

# Local Plan Review Issues and Options Paper

September 2015

**Shaping Wyre Forest District to 2032**



**Have your say on locations  
for new development!**



**Wyre Forest  
District Council**

## A New Development Strategy 2016-2032

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## 1 Introduction

### What is the Issues and Options Paper?

**1.1** This document has been prepared to provide information about the Local Plan which the District Council is preparing. It is the first consultation stage of the Local Plan Review process. The District Council wants as many people as possible to be involved in the preparation of the Plan. Your comments are encouraged and this Paper sets out a series of questions to guide responses. All of the comments we receive will help us to draft the final Plan. A Glossary is included at the back of the document to provide definitions of technical terms.

**1.2** The District Council has decided to undertake a Local Plan Review to bring together the existing planning policy documents which are the Adopted Core Strategy (December 2010), the Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan (July 2013) and the Kidderminster Central Area Action Plan (July 2013). The new Local Plan will identify the development needed within the District up until 2032. The new Local Plan will also respond to the changes in planning policy at the national and regional level. Most notably, the series of Planning Policy Guidance notes and Planning Policy Statements which set out national planning policy have been consolidated into the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the National Planning Practice Guide (NPPG). At the Regional level, the Regional Spatial Strategies (RSSs), which set out the level of housing, retail and employment development that each Local Planning Authority was required to deliver, have been abolished. Local Planning Authorities are now responsible for setting their own development targets, however, these must be supported by a robust evidence base.

### How to Comment

**1.3** Consultation on the Issues and Options Paper will take place between Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> September and Friday 16<sup>th</sup> October 2015. 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: [Planning.policy@wyreforestdc.gov.uk](mailto:Planning.policy@wyreforestdc.gov.uk)
- By post: Planning Policy Team, Wyre Forest DC, Wyre Forest House, Finepoint Way, Kidderminster, Worcestershire, DY11 7WF

**1.4** 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 Issues and Options Paper and how the Local Plan Review might affect you. These sessions will be as follows:

- Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> September 2015 - Stourport-on-Severn Carnival, 11am-3pm
- Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> September 2015 - Bewdley Farmers Market, 10am-2pm
- Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> September 2015 - Weavers Wharf, Kidderminster, 10am-2pm
- Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> September 2015 - Kidderminster Market, 10am-3pm

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



**1.6** The Issues and Options consultation is the first stage of the Plan Review. At this stage, we are looking for your views on whether or not we have identified the right issues facing the District and which of the options identified is most appropriate for addressing these issues. Following the close of the Issues and Options consultation, all responses will be summarised and the Council will respond to them. These summaries and responses will be available via the interactive consultation system in late December 2015.

## The Plan Making Process

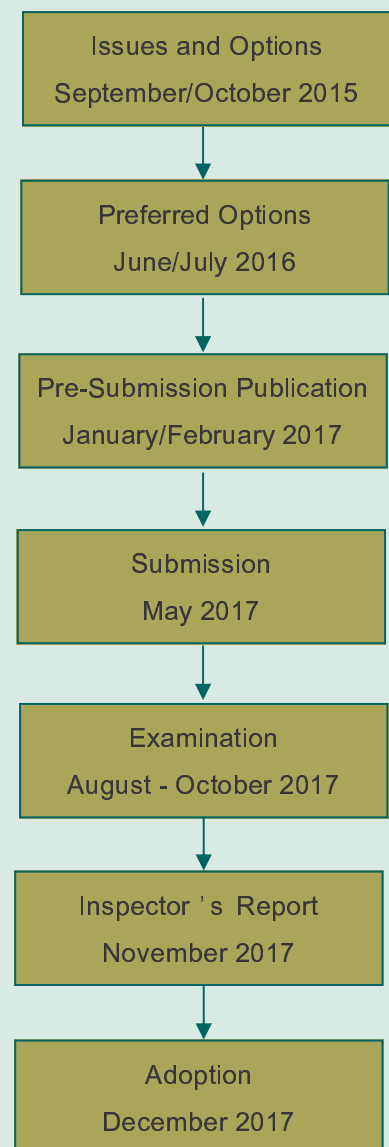
**1.7** The Issues and Options consultations will inform the preparation of a Preferred Options Paper. This is the first draft of the Local Plan Review and it will include specific development targets as well as identifying sites for accommodating the level of development anticipated. A Preferred Options consultation will be held during Summer 2016 to give everyone a further opportunity to comment on the emerging Plan. Following this, a Submission Draft Plan will be prepared. This is the final draft of the Plan which is submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for independent Examination. Before it is submitted, a six week publication period will be held. This will give everyone an opportunity to make further comments. Any comments made at this stage are forwarded to the independent Inspector for consideration. The Examination will include public hearing sessions which all are welcome to observe. Those people submitting comments on the Submission Draft Plan may be invited by the Inspector to speak at these sessions.

**1.8** At the end of the examination the independent Inspector will submit a report to the Council setting out whether the Plan meets the 'tests of soundness' - these are the legal requirements which the Plan must meet in order for the District Council to adopt the Plan and start using it as the basis for determining planning applications. It is likely that the Inspector will identify changes which are required to the Plan and it may be necessary to have a further consultation on these changes. It is anticipated that the Submission Draft Plan will be available in early 2017 and that the Plan will be adopted in late 2017.

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

**1.9** The new Local Plan will set out how much development is required in the District up until 2032. This will include residential (including Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation), retail and employment uses. The Local Plan will allocate the sites required to deliver the identified level of development. 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

## Key Stages in the Local Plan Review Process





be allocated for development but new sites will also be needed as the Plan will look at a longer timeframe and will give fresh consideration to the amount of housing, employment and retail requirements.

**1.10** 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, protecting 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.

**1.11** 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 timeframe. Not having an up-to-date Local Plan could 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 being developed.

**1.12** 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 it goes then this is the time to get involved.

## What Happens to the Existing Local Plan Documents?

**1.13** 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 into the new Local Plan. 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 2017 the new Plan will start to influence decisions on planning applications. Once the new Local Plan is adopted it will replace the existing documents.

## Evidence Base

**1.14** The Local Plan has to be based on robust and credible evidence. The District Council will need to be able to prove to the independent Inspector that this is the case when the examination in public takes place. If the Inspector does not think the evidence is correct or sufficient then the Council could be required to do additional work during the examination stage to demonstrate that the Local Plan is the most appropriate plan for the area. Therefore, a number of documents will be prepared by, or on behalf of the District Council to provide the evidence required to develop the Plan. The following list sets out the range of studies which

will be, or have been prepared. Some of these studies will be updates to work undertaken for the existing planning policy documents. Once completed, evidence base studies will be available on the District Council's web-site.

- Objective assessment of housing need
- Employment Land Review
- Infrastructure Delivery Plan
- Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation Assessment
- Green Infrastructure Strategy
- Historic Environment Topic Paper
- Housing Delivery Evidence
- Community Facilities Audit
- Open Space, Sport and Recreation Audit
- Settlement Hierarchy Topic Paper
- Strategic Flood Risk Assessment and Water Cycle Strategy
- Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment
- Town centre study (retail and other uses)
- Viability Assessment of the plan's policies and site allocations

### Question 1

Is the list of evidence set out above appropriate and sufficient to inform the Plan. If not, what should be added or deleted?

## Call for Sites

**1.15** As part of the Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA) the District Council undertook a Call for Sites exercise in Autumn 2014. This gave any landowner wishing to see their sites considered for development the opportunity to submit them to us for consideration. A large number of sites were submitted and in addition, officers identified a number of other potential development sites in accordance with the requirements of the National Planning Practice Guidance. These sites will be considered by an independent panel of development and property market professionals to assess their suitability for allocation. Any sites which are considered to be suitable for allocation will be considered as part of the plan preparation process. A report documenting all of the sites and drawing conclusions about each will be published in Summer 2016. It is important to remember that the SHELAA report is only a technical evidence document and it does not allocate sites for development.

**1.16** Whilst the initial 'call for sites' has taken place the District Council is happy to receive additional sites during the consultation period. If you are aware of any site that may have development potential or you are a landowner, developer or a business and have a site you would like to bring to our attention, please complete a site submission form, available from [www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk](http://www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk) and send it to us using the details under the 'How to Comment' heading earlier in this section.

## Sustainability Appraisal/Habitats Regulations Assessment

**1.17** A Sustainability Appraisal (SA) is a statutory requirement that integrates the requirements of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive with plan making. It makes sure that the environmental, social and economic effects of a plan and reasonable alternatives to the plan are being considered.

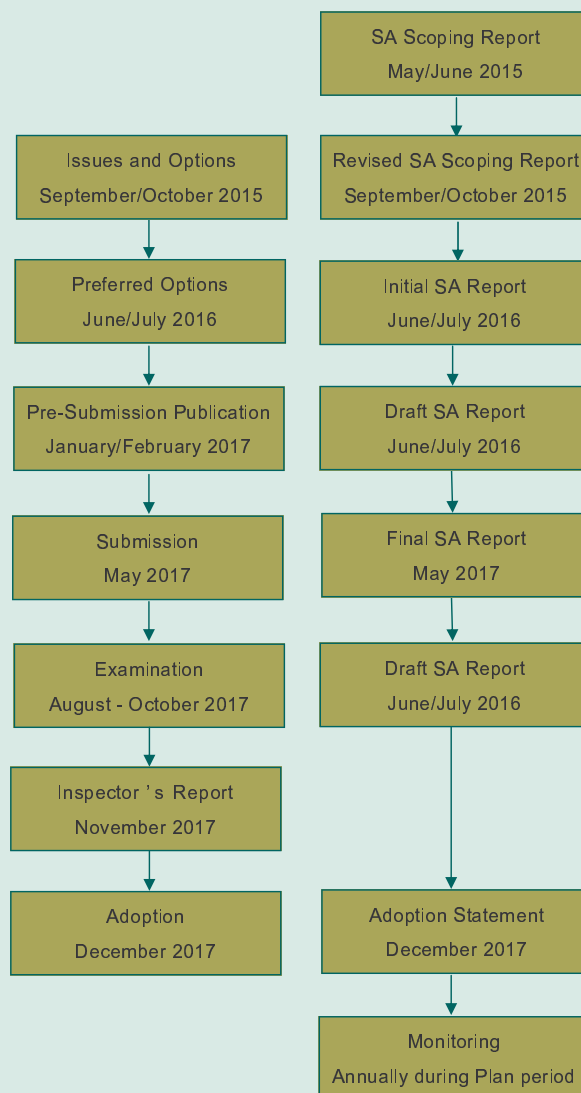
**1.18** As a first step, a Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report was prepared and was made available for consultation with key stakeholders including Historic England, Natural England and the Environment Agency to establish the range of issues to be covered in the sustainability appraisal, develop the sustainability appraisal framework and identify the key sustainability issues that are relevant to the new Local Plan. This consultation took place between 18th May and 22nd June 2015. The comments received have now been incorporated into a Revised SA Scoping Report and this is available on the District Council's web-site for information.

**1.19** Following the scoping stage, the next stage is the appraisal of the plan options set out in this Issues and Options Paper as well as the sites submitted through the 'call for sites' process against the sustainability objectives. This will highlight the social, economic and environmental impacts that are likely to arise from each plan option and will identify suggested mitigation measures. The findings will be incorporated into the Draft Sustainability Appraisal Report which will be made available for consultation alongside the Preferred Options Paper.

**1.20** The Final Sustainability Appraisal Report will be available for consultation alongside the Submission Draft Local Plan. It will help to demonstrate that the Plan is the most suitable for the District taking into account economic, social and environmental issues.

**1.21** The Habitats Directive (an EU policy) establishes an ecological network of European Sites (Natura 2000 Network) and requires consideration of whether or not an Appropriate Assessment needs to be undertaken during the preparation of a local plan. The purpose is to assess what effects, if any, the plan might have on European sites, such as Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs), in view of the conservation objectives

### Relationship between the SA Process and the Plan-Making Process





for these sites. Wetlands of international importance designated under the Ramsar Convention (Ramsar sites) are afforded the same level of protection and will therefore also be considered as part of the Habitats Regulations/Appropriate Assessment.

**1.22** There are no European sites or Ramsar sites in Wyre Forest District, but it will be necessary to carry out a screening exercise to assess whether the new Local Plan, in combination with other plans and programmes, is likely to have an adverse effect on other such sites beyond the plan area. The screening will be undertaken as part of the sustainability appraisal of the Plan for Submission and consultation will be carried out with Natural England.

## 2 Wyre Forest District Today

**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.

### 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 98,960. 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 increase from 2013 to 2014 was 0.54%.

**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 have their own character and community identity.

**2.4** Kidderminster, population 55,426 (2013), is the largest of the three towns and is the main centre for retail, industry and housing. The town developed rapidly in the 19<sup>th</sup> 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 which has a population of 20,434 (2013), developed as an important industrial Georgian Canal Town at the confluence of the River Severn and 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, have fewer facilities and more limited public transport.

### Key Issues for Wyre Forest District

**2.8** Wyre Forest District has many key issues. These include strengths and opportunities as well as weaknesses and threats.



**2.9** Wyre Forest District's strengths, which attract people to live and work within and visit the District, include a wide heritage of both natural and built environment assets, such as The Wyre Forest, the rivers Severn and Stour, the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal, Special Wildlife Sites, Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas as well as high quality agricultural land and

tourist attractions. The District's residents have high life expectancy at birth and in most areas, although not all, low unemployment.

**2.10** The District's weaknesses include a static and ageing population with very little in migration, a low birth rate, a population that has high levels of obesity and poor accessibility from the motorway network.

**2.11** The District has many opportunities for the future, these include the continuing redevelopment of Kidderminster town centre. This will include the expansion of Weavers Wharf which will include cafés and restaurants as well as more shops in a pleasant environment. Wyre Forest District will have more tourist attractions with the possible expansion of facilities at the Safari Park as well as more employment through the development of sites for industrial and business use.

**2.12** Threats to the District in the future include increasing pressure for development on land within the Green Belt. Current Government policy puts pressures on brownfield sites for residential development when many of these sites are needed for employment. The District has an ageing population with 30% of residents over the age of 65. Another threat to our District is flooding. This can be as a result of rivers, streams and brooks breaching their banks and also, as a result of more intense rainfall, surface water flooding can be a significant issue.



### Question 2

Are there any other strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to our District that you feel should be identified?

#### Social

**2.13** The District has an ageing population with approximately 30% of the population aged 65 and over. This is considerably higher than the national average of 23%. Suitable accommodation and care is needed for an ageing population. The number of residents aged 39 or below is considerably lower than the national average. The average age of a resident in the District is 42.69 years and the District has a low birth rate. The population has been virtually static with very little in-migration. However, the 2014 mid year estimate of population was 98,960. This was an increase of 539 from the previous mid year estimate. This shows an annual rise between 2013 and 2014 of 0.54%. This is slower than growth in England of 0.84%, but much higher than has been recorded in previous years in Wyre Forest District as the population between 2001 and 2011 only grew by 1.1%.

**2.14** Obesity is an issue that affects the District. Obesity figures for Wyre Forest at 27.7% are higher than those for Worcestershire at 25.6% and England at 24.1%. A healthy lifestyle with healthy eating and exercise needs to be encouraged. Some wards within the District have much higher levels of obesity than the District as a whole.

**2.15** Even though the population is static, owing to the falling rate of occupants per residential unit, more housing is required. Between 2006/7 to 2013/14, 93% of housing completions were built on previously developed or brownfield land and since 2011 the majority have been built within 30 minutes public transport time of key facilities. This helps to encourage residents to use public transport rather than being reliant on private transport.

#### Social issues for Wyre Forest District:

- Virtually static population growth.
- The population is ageing with a low percentage of residents in the 0-19 and 20-39 age groups. However the number of residents aged 45-64 is high and the number of residents aged 65+ is very high.
- 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. Therefore, we 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 we have a static population, there has been a 9% increase in the number of households as the number of residents per unit of accommodation is falling.

- The high costs of providing healthcare for an ageing population with high obesity - more medical intervention is required; 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.

### Question 3

Do you think that these are all of the social issues in Wyre Forest District, are there others that we should have included?

## Economic and Retail

**2.16** Kidderminster traditionally had a thriving carpet industry which was important for employment. The number of people employed in this industry has sharply declined and now over 90% of it has gone. The District, even with this loss, has low unemployment in most wards but with small pockets of high unemployment. The District also has lower wages than surrounding areas. The number of businesses closing is higher than that of new businesses starting up.

**2.17** The ReWyre Initiative is all about partnership working and bringing together the public, private and voluntary sectors, together with the wider community to improve Kidderminster and the Wyre Forest District.

**2.18** People travel to Wyre Forest District to visit local tourist attractions such as The Safari Park, Severn Valley Railway, the Wyre Forest and Bodenham and Arley Arboretums. Often these visits are day trips and local retail centres are not visited.



**2.19** GCSE results as well as NVQ level 4 and above results are both lower than the national average. The NVQ4 level of attainment could show a reduced level within the District due to out migration where those most highly qualified are travelling to other employment areas with higher wage levels such as Birmingham and Worcester.

**2.20** The Government issued a statement in 2014 outlining that it expects to see local development orders (LDOs) used to get permissions for residential development in place on over 90% of brownfield sites by 2020. Currently, many brownfield sites are allocated for industrial

development so, if approved for residential use, there would then be a shortfall of sites for employment opportunities. The issue is, where will employment sites be located within the District?

**2.21** Wyre Forest District has two railway stations at Kidderminster and Blakedown with good links to Birmingham and beyond. However, at peak times the railway is congested as commuters travel to work and back. Kidderminster rail station is due to be upgraded which will improve capacity and passenger experience.

**2.22** Kidderminster is the main shopping area in the District with smaller shopping areas in Stourport-on-Severn and Bewdley together with local centres which serve residential areas. The expansion of Weavers Wharf, which will include more shops, cafés and restaurants, will encourage more people to shop in Kidderminster. The rural areas in the east are generally well served with local shops and services in the villages. Local centres and rural facilities provide a valuable role in meeting local needs. In the west villages have more limited facilities.

#### **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 Oldington and Foley Park 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 LDO 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.
- With the expansion of Weavers Wharf, other areas of the town centre which have been traditionally retail could change to other uses and the primary shopping area could be redefined.



### Question 4

Do you think that there are more economic issues within the District that we have not included?

## Environment

**2.23** Wyre Forest District is encompassed within the Mid-Severn Sandstone Plateau and part of the District is within the Abberley and Malvern Hills Geopark. The Rivers Severn and Stour run through the District and one or both of them pass through the centre of all three towns. This can lead to development pressures in the flood zones. The Wyre Forest itself is a designated Site of Special Scientific Interest as is 6% of land within Wyre Forest District. The agricultural land within the District ranges from the best quality grade 1 down to grade 3b. The best and most versatile land which is grades 1 and 2 is found in the eastern part of the District.



**2.24** The eastern side of the District falls within the West Midlands Green Belt. The purposes of the Green Belt are set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). One of the main purposes is to ensure that there is enough countryside between built up areas so that they do not merge into one another.

**2.25** Wyre Forest District has many important buildings and area: 6 Grade I Listed Buildings, 26 Grade II\* Listed Buildings and 660 Grade II Listed Buildings together with 17 Conservation Areas. There are also 9 Scheduled Monuments and 1 registered park and garden. There are a series of Local Heritage Lists covering parts of the District. These include 830 buildings which, whilst not listed on the national heritage list, are considered important heritage assets within the District.

**2.26** Within the Wyre Forest District there are two Air Quality Monitoring Areas (AQMA) at Horsefair, Kidderminster and Welch Gate, Bewdley. This poor air quality is due to traffic pollution in built up areas.

### 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.

### Question 5

Are there any more environmental issues that are affecting Wyre Forest District that we have not included ?

### 3 Vision and Objectives

#### What will Wyre Forest District be like in 2032

**3.1** In 2032 the three main towns 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.

**3.2** 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.

**3.3** 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.



**3.4** 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.

**3.5** 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.

**3.6** 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 remains more limited services, focussing on the needs of local communities, in settlements to the west such as Rock, Clows Top and Far Forest.

**3.7** 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 the District and creating a balanced population structure.

**3.8** 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.

**3.9** 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 experience reduced levels of traffic congestion and air quality within the town centres has improved. 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.



**3.10** 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 walking and cycling routes. 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>(1)</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.

### Question 6

Do you agree with the vision set out above? If not, what changes would you make?

### Objectives

The following objectives will help to deliver the vision for the District. They will provide the framework for the Local Plan.

1. Provide a range of high-quality, highly energy efficient, market and affordable homes to meet the needs of all residents and encourage a balanced population structure.
2. Diversify and grow the District's economy, emphasising the development of the service sector, high tech industry and sustainable tourism.
3. Continue to develop Kidderminster as the strategic centre for the District and beyond and to maintain the important roles of Stourport-on-Severn and Bewdley as market towns.

1 Pre May 2015 wards are referred to as data is not yet available for new wards.

4. Support the viability of the District's villages and rural areas by supporting sustainable growth and economic diversification.
5. Safeguard and enhance the District's unique landscape character, Green Belt, natural environment and green infrastructure.
6. Conserve and enhance the District's heritage assets.
7. Safeguard and enhance natural resources, minimise waste and increase recycling, especially the re-use of land and buildings.
8. Safeguard and replenish the District's rich and varied biodiversity and geodiversity, including that within the three town centres.
9. Ensure the District is equipped to adapt to and mitigate the impacts of climate change by ensuring that future developments are low or zero-carbon and that they do not increase flood risk to new and existing property.
10. Improve the District's air quality, particularly in the town centre areas of Kidderminster, Stourport-on-Severn and Bewdley.
11. Support the development of a sustainable transport network which provides genuine alternatives to the private car and encourages sustainable freight movement.
12. Help foster community pride and healthy lifestyles in the District through providing opportunities for community involvement and active lifestyles.
13. Maximise community cohesion and safety and ensure new developments positively contribute towards crime reduction, improved health care and education across the District for the benefit of all residents.

### Question 7

Do you agree with the objectives? If not, what changes would you make? Are there any other issues which need to be covered by the objectives?

## 4 Cross Boundary Relationships

**4.1** The West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy which previously shaped and guided our Adopted Core Strategy has now been abolished. With the removal of this regional tier of planning, the Government brought forward the "Duty to Co-operate" through the Localism Act to assist with strategic planning. This requires us to work with other neighbouring councils and strategic partners to make sure that planning is co-ordinated across Housing Market Areas and Functional Economic Market Areas (FEMAs).

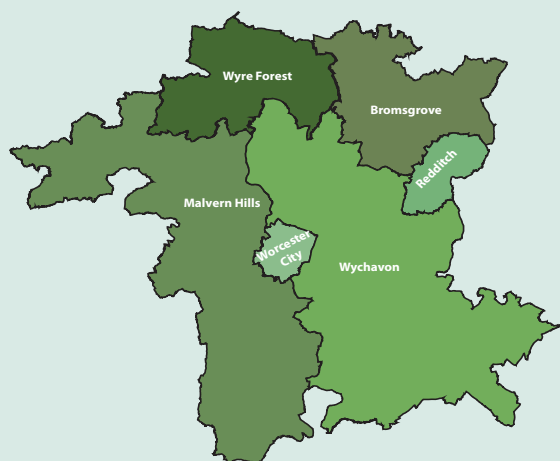
**4.2** Those Local Authorities with whom we share common boundaries are listed below and we continue to have ongoing discussions with our neighbours on strategic planning issues. Wyre Forest also has strong links with the Birmingham and Dudley Metropolitan authorities.

### Neighbouring Authorities:

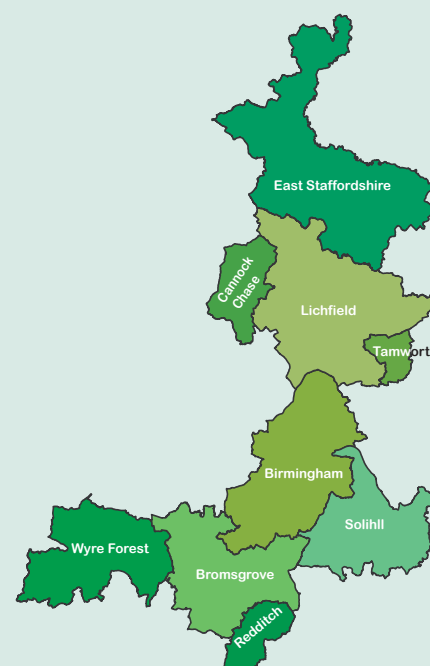
- Bromsgrove District Council
- Malvern Hills District Council
- Wychavon District Council
- Worcestershire County Council
- Shropshire Council
- South Staffordshire District Council

**4.3 Local Enterprise Partnerships** - Wyre Forest District is also within two Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) - the Worcestershire LEP and the Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP.

### Worcestershire LEP Area



### Greater Birmingham & Solihull LEP Area



**4.4** The GBSLEP has a Strategy for Growth, an economic plan which underpins all of its activities and objectives. The Strategy has high level economically driven targets. The GBSLEP is preparing a Strategic Plan known as the Spatial Plan for Recovery and Growth. This will look at the scale, broad distribution and direction of growth required. It is intended that this plan will provide a strategic steer for the participating District's Local Plans.

**4.5** Worcestershire LEP seeks to shape the best business environment for the county, stimulate the growth of the local economy, encourage inward investment, boost enterprise and actively promote Worcestershire as an exceptional place to work, live and prosper.

**4.6** Although we have not been required to jointly produce a Development Plan with our neighbouring authorities, our participation within these LEPs brings with it strategic requirements relating to jobs growth, investment and potentially Birmingham's housing land supply. These factors will all need to be considered through our plan review.

**4.7 Housing Market Area** - Wyre Forest falls within the Worcestershire Housing Market Area. A Housing Market Area is characterised by its house prices, rates of change in house prices, household migration and search patterns, travel to work area boundaries, retail and school catchments areas. Our District does not have strong links with the Birmingham Housing Market Area but has retained some longer standing links with the Black Country Housing Market Area. It will therefore be necessary for us to work with these areas under the Duty to Co-operate requirements.

**4.8 Functional Economic Market Area (FEMA)**- work is currently being undertaken by the Local Enterprise Partnerships to define the extent of the FEMA. This takes into account travel to work areas; the housing market area; flows of goods, services and information within the local economy; the transport network and catchment area. Work on the Employment Land Review will need to take full account of Wyre Forest District's position in the FEMA.

**4.9** The box below sets out some of the potential strategic planning issues to be addressed in the future Local Plan:

#### **Strategic Issues for the Local Plan:**

- Housing provision needs to take account of Housing Market Areas such as the Worcestershire and Greater Birmingham HMAs.
- The scale of new employment land provision needs to take account of the LEP's growth priorities and the Functional Economic Market Area (FEMA).
- The location and scale of any new development to be located near our boundaries with adjacent authorities.
- The potential need for a Strategic Green Belt Boundary Review across the West Midlands.
- The potential impacts of new development on road and rail transport infrastructure.
- The cumulative impacts of new development on utilities infrastructure.
- The potential impacts of new development on River Basin Catchment Areas and flood prevention.



### Question 8

Do you agree with the strategic planning issues identified above?

Are there any other strategic planning issues which you feel should be included here?

Are there any particular local authorities nearby or strategic bodies that you feel we should be engaging with and why?

## 5 Key Local Plan Approaches

### Plan Themes

**5.1** The Issues and Options Paper covers a series of themes as follows:

- **Providing Quality Homes** - this looks at the key issues relating to housing within the District and options for addressing them.
- **Providing Employment Opportunities and Retail Services**- this looks at the key issues relating to the District's economy, opportunities for employment and the provision of services including retailing.
- **Safeguarding Character and Local Distinctiveness** - this looks at issues and options relating to a number of topics which contribute to local distinctiveness including green infrastructure and open space, biodiversity and geodiversity, the historic environment, design quality, the Green Belt and the District's natural landscape.
- **A Well Served District**- this looks at issues and options relating to transport and movement within, and into and out of, the District.
- **Tackling Climate Change and its Impacts** - this looks at all aspects of climate change including reducing greenhouse gas emissions (excluding those from transport), reducing water consumption, and responding to the impacts of climate change, particularly flood risk.

### Corporate Plan

**5.2** The District Council's Corporate Plan details its vision and values and sets out our strategic direction, actions and priorities for the years ahead. The Local Plan will contribute towards the vision and priorities within the District Council's Corporate Plan.

**5.3** "Wyre Forest – where people have the opportunity to enjoy a good quality of life and want to live, work, visit and invest" is the Vision for the Corporate Plan. Almost all of the actions set out within the Corporate Plan are relevant to the Local Plan. There is a particular focus on regeneration. The most relevant priority is "working towards meeting current and future housing needs, with an up-to-date Local Development Plan that provides for growth in the number of houses".

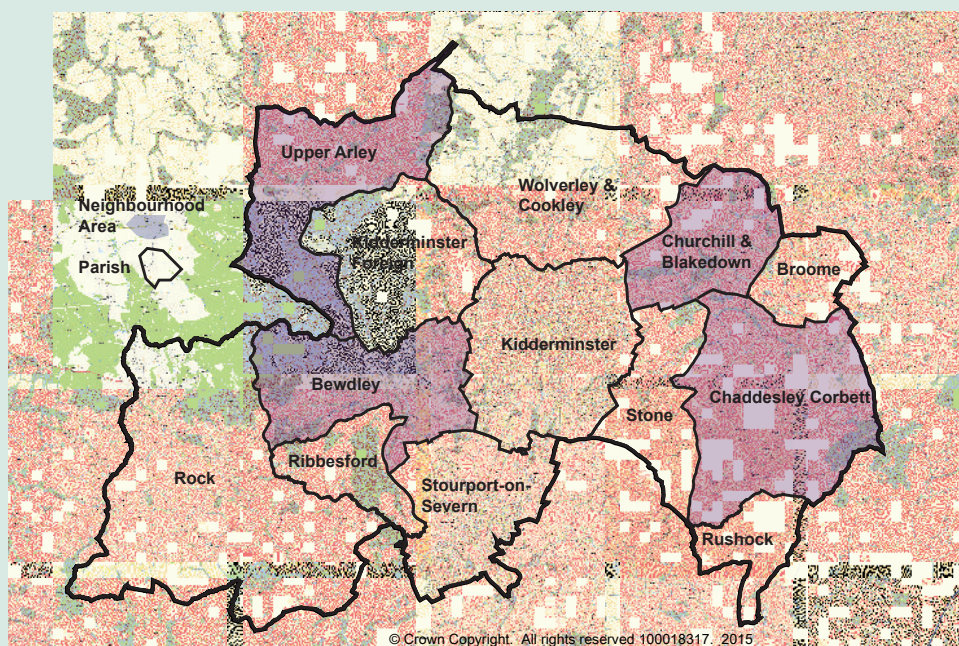
### The Role of Neighbourhood Planning

**5.4** Neighbourhood Planning was introduced by the Localism Act 2011. Through producing a Neighbourhood Plan, communities can take the lead on developing planning policies for their areas, as long as certain rules are followed and any plans and policies are in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the Local Plan. Neighbourhood Plan policies are material considerations in determining planning applications in the area.

**5.5** The Chaddesley Corbett Neighbourhood Plan was made in September 2014. This means it is now part of the statutory development plan for the District. Three further Neighbourhood Plans are being progressed within the District, they are:

- Churchill and Blakedown - Churchill and Blakedown Parish Council
- Bewdley - Bewdley Town Council
- Upper Arley - Upper Arley Parish Council

### Neighbourhood Areas



Wyre Forest District Council will work with these communities and other communities wishing to prepare Neighbourhood Plans to ensure timetables, aspirations and evidence are aligned.

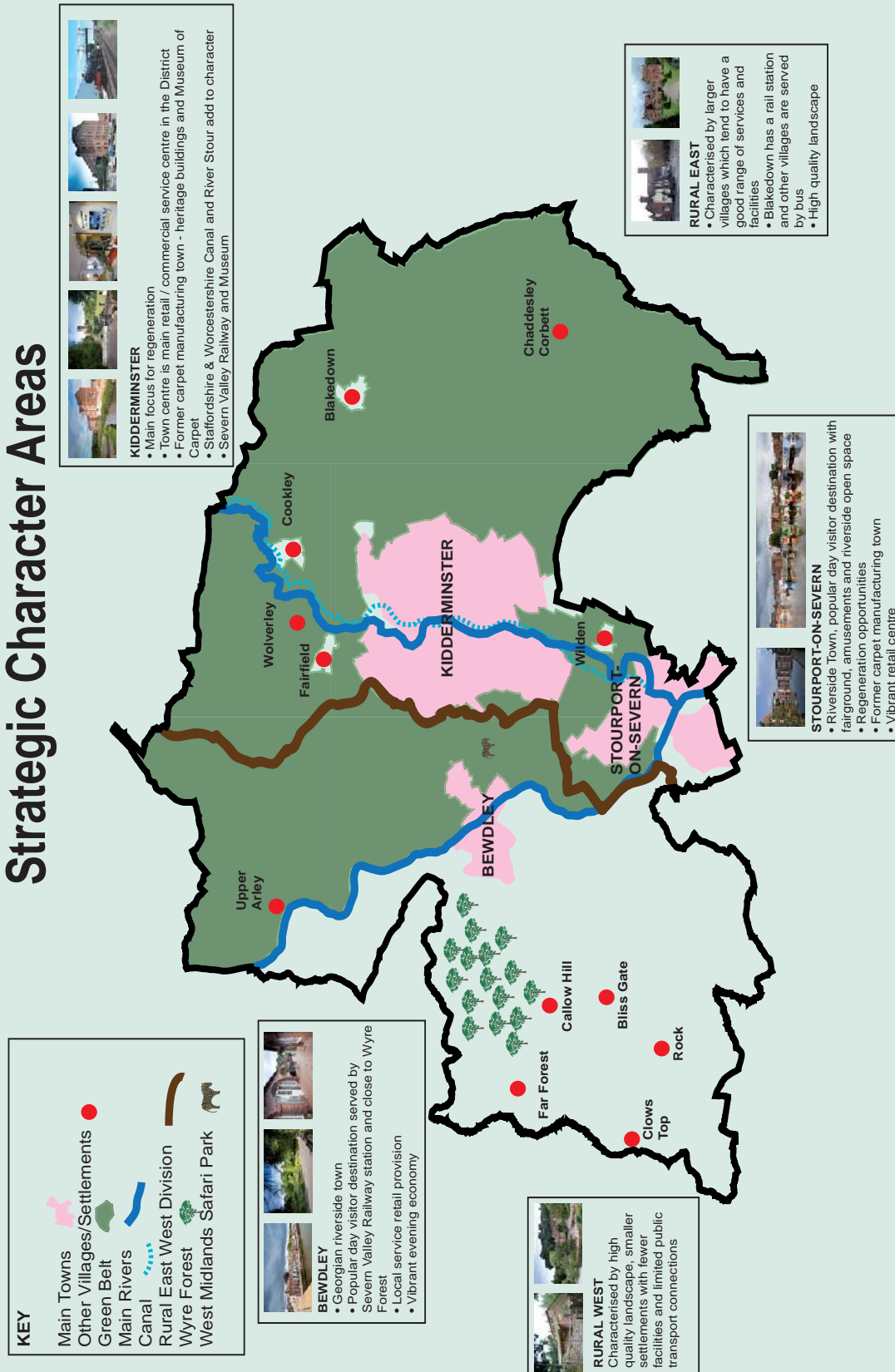
### Local Distinctiveness

**5.6** A key issue for the Local Plan to address is maintaining local distinctiveness. The diagram overleaf shows the key Character areas of the District. Whilst it is appreciated that these character areas are broad and character can differ at a much smaller scale, for example, different areas within the towns and the individual villages within the rural character areas, it is considered that these are the strategic character areas within the District. These character areas will form the basis for the site allocations which will be included at the next consultation stage.

#### Question 9

Do you agree with the broad character areas shown on the map overleaf and the overview of each? If, you disagree, in what way would you change the character areas? What additional character areas do you think should be identified? What would you add to or remove from the character area overviews?

# Strategic Character Areas



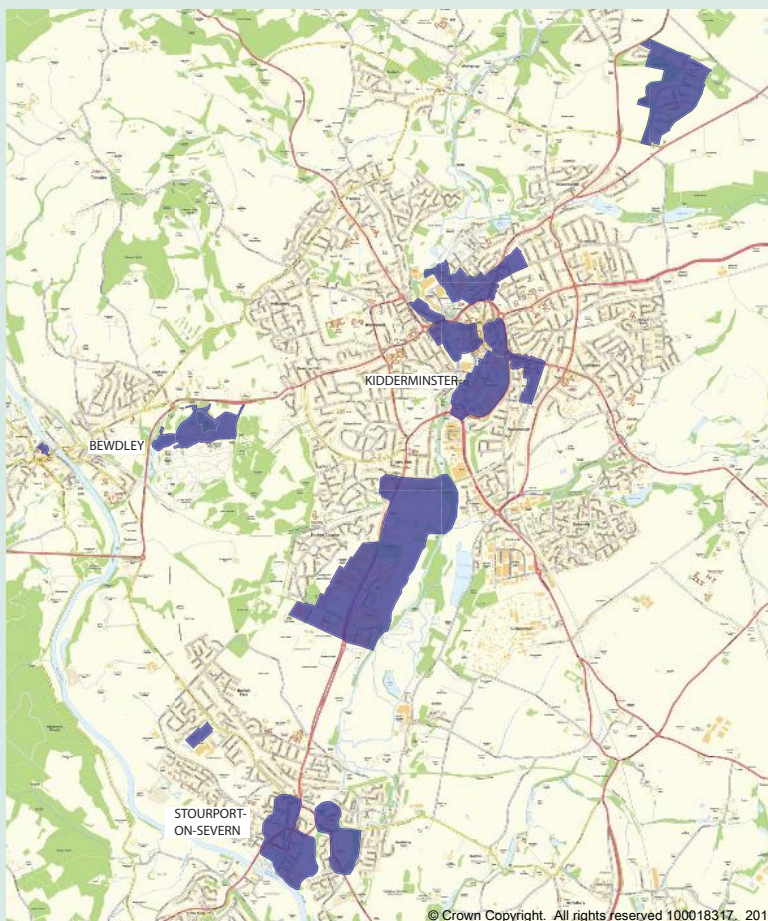


## Main Regeneration Sites

**5.7** The District Council's current plan sets out a brownfield regeneration strategy. Many of the sites allocated within the Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan and the Kidderminster Central Area Action Plan are currently being developed or have already been developed. Examples of sites which have been developed include Reilloc Chain, Broadwaters Community Centre and the former Georgian Carpets site at Clensmore Street in Kidderminster and the former Lucy Baldwin Hospital in Stourport-on-Severn. Development is currently underway on the former British Sugar Site and redevelopment of the former Romwire site is due to start shortly. The majority of the other allocations within these documents are still expected to be developed during the period up until 2026. It is expected that most of these allocations will be carried forward and that the new plan will continue to have a strong focus on brownfield regeneration delivering a significant amount of the development required within the District.

**5.8** The map below shows the District's main regeneration sites and areas.

### Regeneration Areas



### Question 10

Do you agree that the District should continue to focus on brownfield regeneration and that the existing allocations still provide a basis for this to happen?

## Developer Contributions

**5.9** Wyre Forest District Council currently seeks financial contributions from developers towards certain types of infrastructure using planning obligations which are also called S106 Agreements. These agreements are negotiated for each individual development on a case by case basis. The District Council has a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) which sets out the details of how these agreements are negotiated. They include provision for education, affordable housing, open space and play provision, and transport improvements. The SPD is due to be revised during 2015/2016.

**5.10** The Government recently introduced a new mechanism for collecting financial contributions from developers towards the costs of providing infrastructure. This is called The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). When implementing CIL, Local Authorities are required to set out a charge for different types of development. This needs to be based on robust evidence, particularly on viability, and it needs to go through a number of stages of consultation as well as an examination in public. The authority also needs to have a formal list setting out the projects on which CIL contributions will be spent. Some CIL receipts are passed on to communities to spend, for example in areas where a Neighbourhood Plan has been 'made' the Parish Council receive 25% of CIL income generated within their Parish. So far, Wyre Forest District Council has chosen not to implement CIL because of concerns over its viability. However, it is anticipated that CIL will be implemented shortly after the Local Plan review. Even if the District Council implement CIL we will still need to use S106 agreements for affordable housing contributions and infrastructure which is site specific and is required to make a development acceptable in planning terms.

### Question 11

Should the District Council aim to put a CIL Charging Schedule in place following the adoption of the new Local Plan? Do you think that this will help us to better deliver infrastructure to support new development?

## 6 What Level of Growth is Needed and What Broad Options Can be Pursued?

**6.1** Changes to the planning system have brought an end to regional planning. This means that our development targets are no longer set through the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy. We are now responsible for setting the District's own targets for homes and jobs and therefore the amount of housing, employment and retail land that needs to be allocated within the new Local Plan.

### Our Existing Development Strategy

**6.2** The existing development strategy for Wyre Forest District is set out in the Adopted Core Strategy and is regeneration led. It focuses new development on brownfield sites within the main towns of Kidderminster and Stourport-on-Severn. Smaller amounts of development are directed towards Bewdley and the main villages. This sustainable strategy rightly targets new housing and employment to our available brownfield sites in order to make the most efficient use of our land and local service provision. It continues to be a very successful strategy, providing certainty to developers and businesses and has seen the delivery of around 2,500 new homes and 14 hectares of employment land since 2006.

**6.3** The regeneration strategy will continue to be the main focus for new development within the District, particularly within the earlier stages of the new plan. Depending on the levels of growth that are yet to be established through continuing work on housing need assessment and employment land requirements, it may also be necessary to look at additional options for accommodating future development to ensure Wyre Forest continues to grow sustainably to meet these needs. This may necessitate some greenfield development away from the town centres if there are not enough brownfield sites available.

**6.4** The Local Plan Review provides the opportunity for us to look at our long term development strategy and the needs of our local communities. It is important to remember that our District is a mixed urban and rural area where many different communities live. The location of development can help to sustain and improve service provision and reduce the need to travel. This is a factor that will be important to consider in any future development strategy.

### What Are The Factors That Will Influence Growth?

#### *Housing Need*

**6.5** The Council has commissioned further work on our Objective Assessment of Housing Need; at this early stage we are not able to be exact about the total number of dwellings required over the plan period. However, some population modelling work was undertaken during 2013/14 which looked at the 2011-2031 time period. This tested a range of scenarios from standard population projections as a base level to jobs growth which would require higher housing numbers to support the local labour force. The results provided an indicative range of the need for 270-370 dwellings per annum.

**6.6** Put simply, this could mean an indicative range of between 4,320 and 5,920 additional dwellings over the new Local Plan period (2016-2032). The current Local Plan has a housing target of 4,000 dwellings for the 2006-2026 time period and enough sites identified to meet this

requirement. With residential land already identified and allocated for growth through the existing Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan, we have an existing supply of allocated land that can contribute towards accommodating some growth during the 2015-2026 timescale. This could provide a further 1,350 dwellings.

**6.7** The new Local Plan may need to identify sufficient additional sites to accommodate a range of between approximately 2970 - 4570 dwellings in order to meet this indicative range of housing needs over the plan period (2016-2032). These figures will change in light of the latest Objective Assessment of Housing Need and should be considered as a guide only.

### *Supporting Growth in the Local Economy*

**6.8** Based on the latest levels of population growth, job forecasts for the District predict that there is likely to be a 5.4% growth in jobs during the plan period. There will be big increases in the utilities; wholesale and retail; accommodation, food services and recreation and information and communication sectors. It is important that enough economically active people are available to fill these jobs and to meet the skills required otherwise jobs growth and economic recovery within the District could be restrained during the plan period.

**6.9** The Local Plan will need to set a target for new jobs creation over the plan period, this will be informed by projected population growth, the number of people likely to be of working age, economic trends and the number of people living in the District. This will be converted into the amount of employment land required within the District. An Employment Land Review has been commissioned and will take an in depth look at employment land requirements and potential future locations.

**6.10** Similarly the Plan will also need to set a target for the provision of new retail floorspace. This will need to be based on an up to date assessment of the District's retail needs. It is likely that this will be heavily influenced by the growth in on-line shopping and the impact that this has had on shopping patterns.

### *Land Availability*

**6.11** Many landowners and developers have submitted potential sites for further consideration through the Call for Sites exercise in Autumn 2014. As the Local Plan progresses through to its submission stage, potential site allocations will be refined through the sustainability appraisal process and an independent assessment of their deliverability. They will then be subject to a final stage of scrutiny through Independent Examination by the Planning Inspectorate. The key influence in site allocations will be establishing the most suitable overarching strategy for directing growth during the plan period.

### *Environmental Constraints*

**6.12** The District is heavily affected by flooding with substantial areas of land near to the Rivers Severn and Stour falling within Flood Zones 2 and 3. The Eastern areas of the District fall within the West Midlands Green Belt and are therefore subject to Green Belt policy which restricts development except for very special circumstances. There are also a number of Sites of Special Scientific Interest which could be adversely impacted by new development. These constraints will all be very important factors in considering where new development should be located.



## What Level of Growth is Needed and What Broad Options Can be Pursued?

### *Infrastructure Delivery*

**6.13** The provision of infrastructure will have a large impact on the location and scale of new development in our area. It is essential that infrastructure is provided and delivered to ensure that new development is well connected and sustainable and offers its residents a good quality of life. An Infrastructure Delivery Plan was developed in consultation with key stakeholders and utility providers in 2012 this will be updated to inform the new development strategy.

### **What are the Potential Options for Growth?**

**6.14** This consultation identifies 7 potential options for accommodating more residential, employment and retail growth within our District. In reality it may be necessary to utilise a combination of these options. We would like you to consider these different approaches and let us have your views. You may have some alternative suggestions for options which you feel we have not yet identified.

#### Option 1

##### **Brownfield regeneration which focuses on the main towns of Kidderminster and Stourport-on-Severn.**

- This would be a continuation of our existing successful development strategy.
- Makes the most effective use of previously developed land and reduces the need to travel.
- However, depending on our growth needs there may not be enough supply of available and deliverable brownfield sites within the District for the whole of the new plan period.
- There are potentially some viability issues associated with developing brownfield sites such as land remediation costs, which could impact on the deliverability of new development.

#### Question 12

Do you think that there will be enough brownfield sites available to accommodate all of the new development required for the 2016-2032 Plan Period?

Do you think we should continue to focus all new development on the main towns?

#### Option 2

##### **Brownfield regeneration focussed on the main towns and expansion of Kidderminster to the North East via a sustainable urban extension.**

- If growth levels do necessitate some greenfield development during the new plan period, then this option could focus some development to sites around the north eastern

edge of Kidderminster between the A449 Wolverhampton Road and the A456 Birmingham Road.

- Development here could make the most effective use of sustainable transport links at Kidderminster Rail Station and potentially its wider links to HS2 in the future.
- However, land to the east of Kidderminster falls within the Green Belt and in order to allocate sites in this area it will require a comprehensive Green Belt Boundary Review.

## Question 13

Do you think that a Sustainable Urban Extension to the north east of Kidderminster is the most sustainable location for greenfield development?

If so, do you have any views or suggestions on appropriate development sites in this area?

## Option 3

**Brownfield regeneration focussed on the main towns and expansion of Kidderminster to the South East via a sustainable urban extension.**

- If growth levels do necessitate some greenfield development during the new plan period, then this option could focus some development to sites around the south eastern edges of Kidderminster between the A456 Birmingham Road and the A449 Worcester Road.
- Development here could be well located to make the most of the employment opportunities along the Worcester Road and Hartlebury Trading Estate corridor.
- However, land to the south east of Kidderminster falls within the Green Belt and in order to allocate sites in this area it will require a comprehensive Green Belt Boundary Review.

## Question 14

Do you think a Sustainable Urban Extension to the south east of Kidderminster is the most sustainable location for greenfield development?

If so, do you have any views or suggestions on appropriate development sites in this area?

## Option 4

**Brownfield regeneration focus for Stourport-on-Severn.**

## What Level of Growth is Needed and What Broad Options Can be Pursued?

- This option would seek to meet Stourport-on-Severn's future housing, employment and retail needs solely on brownfield sites.
- There are still significant amounts of brownfield land available for development in Stourport-on-Severn. Depending on its level of housing and employment needs this may be enough to accommodate all of its development within the new plan period without the need for a sustainable urban extension.
- Land to the north east of Stourport-on-Severn falls within the Green Belt and therefore any greenfield sites identified here would require a comprehensive Green Belt Boundary Review.
- Land to the south west of Stourport-on-Severn does not fall within the Green Belt, but it does contain sensitive landscapes which fall within the open countryside.

### Question 15

Do you think that Stourport-on-Severn will have enough deliverable brownfield sites available to meet its development needs over the new plan period?

If not, do you think that Stourport-on-Severn will also require a sustainable urban extension to help accommodate its development needs?

Where do you think it would be best to locate a Sustainable Urban Extension in relation to the town itself?

### Option 5

**Allocate some development to Bewdley through an amendment to the town's settlement boundary to accommodate new development.**

- This option would see some new development allocated to Bewdley on greenfield sites to meet its future needs
- This would require an amendment to the town's existing settlement boundary. Bewdley Town Council is producing a Neighbourhood Development Plan for the area. Any allocations or amendments to the settlement boundary will also need to be considered through this process too.
- Through the current Development Strategy, Bewdley has seen only very small amounts of development directed to it because of the lack of available brownfield land in the town.
- Land to the east of the town falls within the Green Belt and therefore any sites allocated here would need to be subject to a Green Belt Boundary Review.
- Land to the north west of the town is not Green Belt but it is open countryside and has high landscape value.

## Question 16

Do you feel that there is enough opportunity to accommodate Bewdley's development needs to 2032 on brownfield land within the settlement boundary? Are there any brownfield sites available?

If not, do you think that Bewdley's settlement boundary should be amended to accommodate further development on greenfield sites in order to meet it's future housing and employment needs?

If you do feel that new development on greenfield sites is appropriate for Bewdley, then where do you think this would be best located in relation to the town?

## Option 6

**Allocate more new development to the villages and settlements within the District's Rural East.**

- This could provide a stronger focus on rural regeneration and help to retain local services and meet localised housing needs.
- In order to accommodate more development in these areas, it would be necessary to undertake a comprehensive settlement boundary review for villages to the east of the District.
- Some villages and settlements such as Chaddesley Corbett, do not currently have a settlement boundary and are washed over by the Green Belt.
- Land to the east of the District falls within the Green Belt and any site identification in or around settlements would be subject to a Green Belt Boundary Review.
- There is the potential to identify more previously developed sites in the Green Belt for new development.
- Chaddesley Corbett village has its own Neighbourhood Development Plan and Churchill and Blakedown Parish Council is in the process of producing a plan for their area. Both of these will be important considerations in allocating further development to meet their local needs.

## Question 17

Do you think we should be directing further development to these settlements to help sustain rural services and communities to the east of the District? Do you feel that villages to the east of our area have the right capacity of services and facilities to help support their sustainable growth?

Should new development in these settlements be relative to their size and if so what proportion should it be?



## What Level of Growth is Needed and What Broad Options Can be Pursued?

Do you think the current settlement boundaries around villages to the east are correct or do they need to be amended?

Are there any brownfield (previously developed sites) located within the Green Belt that we should be considering further for new development?

### Option 7

#### **Allocate more development to the villages and settlements within the District's Rural West.**

- The smaller settlements to the West of the River Severn, generally have a lower level of service provision and poorer public transport links.
- This option could provide a stronger focus on rural regeneration and help to retain local services and meet localised housing needs in these areas.
- In order to accommodate more development in these areas it would be necessary to undertake a comprehensive settlement boundary review for villages to the west of the District.
- Some of the smaller settlements in this area do not currently have a settlement boundary drawn around them.

### Question 18

Do you think that we should be directing further development to these settlements to help sustain rural services and communities to the west of the District? Do you feel that villages to the west of our District have the right capacity of services and facilities to help support their sustainable growth?

Should new development in these settlements be relative to their size and if so what proportion should it be?

Do you think that the current settlement boundaries around villages to the west are correct or do they need to be amended?

Are there any settlements in this area which you feel should have a settlement boundary drawn around them?

Do you know of any sites in this area which could be suitable to meet local development needs?

## 7 Providing Quality Homes

**7.1** Housing should be of a high quality, sufficient quantity, affordable and the type needed in order to create successful communities. It is important to plan for a mix of homes and a range of sizes and types to meet both current and future housing needs.

### Housing Mix

**7.2** The NPPF encourages Local Plans to provide a mix of homes to meet the needs of different groups such as families with children, the elderly, those with disabilities or particular support needs, gypsies and travellers and those wishing to build their own homes. Wyre Forest District has an increasingly elderly population with over 30% estimated to be over 60 in 2013 (it was 22.5% for England as a whole).

**7.3** The District has pockets of severe deprivation where very few residents are able to access open market housing. Average household income in Wyre Forest (£33,482 in 2013) is much lower than that for Worcestershire as a whole (£37,000) with only 22% categorised as 'affluent achievers' compared with 30% in Worcestershire as a whole. Although house prices in the District are low in comparison to the County average, with wages being that much lower, there is still a real problem of affordability. The average sale price in 2014 was £179,000 in Wyre Forest compared with £222,000 in Worcestershire.

**7.4** The Local Plan needs to plan positively for a mix of housing based on an assessment of the type of people that 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. This will affect the affordability of the housing offer.

**7.5** The table below shows that housing completions over the last 9 years have provided a good mix of house types and sizes. 3 in every 5 homes completed since 2006 have had 2 or fewer bedrooms to cater for smaller households.

**Type of Dwelling Completed 2006-15**

Year	1 bed flat	2 bed flat	1 bed house	2 bed house	3 bed house	4 bed house	Total dwellings
2006/7	46	69	4	39	75	68	301
2007/8	44	81	2	59	47	29	262
2008/9	33	92	21	44	54	27	252
2009/10	57	89	1	34	15	23	219
2010/11	8	76	3	27	35	9	158
2011/12	25	74	1	34	71	30	235
2012/13	45	27	0	46	60	50	229
2013/14	42	68	2	67	80	122	379
2014/15	99	42	6	92	124	99	462
<b>2006 - 2015</b>	<b>399</b>	<b>618</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>442</b>	<b>561</b>	<b>457</b>	<b>2498</b>

**7.6** This consultation identifies 5 potential options for achieving a housing mix.

### Option A - Housing Mix

**Continue with current policy of concentrating provision around dwellings to cater for smaller households.**

- This option would cater for both newly forming households and those downsizing into smaller properties. Analysis of waiting list data shows an overwhelming requirement for 1 and 2 bed affordable units.
- Recent provision in the private rental sector has been mainly in the form of 1 and 2 bed flats, much of this being provided in town centre conversions of empty office units.

### Option B - Housing Mix

**Look to provide more housing suitable for families.**

- The District has a declining school-aged population. A policy to provide more family-sized housing could help to revert this trend.

### Option C - Housing Mix

**Look to provide more choice of executive homes in Wyre Forest District.**

- This would encourage more affluent people to relocate to Wyre Forest. Recent examples of developments of this type have included the Sutton Reservoir site in Kidderminster.

### Option D - Housing Mix

**Look to provide for a mix of house types on all large-scale developments.**

- This would encourage a mix of household types and ages which will help to develop a strong sense of community

### Option E - Housing Mix

**Specify housing mix on an individual site basis in conjunction with a site size threshold.**

- This would provide flexibility where, for example, viability issues meant certain house types would be required

### Question 19

What are your views on the options set out for housing mix? Are there any other options which should be considered?

## Housing Land Allocations

**7.7** Allocating land for housing is a key role of the Local Plan. The Local Planning Authority will need to set housing targets for both market and affordable housing and allocate enough land to ensure that these targets can be met. The current Local Plan is based around a brownfield regeneration strategy. Thus all the remaining housing allocations which are yet to be taken up by developers are previously developed sites.

**7.8** This consultation identifies three potential options for allocating housing land.

### Option A - Housing Land Allocations

**Seek to take existing unimplemented residential allocations forward (including mixed use).**

- Many of the remaining allocations have had developer interest and schemes are being developed. Some brownfield sites may take longer to deliver due to viability issues.

### Option B - Housing Land Allocations

**Seek to allocate alternative sites.**

- Landowners and agents have put forward sites through the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment Call for Sites. Depending on the outcome of the Objective Assessment of Housing Need, it is highly possible that additional sites will be required to provide housing for the next plan period

### Option C - Housing Land Allocations

**Consider proposals for residential development on larger areas of garden land with strict conditions relating to impact on neighbourhood character.**



- Garden land is no longer classified as previously developed land. Current Local Plan policy precludes its development for this reason. However, there may be certain cases where it would be appropriate to allocate a garden site for housing.

### Question 20

What are your views on the housing land allocation options? Are there other options which you feel the council should consider?

### Creating Sustainable Communities

**7.9** Recent developments have seen small households moving into newly converted apartments inside of the Ring Road. Much of this housing has been provided by the private rented sector. These developments help to support other commercial uses in the town and encourage more street level activity throughout the day. Redevelopment of former industrial sites on the edge of the town centre have led to the creation of new communities catering for a wide range of households from newly formed households to families and those looking to downsize to a smaller more manageable property. These sites allow easy access into the town centre by foot or cycle along the canal and also easy access to the adjacent countryside. It is important to ensure that new developments create sustainable well-designed communities supported by appropriate infrastructure.

**7.10** This consultation identifies six potential options for creating sustainable communities.

#### Option A - Sustainable Communities

**Seek to provide housing as part of a mixed use scheme.**

- The integration of residential uses with other land uses leads to a more vibrant streetscene with buildings occupied throughout the day

#### Option B - Sustainable Communities

**Provide more housing within Kidderminster Town Centre and inside of the Ring Road.**

- Prior to the construction of the ring road, there were large residential communities in the Bromsgrove Street area. Is housing the best option to kick start the regeneration of this area?

**7.11** The Adopted Core Strategy contains a policy on housing density giving indicative densities of 70 dwellings per hectare (dph) within Kidderminster town centre and adjacent to the railway station and reducing to 30 dph in Bewdley and the rural areas. The NPPF now suggests that density should be determined on a site by site basis so that each development reflects the neighbourhood in which it is located. Higher densities are most appropriate in built-up areas where there is good access to jobs and services.

### Option C - Sustainable Communities

#### **Retain current density policy.**

- This allows for the highest density development within Kidderminster town centre, with slightly lower densities immediately adjacent and around the railway station and within Stourport-on-Severn town centre with lower densities outside of these areas.

### Option D - Sustainable Communities

#### **Determine housing density on a site by site basis through the development management process to achieve the optimum density appropriate to the site's location, context, infrastructure and public transport accessibility.**

- This would reflect the density of surrounding development and respect local character and distinctiveness.

### Option E - Sustainable Communities

#### **Set out specific density requirements for each allocated site within planning policy.**

- Each allocated site will have different characteristics and viability issues may dictate the density and type of development,

### Option F - Sustainable Communities

#### **Set out a series of criteria for all other development sites.**

- The local plan will need to have broad criteria in place to guide development on any other sites that are brought forward for housing use.

### Question 21

What are your views on the options for creating sustainable communities? Are there other options which you feel the council should consider?

### Affordable Housing

**7.12** The Local Plan will need to establish a target for both market housing and affordable homes. The Objective Assessment of Housing Need study will be used to inform this. Current Local Plan policy provides for at least 60 affordable units a year with 70% of these being for rent and 30% for shared ownership. Current policy seeks to secure 30% affordable housing provision on sites of 10 or more dwellings within Kidderminster and Stourport-on-Severn and 6 or more dwellings in Bewdley and the rural areas. It should be noted however that the majority of affordable housing has been provided on 100% affordable sites.



**7.13** Since 2006, there have been 730 affordable housing completions, 29% of the total number built. In only 2 years has the target of 60 homes not been met. 311 of these affordable homes have been completed in the last 2 years. There have been a couple of large scale clearance schemes of sub-standard maisonettes involving 109 dwellings meaning the net increase in affordable dwellings was only 621. There are not expected to be any more clearance schemes on that scale during the next plan period.

**7.14** This consultation identifies four potential options for providing affordable housing.

### Option A - Affordable Housing

**Seek to reduce affordable housing requirement to minimum of 25% on brownfield sites subject to viability.**

- Many of the District's larger brownfield sites have struggled to provide 30% affordable housing owing to viability issues. Reducing the requirement may enable more sites to be brought forward.

### Option B - Affordable Housing

**Seek to increase affordable housing requirement to minimum of 40% on greenfield sites.**

- If the Council decides to release greenfield sites for later in the plan period, then a higher percentage of affordable housing could be achieved, as development costs are usually lower than on brownfield sites.

### Option C - Affordable Housing

**Seek to retain current affordable housing threshold of 6 units in rural areas.**

- Government guidance states that blanket policies restricting housing development in some rural settlements and preventing others from expanding should be avoided unless robust evidence suggests otherwise. However, many development sites in rural areas are smaller and therefore a lower threshold would help to secure the delivery of affordable housing in these areas.

### Option D - Affordable Housing

**Seek to provide affordable housing on rural exception sites and allow market housing to cross subsidise affordable provision.**

- Rural exception sites are sites adjacent to rural settlements that would not normally be used for housing. The recently developed affordable housing at Fairfield is an example of a rural exception site.

### Question 22

What are your views on the affordable housing options? Are there any other options which you feel should be considered?

### Specialist Housing Provision

**7.15** Following a change in Government policy, local authorities now have the option to build housing themselves again. Wyre Forest District Council needs to decide whether it wishes to get involved in the housing market by developing public sector land or by allocating specific types of housing land in the Local Plan such as for retirement dwellings. As the authority no



longer holds any housing stock of its own following the transfer to Wyre Forest Community Housing in April 2000, this may need to take the form of a partnership agreement whereby the council provides the land.

**7.16** The proposed Government Starter Home programme aims to deliver 200,000 homes for first time buyers at a 20% discount on market prices. These will be on brownfield sites not previously identified for housing. A statutory register of brownfield land will help to achieve a target of 90% brownfield land suitable for housing to be covered by a pre-planning outline housing Local Development Order by 2020. Locally in Wyre Forest District we have a very good track record of brownfield housing delivery. Since 2006 housing completions on brownfield land have averaged 89% with only 2 years falling below this figure when a large greenfield allocation was built out.

**7.17** Self-build housing is where a builder is contracted by an individual to create a home or where a private individual builds their home as a DIY project. This is an important element of the Government's housing strategy. Plan makers should consider setting up a register of people who wish to build their own home. Self-build housing is seen as a means of providing a lower cost flexible option to address the need for more housing.

**7.18** This consultation identifies three potential options for facilitating specialist housing delivery.

### Option A - Facilitating Specialist Housing Delivery

**Provide specific serviced plots on larger residential schemes specifically for self-builders.**

- This could potentially allow a better mix of house styles on larger schemes.

### Option B - Facilitating Specialist Housing Delivery

**Set up register of local authority land available specifically to self builders.**

### Option C - Facilitating Specialist Housing Delivery

**Promote the provision of starter homes via a housing Local Development Order.**

- This could enable housing to come forward on brownfield sites at 20% less than the market cost.
- It would need to be carefully considered alongside the impact on the District's allocated employment sites.

### Question 23

What are your views on the different options for facilitating specialist housing delivery? Are there any other options which you feel the council should consider?

#### Housing provision for the Elderly

**7.19** Currently, those aged 60 and over make up 30% of the population in Wyre Forest. By 2032 this is projected to be almost 40%. Planning for this increase will require looking at new options to cater for differing needs. Older people will need different types of housing of various sizes and tenures. 12% of the population are projected to be over 80 years of age by 2032 and this will have particular implications for specialised forms of housing that includes some care provision and is suitable for those with mobility issues. It should be noted that residential care homes now count towards the overall housing target.



**7.20** This consultation identifies two potential options for providing housing for the elderly.

#### Option A - Housing Provision for the Elderly

**Allocate specific sites for housing schemes for the elderly or those requiring extra care.**

- These sites should allow easy access to shops and medical facilities either on foot or by public transport

#### Option B - Housing Provision for the Elderly

**Provide retirement flats as part of larger schemes to encourage people to downsize and release larger houses onto the market.**

- This option would encourage a mixed population age structure on new developments

### Question 24

What are your views on the different options for providing housing for the elderly? Are there any other options which need to be considered?

### Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation

**7.21** The Worcestershire Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment (GTAA) was published in late 2014. The District currently has 85 pitches, mainly in private ownership. These are nearly all located on and around the Sandy Lane Industrial Estate on the outskirts of Stourport-on-Severn. The GTAA sets out the future pitch requirements for the District as 29 pitches from 2019 to 2034. There is no requirement prior to that date. The Council will need to identify sites for these pitches through the Local Plan.

**7.22** This consultation provides three potential options for providing gypsy and traveller accommodation in the District. Issues to be considered include where to locate future pitch requirements and the optimum site size.

#### Option A - Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation

**Limit new sites to a maximum of 10 pitches.**

- Evidence from interviews with gypsy families shows that they prefer to live in smaller groups although economies of scale are often better on larger sites.

#### Option B - Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation

**Allocate sites as part of residential allocations.**

- This would ensure integration with new development and better access to services for the gypsy families.

#### Option C - Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation

**Allocate sites in areas other than Sandy Lane Industrial Estate, Stourport-on-Severn.**

- Gypsy families have traditionally settled in this area. However, the high numbers of pitches in such a small area is starting to dominate the area. Current planning policy resists further development of pitches in this area.

### Question 25

What are your views on the different options for providing gypsy and traveller accommodation? Are there any other options which need consideration?

## Housing Design Issues

**7.23** Through the Wyre Forest Design Guidance SPD high quality design is encouraged for all new developments. By adhering to the principles of Building for Life the Local Authority aims to get the best possible design for the local conditions. There are three key elements to consider - how the development integrates into the neighbourhood, whether the scheme creates a place with a distinctive character and developing streets and homes which are both functional and attractive.

**7.24** In addition to this, through the local plan, local authorities have the option to set additional technical standards for new housing exceeding those required by Building Regulations in respect of access and water and an optional nationally prescribed space standard. Local evidence of need will be required, as well as evidence of viability, if the local authority decides to adopt these standards. There is now an additional standard for age friendly, accessible and adaptable housing as well as wheelchair accessible and adaptable housing which Local Planning Authorities, through their Local Plans, can require a percentage of housing to meet.

**7.25** The Housing Standards Review also introduces a national space standard which sets out requirements for the gross internal floor area of new dwellings at a defined level of occupancy as well as floor areas and dimensions for key parts of the home, notably bedrooms, storage and floor to ceiling height.

**7.26** This consultation provides three potential options for space standards and accessibility policies.

### Option A - Housing Design Issues

**Adopt the national minimum space standards for new housing.**

- This would apply to all new dwellings across all tenures.

### Option B - Housing Design Issues

**Leave space and storage standards up to individual housing developers to decide.**

- This could have implications for practical space and liveability within new development.



### Option C - Housing Design Issues

**Adopt higher wheelchair accessibility standards for new housing.**

- With an increasingly elderly population, it is important that housing is available to meet the needs of wheelchair occupants.

### Question 26

What are your views on the Housing Design options? Are there any other options which you feel should be considered?

## 8 Providing Employment Opportunities and Retail Services

### Employment

**8.1** Employment opportunities within Wyre Forest District are primarily focussed around the Stourport Road employment corridor and the Worcester Road in Kidderminster. Within the rural areas, employment opportunities are limited but include Titan Steel Wheels in Cookley, Bewdley Business Park and Rushock Trading Estate as well as the tourism economy.

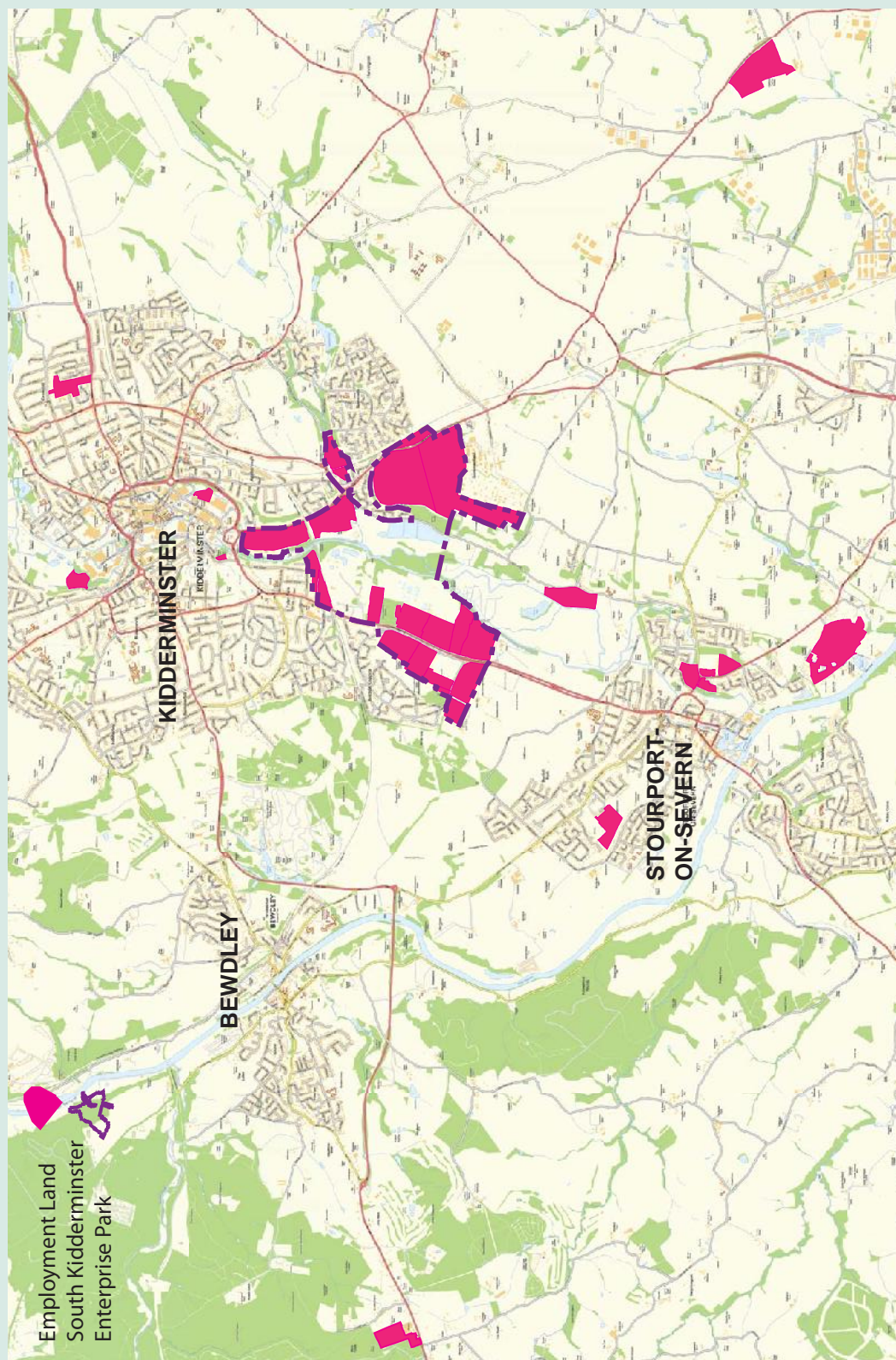
**8.2** Within Wyre Forest District, new employment development is focussed on brownfield sites in Kidderminster and Stourport-on-Severn. Stourport Road Employment Corridor provides a range of jobs across retail, manufacturing and research and development; the infrastructure and a skilled workforce is in place to support it. The ReWyre Initiative is all about partnership working and bringing together the public, private and voluntary sectors as well as the wider community to improve Kidderminster and the Wyre Forest District. The aim is to provide and develop prospects for the District and make it an attractive place to live, work, visit and invest in. The Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan identifies the Stourport Road and Worcester Road employment corridors as the basis for the South Kidderminster Enterprise Park, the main focus of employment development within the District. A Local Development Order (LDO) was established in 2012 to support employment development in this area and has recently been renewed to cover the period up until 2018.

**8.3** Small amounts of employment development are directed to Bewdley and the main villages; this makes the most efficient use of land and service provision within the District. It is now necessary to look at future options for employment to ensure that Wyre Forest District continues to grow sustainably to support regeneration and jobs. The location of employment land is very important as it can help to sustain and improve provision and reduce the need for people to travel long distances to their place of employment.



**8.4** The map below indicates the location of employment land and the South Kidderminster Enterprise Park within the Wyre Forest District.

**Employment Land and South Kidderminster Enterprise Park**





**8.5** Wyre Forest District Council has recently appointed consultants to undertake an Employment Land Review (ELR). The final report will be available in late 2015. The review will determine how much employment land is required within the District as well as looking at the quality and suitability of current employment sites. The previous ELR which dates from July 2008 identified that 44 hectares of employment land were required across the District. At the time of the previous ELR, figures for employment requirements were set at regional level through the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS). Following the abolition of the RSS, Local Authorities are required to assess the need for employment land within their area and provide sites accordingly. It is important for inward investment to have a wide range of employment sites available for a wide range of employment requirements. Key sites need to be identified in order to secure investment.



**8.6** The Government's recent drive to deliver new homes on brownfield sites is expected to put pressure on the District's employment sites. As a result there could be pressure to release greenfield sites for employment uses in order to maintain a suitable supply of employment land.

**8.7** This consultation identifies three potential options for the location of employment sites.

## Option A - Employment Sites

**Continue to retain all existing employment sites.**

- Retain all sites currently allocated for employment use as employment allocations.

## Option B - Employment Sites

**Consider alternative uses on some of the sites which are currently allocated for employment.**

- Consider changing the allocation of any sites which are currently allocated for employment and have not been developed.

## Option C - Employment Sites

**Allocate new sites for employment uses within the District.**

- Consider allocating new sites for employment sites, potentially on greenfield land.



### Question 27

How do you think the above options could be developed to encourage investment and job creation within the District? Are there any other options we should consider?

### Retaining a Skilled Workforce and Providing Jobs

**8.8** It is important that there are enough economically active people available to fill jobs within the District and to meet the skills required. If this is not the case, economic growth within the District could be restrained.

**8.9** One of our aims is to diversify the economic base of Wyre Forest District and to promote an entrepreneurial culture to create more employment and retail opportunities for local people. The Council aims to support the growth of the local economy in ways which are compatible with environmental objectives, creating conditions that sustain more and better jobs, removing the barriers to accessing jobs and raising skills, including support for regeneration and diversification and strengthening tourism.

**8.10** The options for developing small scale start up units and developing educational and training facilities are set out below.

#### Option A - Small Scale Start Up Units.

**Identify specific sites for small scale units aimed at business start-ups and the creative industries.**

- This option would allocate specific sites for small scale start-up units which would ensure that land was available for this use.

#### Option B - Small Scale Start Up Units.

**Continue to designate employment sites for a mix of B1, B2 and B8 uses.**

- This option would allow small scale business start-up units to be developed as part of mixed use schemes.

#### Option C - Develop educational and training facilities.

**Support educational and training facilities that will develop a skilled workforce.**

- This option would promote and allocate land specifically for these facilities to help retain a skilled workforce.

## Question 28

What are your views on the options above? Are there any other options that should be considered?

### Creating Rural Employment Opportunities

**8.11** Rural communities often have limited services and facilities. Poor public transport can prevent those without a car from accessing the facilities they need. With the decline in agriculture many farms need to diversify, for example buildings could become farm shops or holiday accommodation. Farm buildings could be used for processing and packaging, and horse livery. Diversification would help by providing jobs in rural communities as well as services.

**8.12** Live/work units are where the occupier both lives and works at the same location. This can be in either urban or rural locations. The buildings may be purpose built or purposely converted from an existing building into a live/work unit. New technology and broadband is driving the trend towards combining living and working. Many live/work businesses have been established owing to the fact that the nature of the business requires an on site presence both day and night. They can maintain and enhance the sustainability of other local businesses and contribute to the skills and knowledge base of the local community. It can bring an enhanced range and quality of employment opportunities locally and help to reduce the need to travel.

#### Option A - Creating Rural Employment Opportunities

**Support and encourage genuine proposals for live/work units within the District's rural areas.**

- Live/work space is defined as property that is designed for dual use, combining both residential and employment space.

#### Option B - Creating Rural Employment Opportunities

**Allocate sites for small scale rural employment opportunities.**

- This option would help to facilitate small scale employment proposals and reduce the need to travel in our rural areas.

### Question 29

Do you think these options will help to increase the number of rural jobs within the District? Are there other options we should be considering to enhance rural employment opportunities?

## Tourism and Leisure

**8.13** Tourism makes a vital contribution to the economy of Wyre Forest District via direct spending and in creating jobs. Within the District visitors come to visit attractions such as the West Midlands Safari Park, Severn Valley Railway, the Wyre Forest, Bewdley Musuem and Bodenham Arboretum. For this industry to continue to flourish there may be a need to broaden the range and offer of visitor attractions and accommodation. There are a high proportion of visitors as day trippers from the West midlands conurbation. If they were attracted to stay for longer to visit more attractions and with a wide range of accommodation the local economy would be boosted. Visitors may use the town centres for shopping, as well as local cafés and restaurants.



### Option A - Ensuring viable tourist attractions

**Concentrate on our existing tourist sectors.**

- This option would be to retain and expand existing tourist facilities in the District.

### Option B - Ensuring viable tourist attractions

**Develop new tourist attractions.**

- This option would be to encourage new tourist attractions into the District.

### Question 30

How should we encourage a wider range of tourist attractions and accommodation to Wyre Forest District?

## Retail

**8.14** Within Wyre Forest District, Kidderminster is the main retail area with smaller shopping areas in Stourport-on-Severn and Bewdley. The rural areas of the District have, in the larger villages, a number of shops and in the smaller villages there are few retail facilities.

**8.15** In Kidderminster, Weavers Wharf is very successful and attracts many high quality retail stores. It rarely has any empty units and vacancies are filled very quickly. The traditional shopping areas which include High Street, Vicar Street and Worcester Street do not attract the same retailers and this results in empty retail premises some of which are large and are much slower to be re let. It is proposed that Crown House will be demolished and this will allow for the expansion of Weavers Wharf to include the area around the Bull Ring.

**8.16** The traditional role of the town centre as a destination to buy goods and services has been impacted upon by the growth in online retail and services and the rise in click and collect facilities. Click-and-collect is seen as strengthening the high street as consumers visit the shops to collect their online purchases and may visit other retailers or services within the town centre.

**8.17** National planning policy promotes competitive town centre environments. It encourages Local Authorities to recognise town centres as the heart of their communities and pursue policies to support their viability and vitality. Town centres and primary shopping areas should be based on the definition of primary and secondary shopping frontages. Town centres should plan for anticipated future economic changes and have a variety of uses including retail, leisure, commercial, office, tourism, cultural, community and residential development.

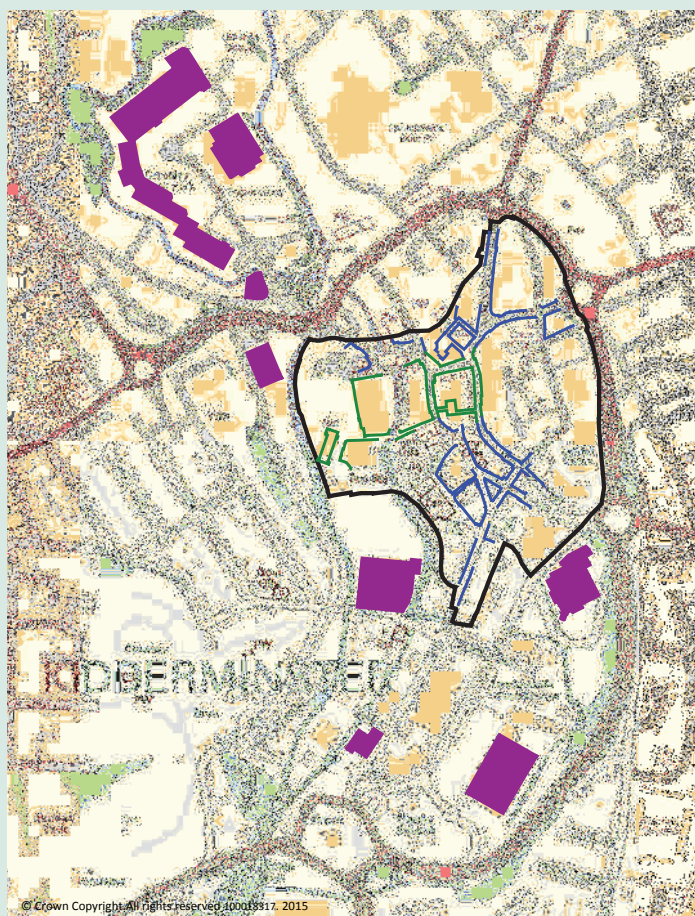


**8.18** Councils should define primary shopping areas based on a clear definition of primary and secondary retail frontages and set policies that make it clear which uses will be permitted in such locations. Primary shopping frontages are the most important retail frontages with the greatest pedestrian flows and greatest concentration of shops for comparison goods. Secondary shopping frontages are in close proximity to the primary frontage, but are occupied by a lower proportion of retail uses and provide greater opportunities for a diversity of uses.

**8.19** The following map shows the Primary Shopping Area for Kidderminster town centre as included within the existing Kidderminster Central Area Action Plan Policies Map.



### Kidderminster Retail



Primary Shopping Area   
 Primary Shopping Frontage   
 Secondary Shopping Frontage   
 Edge of Centre /  
 Out of Centre Retailing 

**8.20** There are two potential options for enhancing the shopping area in Kidderminster. You may have some alternative suggestions for options which you feel we have not yet identified.

#### Option A - Ensuring a Viable Kidderminster Town Centre

**Continue to use the existing primary shopping area in Kidderminster for enhanced retail opportunity in the town centre.**

- This option would retain the existing primary shopping area and does not take account of recent changes in town centre shopping patterns.

#### Option B - Ensuring a Viable Kidderminster Town Centre

**Amend the primary shopping area in Kidderminster and remove Worcester Street and Bromsgrove Street to enable them to be developed for alternative uses.**

- This option would change the primary shopping area to take account of new retail developments and changing shopping patterns within the town centre.

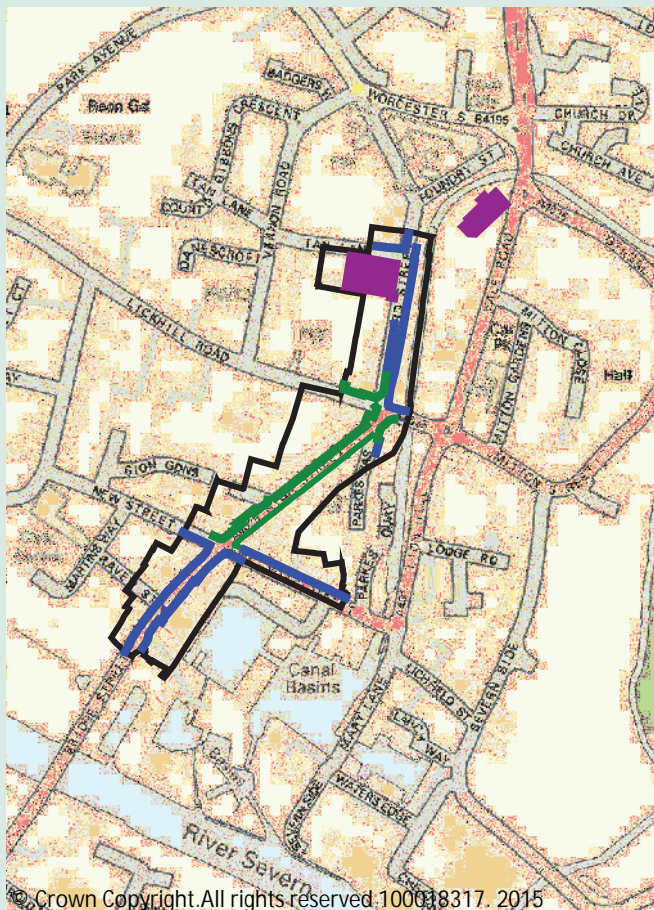


### Question 31

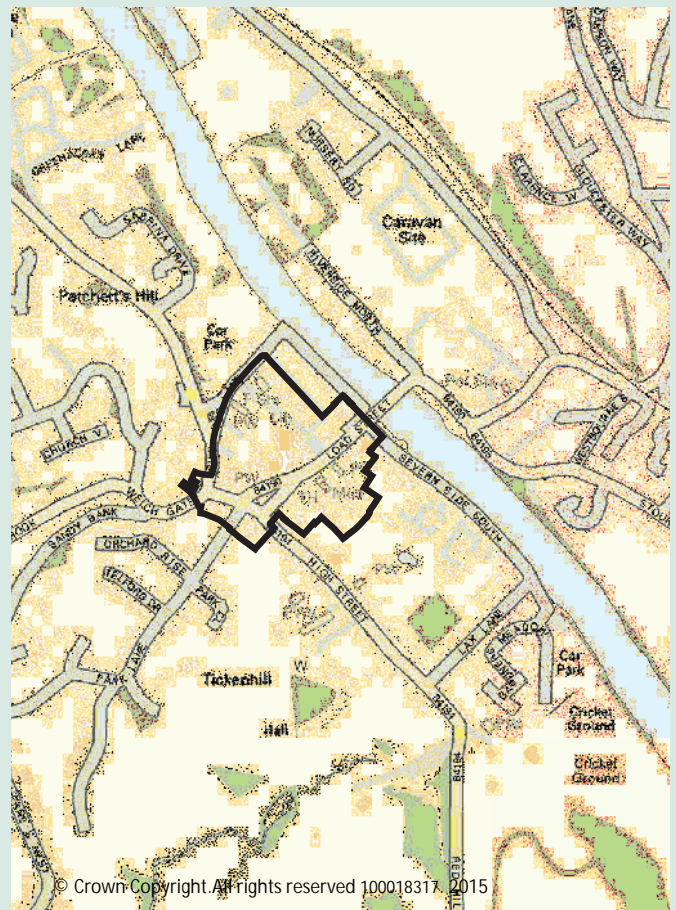
Do you think that the primary shopping area should change to reflect more recent changes to Kidderminster town centre or do you think we should retain the existing allocation to encourage retail back to the Worcester Street area? What alternative land uses would contribute to the overall vitality of the town centre?





**8.21** Stourport-on-Severn and Bewdley both have traditional High Street shopping facilities which together with local facilities provide the shops for the towns. Stourport-on-Severn is well served with supermarkets, Bewdley has smaller scale shops and convenience stores. The Primary Shopping Area of both towns is shown below.

**Stourport-on-Severn Retail**



**Bewdley Retail**



Primary Shopping Area  Primary Shopping Frontage  Secondary Shopping Frontage   
Edge of Centre / Out of Centre Retailing 

**8.22** The potential options for a viable town centre in Stourport-on-Severn are set out below:

**Option A - Ensuring Stourport-on-Severn town centre remains viable.**

**Retain the primary shopping area as it currently exists.**

**Option B - Ensuring Stourport-on-Severn town centre remains viable.**

**Extend or amend the primary shopping area to allow for a mix of town centre uses within the area.**

**Question 32**

Do you think Stourport-on-Severn's Primary Shopping area should be amended? Do you have any further options for consideration?

**8.23** The potential options for a viable town centre in Bewdley are set out below:

**Option A - Ensuring Bewdley Town Centre remains viable**

**Retain the existing primary shopping area as it currently exists.**

**Option B - Ensuring Bewdley Town Centre remains viable**

**Extend or amend the primary shopping area to allow for a mix of town centre uses within the area.**

**Question 33**

Do you think Bewdley's Primary Shopping area should be amended? Do you have any further options for consideration?

**8.24** The retention of local centres and village shops provide a valuable role in meeting local community needs. Providing facilities close to homes reduces the need to travel by private car and creates more desirable and socially inclusive neighbourhoods. Local centres include a

range of small shops of a local nature, serving a small catchment. Typically, local centres might include, amongst others, shops, a small supermarket, a newsagent, a sub-post office and a pharmacy. The options for retaining local shops and services are set out below:

## Option A - Retaining local shops and services

### **Continue to protect and enhance local retail services.**

- Designate neighbourhood and village centres. Development proposals should not result in a reduction of retail convenience uses within a settlement.

## Option B - Retaining local shops and services

### **Provide more flexibility for conversions and extensions for retail purposes within neighbourhood and village centres.**

- This would provide support for small scale conversions and extensions and would allow flexibility for businesses to assist with their viability.

## Question 34

Do you think it is important to safeguard and enhance local retail services? Are there any further options that should be considered?

## 9 Safeguarding Character and Local Distinctiveness

**9.1** The local environment, be it natural or built, is one of Wyre Forest's strengths. The District contains a rich variety of assets from historical buildings and conservation areas to the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal and the Rivers Severn and Stour and their tributaries together with several regionally important habitats. It attracts both residents to live here and visitors to come for day trips or short holidays. It needs to be both safeguarded and enhanced. The District is mainly rural in terms of area with 85% classified as rural. The countryside is readily accessible from the main urban areas.

**9.2** The rural areas to the east of the River Severn are safeguarded from development as they are covered by the West Midlands Green Belt. Much of this land is also of high agricultural value.

### Landscape

**9.3** Much of the District is underlain by sandstone which is dissected by the valleys of the Rivers Severn and Stour. A large amount of the land to the east of the River Severn is in arable use, whilst that to the west is more hilly and wooded with pastures. The Wyre Forest itself dominates the north west of the District. Development to the east of the River Severn outside of the larger settlements is strictly controlled by Green Belt policy. To the west of the River Severn, the landscape is characterised by smaller settlements, small farms, orchards and forest. The Worcestershire Landscape Character Assessment SPD splits the District (outside of the built-up areas) into six distinctive landscape types as follows:



- Sandstone estatelands
- Timbered plateau farmlands
- Estate farmlands
- Principal wooded hills
- Forest smallholdings and dwellings
- Wooded forest

### Question 35

What approach do you think should be taken to protect the landscape in Wyre Forest District?

Should we have different policies for each Landscape Character type?



**9.4** One of the key issues facing our rural areas, especially within the Severn Valley, is the high number of chalets and mobile homes. In some parts of the District, these 'temporary' buildings outnumber permanent dwellings. Current planning policy strictly controls any expansion of this provision.

**9.5** This consultation identifies three potential options for chalet developments.

### Option A - Chalet Provision

**Continue to strictly control any expansion of chalets and mobile homes.**

- There is concern around the collective impact on the landscape of this proliferation of temporary buildings.

### Option B - Chalet Provision

**Allow small extensions to existing sites for future provision.**

- Landscape impact would need to be carefully controlled.

### Option C - Chalet Provision

**Allow development of small sites for holiday purposes only.**

- As part of farm diversification, this can be a useful source of additional low-cost holiday accommodation.

### Question 36

What are your views on the options set out for chalet provision. Are there any other options which should be considered?

**9.6** Horse-riding and keeping horses is a popular past time in Wyre Forest. It is a popular means of diversifying agriculture but development needs to be carefully controlled if it is not to impact too negatively on the existing landscape. Additional buildings, floodlighting and sub-division of fields can all negatively impact on the openness of the countryside.

**9.7** This consultation identifies a further three options for controlling horsiculture. We would like you to consider these different approaches and let us have your views. You may have some alternative suggestions to put forward for consideration.



**Option A - Horsiculture****Continue with current policy.**

- Existing policy aims to minimise the impact of equestrian facilities on the landscape by restricting leisure stables to a maximum size and siting them where they will have the least impact. Commercial facilities are also tightly controlled especially as regards floodlighting. Amenity of nearby residential areas also needs careful consideration.

**Option B - Horsiculture****Tighten controls still further by only allowing commercial developments within existing converted buildings.**

- Existing policy encourages reuse of buildings but does not rule out new build.

**Option C- Horsiculture****Relax policy and rely on general policies for rural development instead.**

- This would enable further diversification but adverse impacts on landscape are more likely.

**Question 37**

Do you consider that any of these proposals are the correct approach or is planning policy too restrictive on equine development?

**Biodiversity and Geodiversity**

**9.8** Wyre Forest District has extensive areas of woodland, grassland and marshland. Many of these are protected as Sites of Special Scientific Interest or Local Wildlife Sites. The Rivers Severn and Stour and their tributaries together with the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal are also important contributors to biodiversity helping to bring nature right into the centre of the towns. Many of the larger nature areas are immediately adjacent to residential estates, thus bringing nature within easy walking distance of a large proportion of the population.

**9.9** The District is home to several areas of acid grassland which does not occur elsewhere in Worcestershire. It is important to encourage better management of these limited resources. However, easy public access brings with it disadvantages, not least problems of anti-social behaviour, including arson, fly-tipping and dog fouling.

**9.10** The Wyre Forest District also has quite a distinctive geology with several exposed sandstone cuttings along main roads and small rock dwellings, especially to the north of Kidderminster.



**9.11** The local plan needs to maintain and improve the natural environment and should include policies to ensure development proposals minimise the negative impacts on biodiversity and, if possible, provide a net gain. A key challenge is how to balance the delivery of new development against the need to protect the rich biodiversity and geodiversity in the District. New development can potentially lead to habitat and species loss and may indirectly affect protected sites through increased water usage, increased waste water and recreational disturbance. Brownfield sites that have been unused for long periods of time may also have quite high biodiversity value.

### Option A - Biodiversity and Geodiversity

**Continue to protect all designated sites and priority species from development and, where development is proposed on an adjacent site, require a buffer zone around the site.**

### Option B - Biodiversity and Geodiversity

**Encourage the enhancement of existing biodiversity of watercourses through development of adjacent sites.**

- Many of the redevelopment sites in Kidderminster and Stourport-on-Severn lie adjacent to the River Stour or the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal and provide opportunities for enhancement of these waterways. Examples of successful schemes include the Morrisons and Tesco developments in Kidderminster.

**Question 38**

How can planning policy encourage increased usage of these natural assets and thus minimise anti-social behaviour issues?

Do you consider that existing policy is robust enough to safeguard the natural environment?

**Green Infrastructure**

**9.12** As part of the previous Local Plan, a Green Infrastructure Study was published in 2010 and it was followed up with a Green Infrastructure Strategy in October 2012. The study provides a detailed overview of the existing green infrastructure network and identifies gaps. The Strategy sets out opportunities for providing the missing links to the network as part of the delivery of regeneration schemes. It is particularly important to build on the opportunities provided by the River Stour and the canal to link a number of development sites and enhance existing provision. The Green Infrastructure Strategy will be refreshed as part of this Local Plan Review. The existing Open Space Audit will also be refreshed in the light of changes in recent years. Green infrastructure and open space have a number of benefits, including encouraging an active lifestyle, enhancing biodiversity, reducing the carbon footprint, creating an attractive environment, enhancing community pride, alleviating flooding, increasing tourism and providing recreational routes.

**9.13** This consultation identifies three potential options for green infrastructure.

**Option A - Green Infrastructure**

**Continue to safeguard the existing green infrastructure network as set out in the Green Infrastructure Study and Strategy.**

- Development will be expected to enhance nearby existing green infrastructure.

**Option B - Green Infrastructure**

**Identify specific opportunities for major development proposals to provide additional green infrastructure to help provide the missing links in the network.**

**Option C - Green Infrastructure**

**Continue to safeguard the site of the proposed Stour Valley Country Park.**

- There is a long standing proposal to create a Stour Valley Park immediately to the north of Kidderminster Town Centre. The Churchfields urban village concept is coming to fruition with the first two phases completed. With more people now living in this area, it is important to encourage residents to use the countryside on their doorstep.

### Question 39

Do you consider more could be made of the green infrastructure network?

Where do you think the key gaps are?

How can we best protect and enhance existing green infrastructure?

Do you agree that the planning authority should continue to safeguard the site of the proposed Stour Valley Country Park?

## Built Heritage

**9.14** Wyre Forest contains large numbers of designated heritage assets including 17 conservation areas, nearly 700 listed buildings and 9 scheduled monuments together with one registered park and garden. Character Appraisals have been completed for all of the Conservation Areas. These will help developers to respond sensitively to proposals for development within conservation areas and those affecting listed buildings. Wyre Forest District contains a wealth of heritage assets which play an important part in the local character and identity of the District. It is important to protect both designated and non-designated heritage assets and, if possible, enhance them via the Local Plan. The Historic Environment Record (HER) which is held by Worcestershire County Council contains over 6,000 entries relating to the District. This is being added to all the time.



Wyre Forest District contains a wealth of heritage assets which play an important part in the local character and identity of the District. It is important to protect both designated and non-designated heritage assets and, if possible, enhance them via the Local Plan. The Historic Environment Record (HER) which is held by Worcestershire County Council contains over 6,000 entries relating to the District. This is being added to all the time.

**9.15** The District Council has adopted Local Heritage Lists for Kidderminster, Stourport-on-Severn, Bewdley, Wolverley and Cookley and Churchill and Blakedown. In the future, working jointly with parish councils, the council intends to roll these lists out to cover the remaining rural areas. These lists identify features which are considered to be of local significance and ensure that the historic value of locally important heritage assets is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

**9.16** Heritage Assets are most at risk through neglect, decay and other threats. The options for addressing this are set out below:

### Option A - Built Heritage

**Provide site specific policies to safeguard historic landscapes, archaeological sites, Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas together with non-designated heritage assets.**

### Option B - Built Heritage

**Have an overarching development management policy to protect all heritage assets and retain conservation areas.**

### Option C - Built Heritage

**Simply rely on national guidance contained in National Planning Policy Framework and National Planning Policy Guidance.**

### Question 40

How do you think the Council should weigh the balance between harm to designated heritage assets against the public benefits of a development proposal including securing the optimum viable use?

## Local Distinctiveness

**9.17** Local distinctiveness is created by the unique physical, social and economic character of an area. Achieving a high standard of design is not just about architectural style. It also needs to consider the local context. The recently adopted Design Guidance Supplementary Planning Document should aid developers in creating an attractive built environment.

**9.18** Two potential options for reinforcing local distinctiveness are put forward below. Please let us have your views on these options.

### Option A - Reinforcing Local Distinctiveness

**Provide specific design guidance for specific locations and specify design criteria for each allocated site.**



- This would avoid standardised design solutions.

### Option B - Reinforcing Local Distinctiveness

**In areas with little or no particular character, raise the design quality through innovative and high quality design approaches and the provision of specific development guidelines via a masterplan if appropriate.**

- A Masterplan has been produced for the Churchfields area of Kidderminster and one is also proposed for the Bromsgrove Street area of the town.

### Question 41

How should the local plan ensure that Local Distinctiveness is reinforced? Are there other potential options that need to be considered?

## 10 A Well Served District

### Transport

**10.1** Transport policy at all levels focuses on reducing the need to travel by private car and encouraging people to choose more sustainable forms of transport which are primarily walking, cycling and public transport services. The rural nature of large parts of the District can make modal shift difficult. Congestion is an on-going problem in the towns of Kidderminster, Stourport-on-Severn and Bewdley, especially at peak times.

### Encouraging Sustainable Transport Choices

**10.2** Sustainable transport choices can play a significant role in improving health and well-being. Walking and cycling have obvious health benefits and people who use public transport are more likely to walk for part of their journey than those who drive. The District has pockets of poor health and promoting walking and cycling as a means of transport can help to address this.

**10.3** The NPPF focuses on the importance of sustainable transport choices and the wider role that this can play in achieving sustainability and health objectives as well as reducing congestion. The role of technology in reducing the need to travel, through virtual meetings and information sharing, is also recognised.

**10.4** New development should be located where it is accessible by public transport, this is particularly important for developments with high trip generation. This is more difficult to achieve in rural areas and consideration needs to be given as to how new development can encourage the provision and use of public transport and how the solutions will vary between urban and rural areas. Within Wyre Forest District, the villages and rural settlements to the East of the District have better bus services than those to the West. The range of services and facilities also varies by settlement; on the whole, the villages to the East have a greater range of services and facilities than those to the West.

**10.5** Key facilities such as schools and shops should be located within walking distance of most new residential properties. New development within the District which is within 30 minutes public transport travel time of a range of key facilities has exceeded the 90% target for the last three years.

**10.6** New developments need to design in walking and cycling facilities and deliver the infrastructure required to support sustainable transport choices. However, encouraging sustainable transport options requires a behavioural change, this is dependant on better education to promote a range of transport options and their benefits. Whilst planning can put in place the physical infrastructure to enable a behavioural change, it can not force it to happen.



By ensuring that settlements provide a basic range of services to meet day-to-day needs the need to travel into the larger towns to access these services is reduced. This issue is considered within the section entitled 'Providing Employment Opportunities and Retail Services'.

**10.7** Three potential options for promoting sustainable transport are included below. We would like you to consider these different approaches and let us have your views. You may have some alternative suggestions for options which you feel we have not yet identified.

### Option A - Sustainable Transport

**Require new developments to demonstrate within a Transport Statement how they facilitate walking and cycling and the use of public transport.**

- This option would require applicants to demonstrate how they would try to reduce car dependence in new developments.

### Option B - Sustainable Transport

**Require that new developments make available information on walking, cycling and public transport links to all new residents.**

- This option would require developers to provide information to new residents/occupants on the public transport options available to them and the walking and cycling routes within the locality.
- This could be potentially difficult to enforce.

### Option C - Sustainable Transport

**Seek contributions to infrastructure to support sustainable transport choices through S106 agreements.**

- This option would require S106 funding towards the provision of sustainable transport measures for example bus provision, walking routes and cycling routes.

### Question 42

What are your views on the options set out for sustainable transport? Are there any other options that should also be considered?

## Rail Travel



**10.8** The District has two rail stations. Rail station usage within the District has increased over recent years, Blakedown has doubled in passenger numbers whereas usage of Kidderminster station has trebled since the late 1990s making it the second busiest station in the country. It is likely that some of this growth is attributable to changing commuting patterns and some is attributable to people choosing the train instead of the car. It is also acknowledged that there is a trend for Wyre Forest residents to drive to Stourbridge Junction station to access Birmingham because

services are more frequent and parking is more readily available and free of charge. Kidderminster Station is due to be upgraded to increase its capacity and the passenger experience, works will include a new station building, improved passenger facilities, a new forecourt layout, and better access for pedestrians, people with disabilities, cyclists, taxi and bus operators and their passengers. Access to the station from the A448 Comberton Hill will be improved by the installation of traffic lights at the junction with Lea Street. Funding is now in place to deliver the upgrades and work is expected to start in Summer 2016 and take around 18 months to complete. These improvements could lead to additional demand for services from the station.

**10.9** This consultation identifies two potential options for encouraging rail travel.

### Option A - Encouraging Rail Travel

**Build at higher densities on sites within 15 minutes walk of Kidderminster Rail Station to concentrate more residents within easy access of the station.**

- This option would allow a greater number of properties to be built within close proximity to Kidderminster Station.
- This could attract people who relocate to Birmingham or Worcester for employment to stay within Kidderminster and commute by rail, helping to retain younger people within the District.
- The option is restricted by the fact that there are not many potential redevelopment sites within 15 minutes walk of the rail station.

### Option B- Encouraging Rail Travel

**Improve parking at Blakedown Rail Station to increase use of the station.**

- This option would allow a greater number of people to commute from Blakedown station.
- This option could reduce congestion and demand for parking at Kidderminster Station.
- The option could also encourage more people to travel by rail, reducing congestion on the A456 towards Birmingham.

### Question 43

What are your views on the options set out for encouraging rail travel? Are there any other options that should also be considered?

## Car Parking

**10.10** The main retail centres (Kidderminster, Stourport-on-Severn and Bewdley) have a range of parking options covering short, medium and long-stay parking, some of which is located in car parks and some is located on-street. The Local Plan should seek to ensure that parking facilities within the town centres in particular balance the need to support their vitality and viability with the need to ensure that non-car modes of transport are attractive and realistic alternatives.

**10.11** This consultation identifies two potential options for town centre car-parking.

### Option A - Car Parking

**Ensure that the town centres in particular have parking facilities of sufficient quality and quantity to ensure their vitality and viability without compromising the need to encourage people to use alternatives to the private car.**

- This option is unlikely to reduce car use.

### Option B - Car Parking

**Plan to reduce car-parking within the town centre to force people to consider alternatives to the private car.**

- This option would also free up space for new development within the town centre.

### Question 44

What are your views on the options set out for car-parking? Are there any other options that should also be considered?



## Road Infrastructure

### *Stourport Relief Road*

**10.12** The line of the Stourport Relief Road has been safeguarded for a number of years. The current aspiration is that the road could be delivered later in the current plan period (2021-2026). This is subject to funding being secured and, to some extent, it is also dependant on the level of new development located within the Stourport-on-Severn area and the level of developer contributions which could be secured from this development. The most significant costs are associated with delivering the part of the road which would provide a second crossing over the River Severn. The link from the Stourport Road to the Worcester Road (via the Timber Lane housing estate where part of the road has already been delivered) are less significant in terms of cost and there is potential to deliver sections as part of new development. If the line isn't safeguarded then development could take place along the route which would prevent the road being delivered in the future.

**10.13** This consultation identifies three potential options for the Stourport Relief Road.

#### Option A - Stourport Relief Road

**Continue to safeguard the line of the Stourport Relief Road in its entirety.**

- This option would safeguard the current proposed line of the Stourport Relief Road. New development would not be allowed along the line.
- The Relief Road could be developed easily if the funding were to become available.
- New developments could continue to provide pieces of the Relief Road with the long-term ambition being to complete the entire road.

#### Option B - Stourport Relief Road

**Continue to safeguard only the line of the Stourport Relief Road which runs from the Stourport Road to the Worcester Road.**

- This would allow a partial implementation of the Relief Road and would ease congestion by providing a direct link between the Hartlebury Road and Worcester Road and then onto the already completed link road over the River Stour.

#### Option C - Stourport Relief Road

**Do not continue to safeguard the line of the Stourport Relief Road.**

- Not continuing to safeguard the line of the Relief Road would mean that parcels of land could be developed which would affect the ability to implement the road if funding became available in the future.

### Question 45

What are your views on the options set out for the Stourport Relief Road? Are there any other options that should also be considered?

#### *Enhancing Access to the Strategic Motorway Network*

**10.14** Wyre Forest District has relatively poor road links to the wider strategic motorway network. In recent years this issue has become more prominent for businesses who are either located in the District or looking to relocate to the area. Depending on the level and location of development proposed within the Local Plan Review, it will be important to think about how this issue could be addressed in the longer term through the Plan Review.

**10.15** The A449 from Kidderminster to Claines Island was previously a two-lane dual carriageway for its entirety. However, in many parts, the carriageway has been reduced down to one lane in each direction with a reduced speed limit of 50mph. The scheme was designed to improve access to side roads; however, it has hindered traffic flow on the main route. There is now pressure to reinstate this as dual carriageway to address logistics and journey times for businesses located in our District.

**10.16** In addition to the Stourport Relief Road, the District Council has previously historically safeguarded the route for a Kidderminster Eastern Bypass which was proposed by the Highways Agency in the early 1990s. However, in 1996 the proposed route was withdrawn from the Trunk Road construction programme and in 2004 the Council ceased to protect the line of the road.

**10.17** Two potential options are highlighted for improving access to the strategic motorway network:

#### **Option A - Improving Access to the Strategic Motorway Network**

**Work with Worcestershire County Council to return the A449 to a two lane dual carriageway between Kidderminster and Claines island.**

- This option would require support from Worcestershire County Council.
- It may have some implications for the future location of developments in the District.

#### **Option B - Improving Access to the Strategic Motorway Network**

**Consider the implementation of a Kidderminster Eastern Bypass**

- This option would depend on the exact amount and location of new development which the Plan will deliver.

- In order to safeguard the line of a proposed route for a Kidderminster Eastern Bypass, the District Council will need to be able to demonstrate its deliverability during the plan period.
- This option would require the support of Worcestershire County Council as well as significant funding, which would need to be sought through external funding programmes and from new developments.

### Question 46

What are your views on the options set out for improving access to the strategic motorway network? Are there other options which should be considered through the Plan Review?

## Lorry Route Network

**10.18** The existing Lorry Route Network is safeguarded through the current planning policy documents. It is shown on the map at Appendix B. This is the network of roads which lorries are directed towards in order to keep them, as much as possible, to main roads and away from wholly residential areas.

### Question 47

Is the current Lorry Route Network still the most appropriate network of roads for lorries to be directed towards? If not, where and how should it be amended?

## Bus Route Network

**10.19** The existing Bus Route Network is safeguarded through the current planning policy documents. This is the network of roads which reflects the bus routes within the District. There have been a number of significant changes to bus routes recently and therefore, it might be appropriate to review this. The map at appendix C shows the current bus network.

### Question 48

Is the current bus route network still reflective of strategic bus routes within the District. If not, how and where should it be amended?

## Air Quality

**10.20** The District has two Air Quality Management Areas – St Mary's/Horsefair, Kidderminster and Welch Gate, Bewdley. These both arise primarily from traffic congestion within the affected areas, with resulting traffic pollution. They are both located in areas with poor traffic flow and the fumes arising from stationary vehicles cause the air quality issues.

*St Mary's/ Horsefair*

**10.21** The St. Mary's/Horsefair AQMA lies adjacent to the Churchfields regeneration area. The Local Plan Review will need to consider whether the existing allocations are still appropriate for the area. New development in this area will need to contribute to alleviating the transport issues which have resulted in the AQMA designation.

**10.22** This consultation identifies four potential options for addressing the AQMA at St. Mary's/Horsefair.

### Option A - Horsefair AQMA

**Continue with the current residential led regeneration of the Churchfields area and require transport improvements to be made in the Horsefair as part of the development.**

- This option would deliver a residential led development on the Churchfields site and road improvements would need to be made as part of the development in order to increase the capacity of the network.

### Option B - Horsefair AQMA

**Seek to provide a second vehicular canal crossing linking Churchfields to Crossley Park (Lime Kiln Bridge) as part of the regeneration of Churchfields.**

- This option would provide an additional bridging point over the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal with a new access to Crossley Retail Park.
- The Ring Road would be able to be accessed via Crossley Retail Park.
- Crossley Park is already congested at peak times and this could exacerbate the situation.

### Option C - Horsefair AQMA

**Seek to provide an additional access to the ring road from Churchfields as part of the comprehensive redevelopment of the area. This could then lead to the implementation of a one-way system in the Horsefair.**

- This option would provide an access to the Ring Road directly from Churchfields without the need to go via the Horsefair.
- The option could serve new development alone or the road network could be redesigned to reduce traffic in the Horsefair.
- The Horsefair could be made one-way as part of this option, allowing for more on-street parking and an improved pedestrian environment.

**Option D - Horsefair AQMA**

**Demolish the buildings one side of the Horsefair allowing the road to be widened to alleviate congestion.**

- This option would allow for the road to be widened and would reduce congestion, thereby improving air quality.
- This option would have a detrimental effect on the character of the area with the loss of historic buildings.

**Question 49**

What are your views on the options set out for the Horsefair AQMA? Are there any other options that should also be considered?

*Welch Gate, Bewdley*

**10.23** The Welch Gate, Bewdley AQMA lies within a tightly constrained area of historic development. Therefore, this AQMA will need to be addressed using road layout changes, diverting traffic onto the bypass and encouraging people to choose alternatives to the private car.

**10.24** This consultation identifies three potential options for addressing the AQMA at Welch Gate, Bewdley.

**Option A - Welch Gate, Bewdley AQMA**

**Work with Worcestershire County Council through the Local Transport Plan process to look at the road layout and amend it to alleviate the AQMA.**

- This option would be reliant on joint working with Worcestershire County Council.

**Option B - Welch Gate, Bewdley AQMA**

**Rely on the diversion of traffic onto the bypass to alleviate the AQMA issue.**

- This approach would be reliant on education and promotion as well as signposting.



### Option C - Welch Gate, Bewdley AQMA

**Provide parking on the Wribbenhall side of the river either as part of a park and ride or park and walk scheme to reduce the number of vehicles driving through Welch Gate.**

- This option would require a suitable site to be allocated for park and ride facilities to operate from the Wribbenhall side of the river. The constrained nature of the area near to the River crossing means that it is likely that any parking provision would be further away from the town centre and therefore a park and ride facility would be most appropriate.

### Question 50

What are your views on the options set out for the Welch Gate, Bewdley AQMA? Are there any other options that should also be considered?

## Services and Facilities

### Health Care Facilities

**10.25** Access to local health care facilities is an important issue for residents given the downgrading of Kidderminster Hospital and the requirement to travel further afield to access hospital facilities. It is important that existing facilities are maintained and enhanced in the three towns and that access to health care in the District's villages and rural areas is improved. Pressure on health care facilities is heightened as a result of the District's ageing population. Since the adoption of the last plan there has been a consolidation of health care provision within Kidderminster with a new health care facility opening adjacent to Kidderminster Hospital to provide GP services. A further health care facility is due to open within Kidderminster town centre later this year to provide additional services.

### Education Facilities

**10.26** The move from a three tier education system to a two tier system is now well established. However, upgrades to educational infrastructure are still continuing. The loss of Building Schools for the Future funding has meant that some sites have not been upgraded as planned. Significant changes to the way new development funds infrastructure are just taking effect, meaning that new developments cannot make generic contributions to infrastructure; they can only contribute to specific projects. This is a



particular issue for funding education infrastructure. Parallel to this, there has been significant investment in post-16 education across the District with new college premises opening within Kidderminster Town Centre.

### Question 51

How can the Local Plan Review ensure that adequate education infrastructure is provided to meet the needs of the District's population?

### Question 52

Should larger developments be required to provide new educational facilities?

## Open Space, Sport and Recreation

**10.27** An open space, sport and recreation assessment was published in 2008 and is due to be updated. The study looked at both the quantity and quality of open space provision. The study assessed local provision of all categories of open space from parks, natural open space and amenity greenspace through to playspace and sports facilities as well as allotments. It concluded that most of the District was well provided with open space in terms of access and quantity but that there was a lack of allotments in certain areas and poor provision for young people.

**10.28** The current Plan safeguards all open space from development. However, some areas of open space could be used to meet the need for new development, particularly where there is an over provision of space or where spaces have been identified as poor quality.

**10.29** This consultation identifies three potential options for addressing open space provision.



### Option A - Open Space, Sport and Recreation

**Continue to safeguard all designated areas of open space.**

- This option would safeguard all open space, sport and recreational facilities regardless of their quality.

### Option B- Open Space, Sport and Recreation

#### Promote some areas as development sites.

- This option would mean that some open space, sport and recreation sites could be allocated for development. This could be replaced with compensatory provision or smaller, better quality open space facilities could be included within new development.

### Option C - Open Space, Sport and Recreation

#### Require all apartment schemes to provide communal garden space for food production.

- This option would ensure that residents of apartment developments had the option to grow their own food.

### Question 53

What are your views on the options set out for the provision of open space, sport and recreation? Are there any other options that should also be considered?

## Funding Infrastructure

**10.30** The District Council currently requires new developments to contribute towards new infrastructure provision through Section 106 agreements. These agreements can provide physical infrastructure, for example highway improvements, open space, and play provision, or a financial contribution towards the provision of education provision or the maintenance of existing open spaces. Recent changes to Section 106 agreements have restricted their use. The District Council is also intending to progress CIL to come into effect following the adoption of the Local Plan.

**10.31** This consultation identifies three potential options for funding infrastructure.

### Option A - Funding Infrastructure

#### Continue to use Section 106 agreements to fund all of the types of infrastructure it currently funds.

- This includes education, open space, play provision, highways as well as other infrastructure specific to the development.

### Option B- Funding Infrastructure

#### **Reduce the use of Section 106 agreements.**

- Use Section 106 agreements only where they are absolutely necessary to deliver the infrastructure required to make the development acceptable in planning terms. This could mean that funding for education and open space in particular is reduced.

### Option C - Funding Infrastructure

#### **Implement the Community Infrastructure Levy alongside the Local Plan Review.**

- This would involve consulting on and adopting a Charging Schedule and a list of the Infrastructure to be funded through CIL.
- CIL is non-negotiable once adopted.
- S106 agreements can not be used to fund any items of infrastructure which are on the CIL list. The list cannot include affordable housing which would still be secured using S106 agreements.

### Question 54

What are your views on the options set out for funding infrastructure? Are there any other options that should also be considered?



## 11 Tackling Climate Change and its Impacts

### Introduction

**11.1** Climate change is a key issue within the District. Reducing our contribution to climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions is a key consideration but we also need to take measures to respond to the already inevitable effects of climate change to minimise the impact they have on the District. Climate change is expected to continue during the plan period. Hotter, drier summers and warmer, wetter winters are expected together with an increase in frequency of intense rainfall events. This has implications for flooding, ground stability and the need to heat and more commonly, cool buildings.

**11.2** Climate change policy at all levels emphasises the importance of a two pronged approach which covers the need to reduce contributions to climate change as well as the need to adapt to the already inevitable effects. This section does not consider emissions from transport as transport is covered within the 'A Well Served District' section of this paper.

**11.3** The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) highlights the importance of planning in tackling emissions, minimising vulnerability and providing resilience to the impacts of climate change as well as supporting the deliver of renewable and low-carbon energy. It also requires that Local Planning Authorities plan new development in a way that minimises carbon emissions and avoids increased vulnerability to the range of impacts arising from climate change.

### Flood Risk

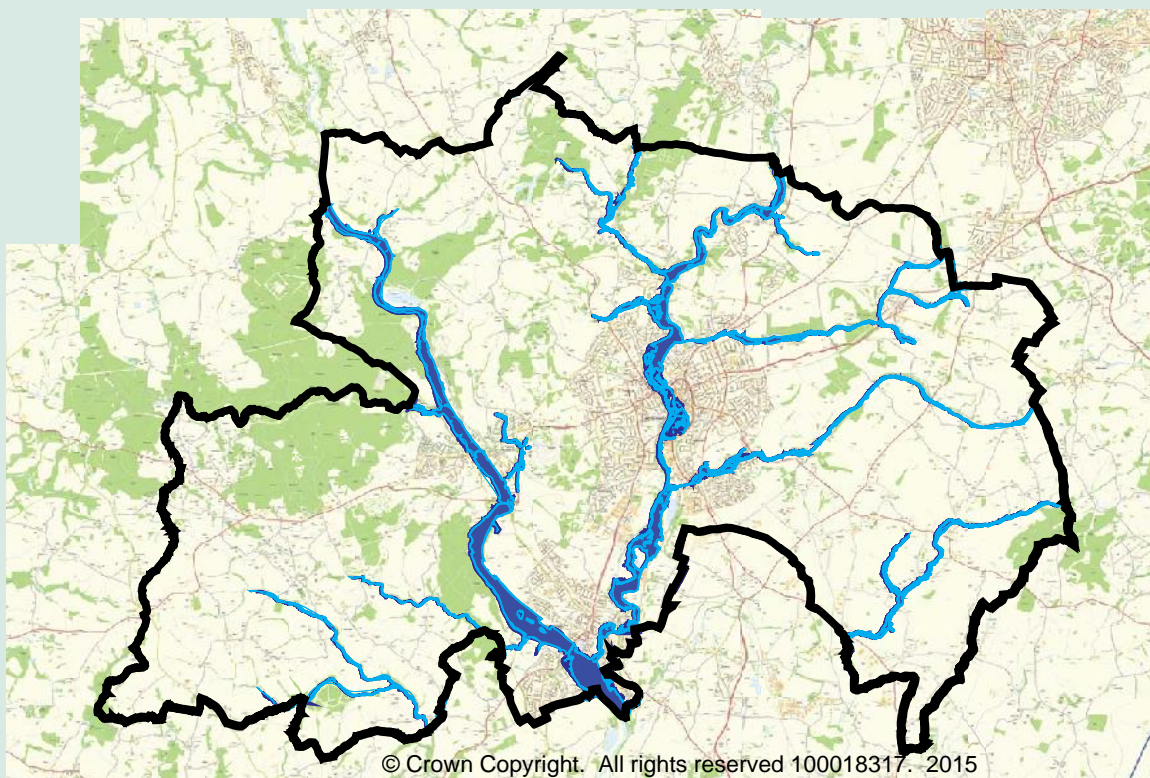
**11.4** The NPPF requires Local Planning Authorities to consider flood risk as part of their Local Plans. Flood risk is a significant issue within the District. The River Stour flows through Kidderminster, Bewdley lies alongside the River Severn and the Rivers Stour and Severn meet at Stourport-on-Severn. Additionally, the District has a number of streams and brooks which can be the source of flooding. In more recent years, surface water flooding has



became an increasing concern as a result of more intense rainfall events. There are a number of flood defences in place, a bund system helps to manage flood risk in Kidderminster and demountable riverside defences to help manage flood risk in Bewdley. Within Stourport-on-Severn, the functional floodplain at Riverside Meadows provides natural flood alleviation.



## Flood Zones 2 and 3



**11.5** Local Plans should be supported by Strategic Flood Risk Assessment and develop policies to manage flood risk from all sources. Local Plans should apply a sequential, risk-based approach to the location of development to avoid where possible flood risk to people and property. The NPPG requires that Local Plans are supported by Strategic Flood Risk Assessments, Water Resources Management Plans and Water Cycle Studies.

**11.6** This consultation identifies three options for addressing flood risk.

### Option A - Flood Risk

**Continue to permit the redevelopment of available sites within the floodplain.**

- Allowing redevelopment could lead to reduced flood risk.

### Option B - Flood Risk

**Prevent the redevelopment of sites within the floodplain and use land instead for flood prevention or other non built land uses.**

- This would be costly to implement.

### Option C - Flood Risk

#### **Relocate vulnerable uses in areas outside of the floodplain.**

- This option would reduce flood risk by taking the most vulnerable uses out of the floodplain.

### Question 55

What are your views on the options set out for managing flood risk? Are there any other options that should also be considered?

### Question 56

How should the Plan ensure that flood risk is adequately managed and that new development both within and outside of the flood plain does not increase flood risk to new or existing properties and assets?

## Water Efficiency

**11.7** The Housing Standards Review sets out a water efficiency target of 125 litres per person per day for all new dwellings which will be implemented through Building Regulations. There is an optional higher target which further reduces water consumption in new dwellings to 110 litres per person per day. In order to adopt this target within the Local Plan, we would need to demonstrate that there was sufficient evidence to support this. The evidence would need to relate to availability of water and pressure on water resources to demonstrate that the approach was necessary, as well as the financial viability of requiring new dwellings to meet this additional standard. Most of the public water supply for the District comes from groundwater abstraction. These groundwater reserves have no scope for further abstraction. In parts of the District the Environment Agency is working with the water companies and other abstractors in order to reduce abstraction to sustainable rates and avoid long term adverse impact on wetlands and landscape and nature conservation interests. The viability of the approach would be considered through a whole plan viability assessment at the Preferred Options stage.

**11.8** This consultation identifies two options for water efficiency.

### Option A - Water Efficiency

#### **Implement the higher water efficiency standard of 110 litres per person per day through the Local Plan Review.**

- This option would impose a higher standard than is required through the Building Regulations and would need to be supported by evidence to demonstrate water stress within the area as well as evidence to demonstrate that it is financially viable.

### Option B - Water Efficiency

**Continue to use the Building Regulations Standard of 125 litres per person per day.**

- This option would not require a policy within the Local Plan as it is the minimum standard required by the Building Regulations.

### Question 57

What are your views on the options set out for water efficiency? Are there any other options that should also be considered?

## Reducing Emissions and Generating Renewable Energy

**11.9** The NPPF requires Local Planning Authorities to set any local requirement for a building's sustainability in a way consistent with the Government's zero carbon buildings policy and adopt nationally described standards and to recognise the responsibility of all communities



to contribute towards renewable energy generation by writing policies which maximise renewable and low-carbon energy development and considering identifying suitable areas for renewable and low-carbon energy development. The NPPG sets out the importance of Sustainability Appraisal in ensuring that Local Plans help to deliver The Climate Change Act 2008.

**11.10** Wyre Forest District has lower emissions than Worcestershire County as a whole because there are no motorways running through the District. There is an overall declining trend in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. However, there was a slight increase between 2012 and 2013. Renewable energy generation can significantly reduce carbon emissions. The District Council currently has a policy to seek 10% of energy requirements from renewable sources in major new developments. However, there have been difficulties in implementing this which are mainly related to the financial viability of development and this is exacerbated by the District's brownfield regeneration strategy.

**11.11** This consultation identifies two options for renewable energy.

### Option A - Renewable Energy

**Require new developments to provide 10% of their forecast energy needs from on-site renewable energy technologies.**

- This option would require developers to install renewable energy technologies to provide 10% of the forecast energy requirements in major new developments.

### Option B - Renewable Energy

**Do not seek a proportion of the energy requirements in new development to come from on-site renewable sources.**

- This option would mean that new development would not have to provide any energy from renewable sources regardless of economic viability.

### Question 58

What are your views on the options set out for renewable energy? Are there any other options that should also be considered?

### Question 59

How best can we ensure that the Local Plan provides the correct opportunities for increasing the proportion of energy which is generated from renewable sources?

**11.12** District heating systems can also contribute to reduced carbon emissions and this approach is encouraged through national guidance. The District does not currently have any examples of District heating systems.

### Question 60

Can the plan provide a framework for encouraging and facilitating the development and use of combined heat and power systems?

**11.13** In addition to small scale renewable energy systems located within new developments, the District Council is also required to consider whether or not there are areas which might be suitable for larger scale, stand-alone renewable energy developments. Examples of these



include wind farms and solar farms. Sites can be allocated specifically for renewable energy generation, however, any allocations should be supported by interest from developers and operators.

### Question 61

Should the Plan identify specific areas for renewable energy development? If so, are there any areas which are particularly suitable for a specific type of renewable energy development (evidence must be provided)?

## Waste

**11.14** The Worcestershire Waste Core Strategy Local Plan sets out how the County Council will plan for waste management facilities in Worcestershire until 2027. It was adopted by Full Council on 15th November 2012 and is now part of the development plan. It will be used by the County Council to make decisions about planning applications for waste management facilities. Wyre Forest District Council, as well as the other City, Borough and District Councils in Worcestershire, will also use it to make decisions about other types of planning applications that could have waste implications. The Strategy will guide developers as to what type of development will be acceptable where and will encourage and stimulate businesses involved in recycling and re-use of resources. The Worcestershire Waste Core Strategy sets out the need to manage waste in accordance with the waste hierarchy. The stages of the waste hierarchy are - prevention, preparing for re-use, recycling, other recovery, disposal. The District Council will need to ensure that the Local Plan Review does not conflict with the Waste Core Strategy.

## Minerals

**11.15** It is a national requirement that the County Council should have planning policies for the "winning and working" of minerals. Worcestershire County Council is preparing a new Minerals Local Plan for Worcestershire. This document will set out how we plan for mineral extraction in the county. It will guide how much and what minerals need to be able to be supplied, where minerals should be extracted, how sites should be "restored" when working has finished and how minerals development should protect and enhance Worcestershire's people and places. Once it is adopted it will replace the existing minerals policies in the Hereford and Worcester Minerals Local Plan and will be part of the Development Plan for Worcestershire, to be used to make decisions about planning applications for mineral extraction, processing and restoration in the county. The District Council will stay engaged with the Plan preparation process.



## A Glossary

**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.

**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.

**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.

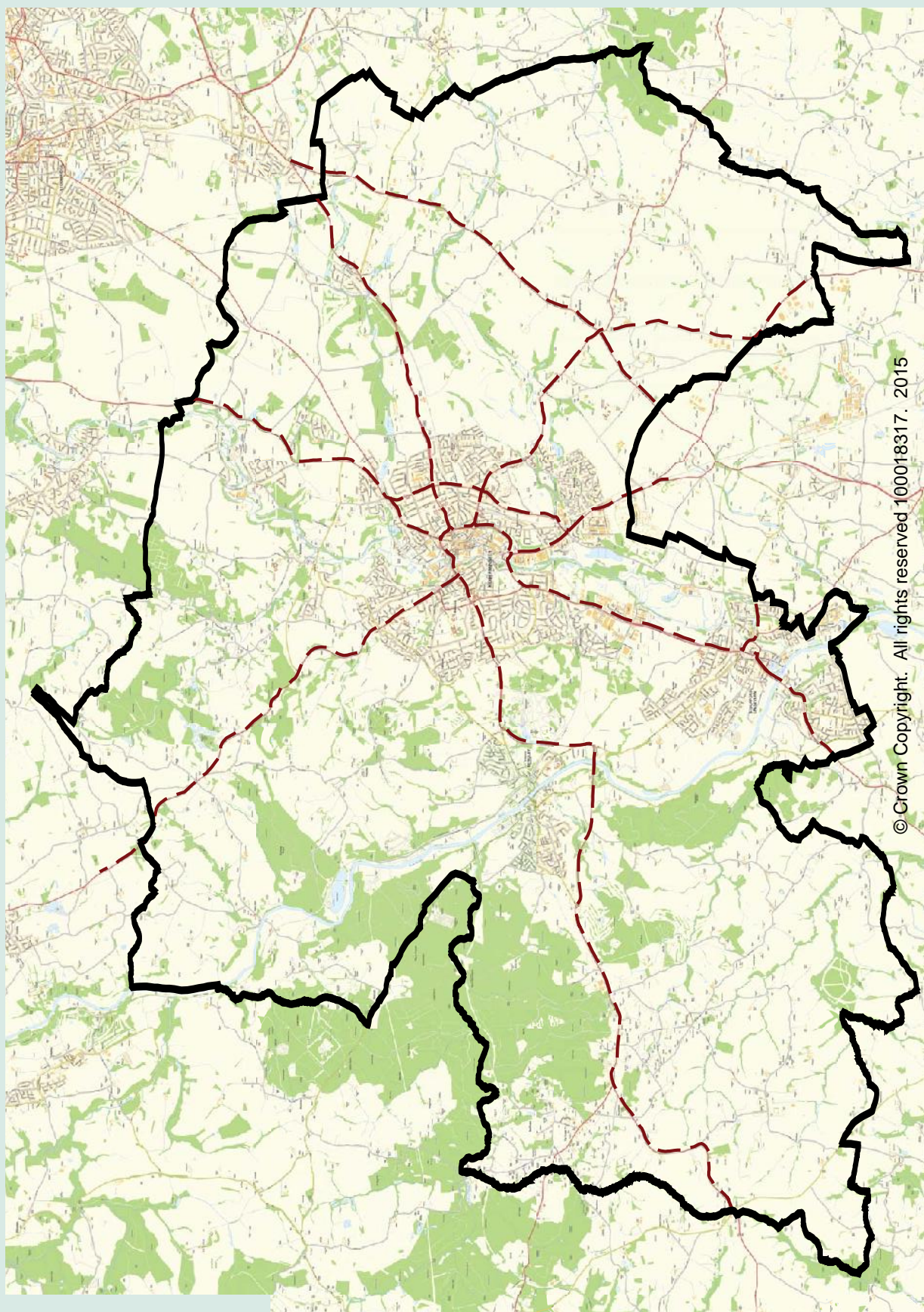
**Windfall Site** - a site not specifically allocated for development in a development plan, but which unexpectedly becomes available for development during the lifetime of a plan. Most windfall sites are for housing.

**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 3 (LTP3) 2011-2026** - sets out Worcestershire's transport strategy, as well as identifying major long-term transportation pressures on the County.



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