

Plan revision - 1st Public consultation

Issues and options explanatory leaflet

May – July 2021

You have probably heard or read that Ledbury Town Council is revising its Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP). This leaflet and accompanying questionnaire is your invitation to contribute. It sets out the main issues on which the community can express its views before the new version of the plan is written. Once this is produced, with proposed detailed policies informed with input from this first round of public consultation, the community will be consulted again.

We would prefer you complete the questionnaire online by midnight on Sunday 11th July, using this link: https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/LedburyNDP_Issues_Options. If you do not have internet access or prefer to complete in writing, please fill out the enclosed questionnaire and return it to us by Monday 12th July using the Freepost address on the questionnaire, or you could drop it into the Town Council office (letter box on Church Lane). For any help or questions email the Town Clerk on clerk@ledburytowncouncil.gov.uk or telephone 01531 632306.

If you need more space for your comments please continue on a separate sheet.

This is a partial revision and not a comprehensive review. The aim is to address specific important matters not covered in the current adopted plan.

Should you wish to know greater background, more detail on each of the issues can be found on the Neighbourhood Development Plan page of the Town Council's website at <https://www.ledburytowncouncil.gov.uk/en-gb/neighbourhood-plan/supporting-documents> Section 2.2, Public Consultation. The recommended documents to read are:

- The full 'Issues and Options Report'
- Topic papers 1-5 covering: design issues (1); employment & economy (2); recreation (3), green infrastructure; (4) the settlement boundary (5). These are all work in progress to be completed as a result of this consultation, but they give a detailed view of the work done to date to inform this round of consultation.

The key issues for the review are:

- Defining a settlement boundary for the town
- Addressing the lack of sufficient football playing fields
- Provision of new sites for employment
- Improving access to Ledbury Railway Station particularly the eastbound platform
- Supporting the town centre
- Safeguarding and enhancing green space
- Promoting good design in the built environment

1. Defining a Settlement Boundary: Question 1

A settlement boundary defines the limits of the town's growth. There are both advantages and disadvantages, but Ledbury Town Council believes that Ledbury would benefit from a settlement boundary as the lack of one in the current NDP has resulted in unplanned development permissions.

Below are three options; each has advantages and disadvantages. The preferred option (C) aims to accommodate identified needs for employment and recreation land (see section 3 below) in locations which will have the least impact on the character of the town based on an analysis of the landscape around the town. **See question 1 to give your views.**

Option A: No settlement boundary (*see Figure 1*)

Advantages:

- offers flexibility in planning
- allows more space for development
- acts as a brake on land values

Disadvantages:

- offers no certainty to landowners, developers and community as to where development will be acceptable
- less community control over development
- less protection of the countryside.

Option B: This uses the boundary based on the previous draft NDP submission and includes an extension for land recently granted planning permission (*see Figure 2*).

Advantages:

- this seems to be the 'natural' boundary as development is limited to the existing built area

Disadvantages:

- developers have successfully challenged this boundary
- doesn't provide room for needed employment provision or playing fields
- doesn't protect public green space outside the built up area

Option C: To extend the settlement boundary defined in Option B westwards incorporating the Riverside Park, and areas for recreation and employment to the south of Little Marcle Road (*see Figure 3*).

Advantages:

- respects the constraints of topography, the AONB and River Leadon
- protects the Riverside Park and land to the south-west to meet Ledbury's present and future needs for recreation and employment
- greater certainty for landowners, developers and community over where building is likely
- ensures a controlled approach which is plan-led
- protects the countryside from unnecessary development to protect the green infrastructure network around the town

Disadvantages:

- reduces flexibility and opportunities for landowners and developers
- extends the boundary to the south-west of Ledbury potentially leading to additional pressures for development in that direction.

The definition of a settlement boundary is the prime objective of this NDP revision and Ledbury Town Council, Herefordshire Council and the professional consultants believe that Option C gives greatest certainty and protection for the future.

2. Employment and Recreation: Questions 2a – 2d

Ledbury does not have enough playing fields, particularly for the youth and adult football clubs. Different sites, funding sources and delivery opportunities have been explored. Sport England will only support a plan in which youth and adult facilities are combined. The proposal is to provide new pitches and facilities to the south of Little Marcle Road as a new home for Ledbury Swifts and Ledbury FC. **See questions 2a-2c and map Figure 3 to give your views.**

There is a need to find land for new businesses. More employment opportunities in the town would reduce the need for people to commute for work enabling Ledbury to grow in a balanced and sustainable way.

Herefordshire Council has analysed the landscape surrounding Ledbury and indicated in its Core Strategy that around 12 hectares (ha) of land south of the Little Marcle Road would be the best location for employment development in terms of access and landscape sensitivity, but the Strategy did not stipulate precisely where this should be.

A site south of Little Marcle Road (beside UBL) has been identified where there are already business premises and Herefordshire Council's Market Towns Economic Investment Project could help to bring forward land in this location. This, with other smaller sites, also identified for their low sensitivity, could contribute towards future employment needs across a range of businesses, including tourism.

It is proposed that both playing fields and employment needs can be met from land south of Little Marcle Road and that other smaller sites could contribute. For example, land off the by-pass near the Full Pitcher roundabout and Dymock Road could be advanced for limited development. Ideas considered include light industrial, hotel accommodation, a possible future location for emergency services and a community garden.

Any development here must be required to enhance green infrastructure and shown not to have a significant adverse effect on the neighbouring residential amenity or on views from and to the Malvern Hills AONB or Wall Hills Camp. **See question 2d to give your views.**

3. Land North of the Viaduct and Railway Line: Questions 3a and 3b

A large part of this area has outline planning permission for housing with some employment land, reinstatement of a section of the Hereford to Gloucester canal and a new park linking to existing walks into the town and Ledbury allotments further to the north. There may also be an opportunity to preserve the option to access the viaduct site off the Hereford Road roundabout. Any review would need to consider whether any possible route would be practical and permissible in planning terms, and it is considered as unlikely to be deliverable in any timescale covered by this plan. **See question 3a to give your views.**

There is no access to the eastbound platform of Ledbury railway station for people with disabilities or limited mobility. In addition there is limited car parking. The current NDP indicates support for improvements, but it has not yet been possible to deliver these. Adjacent land has been submitted for assessment as employment land and these proposals would also provide access to the eastbound platform and some car parking. **See question 3b to give your views.**

4. Supporting the Town Centre: Questions 4a – 4d

a) Defining the Town Centre

The Core Strategy seeks to increase the vitality and viability of Ledbury town centre by supporting retail, commercial, leisure, culture and tourism proposals within the town centre and resisting such proposals outside of it. Retail activities within and close to the town centre have a close relationship and are mutually dependent, especially if they are within walking distance of each other.

The only definition of Ledbury town centre is found in Herefordshire's Unitary Development Plan 2007 which is shown in red on map Figure 4. The advantage of maintaining this boundary is that it concentrates footfall within a relatively small area and this can be attractive to shoppers. It also supports the character of the town with its many historic buildings. However, disadvantages include restricting the ability to attract new types of shops and other premises to reflect current retail, leisure and other changes, and limiting footfall to a smaller area.

On balance it is proposed that the town centre boundary be re-defined with several options to be considered. **See Figure 4 and question 4a to give your views.**

The current NDP defines primary frontages (mainly food, clothing, restaurants, drinking establishments and household shops) and secondary frontages (including hot food takeaways and businesses in addition to the above), regulating the uses considered appropriate within these. (See Figure 5). With the introduction of new retail definitions this division is less relevant, so it is proposed that the distinction between primary and secondary frontages be removed as changes in use are occurring rapidly and a more flexible approach may be needed to retain the town centre's attractiveness. **See question 4b to give your views.**

b) Town Centre Regeneration and Community Services

Lawnside and Market Street are sited on the edge of the town's shopping streets. They have mixed uses, with pressure for change including a future need to extend healthcare facilities. It is proposed that a co-ordinated approach to development in these areas should be taken to ensure maintaining and improving the vitality, attractiveness and character of the town centre and the conservation area. An alternative option is to allow any development in the Lawnside area to proceed on an ad-hoc basis. **See question 4c to give your views.**

c) Health and other Emergency Services

Current health service accommodation is fragmented with medical, dental and care services on different sites. The facilities meet present needs, but must expand to accommodate expected population growth and provide a wider range of services expected of modern healthcare. A joined-up approach is proposed to meet future needs through improved and larger accommodation in the town centre, providing the easiest access for all and supporting the town centre economy. This would not be to the exclusion of other options if that is not possible. **See question 4d to give your views.**

5. Green Infrastructure: Questions 5a – 5e

a) The Neighbourhood's Green Infrastructure

Green infrastructure is the network of green and blue spaces and features within and surrounding Ledbury. These include parks, open spaces, playing fields, woodlands, orchards, rivers and streams, street trees and allotments. They can provide habitats for wildlife and plants, flood and water management services as well as public amenity (footpaths, recreation, etc).

Current NDP policies protect some green infrastructure such as the woods surrounding the town and some features that contribute towards biodiversity. In addition, Herefordshire Council has developed a Green Infrastructure Strategy and identified green local strategic corridors (LSC) and local enhancement zones (LEZ) for Ledbury (see Figure 6). Local Enhancement Zones are areas where green infrastructure is required to create the most sustainable living and working places. Local Strategic Corridors are linear green spaces linking local sites and ensuring connectivity of assets between and within communities. In both LEZs and LSCs, the protection and improvement of green infrastructure is important for existing communities and the successful integration of new developments.

This revision takes a view that these need long term protection and careful management. It proposes adding to this currently identified infrastructure (see Figure 7). Some of the proposals are associated with town-wide pedestrian and cycle routes. Other areas have been identified as sensitive and valuable for biodiversity, historic reasons, landscape character or where measures are needed to mitigate the effects of climate change.

Below are descriptions of these corridors and zones and the new proposals:

LSC1 - The Town Trail.

LSC2 - The Riverside Walk and the adjacent sports grounds. The proposal is to extend this to link to Wall Hills Camp and its surrounding woodland, an important heritage asset and a setting to the town, and also to extend it north and south along the river and the route of the proposed canal.

LSC3 - This corridor runs from the churchyard and Walled Garden to Dog Hill Wood. The proposal is to extend this corridor north to Frith Wood.

LSC4 - This corridor runs through New Mills Way to Leadon Way and the Town Trail. It brings together significant green spaces, verges and stands of trees within a residential area which residents can add to through wildlife friendly gardens.

LSC5 – A new corridor is proposed to incorporate Ledbury Park and the stream and public right of way to the south of the Bovis and Hawk Rise sites. This would strengthen the connectivity between the ecological networks of the Malvern Hills and the River Leadon and protect a green gap between Ledbury and Parkway.

LEZ1 – This enhancement zone covers the viaduct site where 625 new homes are anticipated to be built and which borders Wellington Heath parish. The proposal is to extend this zone and within it to create new footpaths and cycleways including links to Wellington Heath; to restore the canal tow path; and to protect the green gap between Wellington Heath and Ledbury to prevent coalescence between the settlements. This landscape is important to the setting of the Malvern Hills. Natural flood control measures to reduce the effects of development upon the River Leadon should be introduced.

LEZ2 – This enhancement zone is adjacent to the Full Pitcher roundabout and the Dymock Road, an area where change is underway despite being identified by a planning inspector as a sensitive landscape in terms of its relationship to the Malvern Hills AONB. The proposal is to extend this zone to incorporate the land identified as sensitive.

LEZ3 - A new Enhancement Zone is proposed on the higher ground near the Gloucester Roundabout and the housing site to be developed by Bovis. This area will form a backdrop to the new development and a green gap between Ledbury and Parkway and include a proposal for a new footpath/cycleway. **See Figure 7 and question 5a to give your views.**

b) Green space within the town

Figure 8 shows the important green spaces within the built up area of the town. Different levels of protection may apply to these spaces; for example playing fields may be built on if the schools need to extend (but if this happens they will need to be replaced elsewhere), and the cemetery and church yard have special protection. However they do make valuable contributions to the green infrastructure of the town. It is also proposed that where appropriate and opportunity arises, the creation of community gardens and more town allotments should be considered. **See Figure 8 and questions 5b and 5c to give your views.**

c) Footpaths, Cycleways and Public Rights of Way

Public rights of way are important elements in the green infrastructure of the town. Many lead from the built-up area to the woods and surrounding countryside, and the Malvern Hills. The restoration of the Herefordshire & Gloucestershire Canal provides an opportunity to develop the tow path as a pedestrian/cycleway linking to neighbouring parishes.

Such green corridors will support delivery of some of the key objectives in the NDP: to promote health and wellbeing, retain and increase biodiversity and mitigate the effect of climate change. **See question 5d to give your views.**

d) Children's Play

Children's play areas can provide access to nature as part of their design and contribute to wellbeing. There are nine official children's play areas within the town, but only one of these is south of Bridge Street. There are play areas planned in the developments south of Leadon Way, but these are inaccessible to children on the town side of the by-pass. No opportunities to increase children's play area provision within the southern part of the town have been identified. It is proposed that additional play facilities should be supported in areas of need if and when opportunities are identified. **See question 5e to give your views.**

6. Design and the Environment: Question 6

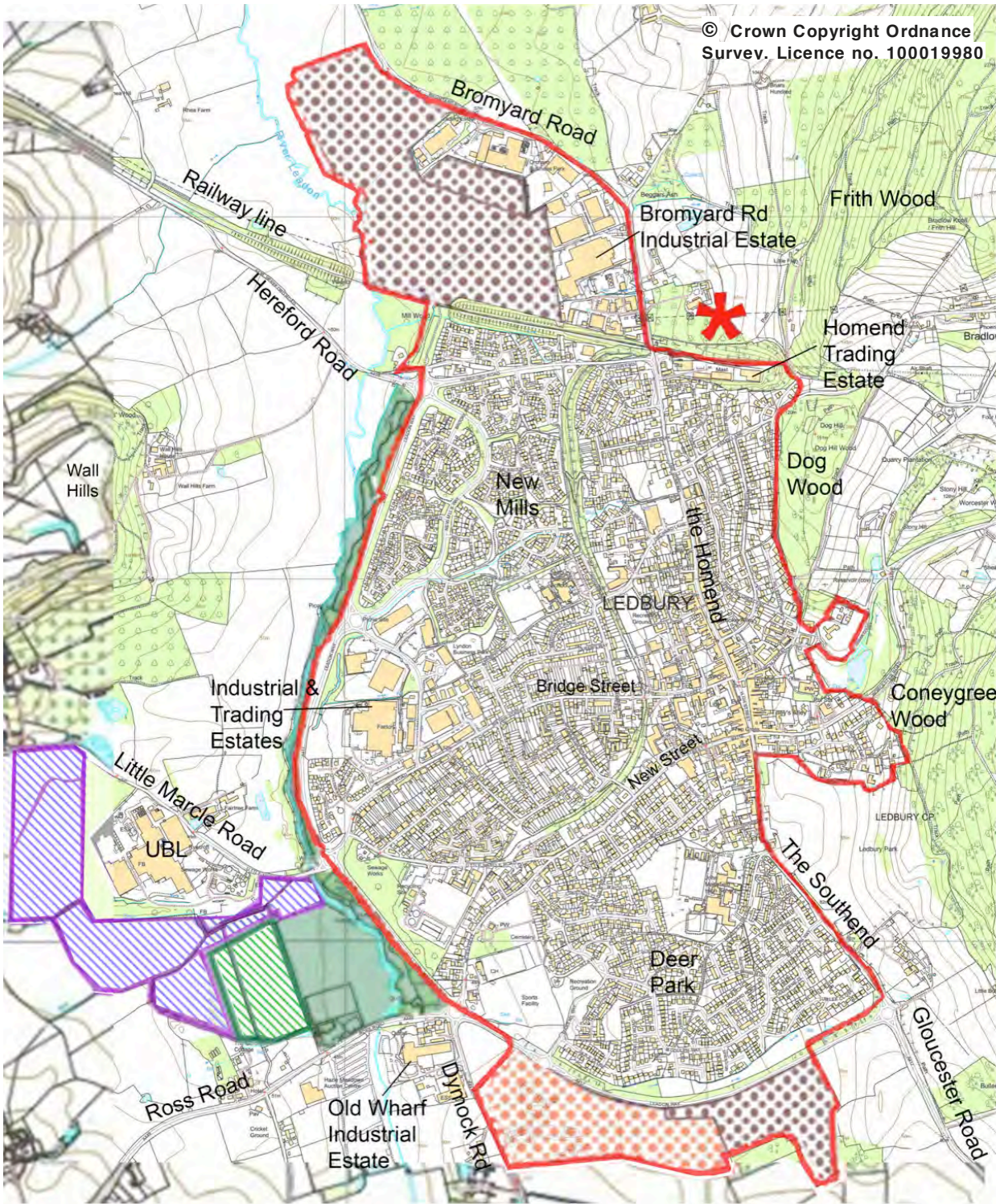
Ledbury Town Council has a Design Guide (2018). This is not a policy document, but it provides guidance to builders and developers. The proposal is that specific design policies should be included in the NDP based on the ideas in the Design Guide. In addition, policies should be updated to encourage sustainable development, measures to mitigate and adapt to climate change and the promotion of active travel. **See questions 6a and 6b to give your views.**

7. Other Matters: Questions 7a and 7b

The NDP may include a limited number of other matters although it is not intended to encompass a major review. Herefordshire Council has started a review of its Core Strategy although this may take some time before it is complete. This may identify further development needs for the town requiring a more significant review of the NDP. **See questions 7a and 7b to give your views on issues that could be considered in this or the next review.**

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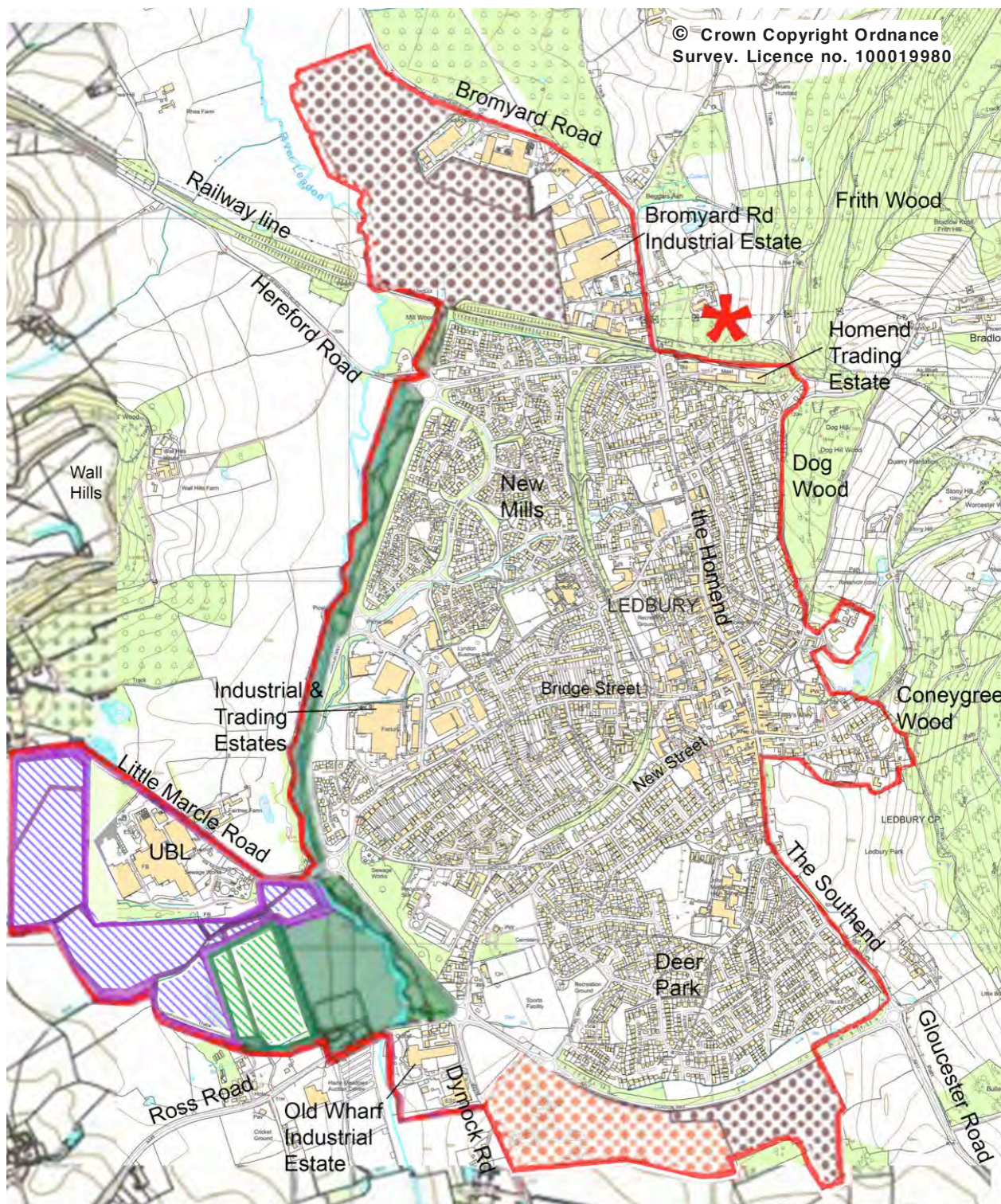
Should you wish to view the maps at a larger scale they can be found on the Neighbourhood Development Plan page of the Town Council's website at <https://www.ledburytowncouncil.gov.uk/en-gb/neighbourhood-plan/supporting-documents> Section 9.0, Maps and Plan



NB Areas for new playing fields and employment are indicative and to be confirmed

- | | | | |
|--|--|---|--|
|  Sites with planning permission |  Riverside walk & rugby pitch |  Indicative area for new employment land |  Proposed settlement boundary |
|  Sites under construction |  Indicative area for new playing fields | |  Access to railway station |

Figure 2: Settlement Boundary Option B –Boundary based on previous draft NDP but with an extension for land recently granted planning permissions.



NB Areas for new playing fields and employment are indicative and to be confirmed

- | | | | |
|--|--|---|--|
|  Sites with planning permission |  Riverside walk & rugby pitch |  Indicative area for new employment land |  Proposed settlement boundary |
|  Sites under construction |  Indicative area for new playing fields | |  Access to railway station |

Figure 3: Settlement Boundary Option C – includes committed development sites and allocations for employment, playing fields and Riverside Walk

TOWN CENTRE OPTIONS

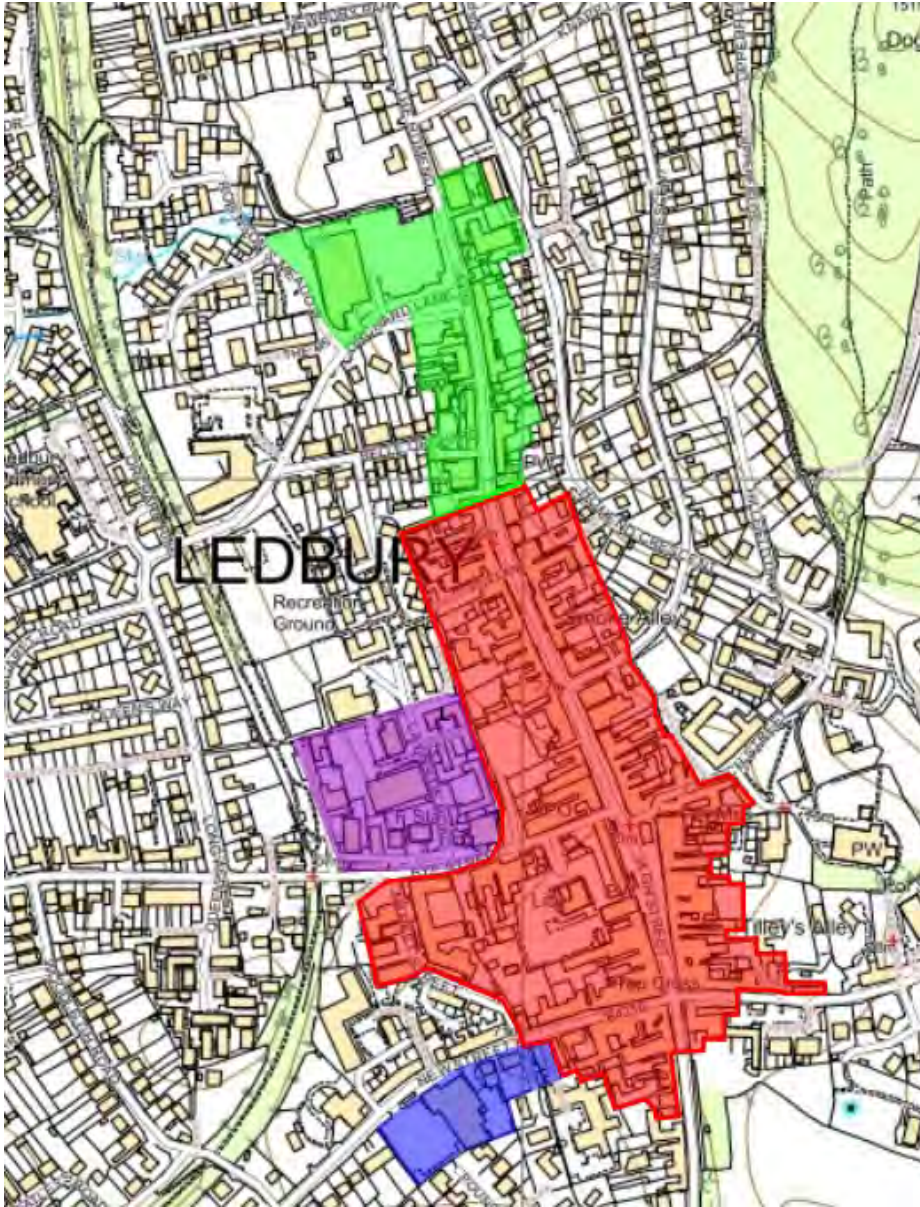


Figure 4: Possible extensions to the Town Centre

Red - town centre defined in Unitary Development Plan

Blue - adds part of New Street and the Co-op

Purple - adds Lawnside

Green - adds part of the Homend and Tesco

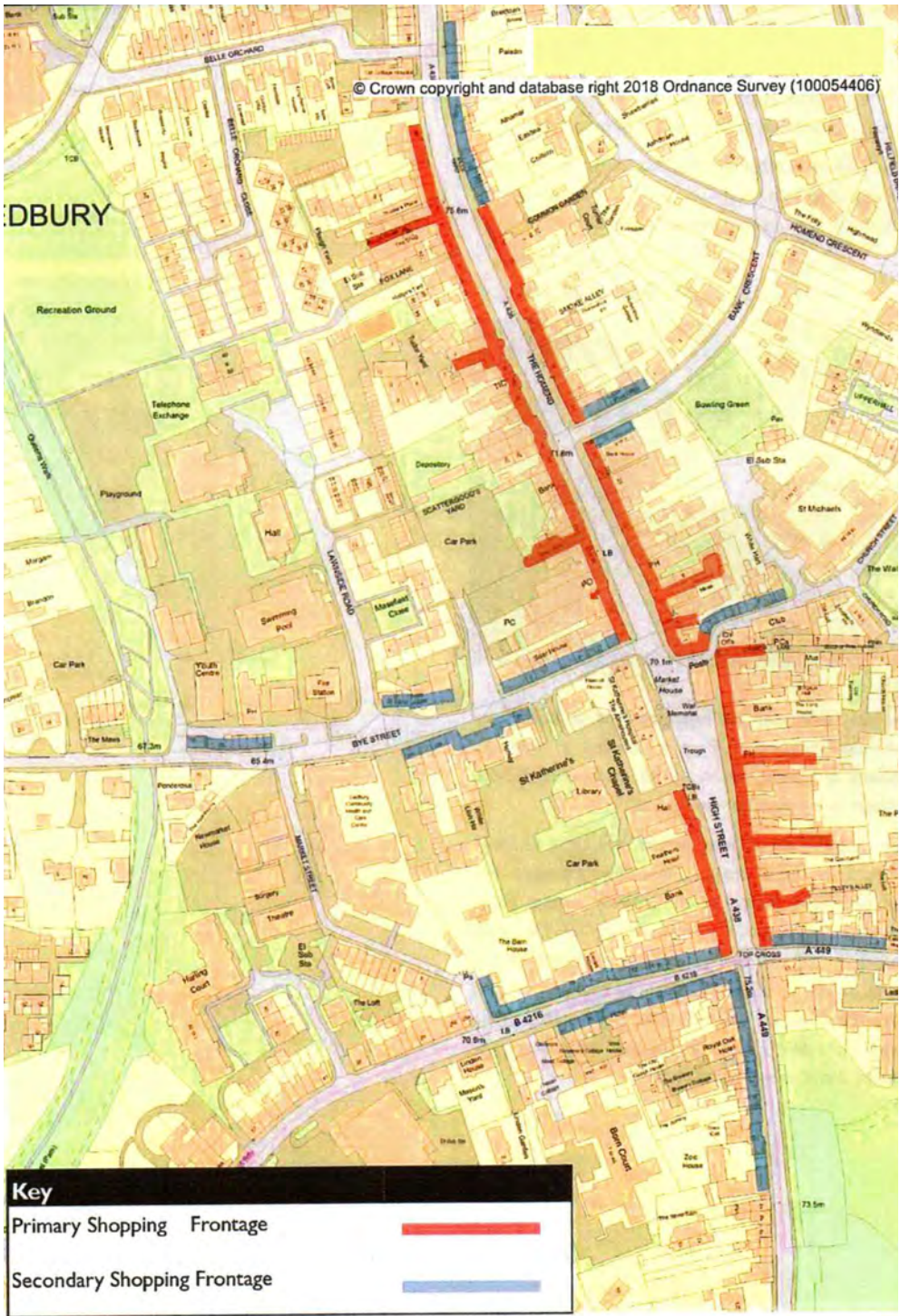
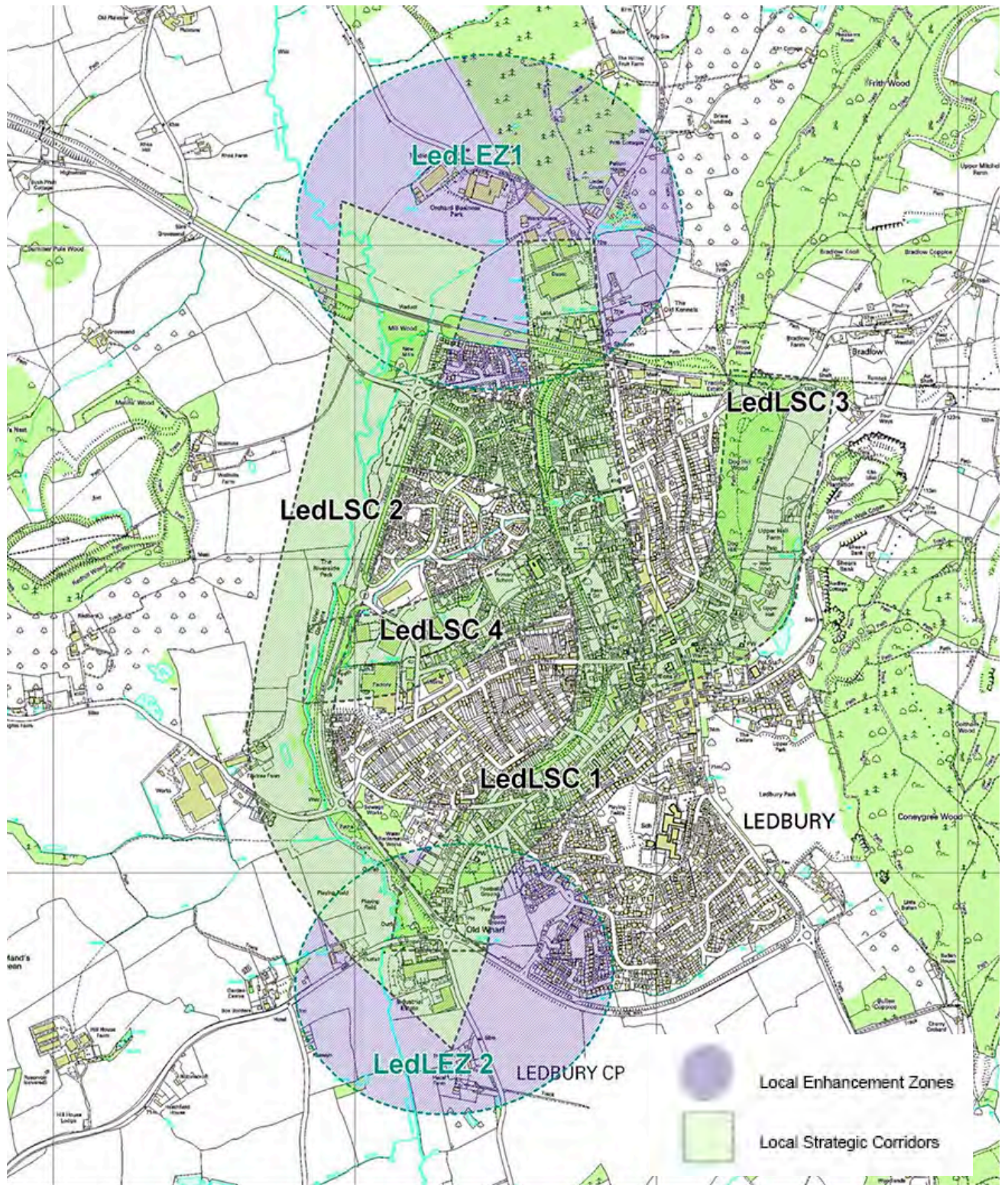


Figure 5. Existing frontages.

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE OPTIONS



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Figure 6: Current Herefordshire Council Local Strategic Corridors (LEDLSC) and Enhancement Zones (LEDLEZ).

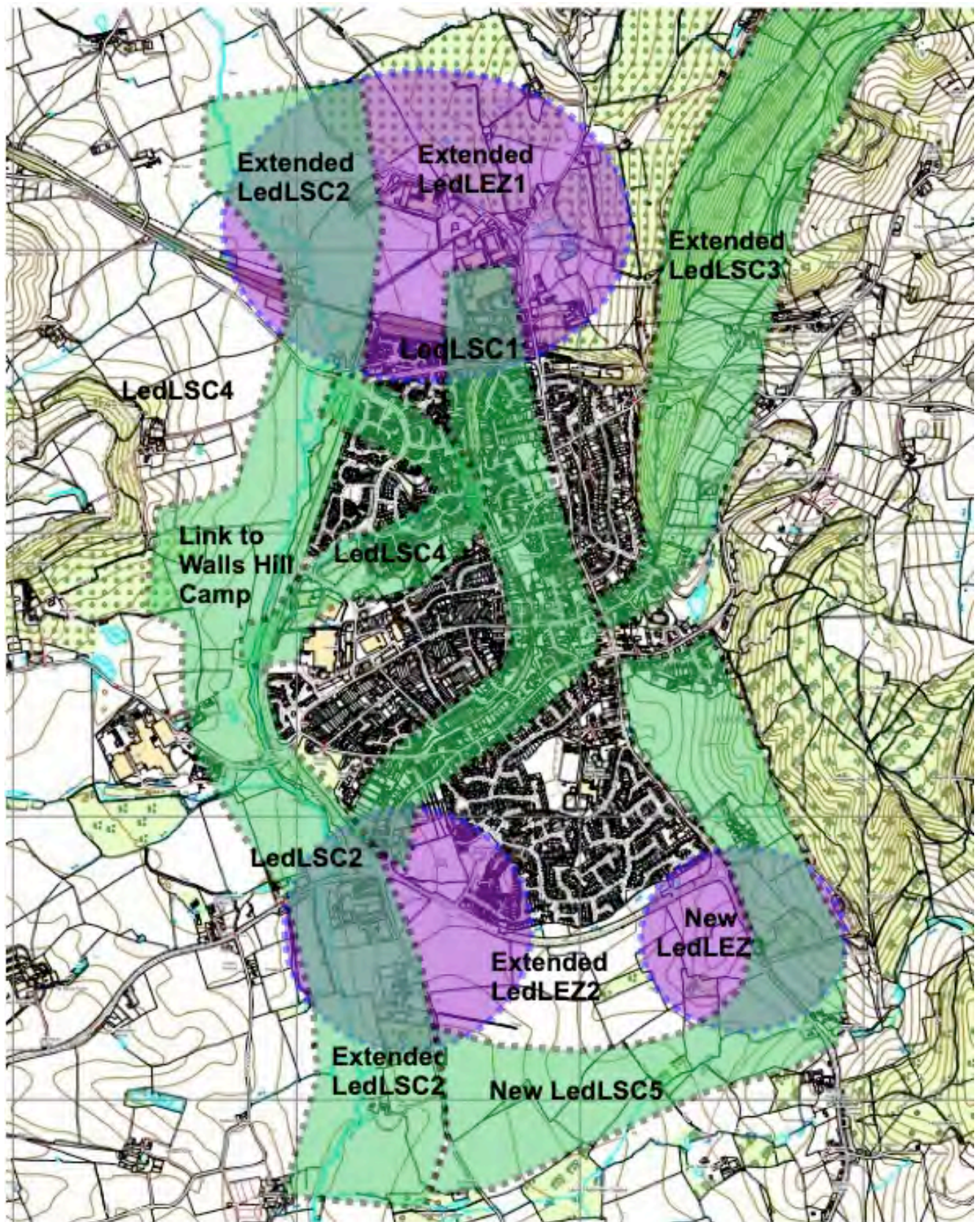


Figure 7: Proposed additional Local Strategic Corridors (LedLSC) and Local Enhancement Zones (LedLEZ).

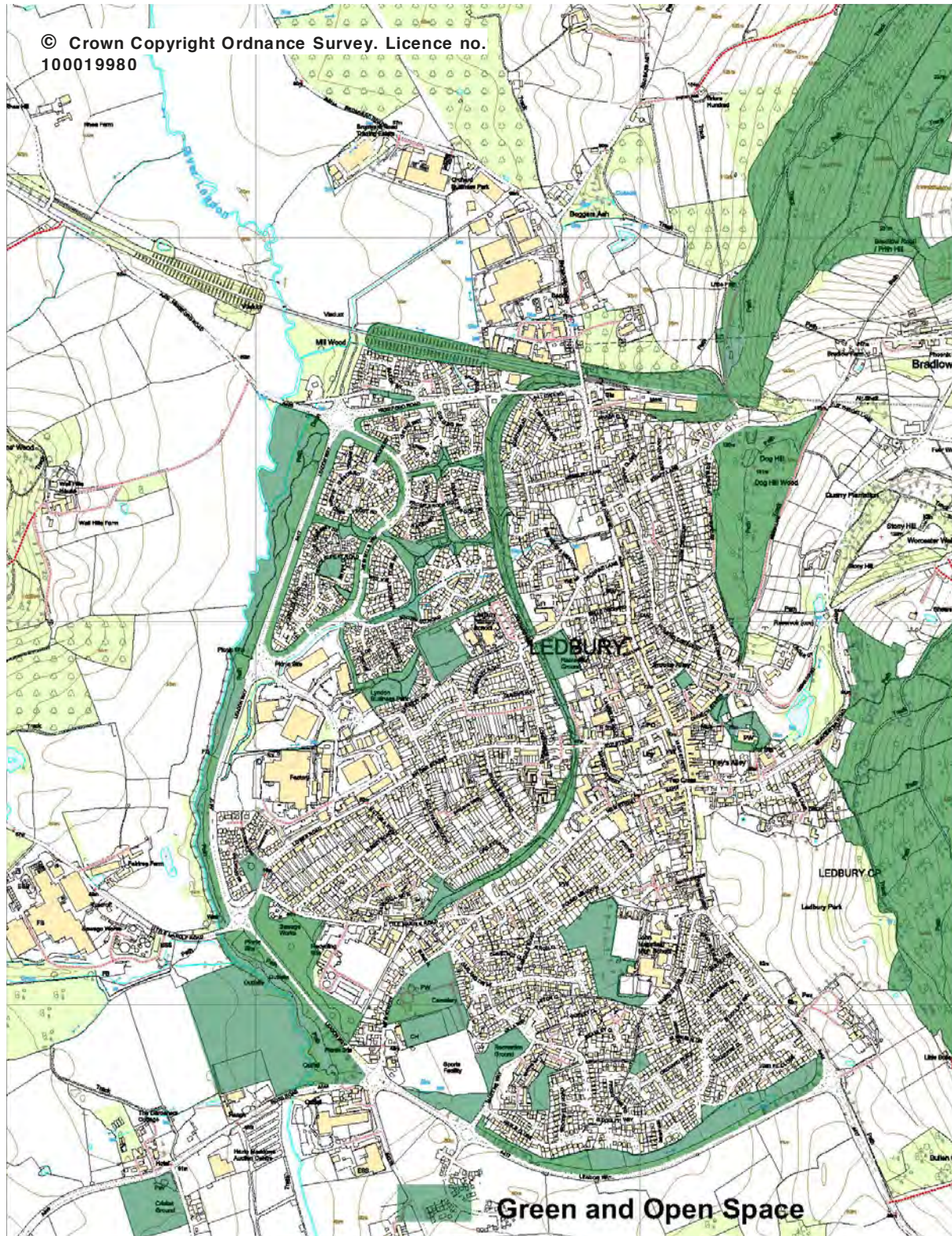


Figure 8: Green and open spaces to be protected.