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## Foreword

### Local Plan Review – Preferred Options – Foreword

Welcome to the Wyre Forest District Council consultation on the Preferred Options as part of the Review of the Local Plan. The Council is planning a summer of consultation on its Local Plan which includes proposals to accommodate its housing and employment needs up to 2034.

This Preferred Options Consultation is part of the process the Council has to follow to eventually adopt a new Local Plan to replace the current one which was adopted in 2013. The process of reviewing the Local Plan began in 2015 when the Council consulted on the broad Issues and Options and we hope the process will be complete when the Local Plan is adopted in early 2019. The Local Plan that is finally adopted will have to respect the guidance provided to Local Authorities by Government's National Planning Policy Framework which requires Councils to plan positively for a period of at least 15 years for development in its area and particularly to meet the full objectively assessed need for market and affordable housing.

Wyre Forest District Council believes that to have an up-to-date adopted Local Plan is essential in order to successfully plan for development to go where we want it and to enable the Council to make good decisions on planning applications.

The Council believes that it is very important that everyone responds to this consultation which will run from 15 June until 14 August. We need to hear from you, our residents, businesses and communities and your representatives to help the Council decide the best way of meeting the development needs for the district going forward. We will be undertaking consultation events across the district over the summer and inviting people to respond. We need to work together to successfully adopt a new Local Plan and we need your help to do that. We therefore encourage you to let us have your views on the Preferred Options.



**Councillor Marcus Hart**  
Leader of the Council



**Councillor Ian Hardiman**  
Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for  
Planning and Economic Regeneration



**1.1** Wyre Forest District Council was one of the first District Councils to successfully introduce a new Plan under the 2004 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act. In 2010 the Core Strategy of the Local Plan was adopted by the Council. This was followed by the “Sites Allocations and Policies” and “Kidderminster Central Area Action Plan” Development Plan Documents in 2013. These documents form the current Local Plan for Wyre Forest.

**1.2** The current Plan has served the District well. It has effectively directed development in a sustainable pattern and has brought forward sufficient land to meet the District’s needs whilst at the same time protecting the District from speculative green field development. It has supported and encouraged the significant enhancement of the District during its lifetime.

**1.3** It is however now necessary to undertake a review of the Local Plan. This process commenced in September 2015 with the “Issues and Options” consultation which explained that it is necessary to review the current plan for a number of key reasons:

- To consider the amount of development that will be required in response to the most recent official data (including population trends, demand for housing, economic trends) and locally generated evidence;
- To respond to recent changes in legislation (including the Housing and Planning Act 2016) and national planning policy as reflected in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG).
- To respond to Government’s demand that Local Planning Authorities should have a Local Plan that is regularly reviewed and evidence-based to enable them to respond strategically to changing development needs over at least a 15 year period.

**1.4** It is important to note that the proposed plan as set out by this Preferred Option is a complete Plan and would be intended to replace all of the currently adopted Development Plan Documents. As such the coverage of the new Plan will be:

- The **strategic element and policies** (Part A) as generally currently set out in the Core Plan;
- The **development management policies** (Part B) as generally currently set out by the Site Allocations and Policies DPD
- The **allocations policies** (Part C) as generally currently set out in the “Site Allocations and Policies” and “Kidderminster Central Area Action Plan” DPDs .
- The proposed approach to **monitoring and implementation** (Part D)

**1.5** This will assist the reader by placing all aspects of the Local Plan into a single document and will remove the repetition which is unavoidable in the current documentation.

## What is the Preferred Option?

**1.6** This document – The Preferred Option (PO) – is the second stage in the making of the new plan. During its preparation the Council have considered the swathe of new evidence that has come forward and proposes the policies that the Council considers to be required to address the issues and meet the challenges identified by that evidence. The PO proposes a spatial strategy for where new development should go and how much development and of what type is required. Importantly the document also considers a range of other associated matters such

# 1 Introduction and Context

as what infrastructure (e.g. roads, schools, utilities) will be required to support the proposed development. The publication of this document is accompanied by a full range of evidence documents. Not least amongst these is the Sustainability Appraisal so that we can be reassured that the proposals respect and adhere to the principles and practice of sustainable development.

**1.7** Normally at this stage of the Local Plan Review process a single Preferred Option is proposed. However on this occasion, due to the difficult choices that will have to be made, two variations (Option A and Option B) of the spatial strategy are put forward for consultation. These are discussed fully at Section 6 of the document. The proposals in this document will be subjected to a full program of consultation for residents, local businesses and other stakeholders to express their views.

## How to Comment on the Preferred Options document

**1.8** The eight week consultation on the PO will take place between 9.00am Thursday 15 June 2017 and will close promptly at 5.00pm Monday 14 August 2017. No late responses will be accepted. We strongly encourage responses to be made on-line via the District Council's interactive consultation system; however, you can submit your comments in any of the following ways:

- On-line by following the links from our web-site: [www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk/localplanreview](http://www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk/localplanreview)
- By e-mail: [LPR@wyreforestdc.gov.uk](mailto:LPR@wyreforestdc.gov.uk)
- By post: Planning Policy Team, Wyre Forest DC, Wyre Forest House, Finepoint Way, Kidderminster, Worcestershire, DY11 7WF

**1.9** The Planning Policy Team will host a number of drop-in sessions during the consultation period where you can come along and speak to us about the PO and how the Local Plan Review might affect you. These sessions will be as follows:

**Table 1.0.1**

Date	Time	Venue
Monday 10th July 2017	3:45pm - 8pm	Heronswood Primary School, Spennells, Kidderminster
Wednesday 19 <sup>th</sup> July 2017	2pm - 7pm	The Wyre Room, St Georges Hall, Load St, Bewdley
Friday 21 <sup>st</sup> July 2017	1pm – 5.30pm	Rowland Hill Centre, Kidderminster
Saturday 22 <sup>nd</sup> July 2017	10am – 4pm	Offmore Evangelical Church Hall, Kidderminster
Wednesday 26 <sup>th</sup> July 2017	1.30pm – 6.30pm	Areley Kings Village Hall, Stourport
Friday 28 <sup>th</sup> July 2017	2pm – 7pm	Cookley Village Hall
Saturday 29 <sup>th</sup> July 2017	10am – 4pm	Stourport Civic Hall
Friday 4th August 2017	2pm - 7pm	St Oswalds Church Centre, Broadwaters Drive, Kidderminster

**1.10** Look out for opportunities to engage via Twitter and Facebook: including a live Q&A session.

### **The Plan Making Process**

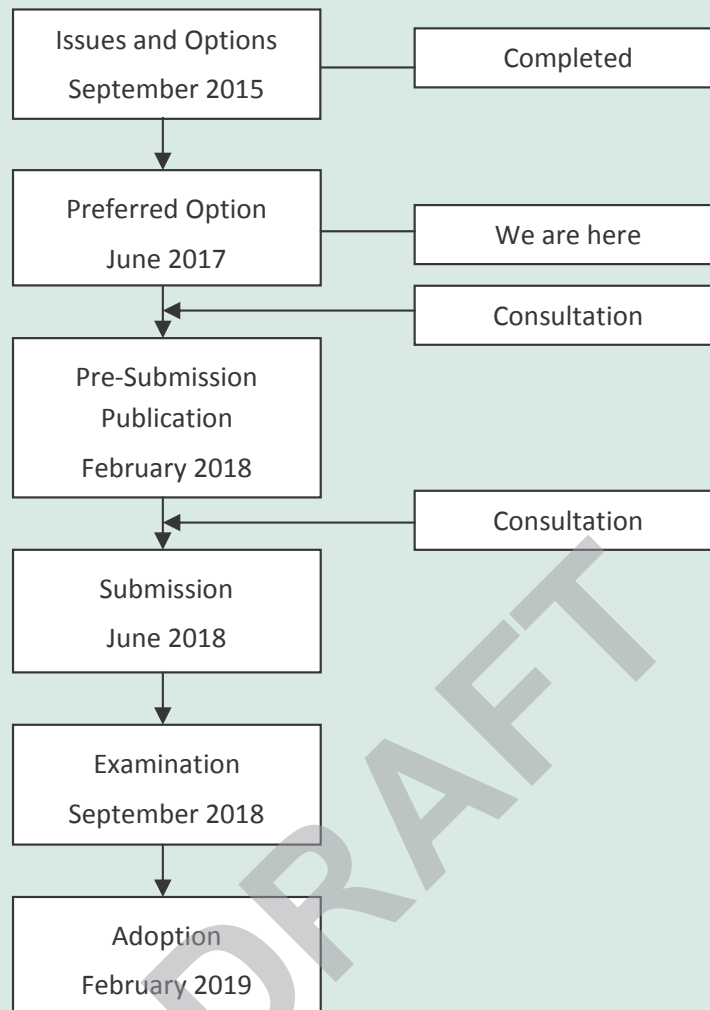
**1.11** The “Issues and Options” consultation conducted in late 2015 has extensively informed the preparation of this Preferred Options document. The PO is the first draft of the Local Plan Review and includes specific development targets as well as identifying sites for accommodating the level of development anticipated. A PO consultation will be held during June, July and August 2017 (as detailed above) to give everyone the opportunity to comment on the emerging Plan.

**1.12** Once the consultation on the PO has been assessed by the Council and any necessary re-drafting completed, a Submission Draft Plan will be prepared. This is the final draft of the Plan which will be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for independent Examination. Before it is submitted a further six week pre-publication consultation period will be held in order to give everyone an opportunity to make further comments. It is important to note that all comments made at this stage will be forwarded to the independent Inspector for their consideration. The Examination will include public hearing sessions which everyone is welcome to observe. Those people submitting comments on the Submission Draft Plan may be invited by the Inspector to speak at these sessions.

**1.13** At the end of the examination the independent Inspector will submit a report to the Council setting out whether the Plan is legally compliant and soundly based. All Plans have to satisfy these tests before the Plan can be Adopted by the Council and used as the basis for determining planning applications. It is anticipated that the Submission Draft Plan will be available in autumn 2017 and that the Plan will be adopted in early 2019

# 1 Introduction and Context

## Key stages in the Wyre Forest District Local Plan Review



## The Role of the New Local Plan and How it Will Affect You

**1.14** The new Local Plan will set out how much development is required in the District up until 2034 and will indicate where and how much land is required to meet these development requirements through the allocation of land for these purposes. This will include residential development (including Travellers and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation), retail and employment uses. It will also consider where new infrastructure will be required to support the anticipated development (eg roads, schools, utilities). The current planning policy documents look forward to 2026 and there are a number of sites which are allocated within these which have not been developed yet. It is likely that most of these sites will continue to be allocated for development but new sites will also be needed as the Plan will look at a longer timeframe (until 2034) and will give fresh consideration to the amount of housing, employment and retail requirements.

**1.15** The new Local Plan will also set out policies which will guide the determination of planning applications. These policies are likely to cover the same issues as those in the existing planning policy documents such as sustainable development, protecting and providing open space, design quality, the Green Belt and managing flood risk. However, consideration will need to be given to what changes have taken place nationally and how we respond to this locally.

**1.16** Once adopted the Local Plan will provide the basis for determining planning applications. It is important that we have an up-to-date Local Plan and enough land to meet our housing requirements for a rolling 5 year time-frame. Not having an up-to-date Local Plan could well result in the District Council being vulnerable to speculative planning applications which would result in a piecemeal approach to new development and sites that do not relate to existing settlements.

**1.17** The Local Plan will result in new development happening. This could be in Kidderminster and Stourport-on-Severn, the District's two main towns, on the outskirts of these towns, or in the smaller town of Bewdley and the District's villages. The changes that take place may affect you in a variety of ways; you may be able to see new housing or employment development near to where you live or on your way to work; new facilities may be provided close to you such as new shops, schools or open spaces; new roads or cycle ways could be built to make journeys shorter or easier and new employers may provide new job opportunities. Planning affects many aspects of our lives and it is important that we get the balance right. If you want to have a say in how much and what type of development takes place and where you believe it should go then this is the time to get involved.

### **Influences on the development of the Plan**

**1.18** National planning policy includes the National Planning Policy Framework<sup>(1)</sup> (NPPF). The NPPF sets out a number of fundamental issues that need to be taken into account during the preparation of local plans, which include the following requirements:

- a. To set out a clear economic vision and strategy for the area which positively and proactively encourages sustainable economic growth.
- b. To use a robust and up-to-date evidence base to ensure that the local plan meets the full, objectively assessed needs for market and affordable housing in the housing market area, as far as is consistent with the policies set out in the NPPF, including identifying key sites that are critical to the delivery of the housing strategy over the plan period.
- c. To set criteria, or identify strategic sites, that will help to encourage local and inward investment to match the strategy and meet anticipated needs over the plan period.

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1 See paragraphs 47 and 159 of the NPPF  
[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/6077/2116950.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6077/2116950.pdf)  
 – these provide the basis for developing housing provision and supply policy

# 1 Introduction and Context

- d. To maintain a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites with a buffer of either 5% or 20% depending on past delivery performance.
- e. To recognise a duty to co-operate between public bodies and to implement a new soundness test, to ensure that plans are “positively prepared”.

**1.19** Wyre Forest District is unusual in that it currently constitutes a self contained Housing Market Area whilst at the same time it is engaged with two Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) – namely Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP and Worcestershire LEP. This provides Wyre Forest with a range of opportunities to further enhance its economic position, access funding streams and ensure that the area is able to continue to look both towards the rest of Worcestershire and the conurbation in the same way that it has done for many years. It also brings a range of challenges in terms of ensuring that development is balanced, proportionate to the capacity of the District and does not undermine the unique character of the area.

**1.20** As part of Worcestershire, Wyre Forest looks to Worcestershire Strategic Partnership to provide a steer for its future direction of travel. In 2013 leaders from Worcestershire’s business, voluntary, community and public sector organisations pledged to work together to create a better future for Worcestershire. Expressed via “Worcestershire Next Generation”<sup>(2)</sup> this provides an update to the Strategic Community Strategy.

**1.21** Under the Duty to Cooperate the Wyre Forest Local Plan has regard to policies and relationships beyond the Wyre Forest administrative boundary. This includes existing and emerging policies related to Worcestershire as a whole together with consultation and coordination with neighbouring local authorities.

**1.22** The preparation of this has considered and taken account of a range of technical evidence. This includes:

- Consultation feedback
- Sustainability Appraisal
- A variety of technical commissions in respect of, for example, housing, employment, infrastructure, viability and Green Belt.

**1.23** These can sometimes be contradictory in nature; as such the District has also to make judgements based on that evidence.

**1.24** Wyre Forest DC is satisfied that this Plan has been designed to achieve sustainable economic growth throughout the plan period in accordance with the requirements of the NPPF. It has identified and promoted a range of sites suitable for the regeneration of the main towns, employment-generating activity, mixed-use, commercial and retail growth and appropriate rural diversification and enterprise activities. The Plan has striven to propose appropriate infrastructure enhancements to mitigate the impact of the proposed development and, in doing so, open up opportunities that would not otherwise have been available.

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2 <http://www.wearethenextgeneration.co.uk>

## What Happens to the Existing Local Plan Documents?

**1.25** The existing Local Plan documents date from 2010 and 2013. Some of the allocations and policies from these documents will be able to be carried forward and integrated into the new Local Plan whereas others will be replaced by entirely new policies. Whilst the new Local Plan is being developed the existing documents will still be used as the basis for determining planning applications. However once we reach Draft Submission Plan stage in early 2018 the new Plan will start to influence decisions on planning applications. Once the new Local Plan is adopted it will replace the existing documents.

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## 2 Key Issues and Challenges

### Wyre Forest today – a pen picture

**2.1** This section paints a picture of Wyre Forest District and provides a snapshot of its key features. It also summarises the key issues facing the District. These include continuing to make the most of brownfield regeneration, ensuring that we have thriving communities with suitable jobs and homes and ensuring that the natural environment is enhanced, used and enjoyed by all. The narrative below reflects the feedback provided via the “Issues and Options” consultation which was conducted in September 2015.

### The Settlement Hierarchy

**2.2** Wyre Forest District is named after one of the largest ancient semi-natural woodlands in the Country and is situated in north-west Worcestershire. The local authority area covers 75 sq.miles and has a population of approximately 99,500 (2015 mid-year estimate). The population has only grown slightly since 1991 and remains fairly static. However, after a decade with a population increase of only 1.1% (2001-2011), the population increased by a further 1.1% from 2013 to 2015.

**2.3** The District is largely rural, and has three towns: Kidderminster, Stourport-on-Severn and Bewdley. The three towns form a triangle of settlements at the centre of the District; between each of the towns is a narrow area of countryside. Each of the towns has its own character and community identity.

**2.4** Kidderminster (pop.56,185 in 2015), is the largest of the three towns and is the main centre for retail, industry and housing. The town developed rapidly in the 19th Century as a world leading centre for the production of carpet. This manufacturing industry has been in decline since the 1970s.

**2.5** Stourport-on-Severn (pop.20,503 in 2015), developed as an important industrial Georgian Canal Town at the confluence of the River Severn and River Stour with the construction of the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal. For over 100 years this attractive town with its riverside meadows has been a popular day trip destination for residents from Birmingham and the Black Country.

**2.6** Bewdley has a population of approximately 9,000 and is a Georgian riverside town, an inland port with surviving wharves which saw significant development during the 1960s. Today Bewdley is an attractive historic market town and a popular visitor destination.

**2.7** To the east, the larger more accessible villages include Blakedown and Cookley which are served by both facilities and reasonable public transport, Blakedown having a railway station. Villages in the west, which include Rock and Far Forest, are smaller with fewer facilities and more limited public transport.





## 2 Key Issues and Challenges

### Issues facing Wyre Forest

**2.8** The Issues and Options consultation conducted in September 2015 considered a range of challenges that face the Wyre Forest area. The consultation provided valuable feedback to the development of this Preferred Option document which has helped to steer the strategy's development.

**2.9** The issues highlighted by the document (Table 2.0.1) proposed by the Issues and Options paper were designated into three categories: social; economic; and environmental.

**Table 2.0.1 Issues highlighted in Issues and Options Consultation document**

#### **Social issues for Wyre Forest District:**

- Virtually static population growth.
- Ageing population. Low percentage of residents in the 0-19 and 20-39 age groups. High proportion of residents aged 45-64; very high proportion of residents aged 65+.
- The ageing population means that more care facilities are needed for elderly/end of life as well as specialist accommodation.
- The elderly may want to downsize to smaller residential units which could free up family sized accommodation. Need to ensure that residential development caters for all groups in society.
- There are high obesity levels.
- The District has a low level of in-migration.
- Although population static, there has been a 9% increase in the number of households as the number of residents per unit of accommodation is falling.
- High costs of providing healthcare for an ageing population with high obesity. Results in more medical intervention; for example, hospital stays or visits and visits to GPs.
- Leisure and sport facilities should be accessible to local residents. Participation in swimming and attending the gym are highest within the District with over 10% of the public accessing these activities.

#### **Economic issues for Wyre Forest District:**

- Reduction in traditional manufacturing industries – need for employment opportunities and suitable housing. Working age people need to be attracted to the District as economically active people improve the area. This helps retail and regenerates the area; more people spending money encourages more shops; this in turn improves the town centre so that more retailers wish to open shops, restaurants and provide services.
- The ratio of economically dependent people to economically active people is high. Therefore, we need to attract more economically active people to the District to ensure that communities are better balanced.
- Generally low unemployment within the District; however, there are pockets of higher unemployment in Foley Park and Hoobrook and Broadwaters wards.
- Lower earnings, both by location of employment and by residence than the West Midlands or Great Britain. It is likely that many people are commuting to Worcester or Birmingham for higher paid jobs.
- Development of brownfield sites - current Government policy states that 90% of suitable brownfield sites should have a Local Development Order for residential development by 2020. This could potentially push industrial development into other areas such as the Green Belt.
- Diversify the economy, create more skilled jobs to reduce out of District commuting and increase the retention of young educated residents.
- Raise wage levels by attracting employers with higher wages, thus reducing the wages gap between the District and neighbouring local authority areas.
- Improve rates of qualification at both GCSE level and higher and further education.

- Greater diversity of shops as improvements are made to Kidderminster shopping centre to encourage more visitors to the town centres and to tourist attractions throughout Wyre Forest District.
- Other areas of the town centre which have been traditionally retail could change to other uses and the primary shopping area could be redefined.

**Environmental issues for Wyre Forest District:**

- Pressure for development in the Green Belt.
- Pressure for development in flood zones.
- Safeguarding the best and most versatile agricultural land.
- Improving air quality and water quality.
- Ensuring that new development reflects Wyre Forest District's distinctive character.
- Protecting, conserving and, where it is possible to do so, enhancing the District's rich natural environment and historic assets.
- Planning for the impact of climate change, which includes flooding, in new development.
- Poor air quality (AQMA) at Horsefair, Kidderminster and Welch Gate, Bewdley.

**2.10** These Issues were broadly supported by respondents with a range of specific comments being made which primarily related to:

- Very poor public transport and high levels of traffic congestion with poor strategic transport infrastructure. It was strongly felt by consultees that these issues need to be addressed to encourage further investment in the District.
- Many local residents raised the importance of protecting the Green Belt and concerns over increased recreational pressures on the countryside.
- A number of comments were received regarding the future role of the Severn Valley Railway and the part it could play in improving passenger transport.
- A number of landowners and others involved in the development industry registered their concern that the Issues and Options consultation document failed to address the relationship between the Green Belt, brownfield land availability, housing completions and employment opportunities.

**2.11** These additional issues have been considered within the development of this Preferred Option consultation document and the development of the supporting evidence base.

### 3 Vision for the Area in 2034

**3.1** In the same way that the issues facing Wyre Forest were previously consulted on so were the Vision and Objectives for Wyre Forest. Again there was general support for these although with some suggested changes. Table 3.0.1 below presents the proposed amended Vision and Objectives.

**Table 3.0.1 What will Wyre Forest District be like in 2034?**

- i. In 2034 the three main towns of Kidderminster, Stourport-on-Severn and Bewdley in Wyre Forest District continue to maintain their distinctive and separate identities. The outlying villages have grown organically to meet their own needs. The Rivers Severn and Stour and the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal together with other green infrastructure are valued links for both wildlife and residents within and between the town centres, the surrounding countryside and villages.
- ii. The District's varied natural habitats, together with its diverse and historic landscapes are thriving, and offer a range of outdoor interests, contributing to local educational opportunities and sustainable tourism. Residents and businesses rely increasingly on energy from locally generated renewable sources. The risk of flooding is reduced due to a programme of floodplain management, increased water efficiency, softer landscaping and extensive use of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDS) in new developments.
- iii. Kidderminster has benefited from sustainable brownfield regeneration. The attractive and accessible town centre provides a range of retail and commercial leisure opportunities as well as civic spaces and urban greenspace. Kidderminster supports a vibrant visitor economy and a flourishing evening economy. Through its links with the region's Universities and Colleges, Kidderminster provides an important educational and vocational training centre. The transformation of the town has been enhanced by an improved transport infrastructure through which traffic congestion in the town centre has been considerably reduced with an associated improvement in air quality and opportunity for regeneration.
- iv. Stourport-on-Severn offers a range of facilities to local residents and visitors alike and its canal and riverside remain a key visitor attraction. Its public realm is enhanced through the restoration of its unique heritage including the canal basins and the regeneration of Bridge Street.
- v. Bewdley remains a thriving market town which meets the local community's needs. The town's historic character is preserved and its flourishing riverside environment continues to attract visitors.
- vi. To the east of the District, the larger villages of Cookley and Blakedown continue to provide local residents and the surrounding rural hinterlands with key local services. There remain more limited services, focussing on the needs of local communities, in settlements to the west such as Rock, Clows Top and Far Forest.
- vii. The District's housing market provides a choice of accommodation responding well to local needs and catering for single households, families and the elderly in particular. Job creation is balanced with housing delivery, encouraging younger people to remain within and be attracted to the District to create a better balanced population structure.
- viii. A vibrant and sustainable economy exists, primarily focussed around Kidderminster, Stourport-on-Severn and the Stourport Road Employment Corridor providing a range of jobs across the service, retail, research and development and manufacturing sectors, with the infrastructure and a skilled population in place to support it. The urban areas of Kidderminster and Stourport-on-Severn and the South Kidderminster Enterprise Park are the main focus for employment but they are supported by the rural economy and sustainable tourism.
- ix. The three towns and rural areas are well served by a sustainable transport network that delivers high levels of accessibility to key services and attractions by a variety of modes of transport. The urban environments have experienced reduced levels of traffic congestion and improved air quality within the town centres which has encouraged the renaissance of Kidderminster town centre. Kidderminster Railway Station acts as a high quality gateway to the District providing convenient interchange for bus users, pedestrians and cyclists alike. Frequent rail links to the nearby regional centre of Birmingham and the sub-regional centre of Worcester give access to higher order services.

- x. Crime and disorder in the District remain low and local residents feel safer. Residents have the opportunity to lead healthier lifestyles with improved access to clean and attractive green spaces, facilitated by a comprehensive network of routes suitable for vulnerable users (eg walkers, cyclists, horse riders). Young residents can access a variety of activities and facilities in the three towns and can make better use of community facilities in the rural villages. Educational achievement rates have improved, particularly in the wards of Oldington & Foley Park and Broadwaters. <sup>(3)</sup> Local residents are more skilled through improved access to training opportunities within the community. As they get older, residents' good health and wellbeing continues through easy access to quality health care and community facilities.
- xi. New development in Wyre Forest is properly supported by the timely provision of suitable infrastructure.

## Development Plan Aim and Objectives

**3.2** The following plan objectives (Table 3.0.2) will help address the key challenges facing Wyre Forest District and will contribute to the achievement of the Vision expressed above.

**Table 3.0.2 Wyre Forest Development Plan – Aim and Objectives**

<p><b>Plan Aim</b></p> <p>By 2034 Wyre Forest will be a District where people want to live <i>and</i> work <i>and</i> fulfil their potential without the need for excessive travel.</p> <p><b>Plan Objectives</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To encourage the long term sustainable development of Wyre Forest and its communities.</li> <li>2. To address the key challenges facing the District especially in terms of housing, employment and transport.</li> <li>3. To address housing needs in order that existing and future residents' requirements are met and the economic development of the area is supported.</li> <li>4. To recognise the changing nature of employment, encourage economic diversification and make sufficient high quality employment sites available.</li> <li>5. To maximise the use of previously developed land in order to ensure the best use is made of available land both within and beyond the main towns.</li> <li>6. To protect and support the role of the Green Belt through a strategic review and to identify limited strategic Green Belt release to enable the delivery of the plan whilst reinforcing the role and integrity of the Green Belt for future Plan periods.</li> <li>7. To help resolve the traffic issues in Kidderminster by the provision of an alternative route for through-traffic and to enhance the availability and versatility of rail-based services.</li> <li>8. To maximise opportunities for the inclusion of green infrastructure and heritage assets into high quality development in order to provide a good quality of life and maximise the benefits of walking and cycling.</li> </ol>
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3 Pre May 2015 Wards are referred to as data is not yet available for new Wards.

## 3 Vision for the Area in 2034

### Document Structure

**3.3** To address this range of challenges and issues within the space of a single document is both challenging and complex. In order to achieve this, the document is ordered according to the following structure:

**Table 3.0.3**

Part	Description	Associated Policies	
		Section	Policy Title
A	Strategic Policies	5	Overarching Sustainable Development Principles
		6	A Sustainable Future – Development Strategy
		7	Strategic Green Belt Review
		8	A Desirable Place to Live
		9	Health
		10	A Good Place to Do Business
		11	A Unique Place
		12	Strategic Infrastructure
		13	Transport and Accessibility
		14	Strategic Green Infrastructure
		15	Water Management
		16	Pollution, Minerals and Waste
	Key Diagram		
B	Development Management Policies	18	A Desirable Place to Live
		19	Providing Accommodation for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Show-people
		20	Community Facilities
		21	Employment Land
		22	Retail
		23	Sustainable Tourism
		24	Telecommunications and Renewable Energy
		25	Safeguarding the Green Belt
		26	Safeguarding the Historic Environment



Part	Description	Associated Policies	
		Section	Policy Title
		27	Quality Design and Local Distinctiveness
		28	Rural Development
C	Proposed Allocations	30	Kidderminster Town
		31	Kidderminster Urban Extensions
		32	Stourport-on-Severn
		33	Bewdley
		34	Previously Developed Sites in the Green Belt
		35	Rural Wyre Forest
D	Monitoring and Implementation Framework	36	Monitoring and Implementation Framework

**3.4** National planning policy includes the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The NPPF sets out a number of fundamental issues that need to be taken into account during the preparation of local plans, which include the following requirements:

- To set out a clear economic vision and strategy for the area, which positively and proactively encourages sustainable economic growth.
- To use a robust and up-to-date evidence base to ensure that the local plan meets the full, objectively assessed needs for market and affordable housing in the housing market area, as far as is consistent with the policies set out in the NPPF, including identifying key sites that are critical to the delivery of the housing strategy over the plan period.
- To set criteria, or identify strategic sites, that will help to encourage local and inward investment to match the strategy and meet anticipated needs over the plan period.
- To maintain a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites with a buffer of either 5% or 20% depending on past delivery performance.
- To recognise a duty to co-operate between public bodies and to implement a new soundness test, to ensure that plans are "positively prepared".

**3.5** Wyre Forest District Council is satisfied that the Preferred Option has been designed to achieve sustainable economic growth throughout the plan period, in accordance with the requirements of the NPPF. It has identified and promoted a range of sites suitable for housing, employment-generating activity, mixed-use, commercial and retail growth and appropriate rural diversification and enterprise activities.

## 4 Core Policies Introduction

**4.1** The remainder of Part A of this Plan sets out the primacy of the need for sustainable, positively planned development required to meet the needs of Wyre Forest throughout this plan period. In doing so it describes the Development Strategy necessary to address the identified issues and challenges and to guide development to ensure that it is appropriate in scale and balanced.

**4.2** In setting out the Development Strategy this section proposes a range of Strategic Policies intended to provide the context and necessary framework for the subsequent Development Management and Site Allocations policies (Sections B and C respectively) of this document. This Section's policies consider:

- **Section 5**     **Overarching Sustainable Development Principles**
- **Section 6**     **A Sustainable Future – Wyre Forest Development Strategy**
- **Section 7**     **Strategic Green Belt Review**
- **Section 8**     **A Desirable Place to Live**
- **Section 9**     **Health**
- **Section 10**    **A Good Place to do Business**
- **Section 11**    **A Unique Place**
- **Section 12**    **Strategic Infrastructure**
- **Section 13**    **Transport and Accessibility**
- **Section 14**    **Strategic Green Infrastructure**
- **Section 15**    **Water Management**
- **Section 16**    **Pollution, Minerals and Waste**
- **Key Diagram**

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**5.1** The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. The Government defined sustainable development via the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which, when taken as a whole constitutes their view of what this means in practice for the planning system in England.

**5.2** Government's overall requirement is summarised at NPPF paragraph 14 which considers that at the heart of sustainable development lies the golden thread of the presumption in favour of sustainable development. As with the Government's view that the meaning of sustainable development is expressed by the entirety of the NPPF, Wyre Forest District Council considers that the meaning of sustainable development for its area is embodied by the whole of this document and the policies it contains.

### Summary of Issues and Options Responses

General support for the concept of sustainable development and the need to maximise the benefit of existing and future supporting and strategic infrastructure.

### Policy 5A - Sustainable Development

- A. When considering development proposals, Wyre Forest District Council (WFDC) will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework. WFDC will always work jointly and proactively with applicants to find solutions that mean proposals can be approved wherever possible and to secure development that improves economic, social and environmental conditions in the District.
- B. Planning applications that accord with the policies in the Plan (and where relevant, with policies in Neighbourhood Plans) will be approved unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- C. Where applications do not accord with policies in the Plan, WFDC will seek to work with applicants with a view to mitigating adverse impacts and identifying sustainable solutions where possible.
- D. Where there are no policies relevant to the application or relevant policies are out of date at the time of making the decision then the Local Authority will grant permission unless material considerations indicate otherwise – taking into account whether:
  - i. any adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the NPPF taken as a whole; or
  - ii. specific policies in the NPPF indicate that development should be restricted.

## 5 Overarching Sustainable Development Principles

### Reasoned Justification

**5.3** The economic, social and environmental aspects that make up sustainable development need to be balanced carefully to accomplish a positive outcome. The NPPF makes it clear that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development.

**5.4** In order to achieve a sustainable end result, the Plan (through its overall approach and policies) needs to perform a number of roles:

- a. **An economic role** – contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive Wyre Forest economy by:
  - i. Ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right locations and at the right time to support economic and social growth and innovation.
  - ii. Identifying and co-ordinating development requirements, including the provision of infrastructure.
  - iii. Promoting accessibility to everyday facilities for all, especially those without a car or those seeking to achieve a modal shift away from the car.
  - iv. Implementing the Worcestershire Economic Strategy
  - v. Implementing the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Economic Strategy.
- b. **A social role** – supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities in Wyre Forest by:
  - i. Providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations.
  - ii. Creating a high-quality built environment, with accessible local services and infrastructure that reflect a community's needs and support its health and social and cultural well-being.
  - iii. Creating a strong sense of place by strengthening the distinctive and cultural qualities of towns and villages.
  - iv. Creating safe and accessible environments where crime, disorder and the fear of crime do not undermine quality of life or community cohesion.
- c. **An environmental role** – contributing to protecting and enhancing Wyre Forest's unique natural, built and historic environment by:
  - i. Helping to improve biodiversity.
  - ii. Using natural resources prudently.
  - iii. Minimising waste and pollution.
  - iv. Safeguarding and enhancing landscape character.
  - v. Protecting important historic buildings, monuments, sites of archaeological significance and the integrity of local planning designations.

- vi. Protecting and enhancing green infrastructure.
- vii. Mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.

**5.5** These roles cannot be undertaken in isolation because they are mutually dependent.

**5.6** Economic growth can secure higher social and environmental standards and well-designed buildings and places can improve the lives of people and communities. For example, the promotion of local food production can help support and diversify the local agricultural economy, promote healthier lifestyles and provide valuable habitats or wildlife. Similarly, sustainable drainage can provide a cost-effective measure to reduce the environmental impact of surface water run-off and increase resilience to flooding. To achieve sustainable development, economic, social and environmental gains will be sought jointly and concurrently wherever possible.

**5.7** The Plan will seek to guide development to achieve sustainable solutions and the policies, taken as a whole, constitute the authority's view of what sustainable development means in practice for Wyre Forest when promoted through the planning system.

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## 6 A Sustainable Future - Development Strategy

### Introduction

**6.1** The Development Strategy sets out the broad framework for future development within the District for the 2016-2034 time period. It takes forward the vision and development objectives into a strategy to address the issues and challenges facing the District and to guide development into the future. Importantly it also establishes a clear role for the District's settlements in accommodating future development.

#### Summary of Issues and Options Responses

The Issues and Options consultation was broadly supportive of the matters identified. Consultees' particular concerns related to:

- Very poor public transport and high levels of traffic congestion with poor strategic transport infrastructure. It was considered that these issues need to be addressed to encourage further investment in the District.
- The need to meet the District's housing and other requirements and that a pro-growth agenda should be pursued. This needs to look beyond just brownfield redevelopment and should address the relationship between the Green Belt, brownfield land availability, the deliverability of current Plan allocations, housing completions and employment opportunities.
- Other issues included the need to look at Green Infrastructure strategically, the potential to focus new development around strategic transport infrastructure and the progression of a strategic Green Belt Boundary Review.
- General support for the re-utilisation of brownfield land (Option 1) continues though there are concerns about the viability of some of these sites. Similarly support continues for the emphasis of concentrating development in and around the main settlements.
- Support for a sustainable urban extension to the north of Kidderminster based on the Lea Castle Hospital site (Option 2) and the Hurcott Lane ADR: although in respect of the latter concern was expressed in respect of traffic and impact on the SSSI.
- Local opposition from local residents (particularly the Spennells Housing Estate) in respect of an Eastern Kidderminster extension (Option 3) although some support for this approach was expressed from other quarters.
- Continuing widespread support for the brownfield regeneration of Stourport (Option 4) with some querying whether further greenfield development there is necessary.
- Concerns over the recent lack of development in Bewdley were expressed with the acknowledged need for some development to meet local requirements (Option 5). This may need a redrawing of the settlement boundary if the Air Quality Management Area problems are not worsened.
- Little enthusiasm was expressed for allocating development to the Rural East villages (Option 6). Where development takes place this should be proportionate.
- Due to its isolation and poor sustainability little enthusiasm was expressed for directing development to the Rural West (Option 7) though the requirement to meet local need is acknowledged.

**6.2** At the time of preparation of this Preferred Option document the Government's new Housing White paper was being published along with the underpinning documentation that accompanied it. The Council's intention has been to try to anticipate as much as is possible of the Government's strategy so that a Plan consistent with the requirements of the NPPF and emerging national policy has been brought forward for consultation. As such, through this Preferred Option, Wyre Forest District Council has strived to propose a realistic level of housing requirement that respects the findings of the Local Plans Expert Group (HoC, March 2016).

**6.3** The Development Strategy is made up of six policies which consider:

- the Development Needs – or amount of development - to be delivered within the Plan period (Policy 6.A)
- the general location strategy for new development and Settlement Hierarchy (Policy 6.B);
- the role of Kidderminster as the strategic centre (Policy 6.C);
- the role of Kidderminster Urban Extensions (Policy 6.D)
- the role of Stourport-on-Severn and Bewdley as market towns (Policy 6.E); and
- the role of the villages and other rural settlements (Policy 6.F);

**6.4** The 'Key Diagram' (page 104) supports the Development Strategy by showing the opportunities and constraints to guide new development and significant future infrastructure especially transport infrastructure.

#### **Policy 6A - Development Needs 2016 -2034**

During the Plan Period (2016-2034) Wyre Forest District Council will make provision for, monitor and manage the delivery of housing, employment land, retail and offices at the levels of development contained in Table 6.0.1. This delivery will be in accordance with the site allocations set out in Section C of this document.

**Table 6.0.1 Wyre Forest Development Needs 2016-2034**

Type of Development	Amount of Development Required	Annual requirement
Dwellings (net additional)	5,400	300
Of which:	3,780	210
- Market Housing		
- Affordable Housing	1,620	90
C2/ Institutional/Care Home	540	Not applicable
Employment Land	40 hectares	Not applicable
Comparison Retailing	Zero	Not applicable

## 6 A Sustainable Future - Development Strategy

### Reasoned Justification

**6.5** Housing provision will be made for 5,400 dwellings (net) which includes the related market housing and affordable housing provision sub-totals. A separate provision for 540 C2 (eg Care Homes) will also be made. In light of the recently published White Paper this level of housing is considered appropriate by Wyre Forest District Council in order to meet the challenges posed by the need for economic regeneration of the District and the provision of an improved level of affordable housing without undermining the local housing market. Key objectives of the Development Strategy include making provision for:

- a. The right amount of land and type of employment uses at readily accessible locations in which business will thrive and be resilient to current and future challenges;
- b. Sufficient housing provision that enables the labour force to live locally and contributes to achieving the right mix of housing types so that the wide range of housing needs can be met;
- c. Whilst the current quantum of available retail provision is considered to be broadly correct it will be necessary to ensure that the retail offer is appropriate to the future requirements of the District. Therefore, whilst it is not anticipated that there will be a need for any additional large scale provision, it may be appropriate for the offer to evolve in order to meet future requirements. Where additional requirements are anticipated to be required to support housing allocations these will be detailed by the specific site allocation policies in Part C of this document.
- d. Infrastructure that supports communities which are housing the labour force and facilitates the movement of people to their employment, education and other services through the alignment of the phasing of development and supporting infrastructure.

**6.6** The approach to defining the Wyre Forest housing requirement for the plan period to 2034 (Amion - April 2017) has incorporated as far as possible the latest technical information and advice associated with the publication of the 2017 Housing White Paper. As such the figure of 5,400 (from the Amion, April 2017 Report) reflects the necessary housing requirement to satisfy housing need plus additional need arising from the necessity to provide additional affordable housing and opportunities for economic growth. The same report separately identifies an additional requirement of 540 C2 (eg care homes).

### Annual requirements

**6.7** Table 6.0.1 also sets out the annual housing requirement for the Wyre Forest District. This is derived by a simple division of the housing requirement (5,400) by the number of years that the plan will apply (18 years). This equates to an annual housing requirement of 300 dwellings: of which 210 should be market housing and 90 will be affordable housing. As discussed by Policy 8B (Affordable Housing) there will be a number of elements that make up the affordable housing component.

### Duty to Cooperate.

**6.8** It is clearly demonstrated by the OAHN (Amion, April 2017) that, unusually in the West Midlands, the Wyre Forest District Council area is co-terminal with the Wyre Forest Housing Market Area. As such the housing requirement reflected by this Plan is based solely by that



required by the needs of Wyre Forest. However, this does not negate the need for the Plan to be prepared in consultation with neighbouring and near-by authorities (eg other Worcestershire districts, Birmingham and the Black Country, South Staffordshire, Shropshire); accordingly Wyre Forest District has co-operated with authorities that are both adjoining and beyond in order to consider strategic priorities for the delivery of homes, including cross-boundary requirements. The evidence base documents the joint working and other activities demonstrating effective co-operation consistent with the Duty to Cooperate legal requirement and the NPPF.

### Management of land supply

**6.9** The Council's monitoring of the provision of dwellings demonstrates that, whilst under normal economic circumstances, a fairly consistent supply can be achieved. Under unusually buoyant or depressed economic circumstances extremes (both high and low) of delivery can be evidenced. It is therefore prudent to ensure that the authority is in a position to respond quickly to changing circumstances. Positive planning measures may be required to help bring forward sites for development earlier in the plan period to ensure a five-year supply of sites is able to be sustained. Whilst not exhaustive such initiatives might include:

- a. Working with house builders / landowners, to monitor and progress the housing supply and to identify any causes of supply problems and where appropriate to act on feedback received.
- b. Production of detailed Planning Briefs and / or area-based Supplementary Planning Documents, to increase certainty for developers on the progression of sites through the planning process.
- c. Regular meetings with stakeholders about the major urban extensions.
- d. As part of the preparation of Planning Briefs, indicate different development permutations to accommodate different viability scenarios.
- e. Pre-application discussions with developers, landowners and their agents to increase certainty in the development management process.
- f. Sensitive application of policy where issues around scheme viability have been clearly demonstrated.
- g. Prioritise public sector land.
- h. Seek public sector intervention and potential funding streams through the Homes England and other funding streams.
- i. Testing of viability through an independent study and liaison with developers about viability issues.

**6.10** The Council recognises the implications for brownfield land to be placed on Part 2 of the brownfield land register which will be required from the Council by the end of 2017. These implications will become clearer in time but are likely to involve such land receiving "Planning Permission in Principle"

## 6 A Sustainable Future - Development Strategy

### Policy 6B - Locating New Development

A The Development Strategy and the site allocations in this Plan (as described by Policies 6.C – 6.F) are based upon the following principles:

- i. Provide accessible, attractive employment sites and positive policies to deliver job creation opportunities.
- ii. Provide for and facilitate the delivery of sufficient accessible housing to meet objectively assessed needs to 2034.
- iii. Encourage the effective use and re-use of accessible, available and environmentally acceptable brownfield land
- iv. Wherever possible safeguard and enhance the open countryside.
- v. Maintain the openness of the Green Belt following the Green Belt Review encompassed within this Local Plan Review.
- vi. Focus most development in and adjacent to the urban areas, where both housing needs and accessibility to more effective public service provision are greatest.
- vii. Relate the allocation of development to the effective provision of infrastructure.

B Windfall development proposals will be assessed in accordance with the settlement hierarchy described below:

**Table 6.0.2 Wyre Forest Settlement Hierarchy**

Category	Settlements Included	Role	Suitable Development
Main Town	Kidderminster	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administrative centre of the District</li> <li>• Focus of public services</li> <li>• Focus of employment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus of large scale housing provision including urban extensions</li> <li>• Utilisation of appropriate brownfield and greenfield sites</li> <li>• Comparison and convenience A1 retail (to meet District requirements and needs)</li> <li>• Commercial leisure</li> <li>• Large and small scale offices</li> <li>• Residential</li> <li>• Employment</li> <li>• Hotels, tourism and leisure</li> <li>• Major services</li> </ul>
Large Market Town	Stourport-on-Severn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comprehensive range of local services</li> <li>• Employment for residents and those in nearby rural areas</li> <li>• River/Canal based Tourism and leisure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support role in the provision of larger scale housing</li> <li>• Utilisation of appropriate brownfield and greenfield sites</li> <li>• Convenience A1 retail (to meet the needs of Stourport-on-Severn)</li> <li>• Local services</li> <li>• Employment, offices and commerce</li> </ul>



Category	Settlements Included	Role	Suitable Development
Market Town	Bewdley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fewer services</li> <li>Employment opportunities especially for rural area west of the R. Severn</li> <li>Tourism and leisure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Convenience A1 retail to meet local needs.</li> <li>Employment, offices and commerce</li> <li>Housing to meet local needs</li> <li>Leisure and business tourism</li> <li>Local services</li> </ul>
Villages washed over by Green Belt	Chaddesley Corbett Wolverley Upper Arley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Varying ranges of local services and facilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Housing to meet local needs via allocated sites and exceptions sites in appropriate circumstances.</li> <li>Local services.</li> <li>Small scale rural employment including offices</li> </ul>
Other villages and rural settlements	Inset Green Belt: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fairfield</li> <li>Cookley</li> <li>Blakedown</li> <li>Wilden</li> </ul> Non Green Belt: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clows Top</li> <li>Rock</li> <li>Bliss Gate</li> <li>Far Forest</li> <li>Callow Hill</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Varying ranges of local services and facilities</li> <li>Settlements to west of River Severn tend to have a widely dispersed catchment for employment, services etc</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Housing to meet local needs via allocated sites and exceptions sites in appropriate circumstances.</li> <li>Infill development within settlement boundary</li> <li>Local services</li> <li>Small scale rural employment including offices</li> </ul>

C Where a community decides to develop a Neighbourhood Plan the District Council will cooperate with and support the community in this activity so that greater local control over the location of development can be exerted whilst supporting the delivery of the Local Plan.

D The open countryside is defined as land beyond any development boundary. In the open countryside development will be strictly controlled and will be limited to dwellings for rural workers, replacement dwellings and rural exception sites (Policy 8C); employment development in rural areas and buildings for agriculture and forestry (Policy 21B and renewable energy projects (Policy 24B) and development specifically permitted by other Wyre Forest Local Plan policies.

E Following the Wyre Forest Green Belt review the remaining Green Belt will be maintained and development proposed within the Green Belt will be considered in accordance with national policy as set out in the NPPF.

## 6 A Sustainable Future - Development Strategy

### Reasoned Justification

**6.11** The development strategy is driven by the Wyre Forest vision and its associated objectives. It brings together land use, development and infrastructure considerations that flow from the economic, environmental and social characteristics of the area. The Sustainability Appraisal (SA) demonstrates that the proposed development strategy will help deliver the SA objectives.

**6.12** The new development strategy builds upon the previous Wyre Forest Core Strategy which concentrated development on the large amount of brownfield land in the urban core of the District. Whilst the new strategy continues to maximise the benefit of this resource it will no longer be possible to be entirely reliant on brownfield land meaning that some green field land take will be required. This is due to two key factors:

- a. much of the readily available brownfield land has now been developed;
- b. the higher housing requirement of Wyre Forest District is significantly greater than the availability of brownfield land.

**6.13** The urban areas of the District have the greatest housing needs and are locations where the cost of public service delivery is relatively low. Accordingly the bulk of development needs that cannot be met via brownfield land (including brown field land in the Green Belt) will be via green field land release adjacent to the main towns, especially Kidderminster. In the other settlements, the allocated growth and future development sites are primarily to meet local needs whilst at the same time ensuring the future sustainability of the settlement.

**6.14** The villages and hamlets in Wyre Forest, particularly to the west of the River Severn, are characterised by close-knit communities that in many places retain links with the traditional rural economy as well as providing some limited services. Sites well beyond development boundaries generally are less sustainable as access to local services and employment opportunities tends to be poorer and therefore it is appropriate that development in the open countryside is restricted to proposals which are supportive of more specific Local Plan policies, eg. Policy 19.2 – Rural Employment.

**6.15** Maintaining the identity and integrity of individual settlements is an important issue for local communities. To the east of the River Severn this is achieved by the West Midlands Green Belt designation. Green Belts serve five purposes (set out in the National Planning Policy Framework), which are:

- to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas;
- to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

**6.16** Locally, the Green Belt continues to serve all the purposes of national policy and the boundaries are considered to be strong and enduring. However, due to the exceptional circumstances of an increased housing demand coupled with a reduced amount of brownfield

land and a very tightly constrained Green Belt boundary restricting the ability to develop sustainable locations the District Council considered it necessary to undertake a Green Belt Review through this Local Plan Review (NPPF para 85). Where the Green Belt is fundamental in preventing the neighbouring towns from merging (e.g. between Bewdley and Kidderminster along the A456 corridor and Kidderminster and Stourport-on-Severn along the A451 corridor), it will be particularly important to ensure that the land remains open.

**6.17** The nearest sub-regional centre to Wyre Forest District is Worcester which has a sub-regional function. Additionally, particularly in respect of commuting, there are links with the southern Black Country and Birmingham. Within the District the largest and most important retail and commercial centre is its administrative centre, Kidderminster, which also provides a focus for public services, comparison shopping, etc. This strategy will continue to support the role of Kidderminster and will seek to facilitate its further regeneration through the redevelopment of such key zones as Lion Fields (the Eastern Gateway) and Churchfields.

**6.18** The other Main Towns' centres at Stourport-on-Severn and Bewdley are smaller and provide a smaller scale and range of retail and other services typically serving their own settlement and their hinterland of smaller settlements and villages. Centres in the villages and rural settlements are again smaller and will typically provide only a limited range of day-to-day retail and other services.

#### **Policy 6C - Kidderminster town as the strategic centre of the District**

Kidderminster will continue to be the strategic centre for the District and its role in providing a focus for new housing, commercial, employment, retail, office and leisure development is to be enhanced. New development will focus on the regeneration opportunities on the identified sites within and adjacent to the town. Where necessary sustainable urban extensions to Kidderminster are proposed (see Policy 6.D).

The future development needs of Kidderminster will be allocated and implemented through Policy 30 (Kidderminster Site Allocations) as well as the "ReWyre Renewed" Strategy.

Development proposals which help to promote Kidderminster as the tourism 'hub' of the District will be encouraged during the plan period. This includes the provision of supporting facilities such as hotels, conferencing facilities and developments that improve the evening / night time economy and cultural offer of the town. Sustainable transport links and infrastructure to promote ease of access to the Wyre Forest, Stourport-on-Severn, Bewdley, West Midlands Safari Park and Kidderminster Railway Station will be sought.

#### **Reasoned Justification**

**6.19** Kidderminster is a former carpet manufacturing town which has been and is still, experiencing economic restructure as a result of the decline in activity of this industry. Consequently Kidderminster faces a number of economic challenges and contains areas which experience acute deprivation. The challenges include lower than average household incomes, low skill levels and poor educational attainment.

## 6 A Sustainable Future - Development Strategy

**6.20** There is great potential for regeneration in Kidderminster. The Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal and River Stour both run through the town centre, providing a significant opportunity to create new waterside destinations. Whilst much of the brownfield land in the town has now been redeveloped, Kidderminster still benefits from significant areas of brownfield land suitable for redevelopment most notably Lionfields (the Eastern Gateway) and Churchfields.

**6.21** As the District's strategic centre Kidderminster has a unique role within the District. There are key opportunities to improve the town's tourism and employment roles, boosted by the Severn Valley Railway, the West Midlands Safari Park, and the economic success of the South Kidderminster Enterprise Park. Overall, opportunities to create additional employment and learning opportunities, improve the natural and built environment, increase tourism and provide new housing, through regeneration are all present in Kidderminster.

**6.22** All new development should make a positive contribution to the vitality and viability of the town and support the creation of a safe, attractive and accessible urban environment and improve both the overall mix of land uses in the town and its connectivity to adjoining areas.

**6.23** The development of a diverse evening/night time economy centred on Kidderminster is seen as an important element in driving the improvement of this strategic centre and the wider District. Careful consideration will be required to determine the number, type and scale of activities and uses to ensure that a rich, inclusive and safe environment is created.

### Policy 6D - Kidderminster Urban Extensions

The areas will be defined on the Policies Map and will come forward in line with the detail requirements expressed by Policy 31.

The proposed Kidderminster Urban extensions are:

- i. The ex-hospital site at Lea Castle
- ii. East of Kidderminster (See **note** below Policy Box)

**Note to Policy 6D:** The precise composition of the remaining urban extension(s) to Kidderminster is an important aspect of this consultation. As such it is not yet possible to be precise at this stage. Please see paragraph 6.44 onwards ("*Preferred Option Stage – Key Choice for the Development Strategy*") of this document for more details.

### Reasoned Justification

**6.24** In recognition of the insufficient amount of sustainably located readily available land to accommodate the necessary housing and employment requirement two well-designed urban extensions are proposed.

**6.25** In line with the NPPF (Para 82) Wyre Forest District Council has determined the need for a review of the Green Belt within the District under the exceptional circumstances provision. This is to specifically accommodate larger scale development such as new settlements or major urban extensions and is necessary due to the scale of development needs identified for the District up until 2034.

**6.26** The proposed housing requirement is 5,400 dwellings for the plan period plus an additional 540 C2 Institutional (eg Care Homes). The HELAA, once assessed against viability and immediately obvious site constraints such as flood risk suggests that there is capacity for approximately 1,200 dwellings on brownfield land within the main towns and an additional 600 at Lea Castle. Whilst there is some additional green field capacity elsewhere in the District, particularly to the west of the River Severn near the market towns (circa 900), some of which will be required to address local needs, this will not be sufficient to meet the overall District housing requirement,

**6.27** Therefore to meet the needs of the growing population and ensure that sufficient high quality accessible land is available for residential and economic development the District has proposed the expansion of the Kidderminster urban area through the removal of around 2% of all land from the Green Belt. This will enable the delivery of planned sustainable urban extensions with accompanying employment, services and infrastructure.

**6.28** The District Council will continue to work proactively in these locations with existing landowners, stakeholders and other agencies to bring forward developments during the new plan period.

#### **Policy 6E - Role of Stourport-on-Severn and Bewdley as Market Towns**

Within the District's market towns of Stourport-on-Severn and Bewdley, the following development proposals will be sought:

- Employment, start-up business units and commerce, to provide local employment opportunities and enhance economic viability.
- Current A1 retail provision will be safeguarded where possible, however, diversification proposals will be assessed against their overall positive contribution to the town centre.
- New retail development proposals should be appropriate to the town's position in the District's settlement hierarchy.
- Developments which provide additional community and health facilities for the local area.
- Sustainable transport infrastructure should be enhanced to ensure ease of access to the town's services and facilities, particularly from the surrounding rural areas. Access from the market towns to the higher order services available in Kidderminster will also be improved.
- There will be limited small-scale Green Belt release to enable the market towns to contribute to the housing requirement whilst addressing the need for sustainability and cost effective infrastructure provision.

## 6 A Sustainable Future - Development Strategy

### Stourport-on-Severn:

- Due to its role in the settlement hierarchy and mix of employment and service opportunities, Stourport-on-Severn is expected to make an important contribution to meeting the District's requirements for new homes. The focus will be on existing brownfield sites within the town supplemented by some green field release.
- Developments which will increase the variety and mix of the tourism offer in the town will be encouraged and facilities which focus on heritage tourism, particularly capitalising on the historic canal basins, will be especially promoted.
- The proposed allocations for Stourport-on-Severn are detailed at Policy 32.

### Bewdley:

- Bewdley's contribution towards the District's housing need will be limited to meet local needs on allocated sites. This reflects the more limited availability of jobs and services within the town. Some limited green field development will be permitted to enable this,
- The role of Bewdley as a sustainable tourist destination is to be enhanced, with sustainable transport links to the Wyre Forest, Severn Valley Railway, West Midland Safari and Leisure Park and Kidderminster Rail station being a particular focus.
- The proposed allocations for Bewdley are detailed at Policy 33.

### Reasoned Justification

**6.29** Within market towns, local people and those in the surrounding rural hinterland, should be able to buy most things they need and have sufficient access to housing, jobs, education and entertainment.

**6.30** The geography of the District means that Kidderminster is just 3 miles from each of the market towns with reasonably good public transport links between them. Therefore, the need for Bewdley and Stourport-on-Severn to provide facilities and services should be balanced with their proximity to Kidderminster and the services it provides in its function as the strategic centre of the District.

### Stourport-on-Severn

**6.31** With a population of 20,000 Stourport-on-Severn is a large market town that is well served by local amenities such as shops and community facilities. It is relatively well served by public transport, although some outlying housing estates have poor access to bus services. The town provides a good level of existing employment opportunities.

**6.32** The town has the potential to accommodate a significant amount of new development on brownfield sites within or adjacent to the town centre. However, regeneration will need to be carefully considered in the context of the town's historic character and heritage in addition to the settlement hierarchy.



**6.33** In Stourport-on-Severn town centre congestion is an issue because the current road layout, pedestrian arrangements and lack of alternative routes (including bridge access and capacity). In respect of future development in and around the town the strategic transport infrastructure in the town is therefore a key consideration. Accessibility to the town centre by alternative modes for residents and visitors alike is extremely important to the town's future functionality and viability.

**6.34** Stourport-on-Severn has unique origins as a canal town and has five historic basins which have recently undergone a major restoration programme. The town is also located on the banks of the River Severn which has helped it become a popular visitor destination. The town is a particular attraction for day trippers, especially for people from the Birmingham and Black Country areas. The tourism offer of the town has a great potential for generating economic activity, but this has not been fully utilised in the past. A key opportunity is available to promote Stourport-on-Severn's history as a canal town with its historic basins and take advantage of its heritage assets. This would help to enable the town to tap into new tourism markets and potentially attract a higher-spending, longer-stay visitor.

### **Bewdley**

**6.35** Bewdley has a smaller population at around 9,000 but has a greater interdependent relationship with the surrounding rural parishes.

**6.36** There is a reasonable level of service provision in the town with shopping and community facilities to serve the local population. However, higher order services and goods are on offer in Kidderminster and therefore are available within a short distance from Bewdley.

**6.37** Employment opportunities are very limited within the town with the majority of workers having to commute out to the surrounding areas.

**6.38** Like Stourport-on-Severn, Bewdley is also a popular tourist destination. This is largely due to its attractive and historic Georgian architecture, its setting on the River Severn, the Safari Park and the Severn Valley Railway station close to the centre. The town's setting within the countryside is also an important factor and the Wyre Forest is located just on the town's outskirts. Therefore, Bewdley is well located within a tourist setting and provides opportunities for developing sustainable tourism.

**6.39** The ability to accommodate new development on brownfield sites within or adjacent to the town centre is limited due to the heritage setting of the town as well as its topography and the Welch Gate Air Quality Management Area.. Development within the town's Conservation Area itself, which covers most of the town centre, is especially sensitive and will need to preserve or enhance the special character and appearance of the area. There are few development opportunities within the built environment and conservation is a priority.

## 6 A Sustainable Future - Development Strategy

### Policy 6F - Role of the villages and rural areas

#### Sustaining Community Facilities and Services

- Developments that provide the rural community with essential facilities and services will be supported in principle.
- The network of local groups of shops and public houses will be safeguarded in order to support nearby settlements and reduce the need to travel.
- Kidderminster, Stourport-on-Severn and Bewdley will remain the most sustainable places to provide higher order services and facilities to the rural areas, but access to them by public transport should be improved.

#### Providing Affordable Housing

- New residential development in the District's villages, rural settlements and other rural hamlets will be to meet local housing needs only, as established through objectively assessed housing needs and parish surveys. (Policy 8C - Rural Exception Sites).

#### The Rural Economy

- The rural economy will be supported by promoting development which contributes to rural employment sectors as well as encouraging appropriate farm diversification schemes.
- Development proposals will not be permitted where they would be likely to have an adverse impact on the District's best and most versatile agricultural land.
- The provision of rural based workspace and live/work units will be permitted providing:
  - i. the proposals are small scale;
  - ii. that they are appropriate to the character of the area;
  - iii. that they do not have an adverse impact on the integrity of the Green Belt.

Priority will be placed on the re-use or replacement of existing rural buildings.

The proposed allocations for the villages and rural areas of Wyre Forest are detailed at Policy 35.

### Reasoned Justification

**6.40** Agriculture is the predominant land use within the District's rural areas. The quality of agricultural land is generally very high in the area running from east and south east of Kidderminster to the District boundary. There are also significant blocks of high quality land to the north of Kidderminster and around Rock.

**6.41** Economic and employment opportunities in rural areas go beyond the traditional land based and agricultural sectors. There are great opportunities for sustainable farm diversification, particularly with regard to the tourism and leisure sectors. New employment opportunity sectors



such as creative industries and environmental technologies may also be available in rural areas. The provision of high-speed broadband will be essential in developing the economic base of the rural areas.

**6.42** Equestrian activities and horsiculture are also prominent uses in rural areas. Horsiculture and commercial horsiculture in particular, can contribute significantly to the rural economy and provide employment for local people. However, equine related development will need to be balanced with the potential impact on the landscape and character of the rural environment and the continued need to preserve the best and most versatile agricultural land to enable localised food production in the future.

**6.43** However, the economic development of the District's rural areas does not need to be at the expense of environmental protection and enhancement and must be balanced by the pressure to regenerate the adjacent towns. A large part of the District also falls within the West Midlands Green Belt and/or a Landscape Protection Area.

**6.44** Sustainable living is as important in rural areas as it is in urban areas. Measures that encourage working practices that cut down on commuting and improve the work/life balance should be encouraged. It is also important to help establish lifestyle changes that support the local economy and the sustainability of the rural community. However, much of the rural area is close to the combined urban area of Kidderminster, Stourport-on-Severn and Bewdley and to the employment opportunities and services they provide. Therefore, significant numbers of the rural population will rely on these centres regularly to access these facilities. Transport links between the urban and rural areas should be improved to increase the sustainability of the relationship between the two areas.

## PREFERRED OPTION STAGE

### KEY CHOICE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

**6.45** The Revised Local Plan will need to enable the District to address the variety of challenges outlined in this document, most especially:

- Economy, Employment and Prosperity
- Demography – particularly generational and skill mix Issues
- Housing (including the availability of affordable housing)
- Transport and other key Infrastructure including education and health facilities

**6.46** Whichever approach is ultimately selected it is important that the implementation of this Plan should capture additional monies to enable the provision of sufficient supporting infrastructure including roads, education, health, utilities and “green infrastructure”. For this opportunity to be maximised there are two basic principles regarding development

- Proximity of new development to facilities and services
- Scale (critical mass) of new development to enable effective provision of infrastructure..

Therefore:

## 6 A Sustainable Future - Development Strategy

- if development is dispersed it will be less possible to capture the necessary supporting infrastructure;
- if development falls below certain thresholds the provision of additional infrastructure is less likely.

It is essential that the implementation of the Plan – and the enabling infrastructure – will need to demonstrate real benefit to those living and working in the area.

**6.47** This Section of the Preferred Options therefore proposes two potential approaches to achieving the necessary scale of development within Wyre Forest District until 2034. The following Options are proposed following the close examination of the evidence base. Sites considered unsuitable (eg because of flood risk), not viable or not deliverable have been excluded. As in all plan-making it is also necessary to adopt a precautionary approach to allow for sites that may not be delivered – this is particularly the case for sites with a poor viability (particularly brown field sites). It is therefore necessary to identify some additional sites so that in the event of a site not coming forward, or sites being excluded from the final plan (consequent to further evidence including consultation outputs), the District is able to demonstrate that the housing and employment requirements can still be met and flexibility is demonstrated.

**6.48** In order to achieve the required flexibility it is necessary to propose allocations in excess of the housing requirement of 5,400. At the time of the preparation of this consultation document the Council's understanding of how this might be informed was guided by the following availability data (Table 6.0.3)

**Table 6.0.3**

Type of Site	No. of dwellings (approx)
Dwellings completed from 1 April 2016 (as at 1 April 2017)	255
Existing and lapsed planning permissions	712
Previously Developed Land (Not in Green Belt)	1,193
Previously Developed Land in Green Belt (inc Lea Castle)	796
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>2,956</b>
Potential from suitable green field and small scale Green Belt release (primarily for local need)	684
<b>Total of these</b>	<b>3,640</b>

Within the Options described below the sites comprising the above elements are viewed as core or common to both potential approaches.

**The key implication of this data is that, assuming a provisional requirement of 6,000 dwellings, a shortfall of some 2,360 dwellings is evident. This will need to be met by more strategic land release.**

**6.49** In order to help the Council address this shortfall in dwellings a key element of this consultation is to enable consultees to advise the Council of their preferred approach. The Council will take account of these consultation responses prior to deciding on the approach to be taken forward in the pre-submission document. This consultation therefore puts forward two options for the future location of development in the District.

**6.50** The make-up of each of the options is represented below:

**Table 6.0.4**

	<b>Option A</b>	<b>Option B</b>
Core sites	Included	Included
Option A sites	Included	Excluded
Option B sites	Excluded	Included

**6.51** The sites that comprise the Core sites and the Option A and B sites are described at Section C of this document (Site Allocations) and are also shown on the accompanying maps at Appendix a. The District Council would strongly encourage you to express a preference for either Option A or Option B but recognise that you might wish to make alternative suggestions.

**6.52** The table below presents key data in respect of the Preferred Options:

**Table 6.0.5 Wyre Forest Local Plan Review Preferred Options: Key Data**

<b>Number of dwellings required 2016-2034</b>	6,000
Number of dwellings to be placed on brownfield land:	
- already completed or with planning permission	967
- additional proposed by the plan	1,193
Number of dwellings on previously developed land in the Green Belt (includes 600 at Lea Castle)	796
Number of dwellings proposed on greenfield sites not in Green Belt	350
Number of dwellings proposed on greenfield Green Belt sites	1,918
Option A - Additional Green Belt dwellings	1,080
Option B - Additional Green Belt dwellings	765
Option B – Additional dwellings on greenfield sites not in Green Belt	570
Percentage take of total Green Belt:	
- Option A	2.4%
- Option B	1.9%

## 6 | A Sustainable Future - Development Strategy

**6.53** Site proposals included in Options A and B each have specific characteristics and will impact upon Wyre Forest District and its component communities differently. **This comparison is summarised by Table 6.0.6.**

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Table 6.0.6

Comparison of Option A and Option B		
Subject	Option A	Option B
Spatial Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Development outside the Main Towns concentrated at and adjacent to two urban extensions               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the currently proposed Lea Castle site</li> <li>major extensions to East and South East Kidderminster (north and south of Bromsgrove Road)</li> </ul> </li> <li>Looks to minimise the number of sites in a more concentrated strategy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Development outside of the Main Towns concentrated at two urban extensions               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>extension to East of Kidderminster north of Bromsgrove Road</li> <li>an enlarged Lea Castle development which extends to the Stourbridge Road</li> </ul> </li> <li>Significant levels of development at Areley Kings</li> <li>Additional development will also be required in:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>each of the Main Towns,</li> <li>the Kidderminster-Stourport corridor and</li> <li>the rural west.</li> </ul> </li> <li>A greater number of sites will be required</li> <li>Overall, a more dispersed strategy</li> </ul>
Green Belt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Green Belt take = 266 ha (gross)</li> <li>This is 2.4% of total Green Belt land area.</li> <li>Respects the need for separation of settlements but will need to ensure a clear corridor between the East Kidderminster extension and Stone village.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Green Belt take = 218 ha (gross)</li> <li>This is 1.9% of total Green Belt land area.</li> <li>Involves additional Green Belt sites at/adjacent to all Main Towns as well as additional green field sites</li> </ul>
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Realises a total of 6,304 dwellings</li> <li>Large scale site releases more likely to enable viable provision of affordable housing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Realises a total of 6,559 dwellings</li> <li>Smaller scale site releases less likely to enable the viable provision of affordable housing</li> </ul>
Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides slightly in excess of the necessary 40ha of employment land (43Ha)</li> <li>Proposed Employment Land allocations in close proximity to proposed residential allocations. Good accessibility</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One employment site in Option A re-categorised for residential. Therefore currently a small shortfall (1Ha)</li> <li>Accessibility of Employment Land allocations from residential allocations reduced due to more dispersed pattern</li> </ul>

# 6 A Sustainable Future - Development Strategy

Comparison of Option A and Option B				
Subject	Option A	Option B		
Infrastructure - Roads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Enables the building of Kidderminster Eastern Relief Road. This would:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Provide access for the new development to the east of Kidderminster</li><li>Enable S-NE traffic to by-pass Kidderminster altogether en route to M5 motorway and Birmingham</li><li>Help relieve congestion on A449 and in Kidderminster (Ring Road, Horsefair etc)</li><li>Help facilitate Kidderminster regeneration</li><li>Help facilitate an improvement in AQMA at Churchfields</li></ul></li><li>Modest level of development at Lea Castle will not impact as much on A451 and A449 as a larger scheme.</li><li>Maximises the benefit of proximity to Kidderminster rail station and links to the national rail network</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Would <b>not enable</b> building of Kidderminster Eastern Relief Road and the benefits this scheme allows.</li><li>Additional development at Lea Castle will put additional pressure onto A451 and A449 from the north into Kidderminster but may improve site access</li><li>Additional development to west of river, particularly at Areley Kings, is likely to have a negative impact on Stourport-on-Severn and the river crossing</li></ul>		
Infrastructure - Education				
NB FE = Form Entry	Education District		Primary Education requirements	Secondary Education requirements
	Kidderminster North	<i>EITHER</i> Onex1FE expansion on an existing site <i>OR</i> Onex1FE new free primary school plus land will be required	2xPrimary School expansions equating to a total of 1.5FE on existing sites . <i>OR</i> 1x2FE new free school&nursery&land will be required	Four x 1FE expansions will be required to support secondary provision across Kidderminster. Some financial support required from WCC as development creates need for 3.5FE
	Kidderminster East	1. One x 2FE new free primary school &nursery &land will be required  <i>And either:</i>	2xPrimary school expansions equating to 1.5FE on existing sites or 2FE free school plus land will be required	

Comparison of Option A and Option B						
Subject	Option A			Option B		
	Education District	Primary Education requirements	Secondary Education requirements	Education District	Primary Education requirements	Secondary Education requirements
		Onex1FE or Onex1FE new free primary school plus land will be required		Kidderminster West	There is no identified need at the present time based on the proposals	There is no identified need at the present time based on the proposals
		2. Onex3FE new free primary school & nursery&land will be required		Stourport	Either 1x1FE expansion and 0.5FE expansion will be required OR 3x0.5FEexpansions will be required OR 1x1FE new primary school plus land with capacity to expand to a 2FEfree primary school with some financial support required from WCC as development creates need for 1,5FE	1x2FE expansion will be required to support secondary provision across Stourport. Some financial support required from WCC as development creates need for 1.5FE
	Kidderminster West	There is no identified need at the present time based on the proposals	There is no identified need at the present time based on the proposals			
	Stourport	1X1FE expansion OR 2x0.5FE expansions required	1x1FE expansion required	Bewdley	1x0.5FE expansion will be required	1x0.5FE expansion will be required
	Bewdley	A contribution on a cost per dwelling would be sought to seek additional primary school places.	A contribution on a cost per dwelling would be sought to seek additional places at Bewdley High School and Sixth Form Centre			
Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Scale and proximity of development enables effective master planning and the provision of, eg, green corridors to enhance development through the development of Green Infrastructure Concept Plans.</li> </ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The more dispersed nature of this approach will mean that more sites are affected. This, in combination with their typically smaller size (with the exception of the enlarged Lea Castle) will mean the delivery of Green Infrastructure requirements are more difficult.</li> </ul>	
Sustainability		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Spatially concentrated within and adjacent to Main Towns</li> </ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More dispersed therefore less likely to be able to support provision of new services</li> </ul>	



## 6 A Sustainable Future - Development Strategy

Comparison of Option A and Option B		
Subject	Option A	Option B
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good access to existing services and due to concentration more likely to be able support provision to address services shortfall.</li> <li>• Close to employment and education – therefore less travel</li> <li>• Provides a transport scheme which mitigates transport pressures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Due to dispersal more travel (typically by car) required</li> <li>• The additional pressures of this approach on services (particularly transport) will be considerable and will not offer a way for these pressures to be mitigated</li> </ul>

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## Consultation Questions

**6.54** Do you prefer Option A or Option B? On what planning grounds?

**6.55** Option A has the associated benefits of enabling the delivery of critical infrastructure including the Kidderminster Eastern Relief Road which will also reduce Kidderminster Town Centre traffic congestion and improve traffic volumes in the adjacent estates. It will enable more effective school provision. Do the benefits of this outweigh the disadvantage caused by the large-scale of expansion to the east of Kidderminster that would be necessary?

**6.56** Whilst Option B removes slightly less land from the Green Belt it disperses development more widely across the District. Consequently it will not support the implementation of a Kidderminster Eastern Relief Road and the provision of sufficient, appropriately located education facilities will be more problematic. The absence of this additional infrastructure to support new development will impact on future traffic congestion, air quality, and educational provision in Wyre Forest. Do you consider the benefits of a more dispersed strategy outweigh these disadvantages?

**6.57** Are there any other alternative Options you would like to suggest?

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## 7 Strategic Green Belt Review

### Introduction

**7.1** The establishment and maintenance of Green Belts around many of England's main urban areas has long been a part of national planning policy designed to strictly control development. The Green Belt (GB) within the administrative Area of Wyre Forest District Council is part of the larger West Midlands Green Belt and was intended to prevent urban sprawl, restrict the expansion of villages and protect the open countryside from the pressure for development.

#### Summary of Issues and Options Responses

A number of local residents raised the importance of protecting the Green Belt; though some mistakenly were under the impression that Green Belt is a landscape protection tool.

Some comments were received from landowners regarding concerns that the Issues and Options document failed to address the relationship between the Green Belt, brownfield land availability, housing completions and employment opportunities.

Issues raised by key stake-holders included the need to look at the potential to focus new development around strategic transport infrastructure and the progression of a strategic Green Belt Boundary Review.

There was some support for the concept of sustainable urban extensions to the north and east of Kidderminster with general support for the use of the Lea Castle Hospital Site and the prioritised use of ADR sites. This was however accompanied by the expression of some concern at the loss of Green Belt.

#### Policy 7 - Strategic Green Belt Review

There is a general presumption against inappropriate development within the Green Belt, and such development will not be permitted unless very special circumstances exist. Development proposals, including those involving previously developed land and buildings in the Green Belt, will be assessed in relation to the relevant national planning policy.

The important role of the District's Green Belt will be recognised and protected, with the majority of new development being channelled towards the most sustainable Main Towns of Kidderminster, Stourport on Severn and Bewdley, many parts of which are bounded by the Green Belt.

In accordance with paragraph 82 of the National Planning Policy Framework, a number of changes will be made to the Green Belt boundaries and Areas of Development Restraint (ADRs) to support the strategic development of Wyre Forest through this Plan. These are:

- Changes to the Green Belt boundary to enable the sustainable urban extensions at:

- a. the north of Kidderminster to enable the Lea Castle development.
  - b. the eastern edge of the Kidderminster urban area (Relates to Option A and Option B therefore not yet decided but consistent with Issues and Options consultation).
- Minor changes to the Green Belt boundary will also be made at southern Kidderminster, Stourport on Severn and Bewdley to enable local development needs to be met most sustainably and economically.
  - The Hurcott ADR (land between A451 and Hurcott village) will be allocated for development.
  - The following ADRs will continue to be safeguarded during the Plan period . These are:
    - Land off Hayes Road Road, Fairfield;
    - Land off Lowe Lane, Fairfield,
    - Land off Kimberlee Avenue, Cookley;
    - Land off Wilden Top Road, Wilden;
    - Four Acres Caravan Park, Stourport-on-Severn

The current approach to “insetting” and “washed over” status of specific villages will be retained although village envelopes will be revisited to allow for development to meet local needs.

Limited affordable housing for local community needs in the Green Belt will be supported on small rural exception sites where the development complies with Policies 8B (Affordable Housing Provision) and Policy 8C (Addressing Rural Housing Needs).

Opportunities to enhance the beneficial use of the Green Belt will be supported in line with the National Planning Policy Framework and Policy 25A (Safeguarding the Green Belt).

## Reasoned Justification

**7.2** The WFDC GB was originally determined in the mid-1970s and was subsequently confirmed by the 1989 Local Plan. Subsequent Local Plan Reviews (1994, 2004 and 2010) did not identify the need for any significant changes although some limited adjustments around a number of the larger villages were made.

**7.3** Within the WFDC administrative area, the current extent of the GB includes all the land as far west as the River Severn, but excludes the towns of Kidderminster, Stourport-on-Severn and Bewdley and the smaller settlements of Blakedown, Cookley, Fairfield and Wilden. Three other villages within the GB are “washed over”, namely Chaddesley Corbett, Wolverley and Upper Arley.

**7.4** In determining the GB boundaries within the Wyre Forest Urban Areas Local Plan (1989), due regard was given to the longer term requirements of development. Accordingly land at Hurcott, Wilden and Worcester Road (Stourport-on-Severn) was taken out of GB and designated

## 7 Strategic Green Belt Review

as Areas of Development Restraint (ADR). Subsequent Plan reviews (2004, 2010) were able to identify sufficient land for housing and employment development requirements: as such it was not necessary for these plans to develop the ADRs or identify new green-field sites. The ADRs were not adjusted by these reviews.

**7.5** However, as explained in Section 6 (the Development Strategy) there is now a need to remove land from the Green Belt for both housing and employment development to support essential elements of the strategy.

**7.6** The important role of the Green Belt is recognised, and whilst the Spatial Strategy seeks to minimise impact upon the Green Belt, this has to be considered in the light of a range of options including the need to locate development to the most sustainable settlements and locations where there is easy access to a range of existing services and facilities and supporting infrastructure. Additionally, minor changes to Green Belt boundaries may be appropriate to meet local needs or aspirations and to facilitate local and neighbourhood planning in the future

**7.7** It is now necessary and entirely appropriate to undertake a Strategic Review of the Green Belt in Wyre Forest District for the following two key reasons:

- i. National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) makes it clear that it is necessary for the evidence base for all Local Plans to be up to date. As stated above the Wyre Forest Green Belt was instituted in the mid-1970s and has not been subjected to fundamental review since. The District therefore needs to provide up-to-date evidence so that a robust defence of the Green Belt at Examination is possible. To achieve this it is necessary to perform a review to demonstrate that the Green Belt boundary within our District remain robust and defensible so that it can effectively fulfil the five purposes set out in the NPPF (para 80)<sup>0</sup>. The National Planning Policy makes it clear that the only way that a Green Belt Review can be conducted is via a Local Plan Review.
- ii. To date Wyre Forest has been extremely successful in utilising previously developed land to meet its housing and employment land requirements. Indeed in 2016 95% of housing land supply continued to be on previously developed land. It is however anticipated that in the next plan period (up to 2034) previously developed land on its own will not be sufficient to accommodate all development needs. It will therefore be necessary to ensure that the most appropriate and sustainable locations are utilised for future development whilst at the same time protecting the future role and function of the Green Belt in a way that can be defended at the examination of the Local Plan. This will require limited strategic adjustments to the Green Belt boundary.

**7.8** A Strategic Green Belt Study (AMEC 2016) and a more detailed Second Stage Green Belt Study (AMEC 2017) form part of the evidence base. These studies demonstrate that across the District the Green Belt fulfils its intended strategic purpose as part of the West Midlands Green Belt with many instances of more than one Green Belt purpose being fulfilled.

**7.9** These studies have formed a key part of the evidence base in deriving the policy options and decisions in the preparation of the Strategic, Development Management and Allocations Policies contained within this document. It is important to note that the NPPF also requires the consideration of whether the Green Belt boundary will remain appropriate to meet the District's needs beyond 2034.

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## 8 A Desirable Place to Live

### Introduction

**8.1** The 2017 Objective Assessment of Housing Need Report has evidenced the overall requirement for 300 new dwellings per annum over the new plan period, which would total 5,400 new dwellings plus 540 C2 Institutional (eg Care Homes) over the whole plan period. The policies contained in this section set out how new housing types will be delivered within the District in accordance with the overarching Development Strategy policies at Section 6. They also address site provision for gypsies, travellers and travelling showpeople during the new plan period.

**8.2** 2011 Census migration data suggests that 66.1% of all household moves are within the Wyre Forest area and that 62.2% of residents in employment work within the District. Therefore Wyre Forest is a largely self contained Housing Market Area. A review of market signals data undertaken in 2016/17 suggests that the Housing Market in this area is relatively stable.

**8.3** The Housing White Paper (February 2017) has set out more specific requirements for housing types to encourage greater delivery of housing and to promote home ownership. National Housing Policy focuses on building more affordable housing; improving the quality of rented housing; helping more people to buy a home and providing housing support for vulnerable people. Policies within the Local Plan will be required to take account of this and to set out a proactive approach to delivery to meet specific needs.

#### Summary of Consultation Responses from Issues and Options Consultation

- This topic generated much debate but most respondents agreed that the final housing mix policy will need to reflect latest evidence for the Housing Market Area and needs identified.
- The current housing density policy has little support and again should reflect the latest evidence.
- Affordable housing issues are likely to be complicated by recent changes to Government policy and changes arising from the Housing White Paper.
- Respondents consider that further research needs to be done on specialist housing provision requirements. And more proactive policies incorporated into the Local Plan.
- The issue of gypsy site provision provoked much debate and gave no clear cut answers as to the best way forward.



## Policy 8A - Housing Density & Mix

New housing developments must be well designed and address local housing needs incorporating a range of different types, tenures and sizes of housing to create mixed communities.

On the basis of dwelling size data, Table 8.0.1 provides a general view on the likely overall dwelling size split based on market and affordable development assuming a 66.6% market and 33.3% affordable split:

**Table 8.0.1 Suggested dwelling mix by market and affordable dwellings**

Overall dwelling size mix	Market (%)	Affordable (%)	Overall (%)
1or 2 Beds	9.1	96.2	38.1
3 Beds	64.4	3.0	43.9
4 Beds	26.5	0.8	18.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
Annual Base Number of Dwellings	200	100	300

*Source: Derived from Table 5.4 Revised Objective Assessment of Housing Need (Amion, April 2017)*

The make up of individual developments, their design and density will be in sympathy with the development context (eg brown field development in a town centre or green field) and existing neighbouring development. It is anticipated that new greenfield developments will have an average density of 35 dwellings per hectare.

## Reasoned Justification

**8.4** The Local Plan needs to plan positively for a mix of housing based on an assessment of the population that will live in the District both now and in the future. Housing mix refers to both the size of property (number of bedrooms) and the type of housing – whether detached, semi terraced or apartments. Housing completions over the last 9 years within the District have provided a good mix of house types and sizes.

**8.5** Within the District, 71.23% of dwellings are owner occupied, 14.44% are social rented and 14.33% are private rented. The 2016 OAHN Report undertook an analysis of stakeholder feedback into housing priorities for the District. This is set out in the table below:

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**Table 8.0.2 Ranking of priorities by stakeholders**

High Housing Priorities	Percentage
Starter Homes Provision	25
Building Open Market Homes	12
Affordable Homes to Rent	63
Affordable Homes to Buy	44
Executive Housing	6
Properties Designed for Older People	75
Properties for People with Specialist Needs	40
Improving Quality of Existing Stock	31

*NB: Percentages do not add up to 100% since respondents were permitted to nominate more than one priority<sup>0</sup>*

**8.6** Analysis (Amion, April 2017) indicates a particular requirement for the development of larger three or more bedroom market dwellings and smaller 1 and 2 bedroom affordable dwellings.

**8.7** This broadly accords with the findings of stakeholder consultation which suggests that there is a mix of size and tenure needed across the District to support a spectrum of needs, cater for demand and attract people to the area.

**8.8** In the preparation of the OAHN stakeholders were asked to identify what types of housing they thought should be built. This established that a mix of size and tenure is needed across the District to support a spectrum of needs, cater for demand and attract people to the area. The following were mentioned:

- larger affordable family homes;
- two- and three-bedroom homes for families;
- executive homes;
- housing for the elderly including bungalows in addition to extra care schemes;
- specialist housing to support specific household groups identified as in need; and
- smaller one bedroom flats to rent.

**8.9** Further feedback from stakeholders indicated the need to provide a range of tenures, including general needs rent, affordable rent and shared ownership in addition to market housing.

## Policy 8B - Affordable Housing Provision

### Level of Provision

A minimum annual average target of 100 affordable dwellings will be delivered during the plan period to 2034.

Affordable housing provision of a minimum of 30% on sites of 11 or more dwellings will generally be required. Individual site characteristics may mean that this level of provision is not achievable on all development sites and this will need to be evidenced by the applicant through an independently verified financial viability assessment.

### Tenure Split

An indicative tenure split of 65% rented and 35% intermediate tenure (including sub-market private rent and shared ownership) will be sought for affordable housing provision on new sites. The exact split to be determined on a site by site basis based on housing need and viability (if relevant).

### Build to Rent Schemes

The District Council will support the development of Build To Rent proposals which will offer a mixture of private and intermediate rented housing aimed at lower to middle income households. Such schemes should demonstrate that they have fully considered the incorporation of a proportion of homes to be made available at a Discounted Market Rent. They should also offer security of tenure through tenancy agreements of 3 years or more. Any impacts on the market rate will be taken into account by the Council at viability assessment stage.

Where the assessment of a scheme demonstrates poor viability, the District Council will encourage those proposing a scheme to consider non-traditional building methods particularly where this would enable the re-use of previously developed land in the main towns of Kidderminster, Stourport and Bewdley.

## Reasoned Justification

**8.10** The definition of Affordable Housing is drawn from National Planning Policy Framework as follows:

### NPPF Definition of Affordable Housing

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

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- Social rented housing is owned by local authorities and private registered providers (as defined in section 80 of the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008), for which guideline target rents are determined through the national rent regime. 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 (or its successor body).
- Affordable rented housing is let by local authorities or private registered providers of social housing to households who are unable to meet their housing needs through the open market. Affordable Rent is subject to rent controls that require a rent of no more than 80% of the local market rent (including service charges, where applicable).
- 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 above. These can include shared equity (shared ownership and equity loans), other low cost homes for sale and intermediate rent, but not affordable rented housing.
- Homes that do not meet the above definition of affordable housing, such as “low cost market” housing, may not be considered as affordable housing for planning purposes.

*Source: National Planning Policy Framework (2012)*

*NB: the definition of "affordable housing" may change with the enactment of the current Housing White Paper*

**8.11** The Wyre Forest Objective Assessment of Housing Need (OAHN) Report (April 2017) establishes an affordable housing need of 229 dwellings per annum over the new plan period. Over the period April 2010 to September 2015, Council data indicates a total of 521 affordable dwellings have been built – an annual average of 96 affordable dwellings.

**8.12** Analysis undertaken suggests that for open market housing rental within the District the minimum income required is £22,272 for lower quartile renting. For house purchase an annual income of £30,857 is required for entry level house prices. The table below sets out the affordability ratios (based on 3.5 x household income ratios) across the District for housing products.

**Table 8.0.3**

Housing Type/Product	% of District Population who can afford
Median House Prices	37.7
Average House Prices	25.3
Lower quartile House Prices	53.5
Shared Ownership & Help to Buy	51.8
Median & Average Rents	61.9
Lower quartile rent	70.5

Housing Type/Product	% of District Population who can afford
Affordable rent	71.9
Social rent	77.8

**8.13** Evidence suggests that there is a significant need for affordable housing within the District. In particular, the table above demonstrates that more rental properties are required which could include social and affordable social housing rented and below market private rent schemes. The current level of housing need as evidenced in the OAHN supports the Council in having a preference for social and affordable rented units but the inclusion of other intermediate housing within the overall affordable housing mix including affordable private rent, schemes and discounted home ownership will be sought in line with the NPPF and Housing White Paper. This will need to be delivered through a combination of policy measures and proposals including 100% provision of affordable housing on exception sites; Section 106 provision as part of the overall mix on sites over 10 dwellings; schemes for build to rent which incorporate affordable rent properties by registered providers; and below market private rent and starter homes provision.

**8.14** The District is required to set an overall minimum target for the Wyre Forest area for the amount of affordable housing to be provided per annum. This target should take account of local assessment of need and also be subject to viability assessment to ensure that it is deliverable. Viability testing has suggested that a minimum figure of 30% affordable housing provision on new sites would be appropriate for the area. This could be subject to some adjustment either up or down on a site by site basis as informed by individual viability assessments. 30% of the overall housing figure would suggest a deliverable target of 1,620 affordable dwellings over the whole plan period which would equate to 90 affordable dwellings per annum. However, the past annual average delivery of 96 affordable dwellings would suggest that it may be more appropriate to set a target of 100 per annum, particularly with the Government's new emphasis on promoting schemes for affordable rent.

**8.15** The Local Authority Housing statistics evidence an overall tenure split of 65% social rented and 35% intermediate tenure dwellings. It is therefore recommended that a 65% rented and 35% intermediate tenure split is appropriate for affordable housing provision. However, this will need to be further explored through this consultation. Further work on economic viability appraisal and discussions with registered providers will be required to determine whether this is appropriate in the light of Government Policy, which has a strong emphasis on low cost home ownership and meeting local demand specific to sites.

### **Policy 8C - Addressing Rural Housing Needs**

The provision of small scale residential development to meet specific local needs within the District's rural settlements will be encouraged. Residential development will be permitted where it is in accordance with the relevant rural development or Green Belt policies as contained within the Local Plan. Small scale residential schemes that take account of local housing needs on windfall sites will be proactively considered within the rural areas.

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### Rural Exception Sites

The District Council will work closely with the Parish Councils, Community Led Housing Groups and Neighbourhood Planning Forums to identify appropriate sites for rural exception schemes. Such schemes will be subject to the following criteria:

- i. The provision of affordable housing must remain so in perpetuity in agreement with the registered provider but where legislation prevents this from happening then agreement must be reached with the registered provider to find a replacement unit if the original property is sold.
- ii. The number, size, type, mix and tenure of dwellings must not exceed the extent of identified local need
- iii. The scale of the scheme should be appropriate to the size and character of the settlement and must not damage the character of the settlement or the surrounding landscape.
- iv. The site should be accessible to local services and facilities.
- v. Any enabling market housing above that which is required to meet a specific housing type as evidenced by local housing needs assessments must be accompanied by a robust viability assessment in order to justify the required enabling development.

### Rural Workers Dwellings

Applications for rural workers' dwellings will be permitted where it can be clearly demonstrated that:

- i. There is a clear and established existing functional need.
- ii. The need relates to a full time rural worker who is employed locally in livestock management, agriculture/agricultural contracting or forestry.
- iii. The proposed dwelling is of a size commensurate with the functional requirement and financial capabilities of the enterprise.
- iv. Wherever possible, the dwelling is sited within, and designed in relation to the main building complex, or a nearby group of dwellings.

Where permission is given for such dwellings, occupation of the dwelling will be restricted by condition to a person solely employed in the locality in livestock management, agriculture/agricultural contracting or forestry, or a widow or widower of such a person, and any resident dependants. The removal of an occupancy condition will only be permitted where it has been proven through marketing of the property that there is no longer a need for a dwelling on the unit or in the locality for a person employed in livestock management, agriculture/agricultural contracting or forestry, or a widow or widower of such person and any resident dependants.

### Replacement Dwellings in the Open Countryside

The replacement of a permanent existing lawful dwelling will be permitted in the following circumstances:

- i. The dwelling is subject to residential use and has not been abandoned



- ii. The replacement dwelling is in the same or less prominent position as the original with curtilage only being amended or required by re-siting, landscape enhancement, vehicular safety or neighbour amenity.
- iii. The replacement dwelling should not be materially larger than the one it replaces. In this respect the District Council will apply the following size criteria;
  - If the dwelling is in its 'original'\* form – the existing\* size plus 20% increase;
  - If the dwelling has been extended beyond its original form – the existing\* size.

When considering comparisons in size, the District Council will have particular regard to floorspace, volume and height.

*\*Please Note:* The terms 'original' and 'existing' used in this policy shall have its statutory meaning..

In respect of all of the categories contained within this Policy the costs of any independent assessment that is required will be met by the applicant

## Reasoned Justification

**8.16** The District's rural areas have some of the most expensive house prices within the District, which means that many local families who wish to remain are priced out of the market. In addition, more elderly residents may wish to downsize to smaller properties and bungalows which in turn will release housing opportunities for families. The table below shows the percentage of households by town and parish who cannot afford different housing market options. It demonstrates significant affordability issues relating to house purchase in all of the parishes. This is most marked within the rural parishes of Broome, Chaddesley Corbett, Churchill & Blakedown, Kidderminster Foreign, Ribbesford, Rushock and Stone. The analysis shows that rental products are far more accessible to parish residents in terms of their household income.

**Table 8.0.4**

Town/Parish	Percentage of households by town/parish <i>unable</i> to afford housing options					
	Social Rent	Affordable Rent	Av Market Rent	Av Market Sale	50% Shared ownership	Help to Buy
Bewdley	8.8	14.4	26.4	78.5	40.3	48.7
Broome	3.1	11.9	25.9	88.9	88.9	88.9
Chaddesley Corbett	4.3	5.3	12.4	93.3	88.3	89.6
Churchill & Blakedown	9.5	15.7	25.5	93.8	79.5	81.9
Kidderminster Foreign	15.9	19.6	25.5	96.6	81.6	89.1
Ribbesford	12.1	23.2	53.9	100	100	100



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Town/Parish	Percentage of households by town/parish <i>unable</i> to afford housing options					
	Social Rent	Affordable Rent	Av Market Rent	Av Market Sale	50% Shared ownership	Help to Buy
Rock	6.2	18.8	28.6	83.3	58.8	64
Rushock	0	0	0	100	100	100
Stone	5.3	29.4	29.4	91	73.7	75.8
Stourport	22.8	28.7	42.1	85.5	60.6	63.3
Upper Arley	14.1	28.6	37.2	73.2	59.2	64.2
Wolverley & Cookley	14.7	25	37.4	81.1	50.4	54
Kidderminster	33	39.2	50.5	77.7	56	57.5

Sources: Cameo, Land Registry, CLG, Core Sales. Adapted from Table 6.5 of Wyre Forest OAHN Report (Feb 2017)

**8.17** Local housing needs are established through housing needs surveys which are undertaken in agreement and partnership with the relevant Town or Parish Council. It is also established through the Housing Register of persons assessed according to the Council's Allocations Policy as qualifying residents.

**8.18** Rural Exception Sites are sites where general market housing would not normally be acceptable, which provide affordable housing in rural areas. Such sites may only come forward where there is a need for specific housing types as identified through a Parish Housing Need Survey. Where no housing needs survey is available, the District Council will consider need demonstrated by the housing register data.

**8.19** Housing provision on rural exception sites must seek to address the needs of the community by accommodating households who are existing residents or who have an existing family or employment connection to the area in line with the local connections criteria. Proposals for development will need to demonstrate that arrangements are put in place to ensure that the housing will remain permanently available to meet the continuing needs of local people.

**8.20** In circumstances where it is not viable to deliver 100% affordable housing on rural exceptions sites, it may be possible to cross subsidise a scheme with an element of market housing (typically no more than 20%). Under these circumstances, developers will be required to provide additional supporting evidence in the form of an open book development appraisal for the proposed site. The provision of starter homes to meet identified local needs will also be an acceptable form of housing on rural exception sites in addition to other tenure types that meet local housing needs.

**8.21** There can be a need for livestock management, agricultural/agricultural contractors or forestry workers to live on site. Rural workers dwellings will only be permitted where they are considered to be essential and the assessment of this will depend on the needs of the particular enterprise. Where permission is granted for an additional dwelling, then the applicant will be expected to agree to retain the existing accommodation for use within the unit. Convincing

evidence should be provided with any application for the removal of an occupancy condition. This should include evidence to demonstrate that the dwelling has been actively marketed by an estate agent for a period of 12 months, at a price which reflects the existence of an occupancy condition, and that no financially viable interest has been expressed from within the District or its adjoining parishes.

**8.22** There may be specific circumstances where existing dwellings are in poor repair or no longer appropriate in terms of their design to meet the occupant's needs. In such circumstances, it is considered that it may be appropriate to permit replacement dwellings to meet a specific local need.

## **Policy 8D - Specialist Housing Requirements**

### **Self Build and Custom Housing**

The Local Plan will seek to allocate plots for self build and custom housing to address the demand from the self and custom build register. Provision will be reviewed on an annual basis as part of the residential land availability assessment and will be based on the demand as set out in the register of need maintained by the Council.

The District Council will require all major housing development proposals to provide evidence that they have fully considered the provision of self / custom build within the overall housing mix on site.

### **Housing for Older People and others with special housing requirements**

The District Council will require all major housing development proposals to provide evidence that they have fully considered the provision of the following tenure and type within the overall housing mix on site:

- Bungalows
- Sheltered Housing
- Extra Care Units
- Other types of supported housing

These housing types should include housing for sale and rent and include intermediate forms of provision in line with the OAHN, Housing Needs Surveys (where available) and Housing Register.

We will allocate a minimum provision of 540 Residential Institutional (C2) Units over the Plan Period to be met on sites allocated for housing. This will meet the average annual need for 30 units.

### **Accommodation for Family Members and Carers**

The development of annex accommodation will be supported subject to its consistency with all other Local Plan policies and where it meets the following criteria:

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- i. Accommodation should be provided by way of an extension which is physically linked to the existing dwelling.
- ii. The dwelling and annex should share vehicular and pedestrian access and the extension should only incorporate a maximum of two bedrooms.

Specific requirements relating to the provision of specialist housing types within the District will be set out in a Supplementary Planning Document.

### Reasoned Justification

**8.23** Paragraph 50 of the National Planning Policy Framework encourages local planning authorities to plan for people who wish to build their own homes in order to encourage home ownership opportunities. This has more recently been reiterated through the publication of the Housing White Paper.

**8.24** Under the Self Build and Custom House Building Regulations 2016, the District Council is required to have regard to a register of people who are interested in self build or custom build projects in the area. This will help to inform policy development and future plot requirements in the District. There are different types of custom build which will have specific requirements for the types of land plots to be allocated through the Local Plan.

- DIY Custom Build
- Self Finish Custom Build
- Full Turn Key Custom Build
- Independent Community Custom Build
- Supported Community Custom Build
- Co-housing Custom Build
- Affordable Custom Build

**8.25** In April 2017 there was a local demand for 44 Self Build and Custom Plots within the District, but not all of those people registered meet the eligibility criteria, in particular around local connection to the District and guidance states we shouldn't double count applicants who also feature on the Housing Register. The number of actual plots required over the three year period is therefore lower.

**8.26** National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) specified that Local Plans should consider the size, location and quality of dwellings needed within the area to allow older people to live independently and safely in their own home for as long as possible. Future needs should be broken down by tenure and type:

- Sheltered
- Extra Care
- Registered Care Homes
- Residential Institutions (C2 Uses)
- Bungalows

**8.27** Wyre Forest District's population has an old age dependency ratio of 38.6%; this is well above Worcestershire – 34.1%, West Midlands – 28.3% and England – 27.2%. A major strategic challenge for the Local Plan is to ensure a range of affordable housing provision, adaptation and support for the ageing population. The number of people across the District aged over 65 is projected to increase from 21,500 in 2012 to 33,100 by 2037 (a 54% increase).

**8.28** During 2010/11 – 2012/13 Core Lettings data showed that 699 older people with support needs were accommodated in the social rented sector within the District. This housing need will need to be met within the overall housing requirements and in addition the Wyre Forest Objective Assessment of Housing Need (OAHN) Report (April 2017) has identified that an average of 30 people per annum will require communal/institutional accommodation within the District. This is a minimum requirement of 540 C2 units for the plan period.

**8.29** The provision of granny annexes or flats as part of an extension to an existing dwelling can be a useful way of meeting the accommodation needs of elderly, sick or disabled relatives or children returning to the parental home. However, it is important to ensure that annexes do not become physically separate dwellings where new dwellings would not normally be permitted.

**8.30** The District Council will seek to progress a Supplementary Planning Document which sets out specific requirements and design standards for specialist forms of housing within the area up to 2034.

#### **Policy 8E - Gypsy and Traveller Site Provision**

The following sites, as shown on the accompanying maps at Appendix a, will continue to be safeguarded for Gypsy and Traveller use:

- Site A – Lower Heath, Stourport-on-Severn ( 22 pitches)
- Site B – Broach Road, Stourport-on-Severn (9 pitches)
- Site C – Power Station Road, Stourport-on-Severn (4 pitches)
- Site D –1 Broach Meadow, Stourport-on-Severn ( 3 pitches)
- Site E – 1b Broach Road, Stourport-on-Severn (3 pitches)
- Site F –6/6a Broach Road, Stourport-on-Severn (5 pitches)
- Site G – Meadow Park, Stourport-on-Severn (7 pitches)
- Site H – Saiwen, Stourport-on-Severn (5 pitches)
- Site I – 28/29 Sandy Lane, Stourport-on-Severn (6 pitches)
- Site J – Land adjacent Nunn's Corner, Stourport-on-Severn (8 pitches)

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- Site K – The Gables Yard, Stourport-on-Severn (5 pitches)
- Site L – Gatehouse Caravan Park (16 pitches)

The allocations set out in this policy meet the short to medium term needs up 2020 though after that some additional provision may be required. Sites to meet the longer term needs will come forward through the development management process and will be determined against other policies within this document. Further small scale sites to meet the indicative need of 21 pitches to 2034 will be allocated in the Local Plan. Proposals for Gypsy and Traveller sites are predominantly residential and will be acceptable on previously developed land or in areas allocated primarily for residential development subject to all relevant policies within the Local Plan being met.

### Reasoned Justification

#### 8.31 Gypsies and Travellers are defined as:

##### Definition of Gypsies and Travellers

1. For the purposes of this planning policy “gypsies and travellers” is drawn from national guidance and means:

*"Persons of nomadic habit of life whatever their race or origin, including such persons who on grounds only of their own or their family's or dependants' educational or health needs or old age have ceased to travel temporarily, but excluding members of an organised group of travelling showpeople or circus people travelling together as such."*

2. In determining whether persons are “gypsies and travellers” for the purposes of this planning policy, consideration should be given to the following issues amongst other relevant matters:

- a) whether they previously led a nomadic habit of life
- b) the reasons for ceasing their nomadic habit of life
- c) whether there is an intention of living a nomadic habit of life in the future, and if so, how soon and in what circumstances.

3. For the purposes of this planning policy, “travelling showpeople” means:

*"Members of a group organised for the purposes of holding fairs, circuses or shows (whether or not travelling together as such). This includes such persons who on the grounds of their own or their family's or dependants' more localised pattern of trading, educational or health needs or old age have ceased to travel temporarily, but excludes Gypsies and Travellers as defined above."*

4. For the purposes of this planning policy, “travellers” means “gypsies and travellers” and “travelling showpeople” as defined above.

5. For the purposes of this planning policy, “pitch” means a pitch on a “gypsy and traveller” site and “plot” means a pitch on a “travelling showpeople” site (often called a “yard”). This terminology differentiates between residential pitches for “gypsies and travellers” and mixed-use plots for “travelling showpeople”, which may / will need to incorporate space or to be split to allow for the storage of equipment.

*Source: Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (PPTS) (2012)*

**8.32** The 2014 Worcestershire Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) provides a robust evidence base to determine an appropriate level of pitch and plot provision for the District. The GTAA identified a total indicative need for 29 pitches over the Plan Period. This can be split down into 5 year tranches as follows:

**Table 8.0.5**

2014/15 – 2018/19	Surplus of 6 pitches (takes account of turnover rates)
2019/20 – 2023/24	6 pitches
2024/25 – 2028/29	10 pitches
2029/30 – 2033/34	13 pitches

**8.33** It should be noted that the later time periods have not had turnover rates applied to them and therefore should be considered as indicative requirements only. Since the GTAA was undertaken, planning permission for an additional 8 pitches on land at Gatehouse Caravan Park has been approved, which brings the total requirement during the plan period to 21 pitches.

**8.34** The GTAA indicated a preference for smaller, privately operated sites amongst the travelling community. It will therefore be necessary to identify and allocate suitable sites to meet these needs within the Local Plan Review. The Sandy Lane Area of Stourport-on-Severn has traditionally accommodated the District’s provision for Gypsies and Travellers. This is an industrial area which is also home to many local businesses. It is considered that a balance between the uses within this area needs to be maintained and therefore no further sites should be identified for gypsy and traveller provision in this area.

**8.35** Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (PPTS) (2012) states that traveller sites should be preferably located on previously developed land. Development in the open countryside that is away from existing settlements or outside areas identified in the Local Plan should be strictly limited. However, it does recognise that some rural areas may be suitable for gypsy sites and that where this is the case sites should respect the scale of and not dominate the nearest settled community.



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**8.36** PPTS states that traveller sites in the Green Belt are inappropriate development – if traveller sites are needed in the Green Belt then they should be allocated through the Local Plan making process. This would mean making an exceptional limited alteration to the Green Belt Boundary to meet a specific identified need for a traveller site.

### Policy 8F - Site Provision for Travelling Showpeople

Views are sought on the suitability of one of the following sites for allocation to meet the immediate needs of Travelling Showpeople within the District:

- Land off Habberley Road, Bewdley
- Land adjacent to Ceramaspeed, accessed from Zortech Avenue
- Land within Wilden Top Area of Development Restraint, Wilden
- Land at Heath Lane, Stone
- Land at former Clows Top Garage, Clows Top

Following the allocation of an appropriate site, any proposals brought forward should submit suitable arrangements for sewerage treatment in addition to satisfactory drainage measures.

### Reasoned Justification

**8.37** Whilst the GTAA did not identify a requirement for additional plots for Travelling Showpeople within the District, there is an existing established site through lawful use at Long Bank, Bewdley. Due to the impending displacement of the current occupiers from this site there is now a requirement to formally allocate a site to meet these needs. Therefore there is a specific current need for one family site to be allocated within the District through the Local Plan Review process.

**8.38** Previous site assessments and consultation undertaken to inform the Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan were unsuccessful in securing the allocation of a site for travelling showpeople. Whilst there is evidence to suggest a track record of delivery through the development control process to meet identified Gypsy and Traveller pitch needs, it has proved more difficult to meet the identified need in association with Travelling Showpeople.

**8.39** Further to the provisions as set out in the PPTS, the possibility of making an exceptional limited alteration to the Green Belt Boundary to allocate a site to meet this specific identified need will now be considered through the Local Plan Review. The District Council has therefore set out a number of sites for consideration and comment, prior to one of them being allocated within the Submission version of the Local Plan.



Table 8.0.6

Site	Area (Ha)	Characteristics
Habberley Road, Bewdley	1.8	Former plant nursery, some buildings on site. Green Belt.
Rear of Ceramaspeed, Zortech Avenue	1.9	Area of land between club house and Walter Nash Road. Leased to Wyre Forest Golf Club. Green Belt
Wilden Top ADR, Stourport	2.7	Allocated as an Area of Development Restraint. Subject to Green Belt policy.
Heath Lane, Stone	1.6	In family's ownership. Green Belt.
Clows Top Former Garage site	1.2	Brownfield site, currently allocated for housing.

**8.40** Whilst Gypsy and Traveller sites are essentially a residential use, sites for Travelling Showpeople differ in that they need to provide a secure, permanent base which is suitable for storage and maintenance of equipment when it is not in use. Most showpeople need to live alongside their equipment and as such sites need to be suitable for both residential and business use. Sites need to be designed in an appropriate manner which minimises any impacts on neighbouring uses and occupiers. Applicants will be required to demonstrate adequate access for their use and that they have sought a connection to the mains foul sewer in the first instance. Proposals should not have a detrimental impact on nature conservation.

**9.1** Planning has a very important role to play in encouraging social interaction and creating healthy and inclusive communities. The NPPF contains measures aimed at reducing health inequalities, improving access to healthy food and reducing obesity, encouraging physical activity, improving mental health and well-being, and improving air quality to reduce the incidence of respiratory diseases.

### **Policy 9 Health and Well Being**

Development should help maximise opportunities to improve quality of life to make it easier for people in Wyre Forest District to lead healthy, active lifestyles by:

1. Providing homes that meet the needs of future occupiers, including older people and those with disabilities
2. Providing energy efficient housing to help reduce fuel poverty
3. Improving access to employment
4. Making adequate provision for safe waste storage and recycling opportunities
5. Designing easy to maintain, safe and attractive public areas and green spaces which minimise the potential for crime and anti-social behaviour and improve community safety
6. Contributing to a high quality, safe and convenient walking and cycling network and providing opportunities for outdoor recreation and sport
7. Locating food and drink premises, hot food takeaways, bars, restaurants, cafés and other non-food and drink uses which may potentially have negative health impacts in appropriate places taking into account other uses in the vicinity
8. Encouraging opportunities for access to fresh food, for example through the retention and provision of allotments, local markets, and usable private amenity spaces
9. Contributing to a high quality, attractive and safe public realm to encourage social interaction and walking and cycling
10. Providing opportunities for formal and informal physical activity, exercise, recreation and play
11. Improving air quality and reducing pollution through the encouragement of more active lifestyles and reducing car dependency
12. Delivering new and improved health services and facilities in locations where they can be easily accessed using sustainable transport

**9.2** Wyre Forest District Council recognises that spatial planning has an important role to play in the creation of healthy, safe and inclusive communities. Many of the policies in this plan will have an impact on these matters. It is vital that community needs are supported through appropriate physical, social and green infrastructure as well as other facilities and services that contribute to improving peoples' overall quality of life, mental and physical health, and their wellbeing.

**9.3** New developments can create environments to help all residents make healthy choices, promote active travel and physical activity, and promote access to healthier food, good quality open space, green infrastructure and opportunities for sport and recreation. Local Plans have a very important role to play in helping to improve health and social interaction and reduce health inequalities.

**9.4** The design of the built environment can have a significant impact on both physical and mental wellbeing. The location, density and mix of uses affects how people live their day-to-day lives. How areas and buildings connect through street layout, footpaths, cycleways and open spaces can impact on mental health and well-being and how active people are.

**9.5** The built environment is one of many factors that can influence people's behaviour and lifestyle choices. The Wyre Forest Health Profile published by Public Health England shows how the health of people in Wyre Forest District compares with both Worcestershire and the rest of England. Priorities in Wyre Forest include older people and management of long term conditions, mental health and wellbeing, obesity and alcohol. The following table shows how Wyre Forest compares with England as a whole for a number of health indicators.

**Table 9.0.1 Key Findings from Health Profile for Wyre Forest District**

Indicator	Wyre Forest %	Worcestershire %	England %	England worst %	England best %
GCSEs achieved (5 A*-C inc. Maths & English)	52.6	59.0	58.6	35.9	78.6
Low birth weight	8.5	7.7	7.4	10.7	4.9
General health - bad or very bad	6.0	5.2	5.5	9.5	2.6
Limiting long term illness or disability	19.9	19.9	17.6	26.0	11.2
Overweight children - Reception class	26.0	23.3	22.2	28.9	15.5
Obese children - Reception class	10.9	9.3	9.3	13.6	5.1
Overweight children - year 6	35.7	31.9	33.4	43.4	22.4
Obese children - year 6	21.0	18.0	19.0	26.9	10.1
Obese adults	27.7	25.6	24.1	30.7	13.7

**9.6** Obesity levels in Wyre Forest District need addressing. 21% of children in Year 6 (10-11 year olds) and 27.7% of adults were classified as obese in Wyre Forest District (Public Health England 2016). By the time children leave primary school, over 1/3rd are classified as overweight. All the figures quoted for Wyre Forest in the above table are significantly worse than the average for England as a whole. Latest data for England as a whole, shows that almost 2/3rds of adults and 1/3rd of children are either overweight or obese. Obesity is a major risk factor for a number of diseases such as Type 2 diabetes, cancer and heart disease. It can also affect people's mental health. Planning has a key role in helping to create places that enable people to achieve and maintain a healthy weight.

**9.7** There are a number of societal, behavioural and environmental factors which make it hard for most people to keep a healthy weight. These factors are often exacerbated in deprived areas where people are 10 times less likely to live in the greenest areas compared with people in the least deprived areas, more likely to live near fast-food outlets which contribute towards the disparity levels of obesity across the population and more likely to feel unsafe in their neighbourhood with consequent negative effects on their health, including a reluctance to take exercise.

**9.8** In areas of high deprivation, it is especially important to encourage healthier lifestyles and easier access to fresh food. One example locally, is at St. George's Park in Kidderminster where the "Let's Eat the Park" scheme started in 2014. Here there are several raised beds which are now in use funded by the Royal Horticultural Society 'Greening Grey Britain' scheme. Several varieties of fresh fruit and vegetables are raised and grown for and by the local community. This gives a free source of nutritional food to the local community.

**9.9** There are six key areas where planning can have a positive influence on health:

A Movement and access - clearly signposted and direct walking and cycling networks; safe and accessible public realm; well-designed buildings with passive surveillance; walking prioritised over vehicles; use and monitor travel plans

B Open spaces, play and recreation - planned network of both blue and green infrastructure; easily accessible natural green space of varying sizes; safe and easily accessible play areas which are overlooked; sports and leisure facilities designed for use by all

C Food environment - development should maintain or enhance opportunities for food production; avoid over-concentration of hot food takeaways and restrict them near schools and facilities aimed at young people; food shops / markets should have diverse offer and be easily accessible

D Neighbourhood spaces - community and healthcare facilities should be provided in early phases of large developments and be located within the same building if possible; public spaces should be attractive, multi-use and readily accessible

E Buildings - dwellings should have adequate internal space for bike storage, dining and kitchen facilities; there should be adequate private and semi-private amenity space per dwelling; car parking provision should be minimised; travel plans should promote sustainable transport

F - Local Economy - development should enhance local centres by providing a more diverse retail offer; local centres and places of employment should be easily accessible by public transport, walking or cycling; centres should provide benches, toilets and secure bike storage

It is important that these cross-cutting issues are picked up by policies elsewhere in the Local Plan.

**9.10** The Food and Drink Retailing Policies in Section 22 of this document further expands on the issues around the prevalence of hot-food takeaways and how they can negatively impact on health.

## A Good Place to do Business

**10.1** The Local Plan provides the strategic framework for the future prosperity and evolution of the District's economy. The District's economy is vital to the prosperity and quality of life of its residents. Economic growth can increase employment opportunities, improve income and regenerate communities. This section includes policies relating to retail, offices and tourism in addition to employment development.

**10.2** Appropriate infrastructure to serve businesses and new development is essential for future prosperity. Suitable access to and from economic areas is crucial to the effectiveness of businesses.

### Summary of Issues and Options Responses

Some support for additional employment and housing to bring in migration to help balance the ageing population. More residents to support services and facilities.

New business should be attracted to District for the economic benefits that it will bring but new employment sites should be accessible by public transport.

Concern raised regarding number of empty shops and empty floor space in Kidderminster town centre, support for utilising floor space or replacing them with residential and encouragement for quality shops within the town centre.

Tourism seen as important for the District's economy.

### Policy 10A - A Diverse Local Economy

#### A Diverse Local Economy

Up to 40 hectares of employment land will be brought forward in the period up to 2034.

Details of the sites expected to contribute to meeting this target will be included in Section C.

- All future employment land within the urban areas should be located in highly accessible locations.
- The development of small scale businesses and starter units will be encouraged.
- Land and premises within the District's existing employment areas will be reserved for uses which generate employment (B1,B2 and B8 use classes and where appropriate sui generis uses).

- Proposals for expansion, updating and intensification of employment uses on existing sites will be supported where they do not compromise the activities of the employment area or conflict with other policy objectives.
- Rural employment sites will be safeguarded for employment uses where appropriate. Proposals for small scale employment in rural areas will be assessed on their merits and should have regard to national policy as well as District Council policies.

### Reasoned Justification

**10.3** The strength of the District's economy is vital to the future prosperity and quality of life of its residents. Economic prosperity is a primary objective of Wyre Forest District Council and this has been highlighted by initiatives such as the 'ReWyre Prospectus' and the more recently adopted ReWyre ReNewed Prospectus as well as initiative such as the Local Development Order for South Kidderminster Enterprise Park.

**10.4** A strategic approach to Employment Development is set out within Policy 10A and the quantum of land required to meet the Districts future employment needs has been determined through the production of an Employment Land Review (ELR).

**10.5** The ELR identified that Wyre Forest has a relatively successful economy, with higher levels of economic activity and lower claimant unemployment levels than the regional averages. It also benefits from a strong level of entrepreneurship (with stronger levels of business start-ups than elsewhere in the West Midlands) and has been the recipient of inward investment from firms such as Morgan Advanced Materials and Amtek.

**10.6** However, challenges still remain and the District still suffers from a historic legacy of economic restructuring, relating to the decline of carpet manufacturing in Kidderminster, which is still ongoing. The District also has relatively few high-skilled residents and higher levels of those with no qualifications than comparator areas. Furthermore, the gap between Wyre Forest's resident and workplace wages implies a disconnect between the quality of employment available to commuters travelling out the Districts and those available in Wyre Forest.

**10.7** Given these challenges it is important that a positive economic framework is put in place to help tackle these issues. Having sufficient, readily available and attractive land, of an appropriate type and in the right location is therefore vital to tackling some of these challenges. The amount and type of employment land identified in Policy 10A will ensure that the District is in a good position to respond and react to the continued diversification of the local economy.

**10.8** A focus of the Wyre Forest District Plan is to provide development that supports the area's economic prosperity. The principal mechanisms to achieve this include making provision for:

- The right amount of quality, readily available and type of land for employment uses in locations where business will thrive and be resilient to the challenges of competition and move towards a low-carbon economy.



- Sufficient housing provision that enables more of the labour force to be housed locally and provides the right mix to meet the wide range of housing needs.
- Infrastructure that supports communities, housing, the labour force and facilitates the movement of labour, goods and materials through the alignment of development and supporting infrastructure; this will include provision of facilities supporting training and skills.

**10.9** In addition, it is important that the plan is flexible and responsive to market demands.

### **Town Centre Development**

**10.10** Town centres are crucial to the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of the District.

**10.11** The concentration of a range of goods, services and facilities in one area creates a centre for communities and enables people to make one trip for many reasons. The District's settlement hierarchy of towns are Kidderminster, Stourport-on-Severn and Bewdley, this provides the basis for identifying the locations for new retail, leisure and commercial development. The regeneration of Lionfields forms part of the Council's ReWyre initiative together with the transformation of the public realm in High Street, Vicar Street, Exchange Street and Oxford Street.

#### **Policy 10B - Town Centre Development**

- Support will be given to safeguarding, maintaining and enhancing the vitality and viability of the existing retail centres throughout the District.
- New development for retail, commercial and leisure uses should follow a sequential approach and be directed to Kidderminster town centre as the strategic centre in the District first followed by Stourport-on-Severn and Bewdley.
- Retail and office development within the towns will be supported subject to proposals being in keeping with the settlement hierarchy and proposals not causing adverse effects on the built and natural environment.
- New office development will be focused on the three town centres, and within both existing and allocated employment areas. Development of small scale offices in rural areas will also be supported, where appropriate.
- Proposals for alternative town centre uses such as residential and recreation, will, where appropriate be supported if there is no significant adverse impact on the overall vitality and viability of the existing centre.
- Proposals for the reuse of vacant floorspace and regeneration of the eastern part of the town centre to provide a counterbalance to Weavers Wharf will be supported.



## Reasoned Justification

**10.12** The retail sector and town centres are undergoing a period of significant structural change arising not just from the effects of the recent and sustained economic downturn but also the continuing popularity and convenience provided by out-of-town facilities and the increasing adoption of online shopping by both consumers and retailers.

**10.13** The Retail and Commercial Leisure Needs Study identified that there is no additional capacity for further convenience floorspace in the District and there is no pressing need for the Council to allocate any sites for additional larger food stores.

**10.14** In addition, the Wyre Forest District Retail and Commercial Leisure Needs study identified that:

**10.15** *"Whilst Kidderminster Town Centre does have a theoretical need for additional comparison goods shopping, due to commitments this need only arises toward the end of the plan period. We do not therefore consider any specific site allocations are required now and would suggest instead that there is encouragement given to the reuse of vacant floorspace and regeneration of the eastern part of the town centre to provide a counterbalance to Weavers Wharf." Paragraph 6.88 Retail and Commercial Leisure Needs Study.*

**10.16** *"Neither Stourport-on-Severn nor Bewdley Town Centres are forecast to have needs for significant levels of comparison shopping floorspace for them to continue to fulfil their existing roles." Paragraph 6.89 Retail and Commercial Leisure Needs Study.*

**10.17** Given this position, it is not proposed to specifically allocate any sites for future retail needs. However, whilst no sites are required to be allocated to meet need, support will continue to be provided within the identified retail areas of the town's where future development opportunities might arise. Maps showing the Primary Shopping Areas can be found in Appendix A. In addition, the Council will continue to support the development and diversification of the three main towns in the District to ensure that their role as strategic Centres are retained and enhanced.

## Sustainable Tourism

**10.18** Wyre Forest District has an attractive and diverse landscape character, which has contributed to growing tourism in the area. Within the District are many visitor and tourist attractions, a number of them are of regional significance such as Severn Valley Railway and West Midlands Safari Park. The District has many more "natural" tourist/visitor attractions such as The Wyre Forest itself, , Habberley Valley, Local Nature Reserves, the River Severn and Stourport Riverside as well Brinton Park. The District also has Bewdley Museum which attracts 190,000 visitors per annum and the Museum of Carpet in Kidderminster.

**10.19** The following policy seeks to protect and enhance the existing visitor and tourist facilities whilst providing opportunities for new tourist attractions and ensuring that the high quality of the environment is not compromised.

### **Policy 10D - Sustainable Tourism**

- Support will be given to proposals that improve the quality and diversity of existing visitor/tourist facilities, attractions, accommodation and infrastructure, where development is compatible with the physical character of the area and does not cause any unacceptable impacts.
- Proposals for new tourism related developments will be considered on their merits and determined in line with the policies contained within this plan.
- Proposals linked to the Tourism Industry should incorporate sustainable transport links wherever possible as the site should be readily and safely accessible by public transport wherever possible, especially between attractions and town centre.
- Support will be given to developments, projects and initiatives that assist in promoting the waterways as a tourist attraction.

### **Reasoned Justification**

**10.20** Tourism is an important element within the overall economy of the area. Each year more than 119 million visits are made to the region, generating over £121 million to the local economy and offers employment to more than 2100. During 2014 2.5 million trips were undertaken to Wyre Forest District comprising 2.3 million day trips and 0.2 million overnight visitors. £64 million was spent by day visitors and £23 million by overnight visitors. The local visitor economy supports 2,138 jobs within the area.

**10.21** The visitor economy creates new and additional services that leads to the creation and growth of businesses in the area. Tourism also helps to support the high level of employment that is found in the region.

**10.22** A strong visitor economy can support regeneration projects, additional facilities and services for visitors. This also provides local people with these same facilities that can enrich the life of local communities.

**10.23** The majority of visitors to Wyre Forest District visit on day trips and do not stay overnight. Day trips are important but the short break market needs to be supported and encouraged to expand which would help to secure greater economic benefits for the area as a whole.

## A Unique Place

**11.1** Wyre Forest District council has an overall vision to protect, improve and enhance the built and natural environment in order to provide an accessible, attractive, enjoyable and healthy place to be. The quality of the District's environment is one of its most valuable assets and includes rich built heritage, diverse and sensitive habitats and attractive landscapes.

**11.2** The built and natural environment includes everything that surrounds us from open space to historic buildings, rivers and canals and the wider countryside. The environment of Wyre Forest District is made unique by the valleys of the River Severn and River Stour and by the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal which all run through the District and help to shape the landscape. The District has a number of sites and features which are designated either nationally or locally for conservation interest.

**11.3** A high quality environment can have numerous benefits for an area. Businesses are more likely to locate in areas where the built and natural environment is attractive. The natural and built environment of the District is also attractive to tourists and can create a strong sense of place, helping to retain residents within the District.

**11.4** Access to high-quality, well-maintained public space is an essential part of promoting active, healthy lifestyles. Well-designed streets can encourage walking and cycling and good access to public space can facilitate participation in sport and active recreation. A comprehensive network of green spaces and corridors will support a range of biodiversity and will help to tackle climate change.

**11.5** This section sets out policies to define quality design and safeguard and enhance the natural and historic environment of Wyre Forest District.

### Summary of Issues and Options Responses

Design and Local Distinctiveness - There was individual support for each option: Option A (specific design guidance for specific locations); Option B (raising design quality in areas with little or no particular character through innovative and high quality design approaches), with overall more support favouring Option B. The role of Neighbourhood Plans and developers' design and access statements in the achievement of high quality locally distinctive design was advocated.

Historic Environment – there was general agreement that the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) alone do not offer adequate protection to non-designated assets and there is full support for the inclusion of a local distinctiveness policy.

Landscape - there was overall support for protection of the landscape, which may or may not include Green Belt. On balance there is general support for existing chalet and equestrian development policies, but also some backing for small-scale farm diversification schemes to allow some tourist accommodation. Calls for a separate policy covering Trees and

Woodlands are addressed within Policy 10D. There was support for the strengthening of Green Infrastructure policy to not only protect assets but enhance them and re-link them into the wider network.

## Design and Local Distinctiveness

**11.6** Wyre Forest District is a considerably diverse area with particularly distinctive characteristics and heritage assets. It is especially important to aim for quality design in any future development to both complement and enhance this local distinctiveness and create a high quality environment.

### Policy 11A - Quality Design and Local Distinctiveness

#### A. High Quality Design

All development within Wyre Forest District will be expected to exhibit high quality design. It will need to integrate effectively with its surroundings, in terms of form and function, reinforce local distinctiveness and conserve, and where appropriate, enhance cultural and heritage assets and their settings. New and innovative designs will be encouraged and supported where they enhance the overall quality of the built environment.

#### B. Creating and Reinforcing Local Distinctiveness

Wyre Forest District has an existing character that is determined by the qualities of the existing buildings and landscape. New development should respond to these existing qualities and ensure that it represents a positive addition to the streetscape or landscape. Where the existing context is weak or negative, it is important that new development demonstrates an improvement in the quality of the area.

#### C. Design Supplementary Planning Document

Proposals for new development must demonstrate a regard for the overarching vision and design objectives, the District's local character and identity and the design processes set out within the latest Design SPD (June 2015) and adopted later revisions.

## Reasoned Justification

**11.7** High quality design is considered to be essential for sustainable development and it is recognised as a key contributor to community health, economic value, social well-being and inclusion, as well as environmental quality. High quality design is needed to create places where people want to live, work and visit. Design is important everywhere in the District, not only in maintaining places which are attractive, but also in revitalising and regenerating places. High quality design is not just about individual buildings but how places work as well as look.

**11.8** In 2015 the District Council adopted the Design Guidance Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)<sup>(4)</sup> underlying its commitment to improve the quality of new developments within the area and reflecting the importance attached to design through the NPPF at paragraph 6 and National Planning Practice Guidance.

**11.9** It is widely recognised that the process of good design starts with the creation of a well planned structure of streets and spaces which are often the most enduring feature of successful places.<sup>(5)</sup> Effectively connecting new streets and spaces into their surroundings will help to assimilate new developments.

**11.10** The District contains a rich heritage with a range of heritage assets including significant buildings, structures, archaeology and conservation areas. These include the Staffordshire and Worcestershire canal in addition to a valued network of green infrastructure incorporating important habitats, rivers and streams. This creates an asset-rich environment which will influence the location, design and use of future development and management of the public realm.

**11.11** Utilising existing qualities including heritage assets will help to strengthen the sense of local identity and community. If successfully incorporated, these elements will also improve the overall legibility of the place with inclusion of recognisable landmarks, spaces and points of enclosure. These strategic policies will help to ensure the creation of successful places that are secure, active, well-connected and attractive places to live and work, with a clear sense of community.

**11.12** Crime and the fear of crime is often a big issue within local communities and can affect the well-being of the District's communities. Even low levels of anti-social behaviour and fear of crime can have a significant impact on people's lives. In line with the objectives of the NPPF paragraph 58 new development within Wyre Forest District should create safer and accessible environments where crime, disorder and the fear of crime do not undermine quality of life or community cohesion.

**11.13** The issue of crime and community safety is dealt with at a local level by the Wyre Forest Community Safety Partnership, which is the Crime and Disorder Partnership that operates within the District. The Partnership brings together a variety of stakeholders who share the vision 'Wyre Forest - an even safer place to live, work, visit or do business in'.

**11.14** Policy 11A should be considered alongside Policy 5 (Overarching Sustainable Development Principles) and read in conjunction with Policy 27A (Quality Design and Local Distinctiveness).

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4 Design Quality SPD- WFDC, 2015

5 Manual for Streets Paragraph 1.1.2 (DfT & DCLG, 2005)

## Historic Environment

### Policy 11B - Historic Environment

- A. Development proposals should protect, conserve and enhance heritage assets, including assets of potential archaeological interest, subject to the provisions of Policy 26A (Safeguarding the Historic Environment). Their contribution to the character of the landscape or townscape should be safeguarded and protected in order to sustain the historic quality, sense of place, environmental quality and economic vibrancy of Wyre Forest District.
- B. Development proposals will be supported where they protect, conserve and enhance the significance of heritage assets, including their setting. In particular this applies to:
  - i. Designated heritage assets; i.e. listed buildings, conservation areas, scheduled monuments, registered parks and gardens and registered battlefields as well as undesignated heritage assets (including those identified on the District's Local Heritage List or for which a Historic Environment Record exists).
  - ii. The historic landscape, including locally distinctive settlement patterns, field systems, woodlands and commons and historic farmsteads and smallholdings.
  - iii. Designed landscapes, including parkland, gardens, cemeteries, churchyards, public parks, urban open spaces and industrial, military or institutional landscapes.
  - iv. Archaeological remains of all periods.
  - v. Historic transportation networks and infrastructure including roads and track-ways, canals, river navigations, railways and their associated industries.
  - vi. The market town of Bewdley with its historic street and plot patterns, buildings and open spaces along with their settings and views of the town.
  - vii. The historic inland port of Stourport-on-Severn with its late-18<sup>th</sup> century street pattern and buildings along with their settings and views of the town.
  - viii. The industrial urban landscape of the historic market town of Kidderminster with its surviving heritage assets and their settings.
  - ix. The rural villages within the District, including their associated Conservation Areas and buildings, along with their settings and historic views to and from the surrounding countryside.

### Reasoned Justification

**11.15** When considering development proposals Policy 11B should be read in conjunction with Policy 26A Safeguarding the Historic Environment.



**11.16** The historic environment of Wyre Forest is a valuable, finite and irreplaceable resource, which is central to the character and identity of the area. It has a crucial role in supporting sustainable development through enhancing the quality of life of those currently living in and visiting the area and should do so for generations to come as well as delivering wider economic benefits through tourism and uplift in related development benefits.

**11.17** Proposals for development should have regard to the locally distinctive character of Wyre Forest District and appropriate weight will be given to those characteristics identified when determining proposals.

**11.18** Heritage assets are a powerful reminder of the work and life of earlier generations. The benefits of conserving and enhancing heritage assets include:

- a. Potential for sustainable development, reducing carbon emissions by re-using historic structures
- b. Influencing the character of an area and giving it a sense of place
- c. Providing opportunities to be the catalyst for regeneration within an area and inspiring new development and imaginative design

**11.19** The District currently has about 750 designated heritage assets included on the National Heritage List for England, together with 17 Conservation Areas. Undesignated heritage assets include those identified on the Worcestershire Historic Environment Record together with a approximately 1000 included by the District Council on the local heritage list.

**11.20** Historic Landscape Characterisation studies have been produced for Worcestershire County Council. These provide an evidence base that can be used to inform assessments of local distinctiveness and the heritage value of historic landscapes and their associated heritage assets. The contribution that historic farmsteads make to the landscape is recognised in the guidance produced as a result of the West Midlands Farmsteads and Landscapes Project.

**11.21** Designed landscapes include historic parks at Upper Arley, Ribbesford and Wribbenhall as well as Brinton Park and Kidderminster cemetery. The Policies Map will specifically identify Conservation Areas, Registered Parks and Gardens and Scheduled Monuments. Others are identified in the local heritage lists available to view on the District Council's website and Worcestershire County Council's Historic Environment Records. As well as landscape interest, these heritage assets have significant architectural and archaeological interest and often contain other monuments and memorials.

**11.22** Archaeological remains provide crucial links to the past and can provide useful information about local heritage. In addition to those Scheduled Monuments included on the National Heritage List for England the District has many undesignated sites with archaeological potential – these are often identified on the Worcestershire Historic Environment Record.

**11.23** A green infrastructure-led approach to development could aid the conservation of historic environment features, for example by allowing archaeology to remain in situ or strategically placing green space to preserve the setting of designated heritage assets. Therefore this policy has close links with Policy14 (Strategic Green Infrastructure).



**11.24** Historically the River Severn was the principal transportation network, being navigable as far north as Bewdley, and encouraging its development as a market town and point of transfer of merchandise from the middle ages onwards. The development of the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century resulted in dramatic industrial expansion at Kidderminster, and the creation of the new inland port of Stourport-on-Severn, whilst the fortunes of Bewdley correspondingly declined. The coming of the railways in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century supported further industrial expansion to the east of the River Severn and improved links both east-west and north-south.

**11.25** The District's villages and hamlets are mostly of medieval or earlier origin. Many of them have surviving medieval assets, such as the parish church, ponds and earthworks. To the east of the River Severn nucleated villages are set within a landscape that is characterised by diverse and important historic field systems, punctuated by small areas of ancient and semi-natural woodlands and remnants of historic parklands. To the west of the River Severn, the farmsteads and settlements are more dispersed and to the north west of the District the Wyre Forest itself remains a dominant feature.

## Landscape Character

### Policy 11C - Landscape Character

#### A. Landscape Character

New development must protect and where possible enhance the unique character of the landscape including the individual settlement or hamlet within which it is located. Opportunities for landscape gain will be sought alongside all new development, in order that landscape character is strengthened and enhanced.

The Worcestershire County Council Landscape Character Assessment and Historic Landscape Characterisation will be used when determining applications for development within the rural areas.

#### B. Severn Valley Regional Heritage Park

The establishment of a Severn Valley Regional Heritage Park to link the historic town and landscape from Stourport-on-Severn through to Ironbridge will be supported and promoted during the plan period.

## Reasoned Justification

**11.26** One of the core principles in the NPPF is that planning should recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. Local plans should include strategic policies for the conservation and enhancement of the natural environment, including landscape. This includes designated landscapes but also the wider countryside.

**11.27** Natural England defines landscape character as “*a distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements be it natural (soil, landform) and/or human (for example settlement and development ) in the landscape that makes one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse*”. <sup>(6)</sup>

**11.28** Worcestershire County Council has undertaken a Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) covering the rural areas of the county. LCA is a tool for identifying those features that give a locality its sense of place, and is used to sub-divide the landscape into areas of similar character, classified as Landscape Types. <sup>(7)</sup>

**11.29** The LCA and Historic Landscape Characterisation will be used when determining applications for development in rural areas. LCA determines the sensitivity of the landscape which may be used at a strategic level to help guide new development to the most appropriate areas. Areas of high landscape sensitivity are those which are least able to accommodate changes without damage to their character. Less sensitive areas are those which are the most likely to be suitable for future small scale development such as community facilities and rural affordable housing, needed to maintain the viability of the District's villages.

**11.30** The landscape of the Severn Valley is particularly distinctive. The River Severn is a cross-boundary feature and the establishment of a linear Severn Valley Heritage Park to celebrate and promote the Severn Valley will be supported through the development of supplementary guidance on its landscape character and the designation of the Severn Valley Railway as a Conservation Area.

## Biodiversity and Geodiversity

### Policy 11D - Protecting and Enhancing Biodiversity and Geological Conservation

Development should support the conservation, enhancement and restoration of biodiversity and geodiversity across the Plan Area. Specific provisions are identified below:

- 1 Full account will be given in making planning decisions to the importance of any affected habitats and features, taking account of the hierarchy of protected sites:
  - i. Nationally important sites including Sites of Special Scientific Interest, National Nature Reserves and Ancient Woodlands.
  - ii. Locally important sites including Local Wildlife Sites, Local Nature Reserves, Local Geological Sites and other priority habitats.
  - iii. The ecological network of wildlife corridors that link the biodiversity areas detailed above, including areas identified for habitat restoration and creation.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/landscape-character-assessments-identify-and-describe-landscape-types>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/cms/landscape-character-assessment.aspx>

2. Net gains in biodiversity will be sought from all major development proposals through the promotion, restoration and re-creation of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of legally protected and priority species populations. Delivery of net gains in biodiversity should be designed to support the delivery of the identified biodiversity network that crosses the Plan Area and links the main towns of Kidderminster, Stouport-on-Severn and Bewdley to the countryside, as well as the network within the towns themselves. The level of biodiversity net gain required will be proportionate to the type, scale and impact of development. Enhancements for wildlife within the built environment will be sought where appropriate from all scales of development.
3. Development which would be likely to directly or indirectly impact the biodiversity value of a site will not be permitted unless:
  - i. The need for and the public interest benefits of the development outweigh the harm, including any harm to the integrity of the ecological network.
  - ii. The impacts cannot be avoided through an alternative, less harmful location, design or form of development.
  - iii. The development demonstrates that it has proactively tried to avoid impacts on biodiversity and geological interests through the design process prior to developing measures to mitigate or as a last resort to compensate for unavoidable impacts.
  - iv. The favourable conservation status of legally protected species is maintained.
  - v. Impacts upon species, habitats or geodiversity can be reduced to a level whereby they are not significant by appropriate mitigation or as a last resort, by compensation.
4. Development will provide for the long term management of biodiversity features retained and enhanced within the site or for those features created off-site to compensate for development impacts.
5. In the event of internationally designated sites being identified within the District following the adoption of this plan, full account will be taken of any adverse impact, on such sites by any future development proposals.

## Reasoned Justification

**11.31** Biodiversity and geological interests (geodiversity) are protected through a hierarchy of national and locally designated sites which seek to protect important habitats and the habitats of species of conservation importance, as well as geological and geomorphological interests. The importance of protecting and enhancing biodiversity occurring outside these designated sites is also recognised in European and national law and in the NPPF. In particular, requirements to maintain functioning ecological networks at the landscape scale and irreplaceable habitats and biodiversity features which may not necessarily be covered by a formal designation.

**11.32** As well as sites which are protected by designations, there is also the potential through development to create and enhance other sites. These additional areas may be smaller ‘stepping stones’ of actual ‘wildlife corridors’ (both blue and green) which help to link sites into a detailed network. This approach is embedded within NPPF paragraphs 109, 114 and 117 which require Local Authorities to create biodiversity or ecological networks.

## **Regenerating the Waterways**

### **Policy 11E - Regenerating the Waterways**

#### **A. Rivers**

All proposals for development in or adjacent to the District’s rivers and/or within an area at risk of flooding must also conform with WFDC Policy 11E

Rivers are to be enhanced in accordance with Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity Policies.

Development which opens up and enhances the River Stour in Kidderminster and Stourport-on Severn will be encouraged.

Development which preserves the historic riverside character of Bewdley will be encouraged.

#### **B. Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal**

Developments and initiatives that make a positive contribution to the creation of an attractive and high quality canal-side environment will be supported.

### **Reasoned Justification**

**11.33** Two of the District’s three main waterways: the River Stour and the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal pass through Kidderminster and Stourport-on-Severn, whilst the principal river, the Severn passes through both Stourport-on-Severn and Bewdley.

**11.34** The canal and rivers are prominent features of the District and, as well as helping to shape the area’s past, these key distinctive assets have great potential to act as catalysts for local regeneration, bringing benefits and influencing the future development of the District.

**11.35** This Policy is to be read in conjunction with Policy 27E Wyre Forest Waterways

## Policy 12 - Strategic Infrastructure

- A. The Council will work closely with its partners, especially the County Council, to bring forward the appropriate, proportionate and necessary infrastructure that is required to deliver the Plan.
- B. Development will be required to provide or contribute, financially or in kind, towards the provision of infrastructure needed to support it, subject to viability.
- C. Where new infrastructure is needed to support new development, the infrastructure must be operational no later than the appropriate phase of development for which it is needed.

## Reasoned Justification

**12.1** Cross reference should be made to Policy 13 Transport and Accessibility.

**12.2** In the previous Wyre Forest Core Strategy and the subsequent Development Plan Documents, much of the development was in the urban areas with a focus on brownfield sites. In this Local Plan Review, a different pattern of development is required with more sustainable urban extensions on greenfield sites under both Preferred Options A and B and this is reflected in the consequent infrastructure requirements. New development requires suitable infrastructure to integrate it with existing communities and meet the needs of new residents and businesses

**12.3** The infrastructure requirements to support the Plan are set out in the Wyre Forest Infrastructure Delivery Plan (WFIDP) that was prepared in Spring 2017 and which will be updated regularly throughout the lifetime of the Plan.

**12.4** As explained in the Introduction, the Council and its partners will be committed to the delivery of infrastructure, as set out in the WFIDP. The WFIDP specifies the requirements for physical infrastructure, including transport and utilities, social infrastructure, including education and health, and green infrastructure. The WFIDP also contains a spatial description of the infrastructure requirements. The WFIDP is intended to be a “living document” and will be updated as necessary to support the delivery of the WFLPR.

**12.5** For the specific infrastructure requirements related to particular sites, reference should be made to the site specific policies contained in Part C of this Plan, where appropriate. For those allocated sites where the WFLPR does not contain detailed policy guidance on infrastructure provision, a specific assessment of infrastructure requirements will be developed by the Council in conjunction with infrastructure providers and in liaison with developers when development proposals come forward. Reference should be made to the most current version of the WFIDP, which will provide assistance in identifying infrastructure requirements for these sites.

**12.6** The assessment of infrastructure requirements set out in these Preferred Options has been carried out by the Council in close consultation with infrastructure providers, including the County Council and the Worcestershire LEP and the Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP to

## 12 Strategic Infrastructure

secure maximum alignment on the priorities for infrastructure in Wyre Forest. The partner authorities intend to explore a range of funding mechanisms to finance the infrastructure requirements of Wyre Forest.

**12.7** The Council will consider wider infrastructure funding streams as part of the Local Plan Review process and in due course will consider the introduction of a Community Infrastructure Levy in conjunction with the latest Planning Obligations SPD, as adopted by the Council in September 2016.

**12.8** This policy has been drawn up to take account of a significant number of comments made during the Issues & Options consultation stage in autumn 2015.

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## **Policy 13 - Transport and Accessibility in Wyre Forest**

### **Managing Travel Demand**

- A. Proposals must demonstrate that:
- i. the location and layout of development will minimise the demand for travel;
  - ii. they offer viable sustainable transport choices, with a particular focus on active travel modes (walking and cycling);
  - iii. they address road safety issues;  
and in particular,
  - iv. they are consistent with the delivery of the Worcestershire Local Transport Plan objectives.
- B. Travel Plans will be required for all major developments. These must set out measures to reduce demand to travel by private cars and must seek to promote and support increased walking, cycling and public transport use for a range of trip purposes through agreed targets and monitoring arrangements. The Travel Plan must follow the guidance set out in the National Planning Policy Framework.
- C. New development should have regard to the principles and design criteria set out in Manual for Streets, Worcestershire County Council's Local Transport Plan and Worcestershire County Council's Streetscape Design Guide.

### **Providing Alternative Modes of Travel**

- D. Priority will be given to improving infrastructure, technology and services to support active travel (walking and cycling) and passenger transport (bus, rail and community transport) during the plan period. In accordance with Policy 12 on Strategic Infrastructure, development will be expected to contribute to the provision of sustainable transport infrastructure, technology and services necessary to support that development, either through direct investment or by financial contributions.
- E. In order to promote greater transport choice in rural areas, community transport and innovative transport projects, including those that promote the use of new vehicle technology, will be encouraged in conjunction with new development proposals.

### **Delivering Transport Infrastructure to Support Economic Prosperity**

- F. The following transport schemes, as identified within the Worcestershire Local Transport Plan, are the most significant for the successful implementation of the WFLPR:
- WFST 1: Kidderminster Transport Strategy Major Scheme.
  - WFST 2; Transport Telematics Investment Package (all towns).
  - WFST 3: Active Travel Corridor: Bewdley to Wyre Forest (Dowles Link).
  - WFST 4: Mustow Green Junction Enhancement Scheme.
  - WFST 5: Blakedown Rail Station Enhancement Scheme.



## 13 Transport and Accessibility

- The schemes listed in the Kidderminster, Stourport -on-Severn and Bewdley Packages.
- SWAT 10: Stourport to Hartlebury Station (Leapgate Line ) Active Transport Corridor.
- In addition schemes will require implementation to support the level of development proposed in the Local Plan Review.

G. Development proposals will not be permitted if they are likely to prejudice the implementation of the transport schemes set out in clauses F, the implementation of identified highway improvements or traffic management schemes, or the operation of existing or proposed public transport facilities.

H. The following sites and corridors will be safeguarded from development that would prejudice future enhancement of the rail network and strategic access to it:

- Worcester-Kidderminster- Stourbridge junction – Birmingham Snow Hill line.
- Severn Valley Rail Line.
- Leapgate Lane former rail alignment (Stourport to Hartlebury).

### Transport Assessment Strategy

I. Transport assessments are required for all major developments and must be carried out in compliance with relevant national and local policies and guidance, including the Worcestershire Local Transport Plan.

### Freight Proposals

J. Any industrial or commercial development that is likely to generate freight movements of more than 10 vehicular trips per day will be required to carry out an assessment of its impact on the local road network and environment and the suitability to accommodate the increased traffic. Wherever possible, such development should be located on or near the principal road network.

### Implementation

K. Financial contributions from development towards transport infrastructure will be secured through developer contributions and, if appropriate, the Community Infrastructure Levy Charging Schedule.

### Reasoned Justification

**13.1** The Wyre Forest Local Plan Review recognises that the quality of transport provision and the accessibility of the District greatly affect regeneration, economic diversification and growth, and the quality of life of its residents and visitors. Traffic congestion, in particular, is a major cost to the local economy, has the potential to constrain future growth, and negatively affects air quality especially within the urban areas.

**13.2** There are two Air Quality Management Areas in the Wyre Forest District: one at Welchgate in Bewdley Town Centre and one on the Kidderminster Ring Road at the Horsefair. Both locations are particularly challenging to mitigate; the former because of historic, dense street patterns and the latter because of traffic volumes. In residents' surveys, concerns regarding traffic congestion as well as the quality of roads and pavements, sit second only to crime concerns in relation to satisfaction with living in the District.

**13.3** Sites on the highway network such as the A451 Kidderminster Ring Road and its approaches, and the A448 between Kidderminster and Bromsgrove suffer from congestion during peak times; the A456 near the West Midlands Safari Park suffers from high levels of traffic in the summer months, when visitor numbers are highest. Furthermore, the Kidderminster Ring Road creates a barrier and 'collar' effect which deters pedestrian and cycle journeys to and from the town centre, including links to Kidderminster Railway Station/SVR on Comberton Hill.

**13.4** Constrained by its single river crossing, highway network and the location of the main car parks to the west of the town centre, high levels of traffic are channelled through the historic centre of Stourport-on-Severn. These high traffic levels have resulted in borderline Air Quality Management Areas and have a detrimental impact on regeneration proposals. Bewdley town centre is also constrained by its single river crossing and narrow historic street pattern, which results in localised congestion and reduced dispersal of vehicular emissions. This has resulted in deterioration in ambient air quality in Bewdley Town Centre and the designation of the Air Quality Management Area in Welchgate.

**13.5** If traffic growth trends continue, many more of the District's main urban and interurban arterial routes may become increasingly congested beyond traditional peak times. Further growth in the District, especially as part of the regeneration of key employment and town centre sites such as the Churchfields development (Kidderminster), has the potential to exacerbate traffic congestion unless delivered in conjunction with investment in transport infrastructure, technology and services. In addition to private cars, the poor performance of the highway network in the form of congestion has significant impacts on the passenger transport network (including bus/rail integration), freight and small delivery movements, taxis/private hire journeys and trips taken by pedestrians and cyclists.

**13.6** To tackle traffic congestion, significant changes in travel patterns and travel behaviour is necessary on a local neighbourhood and District wide level. This will require investment in transport infrastructure and services, and the adoption of policies that ensure the closer integration of land use and transportation planning, to help manage demand on the local transport network. Reducing the need to travel and encouraging use of other modes of transport (travel choice), especially for shorter trips, is key in tackling traffic congestion. Nationally and at the local level, evidence and experience consistently proves that even small shifts away from single-occupancy car use to walking, cycling and passenger transport can deliver significant improvements to traffic flow.

**13.7** The recent completion of the Hoobrook Link Road (opened Sept 2016) will help ease delays along the A451 Stourport Road corridor and bring significant economic benefits to the area; however, traffic congestion cannot just be tackled by building new roads. Investment in

## 13 Transport and Accessibility

transport infrastructure, technology and services across all modes of transport will be required to accommodate the growth in travel demand without increasing travel times, congestion and the associated costs that can undermine economic performance.

**13.8** Traffic congestion is a significant challenge for freight movements and networks, and businesses rely on this network for access to raw materials and delivery of finished products. Reducing delays on the highway network to promote consistently reliable journey times is especially important for road freight operations and to promote economic growth. Tackling 'pinch points' in the network is very important to the freight sector, as is investment in Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS). At the hub of ITS is Urban Traffic Management Control (UTMC), which provides the facility to integrate a wide variety of information on highway network conditions from numerous sources/systems to support network management and provide comprehensive travel information across a wide range of communication channels.

**13.9** In addition to road based freight, future proposals for employment development, particularly along the Stourport Road Employment Corridor, should have regard to the possibility of utilising the existing rail infrastructure for the sustainable movement of freight. The District's inland waterway network including the Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal and the Rivers Severn and Stour also offer longer term opportunities for the sustainable movement of freight through the District.

**13.10** To promote further development, economic growth and tackle traffic congestion, the Wyre Forest District will need to have:

- An efficient highway network with good links to the strategic highway network;
- Excellent access to rail stations and improved rail services;
- A convenient and efficient urban passenger transport network;
- High-quality active travel routes and corridors (walking and cycling) for shorter distance journeys, particularly in urban areas.

### Highway Network

**13.11** The District does not benefit from local access to the motorway network (M5); however, it has good connections to the Black Country and wider West Midlands Conurbation to the north/west, Bromsgrove and Redditch to the east, and Worcester to the south, provided by the local principal road network.

**13.12** The main highway corridors are:

- A442 - runs north/south through the District and Kidderminster town centre linking Droitwich and Bridgnorth;
- A448 - runs Kidderminster- Bromsgrove-Redditch;
- A449 - runs north/south through the District and the eastern side of Kidderminster town centre, linking Worcester and Wolverhampton;
- A450 – runs in the south of the District linking Stourbridge and Hagley to Torton, near Hartlebury;

- A451 - runs north/south through the District and Kidderminster town centre (incorporating the Kidderminster Ring Road) linking Stourport-on-Severn and Stourbridge;
- A456 - runs east/west through the District providing the main route from the West Midlands conurbation to Kidderminster, Bewdley and on to the Marches.

**13.13** There are significant challenges with traffic congestion in Kidderminster and Stourport town centres in particular and intervention is needed to support regeneration, economic diversification and growth. This will potentially require the construction of some new sections of highway and alterations and improvements to existing roads and junctions. In particular, focus is needed to enhance the performance of 'pinch-points' on the existing transport network where journey times and costs are increasing. It is hoped that the recent opening of the Hoobrook Link Road will release capacity on the A451 Stourport Road corridor which may offer opportunities for infrastructure enhancements to benefit buses, pedestrians and cyclists.

**13.14** There are a number of 'pinch points' on the inter-urban highway network such as the junction of the A448 and A450 at Mustow Green, where significant investment is required to improve the efficiency of the junction to cater for existing, and the forecast increase, in traffic demand. Development in intelligent transport systems (telematics), such as Variable Message Signs and Real Time Information Systems, will increasingly have a role in managing demand on the highway network and investment will be required to develop and maintain these systems so that the network functions more efficiently.

### **Rail Network**

**13.15** There are two rail stations within the District, Kidderminster and Blakedown, both providing important links with the West Midlands conurbation and Worcester; there are also direct trains from Kidderminster to London (Marylebone) via Birmingham Snow Hill. Whilst having a good service to Birmingham and Worcester, Kidderminster's connectivity southwards from Worcester depends upon the 2-hourly frequency Great Malvern-Bristol service and connectivity at Cheltenham Spa. Northbound journeys from Kidderminster require a change either between Birmingham Snow Hill/Moor Street and Birmingham New Street or at Smethwick Galton Bridge.

**13.16** Kidderminster Rail Station is the second busiest in Worcestershire, representing nearly 20% of all rail travel in the County, dominated by commuter flows into Birmingham. The service provides valuable links for employment, retail, leisure and education, and is well used in both directions, with the highest demand during weekday peak periods. It is recognised however, that the facilities at Kidderminster Rail Station need to be improved and investment is necessary for enhancements to cater for the expected doubling of passenger numbers by 2043.

**13.17** The Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership (WLEP) Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) highlights a number of challenges facing the County and notes that "there is considerable scope to enhance Worcestershire's rail infrastructure and services". In the SEP there is clear commitment to support the Kidderminster Rail Station Enhancement scheme as a short-term 'Local Growth Fund' initiative, to actively improve accessibility to and from the County by rail, and reduce reliance on private car travel.

## 13 Transport and Accessibility

**13.18** The proposed enhancements include a new station building and improved access for all modes that provides a high quality transport gateway to Kidderminster and the Wyre Forest that is better integrated with the Severn Valley Railway (SVR) and other key business and tourist destinations. To maximise the benefits of the Rail Station enhancements, it is vital that investment go toward measures to enhance bus/rail integration and active mode improvements; in particular, toward improved walk/cycle links to Kidderminster town centre.

**13.19** To complement the planned enhancements to Kidderminster Rail Station and rail connectivity for the District, the emerging Worcestershire County Council Rail Investment Strategy includes aspirations for the following improvements:

- Extending London Paddington-Worcester services to Droitwich Spa and Kidderminster;
- Provision of a new direct train service between Kidderminster, Worcester, Cheltenham Spa, Gloucester, Bristol Parkway and Bristol Temple Meads.

**13.20** The emerging Rail Investment Strategy also highlights the need to address poor journey times between Kidderminster and Birmingham, where the average travelling speed is 33mph.

**13.21** Although patronage is relatively low at Blakedown Station, it is recognised that investment is required to cater for the forecast growth in rail travel with enhancements required to include:

- Improvements to passenger information and station facilities for passengers;
- Improvements to walking /cycling routes to the station;
- Improvements to access arrangements for cyclists and provide additional new cycle storage facilities;
- Set-down and pick-up facilities for taxi users and operators;
- Improve facilities for passengers with disabilities;
- Improvements to car parking.

**13.22** The opportunities to increase car parking provision at Kidderminster Rail Station are limited and so improving parking provision at the alternative stations (Blakedown and Hartlebury) will be valuable as an alternative means of providing for anticipated rail growth in the Wyre Forest.

**13.23** The South Worcestershire Transport Strategy (covering the City of Worcester, Wychavon and Malvern Hills Districts) includes aspirations to enhance facilities and services at Hartlebury Station which will offer increased travel and economic growth opportunities for Wyre Forest District, particularly for residents and businesses in Hartlebury and Stourport-on-Severn. The proposals, similar in scope to those for Blakedown Station, suggest enhancements to facilities to cater for the forecast growth in rail travel. The Worcestershire County Council LTP4 includes proposals for the promotion of 'Active Travel Corridors' and a strategic corridor identified is the Stourport to Hartlebury Station (Leapgate Line) Active Travel Corridor. This Active Travel Corridor aims to focus investment in walking and cycling links along the corridor to create a comprehensive, integrated off-road network linking residential areas with key trip attractors, including rail stations.



**13.24** The Severn Valley Railway (SVR) is one of the leading heritage railways in the UK, operating over a 16 mile route between Kidderminster and Bewdley to Bridgnorth in Shropshire. The railway is one of the major tourist attractions in Worcestershire with over 200,000 visitors annually. There is potential for connections to the National Rail network at Kidderminster Rail Station to enhance services to/from Bewdley. This would, however, require significant investment and support from the Department of Transport (DfT) before this could be realised.

**13.25** As part of the 70 acre 'Silverwoods' development on the former British Sugar site (A451 Stourport Road), now accessed via the new Hoobrook Link Road, works are on-going for a mixed used development including 250 homes. The outline planning consent for 'Silverwoods' includes provision for a new rail halt on the nearby SVR line to connect to the SVR and National Rail services. The viability of such a scheme will require further investigation before it is considered feasible.

**13.26** The West Midlands Safari Park, located near the SVR line has ambitious plans for an indoor water park, 1,000-delegate conference and exhibition centre and 250-bedroom hotel; also included are aspirations for a railway station on the SVR with connections on to the National Rail network at Kidderminster. The Park is keen that the arrival of HS2 in Birmingham in 2026 may support further visitor volume growth.

**13.27** Located near Norton in Wychavon District, the Worcestershire Parkway Major Scheme involves the development of a new parkway station at the intersection of the Bristol to Birmingham and the Hereford – Worcester- London main line railways; the station is due for completion during 2018. The poor quality rail service between Kidderminster and locations served by the Birmingham - Cheltenham - Gloucester - Bristol and Cardiff main lines is exacerbated by the lack of direct access to cross-country services. Worcestershire Parkway aims to address this issue and improve access to national rail services. Parkway's location close to Junction 7 of the M5 will make it a strategic access point for the rail network for much of the County. It will have 500 car parking spaces and services to Parkway will initially include:

- Hourly GWR Worcester – London Paddington services;
- Hourly Cross Country Cardiff – Nottingham services.

**13.28** The Worcestershire Parkway Station is likely to offer increased opportunities for Kidderminster, Blakedown and Hartlebury Stations in the future, including links to London Paddington and Bristol Temple Meads.

## **Passenger Transport Network**

**13.29** The provision of a high quality bus network is important for the economic growth of the District and helps to reduce single-occupancy car use and promote active modes. The bus network in the Wyre Forest District suffers from poor reliability due to traffic congestion, lack of bus priority measures and poor interchange with Kidderminster Rail Station. Access to a car is not universal, especially in deprived neighbourhoods, and so residents such as the young, the elderly and the disabled are particularly dependent on the bus network to access services and facilities. Furthermore, poor bus service provision in the evenings undermines the viability of the evening economy.

## 13 Transport and Accessibility

**13.30** Kidderminster bus station, located adjacent to Weavers Wharf, has some shortcomings and therefore investment is necessary to develop more suitable passenger transport interchange facilities in the town centre. The provision of better bus services and infrastructure, including bus priority measures, is a key element for better accessibility and economic growth in the District. Investment is also required to enhance transport technology such as Real Time Information systems and more comprehensive ticketing arrangements.

**13.31** Whilst most of the population of the District reside in the three main towns, there are rural hinterlands and villages whose residents are more reliant on the private car than those in the urban areas. In particular, the transport needs of the ageing population in rural areas will be increasingly difficult to meet, as the numbers of residents without access to a car rises. More demand-responsive forms of public and community-based transport, such as community buses, will be required if the needs of these residents are to be met. Developments in new technology are likely to enhance the ability of community transport providers to offer flexible, accessible and responsive solutions to unmet local transport needs. These improvements should not only benefit rural users but residents in those urban neighbourhoods where conventional passenger transport provision is poor.

### Active Travel Modes (Walking and Cycling)

**13.32** Walking and cycling should be a normal part of everyday life, and the natural choice for shorter journeys such as going to school, college or work, travelling to the station, and for simple enjoyment. Having access to safe and attractive routes for cycling and walking is key to reducing congestion and improving fitness, health and well-being.

**13.33** Rising obesity in the District is partly caused by sedentary lifestyles, so investing in high quality, continuous corridors for active travel modes (walking and cycling) will help to tackle this issue, by providing attractive environments and realistic alternative travel choices for shorter trips;

**13.34** The District is suffering the legacy of a period where land use planning tended to favour the needs of the motorist, particularly apparent at the Kidderminster ring road where the pedestrian and cycling infrastructure is of a poor quality. Although the majority of roads within the District are available to cyclists, the speed and volume of traffic on some roads makes them undesirable for cyclists. There have been improvements in walking and cycling infrastructure in recent years, however, continued investment in active travel modes, as well as improvements to the public realm in our urban areas, will help to encourage more uptake of sustainable modes and reduce dependency on the private car.

### Worcestershire County Council Local Transport Plan 4: 2017-2026 (LTP4)

**13.35** The Local Plan Review provides the main opportunity for the partners to contribute to the implementation of the District's transport network; the LTP4 and associated policies and overarching strategies, provide the basis on which to develop and deliver this network. It provides the policy and strategy context for major transport projects to enable Worcestershire County Council to bid for additional Government funding. It also provides a context within which developer contributions can be guided. The LTP4 document states that the challenges for the District are:



- To relieve congestion;
- To improve journey time reliability;
- To deliver transport schemes to mitigate the effect of the local plan to accommodate development growth.

**13.36** The LTP4 aims to target investment in three broad areas:

- **Transport Technology** - technology is offering increasingly attractive opportunities to help manage demand on our networks, to tackle congestion and support growth. Modern traffic signals, for example, can intelligently manage traffic flows to respond to variable demand. Improved access to dynamic travel information through a variety of media will enable users of our transport networks to make more informed travel choices;
- **Travel Choice** - increasing realistic travel choice is critical to enable our economy to diversify and grow. In addition to enhancing access to travel information, we recognise that we need to prioritise investment in alternative modes of travel. In particular, our rail network has significant potential to accommodate and support economic diversification and planned growth. Significant investment will be required in our stations, rail infrastructure and rolling stock to provide the quality of services and facilities that the 21st century passenger expects. Rising obesity in the county is partly caused by sedentary lifestyles, so investing in high quality, continuous corridors for active travel modes (walking and cycling) as well as improvements to the public realm in our urban areas will help to tackle this issue, by providing attractive environments and realistic alternative travel choices for shorter trips;
- **Capacity Enhancement** - the most expensive of the three areas, where suitable business cases can be identified to support investment, we will aim to fund and deliver capacity enhancements at key 'pinch points' to support development growth, address poor air quality issues and tackle congestion.

**13.37** Detailed plans for the implementation of transport infrastructure will come forward during the lifetime of the LTP4 and their implementation will be essential to allow for the further investment in transport infrastructure and services needed to accommodate the increased travel demand associated with future development proposals. The funding to deliver this transport infrastructure is likely to come from a variety of sources and potential funding sources include:

- Section 106 Planning Obligations
- Other developer contributions;
- Community Infrastructure Levy;
- Integrated Transport Block
- Local Growth deal

**13.38** Developers will be required to demonstrate that they have given appropriate consideration to the potential impacts of development on the wider and strategic transport network, including that managed by Worcestershire County Council, Highways England and Network Rail.

## Introduction

**14.1** The enhancement of the District's Green Infrastructure Network will form a key part of the development strategy for the District. This policy places an emphasis on the delivery of a comprehensive network of green spaces and corridors across the District. This will help to promote active lifestyles, support biodiversity, address climate change and safeguard and enhance the District's unique landscape character.

### Policy 14 - Strategic Green Infrastructure

- A. The existing green infrastructure network within the District will be shown on the Policies Map and will be safeguarded from inappropriate development.
- B. The following features have been identified as particularly significant green infrastructure assets and essential to the District's local distinctiveness:
  - i. The Rivers Severn and Stour and the associated wetlands.
  - ii. The Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal.
  - iii. The Wyre Forest and associated areas of high landscape and biodiversity value.
  - iv. The District's heathlands and acid grassland network.
- C. New development will be expected to contribute positively to the District's green infrastructure network. Housing and employment development proposals (including mixed use schemes) will be required to contribute towards the provision, maintenance, improvement and connectivity of Green Infrastructure (GI), as follows, subject to financial viability:
  - i. For Greenfield sites exceeding 1ha. (gross): 35% GI.
  - ii. For Greenfield sites of less than 1 ha. but more than 0.2ha. (gross): 20% GI.
  - iii. For Brownfield sites: no specific GI figure.
- D. The precise form and function(s) of the GI will depend on local circumstances and the Worcestershire's Green Infrastructure Strategy's priorities. Developers should seek to agree these matters with the Council in advance of submitting a planning application. Effective management arrangements should also be clearly set out and secured. Once planning permission has been given by the Council, the associated GI will be protected as semi-natural "green space" (see also Policy 18C in respect of the provision of semi-natural green- space).
- E. Other than specific site allocations in this development plan, development proposals that would have a detrimental impact on important GI attributes within areas will not be permitted unless:

- i. A robust independent assessment of community and technical environmental need and functionality shows the specific GI typology to be surplus to requirements in that particular location and that it does not have wider negative impacts; and
- ii. Replacement of, or investment in, GI of at least equal community and technical environmental benefit is secured for the locality or wider area.

### **Reasoned Justification**

**14.2** The District has a unique environment formed from different landscape character areas. There are a large number of green corridors within the District which are currently fragmented but have the potential to provide a comprehensive network of green infrastructure (GI). The District's waterways in particular offer the opportunity to link the urban areas with the open countryside beyond. There are also some of the County's most important and distinctive acid/lowland heath communities and the continued protection and enhancement of these important areas needs to be considered in future development.

**14.3** GI will need to be carefully planned into new developments from the outset. When determining planning applications the way in which the proposals contribute to delivering the GI network will be of paramount importance.

**14.4** Worcestershire County Council's GI Framework seeks to enhance opportunities to link biodiversity with drainage, historic landscape character and improved accessibility. The GI Framework promotes the GI Concept Plan approach for strategic sites and seeks to promote collaborative working with developers.

**14.5** The key objective of Green Infrastructure Concept Plans is to establish principles for development which will identify key GI assets and opportunities for their protection and enhancement in line with local policies and the Worcestershire GI Framework.

## Introduction

**15.1** The purpose of policies relating to water is to ensure that the integrated management of water resources (water supply, water conservation, water quality and waste water) is addressed as an integral part of the planning and design of developments. This includes the mitigation of flood risk and surface water drainage including Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS). The *Wyre Forest Water Cycle Study* (2017) considers issues of water resources, wastewater and flood risk and forms a key part of the evidence base alongside the Wyre Forest Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2017).

**15.2** Strategic issues faced by the District affecting the long term sustainability of the local water environment include:

- The provision for 5,400 new homes and 40 hectares of employment land which will have an impact on water resources and its role in reducing demand on available ground water supplies;
- The distribution and phasing of development sites to match the available capacity of foul sewer network and waste water treatment works so that improvements to be undertaken are in advance of development;
- The need to maintain and replenish ground water supplies, reduce flooding and increase the use of Sustainable Drainage Systems;
- Addressing watercourses in the District which have poor/moderate water quality status under the Water Framework Directive and the affect of development and the quality of waste water discharging from local treatment works.

**15.3** Policies in this section relate to several other policy areas in the Local Plan. Addressing water issues in a comprehensive and integrated way will result in more effective and sustainable solutions to managing water.

**15.4** To introduce high levels of water efficiency, new development is expected to take all available opportunities to integrate the principles of sustainable design and construction into the design of proposals.

### **Policy 15A - Water Conservation and Efficiency**

The Council will require development to demonstrate that it:

- i. Incorporates design features that will reduce water consumption; and/or
- ii. Incorporates design features that will support recycling / re-use of water through measures such as rainwater harvesting and grey water recycling , especially where a large demand for water is predicted such as industrial processes; and/or
- iii. Provides features for the collection of rainwater for use in irrigation /watering to offset potable water demand.

## Reasoned Justification

**15.5** The Water Resource Zone adjacent to the River Severn will be subject to the Environment Agency's 'Restoring Sustainable Abstraction' programme towards the middle of the plan in 2024/5. This will include the revocation of abstraction licences for ground water supplies in some areas and increased abstraction in others with plans to be agreed between Severn Trent Water (STW) and the Environment Agency (EA). The Council recognises that "water sensitive design" can make a positive contribution to the security and conservation of the District's water supplies and protect existing water sources. The Council seeks to maximise efficient use of water and prevent over-abstraction of local water sources.

**15.6** STW has been investing in local infrastructure for the management and resilience of water supplies across its area as well as in upgrading infrastructure within the District to address issues of leakages. STW has made demand assumptions based on the increasing levels of water efficiency in the design of new homes which show that water consumption/head will drop from 120 litres/day (current) to 109 litres/day by 2034. EA has expressed support for reducing consumption of water to a level of around 110 litres/person/day.

**15.7** Further guidance can be found in *Building Regulations - Approved Document G* (2015). While Policy 15A supports a reduction in water consumption in relation to major development, smaller schemes will also be required to address the need to conserve water as set out in the Building Regulations.

### Policy 15B - Sewerage Systems and Water Quality

The capacity and resilience of local sewerage infrastructure is critical to the sustainability of new development. In order to avoid adverse impacts of additional demand on the existing foul sewerage network, the Council requires development to demonstrate:

- i. How foul flows produced by the development will be drained and the identification of the agreed point of connection to the public foul sewerage network;
- ii. That sewerage and surface water will drain separately;
- iii. How development will be phased to allow Severn Trent Water (STW) sufficient time to undertake any necessary capacity improvement works to the public foul sewer network or to existing waste water treatment works prior to construction and occupation of the developments. Where development is brought forward in advance of planned capacity improvements by STW through the Asset Management Process, any required capacity improvements should be delivered via agreement between the developer and STW.

That development should follow the hierarchy (order of preference for foul drainage connection), as set out in the national Planning Practice Guidance. The Council requires non mains drainage proposals to assess the potential impacts upon water quality to ensure no detrimental impact on the water environment.

**Reasoned Justification**

**15.8** A plan led approach to the delivery of development is critical to addressing the capacity constraints within the borough's sewerage and wastewater treatment infrastructure. The main purpose of Policy 15B is to address the alignment of development with the available capacity at wastewater treatment works and where capacity is constrained ensure that improvements can be made prior to development coming forward.

**15.9** The *Wyre Forest Water Cycle Study* (2017) shows that although most wastewater treatment works have capacity to accommodate additional development this available capacity is not distributed evenly and is not always sufficient to absorb the planned levels of development for the area. Phasing development across the course of the plan will allow STW to incorporate improvements into Asset Management Planning delivering key infrastructure in advance of development.

**15.10** Regular reviews of the Infrastructure Delivery Plan will help provide STW with information on any changes to the phasing of development, to feed into their Asset Management Plans in a timely manner allowing opportunities to re-deploy resources to better meet the needs of emerging development patterns.

**15.11** Receiving water courses and groundwater bodies covered by the European Union *Water Framework Directive* (2000) are subject to a basic requirement of 'no deterioration' and the objective to achieve 'good' status potential by 2015 (or 2027 as specified). A plan led approach will allow the Council, STW and EA to identify any potential water quality issues.

**15.12** Strategies to help mitigate the impact of development on water quality will be required in advance of planning approval being granted and could include on-site measures, such as SuDS, reinforcement of wastewater treatment infrastructure, restoring natural watercourses through the removal of culverts, improvements to habitats and overcoming barriers to fish movement. In order to address surface water the appropriate number of treatment stages set out in the *CIRIA SuDS Manual* (2015) should be provided as part of the development.

**Policy 15C - Flood Risk Management**

In line with the NPPF and NPPG the Council will steer new development to areas with the lowest probability of flooding. In order to minimise the impacts of and from all forms of flooding, the Council requires all development in areas thought to be at risk of flooding to:

- i) Ensure development proposals are located in accordance with the Sequential and Exception Test where appropriate and also have regard to latest versions of the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment and Local Flood Risk Management Strategy.
- ii) Submit a site specific Flood Risk Assessment (FRA), which confirms:
  - the wider hydrological context of the site.
  - the development is safe from flooding for its lifetime, taking into account all forms of flooding. This shall include safe access and egress.



- finished ground floor levels will be set a minimum of 600 mm above the 1% annual probability (1 in 100 year) river flood level plus climate change allowance.
- finished ground floor levels will be set no lower than the modelled 1% annual probability (1 in 100 year) surface water flood level plus climate change allowance.
- the development will not increase the risk of flooding elsewhere, and proposals will detail how existing flood flow paths on the site will be accommodated, how the amount of flood storage will not become compromised and how surface water runoff will be limited.
- the development layout is informed by the management of residual flood risk and the drainage strategy for the site, which incorporates sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) as set out in Policy 15D.

The FRA shall use modelled flood level data where possible and shall take into account appropriate allowances for climate change, using the latest Government's Climate Change Allowances guidance.

Planning permission for development will only be granted where:

- iii) The development is safe from flooding for its lifetime and will not increase the risk of flooding elsewhere.
- iv) The natural watercourse and flood plain profiles are not adversely affected. Where practicable, any culverted (piped) watercourses will be opened up to improve drainage and flood flows. Proposals involving the creation of new culverts will not be permitted unless essential to the provision of access.
- v) A minimum 8 m access strip is provided adjacent to watercourses for maintenance purposes. It should be appropriately landscaped biodiversity benefits. The width of the strip may be reduced for smaller watercourses, where agreed by the Local Planning Authority.

## Reasoned Justification

**15.13** It is essential that new development minimises its impact on the built and natural environment. This includes reducing risk of flooding through incorporating features such as Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) (Policy 15 D). Given the potential for flooding in certain areas of the District the purpose of Policy 15C is to take a proactive approach to managing flood risk from watercourses, sewers, heavy rainfall and groundwater sources.

**15.14** Areas of the District are subject to regular instances of flooding. Certain areas are at risk of flooding due to existing drainage systems and watercourses becoming overwhelmed during or following heavy rainfall whereas areas adjacent to the river Severn are predominantly at risk of flooding following prolonged rainfall outside the District. The Council works closely with EA and STW to address flooding issues including the use of demountable barriers to protect properties in Bewdley



**15.15** The Local Plan plays an important role in protecting developments and third party property from flooding by working to retain runoff on-site through sustainable drainage, integrating flood mitigation measures and providing appropriate buffering between watercourses and development. Development needs to plan for the life time of the development and the effects of climate change by setting appropriate floor levels, providing safe pedestrian and vehicle access and where appropriate provide a flood evacuation management plan.

**15.16** Developments will also be required to make allowances for future development for example the paving of gardens, the hard surfacing of previously green areas such as gardens, in the design and capacity of drainage systems. Local evidence shows that change occurs over time as residents tarmac front gardens for extra parking spaces, use hard surfacing to reduce maintenance in gardens as well as businesses seeking to provide more parking for employees.

**15.17** Development can make a positive impact on flooding by reducing the length of culverted watercourses. This can have the added benefits of improving access to water features, improving local habitats and using water bodies as a catalyst to enhance the ecological value of an area. The Council recognises the value of watercourses on or adjacent to development sites as part of wider green infrastructure which helps improve the health and wellbeing of residents and visitors through opportunities for active travel, informal recreation and visual amenity in and around the District's extensive Green Network.

#### **Policy 15D - Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)**

Effective on-site management of surface water can improve water quality, water conservation, the replenishment of ground water supplies and reduce instances of flooding. The Council therefore requires all development with surface water drainage implications to:

- i) Provide Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) for the management of surface water.
- ii) Assess whether management of surface water can be partially or wholly achieved via infiltration.
- iii) Design and construct the surface water drainage scheme in line with the non-statutory technical standards for SuDS (Defra, 2015) and WFDC SuDS Design and Evaluation Guide (2017).

Flows and volumes of runoff leaving a development site should be as close as reasonably practicable to Greenfield levels. For re-development (Brownfield) applications substantial betterment is expected where limiting to Greenfield levels is deemed not reasonably practicable.

- iv) Take into account appropriate allowances for climate change.

For Climate Change allowance the Council follows the latest Government's Climate Change Allowances guidance

v) Include an additional allowance to allow for future development in residential development (“urban creep”), dependent on the housing density.

For urban creep allowance the Council follows the allowances as included in the Local Authority SuDS Officer Organisation (LASOO) Practice Guidance for the non-statutory standards for SuDS.

vi) Design and construct the surface water drainage scheme so that the water quality of receiving water bodies, covered by the Water Framework Directive, are not adversely impacted, both during construction and when operational.

For all major applications with drainage implications the Council expects the planning application to include a Drainage Strategy that demonstrates how the proposed drainage system meets the criteria set out above and how the proposed drainage system will be managed and maintained for the lifetime of the development.

### Reasoned Justification

**15.18** This policy should be read in conjunction with the Wyre Forest Water Cycle Study (2017). All new development will require a suitably designed drainage system in order to mitigate the risk of surface water and overland flooding both on and off the site.

**15.19** The Water Cycle Study provides more detail on the implementation of greywater recycling, rainwater harvesting and SuDS. Developers should allow for sufficient land for SuDS to be designed in at the outset; lack of space is not considered appropriate justification for not accommodating SuDS. A range of SuDS methods are available, although some will be more suited to some sites than others. SuDS selection should be specific to a site and should not be limited to one technique per site. Consideration should be given to source control within the surface water drainage proposals, which can be achieved through a range of techniques.

**15.20** There will be a clear presumption in favour of soft-engineered, multi-functional and biodiversity-led SuDS and sites should be assessed on their merits to determine which SuDS techniques are the most suitable particularly where contaminated land may be an issue. It is considered that all development sites are able to incorporate some form of SuDS; the scale of these techniques should be proportionate to the scale of development proposed. All surface water run-off should be properly treated (see 15.12).

**15.21** New development must not create adverse pressures on the water environment that could compromise the District’s ability to meet the Water Framework Directive (WFD) objectives. Development is required to conserve and where feasible enhance watercourses and riverside habitats, through management and mitigation measures for the improvement and/or enhancement of water quality and habitat of any aquatic environment in or adjoining the development site. It is also important for applicants to bear in mind the importance of the River Basin Management Plan and the Surface Water Management Plan when putting together proposals.

**15.22** Like all drainage systems, SuDS components should be inspected and maintained. This ensures efficient operation and prevents failure. The design process should consider the maintenance of the components and a SuDS management plan for the maintenance of SuDS should be prepared. SuDS components that are on or near the surface can often be managed using landscape maintenance techniques. For below-ground SuDS such as permeable paving and modular geocellular storage the manufacturer's maintenance advice should be followed.

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### **Policy 16A - Pollution and Land Instability**

**A. Development proposals must be designed in order to avoid any significant adverse impacts from pollution, including cumulative ones, on any of the following:**

- **Human health and wellbeing.**
- **Biodiversity.**
- **The water environment.**
- **The effective operation of neighbouring land uses.**
- **An Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) <sup>(8)</sup>**

**B. Development proposals will not be permitted where the land is contaminated <sup>(9)</sup> or unstable and not capable of appropriate remediation without compromising development viability or the delivery of sustainable development.**

### **Reasoned Justification**

**16.1** The NPPF<sup>(10)</sup> clearly sets out, in broad terms, that pollution and land instability are material planning considerations.

**16.2** Pollution can and does have detrimental impacts on the environment and human health. In the absence of a robust local plan policy, both the quality of life of local residents and the ecology of the area would be compromised.

**16.3** Pollution can take many forms, e.g. chemical, dust, light, noise, fumes, smell, vibration, all of which can have detrimental impacts on the environment and the quality of life. These potential adverse effects must be carefully considered in the assessment of any planning application and can be the basis for the refusal of a planning application.

### **Policy 16B - Minerals**

- 1. Proposed development in Minerals Consultation Areas will be required <sup>(11)</sup> to assess the scope for minerals extraction before development takes place. Planning permission will not be granted for non-mineral development that would lead to the unnecessary sterilisation of mineral resources within a Minerals Safeguarding Area (MSA) unless:**

8 The countywide Worcestershire Air Quality Action Plan (September 2013) includes maps of the AQMA in the plan area and is available at <http://www.worcsregservices.gov.uk/media/486190/Final-AQAP-Whole-Doc-v23b-adopted.pdf>

9 As defined under Part IIA of the Environmental Protection Act 1990

10 NPPF Paragraphs 109, 120, 121, 124

11 Excluding 'exempt development', namely householder applications; development already allocated in the Local Plan; infilling in existing built-up areas.

- a. **The applicant can demonstrate that the mineral concerned is no longer of any value or potential value; or**
  - b. **The mineral can be extracted satisfactorily prior to the development taking place; or**
  - c. **The development is of a temporary nature and can be completed and the site restored to a condition that does not inhibit extraction within the timescale that the mineral is likely to be needed.**
2. **Developers will be encouraged to recycle and reuse construction waste on-site and use substitute or secondary and recycled minerals within development.**

### **Reasoned Justification**

**16.4** Minerals extraction, particularly sand and gravel, is an important part of Wyre Forest's economy and an adequate supply of minerals is necessary to provide for new housing, other built development and infrastructure.

**16.5** The broad extent of mineral resources that occur in Wyre Forest is shown on the Worcestershire County Council Emerging Minerals Local Plan interactive map.<sup>(12)</sup>

**16.6** The County Council is the Minerals Planning Authority for Worcestershire. It is responsible for minerals planning for the whole of Worcestershire. At present, minerals policy and proposals for the County are set out in the policies of the Minerals Local Plan (1997) that were "saved" by the Secretary of State in September 2007. These "saved" minerals policies will be replaced by the revised Worcestershire Minerals Local Plan upon its adoption (currently anticipated in late 2018) which will form part of the overall Development Plan for Wyre Forest.

**16.7** The County Council has a duty to determine planning applications for new minerals development in accordance with the Development Plan (including all parts of the Wyre Forest Local Plan), unless there are material planning considerations that would indicate otherwise.

### **Minerals Safeguarding**

**16.8** The NPPF indicates that local planning authorities should define Minerals Consultation Areas (based on Minerals Safeguarding Areas) and should take account of the contribution that substitute or secondary and recycled materials can make to the supply of materials.

**16.9** Minerals are a finite, natural resource and can only be worked where they are found. It is therefore important to make best use of them to secure their long-term conservation.

**16.10** Minerals are a cross-boundary issue that invokes the Duty to Co-operate.

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<sup>12</sup> <http://gis.worcestershire.gov.uk/Website/MineralsLocalPlan/>

**16.11** Minerals Safeguarding Areas (MSAs) are areas designated by the Minerals Planning Authority that cover known deposits of minerals that are desired to be safeguarded from unnecessary sterilisation by non-mineral development. MCAs, based on MSAs, are where consultation is required with Worcestershire County Council as the Minerals Planning Authority on development proposals that have the potential to sterilise the minerals interests of the site.

**16.12** The boundaries of the existing MSAs are shown in the currently adopted Herefordshire and Worcestershire Minerals Local Plan<sup>(13)</sup>. These boundaries may be changed during the preparation of the Worcestershire Minerals Local Plan.

**16.13** The Local Planning Authority will consult the County Council on any planning application received for non-minerals development which falls within the boundary of a MSA.

**16.14** The identification of a MSA does not imply that permission for extraction will be given, only that the presence of minerals is a material consideration that must be addressed when considering future development.

**16.15** Current best practice on safeguarding is provided by the document 'Mineral Safeguarding in England: Good Practice Advice' (BGS, 2011).

**16.16** The revised Minerals Local Plan will include policies relating to the safeguarding of existing, planned and potential transport links to quarries, wharfage, handling and processing facilities.

### **Secondary and Recycled Aggregates**

**16.17** To sustain economic growth without increasing the use of land-won aggregates, it is vital that the contribution of secondary and recycled materials used in construction projects is increased. On site recycling and reuse of construction materials will therefore be encouraged, having regard to the environmental implications of any proposed operations and their overall acceptability. The use of substitute or secondary and recycled materials in development will also be encouraged.

**16.18** The revised Minerals Local Plan will include policies relating to existing, planned and potential sites for concrete batching, the manufacture of coated materials, and the handling, processing and distribution of substitute, recycled and secondary aggregate material.

### **Legacy of Minerals Extraction**

**16.19** Most of the north-west of Worcestershire consists of Old Red Sandstone. Carboniferous strata occur in the western parts of Wyre Forest Area where they form a western continuation of the South Staffordshire Coalfield. These strata contain layers of sandstone and shales, ironstone and coal deposits. The NPPF states that permission should not be given for the extraction of coal unless the proposal is environmentally acceptable or can be made so by planning conditions or obligations or it provides national, local or community benefits that clearly outweigh the likely impacts. Any planning application for coal extraction would be determined by Worcestershire County Council as the Mineral Planning Authority.

13 [http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/info/20015/planning\\_policy\\_and\\_strategy/1009/adopted\\_minerals\\_local\\_plan](http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/info/20015/planning_policy_and_strategy/1009/adopted_minerals_local_plan)



**16.20** The Permian and Triassic rocks of the following Upper Palaeozoic and Mesozoic eras are generally softer, comprising sandstones and marls and make up the greater part of central Worcestershire, including the eastern parts of Wyre Forest. Overlying the 'solid geology' are Quaternary deposits of 'drift' material. These include till / boulder clay deposited directly by glacial ice as fluvio-glacial deposits which can be found particularly along the valleys of the Rivers Severn and Stour.

**16.21** Where development is proposed in areas with a known legacy of minerals extraction, the developer will be expected to assess the site for ground contamination, ground stability and mining hazards and submit appropriate mitigation reports in support of their planning application.

#### **Policy 16C - Waste**

**Proposals for new development should incorporate adequate facilities into the design to allow occupiers to separate and store waste for recycling and recovery unless existing provision is adequate.**

#### **Reasoned Justification**

**16.22** National Planning Policy for Waste (October 2014) sets out national waste planning policies. It should be read in conjunction with the NPPF, the Waste Management Plan for England and National Policy Statements for Waste Water and Hazardous Waste, or any successor documents.

**16.23** Planning applications relating to the use of land (and buildings) for the purposes of waste management will be determined by Worcestershire County Council. The Waste Core Strategy, adopted by the County Council in November 2012 and covering the period up to 2027, is complementary to the Wyre Forest Local Plan and forms part of the development plan.

**16.24** To minimise waste and pollution and reduce the impact of waste on Climate Change Wyre Forest District Council expects future developments to support the waste management hierarchy. The waste hierarchy gives top priority to preventing waste in the first place. Where waste is generated, priority is to reuse, then recycle, then other forms of recovery such as energy recovery and last of all disposal (for example landfill).

**16.25** To ensure waste is dealt with at as high a level as possible on the waste hierarchy, and to protect amenities and prevent pollution, the waste implications of all new development must be considered.

**16.26** To safeguard existing or permitted waste management facilities Wyre Forest District Council will consult Worcestershire County Council on any planning applications within 250m of such a site, in accordance with the Waste Core Strategy. Maps showing existing waste management facilities with a 250m buffer are shown on the Worcestershire County Council's website.

**16.27** The Waste Core Strategy requires that on-site facilities for separating or storing waste should be adequate to meet the needs of occupiers of any proposed new development.



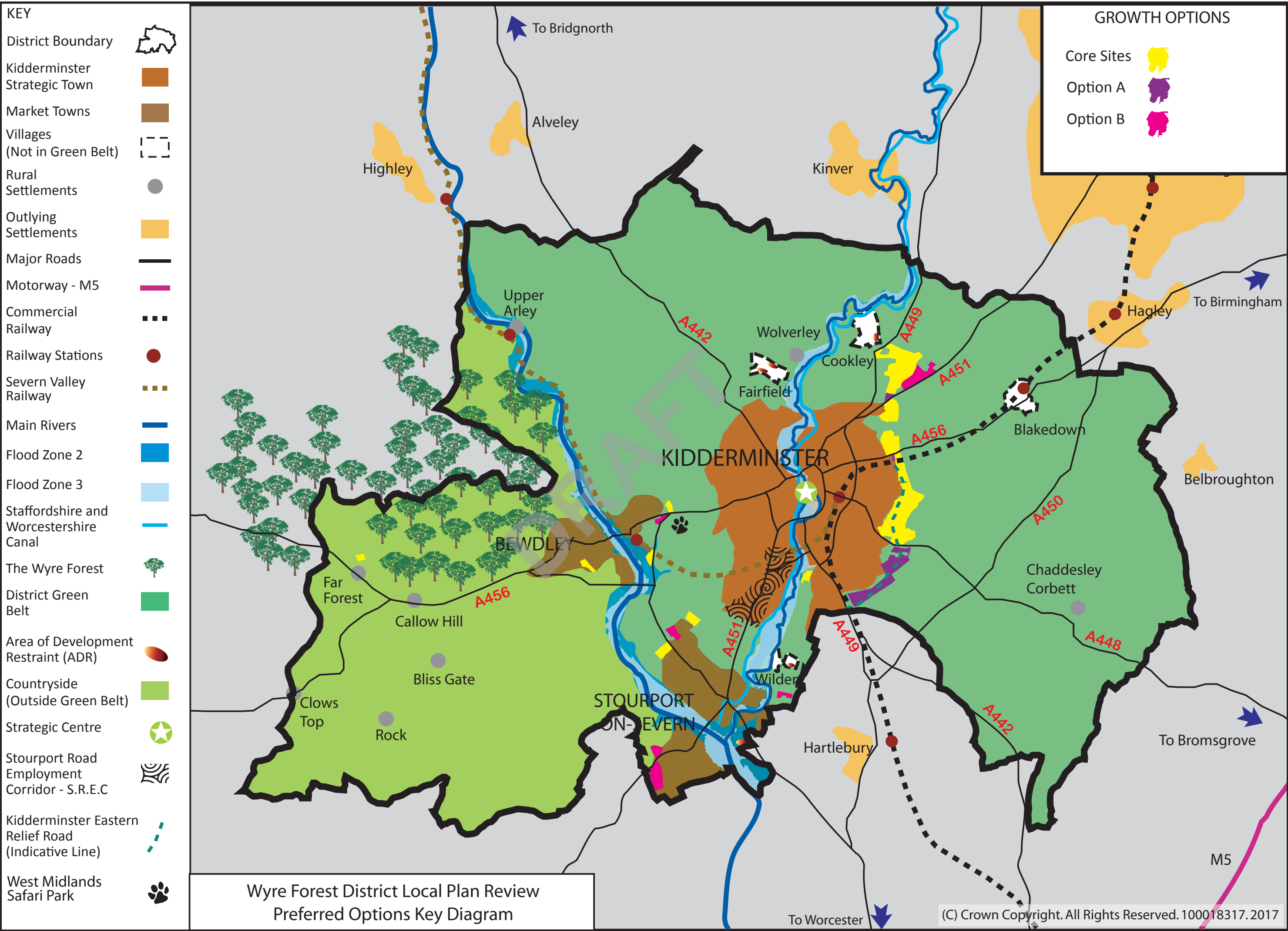
**16.28** On smaller sites, provision might include collection points for segregated waste. On larger sites, particularly where significant areas of new housing or employment land are proposed, waste storage facilities will almost always be needed and provision might also include on-site treatment facilities such as community composting, anaerobic digestion forming part of a district heating system or, in the case of industrial operations, the management of specific wastes produced on site.

**16.29** Specifications for the minimum standards for the type and scale of facilities and vehicular manoeuvrability needed for new residential, commercial and mixed-use developments will be informed by the ADEPT report 'Making Space for Waste' (June 2010)<sup>(14)</sup> All applications will be assessed against this guidance.

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14 [http://www.lgcplus.com/Journals/3/Files/2010/7/14/ADEPTMakingspaceforwaste\\_000.pdf](http://www.lgcplus.com/Journals/3/Files/2010/7/14/ADEPTMakingspaceforwaste_000.pdf).



# 17 Development Management Introduction

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**17.1** The Development Management Section of the Wyre Forest District Local Plan sets out the Council's planning policies for managing development and growth in the District from 2016 until 2034. It will be used to guide, assess and determine planning applications. The Council's aim is to produce a comprehensive planning framework to ensure that the District's housing, employment, infrastructure and other needs are met over the plan period in a way that contributes to achieving sustainable development. Following on from the strategic framework it will set out the development allocations and detailed policies for managing new development.

**17.2** The plan and policies in this section should be read alongside the Strategic policies set out in the earlier section of this Local Plan and any Wyre Forest District Council Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs). The Council will produce SPDs where it considers them necessary to provide more details on the policies set out within other parts of the Local Plan. SPDs are not part of the statutory development plan and do not have the same weight; however, they will be significant considerations in determining planning applications.

**17.3** The primary objective of development management is to enable the delivery of sustainable development. Development management is not intended to hinder or prevent sustainable development. The Council sees development management as a positive and proactive approach to shaping, considering, determining and delivering development proposals.

**17.4** In combination with each other the development management and site allocations policies set out the specific development intentions of Wyre Forest District Council for the Plan Period 2016-2034 as follows:

- Development Management Policies: Detailed planning policies which will be used by the council when assessing planning applications.
- Site Allocations: Sites to be allocated for development for particular land uses, for example housing, employment and mixed uses. This is to provide clarity to the community and developers regarding land uses that, in principle, are acceptable to the council on specific sites.

**17.5** These sections of the Local Plan include additional detailed policies where it is considered that further detail is required to provide the necessary detail for the interpretation of the strategic policies and to provide a proper basis for local development management.

**17.6** Government guidance makes it clear that a Local Plan should not repeat policies that are in either National Policy or other 'development plan' documents. The absence of a policy for a particular topic in the Local Plan therefore does not necessarily mean that the topic is unimportant; it may be that there is already a relevant adopted policy and must therefore be read in conjunction with the other relevant plans and guidance.

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**18.1** The following section includes the Development Management Policies that will be used to determine residential planning applications. These provide more detailed criteria for decision makers and should be considered within the overall strategic context of Section 8 – A Desirable Place to Live.

### Viability of Affordable Housing Requirements

**18.2** This policy provides the framework against which negotiation over the proportion and type of affordable housing on individual sites will be considered to take account of specific viability issues.

#### Policy 18A - Financial Viability

Where an applicant considers that it is not viable to meet the affordable housing requirements as set out in Policy 8B, the District Council will require robust evidence that the following criteria have been met:

- i. The applicant must provide a full viability assessment which demonstrates that the required level of affordable housing is not viable. The methodology, underlying assumptions and software to be used should be agreed with the District Council or its consultants in advance. Applicants should refer to and follow the advice contained in the Council's Viability Study.
- ii. Where the District Council considers it necessary to obtain independent advice to validate a viability assessment which has been submitted, the applicant will be required to meet all reasonable costs of doing so.
- iii. The viability assessment should be presented on either a residual land value or profit basis which should be agreed with the District Council in advance.

### Reasoned Justification

**18.3** Where an applicant considers that there are significant cost constraints affecting a development site and that these are sufficient to impede the developer meeting the Council's affordable housing policy expectations of 30% on residential or other planning gain requirements on residential sites, they will be expected to demonstrate that the viability of the proposals would be jeopardised by this level of provision.

**18.4** The applicant will be required to provide financial information in the form of a full viability assessment carried out by a suitably qualified person to enable the Council to assess the nature, extent and impact of the constraints and the level of affordable housing that could be provided.

**18.5** It is recommended that the methodology, underlying assumptions and any software used to undertake the appraisal should be agreed with the Council during pre-application discussions. This will ensure that the viability assessment includes the level of detail required by the Council.

**18.6** Where the Council needs to undertake independent advice to validate a viability assessment submitted by an applicant, then it will require all reasonable costs of the independent advice to be met by the developer. All information submitted by the applicant will remain confidential.

**18.7** The viability assessment should be presented on a residual land value or profit basis, which takes into account various inputs, including projected sales revenues and values (including affordable housing revenue) to establish a Gross Development Value (GDV) from which Gross Development Costs (GDC) are deducted. GDC either includes i) a site value as a fixed input cost resulting in a developer's return or profit becoming the residual figure which is then compared to a benchmark profit level to assess viability, or ii) a developer's return is adopted as an input cost giving a residual site value which reflects the land value that a developer would pay for the site. The residual land value should then be compared to the benchmark market value of the site.

### **Policy 18B - Residential Infill Development**

Small scale residential developments on infill plots within the settlement boundaries of the three main towns and the villages will be encouraged provided that they contribute to the existing character of the area in terms of design, density and layout.

- i. Proposals that would lead to the over development of a site will be resisted.
- ii. There should be sufficient separation between the proposed development and existing dwellings to ensure that there are no adverse impacts associated with overlooking and disturbance to neighbouring properties.
- iii. All new proposals for infill development should take account of the design and space standards as set out in the District Councils adopted Design Supplementary Planning Document.
- iv. Applicants will be required to demonstrate that proposals include adequate car parking space unless the character and local distinctiveness of the area dictates otherwise. Proposals should not have an adverse impact on existing road safety or cause amenity and parking issues for existing residents.

### **Reasoned Justification**

**18.8** Small scale residential developments on infill plots within the settlement boundaries of the three main towns and the villages are likely to contribute towards new housing provision in the District. Whilst such developments are generally to be encouraged, it is important that they are well designed to protect and enhance the existing character and amenity of the residential areas.

**18.9** Infill development is defined as small scale residential development of 1 to 5 dwellings in an otherwise built up frontage.



**18.10** The Council will assess the effect that proposed infill developments will have on the amount of daylight and overshadowing neighbouring properties receive. Proposals that are likely to have an adverse impact will not be permitted.

### **Policy 18C - Space Standards for New Residential Developments**

The District Council will seek to apply the Government's Technical housing standards – nationally described space standard to internal space within new dwellings. These also set out requirements for gross internal floor area of new dwellings as defined by the level of occupancy as well as floor areas and dimensions for key parts of homes.

Garden size should reflect the size and type of dwellings to be delivered in addition to the character of the area. South facing gardens are to be encouraged where this would not have an adverse impact on other design considerations.

### **Reasoned Justification**

**18.11** Concerns have been raised about the size and layout of housing built in England compared with Europe. Some new housing is considered to be not fit for purpose with minimal storage facilities and circulation space. This is vital to allow easy adaptation as occupiers' needs change over time. Affordable housing funded by the Homes and Communities Agency has to meet minimum space standards (see para. 8.2 of Affordable Housing SPD July 2014) and the District Council is proposing to roll this standard out to cover market housing as well. Further evidence to justify the inclusion of this policy will be gathered with a detailed analysis of recently completed housing undertaken prior to draft plan submission in 2018.

**18.12** The viability modelling undertaken as part of the evidence base for this local plan review has been carried out based on the national standards being applied to all new developments.

**18.13** The nationally prescribed space standards can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/technical-housing-standards-nationally-described-space-standard>

### **Policy 18D - Flat Conversions**

Proposals for the conversion or sub-division of existing buildings into flats will be considered having regard to the intensity of the proposed use and the accessibility of the location to shops and other services.

Within defined settlement boundaries, proposals will be supported provided that:

- i. Conversion is not detrimental to the appearance of the building and the building and plots are of a suitable size for conversion.
- ii. Appropriate provision is made for parking, cycle parking, private amenity space and refuse storage.



- iii. The proposal will not be detrimental to the character of the area.
- iv. The internal layout minimises noise disturbance and overlooking to neighbours.

### Reasoned Justification

**18.14** The District has a number of larger properties for which the original use may no longer be viable. Sub-dividing such buildings into smaller residential units can secure the future of such buildings; however it needs careful consideration to ensure that proposals safeguard the character of the area. This policy serves to ensure that any such development does not have a detrimental impact on the character of the area and the quality of life of existing residents.

**18.15** The sub-division of existing dwellings can be a suitable means of providing smaller accommodation. Where the existing dwelling is important to the character of the area, conversion into flats can secure the future of the building.

**18.16** The intensification of the use of the building can lead to detrimental impacts for neighbouring properties including increased levels of noise and issues associated with an increased number of vehicles at the property. Adequate parking provision should generally be made within the curtilage of the dwelling. However, in town centres, parking requirements may be relaxed where this is not possible or desirable.

### Policy 18E - Residential Caravans and Mobile Homes

The use of caravans and mobile homes for residential purposes will only be permitted for temporary periods to meet specific short term needs as follows:

- i. To temporarily re-house households during redevelopment or major refurbishment to existing housing schemes.
- ii. To provide temporary accommodation during the construction, major alteration or repair of a dwelling, provided that the mobile home can be satisfactorily sited within the curtilage of the dwelling.
- iii. To meet a temporary or seasonal agricultural or forestry need.

### Reasoned Justification

**18.17** Caravans and mobile homes are not considered to be appropriate to meet long term permanent housing needs due to their limited size and design. The use of residential mobile homes will therefore be restricted to occasions when they may be required to meet a temporary need, for example, during construction or major alterations/repairs to a dwelling or group of properties, or in instances relating to the needs of agriculture and forestry.

# Providing Accommodation for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople

## Site Standards for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople

**19.1** This policy sets out specific requirements in relation to the design of sites for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople which are consistent with Policies 8E (Gypsy and Traveller Site Provision) and 8F (Site Provision for Travelling Showpeople)

### Policy 19 - Site Standards for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople

Proposals for Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople sites will only be granted planning permission where:

- i. Pitch boundaries are clearly demarcated using an appropriate boundary treatment and landscaping which is sensitive to the local context. There should be a clear delineation between public and private areas and between residential and non-residential areas.
- ii. The site layout gives adequate consideration to pedestrian safety, cycle movements and vehicle movements and provides adequate space for vehicles, towing caravans to enter, exit and manoeuvre around the site and for refuse collections.
- iii. All necessary utilities can be provided on the site including mains water, electricity supply, surface water and foul water drainage, sanitation and provision for the screened storage and collection of waste including recycling.
- iv. Sites of 5 or more pitches should include a communal recreation area for children where suitable provision is not available within walking distance. Play areas should be designed in consultation with the site manager and residents and should meet local authority standards.

### Reasoned Justification

**19.2** Gypsy and traveller sites should be well-designed and provide adequate amenity and safety levels for residents, including the provision of communal facilities and sufficient space for safe vehicle movements, including for refuse collections.

**19.3** Private gypsy and traveller sites will need to apply for a license and will be required to meet conditions which are based on the national model standards and relevant to the site in question. The site license conditions are applied to protect the amenity and safety of the residents of the site. These license conditions will cover issues including around the provision of facilities, layout of sites, spacing out of pitches and safety requirements.

**19.4** The Good Practice Guide on Designing Gypsy and Traveller Sites (published by DCLG in 2008 and cancelled in 2015) suggested that, where possible, sites should be developed near to housing for the settled community as part of mainstream residential developments. Planning Policy for Traveller Sites also says that new Traveller site development in open countryside that is away from existing settlements should be very strictly limited and that any sites in rural areas should respect the scale of, and not dominate the nearest settled community. The guidance also states the sites should have access to water, electricity, drainage and sanitation.

**20.1** Access to community facilities and the provision of such new facilities to complement new development is important in determining the acceptability and attractiveness of a location to live and work and can be an important factor in the encouragement of a healthy lifestyle (see also Policy 9). The following policies consider Built Community Facilities (20A), Green Space (20B) and Provision for Green Space and Outdoor Community Uses in Development (20C).

### **Policy 20A - Built Communities**

- A. The provision of new community facilities or the enhancement of existing facilities will be permitted, particularly where the proposals have resulted from neighbourhood planning, subject to satisfying the sequential test in the National Planning Policy Framework, where applicable. Applicants will be required to consider whether the combining or rationalisation of facilities would be more appropriate than the provision of a new facility in accordance with the criteria set out in Part B of this policy.
- B. Any proposal that would result in the loss of a site or building currently or last used as a community facility will only be permitted if the following criteria are met:
  - i. An alternative community facility which meets needs to at least the same extent is, or will be, provided in an equally or more accessible location; or
  - ii. It has been demonstrated that there is an excess of similar provision in the appropriate catchment area for that particular facility and the site or building is not needed for any other community facility ; or
  - iii. In the case of commercial community facilities , it has been demonstrated that it would not be economically or operationally viable to retain the facility for community use; or
  - iv. In the case of non-commercial community facilities, the use is no longer operationally viable ; or
  - v. The community facility could not be provided or operated by either the current occupier or by an alternative occupier (e.g. by a local community body, public-private partnership etc.) and it has been marketed in accordance with the Marketing Requirements.
  - vi. Applicants are required to scope existing facilities in the area and consider whether it would be more appropriate to combine or rationalise existing facilities in the first instance.
  - vii. Applicants proposing to re-develop or convert a community facility should demonstrate that they have consulted the appropriate community prior to the submission of a planning application.

### **Reasoned Justification**

**20.2** Community facilities comprise specific buildings (and associated land) for a range of uses including (but not exclusively):

- Health facilities
- Emergency services i.e. ambulance, fire & police
- Educational establishments, such as schools and colleges
- Community centres and village halls

## 20 | Community Facilities

- Leisure and cultural facilities
- Public houses
- Places of worship
- Libraries
- Built sports facilities
- Cinemas and theatres
- Formal sports pitches and courts.

**20.3** This policy is consistent with the NPPF (paragraph 28) and provides more detail. Alongside national planning policies and Policy 12 (Strategic Infrastructure), the Infrastructure Delivery Plan will set out the need for new community facilities to service the anticipated level of housing growth. Once available the emerging Built Facilities and Playing Pitch Strategies will further inform the development of this policy.

**20.4** The policy allows for changes under the Localism Act 2011. This permits the listing of Community Assets, the Community Right to Challenge (in delivering public services) and the encouragement of communities to run their own facilities, or plan for its local area through neighbourhood planning. This allows for the consideration of a wider range of community services when appropriate, acknowledging that the importance of particular facilities will vary between communities. It is essential that the community is involved in considering the merits of any new facility and the suitability of proposals for alternative forms of use.

**20.5** Wyre Forest DC wish to protect valuable community facilities and services that play an important role in the social infrastructure of the District and help to secure sustainable communities. These mainly local facilities are particularly important in helping to maintain a high quality of life for local residents, some of whom have limited access to alternative facilities further afield. Under certain circumstances it may be more appropriate to look to combining or rationalising facilities in a locality rather than replicate through a new proposal. In situations where a facility may be redundant a robust assessment should have taken place, as appropriate.

**20.6** In the case of any proposals that would result in the loss of a community facility, a satisfactory assessment should be undertaken (using recognised national methodology, e.g. Sport England), that proves there is an excess of similar provision in the appropriate catchment area for that particular facility and the site or building is not needed for any other community service / use.

**20.7** When applying these tests to specific proposals, the Local Planning Authority will have full regard to the particular characteristics, needs, service priorities and objectives of the service or organisation concerned. The implications of maintaining and running new facilities will also be an important consideration.

**20.8** For urban areas, proposed facilities should ideally be located within development boundaries. Within rural areas, proposals should be located within, or adjoining the settlement.

### Policy 20B - Green Space

- A. Green space will be identified on the Policies Map and includes a range of private and public open spaces and associated community facilities.
- B. Development of areas allocated as Green Space will not be permitted unless the following exceptional circumstances are demonstrated:
  - i. The proposal is for a community/recreational use that does not compromise the essential quality and character of the Green Space; or
  - ii. An assessment of community and technical need (using recognised national methodology, where appropriate) clearly demonstrates that the Green Space is surplus to requirements; or
  - iii. Alternative /replacement Green Space of at least equivalent value to the community has been secured in a suitable location.
- C. This policy should be read in conjunction with Policy 14 (Strategic Green Infrastructure). Any new Green Infrastructure secured under these policies will be designated and protected as Green Space.

### Reasoned Justification

**20.9** Well-designed, attractive and functional open space is an essential component for a high quality of life. It contributes positively to biodiversity, health and the character of an area and can also help to mitigate the impacts of extreme temperatures and flash flooding.

**20.10** The NPPF (paragraphs 114, 117) emphasises the benefits of recreational open space in terms of its contribution to creating sustainable patterns of urban and rural development, its role in maintaining strong and vibrant communities and the associated promotion of health and well-being. Green Space for recreation and sport can also deliver a number of Green Infrastructure objectives, often simultaneously. The emerging Open Spaces Strategy will further inform this policy once it is available.

**20.11** There is a wide range of types of open space across Wyre Forest; for example, playing fields, recreation grounds, allotments, cemeteries, parks and amenity green space. They are all part of and contribute to the Green Infrastructure both within and outside settlements. Other open spaces have high ecological or landscape value and are protected elsewhere in the Plan, e.g. Strategic Green Infrastructure (Policy 14) and Biodiversity & Geodiversity (Policy 11D).

**20.12** Policy 20B aims to protect the open spaces that will be identified on the Policies Map, together with numerous incidental open spaces too small to include but that nonetheless contribute to the quality and character of their local areas. These small local spaces are often valued and used heavily by local communities and are therefore worthy of policy protection. Whilst most open spaces are publicly accessible, some are in private ownership, although they nonetheless perform valuable functions such as contributing to biodiversity, the character of the area and providing a sense of openness and space.

**Policy 20C - Provision for Green Space and Outdoor Community Uses in Development**

New developments introduce new demands upon public open space. This can include the need for more open space, improving the performance of existing open space or the provision of new types of open space.

The Council requires major development to provide and/or contribute to the provision of multi-functional open space which serves and meets the needs of the development as well as local and wider needs.

The Council will require the development make provision in accordance with the following principles:

- i. On-site provision which meets local needs for open space, sport and play;
- ii. Off-site contributions instead of on site-contribution where it can be demonstrated that on-site provision is not feasible or viable;
- iii. Contributions towards the enhancement and creation of new areas of open space and/or sports facilities where a local deficiency has been identified and/or where the development will lead to a deficiency;
- iv. Open space in the most accessible possible locations;
- v. Play and recreation spaces for children and young people.

The Council will apply the following standards to new development:

- A. Development proposals exceeding 11 dwellings should make provision for Green Space and outdoor community uses, as set out in Table 20.0.1 (see below), together with secure arrangements for its long-term management and on-going maintenance. Enhancing accessibility to these open spaces, e.g. through improvements to the Rights of Way Network, is strongly encouraged. The total amount of Green Space will be within the overall quantum of Green Infrastructure required by Policy 14. In addition to Table 20.0.1, the precise amount, type and form of outdoor community use will be informed by local evidence e.g. Neighbourhood Plans & Local Design Statements. New open space should be designed to be multi-functional and be of a size, type and quality to meet site, local and strategic needs. Where new sport and recreation facilities are provided as part of a development, they will be created in accordance with Sport England technical standards. Where replacement facilities are being provided, equivalent quality or greater will be required. It is critical that ongoing management and maintenance of public open space, sports, play and leisure and recreation facilities is considered at the outset of the planning and design of a development and that this informs the type, amount and layout of provision proposed. Any development will be required to address deficiencies in the provision of play and recreation open spaces. Proposals must provide an assessment which demonstrates how they have responded to and addressed the issues and requirements of the Council's strategies as identified in the Open Space audit, playing pitch strategy and built facilities plan and other relevant



strategies and their subsequent updates. Proposals will be expected to address the type and quality of public open space as well as the amount through new provision and/or by improving existing provision.

**Table 20.0.1 Standards of Provision**

Typology	Hectares per 1,000 population
Amenity (including Informal pitches) and semi-natural Green Space.	
Equipped play space	
Cemeteries & Churchyards	
Civic space	
Allotments	
Formal pitches etc.	
Total	

*NB: These data to be confirmed upon acceptance of the Open Spaces, Built Facilities and Playing Pitch Strategies*

- B. In cases where it will be impracticable and inappropriate to deliver all the open space typologies on site, developer contributions towards off-site provision will be sought and secured through a legal agreement. For large scale proposals, in particular any urban extensions, most of the typologies must be delivered on site. In all cases, the developer will be required to secure the long term maintenance /management arrangements for all Green Space /outdoor community uses both on-site and off-site.
- C. Requirements for new and improved formal sports pitches will be assessed on a case by case basis using the most up-to-date available evidence, with particular reference to the playing pitches strategy.
- D. On-site provision of Green Space will have regard to the following accessibility standards:
  - Children's Play Space (safe walking distances to dwellings):
    - i. Local Area for Play (LAP) – within 100m.
    - ii. Local Equipped Area for Play (LEAP) – within 400m.
    - iii. Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play (NEAP) – within 1 km.
  - Playing Pitches: Within 1.2 km of dwellings or within 20 minutes drive in the rural areas of the District.

- E. Town or parish councils or the Council will be required to conform to the recipient council's standards regarding management and maintenance of public open space:

The Council will require development proposals to provide sufficient management and/or financial provision for the future management and maintenance of new and existing public open space which forms part of, or is created by, a development. A development will be expected to make provision for the ongoing maintenance of public open space including informal and formal recreation spaces, play and sports provision and biodiversity mitigation and compensation areas which are provided as part of the development. The Council will require developers to establish a mechanism by which public open space will be maintained to an agreed standard. The mechanism must be secured and in place prior to commencement, and, in the case of residential schemes, it must be operational prior to occupation of no more than 80% of the development. Developers who wish to transfer ownership of public open space, sport, play or leisure and recreation facilities to the Council will be required to conform to the Council's standards regarding its management and maintenance. Development will normally be required to manage and maintain open space for the first 12 months and is required to provide a commuted sum for its continued maintenance thereafter.

### Reasoned Justification

**20.13** The NPPF advocates improving the conditions in which people live and take their leisure. A high quality built environment, including the spaces within it, plays an important social role in the delivery of sustainable development. The NPPF also requires local planning authorities to plan positively for the provision of community facilities and spaces. This Policy should be read in conjunction with Policy 12 (Strategic Infrastructure), the Infrastructure Delivery Plan and Policy 14 (Strategic Green Infrastructure).

**20.14** It is considered that the provision of new functional open space and other facilities is necessary in order to achieve active, healthy and integrated communities. The type and size of the residential proposal will also be a factor in determining the make-up of the various community use typologies. Over-provision in any single typology does not negate the need to provide for the other typologies.

**20.15** The emerging Open Space, Built Facilities and Playing Pitch Strategies, commissioned in line with national guidance, will be used to identify any shortfall in the provision of these facilities. This policy should at the very least help ensure that the situation does not worsen.

**20.16** This strategy identifies quantitative and qualitative deficits in these facilities and will be used to inform either the necessary level of developer contribution to be made towards new, or upgrading existing provision to meet demand created through new residential development, as informed by the Planning Obligations SPD or, for the necessity to provide on-site facilities.

**21.1** Wyre Forest District Council commissioned an Employment Land Review [ELR] for the District. It assessed economic development needs across the District objectively in line with the NPPF and Planning Practice Guidance [the Practice Guidance]. The report found that the majority of businesses within Wyre Forest District (88.6%) are micro businesses which mean that they employ 0-9 employees this figure is slightly higher than the figure for West Midlands (87.7%) or Great Britain (88.3%) whereas large firms employing in excess of 250 employees only account for 0.3% of businesses within the District versus 0.4% in the West Midlands and Great Britain. The Employment Land Review identified the need for an additional 40 hectares of employment land.

**21.2** Wyre Forest District Council's Local Development Order [LDO], is a scheme that has introduced permitted development to any site within the boundaries of the South Kidderminster Enterprise Park. Whilst it has only been implemented since 2012, it has attracted many businesses and it is hoped that it will attract inward investment to the South Kidderminster Enterprise Park in the future.

**21.3** Wyre Forest District is located within two Local Enterprise Partnerships: Worcestershire LEP and Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP. The involvement of the District in both Partnerships reflects the economic geography of an area that has strong ties with both the county in which it is located, Worcestershire, as well as the larger urban conurbation of Birmingham and its surrounding areas.

**21.4** It is important that the Council's planning documents, wherever possible, reflect the aims and ambitions of the LEPs ensuring that the District continues to be a place for businesses to operate and to grow.

**21.5** Over the past few years there has been a rise in the levels of home working in the UK. According to the ONS the number of homeworkers in the UK amounted to 4.2 million in the first three months of 2014, equivalent to 13.9% of the total workforce. Wyre Forest has around 5,300 workers who work mainly at or from home, which is equivalent to the national rate of 13.9% of the workplace population.

### Summary of Issues and Options Responses

#### Employment:

- Support for brownfield sites to be developed for employment that are accessible from residential areas, accessible by public transport and provide suitable parking.
- Support for sites that have been allocated for employment uses and have not come forward to be used for alternative uses.
- Requirement for small units and start-up units.
- General support for the reuse of existing rural buildings for employment uses such as farm diversification.

**Policy 21A - Urban Employment Land**

The sites are listed in Part C of this document.

- In addition to sites allocated specifically for employment uses, the provision of employment land and the conversion of existing buildings to support job creation throughout the District will be supported providing the development supports existing businesses or new enterprises of a scale appropriate to the location.
- Planning permission for the change of use to a non-employment generating use of premises which are currently or were last used for employment purposes within the B1, B2 and/or B8 use classes will be granted only where:
  - It is demonstrated that the continued use of the premises, or their redevelopment for employment use, is not viable
  - Details are provided of comprehensive marketing of the premises / land for at least 12 months and appropriate to the prevailing market conditions
  - A financial appraisal that demonstrates that redevelopment for any employment-generating use is unviable and is unlikely to achieve viability within five years
  - The proposed use would be compatible with adjacent land uses and not prejudice the amenity, lawful operation, viability or future development of other businesses

**Economic Development outside of Allocated Areas**

- Proposals for economic development outside of the allocated areas will be prioritised following the sequential approach of:
  - Previously developed sites
  - Infill sites within settlement
  - Sites adjacent to a settlement
- They will be assessed on their merits and should have no adverse effect on any of the following:
  - The amenity of adjacent occupiers
  - The character of the area
  - The surrounding environment

**Hazardous Substances**

- Proposals for development or activities involving hazardous substances, or development adjoining an area where hazardous substances already exist, will only be permitted where the relevant authorities are satisfied that the proposals are acceptable. Where necessary, appropriate measures to protect the public and environment will be required.

### Waste Developments on Employment Land

- Development for waste facilities will also be considered favourably within the designated employment locations, subject to proposals being in conformity with the other policies in the plan and the Waste Core Strategy for Worcestershire.

### Reasoned Justification

**21.6** To achieve sustainable growth within the District we need to create opportunities for people to work. Wyre Forest District Council aims to ensure that the right amount of suitable land is available to attract business to the District and enable existing businesses to grow. The purpose of this section is to allocate and safeguard a range of different sized sites in a number of locations that are attractive for businesses.

**21.7** Proposals involving hazardous substances will need to be carefully assessed. Any decision will be made having regard to the advice of the Health and Safety Executive, the degree of risk and the likely hazard or consequences of an accident occurring. Proposals for development in close proximity to existing hazardous installations will also be carefully assessed to ensure that these proposals are safe and acceptable with the appropriate authorities.

**21.8** The Waste Core Strategy for Worcestershire was adopted in November 2012 and forms part of the statutory Development Plan for the District. The Waste Core Strategy sets out a long term vision for waste management within Worcestershire and outlines areas of land that may be suitable for development of new facilities. Waste management facilities are often akin to business or industrial activities and when directed to the right locations they can provide economic opportunities without having adverse impacts on their surroundings. Therefore, it is considered appropriate to allow for the principle of development of waste management facilities on allocated employment sites, subject to the proposals being in line with the other policies included in the Local Development Plan and the Waste Core Strategy for Worcestershire.

### Rural Employment

#### Policy 21B - Rural Employment

- To help promote rural regeneration existing employment sites in rural areas that are currently or were last used for B1, B2, B8, tourism, leisure and /or recreation-related purposes will be safeguarded for employment-generating uses during the plan period. Proposals to change the use of such sites to any non-employment-generating purpose will need to demonstrate that the site has been actively marketed for employment, tourism, leisure or recreation purposes for a period of at least 12 months and that it is no longer viable for an employment-generating use.
- The expansion of existing employment sites in rural areas will be supported where it has been demonstrated that intensification of the existing site is not viable or practical subject to compliance with other relevant policies.

- The replacement of a rural building for economic development purposes will be allowed in appropriate locations where this would result in a more acceptable, sustainable and better designed development than would be achieved through conversion.
- Proposals to diversify farm businesses for employment, tourism, leisure and recreation uses will be permitted providing:
  - The proposed new use does not detract from or prejudice the existing agricultural undertaking or its future operation
  - The scale of activities associated with the proposed development is appropriate to the rural character of the area
  - Wherever possible existing buildings are used to reduce the need for additional built development

### **Reasoned Justification**

**21.9** The provision of new rural employment sites should be considered favourably if it is not harmful to the integrity of the settlement or landscape character.

**21.10** Employment sites that fall vacant should be actively marketed before their conversion to an alternative use such as residential and the consequent loss of a facility / service providing important local jobs. The timescales and range of the marketing exercise will need to have regard to the nature and scale of the site and buildings and the prevailing economic conditions.

**21.11** Rural employment sites not only provide local employment, they also provide opportunities for new investment and rejuvenation, through intensification or re-use.

**21.12** Over the past few years, changes to traditional farming methods have meant that many farms need to diversify to ensure their survival. Diversification should be encouraged but agricultural uses should still remain as the main focus of the farm unit.

**21.13** There is a need to maintain a positive approach to farm diversification activities; such development should not, however, be permitted to jeopardise future agricultural production.

### **Small Firms/Start-ups**

#### **Policy 21C - Small Firms/Start-ups**

- Protect and encourage land for employment use, particularly for affordable small / medium spaces, start-up and incubator units and flexible employment space, in order to support the District's current and future economic and employment needs.
- Facilitate inward investment and support businesses, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises and creative industries to grow the employment base of the District.



## Reasoned Justification

**21.14** Wyre Forest District Council operates a scheme called 'Space' which provides facilities such as industrial units, offices, storage containers and retail units. 'Space' provides flexible workspace for businesses to start, develop and grow. Offering 'per month' rents, the premises provide individual workspaces but with some shared meeting areas, kitchens and toilet facilities. There is a 50% reduction in rent for start-up businesses during their first year and a 25% reduction in their second. Occupants also have access to business support, advice and funding. There is demand for this type of facility within the District as it provides a selection of premises for start up businesses. There is a severe lack of 'follow-on' or 'grow-on' spaces (which tend to be around 200-400 sqm in size) which cater for firms which have outgrown their initial space and so development of this type of facility should be encouraged.

## Live work units and Homeworking

### Policy 21D - Live work units and Homeworking

- Proposals for live/work units will be permitted where they involve the re-use of a rural building.
- New developments including replacement buildings for live/work units will also be considered favourably subject to the following criteria being met:
  - They are located on Previously Developed Land;
  - They do not have an adverse impact on the character, landscape or wildlife of the area;
  - Suitable access arrangements can be made, without the need for extensive new access roads; and
  - They do not constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt.
- All Live/Work proposals must also ensure that:
  - The work element is restricted to B1 activities. B2 uses may only be considered appropriate where there are no adverse impacts on surrounding properties;
  - The workspace is designed to be separate from the dwelling;
  - The emphasis is on the work element with residential use ancillary. This should be reflected in the split of floorspace with at least 60% afforded to the workspace and no more than 40% for residential ;
  - The workspace must be constructed and available for occupation and in use before the residential element of the scheme is occupied.
  - The residential accommodation contains no more than three bedrooms and that residential and work spaces have separate entrances and toilet facilities.

**Reasoned Justification**

**21.15** There has been an increase in self-employment and homeworking and increasing use of technology amongst many growth sectors. It is therefore important that WFDC monitors and responds to these changing preferences, to ensure that business needs can be met within the District.

**21.16** Live work units differ from homeworking in that homeworking uses a small proportion of a residential unit for generally office work whilst Live work units are a business being run from the same place that the worker resides. The employment aspect is the main use with the residential area as an ancillary use.

**21.17** Live work units can make use of redundant rural buildings or may be purpose built on previously developed land. The emphasis should be on the work element of the building but the two uses should be separate and should not have an adverse effect on the surrounding area.

**High Quality Offices****Policy 21E - High Quality Offices**

High quality office accommodation will be permitted where:

- It supports the creation of high quality jobs in professional, technical and knowledge based sectors including training institutions.
- New office development does not cause an adverse effect on the built and natural environment and will be focused on the three town centres and allocated employment areas. Small scale offices in rural areas outside of the green belt will also be supported, where appropriate

Low cost office spaces should be retained to meet the requirements of small businesses, start-ups and the voluntary sector. Utilising premises above shops in the District's town centres for office occupation is encouraged as a source of lower cost office provision.

**Reasoned Justification**

**21.18** The majority of offices within the District are located in Kidderminster. The demand for office accommodation tends to be from small, mainly professional, companies and businesses wanting high quality small office accommodation. The demand is generally local as the market does not attract a high number of occupiers from outside of the District. The area faces competition from larger conurbations such as Birmingham and locations in proximity to the strategic motorway network.

**21.19** In Wyre Forest District the majority of offices tend to be small units above retail units in the town centre, ancillary office units on industrial estates or buildings that have been converted to offices such as Elgar House. Very few offices are purpose built high quality offices. If the District had a supply of high quality offices that were accessible and had parking they would achieve a higher rental value and would attract inward investment.

**21.20** Loss of office floorspace has an adverse effect on business, employment and the character of the District and will therefore be resisted where possible.

**21.21** Some low cost offices are required to meet the requirements of the voluntary sector and start up businesses.

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**22.1** Town centres are crucial to the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of the District. The concentration of a range of goods, services and facilities in one area creates a centre for communities and enables people to make one trip for many reasons. The District's settlement hierarchy of towns are Kidderminster, Stourport-on-Severn and Bewdley (see Policy 6B). It is this hierarchy that provides the basis for identifying the locations for new retail, leisure and commercial development. Further retail development should be directed towards Kidderminster in the first instance, with only developments to meet local needs being allowed within the Market Towns of Stourport-on-Severn and Bewdley.

**22.2** The main retail centre is Kidderminster which has the widest choice of retail facilities within the District. Since the development of Weavers Wharf (opened 2005), the shopping centre has moved westwards away from the traditional town centre which was based around Worcester Street, High Street and Vicar Street.

**22.3** Bewdley is the smallest of the towns within the District and its retailing function reflects its size and role within the area. The retail core is compact and focussed on Load Street. Bewdley provides an important top-up shopping destination with a range of convenience goods and services.

### Summary of Issues and Options Responses

#### Retail:

- General support for the redevelopment of Kidderminster town centre to make it more attractive, including making more use of the canal and to support a mix of specialist shops and larger stores.
- General support for the redevelopment of traditional retail areas to include a variety of uses including retail, residential and leisure.
- General support for the retention of the existing shopping areas in Stourport-on-Severn and Bewdley.

### Town Centre Development

#### Policy 22A - Town Centre development

- Large scale retail development (2,500sqm net and above), commercial and leisure uses should be targeted towards Kidderminster as the strategic centre of the District followed by Stourport-on-Severn and Bewdley in a sequential approach. Proposals for new retail development (of more than 280sqm net), or proposals regarding the removal of restrictive retail conditions, (condition that restricts retail use) will only be permitted where a sequential approach has been followed and it is demonstrated that:
  - It is within the Primary Shopping Area.
  - If edge-of-centre, that the proposals can not be accommodated within the Primary Shopping Area.

- Support will be given to safeguarding, maintaining and enhancing the vitality and viability of the existing retail centres throughout the District without causing adverse effects on the built and natural environment and of a scale appropriate to its location.
- In appropriate locations, support will be given for the change of use of retail units to alternative uses such as leisure and recreation. Proposals must demonstrate that the building is fully used avoiding vacant floors above shops. Proposals to introduce residential development above ground floor within the Primary Shopping Area will be supported. This will help to improve the vitality of the centres without compromising the core retail function of the towns.
- Support will be given for appropriate development for the reuse of vacant floorspace within the town centres.
- Support will be given for the appropriate development for the regeneration of the eastern gateway area of Kidderminster town centre.
- Within the defined Primary Shopping Frontage development proposals for retail use at ground floor (A1-A5) will be permitted where:
  - The scale and type of development proposed is directly related to the role and function of the centre and its catchment area and it contributes to the provision of a safe environment.
  - There would be no adverse impact on the vitality and viability of the centre or other centres.
  - They provide an active frontage and are open for business during the day.
- Proposals for development within the Primary Shopping Frontage area must not result in an adverse cluster of non-retail uses or unduly fragment the retail area.
- Within the Secondary Shopping Frontage proposals for town centre uses that contribute to the vitality and viability of the area will be considered favourably subject to public safety, environmental and amenity considerations.
- Vacant shop units can provide employment/business opportunities. This may help to provide premises for small businesses and start-ups. The Council will consider favourably applications for such uses where the buildings can be satisfactorily converted, the proposed use will not adversely affect the town centre's retail function and appearance or amenity, and there is sufficient off-street parking where required.

Within the District's market towns of Stourport-on-Severn and Bewdley, the following development proposals will be encouraged:

- Current A1 retail provision will be safeguarded where possible. However, diversification may be acceptable where there is a positive contribution to the town centre.
- New retail development proposals should be appropriate to the town's position in the District's settlement hierarchy.

## Reasoned Justification

**22.4** The NPPF states that planning policies should be positive, promote competitive town centre environments and set out policies for the management and growth of centres over the plan period. The NPPF requires Local Planning Authorities to prepare policies that recognise town centres as the heart of their communities and pursue policies to support their viability and vitality;

**22.5** Town centres are extremely important to communities and Wyre Forest District Council wishes to support town centre viability and vitality and to pursue policies that promote town centre development creating thriving town centres.

**22.6** Kidderminster, being at the top of the retail hierarchy, will be the preferred location for major leisure, office and retail developments and other uses that attract large numbers of people. Other centres are suitable for day-to-day food and non-food shopping, small-scale leisure uses and local service and facility provision.

**22.7** The retail sector and town centres are undergoing a period of significant change due to the continuing popularity and convenience provided by out-of-town facilities and the increasing adoption of online and click and collect shopping. Therefore, alternative uses such as leisure and residential within town centres may add to the viability and vitality.

**22.8** Retail development should be focussed on existing centres in order to strengthen and, where necessary, regenerate them. Wherever possible, growth should be accommodated by more efficient use of land and buildings within existing centres. This approach will help maintain the historic character of town centres and provides opportunities to minimise the consumption of non-renewable resources by reusing existing buildings and reducing the need to travel to out-of-centre retail parks.

**22.9** The Primary Shopping Area is a defined area where retail development is concentrated (generally comprising the primary and those secondary frontages which are contiguous and closely related to the primary shopping frontage). Primary frontages are likely to include a high proportion of retail uses. Secondary frontages provide greater opportunities for a diversity of uses and often provide complementary uses to the core retail function that exists within the primary frontage. Maps showing the primary shopping area and primary and secondary shopping frontages for Kidderminster, Stourport-on-Severn and Bewdley are to be found in Appendix A.

**22.10** Consequent to the Retail report by Boyer (2016) the primary shopping area and primary and secondary shopping frontage areas in Kidderminster have been revised consequent to the impact of the Weavers Wharf development. This is shown at Kidderminster Retail map in Appendix A.

**22.11** Stourport-on-Severn and Bewdley are classed as market towns. Stourport-on-Severn offers leisure and shopping facilities to its residents and its canal and riverside assets continue to be a key visitor attraction. Its public realm is enhanced through the restoration of its unique heritage including the canal basins. Bewdley remains a thriving market town which meets the local community's needs. The town's Georgian historic character is preserved and it is a popular riverside destination.



**22.12** The geography of the District means that Kidderminster is just 3 miles from each of the market towns. Therefore, the need for Bewdley and Stourport-on-Severn to provide facilities and services should be balanced with their proximity to Kidderminster and the services it provides in its function as the strategic centre of the District.

### Out of Town Retail

#### Policy 22B - Out of Town development

- Proposals for new, or an extension to existing edge or out-of-centre retail, entertainment or leisure development in excess of 2,500 sq.m gross floorspace will be required to submit a sequential test and an impact assessment demonstrating that there would be no adverse impact on the vitality and viability of the town centres as a whole. The Council will refuse planning permission where there is evidence that proposals are likely to have significant adverse impacts on the vitality and viability of the town centre as a whole.
- If out-of-centre, evidence will be required to show that there will be no significant adverse impact on the overall vitality and viability of the existing centre and that the development is not capable of being located in a sequentially preferable location.

### Reasoned Justification

**22.13** When assessing applications for retail, leisure and office development outside of town centres which are not in accordance with an up-to-date Local Plan, the NPPF states that local planning authorities should require an impact assessment if the development is over a proportionate locally set floorspace threshold (if there is no locally set threshold, the default threshold is 2,500 sq m).

**22.14** Within towns there are developments which are classed as 'edge-of -centre' and those that are classed as 'out-of-centre'. These terms are defined in the Jargon Guide Appendix of this document.

### Neighbourhood and Village Centres

**22.15** Local shops and other services play a vital role in promoting communities' sustainability by helping to meet everyday needs and reducing the need to travel. The Council is therefore keen to ensure that the loss of existing retail areas is resisted, where possible.

### Change of use from retail to alternative uses.

#### Policy 22C - Change of use from retail to alternative uses

- Individual retail shops not within designated town centres and Local Shopping Centres will be safeguarded for A1 retail purposes, unless it has been demonstrated that the shop unit has been marketed for a minimum of one year and there is no realistic

prospect of the unit being used for A1 retail purposes in the foreseeable future. Where this has been demonstrated, change of use from Class A1 retail will be accepted provided that:

- The use meets the needs of residents within the local neighbourhood
- There are alternative shopping facilities for local residents within a reasonable distance

### Reasoned Justification

**22.16** The loss of convenience retail facilities in a settlement or neighbourhood can have a serious impact upon people's quality of life and potentially harm the overall vitality of the community. With an increasing proportion of elderly people in the population, access to locally based retail services will become increasingly important; reflecting lower mobility levels. In identified centres, proposals that would result in a significant loss of facilities could also have a serious impact upon the vitality and viability of that centre as a whole due to their role in providing a range of facilities for the surrounding area.

#### Policy 22D

- Market Towns policy now merged with Town Centres policy. Will be edited out

### Local Shops

#### Policy 22E - Local Shops

- Planning permission for new village and neighbourhood shops will be granted provided they are of an appropriate scale and it can be demonstrated that they will not have a significant adverse impact on the vitality or viability of any local centre.
- Outside of the neighbourhood or village designations, support will also be given for the development of new retail (A1) uses where they do not exceed 280sqm net and where:
  - It can be located on previously developed land.
  - It would not cause an adverse impact to the local amenity.

### Other forms of Retailing – Specialist Retailing

**22.17** There are other forms of retailing that do not lend themselves to being sited within designated areas or neighbourhoods, yet they often make an important contribution to the local economy. It is important that the focus for new retailing remains in the most sustainable locations,

following a sequential approach, but there is a recognition that other forms of retailing also need consideration. The following policy is therefore proposed to manage applications for 'specialist retailing'.

### **Policy 22F - Specialist Retailing**

- Retail developments within employment areas (factory outlets) will not be permitted unless they are small scale uses (not exceeding 280sqm net) related to or an ancillary part of a business use. Car showrooms and vehicle maintenance, repair and service centres will also be permitted on land allocated for B1, B2 and B8 purposes.
- Proposals for convenience retailing associated with petrol stations will be permitted where this is clearly an ancillary function to the main use, is for convenience goods and the floorspace does not exceed 280sqm net.
- Other forms of specialist retailing will be permitted where the retail element is ancillary to the main use. Extensions to existing operations should not lead to an increase in the amount of retail floorspace dedicated to the sale of comparison goods. Where necessary, the range of goods to be sold from the site may also be limited by condition.
- New or expanded farm shops, garden centres or petrol filling stations will be permitted in appropriate locations provided:
  - When sited in or near the Green Belt the proposal is not detrimental to the visual amenity of the Green Belt, by virtue of siting, materials or design.
  - In the case of farm shops, the proposal would make use of redundant or under-used buildings and the range of goods to be sold is restricted to foodstuffs, plants and rural crafts produced locally.
  - The creation of new, or extensions to existing, garden centres or farm shops in the open countryside and unrelated to a settlement will only be permitted if the proposed development is ancillary to, and on the site of, an existing horticultural business or existing farming operation.

### **Reasoned Justification**

**22.18** There are locations within the District where retail elements exist as an ancillary element of another use. This includes outlet shops in employment areas, petrol filling stations, garden centres, and farm shops. It is important, that any future proposal remains ancillary to the existing use so as to not to undermine the primary role.

**22.19** With the loss of many traditional independent retail outlets, the operators of roadside petrol stations have often provided for the convenience needs of their localities. Although a potential good source of top-up shopping, the locations of these shops, due to their main activity, do not tend to be within existing neighbourhoods. It is therefore proposed that the role that future petrol filling stations play in providing retail facilities is controlled.

**22.20** Traditionally, many farms have sold produce grown on the farm to the general public, sometimes from farm buildings and in more recent years from 'farm shops'. Due to the potential impact of the development of farm shops, it is proposed that the role of the shops be limited to agricultural produce originating from the farming unit and its immediate environment. If non-local agricultural produce is required to be sold (for example to combat the issue of seasonality), then this should remain subsidiary to the sale of local agricultural produce. The sale of a wider range of goods would not be permitted as it is considered to be inappropriate for farm shops.

**22.21** Garden centres were also established as an ancillary function to agricultural (horticultural) production. However, such has been the growth in the leisure sector that there are now national chains of garden centres, many of which are dedicated to the retail sale of plants and sundries and have little if any horticultural production capabilities. There is no reason as to why these facilities cannot be located within more urban areas. Where rural garden centres do exist, they often have a valuable role to play in the local economy. Nevertheless, in order to accord with the retail strategy and to preserve the openness and character of the rural landscape, the Council is keen to ensure such facilities remain predominantly ancillary to horticultural production.

### Food and Drink Retailing

#### Policy 22G - Food and Drink Retailing

- Development proposals involving the sale of food and drink must not have an adverse impact in terms of:
  - Residential amenity
  - Pollution (light, litter, noise, odour)
  - Parking and highway safety

### Reasoned Justification

**22.22** Proposals specifically regarding food and drink bring their own issues and challenges.

**22.23** Proposals involving consumption on the premises can increase the levels of liveliness and vibrancy throughout the day and night. Whilst there may be problems associated with anti-social behaviour, such uses can also, conversely, add to the sense of security through ensuring maximum people presence and natural surveillance. The policy therefore seeks to ensure that premises for the sale of food and drink have due regard to community safety and local amenity.

### Policy 22H Hot Food Takeaways

- In all the District's centres, retail parades and all other areas, proposals that would result in two or more A5 uses adjacent to one another will be resisted
- Outside of designated centres, hot food takeaways will be resisted where the proposal is within 400m of the boundary of a school or youth facility.

### Reasoned Justification

**22.24** Where high concentrations of hot-food takeaways occur in the town centres, they can pose a serious threat to the local economic vitality and viability. It is not uncommon for hot food takeaway shops to locate outside of town centres either and particularly high concentrations exist along some of the key road corridors such as the Horsefair and Comberton Hill in Kidderminster. In addition to health issues and obesity levels, hot food takeaway shops are more likely to have a detrimental impact on amenity and on retail character and function of shopping centres. Such harmful impacts relate to increased incidence of litter, smells, crime and anti-social behaviour, noise and general disturbance, parking and traffic problems.

**22.25** The proliferation and proximity of hot food takeaways to schools is also of concern as the food they serve is mostly high in fat, salt and sugar. Healthier options, if available are generally very limited. There is concern that the effect of fast food consumption on children's diets and eating behaviour can add to health problems related to obesity. A proliferation of hot food takeaways within walking distance of locations where children and young people congregate, particularly schools can be seen as a contributing factor to rising levels of childhood obesity. It is important to improve healthy eating choices, encourage active travel and improve access to open spaces, sports, leisure and recreation facilities.

**23.1** Wyre Forest District Council recognises the importance of tourism and the contribution it can make to the local economy. It also aims to protect the environmental quality of the area. The majority of visitors to Wyre Forest District are day visitors, with approximately 79% of those surveyed as part of the Wyre Forest District Visitor Survey 2015/2016 being day visitors. The remainder were made up of 13% overnight visitors and 7% visiting the District as part of a holiday but not staying within the District. Opportunities to encourage visitors to stay overnight or longer as well as facilities for all weathers, and encouraging visitors throughout the year will be encouraged.

#### Summary of Issues and Options Responses

- Support for additional tourism to develop alongside existing tourist attractions but not to detract from them.
- Promote activities within the District such as walking, cycling and art that will benefit local businesses.
- Intensification of existing tourist attractions but this should be measured against additional traffic and effect on amenity.
- Promote Rivers and Canal.
- Facilities required to encourage visitors to stay overnight.

**23.2** Tourism is an extremely important sector of the UK's economy. Within the Wyre Forest, approximately 6.2% of jobs are related to the tourism industry. This figure is below the national average of 9.5 %. Between 2009 and 2014 employment in tourism industries in the UK increased from 2.66 million to 2.97 million. The majority of tourism workers are permanent (89.57%) and the percentage of the workforce employed in the tourism industry has increased from 8.29% (2.50 million 2008) to 9.46% (2.97 million 2014) an increase of 18.78% over 6 years. Employment in the tourist industry is extremely important for younger workers with 26.4% of those aged between the ages of 16-24 being employed in the industry compared to only 10.5% in non tourist industries (Office for National Statistics – data from Annual Population survey 2008-2014 ONS).

**23.3** It is therefore important that future planning policy protects and enhances this aspect of the economy. Planning can have a significant impact on the tourism sector's ability to grow in response to future demand and to protect the natural and historic assets on which the industry is based. Within the District we need to provide adequate opportunities for growth, but also policies should be strong enough to prevent inappropriate development that would limit tourism potential and cause an adverse impact on the District.



## **Policy 23A - Supporting Major Tourist Attractions**

### **Severn Valley Railway (SVR)**

Proposals that enhance the role and function of the SVR (including visitor attractions and facilities and maintenance facilities subject to their impact on the surrounding landscape and the Green Belt) will be supported. Proposals to link the SVR with other sites along the route will be encouraged.

### **West Midland Safari and Leisure Park (WMSLP)**

The Council will consider applications for major development at West Midland Safari and Leisure Park that are contained in the masterplan or any other similar agreed document favourably, where such development would, as appropriate, upgrade and improve the viability of the attraction, address the potential for heathland restoration and recreation, be appropriate to its function as a major tourism destination, make a positive contribution to the local economy and be acceptable taking into account the masterplan and its location within the Green Belt and the need to ensure compatibility with the local infrastructure network.

### **The Wyre Forest**

Future development proposals that enhance the tourism and leisure role of the Wyre Forest will be supported. Proposals will need to ensure that they respect the landscape, biodiversity and historic environment of this ancient woodland. Proposals that cause adverse impact on the area will not be permitted. Development proposals that link to the Forest, but are not necessarily within the Forest boundaries will also be supported, subject to proposals conforming to other policies within the plan.

### **Arboreta**

There are two large arboreta located within the District at Upper Arley and Wolverley (Bodenham). Development proposals that enhance the tourism and leisure role of these areas will be supported. Proposals will need to ensure that they respect the landscape, biodiversity and historic environment of these areas and proposals that cause adverse impact on the environment will not be permitted.

## **Policy 23B - Supporting Tourist Attractions**

Proposals for the development of other tourism related developments within Wyre Forest District will be permitted where the following criteria have been met:

- The development is compatible with the surrounding area and will not have an adverse effect on the surroundings.
- Brownfield sites should be considered where possible before Greenfield sites.

- Provision should be made for suitable access and car parking, including where appropriate coach parking, and where possible be served by public transport.
- Heritage assets and their setting should be conserved and, where appropriate, enhanced.
- The development is not inappropriate development in the Green Belt.
- Initiatives enhancing and safeguarding the natural environment will be supported.

### Reasoned Justification

**23.4** Wyre Forest District Council is committed to ensuring that the District's appeal as a tourist destination is retained and enhanced throughout the plan period. It is therefore important to provide support for tourist proposals by either the expansion of existing proposals or new proposals.

**23.5** Tourism, nationally, is generally an expanding part of the economy. However, locally there was a slight downturn in 2014 when both bednights and expenditure were down 4%. It is estimated that within Wyre Forest District the number employed in tourism is around 2155 and £121 million is spent in the local area as a result of tourism, taking into account multiplier effects. (Economic Impact of Tourism, Wyre Forest 2015)

**23.6** Wyre Forest District provides a wide range of visitor attractions encompassing both the natural and the built environment. Tourism provides uses for historic buildings, and supports the economic viability and vitality of local businesses.

**23.7** Visitor attractions can range from the main tourist attractions which are explored further below to other attractions such as Bewdley Museum which attracts 190,000 visitors per annum, the Rivers Severn and Stour together with Stourport Riverside, the Worcestershire and Staffordshire Canal, Harvington Hall, Kidderminster Carpet Museum as well as various festivals.

**23.8** Around 6% of the District's land area is designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The District has 19 SSSIs with the Wyre Forest itself being the largest designation. Others include Hurcott Pool and Woods and Puxton Marsh. The District also has 53 Special Wildlife Sites (SWSs) and 13 Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) including Habberley Valley and Redstone Marsh. There are also a number of formal parks in the District which host events including Brinton Park. The policy supports proposals that are compatible with the character of the area and look to maximise the reuse of brownfield locations for new facilities. .

### Severn Valley Railway

**23.9** The Severn Valley Railway (SVR) is a heritage railway line running steam trains between Kidderminster and Bridgnorth (in Shropshire), a distance of 16 miles. The railway is not currently a commercial line but provides a genuine draw for visitors and enthusiasts alike. The potential exists to open the line to commercial services in the future. The route of the railway closely follows the course of the River Severn for most of its journey.

**23.10** The route is now a major national and international tourist attraction. During 2016 over 250,000 passengers travelled on SVR (source SVR website). Given the SVR's potential impact on the District, it was considered important to provide a flexible policy framework that safeguarded the existing railway operations whilst providing support for additional development proposals.

**23.11** The line of the SVR runs through the District and therefore support will be given to proposals to link this route with other sites that lie adjacent to the tracks where additional benefit in terms of sustainable transport and improving the tourism offer can be realised. The SVR is a key attraction for tourists and provides an undeniable economic draw into the District. The continued support for operations along the railway is provided within this policy, recognising the important role that the railway provides as both a defining feature of the landscape and the economic impact that it brings.

### **West Midland Safari and Leisure Park (WMSLP)**

**23.12** WMSLP is one of the largest tourist attractions in Worcestershire, and has been in operation for over 35 years. As well as the major Safari Park, it contains one of the UK's leading and longest established inland amusement parks, with over 30 rides catering for the family market, and is also a major events venue. The safari park and leisure park attracts 750,000 visitors a year and employs 82 year round staff plus a further 395 seasonal staff. The company spends several million pounds each year with local and regional suppliers. Its payroll is a substantial, multi-million pound sum which goes directly to the local economy as WMSLP primarily recruits from the local area.

**23.13** A masterplan covering the whole of the West Midlands Safari and Leisure Park was approved in 2013. The masterplan provides a framework for considering future development of the site, to ensure that development takes account of the potential wider impact it may have. The focus of the masterplan is the future development of a hotel, conference centre and waterpark. In April 2016 planning permission was granted for a water park as well as outline approval for a hotel, conference centre and spa. It is hoped that visitors to the safari park will extend their stay to more than a day visit. The conference centre will be important to the District for business visitors who spend more per head in the District than tourist visitors.

**23.14** In order to understand more fully the impact that the WMSLP has on the District, a study was carried out by Amion Consulting in 2011 which focussed on the potential economic impact of the Park. The study looked at how proposed redevelopment at the Park would impact on the local economy. The conclusions of the study were that proposed improvements to the Park would help to drive the development of the visitor economy, enable business growth and create new employment opportunities, as well as building on an existing local asset. The study identified that redevelopment at the Park has the potential to generate significant net additional local jobs and economic activity.

**23.15** The WMSLP undoubtedly has a large impact on the economy of the District, with the potential for this impact to grow further. However, future expansion or redevelopment of the Park is constrained by the Green Belt designation. The site is therefore identified as a Previously Developed Site in the Green Belt (Policy 34).

**23.16** There are competing priorities in planning policy terms within this location and the Council is seeking to achieve a balanced approach which maintains the identity of Bewdley along with the essence of the Green Belt whilst providing some flexibility to enable one of the District's key tourist attractions and employers to develop in a sustainable and appropriate manner. Unless the Park can continue to introduce new attractions and complementary development, the Park's contribution to the local economy will be restricted.

**23.17** In recognition of the valuable role which WMSLP plays in the region's tourism industry, and to help secure its long term future as a major tourist attraction, the Council will support the ongoing enhancement and improvement of the WMSLP as a major tourism destination, subject to other policies being adhered to (including Green Belt policies).

### The Wyre Forest

**23.18** This ancient woodland is a major attraction for tourists and residents of the District alike. Situated to the west of the District, the Forest offers visitors a range of woodland walks and trails amongst beautiful ancient oak woodland and conifer plantation. The forest now stretches to approximately 6,000 acres (although not all of this lies within Wyre Forest District). It is one of the largest remaining ancient woodlands in Britain and much of the area is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) with many rare species of flora and fauna being found there.

**23.19** The Forest includes a visitor centre and a recently developed Community Discovery Centre, providing a magnet for visitors to the Forest. A high wire course within the Forest, run by Go Ape, is situated near to the visitor centre. These facilities provide an important tourism offer and enable people to enjoy this ancient woodland. The Forest also helps to improve the health and wellbeing of the District's population by offering walks and trails to support all abilities.

**23.20** Grow with Wyre was a Heritage Lottery funded Landscape Partnership Scheme that ran from 2008 until 2012. The £4 million project was set up to encourage people to visit, understand and protect the unique landscape of the Wyre Forest. It aimed to conserve the built and natural features that create the unique and historic character of the Wyre Forest's landscape and encourage more people to access, learn and become involved in the Wyre Forest landscape. Therefore, it is of vital importance to the future development of the attraction and the area as a whole, that any proposals respect the special characteristics of the area and do not cause harm to the main reason that people visit the area in the first place, the enjoyment of the Forest itself.

### Arboreta

**23.21** The District has two large Arboreta that perform a tourism function, as well as being important natural habitats. Arley Arboretum boasts more than 300 species of trees in formal and informal plantings and gardens. Bodenham Arboretum contains 3000 species of trees and shrubs from all over the world and its 156 acres contains mature woodland, specimen trees and shrubs and two acres of pools and lakes. The continued operation of these tourist attractions may require future development proposals to come forward. Therefore, the policy framework allows for development to be considered, subject to the proposals not causing an adverse impact on the environment, which is the main draw for tourists.

## Tourist and business visitor accommodation

**23.22** Hotels, bed and breakfast and self catering accommodation make a particular contribution to the tourist industry in the District as they are an important element in the stock of tourist accommodation. In order for the business, conference and tourist market to grow, the District Council recognises the need for accommodation to cater for these demands, together with adequate parking.

**23.23** Where uses, such as restaurants and pubs, are included in schemes, their impact on adjacent settlements will need to be assessed.

### Policy 23C - Tourist Accommodation

#### Conversion of Existing Dwellings to Tourist Accommodation

The conversion of dwellings to guest house or bed and breakfast use is generally considered acceptable. This is, however, dependent upon car parking provision being available and there being no undue disturbance to surrounding neighbours.

#### Caravan, Chalet and Camping Sites

Sites for touring caravans, motor homes and campers can have a detrimental impact on the landscape.

Applications for further mobile home, caravan and chalet developments within the District's rural areas will be resisted due to the collective impact which the existing sites have on the landscape.

#### Chalets

- Extensions to chalets should enhance the appearance of the building and not have a significant adverse impact on adjacent occupiers or the surrounding landscape and comply with all other relevant policy.
- Changes to permanent residential occupation will only be allowed where there is adequate road access, car parking adjacent, reasonable access to facilities by foot or public transport, the building is of permanent construction and is not liable to flooding or located within the floodplain.
- Replacement of a chalet by another chalet, caravan or mobile home will only be allowed where the development would result in a reduction in the visual impact on the landscape.
- The replacement of a holiday use chalet by a permanent residential dwelling will not be permitted. For sites that are located within the floodplain, consideration should be given to relocating the chalet(s) to an area of lower flood risk and it must be demonstrated that the development can be made safe for the lifetime of the development. Replacement of chalets should be on a 'like for like' basis in terms of size and materials.



### New Accommodation

Planning permission for other visitor accommodation will only be permitted where:

- Proposals for new hotels within settlements, will normally be permitted, although they will be assessed in terms of their impact on the built and natural environment; and/or
- Where possible new accommodation should be provided on brownfield sites. For any applications on Greenfield sites, the Local Planning Authority will require supporting information from applicants demonstrating that all potential brownfield sites have been thoroughly investigated and why they are inappropriate for the development proposed; and/or
- In order to protect the high quality landscape of the District, proposals for new build hotels will not be permitted in the Green Belt or the countryside. However, the conversion of large country houses to hotel or self catering use can, if approached in a sympathetic way, provide an attractive form of tourist accommodation. It is important that any new development which is required in connection with the conversion does not detract from the character, appearance or quality of the building and its surroundings; and
- The development is not inappropriate in the Green Belt; and
- It is of a type and scale that is appropriate for its location with no adverse impact on neighbouring amenity; and/or
- It is provided as part of a farm diversification scheme or ancillary development to an existing hotel, guest house, public house, restaurant or other similar establishment and/or
- It re-uses a redundant rural building of permanent and substantial construction. The building must also comply with Policy 28A Reuse and adaptation of rural buildings.

### Reasoned Justification

**23.24** Visitor accommodation can take a wide variety of forms, including hotels, bed and breakfast, guest houses, self catering and group accommodation such as youth hostels. A significant proportion of the money that visitors spend is on accommodation and therefore it is important to retain existing accommodation and the provision of new visitor accommodation is an essential element of supporting tourism in the Wyre Forest District. By encouraging the development of visitor accommodation in built-up areas, the environmental impact of building in the open countryside can be minimised. In the open countryside reuse of existing buildings will help to minimise the visual impact.

**23.25** Sites within settlements are more appropriate as they already have access to the infrastructure, amenities and public transport links and cycling and walking infrastructure needed to support them. The Planning Policy Framework required Local Authorities to support tourism in rural areas and the countryside. It is important that any tourist accommodation does not compromise the amenity of surrounding local residents and is suitable in its surroundings.



**23.26** Pressures to further extend and modernise holiday chalets could lead to chalet sites evolving into permanent residential estates. This is highly undesirable as they are usually located in areas where residential development would not normally be permitted. They are often found in inaccessible locations with poor access roads, remote from shops and schools and often in areas liable to flooding. There is a particular issue with these developments along the River Severn and within the Wyre Forest itself. Historically, these chalets were used at weekends and during the summer but they are increasingly being used as permanent dwellings, often with the addition of a brick skin.

### **Waterway Policies**

**23.27** There are two policies specific to the waterways - Policy 10E Regenerating the Waterways and Policy 27E Wyre Forest Waterways. The River Severn plays a key role in attracting visitors to Bewdley and Stourport-on-Severn whereas the potential of the River Stour and the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal has yet to be fully exploited (other than in the Stourport Basins which has benefitted from a major restoration scheme).

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**24.1** For the Plan to facilitate the viability and success of the Wyre Forest economy it must be sensitive to the opportunities posed by new technology whilst at the same time offering some protection from unnecessary intrusion. Two forms of new technology of particular relevance and importance to the planning system due to their infrastructure implications are Telecommunications/Broadband and Renewable Energy. Although these Policies are included in this Plan it is important to recognise that their interpretation and any future review will need to acknowledge the fast-moving natures of these technologies.

### **Policy 24A - Telecommunications and Broadband**

#### **Broadband**

- A. New development should be provided with superfast broadband or alternative superfast solutions, where appropriate: e.g. mobile broadband and/or Wi-Fi. Wherever practicable, superfast broadband capacity should be incorporated to agreed industry standards<sup>(15)</sup>. Developers and infrastructure providers<sup>(16)</sup>.

#### **Telecommunications and Broadband**

- B. When considering telecommunications development proposals, the following factors will be taken into account:
- i. Operational requirements of the telecommunication networks and the limitations of the technology, including technical constraints on the location of telecommunications apparatus.
  - ii. The need for ICNIRP Guidelines<sup>(17)</sup> (and/or any other relevant guidance in place at the time of the application) for safe emissions to be met.
  - iii. The need to avoid interference with existing electrical equipment and air traffic services.
  - iv. The potential for sharing existing masts, buildings and other structures. Such evidence and justification for any new site should accompany any application made to the local planning authority.
  - v. The impact of the development on its surroundings with particular regard to the following criteria:

15 These include PAS: Next Generation Access for New Build Homes Guide; BT Openreach's Developers Guide to Telecommunications infrastructure and installation etc

16 Service providers can also include locally constituted groups looking to "buy in" broadband services. should seek to facilitate this through early engagement with national and local infrastructure providers

17 ICNIRP = International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection, which has the principal aim to disseminate information and advice on the potential health hazards of exposure to non-ionizing radiation to everyone with an interest in the subject

- The siting and appearance of the proposed apparatus and associated structures should seek to minimise the impact on the visual amenity, character, landscape or appearance of the surrounding area, particularly if it is proposed in a Conservation Area.
- If on a building, apparatus and associated structures should be sited and designed in order to seek to minimise the impact to the external appearance.

### Reasoned Justification

**24.2** Communication infrastructure includes telephone systems (both wired and mobile) and broadband. The benefits of having a modern and accessible system of telecommunications, wireless and electronic methods of communication to Wyre Forest will be significant. Increasingly the demand is for superfast broadband using fibre optic technology but there is no legal requirement to provide this facility. Legislation requires that copper wire telephone services are provided to all new development.

**24.3** High quality telecommunications and broadband is also recognised in Policy 12 – Strategic Infrastructure and the Wyre Forest Infrastructure Delivery Plan.

**24.4** Broadband development across the whole of Worcestershire is driven by the Worcestershire Local Broadband Plan (WLBP), as agreed in May 2012. The Plan aims to drive economic growth across the County improving speeds for all residents and local businesses. This will maximise opportunities for private sector investment, thus reducing the need for public sector funding. These priorities are echoed in the County Council's Corporate Plan for which "Open for Business" is a priority and broadband is a key enabler. This is fully supported by the business community and the Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP).

**24.5** A digitally accessible Wyre Forest will allow people an enhanced freedom of choice about where and how they work, how they interact with services and facilities and how they promote and operate their businesses. A connected community is a more sustainable one, as it represents the opportunity for a reduction in car-based commuting and a commensurate reduction in carbon outputs and traffic congestion. It also promotes the idea of Wyre Forest as a suitable place for high technology activities and employment to take place.

**24.6** The NPPF (paragraph 43) recognises the role of advanced, high quality communications infrastructure in creating sustainable economic growth. The development of high speed broadband technology and other communications networks will also play a vital role in enhancing the provision of local community facilities and services.

**Policy 24B - Renewable and Low Carbon Energy<sup>(18)</sup>****General**

- A. All new development proposals should consider design, siting and orientation to maximise the use of natural heat and light and the potential for renewable energy micro-generation.

**Incorporating Renewable and Low Carbon Energy into New Development**

- B. To reduce carbon emissions and secure sustainable energy solutions, all new developments over 100 square metres gross, or one or more dwellings, should incorporate the generation of energy from renewable or low carbon sources equivalent to at least 10% of predicted energy requirements, unless it has been demonstrated that this would make development unviable.
- C. In addition, large scale<sup>(19)</sup> development proposals should examine the potential for a decentralised energy and heating network. If practical and viable, a decentralised energy and heating network should be provided as part of the development.

**Stand Alone Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Schemes**

- D. With the exception of wind turbines (see E below), proposals for stand-alone renewable and other low carbon energy schemes are welcomed and will be considered favourably having regard to the provisions of other relevant policies in the Plan, providing that appropriate consultation has taken place with the local community.
- E. Proposals for stand-alone wind turbines will only be considered favourably if:
  - I. The site is identified as suitable for wind energy development in a Neighbourhood Plan ; and/or
  - II. Following consultation, it can be demonstrated that any significant planning impacts identified by the affected local community have been fully addressed and that the proposal has demonstrable community benefits and has the backing of the local community.
- F. The Council will set out associated advice and guidance on the implementation of this policy in a Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Supplementary Planning Document.

18 This policy should be considered within the context of an “energy hierarchy”, whereby energy demand is reduced through energy efficiency and low energy design before meeting residual energy demand, first from renewable or low carbon sources and then from fossil fuels.

19 For the purposes of this policy only, the definition of large scale development is residential developments of 100 or more dwellings or non-residential developments of more than 10,000 square metres.

## Reasoned Justification

**24.7** Energy infrastructure is also recognised in Policy 12 – Strategic Infrastructure and the Wyre Forest Infrastructure Delivery Plan.

**24.8** The EU's Renewable Energy Directive sets an overall target for 20% of the energy consumed in the European Union to come from renewable sources by 2020, with a UK target of 15% by 2020.

**24.9** The Climate Change Act (a UK government Act, rather than an EU Directive) sets a legal requirement for the UK to achieve an 80% cut in Carbon Dioxide emissions from 1990 levels by 2050, with a series of five year carbon budgets, including a 34% cut by 2020. The UK government also ratified the Paris Agreement on Climate Change in November 2016. The Paris Agreement provides a framework for governments as well as business and investors to keep global warming well below 2°C, pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C.

**24.10** The Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership's (LEP) Strategic Economic Plan recognises 'agri-tech' (including green energy) as one of the county's three growth sectors. Among Worcestershire's key infrastructure issues that need to be addressed, it identifies an over-reliance on energy supplies from outside the county and an over-reliance on energy from non-sustainable sources. As part of the SEP's aspirations to create a world-class business location, it recognises that *"renewable energy generation has the potential to relieve pressures on the existing energy infrastructure, as well as providing potential employment opportunities and cost reductions"*.

**24.11** Worcestershire County Council's 'Assessment of the capacity for large-scale renewable energy in Worcestershire' was commissioned in 2008 to determine the potential capacity for larger-scale renewable energy generation in Worcestershire. It was concluded that a suggested realistic target of 3.5% of energy consumption from renewables could be achieved by 2026 across Worcestershire. This relates only to large scale biomass, wind and hydro power schemes and excludes micro generation schemes, such as solar.

**24.12** Heat networks (district heating schemes) supply heat from a central source directly to homes and businesses through a network of pipes, so that individual homes and business do not need to generate their own heat on site, helping to reduce carbon emissions through energy efficiency. The UK government has ambitious plans for heat networks in the UK. Initial results from modelling by the then Department of Energy and Climate Change indicated that up to 20% of UK domestic heat demand might be served by heat networks by 2030. Government set up a Heat Network Delivery Unit (HNDU) to assist local authorities address capacity and capability challenges identified as barriers to heat network deployment in the UK. The Worcestershire LEP obtained HNDU funding and commissioned a heat demand mapping and energy master-planning study. Two potential district heat networks were identified in the Kidderminster area; the viability of these could be significantly improved by the inclusion of future and planned developments.

**24.13** To be considered acceptable it is necessary for proposals for stand-alone wind turbines to demonstrate local support either through a Neighbourhood Plan or through other methods to secure local backing.

**Summary of Issues and Options Responses**

A number of local residents raised the importance of protecting the Green Belt; though some mistakenly were under the impression that Green Belt is a landscape protection tool.

Some comments were received from landowners regarding concerns that the Issues and Options document failed to address the relationship between the Green Belt, brownfield land availability, housing completions and employment opportunities.

Issues raised by key stake-holders included the need to look at the potential to focus new development around strategic transport infrastructure and the progression of a strategic Green Belt Boundary Review.

There was some support for the concept of sustainable urban extensions to the north and east of Kidderminster with general support for the use of the Lea Castle Hospital Site and the prioritised use of ADR sites. This was however accompanied by the expression of some concern at the loss of Green Belt.

**Policy 25 - Safeguarding the Green Belt**

Within the Green Belt, as shown on the Key Diagram, development will not be permitted, except in very special circumstances, unless one of the following applies:

- i. There is a clear need demonstrated for new buildings for the purposes of agriculture or forestry.
- ii. Provision of appropriate facilities for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation and for cemeteries, as long as it preserves the openness of the Green Belt and does not conflict with the purposes of including land within it, or for other uses of land which preserve the openness of the Green Belt, and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it.
- iii. The replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces.
- iv. The development involves the re-use or conversion of buildings in accordance with the policies for the re-use and adaptation of Rural Buildings (especially Policies 8C (dwellings) and 21B (employment)).
- v. The proposals involve the redevelopment of an identified Previously Developed Site in the Green Belt and, are in accordance with the site specific policies contained in Part C.
- vi. The proposals are part of a Community Right to Build Order.

In addition, development of housing in the Green Belt will not be permitted unless one of the following circumstances applies:

- a. There is a proven need in association with the purposes of agriculture or forestry.



- b. It is for small-scale affordable housing, reserved for local needs in accordance with Addressing Rural Housing Needs (Policy 8C).
- c. It is for the extension of an existing dwelling, provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original dwelling. Applications for extensions to existing dwellings will be considered on a case by case basis.

Proposals within, or conspicuous from the Green Belt, must not be detrimental to the visual amenity of the Green Belt, by virtue of their siting, materials or design.

The development of specific sites comprising previously developed land is considered by Policy 34.

### Reasoned Justification

**25.1** Over half of the District's land area is covered by the West Midlands Green Belt designation. NPPF section 9 sets out the purposes of including land within the Green Belt and includes information on the types of development that are considered to be appropriate within the Green Belt. Section 7 of this document describes the necessary review of the Wyre Forest Green Belt. Policy 25A sets out detailed local guidance on development within the Green Belt.

**25.2** The essential characteristic of Green Belts is their permanence, and their protection must be maintained as far as can be seen ahead. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. Green Belts help to protect the countryside, and can assist in moving towards more sustainable patterns of urban development. The inclusion of land in Green Belts is of paramount importance to their continued protection and it is important that the visual amenities of the Green Belt are not damaged by proposals for development within, or conspicuous from, the Green Belt.

**25.3** It is nationally recognised that outdoor sport is one of the uses of land which can be appropriate within the Green Belt. Within the District's Green Belt, there is a concentration of outdoor sports facilities on the Minster Road between Kidderminster and Stourport-on-Severn. Because Green Belt areas, by their nature, are located close to towns, they can play a valuable role in opening up access to the open countryside for urban populations.

**Summary of Issues and Options Responses**

The title of this part of the document has been widened to include all areas of historic environment including non-designated archaeology as well as historic character and local distinctiveness. Support was generally expressed for the protection of the historic environment and the identification of additional heritage assets. In particular there was support expressed for policies covering non-designated heritage assets.

Whereas there was support for both option A (site specific heritage policies) and option B (overarching development management policy), there was a lack of support for option C (reliance on the NPPF and associated guidance).

The responses favouring option B made a strong argument for adopting an overarching development management policy noting that site specific policies may be too complex to include with a District Local Plan and could be covered within Neighbourhood Plans and site specific assessments.

**Policy 26 - Safeguarding the Historic Environment**

- A. Proposals likely to affect the significance of a heritage asset, including the contribution made by its setting, should be accompanied by a description of its significance in sufficient detail to allow the potential impacts to be adequately assessed. This will usually be in the form of a Heritage Statement. Where there is potential for heritage assets with archaeological interest to be affected, this description should be informed by available evidence, desk-based assessment and, where appropriate, field evaluation to establish the significance of known or potential heritage assets.
- B. Any development proposal causing harm or loss of significance to a heritage asset will be resisted unless there is provided clear and convincing justification, to permit assessment against the NPPF criteria, relevant legislation and published local and national guidance.
- C. The sympathetic and creative reuse and adaptation of historic buildings will be encouraged. Such proposals, and other proposals for enabling development that provide a sustainable future for heritage assets identified as at risk, will be considered in accordance with Policy 26A.A.
- D. Repairs, alterations, extensions and conversions of heritage assets must be sympathetically designed to respect the significance of the form, character and materials of the original heritage asset and its setting. Fixtures and fittings should be inconspicuously sited and proportioned and be designed sympathetically.
- E. Where a material change to a heritage asset has been agreed, recording and interpretation should be undertaken to document and understand the asset's archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic significance. The scope of the recording

should be proportionate to the asset's significance and the impact of the development on the asset. The information and understanding gained should be made publicly available, as a minimum through the relevant Historic Environment Record and where appropriate at the asset itself through on-site interpretation.

### Reasoned Justification

**26.1** The various elements of the historic environment contribute to making Wyre Forest District a desirable place to live and work and attracts tourism and economic investment to the area.

**26.2** Conservation of heritage assets must reflect a sufficient understanding of their significance, including both their setting and their wider context in the landscape/townscape. It is recognised that many heritage assets, in particular archaeological remains, are currently unidentified. Appropriate information, where necessary from field evaluation, is the key to well-informed decision-making.

**26.3** Local heritage listing is a means for a community and a local authority to jointly identify heritage assets that are valued as distinctive elements of the local historic environment. The Local Heritage List identifies those heritage assets that are not protected by statutory designations. A Local Heritage List provides clarity on the location of these assets and what it is about them that is significant. Their local interest could be related to the social and economic history of the area, individuals of local importance, settlement patterns or the age, design and style of buildings. The Local Heritage List is not restricted to buildings. It may comprise sites, places or areas such as village greens or ponds. It may include structures such as bridges and sluices, and historic street furniture such as letter boxes, signposts or telephone boxes. Local Heritage Assets are not given any protection through Law, but the use of appropriate materials and design is encouraged. Repairs should be undertaken on a like-for-like basis. The District Council will continue to compile and maintain its Local Heritage List for those undesignated heritage assets it considers to be of local interest and significance.

**26.4** Early pre-application discussions are encouraged, as this will allow the early identification of heritage issues, save time, reduce risk and improve the quality of applications and thereby encourage investment in the District. These discussions should involve the relevant local planning authority, applicants, architects and agents and heritage specialists. Proposals involving new build, repair, alteration or extension of heritage assets can conserve the significance of the existing asset and its setting. This may be achieved by means of appropriate siting, massing, form, height, scale, design and use of local materials.

**26.5** The use of local building materials or the sourcing of building materials compatible with those used historically but no longer available (such as stone from local quarries which have closed) is of great importance in maintaining the character of the built historic environment. The Building Stones Database produced by the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Earth Heritage Trust provides data on the origins of building stone used in local buildings and the District Council will use evidence contained within this database to inform its decision making.

## 26 Safeguarding the Historic Environment

**26.6** The sympathetic reuse, repair and adaptation of existing buildings can act as a catalyst for economic regeneration, support tourism and encourage the sustainable use of resources. Enabling development can be considered where it can be justified and where it accords with the NPPF and planning practise guidance. This approach contributes towards delivering the national and local policy aim of sustainable development by supporting the principles contained in Policy 11B. It is important that any climate change mitigation / adaptation measures do not cause harm to the significance of heritage assets. Where appropriate, when opportunities for creative, contemporary and innovative architectural design arise, this will be encouraged.

**26.7** In having regard for the provisions of the NPPF, the total loss of any heritage asset either by demolition or development will be resisted unless all reasonable efforts have been made to sustain existing uses, find viable new uses for the asset, or otherwise preserve it in charitable or community ownership. When considering development proposals of substantial benefit to the community and warranting consideration of total loss of a heritage asset, the District Council will require clear evidence that the redevelopment will proceed.

**26.8** The District Council will from time to time identify and designate Conservation Areas where it considers those Areas to have special character warranting protection under Policy 26A.

**26.9** Alongside relevant policies and guidance regard should be had to the provisions of relevant legislation, including the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

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### Policy 27A - Quality Design and Local Distinctiveness

- A. All development will be expected to be of a high design quality. It will need to integrate effectively with its surroundings, in terms of form and function, reinforce local distinctiveness and conserve, and where appropriate, enhance cultural and heritage assets, landmarks and their settings. New and innovative designs which promote high levels of sustainability will be encouraged and supported where they enhance the overall quality of the built environment.
- B. Applications should demonstrate, through a Design and Access Statement or other supporting evidence, how the objectives outlined in criterion A have been addressed, and demonstrate consistency with the Adopted Design Guidance SPD. They will also need to address the following matters:

i. **Siting and layout**

The siting and layout of a development should reflect the given characteristics of the site in terms of its appearance and function. Orientation should take advantage of passive heating and cooling systems, offer shade as appropriate and provide for the use of renewable energy.

ii. **Relationship to Surroundings and to Other Development**

Development proposals must complement the character of the area. In particular, development should respond to surrounding buildings and the distinctive features or qualities that contribute to the visual and heritage interest of the townscape, frontages, streets and landscape quality of the local area, and should integrate well into the existing streetscene. Development should concentrate the most active uses or entrances on main thoroughfares and focal points, maximising the use of corner plots and the street frontage, and have appropriate regard to the common building line, historic street pattern and skyline.

iii. **Neighbouring Amenity**

Development should provide an adequate level of privacy, outlook, sunlight and daylight, and should not be unduly overbearing.

iv. **Settlement Character**

The distinct identity and character of settlements should be safeguarded and proposals should be consistent with the relevant Conservation Area Character Appraisal or Neighbourhood Plan. Design proposals should ensure that the prominent views, vistas and skylines of Bewdley, Stourport-on-Severn, Kidderminster and the village settlements are maintained and safeguarded, particularly where they relate to heritage assets, existing landmark buildings, and 'gateway' sites. Development at the urban edges should respect the rural setting.

**v. Mix of Uses**

To create vitality and interest, proposals should incorporate a mix of uses where this is appropriate to the location.

**vi. Flexible Design**

Development should incorporate flexible designs, addressing access to public open spaces and enabling adaption for future needs and uses in terms of internal spaces and extensions. It should avoid being prejudicial to the development of larger areas.

**vii. Scale, Height and Massing**

The scale, height and massing of development must be appropriate to the setting of the site and the surrounding landscape character and townscape, including existing urban grain and density. The footprint should be appropriate for the locality and not represent over-development of the site.

**viii. Links, Connectivity and Access**

Design and layouts should maximise opportunities for pedestrian and cycle linkages to the surrounding area and local services and should be generally accessible for all users, including those with disabilities. Vehicular traffic from the development should be able to access the highway safely and the road network should have the capacity to accommodate the type and volume of traffic from the development.

**ix. Detailed Design and Materials**

The detailing and materials of development should be of high quality and appropriate to its context, avoiding inappropriate features and detail. Design should have regard to sustainable construction approaches and ensure adaptability to changes in the climate.

**x. Appropriate Facilities**

Development should incorporate the parking facilities required by the current Parking Standards and provision for the storage of bicycles. Satisfactory access and provision for the parking, servicing and manoeuvring of vehicles should be provided in accordance with the recognised standards. Parking solutions should provide secure parking with adequate natural surveillance without resulting in cars dominating a development.



**xi. Landscaping**

Development should provide high quality hard and soft landscaping. The importance of soft landscaping, using appropriate species and incorporating arrangements for long-term management is emphasised. Existing trees should be incorporated into development or replacements provided where a tree survey demonstrates retention is not possible.

**xii. Public Realm**

Public realm and open spaces should be well-designed, appropriately detailed and maintained via management agreements. They should also incorporate active frontages where appropriate. Proposals should include hard and soft surfaces, public art, street furniture, shade, lighting and signage as appropriate to the development. Open space and play provision should be sited to take advantage of natural surveillance.

**xiii. Creating a Safe and Secure Environment**

Opportunities for creating a safe and secure environment and providing surveillance should be included, principally through the layout and positioning of buildings, spaces and uses. Where appropriate, development should incorporate measures for crime reduction that are consistent with those recommended by the Secured by Design guides. Buildings and their surrounding spaces should incorporate fire safety measures and be designed to allow rapid access by the emergency services.

**Reasoned Justification**

**27.1** The NPPF requires Local Planning Authorities to prepare robust policies on design. Good design is indivisible from good planning (NPPF paragraph 56) and excellence in design can create a sense of place, improve the attractiveness of a location and create safer places to live and work, thereby enhancing the quality of people's lives. Much detailed advice on design issues exists at the national level but, given the importance of the issue locally, it is considered essential to have a specific development management policy at the District level.

**27.2** This policy is underpinned by the Council's Adopted Design Guidance SPD 2015.

**27.3** Good design can have a number of direct and indirect advantages. Well- designed well-connected places provide safe and attractive pedestrian environments and can therefore encourage sustainable modes of transport. Well-designed buildings can also incorporate sustainable and climate change mitigation features which maximise natural heating, cooling and lighting and provide opportunities for the generation of renewable energy.

**27.4** Poor design, on the other hand, has the potential to detract from people's day-to-day lives through poor building relationships, car-dominated layouts and a sub-standard public realm, all of which add little to a sense of place and have a negative impact on land values, property prices and the environment in general.

## 27 Quality Design and Local Distinctiveness

**27.5** The landscapes and townscape of the District represent a legacy of previous developments and they frequently present a history of design styles. Whilst many aspects of this design legacy are pleasing in terms of their aesthetics and function there are other examples which are neither pleasing nor continue to function well.

**27.6** Mixed use developments add to the vitality and viability of places. Residential properties within town centres extend the length of time activity takes place and create natural surveillance. Small business units and retail outlets within primarily urban areas increase the activity within those areas making places feel safer.

**27.7** Good design is also a crucial element in supporting economic prosperity, and can be an important factor in attracting inward investment and promoting a vibrant tourist economy. Where some employment development proposals require the accommodation of specific processes, design solutions should strive to achieve a positive aesthetic without compromising the functionality of the development.

**27.8** It is essential that full consideration is given to achieving sustainable development and counteracting climatic variations over the lifetime of a new building or development through the choice of location, design and materials and through addressing ecological integrity. Reducing the demand for energy and improving energy efficiency is also an important starting point for achieving sustainable design.

**27.9** Good design is also vital in protecting and enhancing the special character of Wyre Forest. The design principles contained within this policy provide a design framework for new development that is explained further in the Design Guidance Supplementary Planning Document. They may also be complemented by Neighbourhood Plans, Management Plans and Conservation Area Appraisals that can provide the "fine grain" local design detail. In accordance with the NPPF, it is expected that pre-application discussions should include design-related matters.

**27.10** Where development proposals are required to be accompanied by a Design and Access Statement, these should be used to explain how the principles of good design, including those set out in this policy's criteria, have been incorporated into the development. This policy should be read in conjunction with other relevant policies in the WFDP and proposals will be expected to demonstrate that they have been informed by current available guidance.

### Policy 27B - Design of Extensions and Alterations

- A. Extensions and alterations, whether to residential or non-residential properties should not have a serious adverse effect on the amenity of neighbouring residents or occupiers.
- B. Extensions and alterations whether to residential or non-residential properties (including those to curtilage buildings and previous extensions) should accord with the design principles set out within the Council's Adopted Design Quality SPD (2015, and subsequent revisions).

C. Residential Extensions and Alterations should:

- i. Accord with the 45 degree code
- ii. Be in scale and keeping with the form, materials, architectural characteristics and detailing of the original building.
- iii. Be subservient to and not overwhelm the original building, which should retain its visual dominance.
- iv. Harmonise with the existing landscape or townscape and not create incongruous features.
- v. Not encroach onto neighbouring land not owned by or under the control of the applicant, including highway pavements where properties are built up to the back of pavement.
- vi. Unless it can be demonstrated that there is no other alternative, the development of flat roofed extensions will not be allowed.

D. Proposals involving the extension or alteration of an existing non-residential building should:

- i. Accord with the 45 degree code if located next to a residential property.
- ii. Harmonise with the existing landscape or townscape and be complementary to the appearance of the existing building.
- iii. Not unduly diminish the amount of ancillary operational space.

### Reasoned Justification

**27.11** Extensions to dwellings constitute one of the most frequent proposals for development. A well-designed extension may add to the value of a property whereas unsympathetic design may not only reduce the value of the building but, potentially, its overall life-span.

**27.12** As a general rule extensions should be subservient to and reflect the scale and character of the existing building. Extensions, both in themselves and when taken together with previous works, should not dominate the original building. A cumulative succession of modest extensions on a building could have a detrimental impact on the surrounding area, particularly sensitive open countryside and Green Belt. For this reason extensions must be in scale with the original building rather than the building at the time of the application.

**27.13** Most dwelling houses in the District feature traditional pitched roofs, and in order to ensure that two storey extensions to such dwellings harmonise in general design terms, the use of flat roofs on such extensions will not normally be permitted.

**27.14** The designers of extensions must consider the 45 degree code in order to protect the amenity of neighbouring residents. Proposals that do not adhere to the code will not be permitted.

## 27 Quality Design and Local Distinctiveness

**27.15** Extensions and alterations to non-residential buildings must have regard to their impacts on the visual integrity of the building and local amenity. Such proposals should not seriously diminish the amount of operational space to the detriment of local amenity and safety.

**27.16** Where properties have been constructed to the back of the pavement with no amenity space in front of the elevation facing the highway, extensions or alterations (including external thermal cladding) will technically fall outside the curtilage and will not be permitted in the interests of highway safety and maintenance of utility services.

### **Policy 27C - Landscaping and Boundary Treatment**

#### **Landscaping and Boundary Treatment**

- A. Landscape schemes whether for residential or non-residential properties should accord with the design principles set out within the Council's Adopted Design Quality SPD (2015, or when later revised).
- B. Landscape Schemes and Boundary Treatments should be specific to the place, recognise the context and reflect existing materials where these contribute to the character of the area.
- C. Landscape schemes must demonstrate that they:
  - i. Predominantly use local native species
  - ii. Provide adequate room for growth and acknowledge the importance of existing trees, hedges and plants when specifying their location
  - iii. Take into consideration the Landscape Character Assessment, protecting existing trees and landscape features where possible
  - iv. Incorporate features to clearly mark desire lines, enhance or create views or vistas, and clearly define public and private spaces
  - v. Incorporate planting appropriate to the prevention of crime and vandalism, where necessary incorporating tree guards
  - vi. Provide imaginative, durable and porous hard landscaping solutions which add to a sense of place and local distinctiveness and meet policy requirements on water management
  - vii. Utilise lighting and architectural features too give artistic effect where appropriate to the locality
  - viii. Have a sustainable management plan
- D. Boundary Treatments must be designed to:
  - i. Reflect the local character and appearance of the area and protect existing tree or distinct landscape features
  - ii. Include vegetation wherever possible
  - iii. Provide woodland planting where new development is proposed along transport corridors

## Reasoned Justification

**27.17** Landscaping schemes and boundary treatments are an important aspect of design. When the topography of an area or the layout of the buildings is taken into account, a combination of good design and landscaping can dramatically reduce the impact of development.

**27.18** Wyre Forest District has a wealth of native species which should be utilised in landscaping schemes to harmonise with the character of the wider area.

**27.19** Insensitive landscaping schemes can harm the openness of the Green Belt and impact on historic views of the local towns and villages.

**27.20** The definition of public and private spaces is important to facilitate future management of landscapes in both urban and rural settings. Landscape schemes require a clear and sustainable management plan to ensure that they do not degenerate over time into wasteland.

**27.21** The use of certain plants (particularly those with spikes or thorns) can deter vandals, burglars and other criminal activity. Consideration should be given to how sensitive landscaping will contribute to a reduction in crime whilst being manageable and attractive.

**27.22** The integration of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems into hard landscaping schemes can enrich biodiversity and ecology whilst contributing to a reduction in flood risk.

**27.23** Architectural and lighting features can enhance and contribute to an increase activity levels in and around landscaping schemes which can make these places better integrated into an urban environment.

**27.24** It is important to be able to easily identify the boundary between public and private spaces. Walls, fences, railings, gates, archways, paving and signage can all be used and should form an integral part of the design solution.

**27.25** Walling with or without timber infill panels, designed as an integral part of the overall development will enhance a housing development over the longer term, particularly when used in association with well-designed landscaping. Timber fencing along boundaries with the public domain is considered inappropriate due to its limited lifespan and vulnerability to damage.

**27.26** The need for a secure perimeter around industrial, commercial, business and retail premises is recognised, especially where there are external storage areas or vehicles depots. It is important, however, that the choice of fencing and screening can harmonise well with the wider setting.

**27.27** Where there is a requirement for screening, this can be designed as a work of art and this will be encouraged to mitigate adverse impacts where appropriate.

**27.28** Landscaping is an important element of design and should augment good design rather than screening or hiding poor design.

**Policy 27D - Advertisements**

- A. Proposals for advertisements must:
  - i. Not have a detrimental impact on the amenity of the area or building in/on which they are displayed.
  - ii. Not be prejudicial to public safety by reasons of their size, location or content.
  - iii. Not obstruct a highway or public right of way either directly or through maintenance requirements.
  - iv. Not confuse users of highways, navigable waterways and railways.
- B. Proposals for large advertisement hoardings or groups of small hoardings will only be permitted within towns at the following locations:
  - i. Vacant plots in large commercial or industrial areas or to provide temporary screening of those areas whilst undergoing development.
  - ii. Around sites identified by the Council as long-term eyesores where alternative screening will not adequately enhance the amenity of the area.
- C. Proposals for advertisements within, on or adjacent to heritage assets must:
  - i. Meet the criteria contained in Policies 11B - Historic Environment and 26A - Safeguarding the Historic Environment
  - ii. Reflect traditional signage compatible with the design and age of the heritage asset.
  - iii. Avoid the use of internally illuminated signage or box fascias.
  - iv. Avoid the use of non-traditional materials such as UPVC, Perspex and Plastics.
  - v. Be in scale and proportion to the heritage asset on which they are displayed.
- D. Advance Warning Signs that would result in harm to the amenity of the townscape or landscape will not be permitted.
- E. Freestanding signs, in addition to meeting the criteria set out in Section A above, must:
  - i. Relate well to the business of the site.
  - ii. Not lead to a predominance of such signage.
  - iii. Be sited within the forecourt or curtilage of the building to which they relate

**Reasoned Justification**

**27.29** The display of advertisements is subject to a separate consent process within the planning system and is principally set out in the [Town and Country Planning \(Control of Advertisements\) \(England\) Regulations 2007](#) as amended.

**27.30** In assessing applications to display advertisements the Planning Authority will have regard to the desirability of preserving the character and appearance of the general locality and the architectural quality or character of buildings when considering amenity issues.



**27.31** Illuminated signage will only be permitted where lighting is unobtrusive or not considered to be harmful to the character and appearance of the site or surroundings. When internal illumination is proposed individual illuminated letters are preferred.

**27.32** Advertisement hoardings may harm the visual integrity of buildings if they are placed without due regard for the building's design and fenestration pattern. Proposals for externally mounted advertisement hoardings should demonstrate that the visual amenity of the building or area will not be compromised.

**27.33** The maintenance of public safety will be of paramount concern when considering applications for advertisements adjacent to railways, navigable waterways and highways.

**27.34** The placing of an advertisement on or close to listed buildings is unlikely to preserve their special interest and is best avoided. Proposals affecting a Conservation Area should demonstrate that its character will be preserved or enhanced.

**27.35** Consent will be granted for outdoor advertisements (including poster hoardings) provided the display will not adversely affect the amenities of the area or impact on public safety. Large hoardings in rural areas are likely to be out of place because of their urbanising effect.

### **Policy 27E - Wyre Forest Waterways**

#### **A. River Severn**

Within the towns of Stourport-on-Severn and Bewdley developments and initiatives that make a positive contribution to the creation of a high quality riverside environment will be supported where these do not conflict or otherwise harm the character of the Conservation Areas or the wider landscape.

#### **B. River Stour**

The opening up and enhancement of the River Stour in Kidderminster town centre will be encouraged. Within the towns of Stourport-on-Severn and Kidderminster developments and initiatives that make a positive contribution to the creation of a high quality riverside environment will be supported where these do not conflict or otherwise harm the character of the Conservation Areas or the wider landscape.

#### **C. Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal**

Developments and initiatives that make a positive contribution to the creation of an attractive and high quality canal-side environment will be supported.

Development adjacent to the canal must provide a strong, active frontage onto the waterside providing natural surveillance and promoting high levels of activity during the day.

## 27 Quality Design and Local Distinctiveness

The canal towpath should be developed and promoted as a sustainable pedestrian and cycle route with paving appropriate to the urban areas through which the canal passes.

All development proposals require a heritage statement identifying the impact of the proposals on the significance of the Conservation Area, as designated heritage asset.

### Reasoned Justification

**27.36** The District's two major rivers are fundamental to the history, heritage and future of the District.

#### River Severn

**27.37** The River Severn shaped the historic development of Bewdley as an inland river port, later overtaken by Stourport-on-Severn, Britain's first canal town. Although the industrial role of the river has ceased it remains an important dominant feature both culturally and economically.

**27.38** Whilst the River Severn plays an important role in attracting tourism to both Stourport-on-Severn and Bewdley, the potential for tourism associated with the River Stour and the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal in Kidderminster has yet to be exploited.

#### River Stour

**27.39** The River Stour, running through the centre of Kidderminster, was vital to the rapid industrial growth of the town. Unlike the navigable River Severn, the Stour ran through culverts and powered manufactories and served dye-houses. Recent developments have exposed more of the river to view, however the town has yet to make the most of the opportunities this provides.

**27.40** The River Stour enters the River Severn at Stourport-on-Severn. The potential of the river at this location has been largely over-looked in recent years; however, there is potential for sensitive development adjacent to the river where flood risk assessment allows.

#### Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal - Stourport-on-Severn

**27.41** Stourport-on-Severn is unique as the only town in Britain built solely as a consequence of the construction of a canal. At one time only second to Birmingham as the midlands busiest inland port, despite the significant decline in industry in the town the canal remains crucial to the local tourism offer.

**27.42** The historic and cultural significance of the canal to the development of Stourport-on-Severn and to the industrialisation of the wider District is explained within the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal Conservation Area Appraisal.

**27.43** Whilst Stourport Basins have benefited from successful restoration schemes, their potential as a visitor attraction remains secondary to that of the River Severn and the amusements lining its banks. Longer visitor stays could be encouraged by capitalising on heritage-based tourism.

### **Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal – Kidderminster**

**27.44** The canal runs through the town centre and adjacent to several large retailers as well as places to eat and drink, yet the potential of the canal has yet to be fulfilled.

**27.45** There is great economic potential yet to be unlocked in Kidderminster provided by canal-based tourism. Anecdotal evidence, however, suggests that a fear of anti-social behaviour and a perceived remoteness from the town centre deter all but brief stops. The canal does not benefit from much natural surveillance and litter, graffiti and poorly surfaced and signposted pedestrian routes contribute to a perception that the town does not relate well to the canal. Given the close proximity to the canal of supermarkets and restaurants easily accessible by car consideration must be given to supporting development which forges stronger links between the canal and the town, whilst providing activity throughout the day.

### **Nature**

**27.46** The District's waterways present an opportunity to provide essential green infrastructure and biodiversity corridors and habitats. This policy should be read in conjunction with Policy 11D - Protecting and Enhancing Biodiversity and Geological Conservation and Policy 14 - Strategic Green Infrastructure.

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**Policy 28A - Re-use and adaptation of rural buildings**

- A. Development proposals for the re-use and adaptation of rural buildings for any new use will be considered in accordance with the following criteria:
  - i. The rural building(s) are permanent structures of a size which makes them suitable for conversion without the need for additional extensions, substantial alterations, significant building works (or complete reconstruction), or the addition of any new buildings within the curtilage.
  - ii. The rural building(s) are in keeping with their surroundings and the conversion works would have no significant detrimental effect on the fabric, character or setting of the building.
  - iii. The proposed development enhances and safeguards heritage assets.
  - iv. Suitable access arrangements can be made, without the need for extensive new access roads.
  - v. There is no adverse impact on the countryside, landscape and wildlife or local amenities.
  - vi. Appropriate drainage and flood risk mitigation, including safe access requirements, can be provided and is available for the lifetime of the development.
- B. Development proposals which provide economic activity supportive of local needs will be encouraged and considered on their merits, assessed against the above criteria (section A).
- C. Development proposals for residential use must demonstrate that a suitable economic development use is not viable and provide clear and convincing justification for residential use.
- D. In addition to the criteria above (section A), development proposals for residential use must also demonstrate that:
  - i. The proposals do not lead to the dispersal of economic activity which would have an adverse impact on the local economy or prejudice the vitality of nearby town centres or villages.
  - ii. The proposals do not involve the conversion of domestic outbuildings.
- E. Where permission has been granted previously (whether through this policy or former policies) for the conversion of rural buildings to other uses, the provisions of Policy 27A - Quality Design and Local Distinctiveness will apply to all new development proposals affecting those buildings.
- F. Where previous development has relied upon this policy or an earlier equivalent no further development (including extensions) will be permitted within the curtilage.

## Reasoned Justification

**28.1** The re-use and adaption of existing rural buildings is an important planning consideration. With the changing structure of the rural economy many agricultural and rural buildings are becoming surplus to requirements. The re-use of such buildings may provide economic benefits to rural areas, allowing farm diversification for uses such as commercial, leisure, tourism and sport and recreation. The re-use of rural buildings can also help to reduce the need for new buildings to be erected in the countryside.

**28.2** It is important that the architectural or historic characteristics of rural buildings are not destroyed through conversion. Residential conversion can result in the greatest change and can be detrimental to both the fabric and character of historic rural buildings and their appearance in the landscape.

**28.3** Proposals for the residential use of rural buildings will be considered in the light of physical effects of the conversion on the character of the building, its significance, existing wildlife, and its appearance in the landscape.

**28.4** New windows and doors and external domestic features such as gardens and parking can be detrimental to a rural building and its setting.

**28.5** The degree of harm on the character and appearance of the countryside is an important consideration when assessing the effects of residential curtilage or establishing the likely demand for further buildings on the site. The Council is unlikely to give permission for proposals for residential conversion where this requires extensive alteration or rebuilding, or if the creation of a residential curtilage would have a harmful effect on the character of the countryside. To this end, no extensions to dwellings created through Policy 28A or earlier rural building policies will be permitted, and neither will the introduction of new buildings into the curtilage of these dwellings.

**28.6** The West Midlands Farmsteads and Landscapes Project and subsequent guidance provides a key element of the evidence base and provides support for the policy approach of Policy 28A. The District Council will use evidence contained within the West Midlands Historic Farmsteads and Landscapes Project to inform its decision making.

### Policy 28B - Chalets, Caravans, Mobile Homes

Mobile home and caravan sites represent one of the biggest development pressures in the rural areas of the District. The issue is most prevalent along the River Severn and to the west of the River Severn around the Wyre Forest itself.

- A. Further caravan, mobile home and chalet developments or changes of these developments from holiday use to permanent residential occupation within the District's rural areas will be resisted due to the collective impact which existing sites have on the landscape.

- B. Extensions to existing chalets should be subservient to and enhance the appearance of the building. They should not have a significant adverse impact on adjacent occupiers or the surrounding landscape and comply with all other relevant policy.
- C. Changes to permanent residential occupation of individual chalets will only be allowed where:
  - i. there is adequate road access and car parking adjacent
  - ii. there is reasonable access to facilities by foot or public transport
  - iii. the building is of a permanent construction, is not liable to heave or subsidence, and is not liable to flooding or located within the floodplain.
- D. The replacement of a holiday use chalet by a permanent residential dwelling will not be permitted.
- E. Replacement of a chalet by another chalet, caravan or mobile home will only be allowed where the development would result in a reduction in the visual impact on the landscape. For sites that are located within the floodplain, consideration should be given to relocating chalets to an area of lower flood risk and it must be demonstrated that the development can be made safe for the lifetime of the development. Replacement of chalets should be on a “like for like” basis in terms of size and materials.

### Reasoned Justification

**28.7** There are around 3000 caravans in the District, of which only 200 are permanent dwellings, the remainder being licensed for holiday use.

**28.8** There are almost 400 chalets constructed before the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act. Pressures to extend and modernise holiday chalets could lead to chalet sites evolving into permanent residential estates. This is highly undesirable as chalets are usually located in areas where residential development would not be permitted, often in inaccessible locations along poor access roads with consequent access issues for the emergency services and delivery vehicles. Most are remote from shops and schools and many are located in areas liable to flooding, heave or subsidence.

### Policy 28C - Equestrian Development

- A. All proposals for equestrian related development will be assessed to ensure that they will not individually or cumulatively affect the quality and character of the landscape and the amenity of any adjacent residential areas. Appropriate landscaping and screening should be provided.
- B. All proposals for equestrian related development will be required to demonstrate that they have taken full account of their potential impact on local biodiversity and habitats and, wherever possible, should incorporate measures to promote and protect biodiversity.



- C. Proposals for equestrian related development should not have an adverse impact on the safety and capacity of the local highway and public rights of way networks. Adequate on-site parking should be provided in accordance with the appropriate parking standards.
- D. Proposals for new menages must not cause a harmful impact on the character of the landscape or on the amenity of neighbouring occupiers. They should be sited near to the stables to limit the visual impact on the landscape.
- E. Proposals for flood lighting will also require planning permission and, where it is accepted that such lighting is essential, its use will be controlled through conditions restricting its maximum height, minimal glare and operating times in order to protect the amenity of the area and local residents.
- F. Commercial Equestrian Facilities
  - i. New developments associated with commercial equestrian uses such as livery stables, riding school, racing stables and stud farms must not impact on the purposes and visual amenity of the Green Belt or open countryside. Within the Green Belt, applications will also be strictly assessed against the criteria listed within Policy 25A
  - ii. The conversion of existing buildings to genuine related uses, rather than new build, will be encouraged where the existing buildings are suitable and capable of conversion.

#### G. Equestrian Facilities for Leisure Use

In considering proposals for smaller scale equestrian developments relating to non-commercial leisure use, applicants should have regard for the need for stables/field shelters/feed stores/tack rooms/menages to:

- i. Be sited within or immediately adjoining an existing building or complex, or alongside an existing hedgerow.
- ii. Be of traditional design and blend naturally into the landscape.
- iii. Comply with the space standards for stables as recommended by the British Horse Society.
- iv. Provide sufficient facilities so as to be fit for purpose without the need for additional extensions or addition of new permanent or temporary structures on the site.

### Reasoned Justification

**28.9** The keeping of horses on agricultural land usually requires planning permission for the change of use.

**28.10** Physical development on the land such as stables, tack rooms, feed stores and menages also requires planning permission.

**28.11** Careful consideration will be given to the impact of proposals on the landscape character of the surrounding area. The cumulative impact of temporary stores and stables and new field divisions adjacent to permanent facilities can have a harmful impact on the surrounding countryside or Green Belt. Relevant conditions or S.106 agreements may be imposed on planning permissions where necessary.

**28.12** In line with recommendations from the British Horse Society, and in recognising the need to allow suitable stable developments to address horse welfare, whilst managing the potential impact on the countryside, the Council considers that the maximum size for a single stable for leisure use should be 3.65m x 4.25m. The roof should be a reasonable clear space (at least 1m) above the withers of the horse.

**28.13** Applicants will be required to submit evidence alongside their proposals to demonstrate that they have taken full account of the potential impacts on local habitat and biodiversity such as the retention of existing hedgerows at field boundaries. Mitigation measures such as the installation of bird and bat boxes should be incorporated wherever possible.

#### **Policy 28D - Agricultural Land Quality**

- A. Development of the best and most versatile agricultural land as defined by the NPPF will not be permitted unless it can be demonstrated that it can not be located on previously developed land, within the boundaries of existing settlements or on poorer quality agricultural land.
- B. Proposals for development on agricultural land should not prejudice the viability of farming operations on any remaining agricultural land.
- C. Applications for development on agricultural land of higher quality will be resisted where the site has not been allocated in the Local Plan and is considered worthy of protection.

#### **Reasoned Justification**

**28.14** Wyre Forest The grade of agricultural land, as defined by the Agricultural Land Classification system, should be taken into account alongside other sustainability considerations when determining planning applications.

**28.15** Where it is considered that development of agricultural land is unavoidable, that development should be directed towards the lower Agricultural Land Classification grades, unless sustainability considerations suggest otherwise.

## Site Allocations

### Contents

Section 30 – Kidderminster Town

Section 31 – Kidderminster Urban Extensions

Section 32 – Stourport on Severn

Section 33 – Bewdley

Section 34 – Previously Developed Sites in the Green Belt

Section 35 – Rural Wyre Forest

**29.1** The Development Strategy (Section 6) of this Preferred Options Document describes the overall level of development required and the type of development that is appropriate in each of the broad areas of the District. The purpose of this section is to describe how this Preferred Option intends to deliver the necessary level of development by setting out the proposed sites that are associated with the Core Sites and those that are associated with Options A and B.

**29.2** Policy 6.1 sets out a housing requirement of 5,400 plus 540 C2/Institutional (eg Care Homes) dwellings to be built in the 18 year plan period to 2034. This number was set through the Objective Assessment of Housing Needs and in light of Government's latest and emerging guidance and will be regarded as a minimum rather than a target by the District. At this stage of the process it is also necessary for the District Council to provide some flexibility through an apparent over-provision: this is to make allowance for sites not coming forward (eg for reasons associated with deliverability). This section reflects in its structure the settlement hierarchy described at Policy 6.2:

- Kidderminster
- Kidderminster Urban Extensions
- Stourport-on-Severn
- Bewdley
- Villages and rural settlements.

### How have the potential housing sites been selected?

**29.3** An ongoing 'call for sites' was initiated in the autumn of 2014 which led to the Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) being published in May 2016. Essentially the role of the HELAA is to identify a range of sites that may have potential for housing development over the coming years. It is important to note that a site's inclusion in the HELAA does not necessarily mean it is suitable for development – merely that it has been put forward (most often by the landowner) as a possibility for consideration by the Council for future allocation. The HELAA therefore provides a basket of sites from which choices are made during the preparation of the Plan.

**29.4** The proposed site allocations contained in these Preferred Options (and ultimately in the Plan itself) have to be based on evidence. Therefore all of the sites have been assessed against the same planning criteria to assess the suitability of each of them for development which have their basis in national and local policy, focusing on the three elements of sustainability (environmental, social and economic) and incorporate consideration of other technical evidence generated in the preparation of this Preferred Option including (but not exclusively):

- Green Belt Study
- Strategic Flood Risk Assessment
- Water Cycle Study
- Viability Assessment
- Infrastructure Delivery Plan.

**29.5** In making the decision whether to include a site or not in these proposed allocations it is important to note that there is rarely a site that satisfies all criteria: therefore this means that judgement has to be exercised and aspects of evidence balanced against each other.

### The Site Allocations

**29.6** Policies 30 to 35 set out below describe details of the sites that are proposed for allocation for development within this Preferred Option. Each policy covers a different settlement, area or component of Wyre Forest. Where appropriate, the policies also set out specific requirements that would apply to development proposals on individual sites or in individual settlements or areas. As well as those specific requirements, the relevant provisions of other policies contained in this Plan would apply to development proposals on the allocated sites.

**29.7** Each of these policies is formatted in a broadly consistent manner and reflects the following elements:

- i. proposed policy wording
- ii. sites proposed as Core Sites (ie sites common to both Options A and B)
- iii. sites proposed as part of Option A
- iv. sites proposed as part of Option B.

**29.8** The headings in each of the tables in the allocation policies (30-35) are as follows

- **Site Reference** – this is the HELAA site reference and is retained for these purposes to enable cross-referencing. This reference is also utilised in evidence documents where specific site reference is made (eg Green Belt Study, Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, etc);
- **Site Description** – a simple description of location;
- **Proposed Use** – Employment (E), Housing (H), Mixed Use (M);
- **Indicative number of dwellings** – this figure takes account of the site area and any known constraints (eg where parts of the site have a risk of flooding) and, unless more specific details are available, is calculated to a density in sympathy with the surrounding area;
- **Site Area** – the land area of the site expressed in hectares (ha);
- **Removed from Green Belt?** – does the inclusion of this site entail the redrawing of the Green Belt boundary (Y=yes; N=no).

## Infrastructure requirements

**29.9** All the relevant infrastructure requirements for the sites contained within the following Policies are set out in the Wyre Forest Infrastructure Delivery Plan (WFIDP) which is part of this document's evidence base. Particular reference should be made to Section 3.1 of the WFIDP on transport and Section 4.1 of the WFIDP on education. As the Plan Review progresses to Pre-Submission stage (late 2017) so will the infrastructure requirements be refined and costed in more detail.

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**Policy 30 - Kidderminster Town Allocations**

Within Kidderminster, the following sites, as shown on the accompanying maps at Appendix a, are proposed for allocation. They should be developed in accordance with the criteria identified in respect of each site and all general policy requirements, including any necessary developer contributions.

**Table 30.0.1 Core sites in Kidderminster Proposed for Allocation**

Site Ref	Site description	Proposed Use	Indicative no. Dwellings / Employment ha	Gross Site Area (ha)	Removed from Green Belt?
AS/1	Comberton Place	M	23	0.83	N
AS/5	Victoria Carpets Sports Ground	H	45	2.21	N
AS/6	Lea Street School	H	24	0.47	N
BHS/2	Bromsgrove Street	M	35	3.59	N
BHS/11	Green Street Depot	E	0.46Ha		N
BHS/16	Timber Yard, Park Lane	M	55	2.1	N
BHS/18	Blakebrook School	H	47	1.38	N
BW/1	Churchfields	M	230	7.09	N
BW/2	Limekiln Bridge	H	80	1.16	N
BW/3	Sladen School	H	72	2.61	N
FPH/6	Oasis, Goldthorn Road	H	91	1.78	N
FPH/8	SDF and adjacent land	E	7.96Ha		N
FPH/10	Silverwoods phase 2	M	70 /2.96Ha	4.55	N
FPH/18	Naylor's Field	H	35	1.65	N
FPH/23	Silverwoods phase 1	E	1.84Ha		N
FPH/24	Romwire	E	5.0Ha		N
FPH/25	Rear of Vale Industrial Estate	E	2.17Ha		N
FPH/28	Land at Hoobrook	E	0.25Ha		N
FPH/29	VOSA site	E	1.72Ha		N
OC/11	Stourminster School site	H	56	2.15	N



Site Ref	Site description	Proposed Use	Indicative no. Dwellings / Employment ha	Gross Site Area (ha)	Removed from Green Belt?
LI/1	Ceramaspeed	E	3.27Ha		N
MI/26	Ratio Park, Finepoint	E	0.69Ha		N
MI/34	Oakleaf, Finepoint	E	1.0Ha		N
WFR/WC/18	Sion Hill School site	H	60	2.1	Y

**Table 30.0.2 Kidderminster sites Proposed for Allocation under Option A**

Site Ref	Site description	Proposed Use	Indicative no. Dwellings / Employment ha	Gross Site Area (ha)	Removed from Green Belt?
FPH/1	Settling Ponds	E	4.06	14.5	Y

**Table 30.0.3 Kidderminster sites Proposed for Allocation under Option B**

Site Ref	Site description	Proposed Use	Indicative no. Dwellings / Employment ha	Gross Site Area (ha)	Removed from Green Belt?
FPH/1	Settling Ponds	H	100	14.5	Y

## Reasoned Justification

**30.1** Kidderminster is the strategic centre where the bulk of development should be located to ensure sustainability, easy access to services and greatest ability to provide infrastructure. Most of the core sites proposed for allocation are redevelopment sites, many of which have been carried forward from the Kidderminster Central Area Action Plan or the Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan. All proposals will need to take into consideration any flooding issues, existing trees on site, heritage assets and highways issues.

**30.2** The sites at Churchfields, Lime Kiln Bridge and Sladen will require the provision of the Churchfields Link Road so that congestion and thus air quality issues are not exacerbated still further. It is anticipated that funding will be available for the Link Road through the Local Enterprise Partnerships. At Churchfields, a planning application has been submitted for the eastern part of the site to include 95 dwellings (16 flats in the converted 1902 building) together with some office space. The woodland area to the north of the site and trees along the western edge will be retained, together with additional planting. Housing will take the form of perimeter blocks and be mostly semi-detached or terraced. The Sladen site may be suitable for a supported housing scheme.

**30.3** At the former Blakebrook School site, a residential scheme is being drawn up and the Listed former Grammar School Chapel will be retained for non-residential use. Existing trees will be retained on site together with further planting. There is the potential for a pedestrian/cycle link through to St.John's Close and the open space at Church Walk to the rear. Another site with proposals well advanced is the site at Comberton Place where a residential scheme is planned on the site of the auction buildings. There are no plans at the current time to redevelop the retail/office units.

**30.4** On Bromsgrove Street, the former Glades Leisure Centre has now been cleared and the site is being marketed for a leisure-led scheme. This is the first parcel to be released for redevelopment on the Lionfields site. There are plans for a mixed-use scheme with a retail and leisure hub, alongside creative workspaces, community uses and residential uses. Final numbers of dwellings are not known at this time. Alongside the canal on Park Lane, the Timber Yard is now unoccupied and it is hoped that a residential-led scheme will come forward on this site. This development would need to provide active frontages to both Park Lane and the Canal and create a high quality environment along the waterfront. If possible, the historic buildings on site should be retained and incorporated into the development.

**30.5** Outside of Kidderminster Town Centre, it is proposed to allocate the former Lea Street School for housing. If structural issues prevent the conversion of the original school buildings, it is proposed to build a terrace fronting Lea Street with part of the former playground used as open space. Two further school sites are also proposed for residential allocation. At the former Sion Hill School in the north of the town, a residential scheme for around 60 dwellings is being drawn up on this previously developed Green Belt site. This development does not include the playing fields to the rear. At the former Stourminster School site in the south of Kidderminster, another residential scheme is proposed. This site includes woodland known to be home to badgers as well as Spennells Brook which will need to be protected and enhanced as part of the development. These areas will be incorporated into a wider area of open space to serve the development.

**30.6** Amongst the list of potential allocations in Kidderminster there are two greenfield sites. Naylor's Field off Sutton Park Rise is proposed for low density housing with areas of open space incorporated. The other site is on the Spennells Valley Road at the former Victoria Carpets Sportsground. This development will need to mitigate for potential flooding from the adjoining Hoo Brook as well as issues with surface water flooding.

**30.7** The other allocations are all for employment uses except for Oasis which although currently in employment use is now fully surrounded by residential uses with the recent redevelopment of the adjacent Reilloc Chain site. There is the potential to provide pedestrian links through between the two sites.

**30.8** Many of the proposed employment allocations are within the South Kidderminster Enterprise Park which is covered by a Local Development Order (LDO) which was originally adopted in August 2015. It has since been extended to August 2018. The LDO allows for a simplified planning regime. A number of developments have come forward including the redevelopment during 2016/17 of much of the former Romwire Site. It is proposed to construct the Wyre Forest Emergency Services Hub on the remaining plot. Another site where development is underway is at Ratio Park on Finepoint where the first phase of 11 starter units is well

advanced. Also on Finepoint, Oakleaf have a further 1.0 Ha that can be brought forward for further employment development. On the eastern side of the Stourport Road, there are sites available for employment uses at Silverwoods as well as on adjoining land to the rear of the Vale Industrial Estate. The SDF site and land to the rear is expected to come forward for redevelopment within the next few years. Other potential redevelopment sites include the VOSA site on Worcester Road and the former Ceramspeed site adjacent to Finepoint.

**30.9** Under Option A, the northern end of the former Settling Ponds site on Wilden Lane (4.06Ha) would be developed for employment uses whereas under Option B it would be used for residential development of around 100 dwellings. The allocation of this site for either use is dependant upon the results of detailed hydrological investigation as the site lies immediately adjacent to the Wilden Marshes SSSI.

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# 31 Kidderminster Urban Extensions

## Policy 31 - Kidderminster Urban Extensions

Within the areas identified on the accompanying maps at Appendix a, a number of sustainable, well-designed urban extensions are proposed. They should be developed in accordance with the criteria identified in respect of each site and all general policy requirements, including any necessary developer contributions.

**Table 31.0.1 Core Sites in Kidderminster Urban Extension Proposed for Allocation**

Site Ref	Site description	Proposed Use	Indicative no. Dwellings / Employment ha	Gross Site Area (ha)	Removed from Green Belt?
WFR/WC/15,	Lea Castle Hospital	M	600 / 1.96Ha	48.51	Y
BW/4	Hurcott ADR	H	200	13.9	N
WFR/CB/7, OC/4/5/6/12/13N,  WFR/ST/1, FPH/27	East of Kidderminster (N)	M	1,735 / 9.66Ha	101.29	Y

**Table 31.0.2 Sites in Kidderminster Urban Extension Proposed for Allocation under Option A**

Site Ref	Site description	Proposed Use	Indicative no. dwellings / employment land (Ha)	Gross Site Area (Ha)	Removed from Green Belt ?
OC/13S, WFR/ST/2, AS/10	East of Kidderminster (S)	H	Up to 930 dwellings	72.9	Y
WFR/WC/16	Lea Castle Hospital extension (S)	H	Up to 150 dwellings	9.52	Y

**Table 31.0.3 Sites in Kidderminster Urban Extension Proposed for Allocation under Option B**

Site Ref	Site description	Proposed Use	Indicative no. dwellings / employment land (Ha)	Gross Site Area (Ha)	Removed from Green Belt ?
WFR/WC/32	Lea Castle Hospital extension (E)	H	360	18.6	Y

## Reasoned Justification

**31.1** As previously stated, there is insufficient sustainably located readily available brownfield or non-Green Belt land to accommodate the necessary housing and employment growth required in the plan period. This consultation document proposes two well-designed urban extensions adjacent to the eastern edge of Kidderminster, one based around the redundant Lea Castle Hospital site near Cookley and the other stretching from south of Hurcott village, around Offmore Farm and Comberton. Under Option A the urban extension would extend further around the eastern edge of Kidderminster towards the Worcester Road whilst under Option B the built development would not extend south of the Bromsgrove Road. Section 6 differentiates the different infrastructure requirements to support these levels of development .

**31.2** An outline planning application for the redevelopment of the 48Ha redundant Lea Castle Hospital site was submitted at the end of March 2017. This site contains a large number of redundant buildings in a parkland setting with large areas of broadleaved and mixed woodland plus areas of acidic grassland. It is proposed to redevelop the site with up to 600 dwellings, with a range of tenures and dwelling types and sizes. At the site entrance on Park Gate Road it is proposed to provide up to 3,350sqm of office space and together with a site for a convenience store / cafe / community facility. The existing sports pitches will be retained along with extensive areas of greenspace totalling over 27Ha.

**31.3** To the north of Hurcott village, fronting the Stourbridge Road, it is proposed to allocate the land currently safeguarded as an Area of Development Restraint (BW/4). The northern section of this site is currently subject to an outline application for up to 82 dwellings by Miller Homes. A total of 200 dwellings could be provided across the entire site, with extensive areas left undeveloped in order to protect the Hurcott Pastures Site of Special Scientific Interest to the south and the Hurcott Woods Local Nature Reserve to the east. The wide dry valley which traverses the site will be incorporated into a larger area of open space and a footpath/cycle link could be provided to existing development at Broadwaters and on through into Kidderminster town centre.

**31.4** Under Option A, it is also proposed to allocate the field north of Stourbridge Road between Lea Castle Hospital and the Area of Development Restraint for housing development. This development to the rear of dwellings on Heath Drive could potentially provide a safer access road to the former hospital site. Under Option B, a further site to the east of the former hospital and rear of The Park Gate PH is proposed for development. This allocation would also provide an alternative access into the larger site avoiding the junction by the Park Gate PH. Both of these sites are currently in arable use and in the Green Belt. Development of these sites would have to be done sensitively as it would create new gateways into the town and would be highly visible along the A451 Stourbridge Road.

**31.5** A further urban extension to the east of Kidderminster is also proposed. This would include a number of sites currently in the Green Belt and has the potential to accommodate around 1700 dwellings together with employment sites. A development of this size would also be required to provide education and community facilities. Any development would need to take into account existing constraints such as water courses, trees and hedgerows and impact on the existing landscape and the setting of heritage assets. Masterplans will be required for each of these allocations. Developing an urban extension to the east of the Comberton / Offmore

estates and to the south of Spennells also gives the opportunity to provide a relief road from the A449 near Easter Park linking through to the A456 Birmingham Road. This would help to alleviate the severe congestion currently experienced along the A449 Chester Road and may also alleviate issues of air quality around the Kidderminster Ring Road. The land to the north of the Bromsgrove Road (A448) includes a series of brooks with marsh and wet woodland areas. These areas will need to be protected from development and managed as part of a wider wildlife corridor. There is also a historical irrigation system present in this area and it is recommended that this is integrated into a wider Sustainable Urban Drainage scheme. Allocations for employment uses are also proposed on land adjacent to Easter Park on the Worcester Road (A449) and between Hodge Hill Farm and Hodge Hill Nurseries on the A456 Birmingham Road. The latter site in particular will require very strict design and landscaping criteria as this development will create a new urban edge to Kidderminster from the Blakedown direction.

**31.6** Under Option A, it is also proposed to extend the development to the south of the A448 around the Spennells Estate. Development would be accessed from a new road which would link the A449 with the A448. Around 900 dwellings could be provided over the 67Ha site. Around 50% of the site would be left undeveloped. This would ensure that there was an adequate natural green buffer between existing residential properties and would ensure Stanklyn Lane is kept as a separate community. There would be no housing development alongside the A448 itself as it is important to keep the approach into Kidderminster from this direction clear of built development and not impact on views towards St. Mary's Church, Stone.



## Policy 32 - Stourport-on-Severn Site Allocations

Within and around Stourport-on-Severn, the following sites, as shown on the accompanying maps at Appendix a, are proposed for allocation. They should be developed in accordance with the criteria identified in respect of each site and all general policy requirements, including any necessary developer contributions.

**Table 32.0.1 Core sites in Stourport-on-Severn Proposed for Allocation**

Site Ref	Site description	Proposed Use	Indicative no. dwellings / employment land (Ha)	Gross Site Area (Ha)	Removed from Green Belt ?
LI/2	Wyre Forest Golf Club, corner of Kingsway	H	80	8.2	Y
LI/6/7	Lickhill Road North	H	94	3.61	Y
AKR/1	Bridge Street Basins	H	17	0.38	N
AKR/2	Cheapside	M	72 / 0.34Ha	2.2	N
AKR/7	Swan Hotel / Working Men's Club	M	20	1.52	N
AKR/20	Carpets of Worth	M	170	3.3	N
MI/1	County Buildings	H	40	0.67	N
MI/3	Parsons Chain	H	114	6.03	N
MI/5	Baldwin Road	H	55 dwellings with permission. Potential for further building plots to come forward	2.06	N
MI/6	Steatite Way	H	106	3.29	N
MI/33	Wilden Industrial Estate	E	0.34Ha		N

**Table 32.0.2 Stourport-on-Severn - sites Proposed for Allocation under Option B**

Site Ref	Site description	Proposed Use	Indicative no. dwellings / employment land (Ha)	Gross Site Area (Ha)	Removed from Green Belt ?
LI/5	Burlish Crossing	H	157	6.03	Y
MI/17	Stourport Manor	H	72	3.7	Y
AKR/14	Pearl Lane	H	420	15.09	N
AKR/15	Rectory Lane	H	130	5.46	N

## Reasoned Justification

**32.1** Stourport on-Severn is classified as a large market town. It is expected to take on a supportive role to Kidderminster in the provision of larger scale housing. In recent years, there has been very little housing development in the town. All of the core sites proposed for allocation apart from those currently in the Green Belt, are existing allocations. Much of the land at Baldwin Road now has permission for housing but there may still be further capacity as more land is assembled. The permission on the Carpets of Worth site lapsed in April 2016. This permission, together with the unsigned legal agreement for the redevelopment of one of the buildings on site, would have entailed the construction of 170 dwellings in total. It is possible that a future scheme may involve community uses as well as housing. At Steatite Way, a proposal for 106 dwellings is yet to be determined.

**32.2** None of the other sites which are currently allocated, have reached planning application stage yet. The Bridge Street Basins Link SPD (2005) identifies the site as suitable for a mix of residential and commercial uses though viability appraisals indicate only residential is feasible. At Cheapside, any redevelopment proposals should incorporate a mix of residential and business uses and retain and enhance the heritage assets associated with the former vinegar works. Flood risk will also need to be carefully considered here. At the Parsons Chain site, currently used as a storage area for the Birmingham Pipeline Resilience Project, any scheme will need to incorporate the requirement for a link road through the site in order to relieve the congestion at the Hartlebury/Worcester Road island. Any proposals at the Swan Hotel/ Working Men's Club would look to make better use of several undeveloped parts of the site and improve the Lickhill Road frontage in particular. At the County Buildings site, some of the community uses have already relocated and others are looking to do so in the near future. It is hoped that a comprehensive redevelopment scheme can be brought forward. At the entrance to the Wilden Industrial Estate there is a vacant plot which is available for development for further employment uses.

**32.3** There are also proposed sites in the Green Belt to the north-west of the town. The site on the corner of The Kingsway (part of the Wyre Forest Golf Club) has the potential to provide both housing and recreational facilities to help relieve pressure on the adjoining Burlish Top Nature Reserve. The land along Lickhill Road North proposed for release for housing

development includes the Bournewood Nursery site and the adjoining paddocks. These sites are well-screened by extensive tree planting and strong hedgerows although impact on views from across the River Severn will need to be carefully considered.

**32.4** Under Option A no further sites are proposed.

**32.5** Under Option B, there are 4 additional sites proposed. Two are in the Green Belt - land at Burlish Crossing is near the Lickhill Road North sites and would require extensive planting along the northern boundary to soften the impact of built development as viewed from the Bewdley direction. It is important not to extend built development any nearer towards Bewdley in order to maintain the separation of the two towns. The site at Wilden Top forms part of the grounds of the hotel and development here would encroach into open countryside. The other sites proposed under this option are not in the Green Belt and are situated west of the River Severn beyond Areley Kings. Development here would encroach into open countryside and there are concerns that the extra traffic generated would push pollution levels higher and lead to a new Air Quality Management Area being declared in the centre of the town. The site at Pearl Lane also has known drainage issues. It is for the sites' promoters to justify their allocation and demonstrate how these constraints can be mitigated.

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### Policy 33 - Bewdley Site Allocations

Within and around Bewdley, the following sites, as shown on the accompanying maps at Appendix a, are proposed for allocation. They should be developed in accordance with the criteria identified in respect of each site and all general policy requirements, including any necessary developer obligations.

**Table 33.0.1 Core Sites in Bewdley Proposed for Allocation**

Site Ref	Site description	Proposed Use	Indicative no. dwellings / employment land (Ha)	Gross Site Area (Ha)	Removed from Green Belt ?
WA/BE/1	Stourport Road Triangle	H	100	3.67	Y
WA/BE/5	Land south of Habberley Road	H	45	1.71	Y
BR/BE/6	Land off Highclere	H	30	4.27	N

**Table 33.0.2 Bewdley sites Proposed for Allocation under option B**

Site Ref	Site description	Proposed Use	Indicative no. dwellings / employment land (Ha)	Gross Site Area (Ha)	Removed from Green Belt ?
WA/BE/3	Catchem's End	H	76	5.61	Y

### Reasoned Justification

**33.1** Bewdley is classified as a market town where residential development to meet local needs is permitted. Potential for development on brownfield sites is very constrained by the historic street pattern of the town and west of the River Severn by the topography and the Air Quality Management Area at Welch Gate in the town centre. For these reasons, the proposed allocations are mostly east of the River on greenfield sites immediately adjacent to existing residential areas. These sites are also currently within the Green Belt but they are not considered to be key contributors to the 5 purposes of Green Belt. There is also one smaller allocation west of the river at Highclere where a limited extension to an existing estate is proposed. All sites are considered to be in sustainable locations with easy access to services and facilities.

**33.2** All developments will be designed to take into account existing constraints such as nearby watercourses, any known potential for flooding, drainage issues, presence of mature hedgerows and trees. The Riddings Brook forms the NW boundary to the Stourport Road triangle site (WA/BE/1) and this would provide the backdrop to an area of open space for the development. The small site lying south of Habberley Road would need to be carefully designed

to take into account the need for a channel to take surface water run-off through the site in times of heavy rainfall. This would be incorporated into a larger area of open space with development on the remainder of the site being for mainly smaller homes. The final proposed allocation is on an area of unimproved grassland to the rear of Highclere. It is proposed to allow very limited single-storey development accessed off the 3 existing hammerheads and retain the majority of the site as an informal recreation area. Any dwellings would need to be designed to blend into the landscape.

**33.3** Under Option A no additional sites are proposed.

**33.4** Under Option B the site at at Catchem's End (WA/BE/3) is proposed for allocation. On this site the existing parkland setting with mature trees along the Kidderminster Road frontage would be retained along with large amounts of open space. This development would also potentially provide a pedestrian/cycle link through to the field adjacent to All Saints Church which would be retained as public open space.

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## 34 Previously Developed Sites in the Green Belt

### Policy 34 - Previously Developed Sites in the Green Belt proposed for allocation

**Table 34.0.1 Previously Developed Sites in the Green Belt Proposed for Allocation**

Site Ref	Site description	Proposed Use	Indicative no. dwellings / employment land (Ha)	Gross Site Area (Ha)	Removed from Green Belt ?
	Rushock Trading Estate	E	14.5Ha	14.5	N
	West Midlands Safari Park	M		92.0	N

#### **Rushock Trading Estate**

Within the Previously Developed area of Rushock Trading Estate, development for employment uses (B1, B2 and B8) will be permitted.

#### **West Midlands Safari and Leisure Park (WMSLP)**

Within the Previously Developed area of WMSLP development proposals that support and enhance the park's operations as a leisure and tourism destination will be permitted.

#### **Proposals for Previously Developed Windfall Sites in the Green Belt**

In order to protect the openness of the Green Belt, windfall development proposals for Previously Developed Sites in the Green Belt should:

- i. Contribute to the achievement of the objectives for the use of land in Green Belts.
- ii. Not exceed the height of the existing buildings and other structures and trees.
- iii. Not give rise to off-site infrastructure problems.

Design and landscaping of development should seek to minimise the impact on the Green Belt through:

- a. Using sensitive materials and colours.
- b. Providing extensive landscaping and tree planting to screen boundaries, where appropriate.

For all previously developed sites, including windfall, in the Green Belt applications for development will be considered against this policy framework and the rest of the policies in the plan.



## Reasoned Justification

**34.1** There are a number of sites that are considered to be 'Previously Developed Sites' in the Green Belt which lie within Wyre Forest District. The largest of these sites are considered to require a site specific policy, identifying what uses would be acceptable within these locations. The largest Previously Developed sites are identified as:

### Rushock Trading Estate

- Area: 14.5ha (approx.)

**34.2** Rushock Trading Estate is a former military site within the Green Belt. It is located in close proximity to Hartlebury Trading Estate and is accessed from the A442 Kidderminster – Droitwich road. The estate is a thriving business area and is owned by Hovi Developments who have recently spent money refurbishing and upgrading the facilities within the estate boundaries. As a Previously Developed Site in the Green Belt, the estate benefits from the flexibility that the planning policy framework provides, and this enables the re-use and redevelopment of sites within the curtilage to continue, subject to proposals being appropriate in terms of impact on the Green Belt.



### West Midlands Safari and Leisure Park (WMSLP)

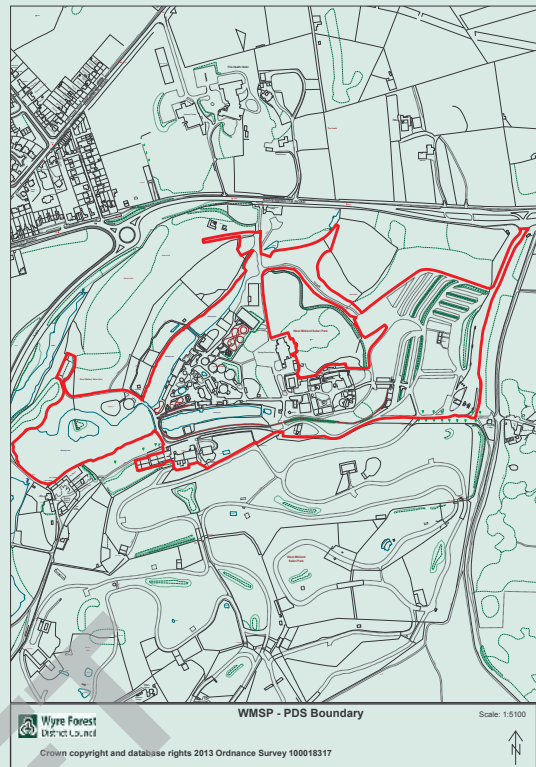
- Area: 92ha (approx.)

**34.3** The West Midlands Safari and Leisure Park is one of the largest tourist attractions within the District. The Park is located entirely within the West Midlands Green Belt and is situated in a strategic gap between the two towns of Kidderminster and Bewdley. The park is not only important locally but has regional and national attraction and provides a destination for visitors to the area.

## 34 Previously Developed Sites in the Green Belt

**34.4** Due to the size and scale of the Park, and its importance to the local economy, it was felt important to specifically identify the site within this section. Due to the nature of the activities at the park, the predominant land use is open grassland, which despite the fences and ancillary animal houses, generally maintains the openness of the Green Belt. However, there is a large part of the site that is considered to be 'Previously Developed' (see plan) and this is contained primarily around the rides and leisure element of the park, as well as the associated car parking.

**34.5** The policy outlines a positive approach to development within this area identifying that development proposals that support and enhance the park's operations as a leisure and tourism destination will be permitted. The importance of the park to the local economy is also identified in Section 10 'A Good Place to Do Business', and in Section 23, at policy 23A : Supporting Major Tourist Attractions. A masterplan for the park was approved in 2013 whose focus was the future development of a hotel, conference centre and waterpark. These facilities were granted planning approval in April 2016. A new access will be required from the roundabout at the entrance to Bewdley and this new complex will be located to the north of the previously developed land. This development will upgrade and improve the viability of the WMSLP, allow for potential heathland restoration and recreation and make a positive contribution to the local economy.



### Policy 35 - Villages and Rural Areas Site Allocations

The following sites, as shown on the accompanying maps at Appendix a, are proposed for allocation. They should be developed in accordance with the criteria identified in respect of each site and all general policy requirements, including any necessary developer contributions.

#### Core Sites in Rural Villages Proposed for Allocation

Site Ref	Site description	Proposed Use	Indicative no. dwellings / employment land (Ha)	Gross Site Area (Ha)	Removed from Green Belt ?
WA/UA/4	Allotments, Upper Arley	H	10	0.46	Y
BR/RO/1	Land at Clows Top	H	30	1.44	N
BR/RO/4/6	Land adjacent Tolland, Far Forest	H	20	0.82	N
BR/RO/7	New Road, Far Forest (S)	H	20	0.67	N
BR/RO/21	Alton Nurseries, Long Bank	E	1.32Ha	1.32	N
BR/RO/26	Walnut Cottage, Bliss Gate	H	5	0.3	N

**Table 35.0.1 Rural Sites proposed for allocation under Option B**

Site Ref	Site description	Proposed Use	Indicative no. dwellings / employment land (Ha)	Gross Site Area (Ha)	Removed from Green Belt ?
BR/RO/7	New Road, Far Forest (N)	H	20	1.54	N

### Reasoned Justification

**35.1** In the rural areas it is important that housing for local needs is planned for. Upper Arley, in the north of the district, is an estate village washed over by the Green Belt. It is proposed to allocate a small area of disused allotments in the centre of this riverside village for a small amount of housing to meet local needs. The other sites are all to the west of the River Severn and therefore outside of the Green Belt. These villages have settlement boundaries drawn

## 35 Rural Wyre Forest

around them. It is proposed to review these boundaries as part of this Local Plan Review. This will allow the release of small infill plots for up to 5 houses as proposed under policy 18B 'Residential Infill Development'. The sites listed at Policy 35 are in addition to anything that might come forward under this infill policy.

**35.2** The site at Clows Top is an existing allocation. Part of the site has recently sold and the other part is in commercial use. It has previously had a residential permission. Clows Top village is partially in Malvern Hills District and there is a small housing site allocated under the South Worcestershire Development Plan. The best served village in the rural west is Far Forest and there are a number of proposed allocations here. To the rear of the school playing fields, behind Tolland Bungalow, there is a potential area that could be developed for a small number of dwellings, including an area of old orchard. If feasible, several of the fruit trees would be retained. This site could accommodate up to 20 dwellings depending on local requirements. Access would need to be upgraded along the lane from the A4117 but the site is well located for access to local village facilities and near to a bus service. Another larger site off New Road in Far Forest is also proposed for allocation. This site is opposite the entrance to the school and consists of a number of areas of rough pasture. It is proposed to allocate a small field alongside the road for up to 20 dwellings with the potential to extend into a further field under Option B. The final site proposed in the rural villages is on the edge of Bliss Gate where a small orchard could potentially accommodate up to 5 dwellings. All of these sites would need to be carefully designed to reflect the characteristics of the settlement and take account of any existing constraints such as flooding, drainage and landscape.

**35.3** It is also important to provide employment in the rural areas to reduce commuting back into the urban areas. The Bewdley Business Park at Long Bank has recently had a number of new units added with more planned for. Along the A456, the Alton Nurseries site is available for redevelopment and it is proposed to allocated this site to the front of the business park for further employment use.

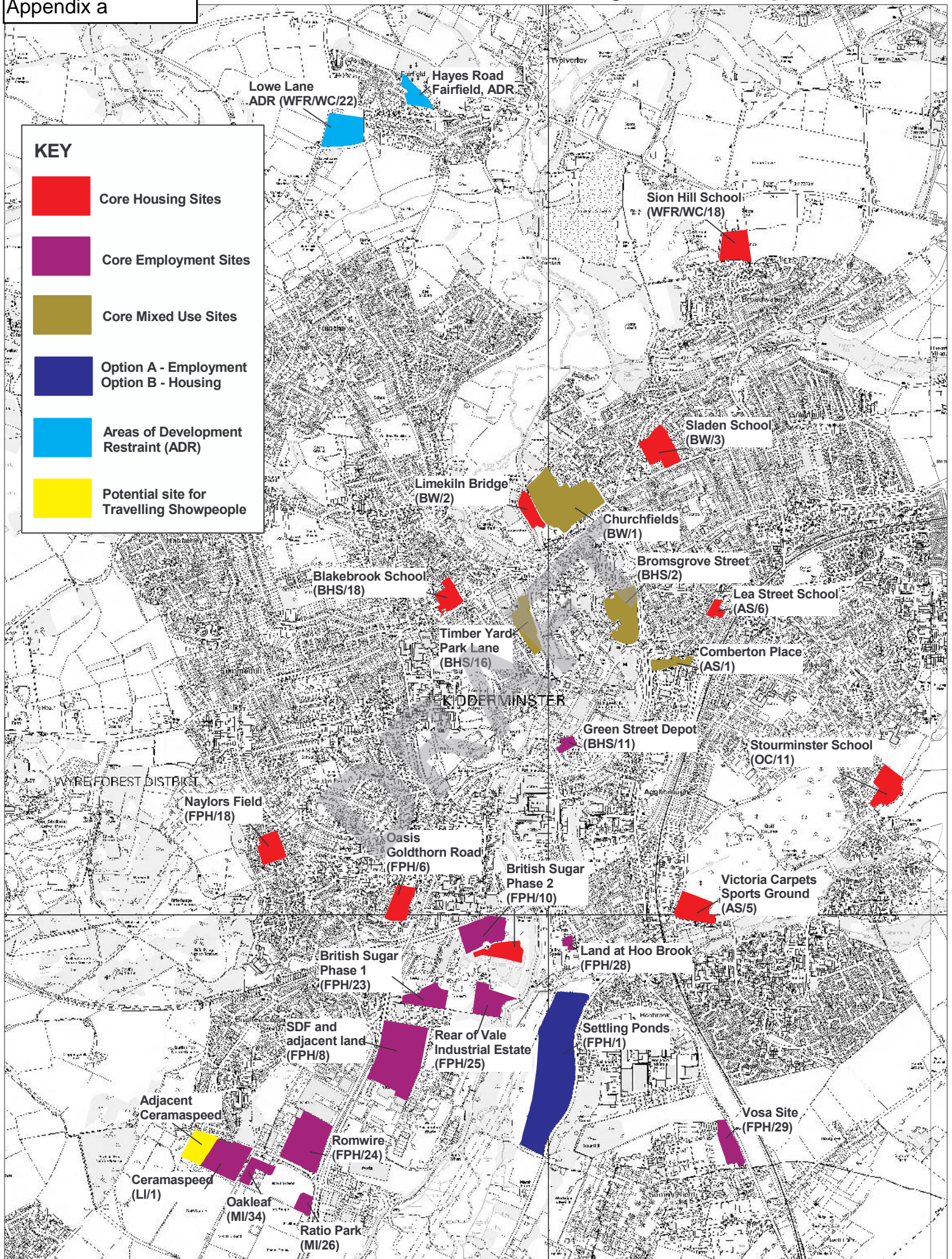
**36.1** The Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP), which is being produced alongside the Local Plan, reviews and evaluates the social, environmental and economic infrastructure that will be required to support the development and growth set out in the plan. It is a living document that details both the infrastructure required to support the proposals and development sites in the plan, the likely delivery partners e.g. developers, the district and county councils, government agencies and likely funding sources.

**36.2** The infrastructure requirements to support the specific policies and allocations in the Plan will be identified within the individual site allocation policies. Further infrastructure may be required as the detail of schemes is developed and for windfall development proposals, the infrastructure requirements and any contributions required will need to be assessed as schemes are drawn up. Infrastructure can be provided directly by developers; or planning contributions can be used to deliver or contribute to on or off-site new or improved infrastructure through Section 106 contributions and/or the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) should the Council decide to introduce it.

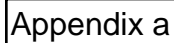
**36.3** As the plan is progressed, monitoring indicators will be formulated to form part of the draft submission plan. These will be based on the sustainability appraisal.

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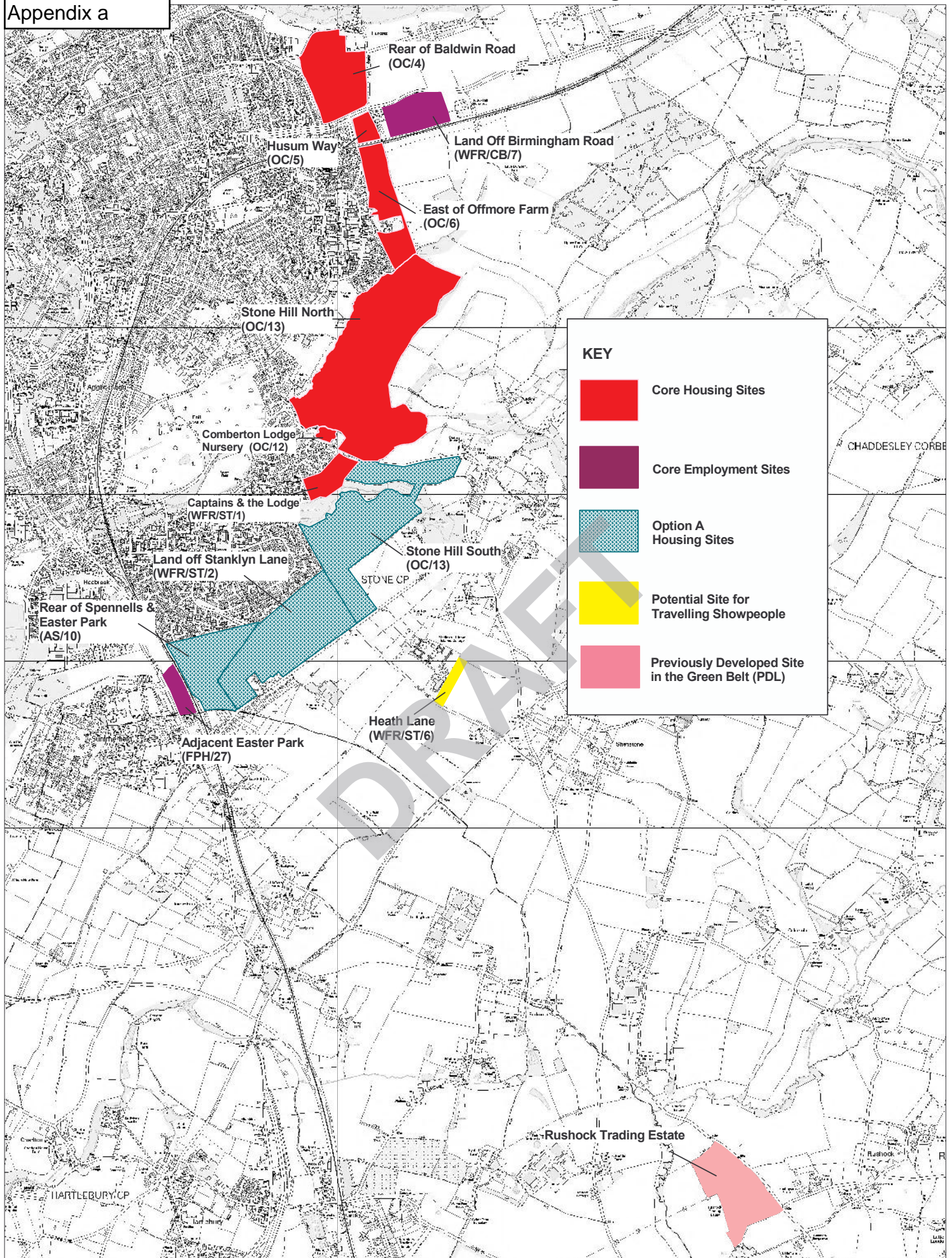






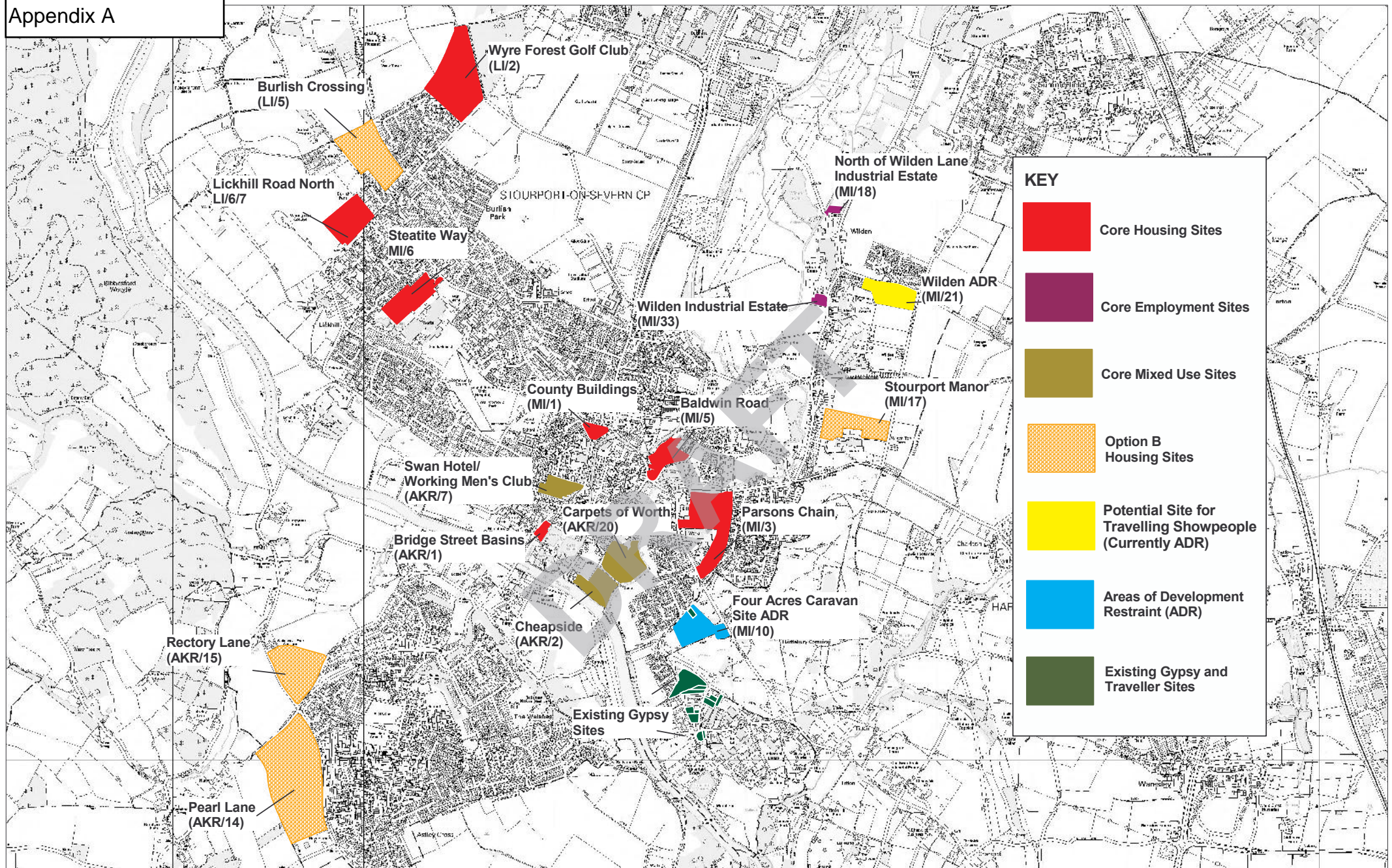








Appendix A



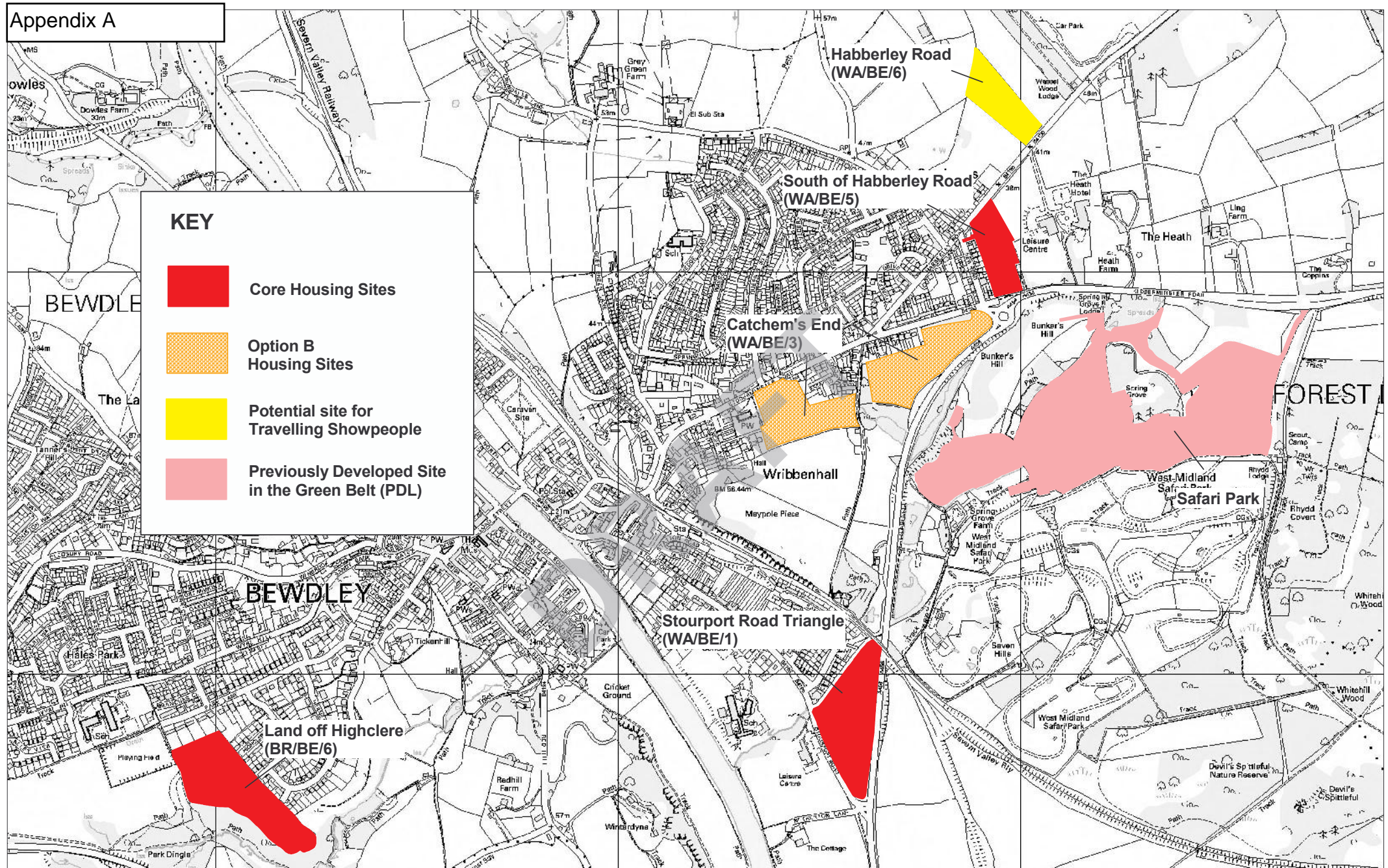
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Stourport-on-Severn

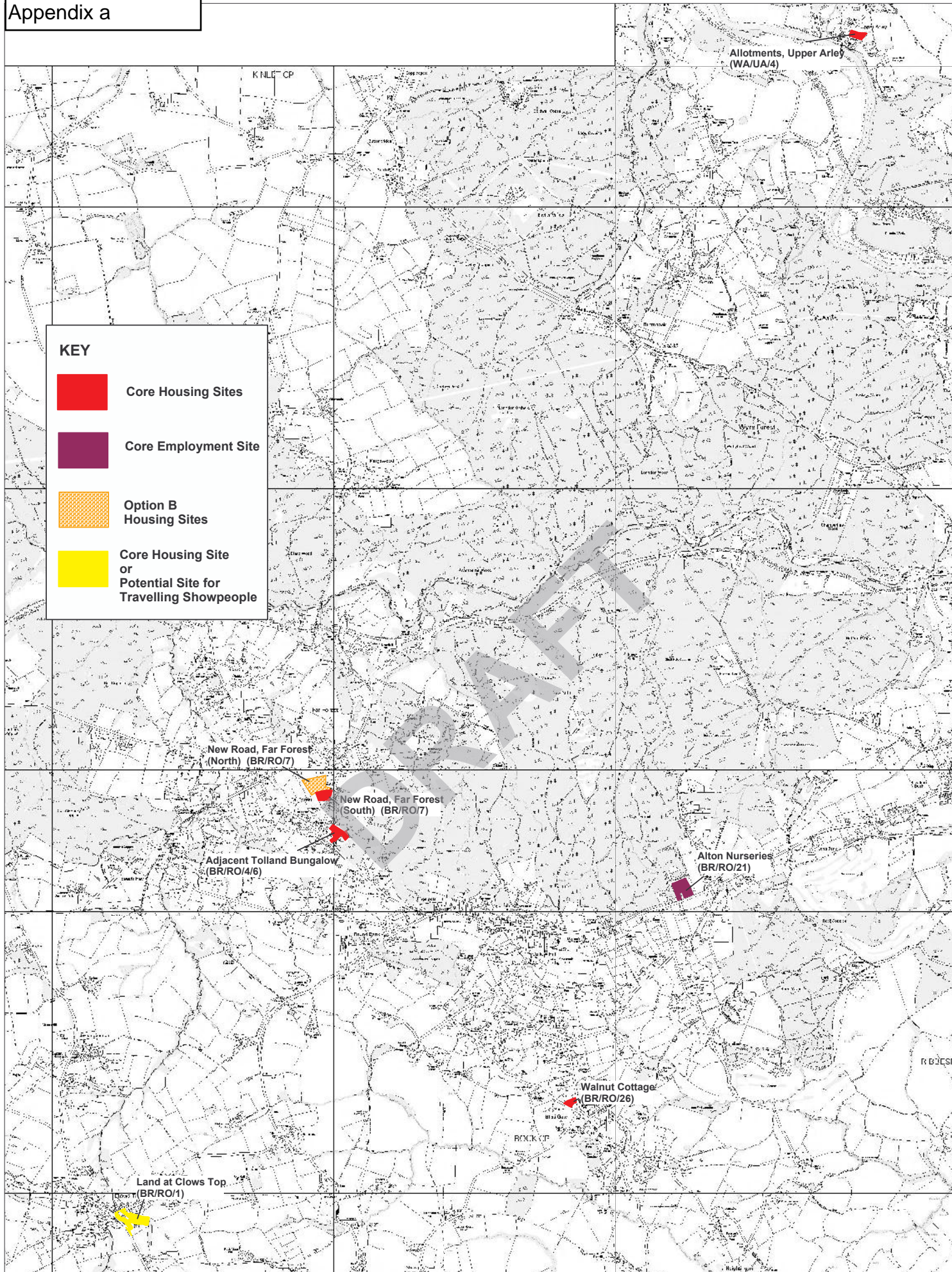
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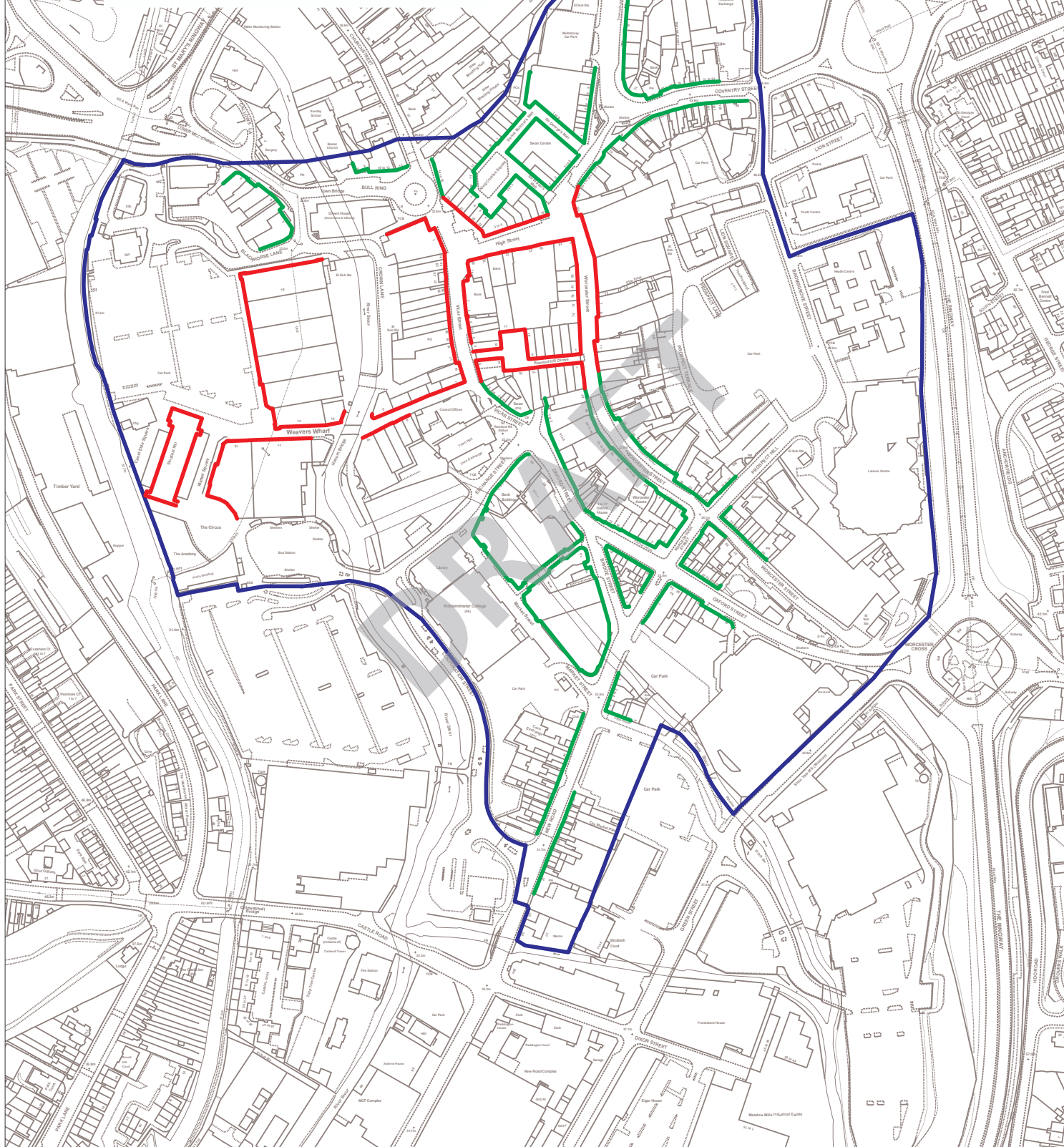








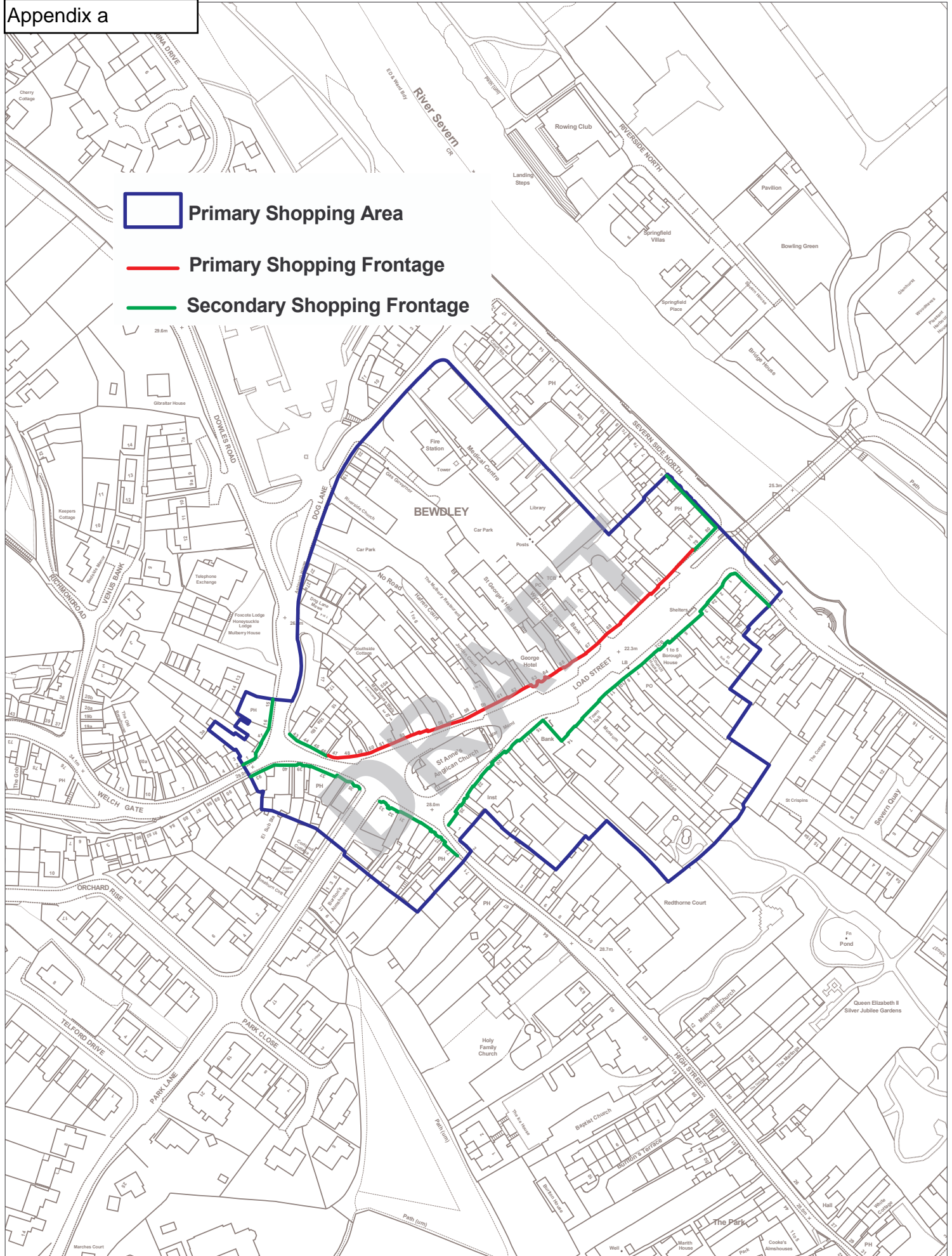
-  Primary Shopping Area
-  Primary Shopping Frontage
-  Secondary Shopping Frontage







Appendix a



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# Retail Bewdley

Scale : 1:1500  
Produced on : 26/04/2017





**Adopted Core Strategy (2010)** -this is the strategic level document within the District's Development Plan. It sets out the broad locations for delivering housing and other major development needs in the District such as employment, retail and transport. It guides the site specific policies within the Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan and the Kidderminster Central Area Action Plan.

**Affordable Housing** - the District Council has adopted the definition of Affordable Housing as set out in the NPPF (Annex 2 Glossary).

**Air Quality Management Area (AQMA)** - areas designated by Wyre Forest District Council where the level of pollutant concentrations in the atmosphere results in the air quality not meeting the objectives set out by central government in 2005.

**Areas of Development Restraint (ADR) (also referred to as Safeguarded Land)** - land which lies between the urban area and the Green Belt which is identified to meet longer term development needs stretching well beyond the plan period. Safeguarded land is not allocated for development at the present time and planning permission should only be granted for such land following a Local Plan review which proposes development. Until areas of safeguarded land are identified for development, Green Belt policies apply to them.

**Chalets** – these are buildings, also sometimes referred to as shacks, which are primarily constructed of materials of less than average permanency and used for residential occupation.

**Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)** - The Community Infrastructure Levy is a planning charge, introduced by the Planning Act 2008 as a tool for local authorities in England and Wales to help deliver infrastructure to support the development of their area.

**Climate Change** - long-term changes in temperature, precipitation, wind and all other aspects of the Earth's climate. Often regarded as a result of human activity and fossil fuel consumption.

**Community Facilities** - facilities which provide for the health, welfare, social, educational, spiritual, recreational, leisure and cultural needs of the community.

**Conservation Area** - an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.

**Designated heritage asset** – a World Heritage Site, Scheduled Monument, Listed Building, Protected Wreck Site, Registered Park and Garden, Registered Battlefield or Conservation Area designated under the relevant legislation.

**Developer Contributions** - developer contributions are often required for major developments to make them acceptable in planning terms.

**Development Plan**- the Development Plan for the District comprises of the Core Strategy, the Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan and the Kidderminster Central Area Action Plan. Neighbourhood Plans will also form part of the Development Plan, once adopted.

**Edge-of-Centre** - For retail purposes, a location that is well-connected to and within easy walking distance (i.e up to 300 metres) of the primary shopping area. For all other main town centre uses, this is likely to be within 300 metres of a town centre boundary. In determining whether a site falls within the definition of edge-of-centre, account should be taken of local circumstances. For example, local topography will affect pedestrians' perceptions of easy walking distance from the centre. Other considerations include barriers, such as crossing major roads and car parks, the attractiveness and perceived safety of the route and the strength of attraction and size of the town centre. A site will not be well-connected to a centre where it is physically separated from it by a barrier such as a major road, railway line or river and there is no existing or proposed pedestrian route which provides safe and convenient access to the centre.

**Evidence Base** - the information and data gathered by local authorities to inform the production of local plans.

**Functional Economic Market Areas (FEMAs)** - Economic flows often overlap local authority boundaries. This means that the functional area over which the local economy and its key markets operate will not necessarily adhere to administrative boundaries. Instead, key economic markets broadly correspond to sub-regions or city regions - known as functional economic market areas (FEMAs). There is no universal approach to defining FEMAs. Ideally, FEMAs would be defined on the basis of several markets or catchment areas which best reflect the drivers of the local economy.

**Flood Risk Assessment** - an assessment of the likelihood of flooding in a particular area so that development needs and mitigation measures can be carefully considered.

**Geodiversity** - the range of rocks, fossils, minerals, soils, landforms and natural processes that go to make up the Earth's landscape and structure.

**Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (GBSLEP)** - Local Enterprise Partnerships are led by businesses and local authorities across natural economic areas. They provide the vision, knowledge and strategic leadership required to drive sustainable private sector growth and job creation in their areas. The GBSLEP comprises a partnership including the local authorities of Birmingham City Council, Bromsgrove District Council, Cannock Chase District Council, East Staffordshire Borough Council, Lichfield District Council, Redditch Borough Council, Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council, Tamworth Borough Council, Wyre Forest District Council.

**Green Belt Land** - land which is situated between urban areas on which development is restricted so as to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. The essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence. The Green Belt serves five purposes: 1. to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas; 2. to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another; 3. to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment; 4. to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and 5. to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

**Green Infrastructure** - the living network of green spaces, water and environmental systems in, around and beyond urban areas. This also includes blue infrastructure (e.g. Canals and Rivers).

**Greenfield Land** - land which has never been developed; this includes greenbelt land and areas of open countryside, as well as undeveloped land within urban areas.

**Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA)** - the purpose of this assessment is to provide information on the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers in order ascertain what the appropriate number, type and distribution of additional pitches need to be provided within the area.

**Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)** - tests the impacts of a proposal on nature conservation sites of European importance, and is a requirement under EU legislation for land use plans and projects.

**Heritage Asset** - a building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest.

**Housing Market Area** - an area in which households search for housing. These areas cut across local authority boundaries and can be defined based on a series of indicators including comprising house prices, migration and search patterns and contextual data including travel-to-work areas, retail and school catchments.

**Infrastructure** - basic services necessary for development to take place; for example, roads, electricity, sewerage, water, education and health facilities.

**Kidderminster Central Area Action Plan (KCAAP)** - Adopted plan targeted specifically to regenerating the central area of Kidderminster.

**Landscape Character Assessment (LCA)** - an assessment of landscape character which is defined as 'a distinct, recognisable, and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape which makes one landscape different from another'.

**Listed Building** - a building of special architectural or historic interest. Listed buildings are graded I, II\* or II, with grade I being the highest. Listing includes the interior as well as the exterior of the building and any buildings or permanent structures within its curtilage.

**Live/Work** - is defined as property that is specifically designed for dual use, combining both residential and employment space.

**Local Development Order (LDO)** - A Local Development Order (LDO) is a simple tool to allow a Local Planning Authority to introduce new permitted development rights. They are flexible and consistent with local determination.

**Local Development Scheme (LDS)** - a three year timetable setting out the type of Development Plans to be produced and the key milestones for their development.

**Local Heritage List** - the Local Heritage List identifies those heritage assets that are not protected by statutory designations. Their local interest could be related to the social and economic history of the area, individuals of local importance. The Local Heritage List is not restricted to buildings. It may comprise sites, places or areas such as village greens or ponds.



**Local Plans (LPs)** - the collective term given to all statutory documents that form the Development Plan for the District. These comprise of the Core Strategy, Site Allocations and Policies, Kidderminster Central Area Action Plan and a Policies Map.

**Major Developments** - major developments include;

- Residential development comprising at least 10 dwellings or a site area of at least 1 hectare if the number of dwellings is not specified.
- Other uses where the floor space to be built is greater than 1,000 square metres or the site area is at least 1 hectare in size.

**National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)** - the document which sets out the Governments planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied.

**National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)** - Web based resource of planning practice guidance, launched and maintained by Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), to enable practitioners to implement the content of the NPPF.

**Natural England** - Natural England works for people, places and nature to conserve and enhance biodiversity, landscapes and wildlife in rural, urban, coastal and marine areas.

**Neighbourhood Development Plans** - Neighbourhood Development Plans allow local people to come together to decide how they want their area to develop. They can be developed by Town and Parish Councils or by Neighbourhood Forums outside of the Parished areas.

**Open Space** - all space of public value, which can offer opportunities for sport and recreation or can also act as a visual amenity and a haven for wildlife. Areas of open space include public landscaped areas, playing fields, parks and play areas, and also areas of water such as rivers, canals, lakes and reservoirs.

**Out-of-Centre** - A location which is not in or on the edge-of-centre but not necessarily outside the urban area.

**Previously Developed Land (PDL)** - land which is, or was occupied by a permanent structure, including the curtilage of the developed land (although it should not be assumed that the whole of the curtilage should be developed) and any associated fixed surface infrastructure.

**ReWyre Initiative / Regeneration Prospectus** - the prospectus aims to highlight Kidderminster's challenges and opportunities in order to attract support and investment into the town.

**Scheduled Monument** - a 'nationally important' archaeological site or historic building, given protection against unauthorised change.

**Significance (for heritage policy)** – The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting.

**Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan** - District wide adopted plan that allocates and designates areas of land for particular uses, most notably land to deliver housing but also for other major development needs such as employment, recreation, open space and community uses.

**Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)** - a specifically defined area within which protection is afforded to ecological or geological features. Sites are officially notified by Natural England.

**Strategic Centres** - there are 25 town centres in the West Midlands region that are defined in the former Regional Spatial Strategy as 'Strategic Centres'.

**Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA)** - collates information on all known sources of flooding that may affect existing or future development within the District. The SFRA identifies and maps areas that have a 'low', 'medium' and 'high' probability of flooding within the Wyre Forest.

**Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA)** - The SHELAA is an evidence base document that identifies sites that may have future development potential for housing or employment uses. It does not allocate sites to be developed.

**Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs)** - provide additional information to guide and support the Development Plan.

**Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDS)** - an environmentally friendly way of dealing with surface water run-off which increases the time taken for surface water to reach watercourses, thereby reducing flash flooding.

**Sustainability Appraisal (SA)** - the purpose of SA is to ensure that the Development Plan and associated Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) conform to the Government principles of Sustainable Development.

**Water Cycle Strategy** - this assesses the constraints and requirements that may arise from the scale of the proposed development on the water infrastructure in the District.

**Windfall Site** - a site not specifically allocated for development in a development plan, but which unexpectedly becomes available for development during the lifetime of a plan. Most windfall sites are for housing.

**Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership** - Worcestershire LEP is led by private sector businesses in partnership with the public sector – comprising Worcestershire County Council and the six District councils of Worcester City, Bromsgrove, Redditch, Malvern Hills, Wyre Forest and Wychavon.

**Worcestershire Local Transport Plan** - sets out Worcestershire's transport strategy, as well as identifying major long-term transportation pressures on the County.