



Campaign to Protect  
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#### LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK - DRAFT PREFERRED OPTIONS - FOLLOW-ON CONSULTATION - JULY 2010

Thank you for forwarding the three latest consultation papers. Herefordshire CPRE has the following comments.

#### **Bromyard, Ledbury, Ross-on-Wye**

We agree with the preferred options for Ledbury and Ross-on-Wye. We disagree with the preferred option for Bromyard for the reasons set out in our response to the January 2010 consultation: the Urban Fringe Sensitivity Analysis shows that Bromyard is entirely hemmed in by the flood zones and by High Sensitivity Landscape, so a major strategic allocation beyond the town's boundary is inappropriate. However, we acknowledge that the location proposed is the least damaging of those considered.

#### **Rural Areas**

Policy RA1. We broadly agree with this policy, in particular with the recognition of the local environment as a factor to be balanced with economic needs when considering development. With regard to the housing number of 4,500, it is not clear whether this takes account of "windfall" development. We are strongly of the view that it should and that the Market Towns and Rural Areas Plan (MTRAP) should be constructed on this basis.

Policy RA2. We broadly agree with this policy. The increased number of settlements makes for a better balance and distribution of service centres, although we think there are still inconsistencies for the reasons set out in our response to the January 2010 consultation.

Policy RA3. We agree with the aim of this policy, but it is too vaguely worded to understand how it will work. In part this is because the paper is not very clear about the detailed functional division between the Core Strategy and the MTRAP.

RA.3/1 and RA.3/2: will settlements qualify according to the services available at the time the Core Strategy is finalised? (In which case why not name them now?) Or will they qualify and be named when the MTRAP is finalised? Or will qualification be considered only when a development proposal comes forward? And what will happen if during the LDF period a settlement loses any of the key criteria that qualified it? Will its status be lost and any uncommitted development proposals halted?

RA.3/3. The meaning of this needs to be clarified. Does it mean that every proposal must have a "defined community benefit" and is this the same as a "community need..identified..by the parish council.."? What is a "local community" and how is its view ascertained? What criteria does the "scale" of a proposal relate to?

In any event the existence of key services is central to this exercise, so in our view it is essential that there is a positive policy for the protection and enhancement of key services, and for encouraging the filling of gaps in services. It should be a policy for actively engaging all departments of the Council and the other public service providers in the county. It is not enough to use the key services concept to identify where to put new housing and then to forget about it.

With regard to settlement boundaries, we acknowledge that they have certain disadvantages - such as a degree of cramming within the boundaries inappropriate to the character of some settlements - but they also have a major advantage in providing a transparent and easily interpreted policy and in preventing unmanageable development in open country or along highways. We think that boundaries should be abandoned only if a simple, robust, manageable and effective criteria-based policy could be created in their stead. We are not convinced this is possible. We are particularly concerned about the likely pressures on development control since text-based policies inevitably create greater scope for dispute, interpretation and inconsistency.

Policy RA4. We agree with the aim of this policy, but it is too vaguely worded to be effective. It must be at least as detailed and precise as the current, and very good, UDP Policy H7.

Policy RA5. We agree with this policy.

## **General Policies**

Natural and Built Heritage Assets Policy NH.1

This policy needs much more development to be a clear and adequate replacement to UDP Policies LA2 and LA3. The syntax is confusing and much terminology needs to be defined.

How and where will "valued landscapes" and "landscape sensitivity" be defined and mapped? The Council's primary policy document for landscape

matters is currently the Landscape Character Assessment SPG, but these terms are not central to the methodology of that document.

"Practicable" in NH.1/1 needs to be qualified. If interpreted as the circumstances of the applicant, e.g. landownership constraints, then few applicants would find difficulty in circumventing it by structuring their circumstances to suit. It must mean the functional requirements of the development itself and this should be made explicit.

Under this policy mitigation would be central to judging the acceptability of any proposal and NH.1/1 needs clarifying to ensure this. The key point is that mitigation deals with adverse impacts and must be adequate. We suggest the second sentence of NH.1/1 should be reworded as follows: "All development should incorporate adequate mitigation of any adverse visual impacts and where possible landscape enhancement measures..."

Where is "need of restoration and enhancement" in NH.1/3 defined? Is it a reference to terminology of the LCA SPG?

We can see no reference to the Historic Landscape Characterisation, which the Council developed with English Heritage funding.

The point of paragraph 2.13 is unclear. It adds little to Policy NH.1, which already indicates that alternative sites and mitigation are factors in judging proposals. The addition of compensation as a criterion is confusing is undesirable: national policy only recommends mitigation of landscape impacts (e.g. Policy NE8.1 in Consultation Draft PPS Planning for a Natural and Healthy Environment; Para 3.9 of BERR Onshore Wind Energy Planning Conditions Guidance Note). The concept is untested and full of pitfalls, as the recent saga over compensation proposals in the Reeves Hill Wind Farm scheme showed.

Herefordshire is fortunate in possessing a lot of high-quality landscape of national designation standard, although only part of it is currently designated as AONB. We drew attention to this in our January 2010 consultation response. It is therefore especially important that these areas are properly identified and that the policy for protecting non-designated landscape is adequate. We trust that this will be addressed in the MTRAP.

#### Green Infrastructure. Policy GI.1

We fully support this policy, but, as stated in our January 2010 consultation response, we are concerned that it is not applicable to rural areas. The concept was created for urban and urban fringe areas and to extend it throughout a largely rural county would be unprecedented. We fear that Herefordshire Council could be inadvertently using itself as a test bed. Moreover, the 'Green Infrastructure Strategy' policy document that underpins it is an early draft that has not been tested in public consultation. What, for example, is the justification for the proposed green 'Strategic District Corridors' through a rural, i.e. already green, landscape and why should they be given priority over that surrounding landscape? It is hard to see what special recreation or wildlife opportunities they present.

#### Movement. Policy M.1

We broadly agree with this policy, but we continue to disagree with the inclusion of a Hereford Relief Road, for the reasons set out in our January 2010 consultation response.

Not included: Housing Density.

The January 2010 consultation stated that there would be a general policy providing guidance on the efficient use of land. It has not been included in the current document and it is not included in the list of forthcoming draft policies in paragraph 1.4. It remains a critical policy matter, especially in relation to affordable housing by ensuring that developers do not slip below the Policy AH.1 thresholds. Although the new government has cancelled the indicative minimum density in PPS3, it remains national policy to use housing land efficiently and it should be addressed in the Core Strategy.

I should be grateful if you would take these comments into account in the next stage of drafting.

Yours sincerely

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