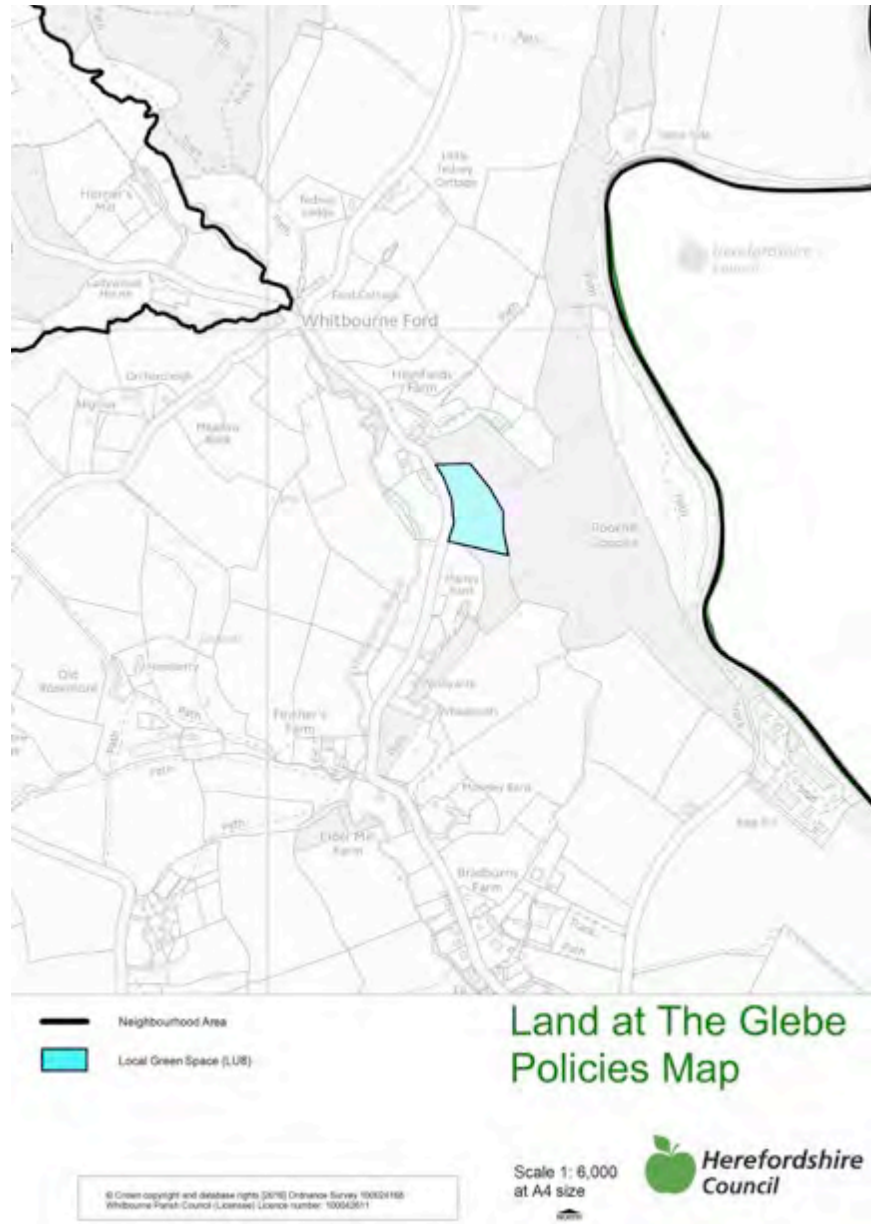
Land at The Glebe, as shown on the map below, is designated as local green space where new development is ruled out other than in very special circumstances.

Supporting-Statement

The Glebe is an area of woodland just off Bottom Lane much enjoyed for the study of birds and other wildlife, and as a quiet retreat. Volunteers do much to preserve it.



The Glebe



Policy LU9 - Environmental Considerations

Any proposals for development should:

- i. Respect the landscape and built environment**
- ii. Respect relevant bio-diversity features and wildlife habitats of the area**
- iii. Have regard to the aims of the Herefordshire Green Infrastructure Study (2010), which enjoins the protection and promotion of green infrastructure**

Supporting Statements

It is worthy of note that part of the parish is within 1 km of the northern part of the Malvern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

As the plan has been in process of construction we have been repeatedly made aware of the importance our people place upon care for the environment.

Responses to the questionnaire, at the drop-in, at the public meeting, discussions with landowners and representations by individuals have all made an impression. There is general support for natural development, such as would respect the environment.

Housing needs are therefore planned to be met by development in in-fill sites or redundant rural buildings. There is strong opposition to housing estates and in that opposition concern for the environment plays a part.

This accords with the excellent record of the parish in its care for the environment and its renewal, as in Whitbourne Estate's long-established afforestation programme and the commitment of our people to the study and promotion of wildlife at Bringsty, Badley Wood and The Glebe.

Part Two : Parish Matters

1. **School**

The school building has been sold. It is clear from a recent petition that retention of the nineteenth century portion of the building is considered very important due to its historical and social associations with the parish. Any proposal for development on the site will be closely examined.

2. **Bus Services**

We mention above the unpromising outlook for local bus services. It seems clear that there will be an opening for a volunteer-run minibus service. Such a scheme is deemed praiseworthy by Herefordshire Council and also operates effectively in Gloucestershire. Car-sharing is another possibility. Both these options are commended in the Core Strategy for the market towns and rural areas.

3. **Post Office**

Another victim of recent cuts has been the post office. -A travelling post office does now call at Whitbourne and is well used.

4. **Village Shop**

We should do all we can to support the community-run village shop, especially in its promotion of local food supplies.

5. **Open Spaces and Amenity Areas**

The Parish Council will seek to work with landowners, developers and other parties with the intention of ensuring the protection and enhancement of the churchyard, playing field, village green, the specified area designated as a children's play area within the Ardley Meadows development adjacent to Acreage and the allotments adjacent to the village shop.

6. Young People

Another comment has been directed at our apparent indifference to the needs of young people. We would reply that the very popular equipment on the Playing Field is there because the Parish Council bought the land from a local land owner and volunteers, after ascertaining young people's views, obtained the equipment by means of grants. The views of the young are continually asked for and a recent result is the planned replacing of the present goalposts with a size more suitable for young people over primary school age. A further survey of young people's views is planned for the near future.

Neither the Local Plan Core Strategy nor the National Planning Policy Framework has a specific policy directed to the needs of young people, but it seems clear to us that those needs, changing as they do over time, must be addressed in a healthy community.

7. Home Working

In our comments on employment, we mentioned our support for the increasing trend to work at home. An obvious result is that the area of Whitbourne itself, the physical parish, becomes a producer of economic growth. Our support for the conversion of redundant rural buildings into dwellings would be all the stronger if the projected conversion permitted the provision of a working space, and we would view planning applications accordingly.

The provision of high-speed broadband will help home-based workers.

8. Public Houses

The *Live and Let Live* in the village is recovering steadily under new ownership. Many residents in the parish would regret its loss. *The Wheatsheaf*, a former coaching inn dating from 1780, has now been sold. Any scheme to develop the building and/or site will be examined with close attention.

9. Commercial Poultry and Pig Farms

Concern has been expressed that this Plan appears to permit the development of commercial poultry and pig farming operations in the parish. For the avoidance of doubt it should be clearly understood that any such scheme would be discouraged, if it were likely to result in excessive noise (traffic or otherwise), noxious smells, pollution, noxious waste or undesirable visual impact.

Part Three : Review of Effectiveness

As will now be clear, the aim of this Plan is sustainable development. This involves growth, a continuing process.

The Plan takes Whitbourne up to 2031. Even in a period of 15 years, much can change. Indeed, within the time of this Plan's preparation, visible changes in the parish have occurred.

The first source of likely change is the government. This Plan itself is the result of the government's localism initiatives. So we must keep abreast of changes or refinements in national or local policy (such as in the NPPF or Local Plan Core Strategy). Fortunately in this we have the ready advice from an experienced Senior Planning Officer at Herefordshire Council.

The second source of change is in the parish itself. Once adopted the Plan cannot be altered. However it will be surprising if events do not prompt us as a community to continue to think about our future.

So the Parish Council proposes that once a year a full meeting of the Parish Council shall be devoted to:

1. a review of the practical effectiveness of this Plan, judged by our Vision and Objectives
and
2. an examination of all the factors – national, local and parochial – which need to be considered when planning the future development of the parish.

As usual, the public will be invited to attend and contribute. The residents of Whitbourne as a whole have contributed greatly to the making of this Plan and the Parish Council is confident that the community will take an active part in the process of review.

Appendix A : Housing Needs

A Neighbourhood Development Plan for Whitbourne for 2011-2031 must have regard for our housing needs in that period, and how they are to be met.

On 17th April 2015 the Herefordshire Neighbourhood Planning Team Leader advised us that the total number of new dwellings required to 2031 was 39. We have been informed, and accept, that this number should be regarded as a minimum.

At this point it may be useful to consider calls that have been made (though by very few parishioners) for a far larger number of new houses within the Plan period.

It was claimed that a large new development would:

1. rescue the village school
2. rescue the *Live and Let Live* public house
3. increase custom for the village shop

Claims (1) and (2) had obvious flaws but have in any case been overtaken by time. The village school is closed and the *Live and Let Live* public house is busy under new ownership. As for the village shop, it will continue to flourish whilst it provides the services that the village requires.

So we see no reason to challenge the figures laid down by Herefordshire Council.

- where, then, are the 39 dwellings to be found?
- we have been advised that this Plan should either *“allocate land for new housing”* or *“demonstrate an alternative delivery mechanism”*.

We have been able to locate sites that the owners have earmarked for housing development.

The first was created on 29th October, 2014, by Herefordshire Council Planning Committee, when it approved an application to build an estate of 20 dwellings adjacent to Acreage.

Further sites can be found, with expected windfall up to 2031, as shown in the following table:

Housing Projections	
Site	No of Units
Ardley Meadows development adjacent to Acreage	20
Committed Units	
Lower Tedney Farm (RRB)	6
Old Rectory	4
Total	10
Expected windfall units to 2031	
The Croft	13
Tiblands Farm (RRB)	2
Virginia Cottage	1
Other windfall (estimated)	10
Total	26
Overall Total	56

The larger site at **The Croft** is owned by senior and respected members of the community who fully intend to sell the site for housing at the appropriate time. Given the ages of the parties, that time may realistically be expected to fall within the span of this Plan. The appeal of the site to developers has already been demonstrated and compelling evidence of this interest has been provided.

Natural England expressed concern that this site might not be viable for housing because its map of the area marked **The Croft** as “traditional orchard”. No such orchard is to be found at The Croft, and the owners, who are long standing, recall no such feature during their tenure.

The smaller site, adjacent to **Virginia Cottage**, in the Conservation Area, has been set aside for development within the lifetime of the Plan. It has also attracted an inaccurate report, namely that it is unsuitable for housing because of flooding. A householder directly opposite the site reports that in more than 40 years of her occupancy no such flooding has occurred. Moreover, building techniques are now available to raise a new dwelling above the threat of flood. The site is owned by a distinguished landowner whose family ties with the parish go back more than a century. Given his character and antecedents, it is inconceivable that he would permit any development in the Conservation Area that did not respect its special nature.

The foregoing sites, then, provide a realistic prospect of 14 new dwellings within the lifetime of this Plan.

As to 'an alternative delivery mechanism', we instance the present availability for housing development of the buildings listed under **LU2 Redundant Rural Buildings (RRB)**. Whitbourne is a rural parish with an ancient farming history. It would be astonishing, given the radical changes in agriculture within living experience, if there were no RRB ripe for development.

The owner of **Lower Tedney Farm** is a respected member of the parish whose family has built up over generations an international reputation as breeders of prize cattle. He has obtained planning consent for the conversion of the RRB into 6 dwellings.

At the **Old Rectory** 4 RRB have been converted into dwellings.

Finally, **Tiblands Farm** is owned by a long established Whitbourne family whose firm intention is to develop RRB into 2 dwellings within the lifetime of the Plan.

It should be noted that all these developments will meet different kinds of housing need. They vary in size. Some are proposed for sale, others for rental.

In addition, we have been advised by Herefordshire Council that we may build into our forecast unexpected windfall sites. This is a calculation that is at best uncertain. How do we predict the unpredictable? It appears to us that the least faulty method is to take as a guide the pattern over the last twenty years, recognising always that unexpected factors may throw any calculation out of kilter. The result in Whitbourne is illuminating. In recent years 14 windfall dwellings have arisen. Three houses now occupy the site of the old post office near the village hall; four more stand at Moor Court alongside the *The Wheatshaf* Public House. More have been from the conversion of RRB than might have been expected. In the last decade conversions of RRB at Poplands Farm and Wishmore Farm appear to confirm a trend.

Windfall units since 1995	
Moor Court	4
Old Post Office	3
Poplands Farm	4
Wishmore Farm	3
Total	14

Bearing these examples in mind and noting the condition of various properties in the parish, we believe it is reasonable to anticipate as a minimum a further windfall of 10 dwellings within the span of the Plan, as detailed in the table on Page 26.

Appendix B : Whitbourne Through The Seasons



To sum up, **the minimal requirements for new housing set by Herefordshire Council and accepted by the Parish Council will be amply met by this Plan, and critically, met in a manner that satisfies the objective of sustainable development.**

Concluding Note

The independent external examiner's report recommended that, subject to some minor modifications being made to the draft Plan, it should proceed to Referendum. This final version of the Plan incorporates these modifications. As a consequence Herefordshire Council issued a Decision Statement on the 9th September 2016, stating that this final version of the Plan should progress to Referendum under the provisions of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) (Amendment) Regulations 2015.

ENVOI

We commend this Plan to the people of Whitbourne. We believe it seeks to preserve what they value and to encourage growth, while leaving the door open for those who follow us to make those changes that they find necessary.

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