

MUCH BIRCH

Neighbourhood Development Plan 2021 - 2031



January 2021

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Much Birch Parish Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) is a new type of planning document introduced by the Localism Act of 2011. It enables local communities to make a major contribution to some of the planning decisions that will be needed to meet the requirements for development within their areas. It does this by enabling local communities to set planning policies that will be used in determining planning applications. Once it is adopted it will become part of the Development Plan, sitting alongside the Local Plan which includes Herefordshire Core Strategy, guiding what might receive planning permission as well as indicating what measures are to be promoted to guide new development.

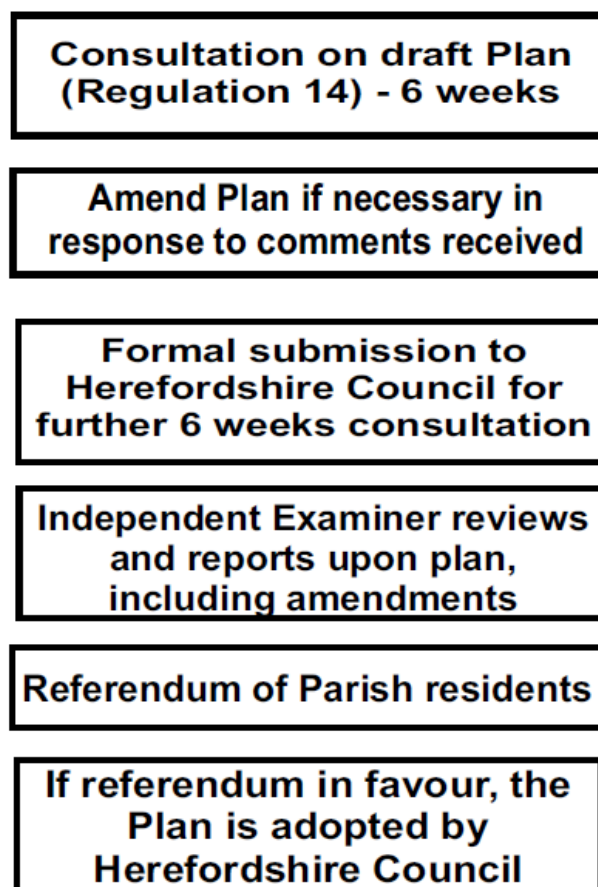
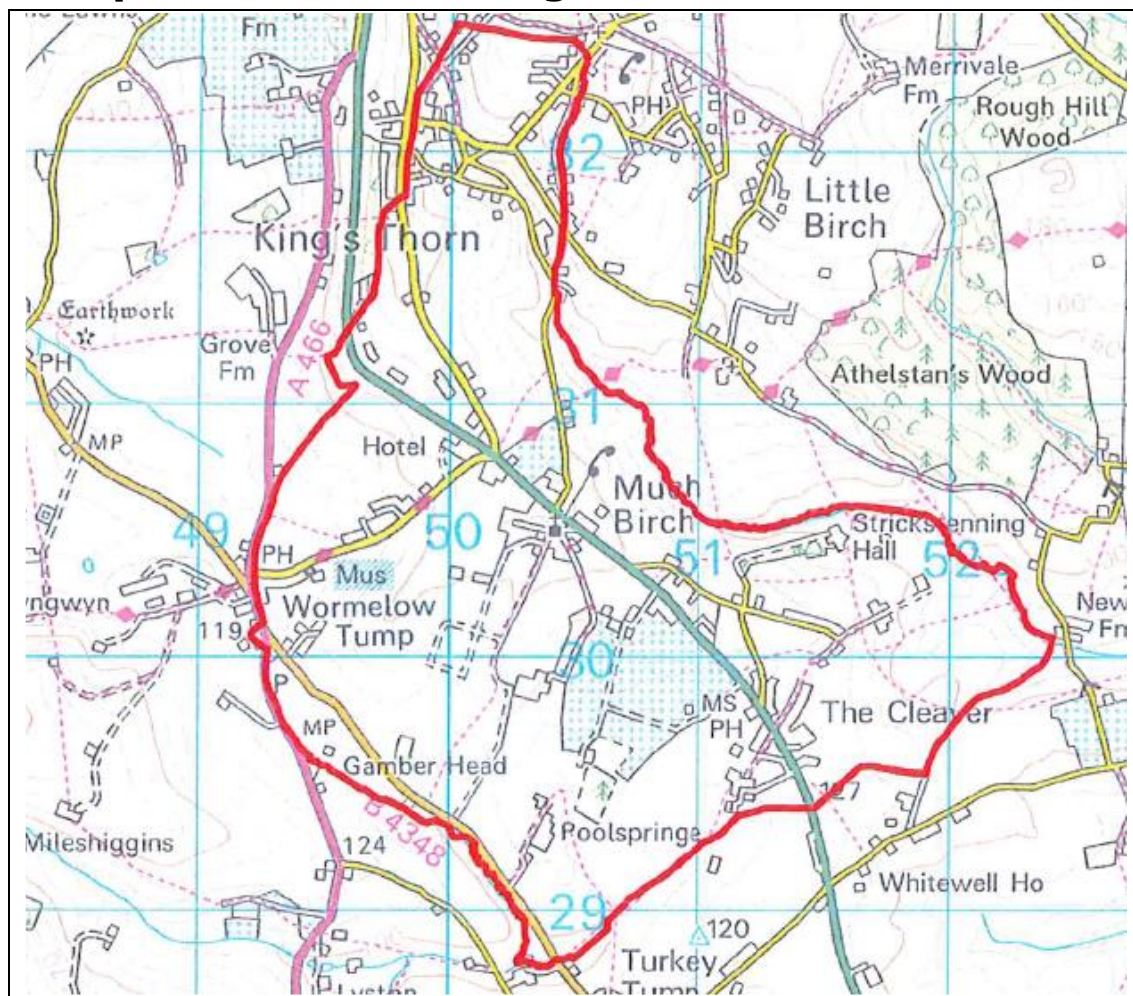


Figure 1 – Neighbourhood Plan Process

- 1.2 The NDP has been prepared in accordance with the Neighbourhood Plan Regulations and following the adoption of Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy by Herefordshire Council on 16th October 2015. The NDP must comply with the broad criteria for sustainable development within Government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and with Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy.

Map 1 – Much Birch Neighbourhood Plan Area



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Community Involvement and Evidence Base

- 1.3 Much Birch Parish Council established a Steering Group for drawing up the NDP in October 2016. Membership consists of 2 members from the Parish Council and 9 members from the community. This NDP has been based on evidence gathered from a range of sources and research undertaken by Steering Group members. A household survey undertaken in the Autumn 2017¹ gave residents the opportunity to express their views upon a number of issues that the NDP might cover, accompanied at the same time by further questionnaires covering businesses², housing needs³ and land for development. Parish consultation events were held in June 2017 and March 2019. Information included within the Much Birch Parish Plan produced in 2004 was also

¹ See Evidence base under NDP at www.muchbirchparish.org.uk/ndp.html

² Ibid (- as previous footnote)

³ Ibid

utilised where it was considered sufficiently relevant and up to date. The evidence base for Herefordshire Core Strategy has also contributed to the NDP.

- 1.4 The involvement of the community during the initial stages of preparing the NDP was seen as crucial to ensuring support for the plan and to give confidence to those involved in its preparation. The response rate to the residents' questionnaire was 43%. Some 55 business questionnaires were returned from households where residents operated a business. Of the 84 households who returned housing needs questionnaires, 73 indicated no requirement either now or over the next 5 years.
- 1.5 The community events comprised a launch event for the NDP in June 2017 that in addition to gaining an impression of the matters concerning residents, also informed the resident's and other questionnaires issued in the subsequent Autumn. The event in March 2019 fed back on the work undertaken, including the resident's questionnaire results, and sought views upon the direction of the plan and its policies being developed by the Steering Group. This gave the Group the confidence to proceed towards preparing the draft Plan for formal consultation with the community and other stakeholders.

2. Background to Our Parish

- 2.1 The Parish of Much Birch covers a rural area close to the centre of the County of Herefordshire some 6 miles to the south of Hereford, the County Town. Historically the Parish had four Settlement Areas (Settlement Boundaries) which were King's Thorn, Much Birch, Wormelow and The Cleaver. The Parish sits astride the A49 Trunk Road that runs north-south through the middle of the Parish and connects to the M50 to the south at Ross-on-Wye. The nearest railway station is in Hereford.

People and the Community

- 2.2 Much Birch Parish had a population of 911 in 2011 which represents an increase of 9% since 2001 (836). The Parish falls within Birch ward. The broad population structure within this ward in 2011 reflected that within the County as a whole although had a slightly lower proportion of people between 25 and 40 and a slightly higher proportion between 45 and 50 years of age. Much Birch Parish contains just over 400 dwellings. Two of the historical settlement areas within the Parish, King's Thorn and Wormelow, straddle neighbouring Parish boundaries. King's Thorn is the largest with just over an estimated 180 dwellings⁴, although a small number of dwellings fall within Little Birch and Aconbury or Much Dewchurch Parishes. Much Birch and The Cleaver combined accommodate around 40 dwellings⁵. Wormelow has an estimated 60 dwellings⁶ although many of these fall within Much Dewchurch Parish.
- 2.3 There is a primary school within Much Birch Parish located between the northern end of Much Birch village and King's Thorn. Although close to a number of dwellings this

⁴ Source 'Rural Background Housing Paper'; Herefordshire Council, March 2013

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Ibid

area has not previously been defined as part of any settlement area. Older children would normally attend Hereford or Ross on Wye Secondary Schools. There is a shop in Wormelow. The Anglican Church of St Mary and St Thomas à Becket sits opposite a community hall and surgery within Much Birch on the west side of the A49. There are three public houses in the Parish, the "Axe & Cleaver" at The Cleaver, the "Tump Inn" at Wormelow, and "The Pilgrim Hotel and Restaurant" to the North of the Much Birch. Access to a wider range of shops and other facilities is available in Hereford and Ross-on-Wye. Hereford is the closest large centre to which residents might travel for higher order shopping. There is a cricket pitch used by Wormelow Cricket Club and the Rosemary Rigby Millennium Green, both at Wormelow.

- 2.4 The A49 trunk road, administered by Highways England, passes through the Parish and is a busy link between North and South Wales and the North and South of the West Midlands. Minor roads lead from Much Birch off to the east and west of the A49 serving King's Thorn and Wormelow respectively. There are a number of public rights of way crossing the Parish with the highest density to the east of the A49 around King's Thorn. The Herefordshire Trail passes through the Parish. The Violet Szabo GC Trail is a local walk established by the Allied Special Forces Association in association with Rosemary E. Rigby MBE and the Violette Szabo GC Museum. The Trail is a 6-mile route through some of the most splendid countryside in Herefordshire and combines a mixture of steep ascents, country lanes, woods, fields, splendid views, public houses and ends at the Violette Szabo GC Museum in Wormelow where hopefully walkers will leave a donation for the future upkeep. There is an hourly bus service between Hereford, Ross-on-Wye and Gloucester along the A49 and via King's Thorn. Buses also run between Hereford and Monmouth via Wormelow eight times a day and from Wormelow to Hereford on Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays. There are less frequent services connecting Much Birch Parish to adjacent villages. There are several stretches of pavements in the Parish: pavements run along one side of the A49: from Much Birch school to the former shop premises at King's Thorn; from the A49 to the surgery car park; from the Tump Inn to Wormelow shop; and for about two thirds of the length of Tump Lane (although the middle stretch is missing).
- 2.5 Employment information for the general area within which Much Birch sits (Birches Lower Super Output Area⁷) indicates it has around 70% of 16 to 74-year olds are economically active; 20% retired and nearly 10% inactive. In terms of employment, nearly 30% are in public health, education and other public administration; nearly one quarter are engaged in transport, accommodation and food service activities; just over 10% in business services; a similar proportion is in production; and over 7% work in agriculture. Some 8% of working age adults work mainly at or from home. More than 4 out of 5 working people travel to work by car.
- 2.6 More than 36% of residents aged 16 and over have a degree, higher degree, NVQ Level 4-5, HND, BTEC Higher, professional qualifications or equivalent. Nearly 20% of economically active people are self-employed.

⁷ Census of Population 2011

History of the Parish

- 2.7 Much Birch and Wormelow villages were originally small wayside settlements with the former concentrated around its Church, Birch House, and Court and Minster Farms. The Church dates from 1837. Only much later did the area along Hollybush Lane, now considered part of Much Birch settlement area, develop and comprises largely detached modern dwellings between the Lane and the A49. Wormelow, originally called Wormelow Tump, developed at a crossroads and most of the original village fell within the adjacent Parish of Much Dewchurch. Despite being smaller it gave its name to a 'hundred' and is referred to in the Domesday Book in that it was the custom that all citizens of Herefordshire who owned a horse were required to attend the meeting of all the hundreds, which took place every three years at the Tump. The 'tump' is a mound traditionally held to be the burial place for King Arthur's son Amr. It was flattened to widen the road in 1896. The village is the site of the Violette Szabo GC Museum, commemorating the life of World War II secret agent Violette Szabo. Szabo stayed occasionally in the village from childhood until just before her final mission. The Cleaver became a relatively new settlement in a similar way to that between Hollybush Lane and the A49 but around the wayside public house called the Axe and Cleaver which gives the area its name. The origins of King's Thorn, or alternatively Kingsthorne, may have been as a concentration of forestry dwellings located in small holdings, a characteristic of the local landscape within and on the edge of the Wye Valley to the south of Hereford. It has grown during more recent times through infilling with modern detached dwellings.
- 2.8 There are no Scheduled Ancient Monuments within the Parish although Aconbury Camp lies just to the north of its boundary. There are 7 Listed Buildings within the Parish, all being Grade II. There are no English Heritage Registered Parks and Gardens or any unregistered parks and gardens within the Parish although Bryngwyn unregistered park and garden lies immediately to the west of Wormelow.

The Parish's Environment

- 2.9 A large part of the Parish comprises grade 2 agricultural land (very good) although there are very small areas defined as grade 1 (excellent) to the south of the Cleaver and at the very southern edge of the Parish close to the B4348. Areas in the vicinity of King's Thorn are grade 3 (good to moderate). No areas of derelict land have been identified within the Parish. There are no areas identified as mineral reserves in the Parish. Opportunities for the development of brownfield land are very limited. There are no extensive areas within the Parish that are at risk of flooding although two brooks along the south-west and south-east edges of the Parish may suffer from limited flooding, but mostly this would appear to be beyond the Parish area. Local knowledge has identified 3 areas where storm water causes the biggest flooding problems flooding. These are at Wrigglebrook Lane, Tump Lane and along the B4348 just outside Wormelow. Only Wormelow is served by a public sewer. There are no plans to install any mains drainage in the Parish's other settlements. Households have cess pits, septic tanks and bio-disc systems. Careful management of these systems is necessary to prevent pollution of water courses.

- 2.10 The Parish is one of rolling countryside, steeply sloping in places, and a settled agricultural landscape. It falls just outside of the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Beauty. The area to the east of the A49 is defined primarily as 'principle settled farmlands' within Herefordshire Landscape Character Assessment. That between Much Birch and Wormelow comprises 'sandstone farmlands' and forms the northern end of a sub-regional area known as Archenfield. The northern end of King's Thorn falls within the 'forest small holdings and dwellings' landscape type. Herefordshire Council's Landscape Character Assessment defines the characteristics of and key landscape features within each area and identifies measures for their restoration, conservation and enhancement.
- 2.11 There are no designated biodiversity assets within the Parish including any local sites and ancient woodlands. Herefordshire Council's Ecological Network Map identifies the streams on the edge of the Parish as biodiversity corridors and there are a number of 'stepping-stones' that benefit wildlife. Orchards have not been identified as part of the environmental screening, but there are both traditional and commercial orchards within the Parish that benefit the overall Parish network.

3. Issues and Options

- 3.1 The background information above provided an initial basis for further exploratory work undertaken to inform the NDP. Other sources of information have also been used where necessary. Having considered the evidence and initial views collected, the following issues have been identified as matters to be addressed within this NDP.

Environment

- 3.2 When asked, 86% of respondents to the Resident's questionnaire identified the rural nature of the Parish to be very important to them and 76% considered living in an area with a thriving natural habitat also to be very important. Protection of woodlands, orchards, important views and the traditional forms of farm buildings were considered important to preserving the natural beauty, amenity and landscape of the Parish and also enhancements through more hedgerow, tree and woodland planting and habitat creation, including wildlife corridors.
- 3.3 Although heritage assets are limited within the Parish and views upon these were not sought as a consequence, the protection of those that do exist is recognised as important to the character of the Parish. The overall character of the settlements that have developed over time should be maintained where possible as part of the historic landscape. Some buildings and heritage of local interest make valuable contributions to local character and distinctiveness, including the Violette Szabo GC Museum.
- 3.4 Flooding is not a widespread problem but there are a limited number of locations where storm water does cause problems, particularly as the result of unsatisfactory local drainage arrangements.
- 3.5 The absence of any mains sewer and associated waste-water treatment works in most of the settlements is a potential constraint that requires proposals for new

development to show that there will be no adverse effects on residents and the environment and indeed, that development could bring about improvements to current flooding and drainage problems. A number of residents have indicated overflow problems associated with foul drainage.

- 3.6 Measures to promote sustainability such as through harnessing energy from natural resources were given significant support by residents.

Housing

- 3.7 The need to provide homes for local people, for 2 and 3 bedroomed family and housing for elderly people and those with mobility problems are identified by the community. It is felt that providing for a range of accommodation based on these needs would meet the aspirations to provide a well-balanced community. Although some forms of housing tenure received greater support than others, in particular private homes and low-cost homes for sale, the Resident's questionnaire revealed no overall objection to any tenure form. The Resident's questionnaire indicated that the majority did not want to see developments of more than 4 houses. Where affordable housing is provided, priority should be given to offering these to those who live and work in the Parish, those with local dependants and key workers moving into the Parish. A survey of housing⁸ needs identified an immediate need for 7 dwellings with a further 7 sometime within the next 5 years. They included a combination of 2 and 3 bedroomed properties, mostly for purchase, particularly through low-cost options.
- 3.8 Protecting residential amenity is important to the community, including avoiding pollution, effects of traffic and visual effects. Design considerations are also important.
- 3.9 Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy defines levels of proportional growth that neighbourhood plans should seek to achieve. In relation to Much Birch Parish this is a growth level of 14% equating to a minimum of 57 new houses over the period 2011 to 2031. However, the level of recent completions and dwellings with outstanding planning permissions is such that the minimum requirement has already been exceeded by a notable amount. Three notable sites spread across the Parish provide for a range of dwelling types and affordable housing.

Roads and Traffic

- 3.10 The A49 road splits the Parish and is the cause of great concern from the road safety aspect. The speed limit is reduced to 40 mph just North of the Pilgrims Hotel and this is increased to 50 mph 200 m south of the church and then delimited to the national limit of 60 mph just short of the Parish southern boundary. A Toucan crossing has been installed to cross the A49 close to the junction with Tump Lane. The condition and maintenance of other roads within the Parish was identified as an important issue, with the need for further passing places and ditch maintenance identified. Support for infrastructure to enable the public rights of way system to be used more effectively was also highlighted, and there was some support to improve provision for cycling. The Parish Council has an aspiration for a cycle link to Ross-on-Wye. There is concern about the ability of minor roads within the Parish to accommodate new development.

⁸ See Evidence base under NDP at www.muchbirchparish.org.uk/ndp.html

- 3.11 Herefordshire Council has indicated it will work with local communities to design and deliver local improvements to support growth arising from its Local Plan Core Strategy including measures that might be brought forward through neighbourhood plans. Transport infrastructure needs have been identified and include:
- Bus shelters at Much Birch Church/the surgery; on King's Thorn Road opposite Tump Lane; opposite top of Holly Bush Lane.
 - Additional car parking at Much Birch Primary School; Much Birch Community Hall and Much Birch Surgery.
 - Weight restrictions along lanes, especially Tump Lane.
- 3.12 Achieving safe access, minimising the effect of new development upon the highway network and ensuring the safety of pedestrians are concerns that need to be highlighted.

Community, Social and Health Needs

- 3.13 All the current facilities within the Parish are considered important and should be retained. There is also considered to be a need for further facilities such as a playing field and additional health facilities such as those providing physiotherapy and for wellbeing and allotments.
- 3.14 Residents travel out of the Parish for access to shopping, banking and recreational facilities.

Economic Activity

- 3.15 Infrastructure difficulties such as poor broadband and telecommunications and the road network are seen by the community as constraints upon business development. Residents would not like to see the loss of greenfield land to employment although were happy for brownfield sites to be used for this purpose. The business community see the area as one that should be based upon tourism, leisure and crafts. Land for the development of businesses should be through existing buildings, including farm buildings, and brownfield sites. Again, businesses confirm the need for faster broadband and better telecommunications to support their activities. In terms of space requirements, there was some demand for up to 100 sqm. for workshops, office space and storage.
- 3.16 Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy sets out a range of policies to support the rural economy, including live/work units, redevelopment of buildings already in commercial use, working from home, tourism and farm diversification. The issue of scale is, however, especially important in view of the limitations of the highway network. Small and home-working business developments need to be supported provided they meet with the scale criteria. Businesses involving farm diversification and tourism were especially supported by the community.

Options

- 3.17 The options presented relate how new housing might be accommodated based upon the sites submitted for consideration. Development needs in terms of businesses and facilities cannot easily be identified and determining how they will be accommodated will rely upon general policies rather than specific proposals, although any policies should ensure protection of the environment, residential amenity and highway safety, among others. Based upon the sites indicated to be available for housing, the options that were considered included:

Option 1: Making no further provision beyond existing committed sites although small sites, normally of around three dwellings, but with a maximum of 4 dwellings⁹, might come forward as infill within defined development boundaries.

Option 2: Providing for a limited number of relatively small and medium sized sites (maximum site areas of around 0.4 hectares [1.0 acres] capable of accommodating up to around 8/10 dwellings) in addition to any infilling within development boundaries.

Option 3: Allocating one larger site that would enable a greater range of house sizes including an element of affordable housing (this would need to be sufficient for at least 11 dwellings) in addition to any infilling within development boundaries.

Option 4: A combination of option 2 and 3.

- 3.18 Option 1 has been adopted and taken forward within this NDP because the extent of housing provision within the Parish is already over and above that required in Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy, and development boundaries that might be defined for the four historical settlement areas will add further to this based on opportunities that are available. Trend data supports the delivery of such dwellings. Planning permissions already provide affordable housing that would provide for the existing local need.

4. Vision, Objectives and Strategic Policies

- 4.1 In preparing Much Birch Parish NDP the following vision, confirmed through the Resident's questionnaire, sets the basis for what it is hoped to achieve within the Parish through the planning system by the end of the Plan Period:

"By 2031 Much Birch Parish will have retained its rural character, whilst incorporating additional housing that local people can afford, and with improved facilities and safer paths, roads and highways that both young and old can enjoy."

Some 90% of respondents to the resident's questionnaire supported this vision.

- 4.2 To achieve this vision the NDP sets the following objectives:

⁹ See Planning Practice Guidance Paragraph: 010 Reference ID: 3-010-20140306

1. Local Environment:

To protect and enhance the natural and historic environment of the Parish and its landscape character, especially views and vistas across open countryside ensuring access to these through the public footpath and bridle way network.

2. New Housing:

To promote sustainable housing through controlled growth in the Parish by providing a mixture of open market and enduring affordable housing which prioritises people with defined local connections including both young and elderly people.

3. Traffic and Roads:

To address community concerns about the amount and speed of traffic; to ensure traffic generated by development can be accommodated successfully; to promote measures to support sustainable transport; and to reduce the need to travel by car, in order to make roads safer for pedestrians, cyclists and motorists within the Parish.

4. Community Facilities:

To maintain and support existing services and facilities, enhance the present educational, leisure and recreational facilities and enable new and improved provisions, e.g. for safety, health and care to serve the needs of all ages where practicable.

5. Economic Development and Employment:

To support farming and local businesses where these reflect the nature and scale of the Parish, in particular farm diversification and tourism.

- 4.3 These were presented to the community and received support of between 87% and 98% from those who responded.
- 4.4 Policies and proposals are set out in this document prefixed by 'MB' (i.e. for name of Much Birch).

Strategy for Sustainable Development within Much Birch Parish

- 4.5 Sustainable development seeks to ensure proposals are advanced that will "meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs"¹⁰. It covers social and economic factors as well as the environment, so that the community is provided with sufficient and appropriate housing, opportunities for enterprise, and access to community facilities which will help to maintain healthy and thriving communities as well as protecting our natural and historic environment, all of which contribute to our quality of life.

¹⁰ National Planning Policy Framework, paragraph 7.

- 4.6 To ensure these major concerns are considered and addressed in accordance with the priorities set by the community, the following policy forms the basis for the overall approach pursued through this NDP.

Policy MB1: Promoting Sustainable Development

Positive measures that promote sustainable development within Much Birch Parish will be supported where they meet the objectives and policies set out in this NDP. Where development proposals are advanced, they should address the following high-level priorities that are considered essential by the local community for maintaining sustainable development within the Parish:

- 1. The highest priority will be given to protecting and enhancing the landscape, natural environment and cultural heritage of the Parish, enabling its quiet enjoyment, having regard to the quality of life of those who live and work within them.**
- 2. New housing shall meet the needs of the community through providing a minimum of 57 dwellings within the plan period; a range of accommodation in locations defined in policies MB7 and MB8; affordable housing where it has reasonable access to a range of services and facilities and in scale with the area concerned; promoting energy efficiency and good design; and ensuring high standards of residential amenity.**
- 3. New development should have safe access; its adverse effects on the highway network minimised; and pedestrian safety and that of other road users ensured. Improvements or other measures will be sought, especially those that encourage active travel.**
- 4. Community facilities and services should be retained and enhanced where possible including through measures that will assist their viability and contributions so that pressures resulting from growth are accommodated satisfactorily.**
- 5. Local employment opportunities through diversification, tourism, working from home, and activities that reflect a rural scale will be supported.**

Benefits will be sought in relation to the priorities set out in this policy where compensatory or mitigation measures are needed as part of any proposal.

(Supporting Objectives 1 to 5)

Justification

- 4.7 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires all planning applications to be determined in accordance with the adopted Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. This overarching policy sets out the essential sustainable development requirements which the local community considers important to achieve its vision and objectives. The provisions within this NDP will be measured against this policy.
- 4.8 Although not within the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Much Birch Parish sits upon its edge and also forms part of the historic and sub-regional area known as 'Archenfield'. Surprisingly, it possesses few designated environmental sites but this masks its attractive environmental qualities and the contribution it makes to the wider area. Opportunities should be taken to utilise its potential to enhance to the natural environment within the wider area. This can be done through enabling development that meets local and wider needs in a sensitive and socially beneficial way for the whole community. There are local needs for housing, and it is considered these can be accommodated reasonably through requiring a mix of housing, especially for young people and families. There is also a need to provide more flexible housing to enable older people to remain within the Parish. Infrastructure, in particular highways, are a cause for concern especially in terms of the effects of the A49 trunk road that passes through the Parish and the capacity of local roads, many of which are narrow lanes, and the opportunity afforded by the positive approach indicated by Herefordshire Council and Highways England to work with local communities is welcome. Facilities within the Parish are limited, and some are constrained. Growth through development should be capable of being accommodated within these constraints or improvements made to accommodate these provided they can be shown to be effective. Where development requires improvements or enhancements it should contribute towards their provision.
- 4.9 The approach to accommodating sustainable development within Much Birch Parish reflects Herefordshire Core Strategy Policies RA1 to RA6, and in particular Policy RA2. The emphasis provided through Policy RA2 is to promote housing within those settlements defined within tables 4.14 and 4.15 of the Core Strategy which for Much Birch Parish comprise Much Birch village, King's Thorn, Wormelow and The Cleaver. Policies MB7 and MB8 define development boundaries and show committed housing sites respectively. The majority of residents within the Parish support the defining of boundaries for its settlement (64% in favour and 19% opposed) and these will identify those areas considered to be within or adjacent to the main built-up areas of these settlements.
- 4.10 Development outside of the development boundaries will be determined in accordance with Core Strategy policies, especially Policy RA3 – Herefordshire's Countryside – which limits housing development to proposals which meet one or more specific criteria. There may be some scope for rural building conversions under Herefordshire Core Strategy Policy RA5 across the Neighbourhood Plan area.

- 4.11 Both the resident's survey and Parish Plan have highlighted improvements in community facilities that the community would like to see. Policy MB13 sets out the requirements that will be considered in assessing new or improved community facilities. These should be located in or adjacent to the development boundaries. The forms of business development that the community would like to see could be undertaken across the Parish although most were against the use of greenfield sites but would support the use of brownfield land for appropriate activities and the conversion of rural buildings. Policy MB15 sets out criteria that will be used in considering proposals for new or expanded business development.
- 4.12 The use of previously developed land (brownfield sites) can bring benefits such as avoiding the use of greenfield sites and the loss of agricultural land; removing untidy areas or obsolescent and unsympathetic buildings; or enabling unsatisfactory uses to move to other locations. Although such opportunities are considered limited within the Parish, a number do exist. The approach to promoting the redevelopment of brownfield sites is considered consistent with Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy policy SD1 (bullet 1). Herefordshire Council has permitted the redevelopment of brownfield sites to dwellings outside of settlements where they are well related to settlements, in sustainable locations, or the planning balance suggests the benefits are greater than the reasons for not permitting such proposals. Landowners may wish to pursue the 'permission in principle' route as an alternative.

5 Conserving the Environment of the Parish

- 5.1 Protecting and enhancing the landscape and natural environment should be given a high priority, not just because it is important to the local community, but also because most of the Parish falls just outside the Wye Valley AONB and within a particularly attractive sub-regional character area. Although there are no designated wildlife sites present, the Parish could increase its contribution to the ecological network that runs through this part of the County. Similarly, the number of listed buildings present is small but there is a strong sense of 'place'. The following policies seek to address the environmental objective set out in this NDP.

Policy MB2: Conserving the Landscape and the Natural Environment

Development proposals should conserve, restore and enhance landscape character and the natural environment within the Parish through:

- 1. Ensuring important landscape features of the particular landscape character type within which the site falls are identified and effectively protected, managed and planned for in accordance with advice indicated in Herefordshire Landscape Character Assessment Supplementary Planning Guidance.**
- 2. Preserving the landscape settings of the settlements within the Parish.**

- 3. Retaining important trees, hedgerows, ponds, opens spaces, orchards and habitats, especially those with high biodiversity value. The protection of ancient or specimen trees will especially be required. A Tree Preservation Order should be made to safeguard any tree that has public amenity value that is affected by a development proposal. Planning conditions may also be applied.**
- 4. Extending tree cover, including where appropriate within hedgerows and gardens, utilising native species where appropriate.**
- 5. Identifying and protecting important views.**
- 6. Including measures that contribute towards enhancing the effectiveness of the ecological network through creating or strengthening wildlife corridors and 'stepping-stones' within the Parish and links to important habitats surrounding it.**
- 7. Ensuring there is a net gain in biodiversity, and the loss of any wildlife features, where absolutely necessary, shall be offset through full compensatory measures. These might include bird and bat boxes, new hedgerow planting, tree and orchard planting and wildflower meadows, among others.**
- 8. Where development utilises or contributes to sustainable drainage systems (SuDS), measures to support biodiversity should be provided where possible.**

To achieve this, for all but small development, landscape proposals should form an integral part of the design for the development, retaining as many natural features within or surrounding the site as possible.

(Supporting Objective 1)

Justification

- 5.2 Residents are in general agreement that the natural environment should be preserved when and wherever possible; this was in particular with regard to woodland, orchards and views within the Parish. This policy accords with Hereford's Local Plan Core Strategy Policies SS6, LD1, LD2 and LD3.
- 5.3 The majority of the Much Birch Parish landscape consists of undulating arable tree-lined farmland and orchards with an occasional copse, with mid distant views of wooded areas to the north east, east and the south west, interspersed with the four main settlement areas, individual houses and farms. Proposals for development in the vicinity of the Parish's settlements should be informed by an assessment of their impact upon the natural and historic landscape, and their features including vegetation, topography and built-form. That part of its area around Much Birch village and The Cleaver is defined primarily as 'principle settled farmlands' within Herefordshire Landscape Character Assessment. Within this landscape type settlements tend to be small. The settlements reflect this characteristic as does its surrounding network of

narrow lanes edged with high hedges and scattered hedgerow trees. Trees are also commonly found in groups around dwellings and along streams. Development in this landscape type should be modest in size and low density to avoid coalescence in order to preserve the character of the original settlements. It might also be combined with tree planting that emphasises the domestic quality of the landscape. The area between Much Birch and Wormelow comprises 'sandstone farmlands' and is located at the northern edge of the Archenfield sub-regional character area. The inherent settlement pattern is dispersed farmsteads and country houses although this has become compromised in places by the imposition of new housing which tends to have a clustered pattern. The large scale of this landscape will accept new development, but individual dwellings would be preferable in order to preserve the dispersed settlement pattern. The northern end of King's Thorn falls within the 'forest small holdings and dwellings' landscape type which is a settled landscape through wayside dwellings and small holdings bisected by narrow lanes. Additional individual dwellings would be appropriate if needed where the scale of the original settlement would not be compromised. However, clustered groups of new housing would not be sympathetic to the landscape character. In all instances the settings of settlements within these landscape types are important.

- 5.4 The landscape features referred to in the policy are all important, especially trees and hedgerows. This policy seeks both to protect them and seek their enhancement through the process of protecting, managing and planning indicated within the European Landscape Convention, to which Government is a signatory. The form of planting may vary between the landscape types, but Herefordshire Council's guidance should inform landscape schemes.
- 5.5 Many of the important features can also contribute towards the natural environment and biodiversity. Opportunity should be taken to increase the components of the County's ecological network¹¹ in association with development through adding new wildlife features such as tree corridors and block planting as stepping-stones in order to contribute to the national objective to increase biodiversity. There should certainly be no net loss and where features must be removed, full compensatory measures must be proposed within any planning application.
- 5.6 Appropriate landscape schemes, informed by the assessment of local features within the vicinity and the landscape type, should address both maintaining and reinforcing the landscape and biodiversity. The schemes should also be informed by an assessment of views and impact on the setting of the particular settlement where relevant. Minor proposals should not require assessments where their effects will be minimal upon the landscape.

Policy MB3: Protecting Heritage Assets

The significance of heritage assets and their settings within the Parish shall be preserved and enhanced through:

¹¹ See https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/1594/ecological_network_map.pdf

- 1. Requiring appropriate development proposals to be accompanied by appropriate archaeological investigations and in the event of significant and/or extensive remains being found, they should be preserved in-situ;**
- 2. Resisting development that adversely affects features or the setting of listed buildings and other similar heritage assets; and**
- 3. Ensuring every effort is made to retain and conserve buildings and heritage assets of local importance, especially historic farmsteads and other traditional rural buildings, including their contribution to the rural landscape, through allowing sensitive conversions and regeneration proposals where appropriate.**

(Supporting Objective 1)

Justification

- 5.7 The Parish has few designated heritage assets. It possesses a limited number of listed buildings, most of which fall within Much Birch village, and no Scheduled Ancient Monuments. The absence of any identified archaeological sites should not be taken as absence of archaeology, especially given the Parish falls within a settled historic landscape with Aconbury Camp lying just to the north of its boundary. There are around 50 entries for the Parish within Herefordshire's Historic Environment Record. The significance of locally important buildings and other heritage features should be recognised for the contribution they make to the Parish's character and local distinctiveness. This includes a number of historic farmsteads. This policy does not restrict development but influences the approach taken to such development. It also stimulates development where regeneration brings benefits. Nevertheless, these assets and, where appropriate, their settings¹² are important and need to be preserved. Policy LD4 of the Core Strategy sets out further requirements on development affecting heritage assets.

Policy MB4: Foul and Storm Water Drainage

Developers should show, through appropriate evidence, that foul and storm water drainage can be accommodated without causing pollution or flooding to other properties and land. In addressing the management of drainage, developers should ensure any proposed scheme that meets the above requirement is fully implemented before development is brought into use. Developers should utilise or contribute to sustainable drainage systems (SUDs) where possible.

Where appropriate, new development shall be subject to the Flood Risk 'sequential' and 'exception' tests set out in the National Planning Policy Framework, and housing development will not be permitted in areas identified as flood zone 3.

¹² NPPF paragraph 189

(Supporting Objective 1)

Justification

- 5.8 There is no mains foul drainage within three of the four settlements or elsewhere within most the Parish. Wormelow is served by the Wastewater Treatment Works at Much Dewchurch which is understood to have some limitations that will be reviewed by Dwr Cymru Welsh Water within a future Asset Management Plan period. The majority of properties within the Parish use septic tanks or similar for sewage disposal. The main watercourse of the Parish is the Wriggle Brook, which forms part of the north-east boundary of the Parish, running mainly to the south-east. This has a narrow area of land subject to flood risk running along it. Residents have highlighted that this small watercourse could affect some dwellings during adverse weather. Field and road run-off and blocked drains have affected properties in the past. This policy seeks to ensure new development does not exacerbate either storm water drainage problems or pollution. Developers should present clear technical evidence to show that their proposals will not create such problems. Where drainage measures are brought forward, these can contribute towards biodiversity and may include retention ponds, infiltration trenches and basins, rain gardens, sand filters, detention basins, swales, rainwater harvesting, permeable paving and green roofs. Although no development proposed in this plan falls close to land shown to be at risk of flooding from streams or brooks, the policy sets out the requirements should any development proposals come forward within the rural area that might fall within defined areas of flood risk. Further details of the considerations for avoiding flood risk areas and managing foul and surface water drainage are set out in Core Strategy Policies SD3 and SD4.

Policy MB5: Protection of Local Green Space

The following areas identified on Wormelow Village Policies Map are designated as Local Green Space:

- 1. Rosemary Rigby Millennium Green, Wormelow**
- 2. Wormelow Cricket Ground**

Development that would result in the loss or diminution of their use and/or characteristics, will not be supported except in very special circumstances.

(Supporting Objectives 4)

Justification

- 5.9 National Planning Policy Guidance allows communities to designate areas of particular importance to communities as Local Green Space. The areas identified are considered special to the communities they serve.

The Rosemary Rigby Millennium Green, Wormelow: established in May 1999, is run by a charitable trust to be maintained as an open space for informal recreation play or

other leisure time occupations or a meeting area or place for community events. It benefits that parish and also the parishes of Llanwarne and Much Dewchurch.

Wormelow Cricket Ground: again, this area of open space sits adjacent to Wormelow and its significance to the community is its recreational value as a playing field. In addition, it is important to the setting and ambiance of the village.

Policy MB6: Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Generation

Renewable energy proposals of a domestic scale for individual properties, especially solar or biomass generated energy, will be encouraged where they do not have a significant adverse effect upon local amenity or heritage assets, including their settings.

Small scale renewable or low carbon energy proposals that will benefit the community or the needs of local businesses will also be encouraged but they should ensure:

- 1. Any traffic that is generated can be accommodated safely upon the local road network.**
- 2. They do not adversely affect landscape character or features or important views.**
- 3. They do not adversely affect heritage assets such as archaeological sites and historic buildings, including their settings.**
- 4. They will not adversely affect biodiversity, especially protected species such as bats.**
- 5. Any potential pollution effects are fully mitigated.**
- 6. Local and residential amenity is protected, including from any significantly adverse traffic effects.**
- 7. Their scale reflects the community's needs.**
- 8. The cumulative effect of proposals, including with other related activities, upon residential amenity, landscape and the natural environment, should be taken into account, when determining the appropriateness of proposals.**

No sites are identified as suitable within the Parish for large or medium scale energy generation through wind power. Individual small-scale turbines serving a specific local need may be supported where they meet the above criteria.

(Supporting Objectives 1 and 5)

Justification

- 5.10 There is some support for individual schemes that would provide renewable or low carbon energy generation, although this depends upon the type of development proposed. Nevertheless, it is recognised that communities are asked to consider how they might contribute to measures that would reduce carbon generated energy and it is also possible that schemes whereby the community can buy into proposals and obtain cheaper electricity might be acceptable if suitable locations are identified. Although there are currently no specific proposals for such a scheme within the Parish their provision should not be ruled out in the event that one or more groups or organisations may wish to pursue such a venture. There are constraints that might affect their location within the Parish. There is a need to ensure proposals fit sensitively into the landscape and local environment. Criteria are set out in the policy that are considered consistent with planning practice guidance and these include matters that are relevant for a range of renewable/low carbon energy developments.
- 5.11 Herefordshire Core Strategy Policy SD2 requires proposals for wind turbines to receive local backing. In terms of local opinion, it is considered unlikely that medium or large-scale wind turbine proposals would receive a positive response.

6 Providing New Homes

- 6.1 Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy requires a minimum 14% increase to meet housing needs within Much Birch Parish between 2011 and 2031. This equates to 57 new dwellings. Core Strategy policy RA2 indicates that the majority of housing should be in one or more of the Parish's four named settlements which comprise Much Birch, King's Thorn, Wormelow and The Cleaver. Between 2011 and May 2019, some 72 dwellings had either been built or granted planning permission within the Parish. Consequently, the minimum level of proportional housing growth has been met and exceeded.
- 6.2 The average age within both the County and Parish has increased. To try to redress this trend would support local facilities, making the community more resilient, and require family housing to be built. Evidence from the Resident's questionnaire indicates that the community would like to see more 2 bedroomed houses (66% of respondents) and 3 bedroomed houses (70% of respondents). In addition, accommodation that can or has been adapted for easy access was supported (67% of respondents). There is evidence¹³ of a local need for family 2 and 3 bedroomed housing, especially for low-cost purchase.
- 6.3 Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy promotes the use of settlement boundaries or appropriate alternatives within neighbourhood plans to define where housing development should take place within its rural settlements. The local community expressed support¹⁴ for such an approach within the Parish.

¹³ See paragraph 3.7

¹⁴ See Evidence base under NDP at www.muchbirchparish.org.uk/ndp.html

Policy MB7: Housing Development in Much Birch, King's Thorn, Wormelow and The Cleaver.

New housing development will be supported within the development boundaries of Much Birch, King's Thorn, Wormelow and The Cleaver as shown on the Policies Maps where it constitutes sensitive infilling. Land outside the development boundaries will be regarded as countryside where new housing development will only be supported where it complies with Core Strategy Policies RA3, RA5 or H2. New housing development will be supported on previously developed land outside but adjacent to development boundaries where the development accords with Core Strategy Policy RA2. New housing development in the countryside should avoid the coalescence of settlements.

(Supporting Objective 2)

Justification

- 6.4 Boundaries are identified for the four settlements where housing growth should be focussed in accordance with Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy Policy RA2. The defining of development boundaries as opposed to settlement boundaries reflect the nature of the Parish's villages which comprise a number of separate concentrations of houses for the settlements of Much Birch village and King's Thorn, and the fact that some settlements straddle boundaries with adjacent parishes, in the instances of King's Thorn and Wormelow.
- 6.5 No boundaries were defined for the settlements in the predecessor plan, the former Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan, and consequently historical settlement boundaries included in previous planning policy documents have been used as the starting point for re-defining new development boundaries¹⁵. The approach proposed reflects Option 1 which has the greatest community support, yet it still represents a positive approach to planning for new housing in that it contributes to other objectives in terms of house types and tenures.
- 6.6 Much Birch village Development Boundaries: Much Birch village was previously defined as two developed areas straddling the A49 trunk road. The northern area is concentrated around the Parish church, community centre and surgery. Its broad character is defined by frontage development on the north-side of the A49 with the former Minster Farm extending to any depth. Although some dwellings have recently been permitted further to its north, these are generally isolated dwellings that ought not to be consolidated through infilling that would adversely affect views across from Athelston's Wood and from the Herefordshire Way which passes through this location. The boundary in this location is retained in order to maintain this characteristic. On the south side of the A49, development extends back from the road to a greater degree and will be consolidated further through two planning permissions that have been granted. The effect upon the views and village setting from the south-west is far less.

¹⁵ See 'Meeting Housing Need and Site Assessment Report' under NDP Evidence base at www.muchbirchparish.org.uk/ndp.html

The southern settlement area is concentrated between Hollybush Lane and the A49 although does extend to encompass a small number of properties on the south side of the trunk road. It is characterised by modern individual dwellings within substantial gardens, with a small number of exceptions, again on the south side of the A49.

- 6.7 King's Thorn Boundaries: Again, this village was previously split into two defined areas and these have largely been retained. This reflects the Forestry Small Holdings and Dwellings Landscape Character Type¹⁶ within which this settlement sits, and the historic gaps should be retained where possible. With the exception of development along Barrack Hill, the density of development decreases as you progress northwards towards Aconbury Hill and is lowest along Warren Lane and Waterloo Lane. It also decreases in density to the east in the vicinity of Parish Lane. Within both these areas, the character of the landscape is particularly important in reflecting the landscape type, emphasised by the narrow nature and condition of the lanes. A small adjustment has been made to the south of Ladywell Lane to accommodate recently built dwellings. It should be noted that parts of previous boundaries for King's Thorn extended into adjacent Parishes of Little Birch (north-east) and Much Dewchurch (east) and these cannot be included in this NDP. There are a number of infill sites within the development boundaries which were submitted through the local call for sites.
- 6.8 Wormelow Boundary: A significant portion of Wormelow falls within Much Dewchurch Parish and it is understood that a strategy for that part of the village, including whether it should have a settlement boundary, will need to be considered in the Rural Areas Development Plan Document being prepared by Herefordshire Council. However, it is assumed that as a settlement boundary has previously been defined for Wormelow, this is likely to be the case again and therefore that part falling within Much Birch Parish should contain part of the boundary. That included in this NDP is based upon where it is most likely to connect with that in its neighbouring Parish's area. It is consistent with the previous boundary defined for the village with no changes in that there has been no new development upon, and no sites proposed development adjacent to its built-up area. A former council estate lies to the east along Tump Lane which was excluded from the previous boundary and remains outside of that now defined for Wormelow.
- 6.9 The Cleaver: This settlement falls within Table 4.15 of Herefordshire Local plan Core Strategy and development within it is expected to pay particular attention to its form, layout, character and setting and location in that settlement and/or result in development that contributes to or is essential to the social well-being. The previous boundary identified its built-up area along the A49 and Hollybush Lane frontages although extending to a greater depth further to its south, including an undeveloped area to the rear of properties on the north-east side which now has planning permission. The previous boundary has been retained in that it allows for development that is consistent with proportional growth of the settlement, including a potential infill site.
- 6.10 Other Areas: Consideration was given to whether other groups of dwellings might be defined as parts of the four settlements, given their proximity to those for which boundaries have been defined. These areas existed when the previous boundaries

¹⁶ See Herefordshire Council's Landscape Character Assessment

were defined although the reason for their exclusion is unknown. Although recent notable developments have occurred both further to the north-west around the cross-roads where Tump Lane meets the A49, and to the south-east between The Forge and Bigglestone, they have not been included in boundaries in order to avoid further sprawl of development, especially the unsympathetic ribbon form. In addition, despite planning permission having been granted adjacent to the housing estate along Tump Lane between Wormelow and Much Birch, the area remains separated from these both in terms of proximity and character and remains reflective of post-war relatively isolated small rural council housing. This maintains a consistent approach to that adopted elsewhere by avoiding consolidation of development through an extension of ribbon development along Tump Lane, which would change its character.

Policy MB8: Housing Commitments

The following sites are included as housing commitments:

- 1. Land amounting to 0.5 hectares at former Mushroom Farm, The Cleaver.**
- 2. Land amounting to 1.2 hectares at Court Farm, Much Birch.**
- 3. Land amounting to 1.4 hectares off Tump Lane, Much Birch.**

(Supporting Objective 2)

Justification

- 6.11 These sites are shown on Much Birch village (South) and The Cleaver, Much Birch village (North) and Wormelow Policies Maps respectively. For the purposes of contributing to the housing requirement indicated for Much Birch Parish the three areas proposed should enable a minimum of 45 dwellings to be provided. All three housing sites have already received planning permission and are included within commitments. One site has now commenced development and it is expected that the other two will come forward before the deadline set by the timescale conditions. In combination they provide a range of house sizes and tenures that will meet the community's housing needs and consequently it is considered that they should be retained in such an event.

Land amounting to 0.5 hectares at former Mushroom Farm, The Cleaver.

- 6.12 This site already has planning permission (Code P140554) for 5 detached dwellings (each having 4 bedrooms). The site lies immediately adjacent to the built-up area of The Cleaver and was included within the previously defined settlement boundary. Development has now commenced.

Land amounting to 1.2 hectares at Court Farm, Much Birch.

- 6.13 This site also has planning permission on one part of its area for 18 dwellings (Code P141830/O) of which 6 are indicated to be affordable dwellings, and on another part for the demolition of 1 pair of semi-detached dwellings to be replaced by two pairs of

semi-detached dwellings (Code P172107/O – net plus 2 dwellings). In combination the site would provide an additional 12 x4 bed, 2 x 3, 4 x 2 and 2 x 1 dwellings. The site sits adjacent to the built-up area of Much Birch. Again, development has yet to commence and the site should remain a commitment.

Land amounting to 1.4 hectares off Tump Lane.

- 6.14 Planning permission for 20 dwellings (Code P130945/O) was granted on appeal and with an agreement for 10 dwellings to remain as affordable (mixture of 7 social rent and 3 intermediate dwellings) the dwellings are of indeterminate size and will no doubt be determined through the submission of reserved matters. The site is outside of any settlement boundary although adjacent to a number of existing dwellings. No development boundary has previously been defined for this area and it is not proposed to define one.
- 6.15 As part of the plan making process a 'Call for Sites' to accommodate housing was undertaken at an early stage and sites submitted assessed against range of criteria. The community was consulted upon the criteria to be used and the weight attributed to each at an event in March 2019. An independent consultant used the results to rank sites in order of how they rated against the criteria¹⁷. In the event, further housing sites were not required beyond those granted planning permission in order to meet the required level of proportional housing growth. The results, however, remain available for use in any review of the NDP that might be undertaken. The process did identify a number of small plots or infill sites that would fall within development boundaries, informing the assessment of a windfall allowance.
- 6.16 Some 22 dwellings have been granted planning permission on small plots or infill sites (1 to 2 dwellings) within or close to the built-up areas of the Parish and also through rural sites since April 2011, and this trend suggests a relatively notable windfall allowance might be considered. The defining of development boundaries may reduce this trend although it is considered there are sites for three dwellings on very small sites submitted through the 'Call for Sites' where it is reasonable to assume planning permission will be granted. There is less certainty in relation to other submitted small sites in view of policy and other constraints although further windfall provision may be possible and might also include sites arising within development boundaries which have as yet not been suggested. A more detailed analysis to inform an estimate of any windfall allowance is not considered necessary because the required level of housing growth has already been exceeded.
- 6.17 Table 1 summarises the expected level of housing development made available through this NDP.

¹⁷ See 'Meeting Housing Need and Site Assessment Report' under NDP Evidence base at www.muchbirchparish.org.uk/ndp.html

Table 1: Achieving the Housing Target 2011-2031

1.	Number of dwellings in Parish 2011	406
2.	Minimum percentage growth required	14%
3.	Minimum number of houses required 2011-2031	57
4.	Number of Completions 2011-2020 (source Herefordshire Council)*	18
5.	Dwellings with outstanding planning permissions 2011-2020 (source Herefordshire Council)*	54
6.	Dwellings with outstanding planning permissions since April 2020 (source Herefordshire Council website)*	6
7.	Windfall Estimate from known sites (minimum)	3
8.	Potential minimum total during Plan Period	81

NB – Row 5 includes Land at the Mushroom, Court Farms and Land off Tump Lane.

Policy MB9: Meeting Housing Needs

Developers will be required to make a meaningful contribution to the housing needs of the community in terms of size, type and tenure. Provision should be made for the following needs on appropriate sites, including those that have been identified:

- 1. A significant proportion of 2 and 3-bedroom properties.**
- 2. An element of affordable housing to meet local needs, in particular those for shared ownership and reduced open market value.**
- 3. Easy access housing to meet the needs of elderly people and those with mobility issues.**
- 4. Self-build and custom build opportunities.**
- 5. Property that enable people to work from home, including live/work units where this will not affect the amenity of adjacent properties.**

Regard should be had to Herefordshire Local Housing Market Assessment 2012 Update or any further update, up to date housing needs evidence and approvals and completions which provide guidance upon the proportion of dwellings of various sizes. Developers of sites for 5 or more dwellings should, within their Design and Access Statements, indicate how they propose to contribute towards the needs identified, particularly in terms of house size. Departure from proportionate needs may be accepted where development provides especially for local community needs such as housing for the elderly or starter homes.

(Supporting Objective 2)

Justification

- 6.18 Past development has comprised relatively low housing densities and this will continue to be the case upon most sites granted planning permission. However, the community wishes to see a significant proportion of new homes provided for local families. The survey of the local community identified support for a range of house sizes comprising 2 and 3 bedrooms and for these to meet local needs. Housing comprising young family starter homes, family homes or homes for the elderly, such as mobility housing, were identified as needed. The allocation at Court Farm provides some smaller dwellings and it hoped that a variety with emphasis on smaller family housing will be encouraged on the site at Tump Lane. These both provide elements of affordable housing and should be capable of making a significant contribution to the immediate local needs identified in paragraph 3.7. Should there be proposals to change the approach upon site allocations, or when determining the house types and tenures for the site off Tump Lane, this policy would be relevant. It should also apply in the longer term should there be a need for affordable housing under Core Strategy policy H2 or the conditions in relation to housing supply change.
- 6.19 Table 2 provides an extract from Herefordshire Council's Housing Market Assessment indicating the needs in terms of house sizes for the area.

Table 2: Proportion of Houses required by Size within Rural Part of the Ross-on-Wye Housing Market Area

House type by size	Market housing Proportion required	Affordable housing Proportion required
1 bedroom	7.4%	21.5%
2 bedrooms	24.3%	40.1%
3 bedrooms	63.2%	34.5%
4+ bedrooms	5.1%	3.9%

(Source - Herefordshire Local Housing Market Assessment 2012 Update)

- 6.20 Affordable housing¹⁸ should in the first instance ensure local housing needs are met, especially those of local people unable to compete within the general housing market. Appendix 2 contains letting criteria for affordable housing within the Parish that are considered generally consistent with the approach adopted across Herefordshire. Developers are encouraged to assist in meeting local housing needs and may wish to

¹⁸ Affordable housing comprises social rented, affordable rented and intermediate housing, provided to eligible households whose needs are not met by the market. Eligibility is determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices. Social rented housing is owned by private registered providers. It may also be owned by other persons and provided under equivalent rental arrangements to the above, as agreed with the local authority or with the Homes and Communities Agency. Affordable rented housing is let by private registered providers of social housing to households who are eligible for social rented housing. Affordable Rent is subject to rent controls that require a rent of no more than 80% of the local market rent. Intermediate housing is homes for sale and rent provided at a cost above social rent, but below market levels subject to the criteria in the Affordable Housing definition. These can include shared, other low-cost homes for sale and intermediate rent, but not affordable rented housing.

provide such housing, even if sites fall beneath the threshold set by Government for this purpose. Local needs identified through a survey within the Parish in December 2017 identified an immediate local need within the Parish for 7 dwellings and a further 7 within the next 5 years. Of the immediate need, three households need 2-bedroom properties, and four households require 3-bedroom properties. Five of the households preferred owner occupation and/or low-cost purchase, and one household was looking to social rented property. The final household would consider all options. A requirement for 5 two-bedroomed dwellings and 2 three-bedroomed dwellings is indicated within the subsequent 5 years.

- 6.21 Any further planning permissions or revisions to existing permissions should reflect the balance in terms of housing mix and range, in order to comply with the provisions of this policy and also Herefordshire Core Strategy policies H1 and H3. Developers should ascertain the most up-to-date information in relation to this at the time they put forward proposals. Although the community strongly supports the provision of privately-owned homes (84% of respondents to the resident's questionnaire), there was also strong support for low-cost housing for sale (61%) and greater numbers supported than opposed all other forms of tenure, including shared ownership and social rented properties. Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy has set a target for 35% of housing to be affordable on sites of 11 or more dwellings.

Policy MB10: Housing Design and Appearance

New housing development, including alterations or extensions to buildings, will be required to achieve good standards and variety of architecture and design, particularly where there is a need to respect local distinctiveness and the traditional qualities and characteristics of the area within which it is to be located. This will be achieved by requiring development to:

- 1. Utilise a range of materials and architectural styles that are sympathetic to the development's surroundings, including other dwellings, and incorporating appropriate locally distinctive features.**
- 2. With regard to new innovative design or features, be of high quality and fit sensitively within the area concerned.**
- 3. Ensure dwellings are of a scale, massing, density, building line and layout compatible with the character, size and form of the part of the settlement within which they are located.**
- 4. Where appropriate, be similar to established building heights, frontages and plot sizes.**
- 5. In relation to parking arrangements, maintain the village street scene by ensuring off-street parking is designed as an integral part of the overall scheme.**
- 6. Avoid the subdivision of gardens where this would result in an uncharacteristic form of development.**

- 7. Protect the amenity and privacy of adjacent existing residential properties and ensure new residential development avoids locations where residents may suffer significant adverse effects from adjacent uses.**
- 8. Provide sufficient space for each property to maintain a functioning garden.**
- 9. Where appropriate, undertake Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments in order to retain important views, vistas and panoramas and inform appropriate landscape schemes.**

(Supporting Objectives 1,2 and 3)

Justification

- 6.22 Housing proposals should comply with other policies set out within the development plan. Criteria have been set that reflect the need to ensure development is sympathetic to the settlement's form, character and setting that its natural features and important spaces are protected, and that appropriate provision is made for parking so that it does not detract from local amenity.
- 6.23 Residents are more concerned about detailed design of dwellings than the layout although they wish to see a consistent approach reflecting the form within the area where development is to take place. There is concern that new development should fit sensitively within their surroundings and therefore this policy requires the form and character of the settlement or rural area within which it is to be located to be analysed and used to inform proposals. All the design features referred to in the policy are considered pertinent and important. In particular, it is considered that properties should have gardens that meet the needs of the type of housing to be developed through being of sufficient size and configuration to provide for a variety of purposes such as children's play and the growing of produce. This will add to the sustainability of any development. Development should also make provision for off road parking which should not detract from residential amenity. New buildings should not jar with the design of surrounding properties and gaps should be consistent with the general density within the location. Development should avoid consolidation between settlements and development boundaries along road frontages which has resulted in unsympathetic development settlement forms and the appearance of sprawling development across parts of the Parish. This policy would apply to the extension of existing houses and also the conversion of buildings.

Policy MB11: Sustainable Design for Housing

An integrated approach to achieve a high standard of sustainable design will be required to achieve the maximum possible reduction in the carbon footprint of new housing development. Development proposals should contain a coordinated package of design measures which could include:

- 1. Utilising physical sustainability measures associated with buildings that include orientation of buildings, the provision of energy and water conservation measures, storage for bicycles and for waste including provision for recycling, broadband infrastructure, and renewable energy infrastructure such as ground source heat pumps or photovoltaic panels where these do not detract from any historic fabric or settings.**
- 2. Seeking on site measures that support energy conservation such as through tree planting and other forms of green infrastructure to provide shade, shelter and for physical activity, and the maximum use of permeable surfaces.**
- 3. Integrating new homes fully into the existing neighbourhood and supporting a more pedestrian friendly environment through convenient links to local facilities and public transport connections which are suitable for those with pushchairs, in a wheelchair, walking with aids or using mobility scooters**
- 4. Assisting offsite measures such as supporting infrastructure to promote sustainable travel and enabling a sustainable drainage system to serve a wider range of properties where opportunities exist.**
- 5. Where there is good reason to believe that contamination of land may exist on any site, including through agricultural processes, ensuring an assessment is carried out to establish the extent and nature of the contamination, and effective measures taken to ensure potential occupiers, and the wider environment, are not put at unacceptable risk.**
- 6. Where external lighting is required it should be appropriate to its purpose and supported by a lighting plan that demonstrates that it will not have an adverse effect through unnecessary glare, light trespass, scenic intrusion or sky glow.**
- 7. Minimising construction traffic and reducing waste.**
- 8. Where new innovative sustainable design or features are incorporated, they should fit sensitively within the street scene and incorporate locally distinctive features to maintain the area's cohesive character.**

(Supporting Objectives 1, 2 and 3)

Justification

- 6.24 Residents have expressed support for sustainable design and especially the need for energy efficiency, exceeding the Government's standards in this regard, although it is acknowledged this is no longer possible in that the planning system cannot require the Building Regulation standards to be exceeded unless there are exceptional reasons. This NDP therefore sets out criteria that should be considered as part of a co-ordinated approach directed at sustainable design. This should be undertaken in an integrated

way addressing measures related to individual buildings, site layout and landscaping and support for off-site measures where these are appropriate such as links to the public footpath network and supporting public transport through such facilities as providing bus shelters. Measures to promote the health and wellbeing of residents should also be undertaken, for example by providing links to the public rights of way network and provision of open space. Residents are keen to see less car use and more cycling and walking. There is also concern that new development might result in light pollution and adverse effects on amenity through air pollution, intrusive noise and increased road traffic. Policies MB10 and MB11 address the detailed design issues raised by residents and they support Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy SD1.

7 Promoting Sustainable Transport

- 7.1 Both Herefordshire Council and Highways England have responsibilities for certain roads within the Parish. Highways England provides a footpath along the A49 and Herefordshire Council is responsible for the public rights of way network. The Herefordshire Trail passes through the Parish. Much Birch Parish is on a public transport route where services are relatively frequent in Herefordshire terms.
- 7.2 The Parish Council has lobbied successfully for a number of highway safety improvements associated with the A49, including achieving a 40 mph speed limit through Much Birch and a pedestrian crossing between Tump Lane and King's Thorn Road which also calms traffic in this location. Other measures identified primarily within the Parish Plan remain to be achieved.

Policy MB12: Highway Design Requirements

Development proposals should ensure:

- 1. The safety of pedestrians and of cyclists is protected and enhanced where possible, especially where there are no public footpaths or cycleways.**
- 2. There is safe access onto and from the adjacent roads.**
- 3. New accesses on the A49 should be avoided.**
- 4. Proposals should not lead to a significant increase in the volume of traffic travelling on roads that do not have sufficient capacity.**
- 5. The amenity of residents is not adversely affected by traffic.**
- 6. Proposals should provide adequate on-site parking in accordance with Herefordshire Council's parking standards.**
- 7. Internal road layouts should comply with Herefordshire Council's Design Guide for New Development and ensure the safety of pedestrians, cyclists and of children in areas designed and located for**

their play. The requirements of service vehicles such as refuse lorries, should be accommodated. Appropriate drainage measures will be required.

8. The nature of the development does not lead to pressure for the provision of street lighting where this is not currently present within the area concerned.

9. Development proposals do not detract from the public rights of way network within the Parish.

(Supporting Objective 3)

Justification

- 7.3 With the need to accommodate further development, it is essential that the highway requirements in terms of safety are met in order that the network can cope with increases in traffic generated. This applies not only in the settlements where growth is proposed but also elsewhere in the Parish. It is also important that local amenity is protected from the impact of traffic. Herefordshire Council utilises appropriate highway standards to ensure that the network can accommodate new development and this policy supports their use, outlining important issues that should be addressed as part of any planning application where traffic is generated. There may be instances where sites require comprehensive treatment of access arrangements to take into account adjacent development in order to minimise the effect on amenity and village character. Appropriate levels of car parking will be required but locations should be screened to reduce any effect on the street scene. The Parish Council is keen to protect and enhance the public rights of way network within its area to support tourism, encourage an active lifestyle and improve their utility as a local service. Consequently, it would like the network to be maintained. The opportunity to improve links should be taken where available, including to the Herefordshire Trail.

8 Retaining and Enhancing Community Facilities

- 8.1 The community facilities available within the Parish include the Primary School, village surgery and community hall (Much Birch), village shop (Wormelow), and public houses and churches. Residents must travel elsewhere for secondary education, other leisure and recreation facilities and higher order shopping. Improvements to, and the maintenance and operation of, facilities and infrastructure is a key concern of residents. The community has also indicated it would like to see some further facilities provided.

Policy MB13: Protection and Enhancement of Community Facilities

The following existing community facilities should be safeguarded and retained. Any proposals affecting these facilities or resulting in their loss will be considered in accordance with Core Strategy Policy SC1:

- **Much Birch Community Hall**
- **Wormelow Village Shop and Post Office**
- **Much Birch Surgery**
- **Tump Inn, Wormelow**
- **Axe and Cleaver Inn**
- **The Pilgrim Hotel**
- **Church of St Mary and St Thomas à Becket**
- **Much Birch Church of England Primary School**

Proposals to enhance existing, replace or provide new or additional community facilities within the Parish will be supported where:

- 1. They fit within the rural setting and do not create unacceptable noise, fumes, smell or other disturbance that would adversely affect the amenity of neighbouring residential properties.**
- 2. They do not cause traffic congestion, adverse traffic impact upon local amenity or adverse impact on traffic flow upon local roads.**
- 3. Access and off-street parking can be satisfactorily provided where required without harming existing residential and other uses.**
- 4. They include measures that encourage and promote active travel to and from the facility.**

(Supporting Objective 4)

Justification

- 8.2 Current facilities meet some of the present needs and some may be sufficient to serve the expected level of growth. However, a number need improvements in order that they may cope. The need for further provision cannot be discounted. This policy sets out important requirements, in addition to those covered elsewhere in the NDP, that would ensure improvements are undertaken without adversely affecting neighbouring properties. Core Strategy Policy SC1 encourages developments that might increase viability of existing facilities, for example through diversification. The community would not wish to see the loss of its facilities, including its surgery and local inns unless there is clear evidence that they are no longer viable. Core Strategy Policy SC1 sets out the provisions for considering proposals that would result in the loss of community facilities. The two areas of open space in the parish are safeguarded as Local Green Space. Proposals that would result in the loss of any other areas of open space should be considered against Core Strategy Policy OS3. More open space may be required to meet the needs of the community and should be provided in accordance with Core Strategy Policy OS2. The provision of car parking at the Primary School is seen as particularly important and also further provision at the community hall and surgery.

Policy MB14: Contributions to Community Facilities.

Where appropriate, new development within Much Birch Parish should contribute towards necessary community infrastructure to address the demands that such development places on the area and to support the social dimension of sustainable development. Contributions should be made through Section 106 Agreements, Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) or other developer contribution mechanisms that may be available during the period of the NDP.

(Supporting Objective 4)

Justification

- 8.3 Provision, improvement and maintenance of community facilities is important to promoting community spirit and involvement. Increasing demands resulting from growth will put pressure upon existing facilities, requiring their enhancement and improvement to ensure continued contribution to community cohesion. Additional facilities may also be required. Herefordshire Council intends to introduce a charging system for the Community Infrastructure Levy during the Plan Period. Currently it operates a system for related payments through Planning Obligations. Contributions should be made towards their improvement either through the CIL process, when this comes into operation, or in accordance with sections 3.4 and 3.9 of Herefordshire Council's Supplementary Planning Document on Planning Obligations, in particular, paragraphs 3.4.8. and 3.9.12. The Parish Council will use the contribution it receives from either of these primarily to ensure its existing facilities are improved, maintained or capable of meeting increased pressures in accordance with the legislative requirements. Herefordshire Council should seek advice from the Parish Council upon what contributions are needed towards local community facilities and infrastructure at the time any relevant planning application is made. These will include contributions to implement traffic and road safety improvements, particularly adequate pavements.

9 Supporting and Encouraging Business

- 9.1 Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy contains a range of economic development policies that are considered relevant to Much Birch Parish and which do not need to be duplicated in this NDP. The emphasis in this NDP for enterprise within the Parish is to support and encourage the development of small-scale businesses.

Policy MB15: Rural Enterprises, Diversification and Tourism.

Proposals for the creation of new rural businesses and the expansion of existing businesses, including the diversification of businesses and the development of tourism related businesses, will be encouraged where they are suitable in terms of scale and character of the Parish. In determining

whether proposals would be of suitable scale, the following criteria should be taken into account. Proposals should:

- 1. Not adversely affect the residential amenity of nearby dwellings.**
- 2. Be compatible with the character of the landscape within which they are to be located, respecting landscape character, visual appearance of the surrounding countryside, and avoiding the introduction of alien features into the landscape.**
- 3. Ensure any new buildings are of appropriate scale to the location and, where appropriate, sited in or adjacent to an existing group of buildings, be compatible in design and materials, and blend sensitively into the landscape.**
- 4. Fully screen any external storage, parking and ancillary uses.**
- 5. Safeguard its heritage and natural assets, while enhancing biodiversity through any mitigation works.**
- 6. Re-use or adapt existing rural buildings where these are available.**
- 7. Not result in the loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land, avoiding greenfield land where possible**
- 8. Not generate traffic that would adversely affect the amenity of residents or require highway improvements that would lead to the loss of important landscape features.**
- 9. Include measures that encourage active travel.**

With regard to the conversion of rural buildings, proposals should address the full site comprehensively, and retain or enhance their character in order to contribute positively to the landscape.

The reuse of brownfield sites for employment uses will be encouraged where the above criteria can be met.

(Supporting Objective 5)

Justification

- 9.2 This policy places emphasis upon the scale of any proposal needing to be compatible with the rural nature of the Parish. It sets the basis for determining when an economic development proposal is in scale with the rural character of the Parish. It must be acknowledged that there are limits to the capacity of both the landscape and the highway network. This policy applies to appropriate rural businesses, including tourism. Tourism has the potential to provide local employment and support diversification within the rural economy. The criteria within the policy seek to encourage positive proposals while ensuring that they do not have direct or indirect detrimental effects upon the structure of the local economy as a whole.

Policy MB16: Home-based businesses

Development proposals for home-based enterprises requiring planning permission, including the erection of an extension to a property, or a new building, or change of use of an existing building within the curtilage, or live/work units, will be encouraged where they:

- 1. Respect the scale, setting and nature of the area in which they are located.**
- 2. Have no adverse effects on residential amenity, including from traffic generation, noise, smell or light pollution.**

(Supporting Objectives 5)

Justification

- 9.3 Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy policy E3 promotes home working subject to a number of criteria. This policy is similar but recognises the rural nature of the Parish in that greater flexibility in terms of scale can be afforded given dwellings may have larger curtilages and outbuildings offering potential for extensions, conversions and even new build. Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy also contains within policy SS1 a presumption in favour of sustainable development; within policy SS4 plans to minimise impacts of movement on transportation; within policy SS5 promotion of live/work units, adaptive design of residential development and the provision of high-speed broadband; and within policy SS7 development that seeks to reduce the need to travel by private car.

Policy MB17: Broadband and Telecommunication Infrastructure

Proposals that provide broadband and other telecommunications infrastructure will be supported where they will assist in ensuring higher speed, greater coverage, improved reliability and availability throughout the Parish by:

- 1. Supporting proposals for well-designed and unobtrusively located development associated with the introduction of appropriate super-fast broadband equipment to provide high quality internet connectivity for business and residential users.**
- 2. Supporting proposals for well-designed and unobtrusively located development, associated with the introduction of appropriate mobile telephone equipment, to provide high quality telecommunications for business and residential users.**
- 3. Requiring new development to facilitate connection to high-speed broadband by means of providing suitable ducting for**

telecommunication and fibre connectivity within development sites, linked to the local/national network, as appropriate.

(Supporting Objectives 4 and 5)

Justification

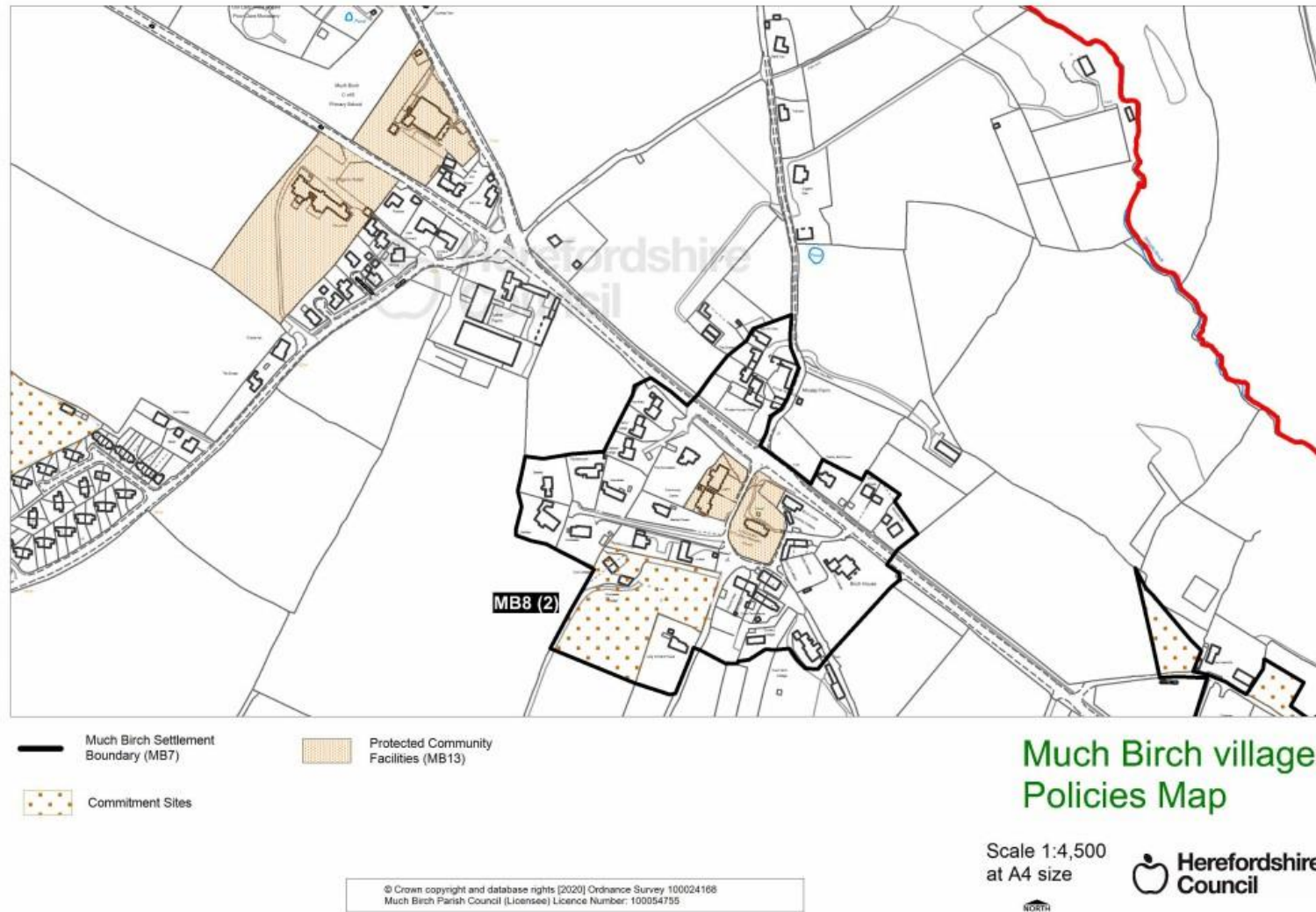
- 9.4 The community and local business people have highlighted that better broadband and mobile phone reception would support business growth within the Parish. Super-fast broadband should be made available throughout the Parish to support the local economy both in terms of assisting businesses located within the Parish and also to enable working from home. This is similarly the case for other telecommunication infrastructure. In addition, the continual improvement of speed and effectiveness should be facilitated. This policy supports the upgrading of existing and provision of new infrastructure that may be required over the plan period. In addition, it is important that new development make appropriate arrangements to connect to any existing mains infrastructure.

10 Delivering the Plan

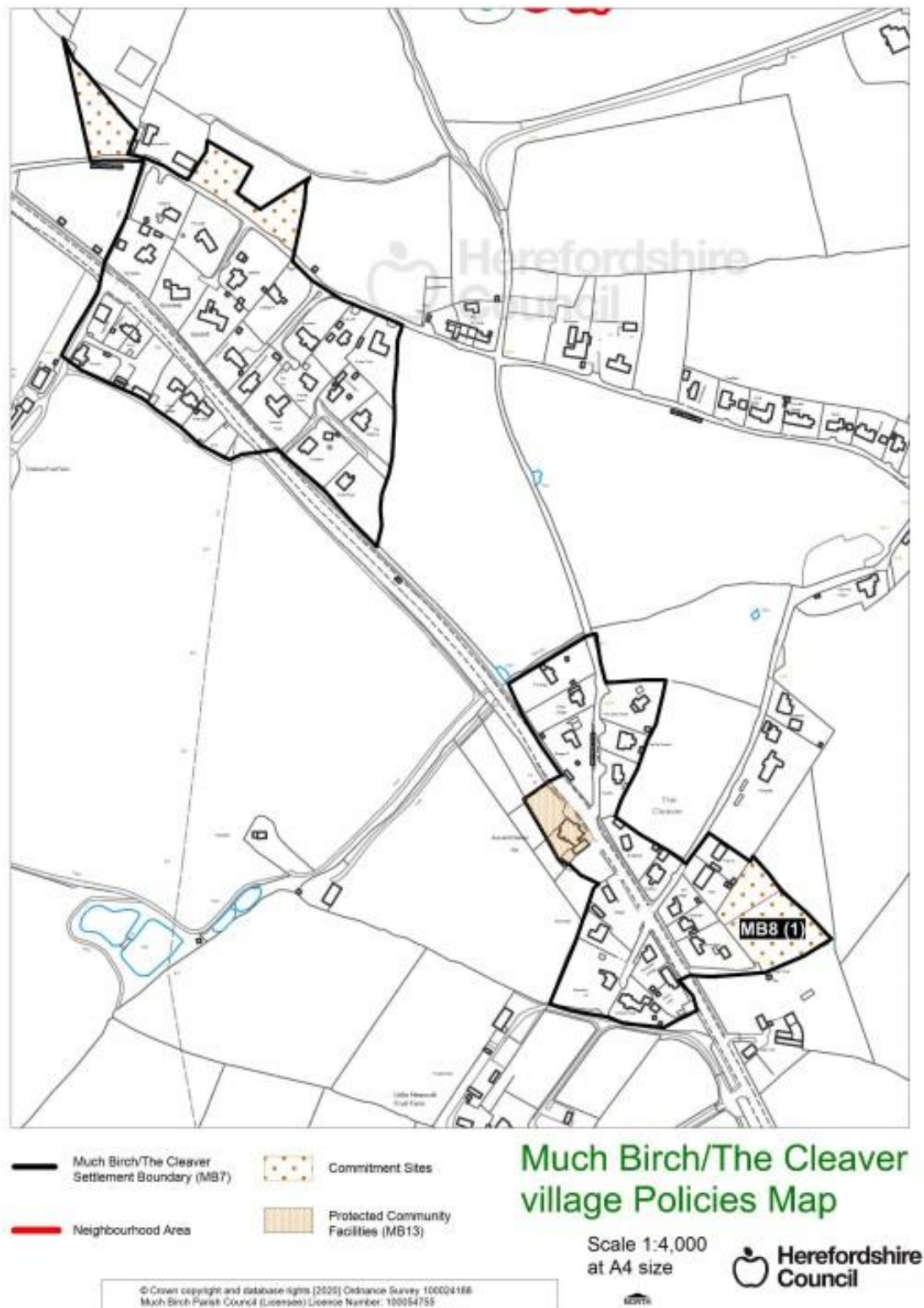
- 10.1 Landowners and developers will deliver most of the proposals that are promoted through policies in this NDP.
- 10.2 Herefordshire Council as the local planning authority will determine planning applications for development within the Parish. Such determinations should be in accordance with this NDP.
- 10.3 While the local planning authority will be responsible for development management, Much Birch Parish Council will also use this NDP as the basis for making its representations on planning applications. The Parish Council will continue to publicise all planning applications. Where necessary, Herefordshire Council will be asked to extend the time within which responses are required so that appropriate local publicity can be given before the Parish Council considers important planning applications.
- 9.4 Herefordshire Council is required to monitor the achievement of its targets for a range of development types including whether sites are coming forward for development to meet its strategy set out in Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy. The Parish Council will also monitor the effectiveness of the approach it has taken to the various issues covered in the NDP policies. This will be done through its annual report. That report will indicate:
- i. The number of dwellings granted planning permission within the Parish, including a running total covering the Plan Period.
 - ii. A list of planning applications for other matters received during the year indicating whether they are covered by policies in this NDP, the Parish Council's representations made, and whether they have been determined in accordance with the NDP.

- 10.5 It is anticipated that a review of the NDP will be needed, most likely when Herefordshire Core Strategy is also reviewed. In the unlikely situation that the strategy and approach in relation to housing does not deliver the level of housing required to meet the target for the Parish, discussions will take place with Herefordshire Council upon whether an early review is necessary. Regardless of external pressures, Much Birch Parish Council will undertake a review of the NDP at least every 5 years to ensure that it remains current and relevant to targets and community need.
- 10.6 Where appropriate, the Parish Council will establish working groups to support initiatives raised by the Council or Parishioners. For initiatives that have adequate support, the Parish Council will advertise and support action to further NDP initiatives. Any Parishioners with specific proposals should initially contact the Parish Clerk so that the item can be discussed by the Council who will aid its progress where possible within the framework of the NDP's objectives.

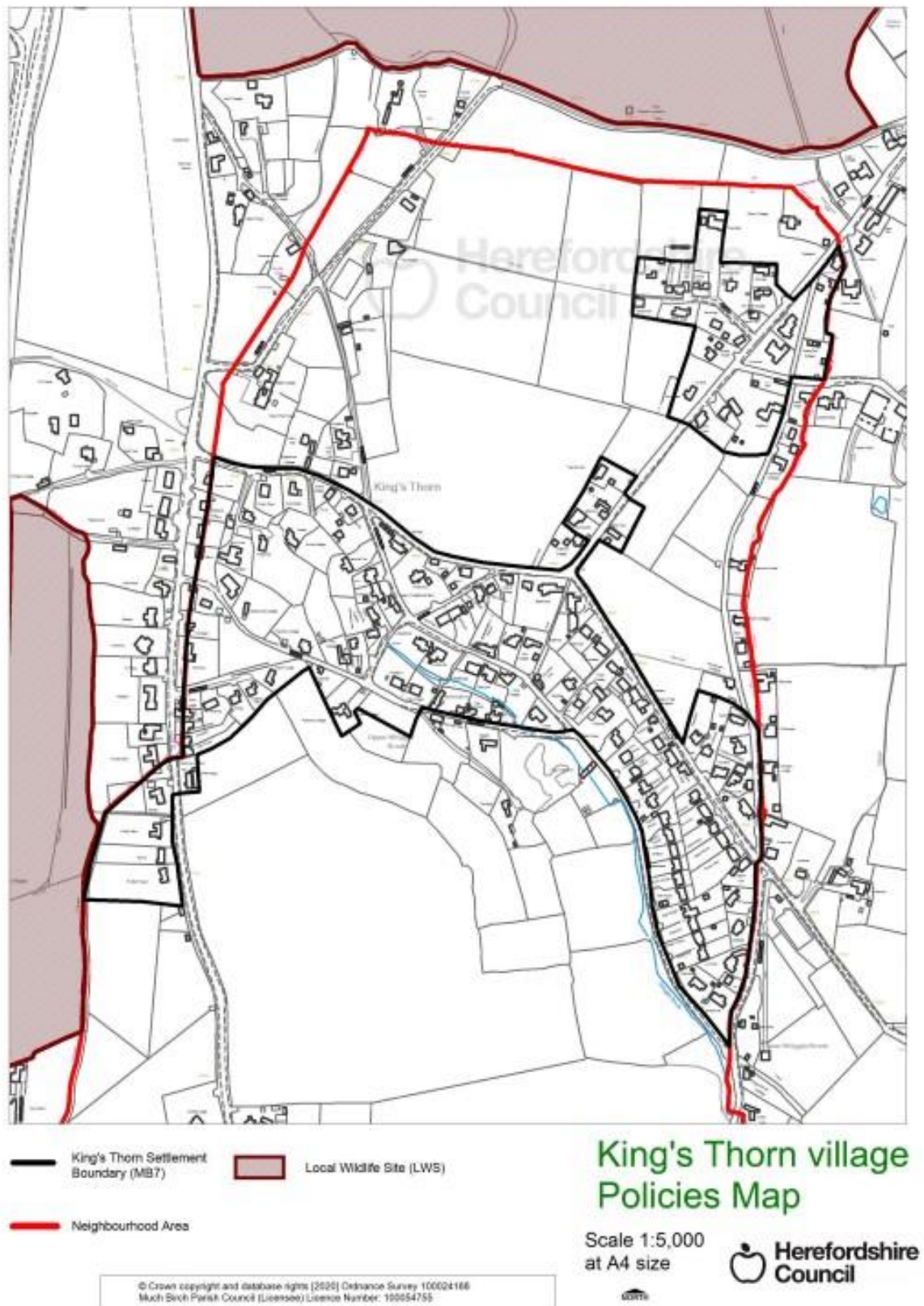
Map 2: Much Birch Village (North) Policies Map



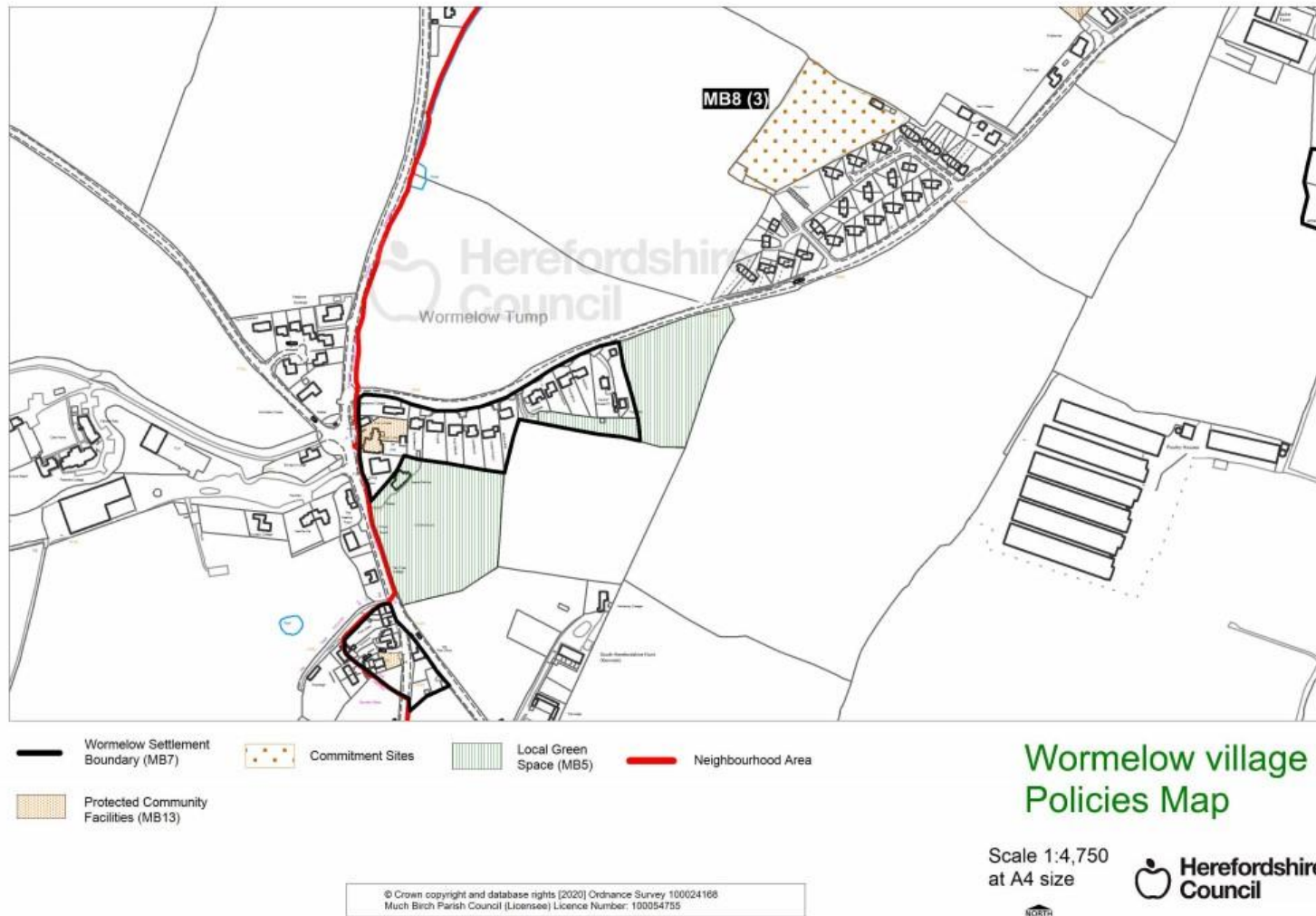
Map 3: Much Birch Village (South) and The Cleaver Policies Map



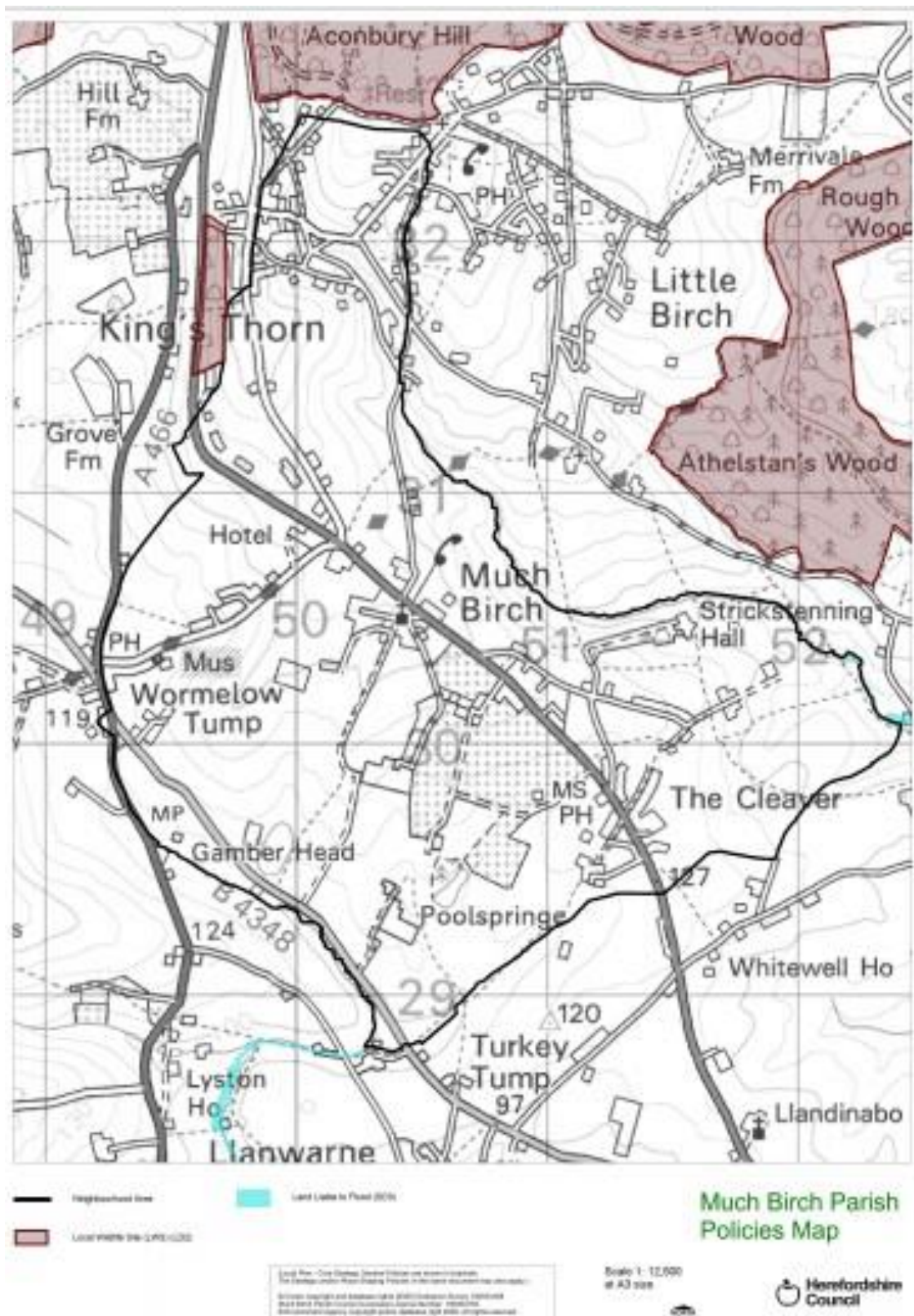
Map 4: King's Thorn Policies Map



Map 5: Wormelow Policies Map



Map 6: Much Birch Parish Policies Map



Appendix 1: List of Heritage Assets

Buildings of Historic Interest

The Parish of Much Birch has 7 buildings included on the Statutory List of Buildings of Architectural or Historic Interest (Listed Buildings). All are Grade 2.

- Milestone at NGR SO 512298
- Barn about 15 yards east of Ash Farmhouse
- Churchyard Cross about 15 yards north of the north-west window of the nave of the Church of St Mary and St Thomas à Becket
- Ash Farmhouse
- Barn and stable about 25 yards east of Strickstenning Hall
- Birch House
- Church of St Mary and St Thomas à Becket (This includes the World War 1 Memorial Clock which is of considerable local interest, forming part of the features of the Listed Building)

Other Heritage Assets

There are no Scheduled Ancient Monuments within the Parish although Aconbury Camp sits just to the north of the Parish boundary. There are no Registered or Unregistered Historic Parks and Gardens. Bryngwyn unregistered park and garden falls just outside the western edge of the Parish.

Appendix 2: Community Actions and Infrastructure

- A2.1 The following are indications of actions to be pursued by Much Birch Parish Council. They do not form part of the Neighbourhood Development Plan but include measures to support the growth proposed and address community needs in terms of facilities, services and key infrastructure.

Affordable, including Intermediate Homes

The Parish Council will work with HC Housing Services to agree a local lettings connections policy as follows:

Where affordable dwellings are to be retained for that purpose under Section 106 agreements, the priority for their allocation, on the first and all subsequent lettings, should first be given to those demonstrating a local housing need within Much Birch Parish. Should at the time of allocation there be nobody with such a connection, the accommodation may be allocated to those from the adjacent Parishes of Much Dewchurch, Little Birch and Aconbury, and Llanwarne and District Group and subsequently to those within the Ross on Wye Housing Market Area.

For the purposes of identifying a local need these shall be:

- 1. Those who live within the Parish.**
 - 2. Those who have lived within the Parish within the past 6 out of 12 months and 3 out of 5 years.**
 - 3. Those who work or are coming to work within the Parish.**
 - 4. Those with an essential need to support a close relative or be supported by a current resident who is a close relative within the Group Parish.**
- In each instance the qualifying criteria may apply to other adjacent Parishes and areas specified when they become relevant.**

A2.2 The purpose for this measure and the relationship to the NDP are set out in paragraph 6.20 of the NDP document.

Traffic Measures within the Parish

Much Birch Parish Council, on behalf of the local community, will work with Herefordshire Council, Highways England and developers to bring forward improvements to benefit pedestrian and cycle safety, endeavour to ensure safer access to local amenities, increase transport choices and reduce the impact of vehicles resulting from development upon its residents. Development proposals should, where possible and appropriate, propose positive measures to address the problems caused by vehicles through:

- 1. Introducing traffic calming measures to complement speed reduction on entry to settlements although calming measures should not include road humps and road narrowing.**
- 2. Seeking junction improvements.**
- 3. Reducing the effects of traffic on residential amenity.**
- 4. Seeking safe crossings.**
- 5. Provision of passing bays on narrow lanes.**
- 6. Seeking additional footpaths and cycleways to local amenities, service and centres of employment, including along the A49 to Ross-on-Wye.**
- 7. Provision of additional bus shelters and other improvements to local public transport including investigating whether a community bus scheme might be established.**
- 8. Seeking additional off-street car parking at the community hall and primary school.**
- 9. Promoting more attractive and better integrated walking, cycling and public/community transport use.**

Developer contributions resulting from development within the NDP area may be used to support additional traffic measures beyond those essential to enabling the development to proceed.

- A.2.3 New developments should prioritise transport measures which promote positive sustainable impacts for the benefit of residents, and these measures should be considered in association with Policy MB12.
- A.2.4 There are continued concerns about the speed, amount and size of traffic associated with the A49 route, through the Parish and particularly its settlements along this route. This policy seeks to highlight those measures that need to be addressed within the Parish in accordance with Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy policy SS4 where Herefordshire Council indicates it will work with the Highways England, bus operators, developers and local communities to bring forward improvements to the local and strategic transport network to reduce congestion, improve air quality and road safety and offer greater transport choices. It remains to be seen whether all such measures are practicable within a rural Parish. The need to improve pedestrian and cyclist safety and reduce the speed of vehicles should at least be addressed. Proposals for connection to the Herefordshire Trail would be enabled through this policy. The Parish Council will endeavour to press for appropriate levels of maintenance to ensure any growth improves the condition of roads, footpaths, drainage, verges and public rights of way.
- A.2.5 All the measures indicated have been identified by the community through consultations either upon the NDP or the Parish Plan. The provision of measures to address safety concerns along the A49 through the Parish and approaching and through the settlements received considerable support. The strength of feeling about the first measure was very strong. Parking provision and management at Much Birch Primary School has been identified as a major problem that needs to be addressed. In terms of measures to address safety, all options with the exclusion of road humps and road narrowing would be supported, including the installation of Speed Indicator Devices and better pavements.
- A.2.6 In terms of active travel, residents consider the Parish's countryside location is beneficial for walking and cycling and also feel that public transport links are very important. There is some support for a community bus scheme, with 31% in favour and 10% expressing a willingness to drive for it. Most of those supporting the measure indicate they would use or drive for the service on a weekly rather than a daily basis. There is little support for a car-pool scheme. There is, however, a community transport scheme covering this area.

Other Associated Measures

To meet community aspirations and support Neighbourhood Plan policies Much Birch Parish will seek to work in collaboration with Herefordshire Council, relevant agencies, developers and other organisations in the following areas:

- 1. Improvements to road maintenance, including cutting of hedges and verges where this is necessary for highway and pedestrian safety (visibility).**
- 2. Seeking solutions to storm water drainage problems arising from field and road run-off and defective drains.**

- 3. Lobbying to achieve better broadband and mobile phone reception.**
- 4. Identifying the need for and if proved resources to provide local play area/field facilities.**
- 5. Supporting measures to improve and enhance the Parish's natural environment.**

- A2.7 Many of these issues were identified through the process of preparing Much Birch Parish Plan. A limited number of additional measures were identified during the preparation of this NDP. The need for proactive action in relation to many of these actions will increase because of growth within the Parish.
- A2.8 Recent consultations have shown support for community infrastructure projects and they have been identified as projects upon which the planning obligation contributions or Community Infrastructure Levy might be used should any be received. Other forms of potential funding will also be investigated, and this will be in association with relevant local organisations where relevant. Other projects may also be identified during the Neighbourhood Plan period. A detailed list of appropriate projects to support growth will be maintained and updated as required to inform relevant heads of agreement in relation to those proposals where planning obligation contributions are expected until such a time as the Community Infrastructure Levy comes into operation.