

**Wyre Forest District Council
Local Plan 2016-2036
Pre-Submission Publication
Heritage Impact Assessment**

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Appendices

- A:** Heritage Impact Assessments for site allocations included within the Wyre Forest District Council Local Plan Pre-Submission Publication September 2019
- B:** Heritage Impact Assessments for those sites excluded from the Wyre Forest District Council Local Plan Pre-Submission Publication September 2019

Introduction to Wyre Forest District

1.0 Background

In 2012 Wyre Forest District Council produced its Historic Environment Technical Paper which collated and analysed the existing information on the Historic Environment within Wyre Forest District. The paper considered that the Historic Environment is a key element for consideration in the future development of the District. It made several recommendations, the third of which was:

“Continued development of the ‘evidence base’ to support the policy making process”

This Heritage Impact Assessment Report is the result of the continuing development of that “evidence base” and is produced to support the Local Plan Pre-Submission Publication (September 2019).

- 1.1** Wyre Forest District is located at the north of Worcestershire, bordered by Shropshire and Staffordshire to the north, Bromsgrove District to the east, Wychavon District to the south and Malvern Hills District to the west. Situated some 16 miles from the Birmingham conurbation and on the western edge of the West Midlands Green Belt, the District has an area of 195 square kilometres and a population of approximately 100,715. [ONS 2017] Geographically Wyre Forest District has road and rail links to Birmingham and the Black Country whilst the nearest sub-regional centre is Worcester, also connected by major roads and the railway network.
- 1.2** The District is a considerably diverse area with particularly distinctive characteristics and heritage assets. The District is largely rural and has only three towns: Kidderminster, Stourport-on-Severn and Bewdley. These three towns form a triangle of settlements at the centre of the District; between each of the three towns is a narrow area of Green Belt countryside. Each of the towns has its own character and community identity.

There are two principal river catchments: The River Severn and the River Stour. The River Severn is one of Britain’s principal rivers and flows from north to south through the District and through the towns of Bewdley and Stourport-on-Severn. The River Stour flows south west through Kidderminster to join the River Severn at Stourport.

The Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal runs northwest through the District from the basins at Stourport-on-Severn, through Kidderminster and towards the Black Country.

There are a number of rural settlements within Wyre Forest District, each having its own unique character and heritage context. These include:

Bliss Gate
Broome
Callow Hill
Chaddesley Corbett
Churchill and Blakedown
Clows Top
Cookley
Fairfield (Wolverley)
Far Forest
Heightington
Rock
Rushock
Stone
Upper Arley

Historic Towns

1.3 Kidderminster

Kidderminster is the largest town within the District with a population of 55,530 [2011 Census]. It is the only town linked to the national rail network providing direct access to Birmingham and Worcester.

Kidderminster grew-up at a crossing point to the River Stour, on an important route-way between the Midlands and Wales. Archaeological evidence, such as the Bronze Age stone axe found during the construction of the Church Street carpet works in the 19th century, and the roman coins discovered beneath the floor of St Mary's Church, indicates early settlement in the area. A minster was founded in the vicinity during the eighth century and Kidderminster (or "*Chideminstre*", possibly meaning "*Cyddda's*" or "*Cydela's minster*") was of sufficient importance to be mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086. A church, probably on the site of the current St Mary's, is first mentioned in 1175. Church Street linked the church and manor house (believed to have been located to the north west of Church Street) to the town and is medieval in date.

The medieval town was centred on the market with streets, including Church Street, radiating from the market. The Bull Ring may well have formed an extension for the expanding market during the later medieval or post-medieval period.

A textile industry grew-up in the Town during the medieval period, associated with the industrial potential of the River Stour. This industry reached its height between the late nineteenth and mid twentieth centuries, when Kidderminster became a leading centre for the manufacture of textiles and, later, carpet.

The opening of the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal in 1772 brought more traffic and trade and by the nineteenth century carpet production became the major industry of the town and resulted in a growth in population and redevelopment of the town. In the 1960s the town centre was separated from the suburbs by the construction of the Ring Road and the historic core of the town was extensively redeveloped in the late 20th century with the construction of new shopping centres such as The Swan Centre and The Rowland Hill Centre.

With the coming of the railway the town expanded rapidly in the Victorian era and much of the residential development of that period survives today: there is a great variety of suburban residential property in the town dating from the early 19th century onwards, including mansions formerly belonging to carpet barons.

In the mid C20 the town expanded further towards the west, north and east, as the possibility of employment in the West Midlands conurbation was made possible by rail and road improvements and higher ownership of private cars. In the late C20 former farmland to the south east was transformed into the Spennells estate.

The severe decline in the carpet industry in the late C20 has led to the creation of retail parks at the edge of the town centre including Weavers Wharf and Crossley Park. On the former site several historic buildings have been retained for alternative uses, however on the latter nothing now remains of the former carpet industry. Whilst some historic buildings close to the town centre are now derelict and require regeneration many others have been successfully integrated into new retail and office accommodation.

Kidderminster contains several conservation areas: Vicar Street; Church Street; Green Street; Blakebrook; and the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal Conservation Area runs through the town.

The town has been surrounded by Green Belt since the 1960's, and this has prevented urban sprawl towards Bewdley and Stourport and the linking up of the three towns.

1.4 Stourport-on-Severn

Stourport-on-Severn is the second largest town within the District with a population of 20,112 [2011 Census]. Stourport-on-Severn is by comparison with many other country towns, a relatively recent settlement. It owes its origin and development solely to the construction of the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal during the late eighteenth century and in this respect claims to be unique, which adds to its importance. Prior to this event, the only settlement in the vicinity was the hamlet of Lower Mitton nearby to the north-east, which now forms the Gilgal Conservation Area. Lower Mitton was of importance in earlier times because it was the historic crossing place of the River Stour.

Crossings of the River Severn historically took place at Redstone, about one kilometre further downstream.

During the late 1760's, the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal was constructed under the guidance of the engineer James Brindley to link the River Trent (far to the north) with the River Severn (immediately to the south). The canal itself became operational in 1770/1 and the town of Stourport-on-Severn was founded at the southern terminus of this route.

Much of the southern length of the Canal was constructed to follow the gentle valley contours of the River Stour, which runs south to converge with the River Severn at what is now the south-east tip of the Conservation Area. Immediately to the north of Lower Mitton, the Canal was routed west away from the Stour, and then south to take a direct course dropping to meet the Severn through a series of locks (manually operated) and basins; and these make up the predominant land feature in the Area. In addition to constructing the basins, the Canal Company constructed a quayside along the north bank of the River Severn, which still retains its sandstone block-work and steps. The Canal Company also constructed a number of buildings in the vicinity, including the Tontine (a former hotel), maintenance buildings to the north, most of the houses and former stabling in Mart Lane and Severn Side, and a number of warehouses.

The extent of the basins is testament to the degree of activity created by the traffic using the canal and the transfer of merchandise to vessels for onward trips on the Severn, and the town fared well from this intersection, being established immediately to the north and north-west. The core streets of the town were laid out during the late eighteenth century and in-filled with buildings, principally between then and the mid. nineteenth century.

Many large houses associated with canal managers were constructed, and reflect the wealth of their occupants and the wealth brought by the Canal. Other buildings were necessary to handle the amount of trade undertaken.

In addition to those basins still surviving, a further basin existed but has been in-filled - this basin existed in the area bordered by Cheapside, the River Severn and the Angel Public House. This basin was in-filled when a gas works was constructed on the site. The water connection was via a narrow channel from the Inner Basin to the north-east; beneath a path that still links Severn Side with Severn Road and Cheapside. This access point is still visible as an in-filled bridge forming a hump in the footpath.

The oldest vinegar works in the County (the Swan Brewery, later becoming Holbrook's, Sarson's and finally Nestle) was established in 1798 on a site in the south-east corner of the Conservation Area adjoining the Rivers Severn and Stour. This site had the advantage of a readily available water supply for brewing purposes, and close proximity to the River Severn and adjoining canal basins for transportation.

The town expanded rapidly during the C20 and this is most visible in the scale of the housing estates at Lickhill and Areley Kings. More recently housing has been constructed on redundant industrial sites including that of the former power station.

The decline of major industry in the town also coincided with the closure of the power station and its link to the rail network. Much of the redundant industrial land has been allocated for housing although only a small proportion of this has been developed to date.

The funfair by the river existed before WW2 and the town's attractive architecture, canal basins and riverside environment have contributed to its popularity as a tourist destination in its own right for the last century.

There are three Conservation Areas within Stourport-on-Severn: Stourport No.1; Stourport No.2 and Gilgal. The Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal Conservation Area runs through the town, whilst the ancient hamlet of Areley Kings to the west of the River Severn has now become a suburb of the town and has its own Conservation Area focused on the historic Church.

1.5 Bewdley

Bewdley is the smallest of the towns within the District with a population of 8,571 [2011 Census]. The Conservation Area comprises the historic core of the Town and adjoining landscape features. Prehistoric and Roman artifacts have been found in the Area, but it is from the medieval period onwards that the remaining above ground fabric dates.

Bewdley was not mentioned in the Domesday Survey of 1086 but Wribbenhall appears as "*Bailiwick*", an outlying estate of the manor of Kidderminster. The oldest surviving reference to Bewdley, or "*Beaulieu*", is in 1304 when it was associated with a manor on the western side of the River.

Bewdley has probably always been the site of an important crossing point of the River Severn, this providing one of the main reasons for the settlement. A ford at Bewdley had probably existed from an early period and a ferry is mentioned in 1336. The first bridge was built in 1447.

Throughout the late 14th and 15th centuries there was a steady increase in profits from the ferry and in the number of free tenants in Bewdley. The first record of a burgage is in 1367 and in 1376 permission was granted for a market on Wyre Hill. In the mid. 15th century, a market place was established in Load Street. By this time Bewdley changed from a linear settlement, along Wyre Hill and the road to the ford, into a planned town focused on the River. A chapel was built in the centre of the town (Load Street) c1450 and the main streets and town gates (which do not survive) may also have been laid out around this time. The status of the town was enhanced by the presence of a royal palace known as Tickenhill that was built on a hillside adjoining the south-west edge of the town during the 16th century by Henry VII for his son Arthur.

The Court of the Marches usually spent summer at Tickenhill. A number of timber framed buildings were constructed during this period.

The first bridge was rebuilt in timber during 1460 but in 1483 a new stone bridge was built and survived until the end of the 18th Century, being replaced with the current bridge in 1798.

During the later Middle Ages Bewdley increased in prosperity and importance, and by the 16th and 17th centuries had become an important inland port and focus for trade between the Upper Severn Valley, the Black Country and Bristol. Bewdley also became a centre for non-conformist religious groups, and the many chapels, particularly off High Street, reflect the Stuart Clarendon code that such building should be located in inconspicuous locations.

As well as being a trading centre, Bewdley supported a variety of crafts and industries, including cloth, leather and rope production. The presence of a navigable river and the proximity of the Wyre Forest with its natural resources meant Bewdley could attract trade from areas normally outside the hinterland of a town its size.

By the mid-18th Century Bewdley had become one of the most important inland ports in the country. Owing to its strategic location, it became a port of trans-shipment and served as a collection centre for bar-iron and other goods from Wales and the west, which were then sent overland to the emergent industries of Birmingham or downstream to Bristol. The prosperity of the town during this period became reflected in many Georgian buildings, and some new and earlier properties were given particularly elegant facades at this time. A number of merchants in the town became very wealthy and secured for themselves the most prestigious situations overlooking the town, where they built substantial homes. Many of these buildings survive although not always in single family occupation. Although the medieval past of Bewdley is still very much in evidence, Pevsner (writing in the mid-20th century) described the town as *“the most perfect small Georgian town in Worcestershire”*, reflecting the important and enduring contribution made to its appearance during later years.

The importance of Bewdley declined with the coming of the canals during the late 18th. Century, and particularly with the development of Stourport-on-Severn a few miles to the south, which was established at the terminus of the newly constructed Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal (c.1771) and the River Severn. Following this period, Bewdley continued to function as a market town but was not such an important centre for trade. A railway station was constructed on the eastern side of the River in Wribbenhall during the 1860's, linking the town with nearby Kidderminster and Bridgnorth. Historically Wribbenhall was part of Kidderminster Foreign but since the early 20th Century has formed part of Bewdley. Despite the railway connections the town was largely overlooked by more extensive Victorian development (and redevelopment).

Consequently, with diminished trade and little impetus for change, the town retained much of its historic form during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and certainly its architectural legacy that today is perhaps its most striking attraction.

Sir Stanley Baldwin, later Earl Baldwin of Bewdley and Prime Minister for several years during the early twentieth century, was born in No. 15 Lower Park which is still standing albeit subdivided into flats. A statue to him has recently been erected in Load Street.

As early as June 1944 Clough Williams-Ellis FRIBA (of Portmeirion fame) presented the borough with a draft Town Planning Report which contained suggestions for the post-war development of the town including a by-pass, car parks, new housing and identifying those historic characteristics he thought ought to be retained and preserved.

During the latter part of the twentieth century, with the introduction of the Town and Country Planning Act 1947, forerunner of the modern day town planning system, both Bewdley and Wribbenhall experienced substantial suburban residential growth and infilling within and adjoining the Conservation Area. Much of this development integrated poorly with the existing fabric of the town. In 1986, a southern bypass providing a second river crossing was opened, which helped to alleviate some of the problems associated with increasing vehicular traffic in the historic core, although congestion, particularly in Welch Gate is still a major issue.

Much of the centre of the town and Wribbenhall on the eastern bank of the River Severn lies within the Bewdley Conservation Area.

1.6 Rural Areas and Historic Landscape

The majority of the Wyre Forest District is rural in character however there is a wide variety of landscapes and historic settlements within the District such that there are several different Landscape Character Areas. Much of the information in this section has been sourced from the *Worcestershire Historic Landscape Characterisation Report (2012)*. The character of the landscape has shaped the development of the settlements within it including the types of buildings constructed and the availability and use of local building materials. Wyre Forest District Council area has a varied landscape character that encompasses large tracts of enclosed fields, the Worcestershire elements of the Wyre Forest itself, scattered villages and settlements, as well as the nucleated settlement of Bewdley with its larger more industrialised neighbours Kidderminster and Stourport-on-Severn.

The district's landscape character appears to be divided roughly between a wooded west and north, an urban centre and south and a more open fieldscape to the east:

- At 17%, settlement occupies a large part of the district's centre, modern expansion alone covering over 8% of the council's total land area;
- Over 14% of the district currently consists of woodland, though only 6% of that is ancient semi-natural woodland;
- Ornamental, Parkland and Recreational elements, mostly consisting of Golf Courses and Parkland, comprise nearly 4% of the total area, and they are mostly clustered around the periphery of Kidderminster, Stourport and Bewdley urban settlements.

The amount of Fields and Enclosed Land in the district council area in the present-day has only marginally decreased since the Industrial period (1800-1913). The greatest period of landscape character change occurs in the early Industrial period, with the enclosure of large areas of pre-1800 unenclosed heath and common land that had probably dominated the eastern half of the district since the medieval period. Only small areas of this formerly open countryside remain in Wyre Forest District: mostly adjacent to Hartlebury Common.

Nearly 27% of the district council area retains a historic landscape character that pre-dates 1800. Much of this is ancient woodland and historic settlement cores.

In the early 20th century, historic landscape change focuses around Kidderminster and Stourport, due to residential and industrial expansion adjacent to the canal and the railways.

Half of the District Council area has undergone some change of landscape character since the Second World War and distribution of these post-war changes is spread throughout the district.

Over half of the district council's area consists of Field and Enclosed Land, being almost 57% of the total area, 29% alone of which consists of field amalgamation, that is medium or large fields created by the removal of internal and adjoining field boundaries. Fields in parishes in the south-west and east of the district in particular have suffered from concentrations of boundary loss. Field patterns and hedgerows add greatly to diversity and a sense of local distinctiveness and widespread boundary removal can dramatically change historic landscape character.

Wyre Forest District East of the River Severn

1.6.1

North East of the District (North of Kidderminster)

To the north-east of the District lie the principal village settlements of Cookley, Wolverley and Upper Arley. Smaller settlements include Caunsall, Fairfield, Drakelow and Kingsford; whilst hamlets include Blakeshall, Trimpley and Shatterford. All fall within or are washed over by Green Belt.

Conservation Areas within the north east of the District have been designated at Upper Arley, Wolverley and the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal. The settlements contain several important listed buildings, a registered park and garden and scheduled monuments.

The landscape types found in the north east of the District are:

1.6.1.1

Sandstone Estatelands

(This circles Kidderminster and also comprises areas to the east):

An open, rolling landscape characterised by an ordered pattern of large, arable fields, straight roads and estate plantations. Fields are typically defined by straight thorn hedges, reflecting the late enclosure of much of this landscape from woodland and waste. This historic land use pattern is also reflected in the occurrence of isolated brick farmsteads and clusters of wayside dwellings, interspersed with occasional small villages. Despite the fact that this is a functional landscape, the consistent geometric pattern can convey a strong sense of visual unity. Churchill, Blakedown, Caunsall, Cookley, Blakeshall and Fairfield fall within this landscape type.

1.6.1.2

Principal Timbered Farmlands (also comprises an area to the south east):

A small scale wooded, agricultural landscape characterised by filtered views through densely scattered hedgerow trees. This is a complex, in places intimate, landscape of irregularly shaped woodlands, winding lanes and frequent wayside dwellings. Its mosaic of agricultural land was cleared directly from woodland, on a piecemeal basis, and from former localized areas of open fields, resulting in a lack of strong settlement nuclei. The villages of Chaddesley Corbett and Wolverley lie within this landscape type.

1.6.1.3

Principal Wooded Hills:

An upstanding wooded landscape with a sloping, in places steeply undulating topography, often on the edge of higher ground. This is a landscape of large, irregularly shaped ancient woodlands and wooded streamlines, typically forming an interlocking pattern with surrounding hedged fields. The woodlands are a key visual element within the landscape which contains Upper Arley, Drakelow, Kingsford, Trimpley and Shatterford.

1.6.1.4

Timbered Plateau Farmlands:

A varied, mixed farming landscape of hedged fields, scattered farms, woods and wooded valleys associated with upstanding areas of undulating relief. The landform conveys a sense of strength and dominance which tends to override the pattern of tree cover and fields.

Variations in landform within this landscape create a changing sequence of visual perspectives, ranging from open vistas on plateau summits to more secluded scenes along valley bottoms. The most northern part of Wyre Forest District falls within this landscape type including the Church and Arboretum at Upper Arley Estate and several isolated farmsteads.

1.6.2.

East of the District (East of Kidderminster)

To the east of the River Severn lie the principal village settlements of Blakedown and Chaddesley Corbett. Smaller settlements include Churchill, Broome, Drayton, Rushock, Shenstone, Harvington and Stone; whilst hamlets include Hackman's Gate, Hillpool, Tanwood, Cakebole, Mustow Green and Stanklyn. All fall within or are washed over by Green Belt.

Conservation Areas within the east of the District have been designated at Broome, Churchill, Chaddesley Corbett and Harvington.

These villages contain many fine examples of ecclesiastical, vernacular and polite architecture, including Harvington Hall and the Church of St. Cassian Chaddesley Corbett which are Grade I listed Buildings.

The landscape types found to the east of Kidderminster are:

1.6.2.1

Estate Farmlands:

An ordered agricultural landscape characterised by a sub- regular pattern of medium-to-large sized fields, small geometric plantations and groups of ornamental trees associated with large country houses. Settlement is largely restricted to discrete clusters of dwellings and occasional small estate villages. The villages of Broome, Harvington, Stone and Shenstone lie within this landscape type.

1.6.2.2

Principal Timbered Farmlands:

A small scale wooded, agricultural landscape characterised by filtered views through densely scattered hedgerow trees. This is a complex, in places intimate, landscape of irregularly shaped woodlands, winding lanes and frequent wayside dwellings. Its mosaic of agricultural land was cleared directly from woodland, on a piecemeal basis, and from former localized areas of open fields, resulting in a lack of strong settlement nuclei. The villages of Chaddesley Corbett and Wolverley lie within this landscape type.

1.6.3.

West of the District (West of the River Severn)

The area to the north-west of Bewdley is largely characterised by its densely forested nature, however around the edge of the forest there are several small settlements including: Button Oak, Pound Green, Dowles, Callow Hill and Far Forest. Further west there are the settlements of Bliss Gate and Buckeridge, whilst to the south west are the villages of Rock and Heightington. These settlements contain several important listed buildings including, at Rock, a Grade I Church and scheduled monument. There is no Green Belt to the west of the River Severn, the land being classed as open countryside.

The landscape types found in the west of the District are:

1.6.3.1

Forest Smallholdings and Dwellings:

An intimate, densely settled landscape characterised by strings of wayside cottages and associated smallholdings. These nestle within a small-scale matrix of pastoral fields and narrow interlocking lanes, usually defined by prominent dense hedges with hedgerow trees. The consistency of human activity in these distinctive, small scale landscapes has resulted in a unified, palpably domestic character. The settlements of Button Oak, Pound Green, Dowles, Callow Hill, Far Forest, Buckeridge and Bliss Gate lie within this landscape type.

1.6.3.2

Wooded Forest:

A landscape dominated by dense tree cover, predominately woodland of ancient character, effectively blocking all but immediate short distance views. It is essentially unsettled although occasional wayside cottages occur, often with adjacent small fields of assart (a piece of woodland converted to arable use) origin. This is an uncomplicated landscape where the unrelenting mass of woodland and restricted views creates a strong character which can feel overwhelmingly remote and confined. There are very few developed areas of the Wyre Forest, principally there are isolated farmsteads (e.g.: Ruskin Land) and cottages associated with timber operations and the production of charcoal. Along the Dowles Brook there are historic mills and cottages associated with milling.

1.6.3.3

Timber Plateau Farmlands:

The villages of Rock and Heightington fall into this landscape type which circles the Wyre Forest from north through west to south.

1.6.3.4

Principal Wooded Hills:

The hamlet (and Conservation Area) of Ribbesford containing Grade II* Ribbesford House and the Grade I Church of St Leonard lies within this sliver of landscape type bordering the River Severn between Bewdley and Areley Kings.

1.6.4

South of the District (South of Kidderminster and Stourport-on-Severn):

The towns of Kidderminster and Stourport lie extremely close to the southern boundary of the District. To the immediate south of Kidderminster and Stourport lies Wychavon District and to the immediate south of Areley Kings lies Malvern Hills District.

The landscape types found to the south of the District are:

1.6.4.1

Sandstone Estatelands:

Areley Kings to the west of Stourport-on-Severn is surrounded by this landscape type.

1.6.4.2

Wooded Estatelands:

A large-scale, wooded agricultural landscape of isolated brick farmsteads clusters of way-side dwellings and occasional small estate villages. Key visual elements in this landscape are the many large, irregularly shaped ancient woodlands often prominently situated on low crests. It is a landscape that, due to its scale, lacks intimacy and can appear rather functional. A small area of the District to the west of Areley Kings falls within this landscape type.

1.6.4.3

Unenclosed Commons:

A category of landscape offering tremendous variety of scale and size, the overriding characteristics being the lack of enclosure and usually a land use of rough grazing. The smaller unenclosed commons are ranked as features within other Landscape Types but a few are considered to be of sufficient extent to warrant separate classification. Settlement, where present, is usually restricted to wayside dwellings situated around the perimeter of the common. There are two such areas within Wyre Forest. The first lies to the south of Bewdley and west of Kidderminster, and comprises Rydd Covert, Rifle Range Nature Reserve, Devil's Spittleful and Spring Grove (now part of the safari park). The second lies to the south of Stourport-on-Severn and comprises Lower Heath which is adjacent to Hartlebury Common (within Wychavon District).

1.7 The Challenges Facing Wyre Forest

In 2012 Wyre Forest District Council produced its Historic Environment Technical Paper which collated and analysed the existing information on the Historic Environment within Wyre Forest District. The paper considered that the Historic Environment is a key element for consideration in the future development of the District. It made several recommendations, the third of which was: “*Continued development of the “evidence base” to support the policy making process*”.

1.8 Housing

Wyre Forest District is located at the north of Worcestershire, bordered by Shropshire and Staffordshire to the north, Bromsgrove District to the east, Wychavon District to the south and Malvern Hills District to the west. It is situated some 16 miles from the Birmingham conurbation.

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

The 2018 Housing Needs Study has evidenced the overall requirement for 276 new dwellings per annum over the new plan period. The Housing Policies in the Local Plan Pre-Submission Publication (September 2019) set out how new housing types will be delivered within the District. This will be in accordance with the overarching Development Strategy policies and also address site provision for gypsies, travellers and travelling showpeople during the new plan period.

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

1.9 Economy

Wyre Forest District is a considerably diverse area with particularly distinctive characteristics and heritage assets. The District is largely rural and has only three towns: Kidderminster, Stourport and Bewdley. Its close proximity to the West Midlands conurbation has resulted in Wyre Forest joining two Local Enterprise Partnerships: The Worcestershire LEP and the Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP.

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

The Government in September 2019 has produced a Local Industrial Strategies policy prospectus and a document 'Working towards a West Midlands Local Industrial Strategy'. This is a strategic approach to jointly designing solutions. The strategic overview will help inform LEP's to drive future growth and productivity.

The Employment Land Review Study 2018 identified that Wyre Forest has higher levels of economic activity and lower claimant unemployment levels than regional and national averages. Unemployment in Wyre Forest District is 4.1%, the West Midlands Regional figure is 5.1% and nationally 4.4%.

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

Given these challenges it is important that a positive economic framework is put in place to help tackle these issues. Having sufficient, readily available and attractive land, of an appropriate type and in the right location is therefore vital to tackling some of these challenges. The amount and type of employment land identified in the Local Plan Pre-Submission Publication (September 2019) will ensure that the District is in a good position to respond and react to the continued diversification of the local economy.

1.10 Heritage within Wyre Forest District

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

1.11 Designated Heritage Assets

The National Heritage List for England identifies the following within the District:

- Grade I Listed Buildings: 6
- Grade 2* Listed Buildings: 26
- Grade II Listed Buildings: 659
- Grade II Registered Park and Garden: 1
- Scheduled Monuments: 9

The District has also designated 17 Conservation Areas covering both the urban areas and a number of rural villages.

These are:

- Upper Arley
- Wolverley
- Broome
- Churchill
- Chaddesley Corbett
- Harvington
- Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal
- Church Street (Kidderminster)
- Green Street (Kidderminster)
- Vicar Street (Kidderminster)
- Blakebrook (Kidderminster)
- Bewdley
- Ribbesford
- Areley Kings
- Stourport No.1
- Stourport No.2
- Gilgal (Stourport)

1.12 Undesignated Heritage Assets

Wyre Forest District Council has identified historic buildings, structures and areas of local significance and these are recorded on the Local Heritage Lists for:

- Kidderminster
- Stourport-on-Severn
- Bewdley
- Chaddesley Corbett Parish

- Churchill and Blakedown Parish
- Wolverley and Cookley
- The Severn Valley Railway

In Wyre Forest District there are currently 1388 non-designated historic buildings recorded on the Worcestershire Historic Environment Record. The Historic Buildings of Worcestershire Project of 2014 identified 7164 potential historic buildings in Wyre Forest.

There are also 3188 non-designated monuments within Wyre Forest District included on the Worcestershire Historic Environment Record which include areas of Paleolithic potential, landscape components, hedgerows, parks & gardens, place names and monuments.

1.13 Heritage at Risk

Historic England's 2017 Heritage at Risk Register contains 6 entries for Wyre Forest District. These are:

- Severn Bridge, Bewdley Grade I Listed Building
- Ribbesford House, Ribbesford Grade II* Listed Building
- Churchill Forge, Churchill: Scheduled Monument and 3 Grade II Listed Buildings
- Gilgal Conservation Area, Stourport-on-Severn
- Green Street Conservation Area Kidderminster
- Ribbesford Conservation Area

The national list does not include Grade II Listed Buildings, however a survey of 2006 identified that there were 29 at risk within the District.

1.14 Purpose and scope of the Heritage Impact Assessment

In order to meet the required housing, employment, leisure and retail growth, the Local Plan needs to allocate land. Opportunities to develop within the District are constrained by the Green Belt, the need to maintain a degree of separation between the three towns, environmental constraints (including the flood plains of both the River Severn and River Stour) and biodiversity designations. For this reason a proportion of Wyre Forest's housing and employment opportunities will come forward as a limited amount of rural development as well as sustainable urban extensions and development within the existing urban areas. Within the urban area, biodiversity and heritage designations also apply and the key challenge will be to balance growth with the protection of natural and built assets to ensure it will not have a detrimental impact on the quality of life for the District's communities.

- 1.15** The purpose of the Heritage Impact Assessment is to support the Local Plan Review Pre-submission Publication Document by demonstrating how the historic environment has been considered in the site selection process and to assess the likely impact on heritage assets, (designated and non- designated) and whether any impact can be mitigated.

The following types of assets are considered in the assessments:

Designated Heritage Assets (listed buildings at Grades I, II* and II; Scheduled Monuments; Registered Parks and Gardens and Conservation Areas);

Non-designated assets including those included on the Worcestershire Historic Environment Record, those recorded on Wyre Forest District Council's adopted Local Heritage Lists and those identified during the plan-making process. These can include buildings, monuments, archaeological remains and places.

- 1.16** All housing and employment sites that were considered for allocation in the Preferred Options Document June 2017 have been assessed, together with other sites which have been proposed for development as part of the public consultation process. The assessments were used to inform the Policies contained within the Local Plan Review Pre-submission Publication Document: Section C Site Allocations, and draw attention to heritage considerations and how impact can be mitigated. Reference to the Heritage Impact Assessment is made in these policies and in Policies 11 and 26 which deal with the protection of the historic environment.

- 1.17** The Local Plan Review Pre-submission Publication Document sets spatial priorities to deliver the vision and in the context of the heritage impact assessment the following are considered relevant:

Part A Context and Strategic Policies
Section 11 - A Unique Place

Part B Development Management Policies
Section 26 - Safeguarding the Historic Environment

Part C Proposed Allocations
Sections 29-36

- 1.18** The following sections outline the policy background to the historic environment; why it is important to take heritage into consideration when changes are proposed; the guidance received from Historic England; and the methodology and summary of the assessments.

2.0 Legislative and Policy Context

- 2.1 The legislative framework for planning and heritage protection is embodied in the normal planning framework (Town and Country Planning Act 1990) and three specific Acts of Parliament:

Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

This provides specific protection for buildings and areas of special architectural or historic interest.

Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1990:

This provides specific protections for scheduled monuments.

Protection of Wrecks Act 1973:

This provides specific protection for protected wreck sites.

- 2.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) issued February 2019 states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development and defines the objective of sustainable development as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

The NPPF describes the three over-arching objectives which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways to achieve sustainable development. The third of these is an environmental objective which is (inter alia) to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment.

Section 15 of the NPPF “Conserving and enhancing the historic environment” provides the main policies on the historic environment and its significance-led approach to planning.

- 2.3 When considering the allocation of housing and employment sites in a Local Plan, paragraphs 185, 190 and 193-200 of the NPPF are of particular relevance. Paragraph 185 states that “*Plans should set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, including heritage assets most at risk through neglect, decay or other threats*”. Finding viable uses for heritage assets and ensuring that new development makes a positive contribution to local character are important.

Paragraph 190 goes on to say that the significance of designated assets affected by a proposal should be assessed and the impact identified to minimise conflict.

Paragraphs 193 and 194 give relative weight to assets depending on their significance and paragraphs 195 and 196 draw attention to the concept of public benefits where harm is caused. Non-designated assets are covered in

paragraph 197. The opportunity should be taken for development to enhance or better reveal the significance of assets (paragraph 200).

- 2.4** Any decisions relating to listed buildings and their settings, conservation areas and scheduled monuments must address the statutory considerations and satisfy the relevant policies of the NPPF and the Local Plan.

- 2.5** Planning policy guidance has been published to support the NPPF and planning system. It provides guidance on the interpretation of the NPPF although there is no specific guidance yet on how to prepare heritage impact assessments. It does advise on how to define significance of assets, which includes their setting and assessing whether development will cause harm. It also advises that significance should be identified at an early stage using evidence and expertise. Importantly for Wyre Forest District it advises identifying areas of potential non-designated heritage assets with archaeological interest.

More constructive guidance was provided by Historic England which is set out in the following section.

3.0 Guidance from Historic England

3.1 In order to demonstrate that it has fulfilled its duty to co-operate obligations, the Council has actively engaged with statutory consultees throughout the preparation of the Local Plan Pre-Submission Publication (September 2019) and Historic England is one such consultee.

3.2 Historic England provided a formal response to the Local Plan Review Preferred Options Document in 2017 and followed this in 2018 with further guidance related to the wording of specific individual policies in the Local Plan Review Pre-submission Draft.

Historic England advised that the opportunity should be taken to conserve and enhance the assets to better reveal their significance in line with the NPPF and consider heritage at risk could be addressed through development. Historic England also advised that it would be appropriate to present this as a heritage impact assessment along the lines of that produced by Tamworth Borough Council in 2014 with reference to all proposed allocations that are on or adjacent to a heritage asset or its setting.

3.3 Wyre Forest District Council sought advice from Historic England on a methodology for the assessment and clarification on which sites should be assessed. The response was that assessments would be needed specifically where heritage assets are within the site boundary, adjacent to a site boundary and in proximity to the setting of a heritage asset. The Heritage Impact Assessment should be carried out prior to allocation in order to fully justify the principle of development. It was suggested that the following information would be captured for each site:

- Identification of designated and non-designated heritage assets
- Impact of development on the historic environment, heritage assets and their setting and significance
- Is harm justified?
- Can harm be mitigated?
- Identification of opportunities for enhancement
- Further work required

This was based on the Heritage Impact Assessment undertaken by Tamworth Borough Council in October 2014.

Evidence Base

3.4 Historic England advised that the assessments should make use of an appropriate local evidence base. This information is held online by Historic England (National Heritage List for England), the District Council, and the Worcestershire Historic Environment Record. In the case of Wyre Forest District this consists of the following:

- List descriptions for statutorily and locally listed buildings
- Information held by (WAAS) Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service on the Worcestershire Historic Environment Record
- Conservation Area Appraisals undertaken by Wyre Forest District Council

3.5 Further general advice from Historic England is set out on its website under the headings “The Local Development Plan and Heritage”, “Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 1”, “Good Practice Advice in Planning - Note 3 - The setting of Heritage Assets” (Second Edition) and “Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance”.

4.0 Methodology

- 4.1 Although there are a large number of sites being considered for development Historic England's advice was that it is necessary to subject every site included within the Preferred Options Document 2017 and those identified later to a full heritage impact assessment. This was conducted in liaison with Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service (WAAS).

WAAS provided a report on the information relating to each site held on the Worcestershire Historic Environment Record (HER). This included an assessment of LiDAR (Light detection and ranging) data, and provided recommendations for further archaeological investigations on those sites where the significance was unknown or not yet fully understood.

Analysis of historic mapping was undertaken which included reference to Worcestershire Tithe Maps, Historic maps for the towns and 1st and later edition Ordnance Surveys.

- 4.2 A pro-forma based on the methodology developed at Tamworth in 2014 was produced for each site. It included the information set out in paragraph 3.3 with the addition of sections on opportunities to enhance or better reveal the significance of an asset, recommendations for further work and a site map. An important part of the assessment process was to identify how the Local Plan could achieve the appropriate protection, mitigation and enhancement.

The stages are set out and explained below:

Stage	Task
Stage 1	Identify relevant heritage assets from maps, local knowledge and WAAS
Stage 2	Identify significance of heritage assets using available evidence i.e. list descriptions and conservation area appraisals, HER
Stage 3	Assess the potential impact of development on significance of heritage assets
Stage 4	Decide whether impact is justified and capable of mitigation
Stage 5	Identify opportunities for enhancement or to better reveal significance, including tackling buildings at risk or issues identified in conservation area appraisals.
Stage 6	Identify further work required by either the Council or landowner/developer.
Stage 7	Consider and make changes to the Local Plan to reflect HIAs

Stage 1: Identify relevant heritage assets

- 4.3** The identified heritage assets were both designated and non-designated. In addition to conservation areas, statutorily listed buildings, locally listed buildings and scheduled ancient monuments, other less well known archaeological assets and potential for archaeology were identified through WAAS and the HER. Some of the sites also contain currently undesignated assets that may be worth considering for addition to the local list when this is reviewed.

Stage 2: Identify significance of heritage assets

- 4.4** Understanding significance is essential in order to be able to assess the impact of development. The Historic England document “Conservation Principles: Policies and Guidance for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment” (2008) provides a useful basis for articulating significance which is based on how a heritage asset or place is valued by this and future generations because of its heritage interest. This may be value that derives from an asset’s:

Evidential value: potential to yield evidence about past human activity

Historical value: connection with a notable person or event

Aesthetic value: design and appearance

Communal value: connection with any current or past community

Stage 3: Assess the potential impact of development on significance

- 4.5** This stage involved making an assessment of how the type and form of development might impact on the asset and its setting. Some assets and areas are more sensitive to change. Not surprisingly, the existing environment and streetscape in areas such as the town centre that contain a concentration of heritage assets, are more sensitive. However, even in rural areas with few visible above ground assets, there is also a chance that below ground archaeology may survive and may be disturbed or destroyed by development; WAAS identified the potential for this within their consultancy advice.

Stage 4: Decide whether impact is justified or capable of mitigation

- 4.6** Where a development impacts on a heritage asset and its setting, it is necessary to decide whether the impact will cause harm and if so, whether it is acceptable. Harm should be given weight according to the value of the asset. Where it is possible to mitigate against impact or harm, the assessment pro-forma sets out ways in which this could be achieved, which is primarily through design and materials, but may also include archaeological desk-based assessments and landscaping.

Stage 5: Identify opportunities for enhancement or to better reveal significance

- 4.7** Although development will inevitably have an impact on sensitive sites and locations, impact will not always be harmful. In the case of some sites, existing development may already have resulted in loss or fragmentation of character and development provides the opportunity for improvements to consolidate historic character and street scene. The assessment process provides the opportunity to identify where this may be possible. For sites that have known archaeological interest or potential for archaeology, the opportunity exists through a desk based assessment and subsequent fieldwork and recording to fully understand the asset and record this in the Historic Environment Record and potentially on-site if it is significant.

Stage 6: Identify further work required

- 4.8** Where WAAS identified the potential for archaeological remains (even when the potential is low), the assessments have identified that an archaeological desk based assessment is the starting point to understanding the potential, which may lead on to a requirement for fieldwork and the need for specific mitigation measures. For sites that are of high heritage significance, this information should be collected and submitted with a planning application. For sites of less significance, this requirement could be achieved through a condition on any approval.
- 4.10** The assessments have identified where there are existing buildings that are currently undesignated but may be of sufficient interest to be considered for listing in the forthcoming review of the local list.

Stage 7: Consider changes to the Local Plan

- 4.11** This stage is considered in more detail in section 6.

5.0 Summary findings from the assessment

- 5.1** The assessments for each site included in the Local Plan Pre-Submission Publication (September 2019) are contained in Appendix A.

Not surprisingly, those parts of Wyre Forest District which exhibit the greatest heritage significance and value are mostly associated with the historic cores, namely Bewdley town centre, Kidderminster town centre and Stourport town centre. In these locations where the historic street patterns survive there is high potential for below ground archaeological deposits. Sites in and on the edge of these town centres are inevitably next to or close to listed buildings and within Conservation Areas, which, together with their settings, are very sensitive to change.

A number of sites are highly visible on key gateways into the town or visible from within or across the town, for example Bewdley Fires Station; Bridge Street Basin Stourport; Cheapside, Stourport and Churchfields, Kidderminster. In these cases, it is particularly important to have regard to the existing known heritage assets and set high standards for development that must respect its setting.

- 5.2** In some cases development has the potential to enhance and restore historic townscape such as within the Green Street Conservation Area in Kidderminster, those sites adjacent to the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal in Kidderminster and Bridge Street in Stourport-on-Severn.
- 5.3** Outside the town centre but still within the urban area, there are other sites that are of high significance for a variety of reasons. In Kidderminster these include sites at Blakebrook School and Limekiln Bridge, in Stourport Cheapside and County Buildings and at Bewdley the Stourport Road Triangle.
- 5.4** The rural areas are particularly rich in heritage due to the area's medieval (and earlier) history. The villages of Chaddesley Corbett and Rock are clustered around Grade I listed historic churches, and historic churches form the focal point of several smaller settlements including Stone, Rushock, Broome, Upper Arley and Heightington.
- 5.5** Even on sites where 20th century redevelopment has previously taken place whilst the nature of such development may have eradicated all sign of historic building patterns due to the ancient origins of many of the settlements in Wyre Forest there is high potential for below ground archaeology to survive on many sites proposed for redevelopment in the pre-submission Local Plan.
- 5.6** The assessments generally describe how development is likely to impact on significance for each site, both on above and below ground heritage assets and make recommendations for mitigating the impact which would involve a combination of careful, thoughtful design and consideration of

context. A desk based archaeological assessment will be required for many sites identified in Appendix A.

- 5.7** Sites considered inappropriate for development on heritage grounds have generally been excluded from the Local Plan Pre-Submission Publication (September 2019) and these heritage impact assessments can be found in Appendix B.

On some sites the impact on heritage assets has been considered so harmful that development of a site would be unacceptable and these sites will not be taken forward in the Local Plan Pre-Submission Publication (September 2019) because of the heritage impact assessment.

For some other sites although development may result in a degree of less than substantial harm (for example to the setting of a listed building) there are other compelling reasons to consider including these within the Local Plan Pre-Submission Publication (September 2019) as it is considered that, applying the Framework, the public benefits of development on these sites may be demonstrated to outweigh this harm.

Sites where mitigation is possible: retained at Local Plan Pre-submission Publication (September 2019).

For other sites, even within the most sensitive locations, it is considered that impact can be mitigated through sensitive design and use of materials and reflecting historic character in the surrounding area.

6.0 Impact on the Local Plan

- 6.1** The heritage impact assessment was undertaken following the draft Local Plan Review Preferred Options Consultation 2017. At this stage, a number of housing and employment allocations were under consideration and have been refined through a number of different exercises including sustainability appraisal and technical consultations. The list of sites has been further refined and all the allocations in the Pre-submission Local Plan have been assessed in this document.
- 6.2** Following completion of the assessment, the recommendations for mitigation have been incorporated into the Local Plan Review Pre-submission Publication Document (September 2019). Part C of which, Proposed Allocations, Sections 29 to 36, sets out sites that are allocated for housing and employment and the supporting text references the heritage impact assessment and its requirements in respect of the preparation of a heritage statement and archaeological desk based assessment in respect of the allocations.
- 6.3.** The Local Plan Review Pre-submission Publication Document Section A Policy 11 B Historic Environment also references the heritage impact assessment in respect of allocated sites, although all sites including those that are not allocated and come forward as windfall sites, will need to pay particular attention to heritage assets in their design and show how mitigation and enhancement can be achieved through the development. There is also a requirement to address issues by means of Conservation Area Appraisals, heritage impact assessments, and heritage at risk where practical. The policy makes a commitment to review the local heritage list which will pick up on the buildings identified as having potential through the assessment process.