



Ledbury

Neighbourhood Development Plan

Landscape and Visual Baseline Assessment

January 2022

Commissioned by Ledbury Town Council

by

Carly Tinkler BA CMLI FRSA MIALE and the community of Ledbury

*When human touch (as monkish books attest)
Nor was applied nor could be, Ledbury bells
Broke forth in concert flung adown the dells,
And upward, high as Malvern's cloudy crest;
Sweet tones, and caught by a noble lady blest
To rapture! Mabel listened at the side
Of her loved mistress; soon the music died,
And Catherine said, Here I set up my rest.*

Extract from the sonnet *St Catherine of Ledbury* by William Wordsworth (1770 - 1850). Composed whilst returning from a visit to friends at Brinsop, Herefordshire, inspired by Katherine de Audley.

Katherine (or Catherine) de Audley (1272 - 1326/7), was the widow of Sir Nicholas de Audley. She became the recluse of Ledbury, enclosed by the Bishop of Hereford as an anchoress in the church (then called St Peter's), and was widely regarded by the townsfolk as an unbeatified saint. Her faithful maidservant Mabel brought her food, herbs and milk from Hazle Farm, along a lane which came to be known as Mabel's Furlong; there was also a field south of it called Catherine's Acre.

Front cover image extract from *Ledbury Church and Village, Herefordshire*, a pen-and-ink sketch by John James Barralet (1747 - 1815)

Following image Ledbury church (St Michael and All Angels) 2021



Document Control

| Version | Date | Author | Comment |
|----------------------------|------------|--------|--|
| DRAFT v1 (1) | 15.01.2021 | CT | Issued to LTC NDP WP for review & comment |
| DRAFT v1 (2) | 16.02.2021 | CT | Updated & issued to LTC NDP WP for review & comment |
| DRAFT v1 (3) | 17.03.2021 | CT | Working draft issued to LTC NDP WP for information |
| DRAFT v1 (4) | 23.08.2021 | CT | Updated & issued to LTC NDP WP, LVBA topic authors and others for review & comment |
| DRAFT v1.5 | 11.10.2021 | CT | Updated & issued to LTC NDP WP and LVBA topic authors for review & comment |
| DRAFT v2 | 13.10.2021 | CT | Updated & issued to LTC NDP WP, draft v2 to be issued for informal consultation |
| Regulation 14 consultation | 31.01.2022 | CT | Updated & issued to LTC NDP WP for publication & Regulation 14 consultation |
| | | | |

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Acronyms

Below are acronyms commonly used in the report and schedules:

| | |
|--------|---|
| ALC | Agricultural Land Classification |
| AOD | Above Ordnance Datum |
| AONB | Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty |
| ASNW | Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland |
| ATI | Ancient Tree Inventory |
| BAP | Biodiversity Action Plan |
| BBBCC | Building Better Building Beautiful Commission |
| BRC | Biological Records Centre |
| CA | Conservation Area |
| CS | Core Strategy |
| CRoW | Countryside and Rights of Way |
| DMS | Definitive Map and Statement |
| DPH | Dwellings per hectare |
| EIA | Environmental Impact Assessment |
| ELC | European Landscape Convention |
| EPS | European Protected Species |
| GI | Green Infrastructure |
| GLVIA3 | Guidance for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 3 rd Edition |
| HC | Herefordshire Council |
| HE | Historic England |
| HER | Historic Environment Record |
| HLC | Historic Landscape Character / Characterisation |
| HWEHT | Herefordshire and Worcestershire Earth Heritage Trust |
| KFP | Key Focal Point |
| KVP | Key Viewpoint |
| KVR | Key View Route |
| LCA | Landscape Character Assessment |
| LCT | Landscape Character Type |
| LDU | Landscape Description Unit |
| LGS | Local Green Space |
| LGeoS | Local Geological Site |
| LNR | Local Nature Reserve |
| LNRS | Local Nature Recovery Strategy |
| LPA | Local Planning Authority |
| LSCA | Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment |
| LTC | Ledbury Town Council |
| LVA | Landscape and Visual Appraisal |
| LVBA | Landscape and Visual Baseline Assessment |

| | |
|-------|--|
| LVIA | Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment |
| LVSA | Landscape and Visual Sensitivity Assessment |
| LWS | Local Wildlife Site |
| NARA | Nature and Recreation Area |
| NCA | National Character Area |
| NDP | Neighbourhood Development Plan |
| NE | Natural England |
| NFI | National Forest Inventory |
| NGS | Neighbourhood Green Space |
| NPA | Neighbourhood Plan Area |
| NPPF | National Planning Policy Framework |
| NVC | National Vegetation Classification |
| OS | Ordnance Survey |
| PHI | Priority Habitat Inventory |
| POS | Public Open Space |
| PPG | Planning Policy Guidance |
| PRoW | Public Right of Way |
| QoL | Quality of Life |
| QoLC | Quality of Life Capital |
| RPG | Registered Park and Garden |
| SHLAA | Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment |
| SM | Scheduled Monument |
| SEO | Statement of Environmental Opportunity |
| SSSI | Site of Special Scientific Interest |
| TPO | Tree Preservation Order |
| UPG | Unregistered (Historic) Park and Garden |
| WFD | Water Framework Directive |
| VP | Viewpoint |
| ZTV | Zone of Theoretical Visibility |
| ZVI | Zone of Visual Influence |

Foreword to the Report

This report forms part of the evidence-base produced for Ledbury's revised Neighbourhood Development Plan. It is the result of over two years' work, involving an in-depth study of the parish's landscapes.

As far as I am aware, the study is unique. Usually, the technical assessments required to inform Neighbourhood Plans are undertaken by teams of experts, with much of the funding provided by central government, local authorities and other bodies; however, over time the availability of grants has dwindled, and today, many communities are unable to raise enough money to cover the costs. Given the importance of the NDP to Ledbury's future, the Town Council therefore decided to mobilise the local community instead, and called for volunteers to help collect, analyse and report the baseline information, under professional guidance. Several qualified landscape architects also offered their help *pro bono*.

It has been a truly collaborative and very successful exercise, generating a great deal of interest both within and outside the community. The studies were extremely comprehensive, with not a stone in the parish left unturned. Now, there is far greater understanding and appreciation of the features and qualities which contribute not only to Ledbury's distinctive character and unique sense of place, but also to the health and well-being of its communities. The process has engendered a strong desire to protect and enhance what is most valuable and special, so that as the town grows, the factors which make it such an attractive place to live are still there for everyone to enjoy.

Furthermore, all are keen to start work on the next stage of the process, which involves developing and realising the vision for Ledbury as it will be in the future. This will be carried out in the light of the government's apparent aim of improving the quality of people's lives through making the natural and built environments more beautiful. In July 2021, a revised version of the National Planning Policy Framework was published. The revisions in part responded to the recommendations set out in the Building Better Building Beautiful Commission January 2020 report *Living with Beauty*, which advocates asking for beauty, refusing ugliness, and promoting stewardship.

The report defines 'beauty' as *'the benchmark that all new developments should meet. It includes everything that promotes a healthy and happy life, everything that makes a collection of buildings into a place, everything that turns anywhere into somewhere, and nowhere into home. So understood beauty should be an essential condition for the grant of planning permission'*.

I am very grateful to everyone who generously provided their time, assistance, information and on-the-ground knowledge, all of which have been invaluable. Thanks also to Malvern photographer Jan Sedlacek of Digitlight for allowing us to use his stunning images in the report. The end result is a fascinating insight into life in Ledbury in the 2020s, which will no doubt be of great interest to future generations.

Any errors in the text are likely to be mine, so if spotted, please let me know. Feedback can be via the Parish Council / Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group representatives, or directly to the author of this report (carly@carlytinkler.com). Thank you.

Carly Tinkler BA CMLI FRSA MIALE January 2022

1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of Study

- 1.1.1 This report sets out the findings of an assessment commissioned by Ledbury Town Council (LTC), the purpose of which was to establish, analyse and report the existing landscape and visual baseline situation in and around Ledbury parish.
- 1.1.2 For a number of reasons, which are explained in Section 3, the project's aim and scope evolved over time due to unforeseen changes in circumstances.
- 1.1.3 In summary, LTC issued the brief for the commission in June 2019. At that time, the assessment's main purpose was to establish whether certain areas of land around Ledbury were sensitive to, or, had the capacity to accommodate, certain forms of development. The most appropriate form of assessment for this exercise is called a Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment (LSCA) (the meaning of this and other technical / planning terms are explained in the following sections).
- 1.1.4 The LSCA's findings would form an important part of the evidence-base and justification that was required in order for LTC to:
- i. determine the location of the town's future settlement boundary;
 - ii. allocate areas of land which could, in principle, be developed for specified uses (mainly residential, with some employment and sport / recreation), and / or which should be protected from certain types of development / forms of change;
 - iii. inform policies and proposals in the current review of Ledbury's Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP);
 - iv. inform decisions about and plans for the longer-term development of the town up to 2060, including LTC's input into the review of Herefordshire Council (HC)'s Core Strategy and any future revisions to the NDP;
 - v. inform and develop measures to address future planning / development-related matters; and
 - vi. develop and deliver recommendations for future parish-wide environmental and recreational strategies, projects and initiatives, including some which LTC and the community might undertake themselves, and especially those which would support sustainable development.
- 1.1.5 Work on the LSCA began in January 2020. By March of that year, the baseline studies were well underway, with some complete; however, because of the Covid-19 pandemic, the project was temporarily put on hold.
- 1.1.6 Subsequent to this, both the LSCA and the NDP were delayed by other factors. For example, at that time, LTC was busy preparing for a public inquiry, due to be held in the summer, that would determine whether a large site allocated for residential and employment use ('the viaduct site') would be granted planning permission - the outcome would affect the capacity studies (the appeal was allowed). Then, in August 2020, the Government announced and began consulting on its plans to radically reform the planning system. We now know that the proposals were unpopular and have effectively been scrapped; however, had they been implemented, the approach to not only the assessments, but also the entire NDP process, would have to be fundamentally re-thought. Also, by September 2020, it had become clear that due to the number of proposed residential developments having recently been granted planning permission, there should be no need to build more houses in Ledbury for many years to come.
- 1.1.7 Thus, in the light of the above, it was concluded that sensitivity / capacity assessments for residential development were not required at this time, but could be carried out in future if necessary if / when the NDP was next revised. However, it was still critical that the review of the

NDP should be completed as quickly as possible: in particular, decisions needed to be made about matters such as the line of the settlement boundary and the location of sites for future employment and sports use. Such decisions would still have to be fully-justified, of course, and informed by a robust evidence base. The scope of the commission was therefore adjusted accordingly.

- 1.1.8 Firstly, it was agreed that work on the baseline landscape and visual studies should start again straight away, as they would be needed to inform NDP decisions and revisions. It was also agreed that when complete, the findings would be published as a stand-alone report (to be called a Landscape and Visual Baseline Assessment (LVBA)), and would be subject to consultation.
- 1.1.9 Secondly, it was agreed that in certain areas specified by LTC, assessments should be carried out to determine their landscape and visual sensitivity to specific forms of change / development (the specified uses being a) employment, and b) sport and recreation). Levels of capacity would also be considered, but out of necessity the assessments would be high-level and not full LSCAs. Instead, they would be called Landscape and Visual Sensitivity Assessments (LVSAs).
- 1.1.10 The findings of the LVBA and the LVSAs would be used for a variety of purposes.
- 1.1.11 In the **short-term**, i.e. up to adoption of the current iteration of the NDP, they would inform and guide decisions about / proposals for:
- i. the line of the town's future settlement boundary;
 - ii. allocating land for specified amounts and types of use (employment and sports);
 - iii. Ledbury's future Green Infrastructure provision; and
 - iv. policies and proposals in the current NDP review.
- 1.1.12 They would also set out recommendations for:
- i. any future studies / assessments considered advisable / necessary and / or further information required, now or in the future;
 - ii. measures to address specific current and future planning- / development-related matters identified in the studies;
 - iii. planning- / development-related matters requiring further consideration / action, such as general and specific NDP policies, strategies, and guidance documents;
 - iv. non- planning- / development-related matters for further consideration / action, such as parish-wide environmental and recreational projects and initiatives; and
 - v. developing the long-term vision for Ledbury up to 2060.
- 1.1.13 In the **medium-term**, i.e. between this iteration of the NDP being adopted and the review of Herefordshire's Core Strategy (currently underway, but unlikely to be completed before 2023) - and of course subject to external factors - the following is envisaged:
- i. the LVBA would be updated to reflect changes to the baseline situation / circumstances as required;
 - ii. full LSCAs would be carried out for specified uses in specified locations as required;
 - iii. the LSCAs' findings would be used to make informed decisions about and draw up plans for LTC's input into the review of the Core Strategy and any imminent revisions to the NDP;
 - iv. measures to address current and future planning / development-related matters would be informed and developed;
 - v. Ledbury's Green Infrastructure would be planned and developed, and would start to be delivered;

- vi. parish-wide environmental and recreational strategies, projects and initiatives that LTC and the community might undertake, especially those which would support sustainable development, would be developed and delivered; and
- vii. the long-term vision for Ledbury would be further developed.

1.1.14 In the **longer-term**, the LVBA, LSCAs and other forms of assessment will help to determine the direction of travel for Ledbury's growth over the next forty years. i.e. up to 2060. It is likely that the same processes would have to be repeated several times, although of course, over time, the vision would be for Ledbury in 2100 and ideally - given the wider need for much longer-term thinking - well beyond.

1.2 Structure of Report

- 1.2.1 **Section 2** sets out the wider planning context within which the neighbourhood planning and landscape and visual assessment processes fit.
- 1.2.2 **Section 3** summarises the background to Ledbury's NDP, explains the purpose and role of the assessments, and describes the approach adopted and processes followed during the commission.
- 1.2.3 **Section 4** explains landscape and visual assessment methods and techniques generally, and the method that was developed specifically for Ledbury. This is followed by an explanation of Ledbury's LVBA process. The section concludes with a summary of the LVSA process.
- 1.2.4 **Section 5** describes the current landscape baseline situation within the study area.
- 1.2.5 **Section 6** describes the area's visual baseline.
- 1.2.6 **Section 7** sets out the assessment's conclusions and recommendations.
- 1.2.7 Appendices are as per the list on the contents page.
- 1.2.8 The figures which illustrate the landscape and visual baseline study findings for each of the environmental topics are in **Appendix A**.
- 1.2.9 Apart from **Appendix C**, which is a sequence of maps from 1831 to 2006 referred to in the Heritage topic section, **Appendices B - F** contain schedules with more detailed information about some of the topics covered, namely Physical Landscape, Heritage, Public and Social Amenity (footpaths), and Green Infrastructure.
- 1.2.10 **Appendix G** contains examples of the criteria which are used in making judgements in landscape and visual assessments.
- 1.2.11 **Appendix H** contains a presentation about creating a new safe route between Ledbury and Wellington Heath.
- 1.2.12 **Appendix I** is a definitive map modification order relating to certain footpaths in the parish.

1.3 Relevant Experience

- 1.3.1 This assessment was carried out and the report was produced by landscape practitioner Carly Tinkler, with help and input from the local community and professional volunteers.
- 1.3.2 Carly is a chartered member of the Landscape Institute (CMLI), a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts (FRSA), and a Member of the International Association for Landscape Ecology (MIALE). She specialises in landscape, environmental and colour assessment / planning, historic landscapes, masterplanning and design, and has done so for over 35 years. She is now a freelance consultant based in the Malvern Hills area, but has worked in both public and private sectors in the UK and overseas.
- 1.3.3 Today, much of Carly's work is within local communities, carrying out landscape and visual assessments for, and providing ongoing advice on, neighbourhood plans, helping people to develop

a more in-depth and informed understanding of landscape value. In 2020 she was invited to talk about 'valued landscapes' at the Planning Inspectorate's Annual Training Event.

- 1.3.4 She advises bodies responsible for National Parks and AONBs and authors guidance documents. She also acts for local planning authorities, for example she produced the method and criteria for, and led the team undertaking, landscape assessments of over 300 sites for Herefordshire Council's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA). She is regularly called as an expert witness for planning inquiries, giving evidence on behalf of appellants, defendants, and Rule 6 Parties.
- 1.3.5 She has been instrumental in the promotion of the 'landscape-led and iterative' approach to development which is now being adopted by local planning authorities and other bodies. She was a contributor to the Landscape Institute's *Guidance for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment* 1st edition, and a reviewer of the current 3rd edition ('GLVIA3'). She is a member of Landscape Institute and Natural England working groups tasked with updating current guidance, and recently, providing consultation responses to NPPF revisions, the Government's *25 Year Environment Plan*, and the Agriculture Bill. She is also a Design Council expert, and an author.

2 Planning Context

- 2.1 This section sets out the wider planning context which dictates both neighbourhood planning and landscape assessment processes.
- 2.2 In 2010, the government introduced the concept of neighbourhood planning. Following the 2011 Localism Act, neighbourhood planning policies were included in the first (July 2012) version of the NPPF¹.
- 2.3 The NPPF sets out the policies with which new development should comply. Broadly speaking, there are three key factors that must be taken into account in the decision-making process: social, economic and environmental. An appropriate - ideally equal - balance should be struck between them. The NPPF states that development should be on land *'of the right types'* and *'in the right places'*, and that *'Planning policies and decisions should... ensure that new development is appropriate for its location.'*
- 2.4 The apparent aim of recent and forthcoming planning reforms is to make our environments more 'beautiful'. This would be achieved in part by raising standards of quality in planning, submissions, design, construction and operation. The NPPF states that development should *'protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment'*, and places great emphasis on *'The creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places'* which is *'fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve'*.
- 2.5 Clearly, some areas are likely to be more appropriate for development than others, for example degraded, or previously-developed / 'brownfield' land². However, in many cases it seems that regardless of what the NPPF's requirements and aspirations are, environmental factors do not carry as much weight as they should in the planning balance; places and features of high value are being lost, sense of place and local distinctiveness are being eroded, ubiquitousness is prevalent, and high quality in any form is rarely achieved.
- 2.6 One of the reasons for this is probably the time and effort involved in establishing exactly what is there; whether it is valuable and if so, to whom and why; and whether it merits conservation, protection, restoration and / or enhancement.
- 2.7 Gaining an in-depth understanding of an area's character, and its importance / value, is a fundamental part of the process of judging the effects of change on the landscape and those who use it, and the implications. The health and well-being of both the environment and the communities it supports are of paramount importance, and landscape makes a significant contribution to this (the meaning of landscape as used in a planning context is explained in Section 4).
- 2.8 However, whilst information about nationally-important sites and features is readily available, it is more difficult and time-consuming to find information about sites and features of local and neighbourhood importance, especially if they are not designated.
- 2.9 In Ledbury's case, the eastern part of the parish lies within the Malvern Hills Area of Outstanding Beauty (AONB), and the rest of it lies within the AONB's setting. AONBs are agreed to be highly valuable (on a national and even international level) by common consensus, and are therefore afforded the highest level of protection in the NPPF (although even these designations do not preclude new development).

¹ The NPPF was first published in March 2012, and was revised in July 2018, February 2019 and July 2021. In this report, all NPPF policy references relate to the July 2021 version unless stated otherwise.

² The revised (21st July 2019) version of the Government's Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) on the Natural Environment provides more information on this subject - see paragraph 003 Reference ID: 8-003-20190721 <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/natural-environment>

- 2.10 Conversely, features and factors of high local and neighbourhood value may not be designated so are often overlooked. The onus of establishing features and factors of high value often falls on the local community, as it is rarely volunteered by the developer. Ironically, the community studies often identify previously unknown or undesignated assets which are later recognised as being of national significance.
- 2.11 One of the NPPF's original 'fundamental objectives' was *'to put unprecedented power in the hands of communities to shape the places in which they live'*.
- 2.12 According to the Government's website³, *'Neighbourhood planning gives communities direct power to develop a shared vision for their neighbourhood and shape the development and growth of their local area.*
- 'They are able to choose where they want new homes, shops and offices to be built, have their say on what those new buildings should look like and what infrastructure should be provided, and grant planning permission for the new buildings they want to see go ahead.*
- 'Neighbourhood planning provides a powerful set of tools for local people to ensure that they get the right types of development for their community where the ambition of the neighbourhood is aligned with the strategic needs and priorities of the wider local area.'*
- 2.13 In other words, local communities can help to protect, enhance, and shape the future of, their local environment by producing their own NDPs, with planning policies which are specific and relevant to the local area and its people. So long as the NDP policies do not conflict with national or local policies, the NDP will form part of and sit alongside the plans prepared by the local planning authority (LPA).
- 2.14 It is also important to note that neighbourhood planning is not just about trying to find the most appropriate places for new development (of any form) to take place: it is also an opportunity for the community to identify the *least* appropriate places, and formally protect areas / features which it considers to be of high local value.
- 2.15 NDPs can designate certain areas as Local Green Spaces⁴. The designation is *'a way to provide special protection against development for green areas of particular importance to local communities'*. The criteria for LGS designation include areas / features which are *'demonstrably special to a local community'*, of *'particular local significance'*, and *'local in character'*.
- 2.16 Producing an NDP can take several years. Both Ledbury and neighbouring Colwall parish began work on theirs in 2012. The process involves rounds of public and statutory consultation, and the draft plan may be revised many times before it is complete. The final version of the NDP goes before an examiner, who studies the document and decides whether it meets the 'basic conditions'. The proposed NDP policies must be fully justified, and based on clear evidence derived from a wide range of studies and technical assessments - hence the need for this one. Ledbury's NDP was 'made' in January 2019 (with caveats - see Section 3), and Colwall's not until June 2021.
- 2.17 Planning decisions in Herefordshire are made on the basis of five sets of policies and any guidelines linked to them. The documents that make up this framework are:
- i) the NPPF (which applies nationwide);
 - ii) Herefordshire Council (HC's) Local Plan. The Core Strategy (CS) is a key document in the Local Plan, which provides the strategic planning framework for the county's future development needs up to 2031. A range of policies sets out how these needs can be met, whilst achieving social and environmental objectives at the same time. The CS was adopted in October 2015 and runs until 2031, but the review process is currently underway.

³ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/neighbourhood-planning--2>

⁴ <https://neighbourhoodplanning.org/toolkits-and-guidance/making-local-green-space-designations-neighbourhood-plan/>

- iii) Neighbourhood Plans. These contain policies which are specific to a parish or town, and which are informed by in-depth, evidence-based studies of the Neighbourhood Plan Area. The policies therefore respond to and reflect the identified needs and aspirations of the community, although by law, the NDP has to conform to both the NPPF and the Core Strategy.

3 Background to Ledbury NDP & LVBA

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 The background to, and detailed information about, Ledbury's NDP is available on LTC's website⁵; this section summarises the background to the NDP, explains the role of the LVBA within the NDP process, and describes the approach adopted and processes followed during the commission.

3.2 Background to NDP: 2012 - 2019

3.2.1 Ledbury's neighbourhood area - i.e. the area that the NDP would cover - was designated in November 2012. An NDP steering group was set up, and work on the plan began right away.

3.2.2 According to the published NDP, the plan took *'thousands of hours by residents, volunteers, Ledbury Town Council (LTC) staff and Councillors, guided by paid consultants, to produce'*.

3.2.3 By July 2017, the Regulation 14 draft plan was ready for submission to HC. In April 2018, the Regulation 16 draft was produced, and consultation was carried out during April and May of that year. The NDP examination commenced in June, and the examiner's report was published in October 2018.

3.2.4 The examiner set out recommendations for a number of modifications to be made to the plan, including the deletion of Policy BE1.2 and associated Map 15. Policy BE1.2 related to the town's settlement boundary, which was drawn on Map 15. The NDP policy said, *'Development within the settlement boundary will be supported. Residential development outside the settlement boundary, other than that identified as appropriate within HCS Policy RA3, will not be supported'*.

3.2.5 The basis for the recommendation was that *'neither Policy BE1.2 nor its supporting text provide any information in respect of how the proposed settlement boundary was considered through the plan-making process. Further information provided by the Qualifying Body in this regard appears limited in its scope.'* In other words, the examiner concluded that not enough evidence had been provided to objectively determine the line of the settlement boundary; furthermore, the line had not been endorsed by a majority of respondents.

3.2.6 LTC decided to accept the examiner's report and make the recommended modifications - many of which were minor adjustments to the text - in order for an amended NDP to proceed without further delay to referendum and hopefully, adoption.

3.2.7 However, without a policy-protected settlement boundary in place, the town and its outskirts would be highly vulnerable to the pressures of new development. In planning terms there is a presumption in favour of built development within the settlement boundary whereas, beyond the boundary in open countryside, development is much more tightly controlled. The purpose of the settlement boundary is to act as a distinct, robust and defensible line between these areas, determining where certain types of development may be acceptable or, where protection of land is required, for a wide variety of reasons (explained further in Section 7.2). It was therefore agreed that this matter would be dealt with during the future NDP review.

3.2.8 In December 2018, a referendum for voters within the Ledbury neighbourhood area was held. 90.6% of those who responded to the question *'Do you want Herefordshire Council to use the neighbourhood plan for Ledbury to help it decide planning applications in the neighbourhood area?'* answered 'yes'.

3.2.9 The NDP was made on 11th January 2019. Soon afterwards, LTC's NDP Working Party began the process of building up the evidence-base for a new settlement boundary and other policies. It was

⁵ http://www.ledburytowncouncil.gov.uk/Neighbourhood_Development_Plan.aspx

clear that technical studies would be needed, especially to help identify and evaluate potential settlement boundary lines and land use allocations, and justify the preferred options.

- 3.2.10 LTC had been advised that the best form of study for the exercise was LSCA, and so they decided to find out more about what that entailed.

3.3 LSCA: 2019 - March 2020

- 3.3.1 In February 2019, LTC asked landscape architect Carly Tinkler and a local planning consultant to attend an NDP Working Party meeting to discuss the settlement boundary / allocations study, LSCAs specifically, and the NDP review generally. In June 2019, LTC prepared a brief for the commission and invited landscape practitioners including Carly to submit fee proposals for carrying out an LSCA.
- 3.3.2 More information about LSCA and other forms of landscape assessment is provided in Section 4, but in a nutshell, LSCA was developed in response to the growing need for people, communities, planning authorities and government organisations to make informed decisions about the future allocation of land for development of various types. It is a systematic, evidence-based process, providing an objective, impartial and transparent system for assessing the sensitivity of the landscape and its capacity to accommodate change of a certain type (for example, industry, housing, forestry, renewable energy), whilst also retaining the aspects of the environment which - for a variety of reasons - are valued.
- 3.3.3 In Ledbury's case, it was agreed that one of the LSCA's primary purposes would be to establish levels of capacity for residential development on land around the periphery of the town (in fact, subsequently, the scope of the assessment was changed, and residential capacity was not considered - see below). At that time, the Core Strategy's target was for Ledbury to accommodate an additional 825 no. houses within the plan period (up to 2031); however, that figure included the 625 no. dwellings proposed on the viaduct site, which had previously been allocated for both residential and development and employment use.
- 3.3.4 In addition, the LSCA would consider the capacity of a previously-identified area of land west of the town - approximately 12ha - to accommodate certain employment uses, and the capacity of areas of land west and south west of the town for sporting / recreational use.
- 3.3.5 The findings would help the community to make informed decisions about whether or not houses might be acceptable / appropriate in certain locations, given the likely implications. They would also inform and guide decisions about the location of the settlement boundary, LGSs, GI, and key viewpoints. In addition, they would form part of the evidence-base required for, and would inform, a variety of NDP policies, and would be used to help develop detailed landscape strategies and guidance documents, future environmental and recreational projects / initiatives / enhancements / design codes for the local area, the settlement, and individual parcels of land - these could also be the subject of NDP policies. It was agreed that the vision should be developed for both the immediate and the long-term future, up to the year 2060.
- 3.3.6 In addition, the findings would be factored in to a review of Ledbury's Design Guide, and into the more comprehensive design guidance that it was proposed would be included in the NDP when reviewed again in future.
- 3.3.7 LSCAs usually involve many months' work for a dedicated team of professionals, and so they are costly: unfortunately, the quotes LTC received were well beyond the available budget. One of the most time-consuming parts of LSCA is carrying out and writing up the findings of the baseline landscape and visual studies; Carly therefore suggested that local people might volunteer to undertake the bulk of the baseline studies themselves, under her guidance. She would then do the required analysis, carry out the technical assessment, and write up the report.

- 3.3.8 She said that this had worked well on past projects, especially because local people often know more about their own back-yards than others, and are a mine of information. Importantly, local involvement in the studies helps engender a sense of community ownership / responsibility / pride in the outcome, as well as a deeper understanding of and respect for landscape and its value.
- 3.3.9 LTC agreed with the suggestion, and work started in January 2020. Volunteers were recruited. Groups were set up with members who would be responsible for each LSCA topic (physical landscape, character, heritage, biodiversity, public and social amenity, views and visual amenity and so on). The LSCA purpose and process was explained to them; examples and templates were sent out; maps were provided. The instructions were straightforward: go out and record 'what's there'.
- 3.3.10 The volunteers not only rose to the challenge, but also their submissions were of a very high quality. Furthermore, not only had they comprehensively recorded 'what is there', they had also started considering the next stage of the LSCA process, i.e. determining 'how important is what is there, to whom, and why' - in this case with the focus being on factors and features of high neighbourhood landscape and visual value.
- 3.3.11 As mentioned above, one of the LSCA's original objectives was to establish levels of capacity for future residential development, along with some employment and / or recreational use west of the town. However, it soon became clear that what was really needed was a cohesive plan for the vision of Ledbury as it could be in 2060, which would factor in predictions about how people might be living / working / travelling then, and accommodate the various requirements associated with the increase in population, and climate change.
- 3.3.12 New infrastructure, education, health, employment, access, sustainable transport and food production, GI / natural capital / ecosystem services and so on would need to be considered. The Ledbury community was clearly not against the principle of new development and growth - on the contrary, there appeared to be an appetite for it, so long as it conformed to certain aspirations, for example benefiting nature and recreation, providing meaningful employment opportunities and community facilities, creating beautiful and high-quality places, and protecting the character of the town and the countryside.
- 3.3.13 The vision was that future development would be situated within pre-determined zones which had been assessed to have the capacity to accommodate it. New developments would be integrated into a landscape within which a robust and healthy GI framework / network had already been established, providing sustainable transport routes and options, varied wildlife habitats, recreational facilities, allotments, orchards and community spaces. The framework would include a strong future settlement boundary beyond the areas considered suitable for future development, which would be based on natural features (existing and newly-created). Ideally, the process would involve early discussions between and collaboration with LTC, developers and landowners as well as other stakeholders.
- 3.3.14 However, it was also agreed that whilst the Ledbury 2060 vision was important, and should be kept in mind throughout, it could not be progressed at this time: the immediate priority was to complete the LSCA, and revise the NDP to include the evidence-based settlement boundary and other policies. It was hoped that the NDP would be made early in 2021, and that the LSCA would inform HC's forthcoming Core Strategy review. However, it was also agreed that this would be the first stage of a two-stage process: the second stage would commence once the NDP had been made.
- 3.3.15 The aim was to complete the LSCA and produce settlement boundary and land allocation options for informal consultation by midsummer 2020. The NDP would then be revised, and Regulation 14 consultation would begin in early autumn.
- 3.3.16 By early March 2020, about half of the baseline work had been carried out, the rest was ongoing. LTC decided to organise a day-long workshop for the LSCA topic group members, the aim being to bring the teams together, discuss what had been done so far, and plan the next steps. The information gathered would be pooled, shared, and cross-referenced with other topics. Any

information gaps or help needed would be noted. The attendees would be asked to start making objective value judgements about the features and factors they had identified. This was also an ideal time to exchange preliminary thoughts about the Ledbury 2060 vision, and consider incorporating aspects of the vision into the LSCA if relevant.

- 3.3.17 In addition, the workshop was an opportunity to meet and talk to the landscape architects and other professionals who had offered their time free of charge, to help digitise the information, analyse it and establish levels of sensitivity and capacity. Interestingly, the fact that the community was carrying out the technical studies themselves had generated interest from other professionals, including representatives from government organisations and the Landscape Institute. Several asked if they could attend.
- 3.3.18 The workshop was due to be held on Wednesday 18th March, with over 50 participants expected. However, by Friday 13th it had become clear that due to the rapidly-evolving Covid-19 pandemic, social-distancing measures were likely to be required, so numbers were cut to the bare minimum.
- 3.3.19 On Monday 16th March, the government announced that all unnecessary social contact should be avoided. At that point, LTC decided to postpone the workshop, pause the NDP and LSCA work, and regroup in due course.

3.4 Landscape & Visual Baseline Assessment: Mar 2020 - Jan 2022

- 3.4.1 With hindsight, it appears that the enforced pause in work due to the pandemic may have had certain benefits for the NDP / LVBA process, as during the hiatus there were a number of material changes to both the baseline situation and the planning system that had to be factored in.
- 3.4.2 The programme for revising and making the NDP was ambitious, and in mid-March 2020, there was still much to be done. However, although no-one knew how long social-distancing measures would remain in place, it was clear they would make both technical assessments and public consultation exercises difficult if not impossible. They would probably also delay the Core Strategy review programme and other planning procedures. This meant there would be more time available for finalising the LSCA and the NDP revisions.
- 3.4.3 In addition, LTC was preparing for a public inquiry that was due to be held in mid-July. This would require significant input from some of the NDP working party and LSCA topic group members, who would have struggled to cope with both at the same time.
- 3.4.4 Furthermore, the inquiry was considering whether approval for a proposed large-scale development (up to 625 new homes plus employment use) should be granted on a previously-allocated site at the northern edge of the town (the viaduct site). If approved, the LSCA and NDP would need to factor it in, but the decision was unlikely to be published until several months after the inquiry closed (in fact, the appeal was allowed in March 2021). There was another site, south of Leadon Way, on which planning permission for residential development was being sought by Bovis Homes, and which, if approved, would also affect the approach to and findings of the LSCA, and some of the NDP strategies and policies (permission was granted in August 2020). Other planning applications have been, and inevitably will continue to be made - some are listed at the end of Section 5.7.
- 3.4.5 Also, in July 2021, a revised version of the NPPF was published. The revisions in part responded to the recommendations set out in the Building Better Building Beautiful Commission (BBBBC)'s January 2020 report *Living with Beauty*⁶, which advocates asking for beauty, refusing ugliness, and

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https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/861832/Living_with_beauty_BBBBC_report.pdf

promoting stewardship. The National Model Design Code⁷ was published at the same time as the revised NPPF, the aim purportedly being to help local authorities approve high-quality designs.

- 3.4.6 Finally, in August 2020, the Government announced its intention to reform ('overhaul') the planning system, saying in its planning white paper that its proposed vision *'is easier for the public to access, transforms the way communities are shaped and builds the homes this country needs'*. The draft was subject to consultation which closed in October 2020 (although it is understood that responses are still being considered), and the original aim was for the Planning Bill to go before parliament in the autumn of 2021. However, from the start, the plans caused great controversy, with fierce criticism from many quarters. In early October 2021, the Government decided to 'pause' the plans, and said it may possibly have a 'complete rethink'.
- 3.4.7 The outcome of this will inevitably affect how Ledbury approaches planning for its future in the shorter-term, influencing what factors should be considered / measures put in place, and when. For example, it appears likely that there will be greater focus on urban / brownfield land development, which would greatly alleviate the pressure on greenfield sites. According to a report carried out by CPRE in October 2020⁸, *'There is currently land provision for over 1.5 million homes using brownfield land and other land with planning permission, providing enough land to meet the government's 300,000 homes a year target for the rest of this parliament'*. The BBBBC's *Living with Beauty* report concludes that *'greenfield sites should be considered only when all brownfield alternatives have been exhausted'*. In October 2021, the new housing and communities secretary Michael Gove said that 'urban regeneration' and building homes on 'neglected brownfield sites' will be 'a priority for the government's levelling-up agenda'. Some MPs and organisations are even calling for the reversal of some permissions which have already been granted for developments on greenfield sites.
- 3.4.8 During August and September 2020, representatives from HC, LTC / the NDP working party, and their consultants, met for the first time since March 2020, to discuss the proposed planning reforms and other NDP matters. Significantly, by September, it had become clear that due to the number of proposed dwellings having recently been granted planning permission, there was no longer a need to consider the capacity of land for residential development during the current review of the NDP - such assessments could be carried out in future if necessary if / when the NDP was next revised. However, it was still critical that the review of the NDP should be completed as quickly as possible: in particular, decisions needed to be made about matters such as the line of the settlement boundary and the location of sites for future employment and sports use. Such decisions would still have to be fully-justified, of course, and informed by a robust evidence base. The scope of the commission was therefore adjusted accordingly.
- 3.4.9 Firstly, it was agreed that work on the baseline landscape and visual studies should start again straight away, as they would be needed to inform decisions and revisions. It was also agreed that when complete, the findings would be published as a stand-alone report (the LVBA), and would be subject to consultation.
- 3.4.10 Secondly, it was agreed that at certain locations specified by LTC, assessments should be carried out to determine the landscape and visual sensitivity of these areas to specific forms of change / development (the specified uses being a) employment, and b) sport and recreation). Levels of capacity would also be considered, but out of necessity the assessments would be high-level and not full LSCAs. Instead, they would be LVSA's.
- 3.4.11 The findings of the LVBA and the LVSA's would be used for a variety of purposes. These are set out in full in Section 1, but in summary, in the short-term (i.e. up to adoption of the current iteration of the NDP), they would inform and guide decisions about / proposals for i) the settlement boundary; ii) allocating land for specified amounts and types of use (employment and sports only); Green Infrastructure (GI); and NDP policies and proposals.

⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-model-design-code>

⁸ <https://www.cpre.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Recycling-our-land-the-state-of-brownfield-report-Oct-2020.pdf>

- 3.4.12 They would also set out recommendations for a variety of matters identified during the assessments, such as additional studies; strategies, guidance, environmental and recreational projects and initiatives; and developing the long-term vision for Ledbury.
- 3.4.13 In the medium-term future (i.e. between this iteration of the NDP being adopted and the review of the Core Strategy), and subject to external factors, the LVBA would be updated to reflect changes to the baseline situation / circumstances, and full LSCAs would be carried out for specified uses in specified locations if / when required. The findings would be used to make informed decisions about and draw up plans for LTC's input into the review of the Core Strategy and any imminent revisions to the NDP. Previously-made recommendations - for example for Ledbury's GI - would be considered, prioritised, developed and delivered, and new ones put forwards. The long-term vision for Ledbury in 2060 would be further developed.
- 3.4.14 In the longer-term, the LVBA, LSCAs and other forms of assessment would help to determine the direction of travel for Ledbury's growth to 2060 and beyond.
- 3.4.15 Following the September meeting, the NDP programme was updated to take the above into account, and a target date of June 2021 for reaching the Regulation 16 stage was set. This was based on the assumption that Covid-19 restrictions would soon be lifted and public consultation could safely be carried out; however, unfortunately that turned out not to be the case, and further delays ensued.
- 3.4.16 In fact, most of the wider and a few of the LSCA Area baseline studies (see Section 4) had already been carried out and written up by then, but the LSCA topic group members were asked to update and revise their sections to take into account the various changes which had occurred in and around the town in the previous few months, including approvals for residential and employment development on the viaduct site and residential development south of Leadon Way.
- 3.4.17 At the same time, work began on the LVSA. The baseline study findings were analysed. Sketch plans showing i) options for the line of the settlement boundary and ii) mixed-use development (mainly sport and employment) and strategic GI / structural landscaping west of the town were drawn up, with associated schedules. The information was shared with the NDP groups, HC and other parties who were working on the NDP revisions.
- 3.4.18 First drafts of the LVBA report were issued for informal comments in January and February 2021, then the LVBA was paused while work continued on developing the NDP and its policies and public consultation was carried out. In June 2021 the baseline situation was reviewed again, and the report was updated to take into account the various changes and consultation comments.
- 3.4.19 In August 2021, a new brief for the LVSA was drawn up, requiring an assessment of the sensitivity of other sites on the town's periphery to specified forms of change. The assessment's findings are not included in the LVBA report, and are available separately.
- 3.4.20 After several iterations and rounds of informal consultation including with HC and other stakeholders, the LVBA was completed and signed-off by LTC in mid-January 2022, the aim being to publish the document for Regulation 14 consultation as soon as possible.

4 Method, Process and Approach

4.1 Introduction

- 4.1.1 The background to and reasons for the need for this assessment are set out in the previous sections. In summary, its purpose was to establish and report Ledbury's current landscape and visual baseline situation.
- 4.1.2 This section begins with an overview of landscape and visual assessment methods and techniques generally, and the method that was developed specifically for Ledbury. This is followed by an explanation of Ledbury's landscape and visual baseline assessment process.

4.2 Landscape & Visual Assessment: Methods

Overview

- 4.2.1 As explained in Section 3, due to uncertainties about the government's proposed reforms to the current planning system, it is not clear whether the originally-proposed LSCA will be the most appropriate form of study for future planning exercises; however, the aim of any future assessment will be to provide the evidence-base that informs judgements about a) which areas are most appropriate for specific uses, and b) if a new planning system comes into force, which areas should be covered by the proposed 'growth', 'renewal' and 'protected' category designations (assuming these are still being promoted by the government).
- 4.2.2 Clearly, any new development will result in certain changes to the existing baseline landscape and visual situation, which are likely to subsequently affect landscape character and views in some way.
- 4.2.3 In order to make decisions about whether the changes are 'acceptable' or not, particularly in terms of policy and guidance, firstly it is necessary to establish exactly what and who could be affected by these changes, and what the implications of the changes would be, taking into account a wide range of factors.
- 4.2.4 At the outset, questions have to be asked such as:
- What is there?
 - Who sees it?
 - How important is what is there, to whom, and why?
 - What is the nature of the proposed change?
 - Is what is there (and / or the people who see / experience it), tolerant of, or sensitive to, this type of change?
 - How and to what degree would the changes affect what is there and those who see / experience it?
 - Does the area have 'room', or 'capacity', for these types of changes?
 - Is the change / level of harm acceptable or not, especially in relation to compliance with current planning policy, guidance and strategy?
- 4.2.5 Technical studies are usually required to help answer these questions (the order in which they are posed is deliberate, as effects assessments are undertaken in the same order). The process is complex, but it is important to understand it in order to interpret the findings and draw conclusions. The assessments' findings may be used by planning authorities and others to inform decisions about whether the change would comply with planning policy and guidance requirements, or whether it is inappropriate and / or would result in unacceptable consequences, which are often expressed as 'harm', or negative / adverse effects.

4.2.6 Often, a variety of published methods and techniques for carrying out the different types of assessments required are used and combined in order to provide the fine-grained, evidence-based and objective results which are necessary in situations such as this. Other matters such as physical constraints to development are factored in.

4.2.7 The three main forms of assessment used are Landscape Character Assessment (LCA), LSCA, and Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA)⁹. The footnote¹⁰ lists the relevant guidance and other documents used for the studies.

LCA

4.2.8 LCA answers the question 'what is there?'. It is really a stand-alone process / study, and may, for example, be adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG), simply describing the baseline landscape situation without necessarily making any 'value-judgements' (although it should identify features and qualities which are especially characteristic and / or rare, along with other factors that contribute to judgements about landscape value); whatever its purpose, the information recorded in the LCA is used to inform sensitivity / capacity / effects assessments, so it is always carried out first.

4.2.9 In *An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment* (October 2014), Natural England (NE) defines LCA as '*... the process of identifying and describing variation in the character of the landscape. It seeks to identify and explain the unique combination of elements and features (characteristics) that make landscapes distinctive... By setting down a robust, auditable and transparent, baseline, Landscape Character Assessment can not only help us to understand our landscapes, it can also assist in informing judgements and decisions concerning the management of change*'.

4.2.10 It is also important to understand what exactly is meant by 'landscape' in the above context. The definition given in the 2002 version of the LCA guidance (para. 1.11) is as follows:

'Landscape is about the relationship between people and place. It provides the setting for our day-to-day lives. The term does not mean just special or designated landscapes and it does not only apply to the countryside. Landscape can mean a small patch of urban wasteland as much as a mountain range, and an urban park as much as an expanse of lowland plain. It results from the way that different components of our environment - both natural (the influences of geology, soils, climate, flora and fauna) and cultural (the historical and current impact of land use, settlement, enclosure and other human interventions) - interact together and are perceived by us (Figure 1.1). People's perceptions turn land into the concept of landscape.

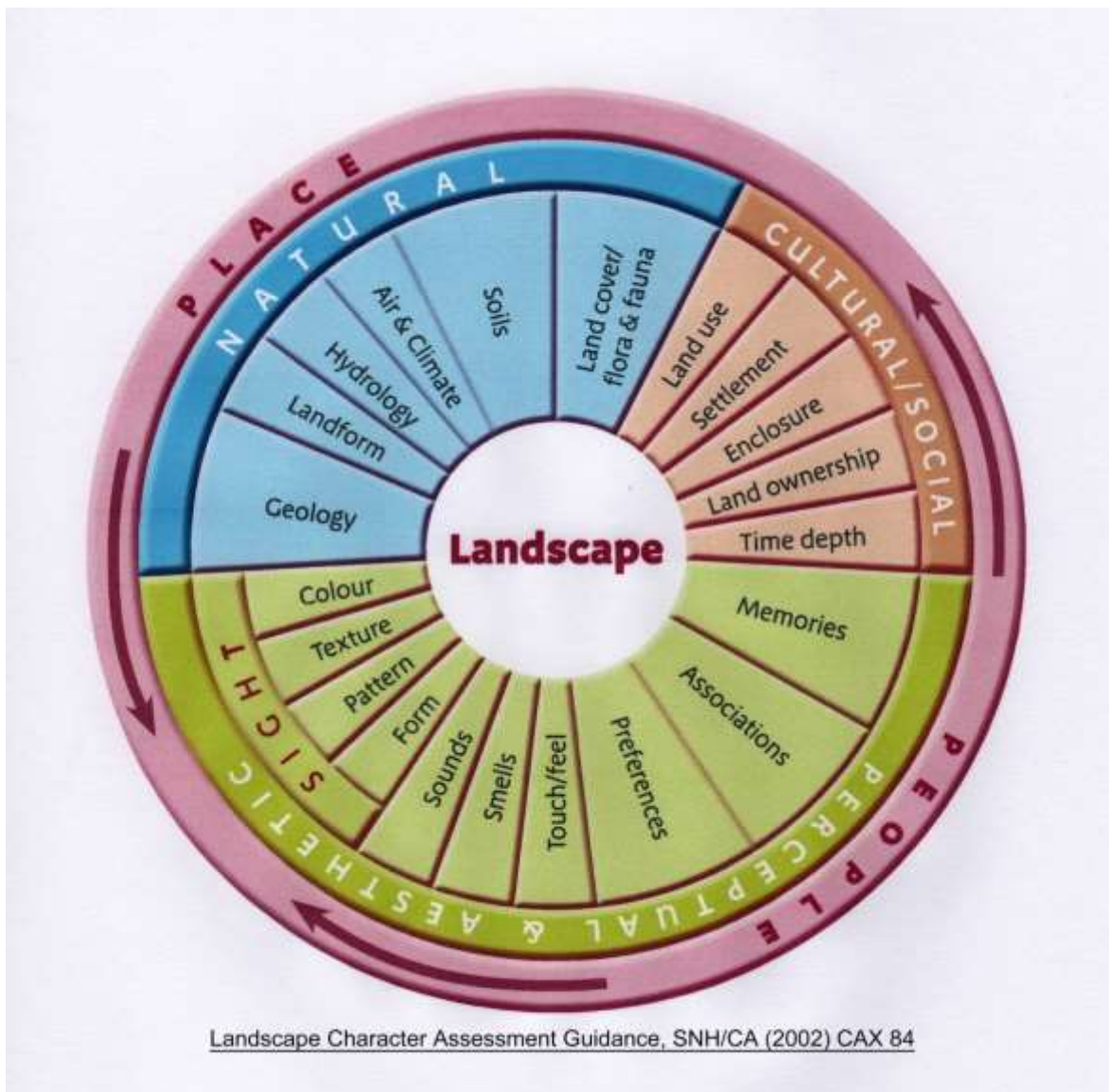
'This is not just about visual perception, or how we see the land, but also how we hear, smell and feel our surroundings, and the feelings, memories or associations that they evoke. Landscape character, which is the pattern that arises from particular combinations of the different components, can provide a sense of place to our surroundings'.

4.2.11 The 2014 version of the 'Figure 1.1' referred to in the guidance is shown overleaf; it illustrates all the different factors / qualities that LCA and other forms of landscape and visual assessment must consider.

⁹ The term 'LVIA' is often used to describe all forms of landscape / visual effects assessment; however, it is important to note that a 'full and formal' LVIA is only carried out when the proposed development is required to be the subject of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), which must be carried out in accordance with the EIA Regulations. For developments which are not subject to the Regulations, GLVIA3 recommends that an 'informal' Landscape and Visual Appraisal' (LVA) of effects is carried out, following GLVIA3 but without the EIA Regulation requirements being factored in. For the purposes of this report, the term LVIA has been used throughout, but LVA could also be appropriate.

¹⁰ For further information on the various methods, techniques, processes and advice, see *An approach to landscape sensitivity assessment – to inform spatial planning and land management* (June 2019) Natural England; *An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment* (October 2014) Natural England; *Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland* The Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage (2002); *Topic Paper 5: Understanding Historic Landscape Character*; *Topic Paper 6: Techniques and criteria for judging sensitivity and capacity* (ditto); and *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 3rd Edition* (2013) Landscape Institute / Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (usually referred to as 'GLVIA3').

LCA Guidance 2014 Figure 1: What is Landscape?



- 4.2.12 The three separate but interrelated aspects of landscape character, which are also called 'resources', are natural, cultural and visual. The visual resource includes views and the general visual amenity experienced by people, but LCA also considers how the landscape is experienced in terms of sound, smell, touch, taste and memory.
- 4.2.13 In Ledbury's case, because of the area's high levels of scenic beauty, it was agreed that the baseline studies would place more focus on specific views and viewpoints than is normally the case in LCA, answering the second question 'who sees what is there?'. Thus, the study would be called a 'Landscape and Visual Baseline Assessment'.

LSCA and LVIA

- 4.2.14 As mentioned above, the original plan for Ledbury was to carry out an LSCA, but it is not certain if this will be the most appropriate form of study for future planning exercises. The LSCA process is summarised below as it is likely that there will be similarities.
- 4.2.15 LSCA has been developed in response to the growing need for people, communities and planning authorities to make informed decisions about the allocation of land for development of various types. It also responds to an increasing public interest in, and awareness of, what the term 'landscape' really means, as shown on *Figure 1: What is Landscape?* above. There is also a desire to

understand for oneself how development can change the landscape, and what the effects and subsequent implications of this might be, both on the landscape itself and those who experience / use / benefit from it (for example, many people visit AONBs to enjoy the outstanding natural beauty, and this can bring economic benefits to local communities).

- 4.2.16 LSCA is a systematic, evidence-based process, providing an objective, impartial and transparent system for assessing the sensitivity of the landscape (sensitivity is explained in the following section) and its capacity to accommodate change of a certain type, whilst also retaining the aspects of the environment which - for a variety of reasons - are valued.
- 4.2.17 Such change is usually some form of social and / or economic expansion, for example new housing developments, although the method can be applied to other forms of development and changes in land use such as intensive agriculture, energy production and commercial forestry. The LSCA should always specify the type of change which is being assessed, and what if any assumptions have been made, for example if housing, would it be predominantly two-storey, or would there be tower blocks? The visual effects of the latter could be greater.
- 4.2.18 '*Topic Paper 6*' (2002) sets out techniques and criteria that LSCA practitioners can use, and still broadly underpins the adopted approach; however, the document was only ever intended to be for discussion purposes (entitled '*An exploration of current thinking about landscape sensitivity and landscape capacity, to stimulate debate and encourage the development of common approaches*'), and as yet no guidance has been published¹¹. In fact, over time, more bespoke methods have evolved. These can be tailored to suit specific commissions such as this, where the findings are used to inform NDPs, and future planning and design decisions.
- 4.2.19 LSCA considers the likelihood of certain types of development giving rise to certain effects (adverse or beneficial) on landscape character and visual amenity. This is factored in to conclusions about levels of capacity; the effects assessment process follows the principles of LVIA, the guidance for which is set out in GLVIA3.
- 4.2.20 However, LVIA is used mainly for assessing the effects of site-specific schemes, where the type, scale and form of the proposed development is known. LSCA tends to be carried out at an early stage in the planning process, as the findings are used to inform judgements about the suitability or otherwise of land for certain generalised forms of development such as housing, industry, energy production etc. The potential for likely effects is factored in, but only at a high-level.
- 4.2.21 The Government's Natural Environment Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) (revised in July 2019) notes that '*To help assess the type and scale of development that might be able to be accommodated without compromising landscape character, a Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment can be completed. To demonstrate the likely effects of a proposed development on the landscape, a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment can be used*'.
- 4.2.22 In Ledbury's case, a combined LSCA / LVIA would consider effects arising from specific forms of development with known criteria and parameters such as form and height; the generic types and levels of landscape and visual effects arising from such development would therefore be relatively straightforward to predict.
- 4.2.23 The full methods and techniques used for LSCA and LVIA are not set out in full here (for further information, see previous footnotes), but it is helpful to understand the process, the role of the baseline studies within it, and how judgements about landscape and visual sensitivity and capacity are made. In summary, the baseline studies answer the first two questions set out at the start of this section (what is there? and who sees it?), LSCA / LVIA provide answers to the rest.

¹¹ In June 2019, Natural England published *An approach to landscape sensitivity assessment – to inform spatial planning and land management* (this did not deal with capacity, but the Landscape Institute is considering publishing its own LSCA guidance in future): see https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/817928/landscape-sensitivity-assessment-2019.pdf

Landscape and Visual Sensitivity

- 4.2.24 The fifth question on the list relates to landscape and visual sensitivity, and the answer is informed by answers to the third, fourth and fifth questions, which relate to value, the nature of change, and susceptibility to the change. These are explained below, but it is important to understand the concept of sensitivity as used in this context.
- 4.2.25 A landscape's sensitivity is not a baseline quality or attribute: it is the outcome of the process of identifying and analysing the landscape's natural, cultural and aesthetic factors and features (i.e. the baseline situation) which may be sensitive to certain types of change.
- 4.2.26 Natural England (NE)'s June 2019 publication *An approach to landscape sensitivity assessment* explains the term 'sensitivity' as follows:
- Landscape sensitivity may be regarded as a measure of the resilience, or robustness, of a landscape to withstand specified change arising from development types or land management practices, without undue negative effects on the landscape and visual baseline and their value – such as changes to valued attributes of baseline landscape character and the visual resource. Landscape sensitivity assessment is a process that assesses the resilience / robustness of landscape character and the visual resource – and what we value - to a defined change, or changes. It can help decision makers to understand likely changes and the nature of change should particular courses of action - the development / land management scenarios – be taken forward.*
- 4.2.27 LCA Guidance also emphasises that 'A landscape is sensitive if it is likely to be adversely affected by the type of change proposed'. Small changes in a landscape of high sensitivity could be very damaging, whereas those changes in a landscape of low sensitivity could potentially be more acceptable.
- 4.2.28 A landscape's visual sensitivity is determined by assessing the visual resource that the landscape provides (in terms of visual quality, availability of views and so on), and ascribing levels of visual value and susceptibility to change.
- 4.2.29 The sensitivity of the various visual receptors (i.e. people who would see changes in the landscape) is also assessed. The criteria¹² for Very High sensitivity visual receptors include people visiting internationally-important or nationally-designated landscapes such as AONBs specifically to appreciate their natural beauty, special qualities and other attributes; also people visiting nationally-important heritage assets such as scheduled monuments and grade I and II* listed buildings, and places with nationally-important cultural associations; and people who live in / enjoy areas where the landscape setting makes a highly important contribution to visual and social amenity.
- 4.2.30 As mentioned above, it is also important to consider how people would experience sensory / experiential changes in the landscape too, for example smells and sounds.

Landscape and Visual Value

- 4.2.31 The third question is 'how important, or valuable, is what is there, to whom, and why?'. Answering this question is the next step in the assessment process, as it helps to inform judgements about sensitivity. Levels of value are attributed to the various landscape elements, features and qualities, and views of them, which have been identified in the baseline studies.

¹² Judgements about levels of landscape / visual value, susceptibility to change and magnitude of effect are made with reference to previously-set criteria. Not all the criteria have to be met in order for an area to be categorised at a certain level: they simply indicate the factors which need to be taken into consideration, and professional judgement must be applied when deciding which ones are most relevant. The levels are graded on a five-point scale from Very High to Very Low with the possibility of 'split' categories in between, which means that small variations in quality, value, susceptibility and magnitude of effect are taken into account and a clear hierarchy can be established.

- 4.2.32 Understanding landscape (and associated visual) value (and values) is essential, especially as it plays a major role in many of the UK's environmental, landscape and social planning policies, as referenced in the NPPF (e.g. para. 174 a)'s 'valued landscapes'), the Natural Environment PPG (revised July 2019), and BBBBC's January 2020 report *Living with Beauty*.
- 4.2.33 The 2002 LCA guidance explains that landscape '*can provide habitats for wildlife and a cultural record of how people have lived on the land and harnessed its resources. Landscape can have social and community value, as an important part of people's day-to-day lives. It can contribute to a sense of identity, well-being, enjoyment and inspiration. It has economic value, providing the context for economic activity and often being a central factor in attracting business and tourism.*'
- 4.2.34 Landscape also performs a variety of highly valuable functions, including contribution to landscape character, visual and social amenity, context and setting (e.g. AONB, settlement, heritage asset); green gap / buffer / transition zone; approach / gateway / corridor / link; ecosystem services / natural capital / GI; and hydrological (e.g. flood zone / water catchment).
- 4.2.35 In fact, the social and community value of the landscape matters greatly in land use planning, especially as this value is tied to the important role that landscapes - and views / experiences of them - play in people's quality of life. Furthermore, a 'small patch of urban wasteland' may be as valuable to some as a National Park is to others, if it is all they have to call and use as a 'landscape': '*a service that matters at national level is not necessarily more important than one that matters only locally*'¹³.

A small patch of urban wasteland



¹³ Source: Quality of Life Capital methodology. QoLC approach guidance was developed jointly by the Countryside Agency, English Nature, English Heritage and the Environment Agency to 'provide a consistent and integrated way of managing for Quality of Life' (<https://www.google.co.uk/#q=Quality+of+life+capital+overview+report+2001>). Although this guidance concentrates on the benefits for human Quality of Life that come from the environment, the approach is as valid for social and economic as for environmental benefits. The relationship between QoLC and landscape issues is set out in *Landscape Character Assessment: Guidance for England and Scotland Topic Paper 2: Links to other sustainability tools*. Essentially characterisation describes, whereas QoLC evaluates and derives aims. The two are complementary.

- 4.2.36 Highly valuable landscapes are usually designated and protected from harm through planning policy. Very high value landscapes have features / qualities / attributes which are known and agreed to be of international / national significance / rarity, and / or of benefit to the planet, and to the largest numbers of people. Examples include World Heritage Sites (categorised as being of outstanding universal value), AONBs and National Parks. Landscapes of countywide and neighbourhood value can also be designated and protected from harm through policy.
- 4.2.37 The Natural Environment PPG states:
'Where landscapes have a particular local value, it is important for policies to identify their special characteristics and be supported by proportionate evidence. Policies may set out criteria against which proposals for development affecting these areas will be assessed. Plans can also include policies to avoid adverse impacts on landscapes and to set out necessary mitigation measures...where necessary'.
- 4.2.38 However, the NPPF emphasises that a landscape does not have to be designated in order for it to be 'valued', and for the planning system to protect it from inappropriate development. Para. 036 of the Natural Environment PPG (revised July 2019) emphasises that the NPPF **'is clear that plans should recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and that strategic policies should provide for the conservation and enhancement of landscapes. This can include nationally and locally-designated landscapes but also the wider countryside'**.
- 4.2.39 Also, whilst international and national landscape designations automatically confer a 'Very High' level of value, this does not necessarily mean that the landscape is in good condition or of high quality (although in the case of AONBs it should be borne in mind that natural beauty is the main reason for the designation being made in the first place - see Section 5.3), nor that it has a high degree of susceptibility to certain types of change (see below). The assessment needs to 'go beneath the blanket' of these designations and consider the area's landscapes on their own merit at a more localised level, although the weight of the designation must be factored in.
- 4.2.40 The 2002 LCA guidance says that:
'A landscape may be valued by different communities of interest for many different reasons without any formal designation, recognising, for example, perceptual aspects such as scenic beauty, tranquillity or wildness; special cultural associations; the influence and presence of other conservation interests... Landscape can have social and community value, as an important part of people's day-to-day lives. It can contribute to a sense of identity, well-being, enjoyment and inspiration. It has economic value, providing the context for economic activity and often being a central factor in attracting business and tourism.'
- 4.2.41 As noted in Section 2, unfortunately, features and factors of high local and neighbourhood value may not be designated and can be difficult (and time-consuming) to quantify, so are often overlooked. The onus of establishing features and factors of high value often falls on the local community, as it is rarely volunteered by the developer, and the community studies often identify previously unknown or undesignated assets which are later recognised as being of national significance.
- 4.2.42 Community involvement and public consultation are the best ways of objectively establishing what is important to local people and why, and can result in judgements - especially those about what is valuable enough to be protected - ratified by 'common consensus' as far as possible.
- 4.2.43 Regarding visual value, it must be borne in mind that people value views for different reason.
- 4.2.44 Judgements about levels of visual value factor in a) recognition of the value ascribed to particular views by people including residents with a 'proprietary interest', and b) specific indicators of the value attached to views by locals / visitors / tourists, which may include featuring on maps / in guide books, the provision of parking spaces / facilities, and references in literature / art (see GLVIA3 para. 6.37).

- 4.2.45 Other aspects of landscape character, such as aesthetic and perceptual qualities, add to the understanding of the quality, value, function and importance of views.
- 4.2.46 In considering visual value, it is essential to identify and analyse the baseline landscape character factors which contribute to that value. It must be noted that whilst areas with high levels of landscape value are often also of high visual value, that is not always the case; however, analysis of the baseline information helps to explain the 'nature' of the view, which is influenced by matters such as how well-cared for and / or well-used the landscape is, what its character 'tells' us about an area's history and sense of place, and what it contributes to its local distinctiveness.

Nature of Change

- 4.2.47 The fourth question is, what is the nature of the proposed change?
- 4.2.48 As noted above, LSCA assesses the capacity of the landscape to accommodate often very generalised forms of change such as housing or industry, so only considers generalised effects; if the change is considered appropriate, LSCA is also carried out to inform and guide future plans and allocations, and matters such as a development's type, scale and form.
- 4.2.49 LVIA assesses effects arising from proposed development where there is usually sufficient information about the scheme to be able to make fairly accurate predictions about the nature and degree of effects likely to arise. However, it must be borne in mind that some planning applications are submitted in outline form not full, which means that only the principle of that type of development and its likely effects are considered, not the details.
- 4.2.50 Clearly, the more information available, the more accurate the predictions will be.

Landscape and Visual Susceptibility to Change

- 4.2.51 Once the nature of the change is known, the next (fifth) question is, 'is what is there (and / or the people who see / experience it), tolerant of, or susceptible to, the type of change being assessed / proposed?'. Answering this involves making judgements about levels of landscape and visual susceptibility to change, which is defined in LVIA guidance (GLVIA3 para. 5.40) as:
- 'The ability of the landscape receptor (whether it be the overall character or quality / condition of a particular landscape type or area, or an individual element and / or feature, or a particular aesthetic and perceptual aspect) to accommodate the proposed development without undue consequences for the maintenance of the baseline situation and / or the achievement of landscape planning policies and strategies'.*
- 4.2.52 In a nutshell, if a landscape is susceptible to a certain type of change, it is very likely to be adversely affected by it. A good example of this is polytunnels: landscapes within which there are no existing polytunnels are likely to be highly susceptible to the changes they cause; landscapes within which there are already a few polytunnels are probably less susceptible to the addition of more, unless they have reached a tipping-point where the addition of more tunnels would change the landscape's character to an unacceptable degree. Landscapes within which there are many polytunnels would probably be described in character assessments as 'polytunnel landscapes', and it may be concluded that this is now the best place for all new tunnels to go.
- 4.2.53 In terms of the visual resource, the landscapes which are most visually susceptible to change are usually those which are the most highly visible over a wide area, form part of highly-valued views and / or perform highly important functions, and within which development would create an unacceptable visual intrusion into the wider landscape that almost certainly could not be mitigated.
- 4.2.54 Once levels of landscape and visual value and susceptibility to change have been determined for all the landscape and visual receptors, they are combined to give the overall level of receptor sensitivity. When all the results have been set out they are analysed, tested and compared, and

professional judgement is applied, to ensure the assessment is on a like-for-like basis. Adjustments are made if considered necessary.

Magnitude of Change, Effects and Capacity

- 4.2.55 The next stage involves answering the question 'how and to what degree would the changes affect what is there and those who see / experience it?'
- 4.2.56 First of all, for each receptor identified (which may be individual features / factors or in-combination), the level of magnitude of each of the effects likely to arise is assessed, in terms of its size, scale, extent, duration and reversibility.
- 4.2.57 Often it is necessary to factor in mitigating measures which could avoid or reduce high levels of adverse effects, and or enhancement / compensation measures. Once the level of magnitude has been established, it is combined with the level of the receptor's sensitivity. This gives the overall level of effect.
- 4.2.58 If the assessment is LSCA, it will also answer the question, 'does the area have 'room', or 'capacity', for these types of changes, without causing unacceptable levels of harm?'

Planning Policy

- 4.2.59 The final question in the assessment process is, 'is the change / level of harm acceptable or not, especially in relation to current planning policy, guidance and strategy?'
- 4.2.60 Planning policy, strategy and guidance are of relevance to landscape and visual assessments, which should set out the relevant policy context. As noted above, LVIA evaluates '*the ability of the landscape receptor... to accommodate the proposed development without undue consequences for... the achievement of landscape planning policies and strategies*'. The planning context within which new development has to be considered is an important factor, and clearly, the most sensitive sites / those with least capacity are also most likely to be in conflict with landscape and other policies.
- 4.2.61 It is important to note that LSCAs / LVIAs do not state whether an area of land can or should be developed; they simply set out the various implications arising from a known type of development being built in a specific place, taking into account identified factors. Once the levels of capacity and likely effects throughout an area have been established, informed decisions can be made - by the community and other stakeholders / interested parties / decision-makers - about where to 'draw the line' in terms of which level of capacity or effect forms the 'threshold' between development being 'acceptable' or 'unacceptable'.
- 4.2.62 Also, an area's level of landscape and visual capacity is only one of many matters that must be considered before any decisions are made about its suitability for future development, and in Ledbury's case, about where to draw the line of the settlement boundary.
- 4.2.63 LSCAs do not normally consider matters such as land-ownership or rights of access: regardless of a landowner's opinions about the future development of their land, the LSCA simply states what the level of capacity of the land is judged to be. Whether or not it is included as a potential development site in the NDP is up to the community / decision-makers.
- 4.2.64 Even if the development of a certain parcel of land was found to be feasible, viable and deliverable, other factors would play an important role, including future allocations, planning applications, and the number of houses required / built during the plan period.

4.3 Ledbury's Landscape and Visual Baseline Assessment: Process

- 4.3.1 As mentioned previously, the majority of the baseline-gathering and reporting was carried out by volunteers from the local community, with professional input and guidance.
- 4.3.2 One of the first steps was to establish the study area boundary. The outer boundary was defined by the parish's wider 'landscape context' and its 'area of influence'. This is partly determined by the 'visual envelope' (i.e. the places from which a given area is visible), and partly by landscape character - the latter is usually influenced by factors such as underlying geology and hydrology, so the extent is not necessarily determined by visibility. 1:30,000 scale Ordnance Survey (OS) maps were used for the wider baseline studies (see Figure 1A).
- 4.3.3 The study area boundaries for features or places of importance such as heritage assets and sites of nature conservation importance were drawn with consideration given to the potential area of influence of the individual feature / site.
- 4.3.4 Although the Malvern Hills and Marcle Ridge were included in the study, they are not shown on the figures, as other information would be unreadable on the scale of map that would be required. Both features exert considerable influence on Ledbury, and due to their elevation there are far-reaching views from them; however, there is limited interinfluence between the parish and the lower-lying landscapes immediately west of the Hills / east of Marcle Ridge, and therefore the assessment's main focus is the parish's landscapes.
- 4.3.5 The town centre itself was not the subject of the more granular landscape and visual studies, but information about its history and numerous features and qualities were identified, recorded, and factored into the baseline and sensitivity assessments where relevant.
- 4.3.6 Before the first lock-down began, it had been assumed that a full LSCA was being carried out. One of the LSCA's main objectives was to establish levels of capacity for future residential development on the outskirts of the town, along with some employment and / or recreational use west of the town. The parish-wide baseline studies would set the context for the sensitivity and capacity assessments, but the latter would need to be more granular.
- 4.3.7 A boundary for the core study area was therefore drawn in a broad swathe to include land adjacent to, or having a relatively close association with, the settlement (developers are aware that in theory there is more chance of gaining planning permission on sites close to the settlement than on those lying in open countryside). 1:15,000 scale OS maps were used as the basis for these studies - see Figure 1B.
- 4.3.8 The land within the core study area was subdivided into fourteen separate areas, called LSCA Areas - see Figures 2A and 2B. The LSCA Areas are numbered in a clockwise order, starting north of the town. The town centre and developed / allocated sites were excluded.
- 4.3.9 The LSCA Area boundaries were determined through analysis of the baseline information. Wherever possible the boundaries followed physical features in the landscape such as roads, watercourses, field boundaries and the edges of developed areas / allocated sites. Each Area comprised one or more land parcels, often containing a variety of land uses and different types of landcover but with shared key factors / qualities such as character, location, aspect, relationship with the settlement, and presence / absence of high value features.
- 4.3.10 In order to understand all the elements, features and factors that contribute the area's landscape character and make judgements about its value, extensive research was carried out, including reviewing and recording (on maps, schedules and in note-form, both by hand and digitally) relevant background material from sources such as books, reports and studies, historic maps and documents, archives and historians, government and other websites, and the local community.
- 4.3.11 The baseline studies took into account national and / or local landscape-related designations, strategies, policies and guidance (especially that produced by the Malvern Hills AONB Partnership);

the landscape's natural history and cultural heritage; its character; settlement and land use patterns; key views; public rights of way (PRsoW); recreation; hydrology; topography; significant vegetation and so on.

- 4.3.12 Once the desktop studies were complete, the findings were tested and verified on the ground, both within the parish and beyond its boundaries. The fieldwork involved a combination of driving, walking and cycling along PRsoW (roads, footpaths, bridleways, byways open to all traffic, restricted byways), making notes and taking photographs. Both publicly-accessible and - where possible and accessible with permission - privately-owned areas were visited. Key views and viewpoints were also mapped.
- 4.3.13 The findings of the studies which were being carried out by volunteers were written up and submitted for professional review / editing as required. Each topic was cross-referenced with the others to ensure consistency and identify any missing gaps.
- 4.3.14 The decision not to proceed with the full LSCA was taken in September 2020, although this did not change the approach to the baseline assessments. However, whilst most of the baseline studies had already been carried out and written up by that time, the LSCA topic group members were asked to update and revise their sections to take into account the various changes which had occurred in and around the town in the previous few months, including approvals for residential and employment development on the viaduct site and residential development south of Leadon Way.
- 4.3.15 Also, individual LSCA Area schedules were completed for some of the topics, but not all of them. The information contained in the finalised schedules was incorporated into the relevant sections with the schedule included as an appendix (note that the Area numbering is consistent in the schedules, but the Areas are given different names depending on the topic in question).
- 4.3.16 The LVBA was completed and signed-off by LTC in mid-January 2022, the aim being to publish the document for Regulation 14 consultation as soon as possible.

5 Landscape Baseline

5.1 Introduction

- 5.1.1 This section describes the landscape baseline situation within the study area. It begins with an overview of Ledbury parish, followed by descriptions of the area's landscape designations, national and regional character areas and types, physical landscapes, and designated / other key features / factors. The findings of the heritage, cultural and historic landscape character studies and the settlement pattern analysis are set out, and key landscape functions and various constraints are noted.
- 5.1.2 The landscape baseline information is shown on Figures 4 - 11 in Appendix A. The figures have a version 'A', which shows the parish-wide information on a map at a large scale (1:30,000), and a version 'B' which shows the information in the core study areas at a smaller scale (1:15,000), for ease of reference.
- 5.1.3 The study area was divided into four geographical sectors (North to East, East to South, South to West, and West to North). The central point is in the town centre at the junction of Long Acres and Bridge Street. Generally, the descriptions below follow the same order.

5.2 Ledbury Parish

- 5.2.1 Ledbury is a rural civil parish in south-eastern Herefordshire. The eastern side of the parish lies within the Malvern Hills AONB, including a small part of the settlement. Great Malvern lies c. 11km north east of Ledbury town; the city of Hereford lies c. 20km to the west. The parish covers c. 26 sq km (c. 10 sq miles). According to the UK census, in 2011, the parish population was 9,290.

View from Marcle Ridge looking east over Ledbury parish towards Malvern Hills



5.2.2 Ledbury is also the name of the parish's market town; it is centrally-located within the parish, close to the south-western end of the Malvern Hills which form the Herefordshire - Worcestershire county boundary.

Ledbury town centre - High Street looking north



Ledbury town centre - High Street looking south



- 5.2.3 Until recently, the town covered an area of some 2.5 sq km (approximately 10% of the parish area). With development on the allocated viaduct site to the north and the approved sites to the south in place, the area will be c. 3 sq km - an increase of 20%.
- 5.2.4 Some sections of the parish boundary are well-defined, following distinct physical features such as roads, tracks, watercourses and field boundaries, whereas others appear to be arbitrary lines. However, the latter would almost certainly have once been along a trackway or field boundary which was subsequently stopped up or removed; also, the parish boundaries were occasionally modified (for example, the parish of Wellington Heath was carved out of Ledbury in 1842).
- 5.2.5 The northernmost part of the parish is west of Staplow, a small settlement lying just beyond the parish boundary.
- 5.2.6 The parish's northern boundary runs south-eastwards from Staplow for some 2.2km along the B4214 Bromyard Road before turning north east and following a watercourse and field boundaries, with Wellington Heath parish and village to the north. It continues south east / east, with Colwall parish to the north, skirting Petty France and Barton Court, until it reaches Ockeridge Farm, which marks the easternmost part of the parish. The farm lies on the lower slopes of the central section of the Malvern Hills, just below the Herefordshire Beacon (usually called British Camp).
- 5.2.7 The parish's eastern boundary runs south-westwards from Ockeridge Farm along the northern section of the Ridgeway - a c. 4km long distinctive crescent-shaped ridge of Wenlock limestone which is the route of the main carriageway through Eastnor deer park (within the Registered Park and Garden - see heritage assets in Section 5.12 below), and which forms the boundary between Ledbury and Eastnor parishes. It then turns west, crossing fields, the London - Hereford railway line, and the A449 Worcester Road, before turning south west towards the town. Some 600m from the settlement's edge it runs south / south eastwards along the ridge of the wooded slopes c. 600m east of the A417 Ledbury - Gloucester road, as far as Webb's Coppice.
- 5.2.8 The southern boundary zig-zags west / north west from Webb's Coppice to Ludstock, which lies c. 2.3km south west of the town. The parish's southernmost point is at Brand Oak Coppice, on the A417. For much of its length the boundary follows field boundaries / minor watercourses, although some sections appear to be along arbitrary lines (see note above).
- 5.2.9 From Ludstock, the parish's western boundary runs north - north-westwards, firstly along Ludstock Brook, then field boundaries and sections of Falcon Lane before crossing the A438 Hereford Road, the railway and Stores Brook. From the brook, it zig-zags north - north east back to Staplow, along field boundaries and across fields.
- 5.2.10 The character and qualities of Ledbury's landscapes are described in detail in the sections below. In summary, they are distinctly rural and quite sparsely-settled. Agriculture is the predominant land use within the parish, and in the wider area as well; some is intensive - several local farms grow soft fruit and other tender crops under polytunnels.
- 5.2.11 Tree cover within the parish is relatively sparse, mainly confined to plantation blocks, linear corridors along watercourses and roads, and field boundaries. Much of the ancient woodland has long-since been cleared for cultivation and / or forestry, although a few good sites remain, for example west of the town around Wall Hills, and a significant 5km long belt on the hill slopes east of the town, between Petty France and Parkway. There are a few remnant traditional orchards, and some modern bush orchards (see Significant Vegetation in Section 5.9).

Wooded hills east of Ledbury (in mid-ground, looking west from Malvern Hills)



Wall Hills woodland (image © Google)



- 5.2.12 Due to its historically-strategic location, the majority of the roads in the area, including those mentioned above, converge in Ledbury. The railway runs along the northern edge of the town, partly through a tunnel; the railway station is situated at the A438 Homend and Hereford Road junction with the B4214 Bromyard Road.
- 5.2.13 Several watercourses run through the study area, the largest being the River Leadon, which flows from north to south, and close to the western edge of the town. The Cradley Brook flows northwards from the north-eastern edges of the parish.
- 5.2.14 The line of the now-defunct Herefordshire and Gloucestershire canal also runs north - south, mainly within the Leadon valley except where it traverses the town. The canal's route is protected, and it is now the subject of an active and ambitious restoration scheme being run by the Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal Trust¹⁴. It is being / will be restored section by section as the land it passes through is purchased from raised funds, albeit only when a plan for that section is available.

Remnant section of Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal near Staplow



- 5.2.15 The proposal for Ledbury is to divert the section at the northern approach to the town to a line which curves around the west side of the viaduct site, passing under one of the viaduct's arches and under the Hereford Road by using lock gates either side. The original town centre section (part now the Town Trail / part built on) would be diverted to the west alongside the River Leadon. This would be some way from the old wharf, which is on the town's south-western outskirts, but the canal would rejoin the original route at a point south of the A449 Ross Road and the industrial estate.
- 5.2.16 Overleaf is an extract from the map showing the planned route.

¹⁴ <https://www.h-g-canal.org.uk/>

Planned canal route

Please note: Unless indicated it should not be assumed that Rights of Way exist. We are working on the Canal with the co-operation of the land owners and their neighbours – please help the Trust to maintain its good relations with them.

Thank you.

-  = Canal Walk leaflet available.
-  = restoration sites suitable for public access.



5.3 Designated Landscapes

5.3.1 The Malvern Hills AONB designation covers the eastern side of Ledbury parish, including a small part of the settlement (Horse Lane Orchard, south of the A449) - the boundary is shown on most of the baseline figures (see for example Figures 4A and 4B).

5.3.2 According to the Malvern Hills AONB's Management Plan (2019 - 2024):

'The AONB covers 105 square kilometres and includes parts of Herefordshire, Worcestershire and Gloucestershire. The special quality of the Malvern Hills lies in the contrasts. The distinctive, narrow, north - south ridge, a mountain range in miniature, thrusts unexpectedly from the pastoral farmland patchwork of the Severn Vale. The highest point is Worcestershire Beacon (425m) and walkers along the ridge crest enjoy views as far as Wales and the Cotswolds. The geological variety, and centuries of traditional farming have given the AONB great ecological value. Herb-rich, unimproved pastures and native woodland support a wealth of habitats, species and wildlife. In addition, it is also a historical landscape, the ridge is crowned by three ancient hill forts, the most famous being the ditches and ramparts of British Camp.'

'This is an area of pastoral farming, with dairying and stock-rearing, plus fruit growing, mixed crops and forestry. Large areas are grazed as ancient commons. The AONB has a population of approximately 12,000 and villages such as Malvern Wells have experienced considerable growth in their retired population and in workers commuting to Birmingham and Worcester. The towns of Great Malvern and Ledbury fringe the AONB and the rural economy includes light manufacturing and prestige office development together with the important conference and tourism sector. Tourists have flocked here to 'take the waters' since the early 1800s and Great Malvern's formal paths and rides give the nearby slopes the air of a Victorian pleasure garden. The ridge and hillside paths and the commons are traditional 'day trip' country. The Worcestershire Way footpath is an important recreation resource in the AONB.'

Malvern Hills AONB (photo courtesy of Jan Sedlacek @Digitlight)



AONB east of Ledbury, Eastnor Castle and park (photo courtesy of Jan Sedlacek @Digitlight)



- 5.3.3 AONBs are of national importance (and indeed of international importance, being recognised as Category V protected landscapes by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature). They are designated solely for their special landscape qualities. They are considered to be of such outstanding natural beauty that they require, and enjoy, a high level of protection through European, national and local planning policies and plans, in order to *'secure their permanent protection against development that would damage their special qualities, thus conserving a number of the finest landscapes in England for the nation's benefit'*.
- 5.3.4 The primary purpose of AONB designation is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the landscape, and AONB partnerships have a statutory duty to conserve and enhance that natural beauty.
- 5.3.5 In terms of the designation, an area's natural beauty is deemed to include its geology, climate, soils, animals, communities, archaeology, buildings, the people who live in it (past and present) and the perceptions of those who visit it.
- 5.3.6 Public appreciation is a key component of natural beauty, and the secondary purposes of AONB designation include meeting the need for quiet enjoyment of the countryside, as well as having regard for the interests of those who live and work there.
- 5.3.7 The natural beauty of these areas is recognised as contributing significantly to economic activities and well-being through tourism and inward investment. In Chapter 8, the AONB Management Plan states that *'Each year, some 1.25 million visitors come to the AONB to enjoy its natural and cultural heritage. Tourism makes a significant contribution to the local economy'*.
- 5.3.8 Furthermore, the importance of access to healthy and beautiful landscapes is now recognised as being vital to human health and well-being, and the AONB's landscapes make highly important contributions to both local and wider natural capital and ecosystem services (see landscape value in Section 4).

- 5.3.9 The Management Plan sets out the vision of what the AONB will be like in 20 years' time (i.e. in 2040). In terms of the AONB's landscapes, the Plan notes the vision that '*Change in the landscape is accepted and its impacts accommodated through positive management. However, the landscape largely comprises broadleaved woodland and grassland, interconnected with hedgerows and hedgerow trees, all in good condition*'. Another vision is that '*The distinctive character of villages, historic farmsteads and rural buildings is sustained by high standards of informed design and development*'.
- 5.3.10 Ledbury's LVBA provides an in-depth understanding of the character of the AONB landscapes within the study area, using the Malvern Hills AONB Partnership's various guidance and publications as key sources of reference.
- 5.3.11 The Malvern Hills AONB's 'special qualities' are set out on page 9 of the Management Plan. Many are present within the study area. Those of most relevance to this study, with the most relevant at the top of the list, are:
- *A sense of remoteness and tranquillity, underpinned by dark night skies and limited noise and disturbance. People feel calm and spiritually refreshed.*
 - *A history of recreation and tourism that continues today, with people coming to enjoy the hills, spas and the tranquillity of the rural landscapes.*
 - *An unspoiled 'natural' environment supporting a wide variety of wildlife habitats and species, many of which are nationally rare.*
 - *A distinctive combination of landscape elements that include orchards, parklands, ridgelines, ponds, quarries, hedgerows and watercourses.*
 - *An historic landscape of ancient unenclosed commons, varied field boundary patterns and designed parks and gardens, for example at Eastnor.*
 - *A strong spirit of place, landscapes that have inspired and continue to inspire and which have a deep cultural narrative.*
 - *Distinctive villagescapes, including conservation areas, listed buildings and local features, that define a 'spirit of place' in the settlements.*
 - *Thriving and active communities with a low deprivation index that reflects the area's prosperity and the availability of employment.*
 - *Open access in many places over the hills and commons, providing opportunities for bracing walks with fine views.*
 - *The Malvern Hills: a high, dramatic ridge of ancient rock that is visible from the Severn Vale and from the rolling hills and valleys to the west.*
 - *Dramatic scenery and spectacular views arising from the juxtaposition of high and low ground.*
 - *A distinctive and varied geology, with a variety of different rock types including granites, diorites, volcanic lavas, limestones, sandstones, mudstones and shales. This gives rise to a unique array of landscapes and natural habitats.*
 - *A wide variety of landscape types in a relatively small area. Assessments of the area's landscape character identify ten distinct landscape types. Woodland and grassland in varying mixes are the most prevalent.*
 - *A distinctive combination of landscape elements that include orchards, parklands, ridgelines, ponds, quarries, hedgerows and watercourses.*
 - *A rich and distinctive historic environment including Bronze Age burial grounds, moated sites and Iron Age hill forts, for example British Camp.*
- 5.3.12 Where appropriate, this information is supplemented and illustrated in the sections below.

5.4 National Landscape Character

- 5.4.1 Nationally, the country is divided into National Character Areas (NCAs)¹⁵.
- 5.4.2 NCAs are the responsibility of Natural England. They are '*... areas that share similar landscape characteristics, and which follow natural lines in the landscape rather than administrative boundaries, making them a good decision-making framework for the natural environment.*'
- 5.4.3 For each NCA, a profile is produced. NCA profiles are '*... guidance documents which can help communities to inform their decision-making about the places that they live in and care for. The information they contain will support the planning of conservation initiatives at a landscape scale, inform the delivery of Nature Improvement Areas and encourage broader partnership working through Local Nature Partnerships. The profiles will also help to inform choices about how land is managed and can change.*'
- 5.4.4 The NCA profiles contain specific 'Statements of Environmental Opportunity' (SEOs) for each area, which offer guidance on the critical issues identified, and which can '*... help to achieve sustainable growth and a more secure environmental future.*'
- 5.4.5 The profiles also set out recent landscape changes and trends within the NCA, and the key drivers of future changes: those of most relevance - to both this assessment and Ledbury's future planning - are highlighted below.
- 5.4.6 The NCAs which cover the Ledbury study area are shown on Figures 4A and 4B.
- 5.4.7 The landscapes in the western half of the area are covered by NCA 100 Herefordshire Lowlands¹⁶. The majority in the eastern half are NCA 103 Malvern Hills¹⁷, apart from the very south-easternmost part of the parish which is NCA 104 South Herefordshire and Over Severn¹⁸. NCA 101 Herefordshire Plateau lies north of the parish beyond Bosbury, where the land begins to rise towards Bromyard; however, the preliminary studies concluded that there was very limited interinfluence between the parish's and NCA 101's landscapes, so they were not factored in to the assessment.
- 5.4.8 The boundary between NCAs 100 and 103 runs north - south along the western edges of the wooded hills which characterise the landscapes east of the town, and is broadly contiguous with the AONB boundary. NCA 104's northern boundary runs between Webb's Coppice and Noad Farm.

NCA 100 Herefordshire Lowlands

- 5.4.9 This NCA covers much of central Herefordshire, with small areas to the north and east in Shropshire and Worcestershire, and to the south east in Gloucestershire. From Ledbury, the NCA extends west - north-westwards as far as Ross-on-Wye to the north west and Ludlow to the north.
- 5.4.10 The majority of the landscapes within the study area are very typical of their host NCA, which is described in the profile as follows:

'It is largely tranquil and rural in character but does include the larger settlements of Hereford and Leominster. There are small dispersed settlements of hamlets and villages, many of which contain older buildings with the local vernacular of black-and-white timber-framed buildings. Restored cider barns with characteristic double-doors and historic farmsteads are also common.

'The landscape is gently undulating... Woodland within the area is a significant landscape feature, typically on the hill tops and valley sides. Many of these woodlands are actively managed (commercially) to produce quality timber... The NCA is an important area for commercial agricultural

¹⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-character-area-profiles-data-for-local-decision-making>

¹⁶ <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/4827527503675392?category=587130>

¹⁷ <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/3039205?category=587130>

¹⁸ <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5018311469301760?category=587130>

[sic] supported by the fertile and high-grade agricultural soils; the farming is mixed arable and livestock. Traditional orchards are still to be found, though suffering decline, with new orchards and dwarf varieties of trees also common. The area is also important for commercial production of soft fruit under polytunnels, supplying much of the UK. Historic parklands... have many veteran trees that are important for invertebrates.

'There are many rivers in the area ... flowing through wide, fertile mudstone valleys. Old Red Sandstone is commonly found in the west and east of the area and here the soils take on a distinctive red colour... Recreational opportunity is offered by long-distance trails including... the Herefordshire Trail which links the market towns in Herefordshire [of which Ledbury is one of the best examples]. Views can be expansive across to neighbouring NCAs, looking west to the Black Mountains, north to the Clun and Shropshire Hills, and east to the Malvern Hills.'

5.4.11 The NCA displays a wide range of key characteristics; those which are well-represented in the study area comprise:

- *Gently undulating landscape with localised steep-sided hills in the centre and wide agricultural flood plains.*
- *Much of the area is underlain by Old Red Sandstone, with localised deposits of alluvium and glacial drift. Fertile soils support intensive mixed agriculture, especially on the better drained glacial river terraces.*
- *Wide, meandering river valleys drain the area....*
- *Pasture with occasional wet meadows and permanent grassland along the rivers. Low hedgerows with sparse tree cover. Arable cultivation on lower-lying land.*
- *Localised traditional and bush orchards and occasional hop fields planted with windbreaks.*
- *Several historic parklands... and numerous medieval parks, many with important ancient and veteran trees.*
- *Timber-framed (black-and-white) buildings are characteristic with stone and red brick also used frequently as building materials.*
- *Dispersed rural settlement pattern throughout with scattered villages, hamlets, farmsteads and clustered settlements around commons.*
- *Tranquil and relatively undisturbed by major infrastructure aside from a few crossing A roads.*

Typical NCA 100 Herefordshire Lowland landscapes (Leadon Vale, south of Ledbury town)



5.4.12 Ledbury is mentioned several times in the NCA profile, noted as being an historic, strategically-located market town (see various sections below).

5.4.13 All the SEOs for NCA 100 are relevant to the Ledbury area:

- *SEO 1: Protect and manage the internationally important River Wye Special Area of Conservation and the many other watercourses and their flood plains to improve the health of the rivers and the quality and availability of water. Develop the capacity of the riverine environment to tolerate more extreme flow levels by protecting and creating new wet meadow and woodland in the flood plain and seek to increase recreational opportunities related to the riverine environment.*
- *SEO 2: Protect and enhance the natural and historic environment, integrating new development through the use of green infrastructure principles informed by existing heritage, geodiversity and biodiversity assets. Protect the agrarian character of the area by making the most of versatile and fertile soils to produce food while integrating semi-natural features and protecting above- and below-ground heritage assets and geological assets and reinforcing the strong sense of character.*
- *SEO 3: Protect, manage and restore semi-natural habitats, in particular woodlands, grasslands, orchards and wet meadows within the rural and urban areas to improve ecological connectivity, biodiversity, landscape character, the historic environment, and flood water storage capacity and the ability of the landscape to adapt to the impacts of climate change. In particular, manage, restore and create new woodland, and develop connectivity in other semi-natural habitats such as the hedgerow networks and orchards.*

5.4.14 The recent changes and trends identified within the NCA and which are of relevance to Ledbury include (paraphrased in parts):

- New development is having an adverse effect on the surrounding countryside, resulting in some visual intrusion from urban development.
- Decline in / lack of management and neglect adversely affecting woodlands (especially coppice), traditional and bush orchards, and hedgerows / hedgerow trees and associated habitats.

- Some recent increase in woodland resource.
- Hedgerow removal resulting in field enlargement.
- Neglect of riverine habitats.
- Flood plain erosion is judged to be a significant issue by some stakeholders and seems to have been partly caused by draining and intensively farming the flood plain for root crops.
- Pasture improvement and arable expansion threaten areas of semi-natural grassland and meadow resulting in fragmentation and loss of habitats.
- The valley bottom meadows are under pressure from agricultural intensification and fragmentation.
- Evidence suggests that the character of important aspects of the historic landscape remains neglected.
- A number of heritage assets in the area are identified as being 'at risk'.

5.4.15 Relevant drivers of change include:

- Climate change.
- The need for food security may result in continued expansion of arable production. This may impact on ecological habitats, networks and species, as well as landscape character.
- In parts of the NCA, development pressure provides a key driver for improved delivery of GI and the possibility to maximise opportunities to integrate it into new development from the outset.

NCA 103 Malvern Hills

5.4.16 This NCA includes the Malvern Hills, their footslopes, and the flatter albeit undulating land to the west which characterises the transition between the Malvern Hills and the lowland areas.

5.4.17 The NCA's landscape is described in the profile as follows:

'...The area is one of great contrasts. These range from the majestic height of the hills themselves to the undulating swells and low wooded escarpments of Eastnor and the Suckley Hills, and to the jumble of rolling hills and woodlands marching away to the west. Most of the area lies within the Malvern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).'

5.4.18 Many of NCA 103's key characteristics are well-represented in the parts of the study area which are covered by it (the study area includes the Malvern Hills, although they are not shown on the figures). Those of relevance to the Ledbury area include:

- *A prominent, narrow north–south ridge of high, unenclosed, rounded hills [which] ... form a highly visible dominant landmark, visible from a long distance;*
- *A varied geology, which is reflected in the soils;*
- *Along the Malvern Hills ridge there are a number of dramatic historic sites, including the bronze-age barrows, iron-age hill forts at British Camp and Midsummer Hill, and the Shire Ditch;*
- *There is a high density of public rights of way and an extensive area of open access land;*
- *There are good rail and road links to urban populations;*
- *To the north and west of the hills there are wooded limestone ridges, separated by vales of mixed shale. The lower slopes and ridges – particularly the steeper ones – are densely wooded, with blocks of ancient woodland and occasional plantations. Many field boundaries are species-rich and also of medieval origin; and*
- *The ridges and vales form a mixed pastoral landscape of small irregular fields, orchards, hop yards and many ancient, species-rich hedgerows and meadows. Interspersed throughout this landscape (particularly to the south, where larger farms and estates developed) are larger fields bounded by thorn.*

Typical NCA 103 Malvern Hills landscapes, Eastnor (photo courtesy of Jan Sedlacek @Digitlight)



5.4.19 All the SEOs for NCA 103 are relevant to Ledbury:

- *SEO 1: Conserve and appropriately manage the areas of semi-natural habitat in the wider character area of the Malvern Hills such as woodland and traditional orchard, providing economic opportunities, fostering community participation;*
- *SEO 2: Manage and improve access to the landscape, as well as the cultural and geological features of the Malvern Hills National Character Area and promote enhanced understanding and enjoyment to reinforce a strong sense of place;*
- *SEO 3: Protect and appropriately manage the historic environment and its setting, ensuring that historic features and landscapes are recognisable and valued; and*
- *SEO 4: Plan for an expansion of semi-natural habitats where appropriate, so that a significant ecological network is created and interconnected to adjoining areas. This will increase biodiversity, pollination, food and drink production, as well as regulate soil erosion, water and soil quality, reinforcing a strong sense of place.*

5.4.20 The recent changes and trends identified within the NCA and which are of relevance to Ledbury include (paraphrased in parts):

- Neglect and replacement of traditional orchards have affected the landscape.
- Woodland clearance and the gradual loss of trees along hedgerows and stream sides have damaged visual links between areas historically cleared and those still wooded.
- Limited extent of boundary management, signs of neglect: hedgerows and mature hedgerow trees including fruiting species have been lost or replaced by fencing, resulting in deterioration of the characteristic regular enclosure pattern.
- The character is predominantly pastoral. The dominant and increasing land use is grassland and uncropped land, but cereals are also increasing.

- The fragmentation of large farms / estates can result in the enlargement of extant properties and / or an increase in the demand for buildings and associated infrastructure (both residential and agricultural). It can also lead to a loss in linear habitats such as hedgerows.
- Growth in the size of settlements around the NCA will impact on views into and out of the area.

5.4.21 Relevant drivers of change include:

- Climate change.
- Opportunity to manage and extend traditional orchards and increase the resource for the production of fruit and apple juice, perry and cider and to benefit wildlife and pollination.
- Development pressures present the opportunity to advocate good, sustainable design, looking to reduce the impact on the landscape and increase climate regulation, within the parameters of maintaining the built character.
- Challenge to reduce the impacts on the NCA of polythene and polytunnels that are being used for intensive production of certain crops and can be highly visible. This is particularly prominent around the borders of the AONB, especially to the south and west [the extent of polytunnel development in and around the parish can be seen on the aerial photograph in Figure 3B, see also sections below].
- Scope for additional woodland: as well as increasing habitat this could absorb some of the pressure of recreational use from other heavily-used areas.
- Extension of semi-natural habitats and maintenance of hedgerows to connect adjoining landscapes and make biodiversity stepping-stones and corridors.

5.4.22 Ledbury town is beyond (albeit adjacent to) the Malvern Hills NCA, but is featured in the profile due to its historic importance and influence within / associations with the wider area. There is also a note in the Malvern Hills profile which is of great relevance to Ledbury, relating to ecosystem services and the regulation of water flow - see Section 5.16 Green Infrastructure.

NCA 104 South Herefordshire and Over Severn

5.4.23 NCA 104 extends from Tarrington (north) to Monmouth (south), and from the England / Wales border at Kentchurch (west) to Bromsberrow Heath (east).

5.4.24 The landscapes of South Herefordshire and Over Severn are described in the profile as '*a picturesque, rural, well-wooded landscape with substantial areas of ancient semi-natural woodland, parkland and traditional orchards and a network of ancient hedgerows with hedgerow trees contributing to a timbered feel*'.

5.4.25 It continues, '*Stunning panoramic views are available from Garway Hill in the west and May Hill in the south-east across the NCA and beyond to up to 12 counties on a clear day... Land use is mainly a mix of livestock and arable farming... Key ecosystem services within this NCA include water regulation as a part of the Wye and Severn catchments, food production through extensive agriculture, an important genetic resource of local fruit varieties and a sense of tranquillity intrinsic in the scenic rural character of the landscape*'.

5.4.26 The study concluded that the small part of the parish which is covered by NCA 104 is broadly typical of its host.

5.4.27 The extent of this NCA within the study area is very small, so only a few of the key characteristics of NCA 104 are present. They include:

- *An undulating landscape with... lower rolling ground, ridges and valleys...*
- *Well-wooded character created by larger woodlands confined ...to hillsides. Smaller tree clumps often found in groups around hill tops, farmsteads, hamlets and prominent buildings including small areas of ornamental parkland-style planting and scattered parklands.*

- Numerous mature and over-mature trees along hedgerows and watercourses including ash, oak, alder and some pollarded willows.
- Traditional historic cider apple orchards and commercial bush orchards on steeper valley slopes and around farmsteads, hamlets and country houses throughout the area, contributing to the woodland character [there is a traditional orchard at Woodfields Farm].
- Substantial country houses set within historic landscaped parklands.
- Varied field pattern bounded by hedgerows, ranging from sparse and low 19th century to dense and species-rich hedgerows dating from the medieval period.
- Large-to-medium-sized fields dominate the intensive arable farming on the fertile soils of the lower undulating ground and river valleys.
- Dispersed settlement pattern throughout the area with scattered farmsteads...
- Traditional building materials in the west are predominantly red sandstone.
- Historic wild daffodil fields of Over Severn and the Wye Valley have inspired poets and stimulated tourism [this is of great relevance to Ledbury: see reference to poetry in Section 5.13 Cultural Associations].

Typical NCA 104 landscapes, Chase End / Bromesberrow (photo courtesy of Jan Sedlacek @Digitlight)



- 5.4.28 Within the south-eastern sector of the study area, due to localised topographical variations, the degree of interinfluence between NCAs 100, 103 and 104 varies from place to place: it is relatively high along parts of the A417 north west of Brand Oak Coppice. Intervisibility also varies: dense, mature vegetation along the A417 screens many views even during the winter months.
- 5.4.29 All the SEOs for NCA 104 are relevant to Ledbury:
- *SEO 1: Protect and manage the woodland, parkland, traditional orchards and hedgerows with hedgerow trees that contribute to the well-wooded feel of the landscape, securing the new generation of replacement trees. Expand and restore the currently much-fragmented semi-natural habitats across the National Character Area (NCA) to enhance the ability of species to move across the landscape, enabling some resilience to climate change, and benefiting soil quality and water quality and reducing soil erosion.*

- *SEO 2: Sustainably manage the productive agricultural landscape, enhancing food provision and increasing permeability to the movement of species. Manage in such a way as to preserve and enhance soil condition and water quality and reduce soil erosion, particularly in relation to the River Wye Special Area of Conservation.*
- *SEO 3: Maintain and enhance the many historic features and characteristic settlement pattern of rural hamlets, isolated farmsteads and small villages and towns using local materials. Preserve the tranquil rural character of the area, protecting and promoting the biodiversity, geodiversity, access, recreation and heritage of the area.*
- *SEO 4: Protect and enhance the rivers Wye, Leadon and Monnow and their tributaries for their internationally important biodiversity associated with the River Wye Special Area of Conservation, their contribution to landscape, the ecological network, and sense of place and inspiration, and for the regulating services that they provide including water flow, water quality and water availability.*

5.4.30 The recent changes and trends within the NCA and which are of relevance to Ledbury include (paraphrased in parts):

- Increase in take-up of management / other agreements for woodland, traditional orchard, hedgerows, stone walls and other habitats / features.
- Agricultural improvement has led to a loss of species-rich grassland particularly in the Leadon Vale, and to remaining semi-natural habitats in the area being fragmented. It has been suggested that the environmental value of grasslands should be maintained through low usage of fertiliser and appropriate grazing regimes.
- In 1918 about 3% of the NCA was historic parkland. It is estimated that by 1995, 51% had been lost [and the loss continues]. Historic farm buildings appear to be at risk.

5.4.31 Relevant drivers of change include:

- Climate change.
- Increased pressure for food production may result in arable expansion of current farming systems, and thus increased pressure on semi-natural habitats, archaeological features and ecosystem services such as water availability and water quality; however, this may be an opportunity to encourage low water consumption devices to be installed.
- Increased visitor numbers and recreational activities may mean that 'honey-pot' sites suffer high levels of disturbance, particularly within the AONB.

5.5 Regional / Local Landscape Character

5.5.1 NCAs are relevant to this study for the reasons set out above, and it is important that the assessment evaluates whether the local landscapes are typical and good representations of landscape character at a national level, which can increase their value. However, the NCA descriptions usually cover very large geographical areas, so it is necessary to look at character at regional and local scales, where landscape character has been surveyed and categorised by HC¹⁹, Gloucestershire County Council²⁰ (GCC) and the Malvern Hills AONB Partnership²¹.

5.5.2 The purpose of HC's LCA is '*to promote the use of landscape assessment as part of the development control process, to increase awareness of the countryside's character and to ensure that future development is compatible with that character*' (para. 1.1.2).

¹⁹ Landscape Character Assessment Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) (2004, updated 2009) Herefordshire Council https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/downloads/file/2069/landscape_character_assessment_for_herefordshire

²⁰ <https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/planning-and-environment/ecology-and-landscape/landscape/>

²¹ Malvern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Landscape Strategy and Guidelines 2011 <http://www.malvernhillsaonb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/MalvernLandStratGuideLoResFinal.pdf>

- 5.5.3 The LCA assesses landscape character areas and types; the difference is explained in para. 4.1.2:
- 'Firstly, there will be landscape character areas, which in the Herefordshire Landscape Character Assessment are called Sub-regional Character Areas and Landscape Description Units (LDU). The larger areas are at a regional scale while the smaller LDUs are at a much more local scale. These are all individual, unique areas with their own identity and character. These areas are identified by description and given appropriate local names such as the Northwest Herefordshire Hills Sub-regional Character Area or Downton Gorge LDU which is one of a number of LDUs found within it. Their individual descriptions are held in the Technical Handbook.*
- 'Secondly, there will be landscape character types. These have been identified through assessing the characteristics that make up landscape character. Thus, different combinations of these characteristics will result in different landscape character types (called Landscape Types in the Herefordshire Landscape Character Assessment) [in this assessment, the term Landscape Character Type (LCT) is used]. Since this is a generic classification, the same combination of characteristics will always result in the same Landscape Type wherever it is found in the country.'*
- 5.5.4 Some of the LCTs are rare in Herefordshire and only occur in the Ledbury area, for example Settled Farmlands on River Terrace and Riverside Meadows: this increases their level of landscape value.
- 5.5.5 During Ledbury's landscape baseline assessment it was noted that some of the landscapes within the area did not conform to the LCT description in HC's LCA, and displayed the key characteristics of a different LCT. In order to check this, it was necessary to consult the LCA *Technical Handbook* mentioned above, as according to the LCA SPG, this was supposed to contain individual descriptions of the LDUs (only the LCTs are described in the SPG document).
- 5.5.6 Unfortunately, despite searches and requests to HC, it was not possible to obtain hard or electronic copies of the documents or the supporting database which apparently *'contains useful detailed information'* (HC believes they have been lost). Recently, a 2006 version of the *Technical Handbook* came to light, but it is not known whether it is the current version or was revised when the LCA was revised (in 2009), so it has not formed part of the evidence-base for the LSCA. If the information comes to light at a later date, or if the LCA is updated (which it will have to be at some point in the near future), Ledbury's baseline studies would need to be updated accordingly.
- 5.5.7 HC's LCA begins with classifying sub-regional landscape character areas. Para. 4.2.12 explains that *'The location and list of Sub-regional Character Areas is shown in Fig. 9. The descriptions of both these and the Landscape Description Units are available in the technical handbook, which accompanies this SPG. Since they are site specific descriptive areas they are not considered directly pertinent to this planning guidance but they do provide valuable additional information which will be vital in the future preparation of documents such as management plans and design guides'*.
- 5.5.8 As mentioned above, unfortunately, the Technical Handbook and LDU descriptions appear to have been lost, so no description of the sub-regional character area covering the study area (Leadon Vale) can be provided here.
- 5.5.9 The locations of the county- and AONB-wide LCTs in and around Ledbury are shown on Figures 4A and 4B.
- 5.5.10 There are eleven different LCTs within the Ledbury study area, including ten of Herefordshire's twenty-three (the other type is Wooded Vale which occurs in Gloucestershire but not Herefordshire). The large number of LCTs within such a small area is an indication of how complex and interesting the landscapes in and around the parish are, being the product of the myriad natural and cultural factors and influences (which are described in more detail in the following sections).
- 5.5.11 On the whole, the landscapes within the study area are good representations of the countywide LCTs (material variations and anomalies are noted).

- 5.5.12 Where of relevance to Ledbury and this study, extracts from the countywide LCAs for each of the LCTs within the parish are provided below; however, it is important to note that in some places there is a high degree of interinfluence between the parish and neighbouring LCTs, so this must be factored in to future studies. The LCA describes broad settlement patterns within the LCTs, and this information has informed the settlement character and pattern sections below. In addition, the LCA contains important information about management guidelines and environmental mitigation for the LCTs, which should be referred to when necessary (for example when preparing / reviewing planning applications).

Principal Timbered Farmlands

- 5.5.13 Principal Timbered Farmlands occur as a narrow belt in the north-eastern part of the parish, and a wider belt south of the town.

CHARACTER DESCRIPTION

Principal Timbered Farmlands are rolling lowland landscapes with occasional steep sided hills and low escarpments. They have a small scale, wooded, agricultural appearance characterised by filtered views through densely scattered hedgerow trees. These are complex, in places intimate, landscapes made up of a mosaic of small to medium sized fields, irregularly shaped woodlands and winding lanes. The key element of these landscapes is the strong unifying presence of tree cover in the guise of woodlands, hedgerow trees, and linear tree cover associated with streams and watercourses... The irregular outline of many of the woodlands, together with the pattern of hedgerows and winding lanes, contributes to the overall organic character of this landscape. A densely dispersed pattern of farmsteads and wayside cottages is typical with a notable number of buildings constructed out of brick and timber.

Typical Principal Timbered Farmlands landscapes east of Ledbury (A449 corridor across plain)



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

Primary

- *hedgerows define field boundaries*
- *ancient wooded character portrayed by the hedgerow trees and woodland*
- *densely scattered hedgerow trees, predominantly of oak*
- *filtered views between the hedgerow oaks*

Secondary

- *organic enclosure pattern*
- *small scale landscapes*

FORCES FOR LANDSCAPE CHANGE

The deterioration of the distinctive character of these landscapes is very evident and continuing... due primarily to the decline and fragmentation of the tree cover elements, particularly the hedgerow trees... A gradual increase in arable land use is resulting in loss of function of many hedgerows and this in turn will lead to a gradual demise of the hedgerow structure through inappropriate management. Development pressure has resulted in new dwellings which do not respect the characteristic settlement pattern.

ENCLOSURE PATTERN

The organic enclosure pattern indicates an unplanned landscape arising from the previous enclosure of both former woodland and open fields. It is vital for the retention of landscape character that the organic pattern of enclosure is preserved and that a geometric pattern is not superimposed by subdividing fields or enlarging others and employing straight fence or hedge lines.

Principal Wooded Hills

- 5.5.14 This LCT covers the upstanding landscapes which characterise the east side of the parish, with a smaller area at Wall Hills on the west side.
- 5.5.15 The LCTs often coincide with areas of Ancient Semi-natural Woodland (ASNW). They are of high ecological and visual sensitivity, and are also likely to contain features of high heritage value / historic interest.

Typical Principal Wooded Hills landscapes (western edge of Frith Wood)



CHARACTER DESCRIPTION

These are upstanding, densely wooded, hilly landscapes with a steeply sloping topography. The inherent character is derived from the pronounced relief and the dominant, flowing woodland cover which provide a strong sense of unity and visual integration. These are landscapes of large irregularly shaped ancient woodlands and wooded streamlines which interlink with the surrounding hedged fields... The ancient semi-natural status of many of these woodlands confirms their high nature conservation value. These landscapes are sparsely settled by farmsteads and wayside cottages. Views are usually framed between the woodland blocks.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

Primary

- *varied, often steeply sloping topography*
- *ancient wooded character made up of mixed broadleaved woodlands, often of ancient origin*

Secondary

- *wooded land use with occasional pasture*
- *hedgerows define field boundaries*
- *linked woodland pattern*
- *medium-framed views*
- *scattered settlement pattern*

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These are highly visible landscapes, framing long distance views and therefore their visual integrity is of paramount importance in the rural landscape... more recent woodland clearance and the gradual loss of trees along hedgerows and stream sides damages both the biodiversity and landscape

character. The hedgerow and streamside trees are a vital component in maintaining visual integration between the areas of historic clearance and those still wooded.

ENCLOSURE PATTERN

The enclosure pattern is an organic composition of irregularly shaped pastoral fields bounded by hedges and often cleared from the adjoining woodland. Any changes to woodland cover, either through clearance or new planting, should respect the historical significance of the old patterns of woodland clearance and ensure the conservation of these patterns along with boundary hedges of assorted origin.

Settled Farmlands on River Terrace

- 5.5.16 This LCT covers the landscapes west of the River Leadon. Its soils comprise river terrace deposits which date to the last interglacial period. Across the area there is extensive evidence for prehistoric activity and settlement in the river gravels, including cropmarks from the late Bronze and Iron Ages.
- 5.5.17 Settled Farmlands on River Terrace is a rare LCT, and thus is of higher sensitivity and value than most others. The LCT also occurs north of the town, covering Beggars Ash and the landscapes between the east side of Wellington Heath village and Frith Wood; however, contrary to what is said in HC's LCA, the baseline studies suggest that the area to the west - a narrow band of land currently categorised as Principal Settled Farmlands - is actually Settled Farmlands on River Terrace, being more typical of this LCT (river terrace, mainly used for intensive horticulture). This is supported by the land use map (Figures 5A and 5B), which shows a narrow band of intensive horticulture north of Ledbury and east of the River Leadon.

Typical Settled Farmlands on River Terrace landscapes (midground) north / north west of Ledbury



CHARACTER DESCRIPTION

This landscape shares many of the characteristics of the Principal Settled Farmlands. These are areas defined by the highly fertile, free draining, sandy brown soils of the river terraces which give rise to the

predominantly horticultural cropping land use. Settlement here tends to be sparsely dispersed and is limited to small discrete clusters. These areas have a small to medium scale field pattern with very sparse hedgerow tree cover and consequent open views. They may have been void of woodland for a substantial period of time as they have always been the most fertile and productive agricultural land. In Herefordshire this Landscape Type is only found along the River Leadon near Ledbury.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

Primary

- horticultural cropping land use

Secondary

- hedgerows delineate the field boundaries

FORCES FOR LANDSCAPE CHANGE

The demands of modern horticulture have resulted in a landscape that is generally denuded of hedgerow trees and where the remaining hedgerows are themselves in very poor condition. Tree cover is now limited to those around buildings and those growing along water courses where the land is not required for crops.

ENCLOSURE PATTERN

The sub-regular pattern of hedged fields has been lost in many areas as hedgerows have been removed or neglected.

Riverside Meadows

- 5.5.18 The Riverside Meadows LCT covers a narrow linear belt of low-lying land running north - south along the River Leadon valley.
- 5.5.19 Due to its characteristics it is of high sensitivity. Although once extensive in Herefordshire, these traditionally pastoral, tranquil and secluded riverside meadows (settlement is typically absent) are rare in the county today, many having been lost to development (often within the flood plain), intensification of agricultural / recreational use, and pollution.
- 5.5.20 The western edges of the viaduct site lie within the Riverside Meadows LCT.

Typical Riverside Meadows landscapes, NW approach to town (A438) looking east (image © Google)



Typical Riverside Meadows landscapes, NW approach to town (A438) looking north (image © Google)



CHARACTER DESCRIPTION

These are linear, riverine landscapes associated with a flat, generally well defined, alluvial floodplain, in places framed by steeply rising ground. They are secluded pastoral landscapes, characterised by meandering tree lined rivers, flanked by riverside meadows which are defined by hedge and ditch boundaries. Settlement is typically absent. Throughout these landscapes, the presence of extensive areas of seasonally grazed waterside meadows has in the past provided a strong sense of visual and ecological unity. These are landscapes that accommodate a degree of annual flooding, a factor which has been reflected in the traditional patterns of land use, the lack of settlement and development (except for the occasional water mill), and the representation of species and habitats tolerant of such waterlogged conditions.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

Primary

- *pastoral land use*
- *well defined linear patterns of willow and alder*
- *tree cover represented by stream side and hedgerow trees*
- *unsettled landscape*

Secondary

- *wetland habitat*
- *river channel*
- *hedge and ditch boundaries*

FORCES FOR LANDSCAPE CHANGE

The strongly consistent visual and ecological character that has arisen through traditional methods of land management has been noticeably impoverished during the post war period. A rapid increase in arable cropping... has disrupted the classical patchwork of water meadows and pasture. The decline in the traditional practices of seasonal grazing and hay making, together with flood alleviation works... have all led to a reduction in ecological and visual interest. Elsewhere, built development has been undertaken and the resulting risk of flooding has often been overcome by the construction of uncharacteristic structures.... These are linear landscapes where the sense of unity relies heavily on extensive views along the length of river corridors. Added features such as roads or embankments which dissect the river corridor have resulted in numerous instances of visual fragmentation.

ENCLOSURE PATTERN

The pattern of enclosure is that of a planned nature where regularly laid out fields are hedged, ditched and traditionally managed.

Principal Settled Farmlands

- 5.5.21 This LCT is scattered throughout the county, with the greatest concentration in the centre.
- 5.5.22 Within Ledbury parish it only occurs as a very small area north of the town, covering part of the viaduct site which has outline permission for future residential development and employment use. It is thus of relatively high neighbourhood value.
- 5.5.23 The rest of the viaduct site is covered by the rare Riverside Meadows and generic Urban LCTs, although the latter appears to be another anomaly in the LCA, as the land is more characteristic of the Principal Settled Farmlands LCT (currently arable fields) so is probably an extension of the Principal Settled Farmlands lying to the north.

Typical Principal Settled Farmlands landscapes north of Ledbury, B4214 (image © Google)



CHARACTER DESCRIPTION

The rolling, lowland area of Central Herefordshire is dominated by this Landscape Type. These are settled agricultural landscapes of dispersed, scattered farms, relic commons and small villages and hamlets. The mixed farming land use reflects the good soils on which they are typically found. Networks of small winding lanes nestling within a matrix of hedged fields are characteristic. Tree cover is largely restricted to thinly scattered hedgerow trees, groups of trees around dwellings and trees along stream sides and other watercourses. The composition of the hedgerow tree cover differs from that of Timbered Farmlands in its lower density and lack of oak dominance. This is a landscape with a notably domestic character, defined chiefly by the scale of its field pattern, the nature and density of its settlement and its traditional land uses. Hop fields, orchards, grazed pastures and arable fields, together make up the rich patchwork which is typical of Principal Settled Farmlands.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

Primary

- *hedgerows used for field boundaries*

Secondary

- *mixed farming land use*

FORCES FOR LANDSCAPE CHANGE

The pattern of small to medium sized hedged fields is vulnerable to change as the tendency towards arable dominance reduces the functional need for hedgerows... inappropriate maintenance is still resulting in the degradation and loss of the hedgerows which are one of the most significant features of the landscape. Intensification of farming practices is also resulting in a simplistic visual uniformity as landscape character is eroded. Development pressure in many of these areas has resulted in a distinctly nucleated or clustered settlement pattern which is contrary to the landscape character.

ENCLOSURE PATTERN

The enclosure pattern varies considerably but is generally of a planned sub-regular nature. The small to medium sized fields are vulnerable to amalgamation through hedgerow loss.

Sandstone Estatelands

5.5.24 The LCA notes that *'This Landscape Type is only represented in Herefordshire by two Land Cover Parcels which make up the northern tip of the North-west Gloucestershire Sandlands Sub-regional Character Area around Bromsberrow'.*

5.5.25 It is rare within the parish, only covering two fields between Woodfields Farm and Webb's Coppice, but as it is not highly characteristic of the parish as a whole it is of medium to high sensitivity.

Typical Sandstone Estatelands landscapes SE of Ledbury, A417 looking SE (image © Google)



CHARACTER DESCRIPTION

These are open rolling landscapes characterised by a pattern of large arable fields, straight roads and estate plantations. This is a planned landscape in which strong, regular patterns of field layout, road networks and woodland shape play a dominant structural role... this is essentially a fairly open, large scale landscape with a notably sparse hedgerow tree presence... isolated brick farmsteads and clusters of wayside dwellings are interspersed with occasional small estate villages and their accompanying country house.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

Primary

- *highly intensive arable land use*
- *hedgerows used for field boundaries*
- *planned enclosure pattern of straight boundaries and roads*

Secondary

- *heathy/acid grassland ground vegetation*

- *planned woodland character*
- *discrete woodland pattern*
- *large scale landscape*
- *clustered settlement pattern*

FORCES FOR LANDSCAPE CHANGE

These are large scale landscapes in which the intensive land use has resulted in an overwhelming dominance of arable cropping. Hedgerows have therefore lost their primary function of stock containment and their continual deterioration has robbed these landscapes of much of their unifying presence. The deterioration of parkland and its encroachment by other land use is very evident, with many parkland trees now marooned in a sea of arable crops. The distinctive natural, heathy grassland is becoming increasingly rare as intensive management of non-productive land destroys the native plant communities.

ENCLOSURE PATTERN

These are large scale landscapes with a regular geometric pattern of large hedged fields.

Estate Farmlands

- 5.5.26 This visually-distinctive LCT characterises the landscapes in the north-westernmost part of the parish, north of Wall Hills and south of Staplow. It extends westwards as far as the River Frome.

CHARACTER DESCRIPTION

The majority of this land has historically been in the ownership of a few land owning families who have influenced the character of the landscape by laying it out in an ordered fashion. This is a mixed farming, medium scale landscape where the medium to large sized fields are defined by hedgerows. The views are framed by tree groups associated with its planned character.

These are often small, geometrically shaped plantation woodlands, possibly used in the past for shooting purposes, together with the tree features associated with large country house estates and ornamental parklands. This landscape type is similar to the Wooded Estatelands but it lacks the medieval parks and associated ancient woodland. Settlement is largely restricted to discrete clusters of dwellings and associated small estate villages.

Typical Estate Farmlands landscapes south of Staplow, B4214 looking NW (image © Google)



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

Primary

- *hedgerows define the field boundaries*

Secondary

- *mixed farming land use*
- *planned woodland character*
- *medium-framed views*
- *clustered settlement pattern*

FORCES FOR LANDSCAPE CHANGE

The tendency towards arable conversion is gradually changing the character of this Landscape Type. Hedgerow loss and deterioration are very often associated with an arable land use change, as hedgerows are no longer required for their primary function of stock containment.

ENCLOSURE PATTERN

This is a planned landscape with a sub-regular pattern of medium to large hedged fields. In Herefordshire, the fields tend to be smaller than in some other parts of the country.

Urban

- 5.5.27 The Urban LCTs are not described in the LCA as they were not assessed, but see settlement character in Section 5.7.

5.6 Physical Landscape

- 5.6.1 Ledbury's geology, topography and hydrology are complex. They give rise to fertile soils and wooded hills which were exploited by the communities which settled west of the Malvern Hills during the Mesolithic period. The landscapes of the study area are characterised by locally-distinct patterns of contrasting elements and features shaped by both nature and culture. They provide a wide range of highly valuable and valued resources for residents and visitors alike, and perform many essential functions.
- 5.6.2 This section describes the physical landscape (geology, topography, soils, hydrology, land cover and land use) of Ledbury parish, with reference to its wider context and influences.
- 5.6.3 More detail about the physical landscapes closer to the town is provided in the LSCA Area schedules in Appendix B.

Geology

- 5.6.4 Ledbury's geology originated mainly in the Silurian and Devonian periods, about 425 million years ago when the area was part of a shallow, tropical basin stretching westwards to modern-day Wales. Sea levels fluctuated, and as they did, various layers of sediments were deposited, ranging from fine-grained sandstones and siltstones to limestone. The geology evident today can be broadly divided in two: sandstone to the west, and limestone to the east.
- 5.6.5 Ledbury and the area immediately to the west are situated on sandstone, mudstones and conglomerates of the Siluro-Devonian, Lower Old Red Sandstone group, laid down as sedimentaries.
- 5.6.6 The hills immediately to the east of Ledbury consist of limestone and shales. Situated on the western flank of the Malvern Hills, the area was affected by the faulting and complex folding of very old rocks that produced the Malverns. Such folding and movement also occurred along a north - south fault through Ledbury, causing earlier Silurian limestone to re-emerge in the hills to the east of the town. This eastern geology now consists mainly of Wenlock Limestone and Ludlow Shales.
- 5.6.7 Similar folding further west caused limestone to re-emerge in Marcle Ridge c. 7km west of Ledbury, forming the eastern edge of the Woolhope Dome.

Marcle Ridge, looking west from Malvern (photo courtesy of Jan Sedlacek @Digitlight)



- 5.6.8 Wall Hills, c. 2km north west of Ledbury, comprises Old Red Sandstone capped by crystalline Cornstone or calcretes (Devonian rock left following erosion of surrounding beds).
- 5.6.9 Wenlock Limestone used to be quarried within the area for mortar, fertiliser and crushed rock for aggregate. It was also used in cottages, boundary walls and buildings such as St Katherine's Hospital.
- 5.6.10 Within the Wenlock Limestone, Ledbury Marble was found - a hard, crystalline, fossil-rich limestone used for decorative purposes, for example in Church Lane's cobbles.
- 5.6.11 There are many disused quarries within the study area. Some have been identified in HC's *Ecological Network Map* (2013) as Local Geological Sites (LgeoSs). LgeoSs are of national (sometimes international) importance due to their very high geodiversity value²²; they often have high biodiversity, landscape and recreational value as well.
- 5.6.12 Three LgeoSs lie within the parish: Knapp Lane Quarry, Ledbury Tunnel Quarry and Coneygree (or Conigree²³) Wood Site 1 (see Figure 8A).

²² The Geological Conservation Review (GCR) is the register of known nationally- and internationally-important Earth science (geological and geomorphological) sites in Great Britain. The GCR underpins designation of Earth science features in SSSIs. The majority of GCR sites therefore now have statutory protection through designation as notified features in SSSIs. GCR sites, however, remain unnotified, and are known as unnotified GCR sites. National Park Authorities and some LPAs treat these as candidate SSSIs, and afford them the same levels of protection as SSSIs. Some unnotified GCR sites are also Local Geodiversity Sites, and as such they are afforded levels of protection appropriate to locally-important sites (though they are, themselves, considered to be of national or international importance). The remaining unnotified GCR sites have no statutory protection, although they are considered to be sites of national or international importance.

²³ The correct spelling is Coneygree, but Conigree is occasionally used. Some time ago, LTC decided to use Conigree throughout the NDP, because this was how the Forestry Commission spelt it in one of their documents. Conigree is used throughout the LVBA unless Coneygree is used elsewhere for example in documents / designations.

- 5.6.13 The Herefordshire and Worcestershire Earth Heritage Trust (HWEHT)'s publication *Explore Ledbury Geology & Heritage Walking Trail* provides interesting and useful information about Ledbury's geology and heritage²⁴, with a self-guided walking trail in and around the town along which the various stones used in buildings and other structures can be found.
- 5.6.14 In future, these LGeoSs should be better known, protected and enhanced to ensure protection of both their geo- and biodiversity (see Recommendations in Section 7).

Topography

- 5.6.15 Topography is determined by the underlying geology and the effects of erosion and abrasion over many millennia.
- 5.6.16 Topography is an integral aspect of Ledbury's context and setting, and has also had a significant influence on the town's evolution and growth, which is constrained and built up against the hills to the east and bounded by the River Leadon to the west.

Town viewed from west with hills to east on skyline - River Leadon in foreground, behind trees



- 5.6.17 The topography of both the study area and the town / its immediate surrounds can be seen on the OS maps used as the bases for the figures.
- 5.6.18 The highest part of the settlement is to the north east just below Dog Hill, at c. 120m above Ordnance datum (AOD). The urban area slopes broadly westwards down to the River Leadon, the lowest part being at c. 45m AOD, south west of the Full Pitcher roundabout.
- 5.6.19 The town developed away from the north - south axis of the original settlement (the Homend, High Street and the Southend at c. 80m AOD) to cover the eastern slopes rising above the town. A much larger area of the town developed to the west of the main Homend-Southend axis on the gentle slopes of the Leadon valley. This urban development is mostly between c. 50 and 60m AOD.

²⁴ Available from www.earthheritagetrust.org. Details of Ledbury's LGeoSs were kindly provided by the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Earth Heritage Trust.

5.6.20 In the wider area, the more resistant limestone has produced a ridge of hills with steep scarps which extend some 6km along the town's eastern edges. From north to south, the hills are: Frith Wood to the north-east at c. 260m AOD; Dog Hill at c. 150 m AOD; and the larger Conigree Wood to the south and east, at just over 190m AOD. The hills are characterised by steep slopes, as are the routes through them, notably Knapp Lane and the A449 Worcester Road.

Knapp Lane, looking west (image © Google)



5.6.21 To the north-west, west and south-west of Ledbury town, the land is low-lying and gently undulating. The River Leadon, flowing north - south to the west of Ledbury, forms a plain at between 45 and 60m AOD.

River Leadon plain north west of Ledbury (image © Google)



- 5.6.22 Within this valley there are slightly higher river terraces (for example around the 60 metre contour), representing a former flood plain into which the River Leadon has cut down to its present course. Such river terraces were formed due to fluctuations in climate during the Quaternary period. As the ice sheet expanded during a cold phase, sea levels fell and rivers such as the Leadon cut deep channels into their flood plain. When the ice melted, these channels were filled with glacial debris, so that a typical terrace is covered with a sheet of gravel and sand passing upwards into finer alluvium. During a warmer, interglacial period, the sea failed to recover its former level and rivers continued cutting down to produce a flood plain at a lower level than before.
- 5.6.23 Some Herefordshire valleys contain a 'staircase' of several terraces caused by several phases of climate fluctuation. However, in the valley area to the north, west and south-west of Ledbury, it is difficult to distinguish more than one river terrace level and only remnants are visible.
- 5.6.24 The area south of Leadon Way is more undulating, sloping west / north west towards the river from c. 90m AOD close to the southern entrance to Ledbury to c. 50m AOD by the B4216 Dymock Road.

Land south of Leadon Way, Dymock Road looking east



5.6.25 The valley area between the Little Marcle Road and the A438 Hereford Road is also undulating, sloping gently up to Wall Hills, which rises above the plain to over 110m AOD.

Wall Hills on skyline, looking north west



- 5.6.26 Further afield, both to the east and west, Ledbury is bounded by much higher relief. The Malvern Hills to the east form a distinctive chain of peaks which run north - south, from the River Teme west of Worcester to the northern Gloucestershire border at Chase End. The highest peak is the Herefordshire Beacon (also known as British Camp), at 338m AOD.
- 5.6.27 The core of the Malvern Hills is formed from the oldest rocks in England. They were solidified from molten material deep in the earth during the Precambrian period some 680 million years ago, and were later thrust up to the surface. There are many different types of these very hard rocks - granite for example - giving rise to the collective name 'the Malverns Complex'.
- 5.6.28 The Hills act as a barrier between the drift deposits of the Severn Valley river terraces to the east and the undulating Old Red Sandstone claylands to the west, with great contrasts in resulting landcover and land uses. There is a high degree of physical association and interinfluence between the Malvern Hills and Ledbury, but limited intervisibility due to screening by the intervening upstanding topography of Frith Wood and further north, Oyster Hill at c. 211m AOD.

The Malvern Hills, looking south west towards Ledbury (photo courtesy of Jan Sedlacek @Digitlight)



- 5.6.29 Marcle Ridge to the west forms high ground ranging from c. 170 to just over 200m AOD. There is a high degree of intervisibility between the Ridge and the Malvern Hills, with Ledbury visible on the lowlands in between.

View from Marcle Ridge looking east over Leadon Vale to Malvern Hills on skyline



- 5.6.30 Topography also influences the climate of the Ledbury area, sheltering it from easterly winds and resulting in a south-westerly orientation; this, along with the area lying in the rain-shadow of Wales, results in a mild, productive climate.

Soils

- 5.6.31 In the lower-lying areas where the underlying geology is Old Red Sandstone, to the north, west and south of Ledbury, the soils are predominantly Category 8. They are 'slightly acid loamy and clayey soils with impeded drainage'²⁵. Fertility is moderate to high, and the landcover predominantly arable and grassland.
- 5.6.32 Superficial surface deposits (clay, silt, sand and gravel) are found along the course of the River Leadon, giving rise to the characteristic riverside meadows.
- 5.6.33 Within this lowland area, the river terraces north, west, and south-west of Ledbury are noted for their sandy brown soils, which are free-draining and highly fertile. These are the most productive soils in the area and have long been cultivated, most notably for horticultural crops.
- 5.6.34 The area to the north-east of Ledbury, bordering Frith Wood, and in a 'tongue' to the south-east of the town, consists of Category 6 soils. This is 'freely draining slightly acid loamy soil' (Soilscape). Its fertility is relatively low and gives rise to arable farming and grassland.
- 5.6.35 The high hills comprising Frith Wood, Conigree Wood and the area adjacent to the A449 as it leaves Ledbury have mainly Category 17 soils. These are described as 'slowly permeable seasonally wet acid loamy and clayey soils with impeded drainage' (Soilscape). They have relatively low fertility associated with grassland, some arable production, and forestry.

²⁵ Source: Soilscales <http://www.landis.org.uk/soilscales/>

Characteristic reddish-brown soils (west of Frith Wood)



- 5.6.36 According to the Agricultural Land Classification (ALC), land in the Ledbury area is predominantly Grade 2 (very good). Within the Grade 2 area west of Ledbury, there are two areas of Grade 1 (excellent): one south of Flights Farm, the other east of the B4216 Dymock Road near Ledbury. The western, mainly Grade 2 area is also broken by small areas of Grade 3 (good to moderate). Wall Hills is surrounded by Grade 3, as is land either side of the River Leadon, from north of the viaduct to where it flows out of the parish to the south.
- 5.6.37 To the east of Frith Wood and Dog Hill is a narrow band of Grade 4 (poor), orientated approximately north - south. Roughly parallel with this is a more extensive area of Grade 3 land, from around Cummins Farm in the north to the edge of Conigree Wood, south of Hill Farm. This Grade 3 area includes some small areas of Grade 2 land either side of the railway line.

Hydrology

- 5.6.38 The drainage system of the Ledbury area is mainly determined by the River Leadon and its tributaries which are described below; however, the upper reaches of the Cradley Brook flow from and through the north-eastern sector of the parish.
- 5.6.39 The Cradley Brook rises in the lower western slopes of the Malvern Hills below British Camp, emerging from springs along the Ridgeway which forms the western edge of Eastnor Park. It flows northwards through Colwall and Mathon before turning north east at the northern end of the Malvern Hills and discharging into the River Teme at Leigh, west of Worcester.
- 5.6.40 Cradley Brook's influence on the parish's landscapes is relatively limited, being confined to its shallow valley / plain - a narrow area of lowland lying between the toe of the Hills and Frith Wood.
- 5.6.41 The Leadon's catchment area is defined by local topography, bounded by the high relief of Seager Hill and the Marcle Ridge to the west, and the hills extending from Frith Wood to beyond Conigree Wood to the east (see relief on Figure 1A).

RIVER LEADON

- 5.6.42 The River Leadon is relatively short (c. 51km from end to end) and, as its Celtic name suggests, is mainly a 'broad stream'. Rising c. 10km north of Ledbury, near Evesbatch, it flows in a southerly direction through Bosbury, Ledbury and Dymock, joining the River Severn at Over, near Gloucester. Within Ledbury parish, the Leadon flows from north of the railway viaduct to a course west of the town, roughly parallel with the A417 ring road. It then continues southwards following a course to the west of the B4216, Dymock Road.
- 5.6.43 The river's course through the landscape is marked by mature riparian vegetation along most of its length, but there are few places from which the river itself is visible except at close quarters, especially in summer when trees are in full leaf, for example when walking through the Riverside Park west of Leadon Way.

River Leadon, west of Leadon Way





TRIBUTARY STREAMS

- 5.6.44 Water coming off the high hills to the west and east of the river drains into various small tributary streams. Within the study area, these include Stony Brook, which flows eastwards from near Durlow Common to join the River Leadon north of Ledbury. Further south, there are several streams flowing in an easterly direction, for example joining the Leadon near Fairtree Farm and in a westerly direction, joining the main river opposite Siddington Farm.

SOIL DRAINAGE

- 5.6.45 Drainage on the area's mainly clay soils (Category 8) is described as impeded i.e. slow to soak away or drain to the local stream network described above. Similarly-impeded drainage occurs on the hills of Frith Wood and Conigree Wood (Category 17). Smaller areas on the western edge of Frith Wood and in a narrow tongue of land to the east of the town (Category 6) are more free-draining, to local groundwater and streams.

FLOODING

- 5.6.46 Sources of reference for this section include the *River Severn Catchment Flood Management Plan (2009)*, and *Herefordshire Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2019)*.
- 5.6.47 The Vale of Leadon is part of the Lower Severn Corridor and Leadon Catchment sub-area, and is liable to flooding both by surface and river water.
- 5.6.48 The fluvial flood risk on both sides of the River Leadon at Ledbury is currently 'low to moderate'. Flood Zone 3 (land assessed as having a greater flood risk (>1%)) is closest to the Leadon; there are small patches of Flood Zone 2 (medium probability of flooding (>0.1%)) adjoining Flood Zone 3, but further from the river.

River Leadon flooding at viaduct



- 5.6.49 There is a higher risk of surface water flooding in small patches close to tributary streams entering the Leadon at Ledbury from both the east and the west. These include: parts of the Bromyard Road trading estate and Bromyard Road; a small area north of the viaduct; on the town side of Little Marcle roundabout; and the rugby pitches.
- 5.6.50 The overall 'low to moderate' flood assessment may change. The River Severn and Herefordshire studies predict that with present trends in land use and management, climate change and further urbanisation, flood risks near Ledbury will increase. The winters of 2019/2020 and 2020/2021 saw a cluster of floods of relatively long duration and / or large spatial footprint in the neighbouring catchment areas of the Severn and the Wye.
- 5.6.51 The Severn and Herefordshire studies recommend a range of best-practice land use and management measures that will work together to reduce run-off and restore a more sustainable and natural floodplain. These measures include wetland creation and woodland planting to slow the flow of water. They also include encouraging increased resilience in buildings, infrastructure and businesses to flooding, and ensuring that new development is steered to areas with the lowest probability of flooding.
- 5.6.52 The River Leadon and its tributaries have had a significant influence on the area's settlement pattern. The risk of flooding has been a major constraint to the development of Ledbury west of the A417 ring road and should continue to influence the location of new development. Settlement in the rest of the Vale of Leadon is rural, sparsely dispersed, often with single farmsteads.

WATER QUALITY

- 5.6.53 The River Leadon and its tributaries form a highly important and strategic north - south green / blue infrastructure corridor which displays great biodiversity - see Section 5.14. However, currently, the Leadon's levels of water quality, and the aquatic / riparian flora and fauna it supports, are in decline, mainly due to high levels of phosphates in the water and surrounding soils, similar to the serious problem in the River Wye and River Lugg catchment areas.

- 5.6.54 Recent studies of the Leadon by the Environment Agency (2019)²⁶ show the overall water classification as Moderate, which means that the watercourse is currently failing to meet the required standards in some categories. This is mainly due to pollution from intensive agricultural operations such as poultry units, although waste-water treatment and disposal, the larger settlements and certain forms of transport also contribute towards the problem. The implications for biodiversity are discussed further in Section 5.14.
- 5.6.55 Thus, there is a clear need for continuing monitoring of water quality in the Leadon, as well as for more proactive cross-county liaison, collaboration and co-operation to support mitigation measures, such as advice to landowners / farmers; the creation of wetlands; and gaining a full and informed understanding of the implications for water quality (positive and negative) when planning and / or considering new developments in the Leadon catchment area.

WATER AVAILABILITY

- 5.6.56 The profile for NCA 100 Herefordshire Lowlands, which, in the Ledbury area broadly covers the landscapes west of the Malvern Hills AONB, states that *'Large quantities of water are used both in Hereford and Ledbury in the drinks industries, both processing and treating waste. When Bulmers are treating apple pulp waste in the autumn there is barely enough water to treat the sewage waste from Hereford. Surface and groundwater resources in this NCA have been assessed as 'no water available'.*

Landcover

- 5.6.57 Beyond the urban area, Ledbury's landscapes are predominately agricultural, with landcover comprising a patchwork of arable and pastoral fields. The latter are predominantly improved grassland so like the arable fields have limited biodiversity value; however, at Stony Hill on the east side of the town there are small, locally-rare patches of Lowland Calcareous Grassland and Lowland Meadows (Priority Habitat Inventory sites - see Biodiversity section).

Typical landcover west of Ledbury



²⁶ Catchment Data Explorer (Waterbody ID GB109054039640 Leadon source to Preston Brook; waterbody ID GB109054032511 Preston Brook to confluence River Severn)

- 5.6.58 Land south of new development adjoining Leadon Way is agricultural, mainly arable, interspersed with small blocks of mature woodland (broadleaved and coniferous plantations) and coppice.
- 5.6.59 The areas to the south west and north west / north of Ledbury are covered by more open agricultural land, with little tree cover except along watercourses. These sectors also contain a few small areas devoted to intensive agriculture and more extensively, modern bush orchards. Polytunnels are relatively common in the local landscapes and are highly visible from several locations in and around the parish²⁷.

Polytunnels north west of Ledbury, looking east from Marcle Ridge



²⁷ Polytunnels are usually white, which results in a high degree of contrast when viewed against a darker, usually green background; however, bright yellow tunnels are being trialled near Trumpet for pest-repellent reasons. Surprisingly, the yellow is less jarring than white, probably because a) fields of yellow-flowered oilseed rape are now a common sight, and b) landscape greens tend to contain a high percentage of yellow.

Polytunnels at fruit farm north of Ledbury on slopes west of Wellington Heath



- 5.6.60 The traditional agricultural landscape of the 19th century (see Appendix C and Section 5.11), with its small arable and pastoral fields mixed with meadows and orchards, bordered by hedging, is still visible in Ledbury's rural surroundings. Many of the 19th century field boundaries are intact, especially those bordering the hills to the east of the town, where steeper slopes are used for pasture rather than arable farming. However, to both the north and south of Ledbury, many boundary hedges have been wholly or partially removed to create larger fields for arable crops. Further, traditional orchards have been allowed to decline and new, extensive areas planted with less biodiverse modern bush orchards.
- 5.6.61 Landcover includes a large area of mixed woodland (deciduous and coniferous) on the range of steep hills to the east of Ledbury and close to Wall Hills to the north-west of the town. Much of this tree cover is categorised as ASNW (some replanted). These wooded hills form the eastern boundary to significant areas of historic parkland.
- 5.6.62 Ledbury Park and Underdown (both described in detail in the following sections) lie close to the south-eastern edge of the town: much of the land is categorised as Woodpasture and Parkland Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Habitat, which is typical of historic parkland and of high value. There is a smaller area of parkland near Fairtree Farm, close to the western edge of Ledbury - see Section 5.11 Landscape History and Historic Landscape Character.
- 5.6.63 Beyond the town and its hills, the eastern part of the parish that extends towards Malvern is mainly under arable cultivation; along the A449 corridor, on both sides, the land slopes down to the Cradley Brook valley which the road crosses. In this sector, woodland cover is most noticeable on surrounding hills and ridges to the north west and south, with mainly pastoral fields just below the wooded heights.

Land Use

- 5.6.64 Parish-wide land use was mapped at a 1: 10,000 scale (see Figures 5A and 5B). The information was gathered through a combination of field-walking, local knowledge, and studying maps and Google Earth.
- 5.6.65 Land uses are greatly determined by the physical factors described in the previous sections; the influence of land uses on character and views are described in the following sections. In summary, beyond the urban area (including the new housing sites south of Leadon Way), land is predominately in agricultural use, with some small but significant areas in intensive horticultural use, mostly for apples grown in modern bush orchards and soft fruits grown under polytunnels.
- 5.6.66 There are also extensive woodlands on the hills to the east of Ledbury on the western edge of the Malvern Hills AONB which are still managed for forestry, but are also highly valued for their views, biodiversity and general recreational use.

5.7 Settlement Character and Pattern

- 5.7.1 This section was informed by research, map regression exercises, and settlement pattern analysis. It describes the patterns and characteristics of settlement present within the study area, and explains how Ledbury's distinctive character evolved from a cluster of dwellings at a crossroads into a thriving market town.
- 5.7.2 The contextual history and evolution of Ledbury's landscapes and settlements are set out in Section 5.11; see also map sequence 1831 - 2006 in Appendix C.

Study Area / Parish Settlement Pattern Overview

- 5.7.3 The countywide LCA describes the various LCTs within the study area (see Section 5.5); this includes an overview of the patterns of settlement that characterise each LCT, and importantly, an indication of what the most appropriate siting / layout / form of residential development would be within that LCT. The settlement pattern descriptions for the LCTs which cover the parish are as follows:

Principal Timbered Farmlands

SETTLEMENT PATTERN

These landscapes typically have a dispersed settlement pattern of frequent roadside dwellings and farmsteads, set amongst winding lanes. In accordance with UDP policy, additional individual dwellings would conform to the settlement character, as long as they do not occur in sufficient density to convert the pattern to wayside or clustered status. Modern development favouring groups or clusters of new houses would not be appropriate in this landscape.

Principal Wooded Hills

SETTLEMENT PATTERN

This is a landscape with a scattered settlement pattern of occasional dwellings which were traditionally small forestry workers cottages. An occasional additional dwelling could be assimilated if it is in accordance with... policy, but the density of dwellings should remain extremely low.

Settled Farmlands on River Terrace

SETTLEMENT PATTERN

Pressure for built development has been resisted in these areas that are so valuable for horticulture.

However, limited new development could be accommodated, either as small clusters or individual dwellings, but only in accordance with UDP policy. The density should remain very low.

Riverside Meadows

SETTLEMENT PATTERN

These are essentially unsettled landscapes with occasional mills or other buildings directly associated with the river.

Principal Settled Farmlands

SETTLEMENT PATTERN

The dispersed settlement pattern of farmsteads and hamlets is capable of accommodating limited new development if it is in accordance with... policy. Low densities of individual dwellings would be acceptable as long as they are not sited close enough to coalesce into a prominent wayside settlement pattern. Additional housing in hamlets and villages should be modest in size in order to preserve the character of the original settlement.

Sandstone Estatelands

SETTLEMENT PATTERN

The settlement pattern varies between isolated brick farmsteads, clusters of wayside dwellings and occasional estate villages.

Estate Farmlands

SETTLEMENT PATTERN

The settlement pattern is of clustered groups of dwellings, often estate villages. New development which tends towards a clustered pattern would be appropriate in these landscapes if in accordance with... policy. However, the siting of new development should be undertaken with extreme care in order to avoid compromising the visual integrity of distinctive estate villages.

- 5.7.4 Broadly, settlement patterns within the parish are typical of the LCTs in which they occur; however, there are local variations which are likely to affect, and must be factored into, plans and decisions about the siting, layout, form and design of new development.
- 5.7.5 Over time, settlement of the landscapes on the west side of the Malvern Hills has ranged from transient encampments to individual farmsteads and cottages clustered in hamlets, small and large villages, and market towns such as Ledbury.
- 5.7.6 Ledbury is the only town within the study area; Wellington Heath and Colwall are the largest villages. Several small villages / hamlets / settlement clusters are quite evenly-scattered throughout, encircling Ledbury. The scatter and density of the smaller settlements / building clusters varies, with location determined by, and reflecting, natural, cultural and other factors / constraints.
- 5.7.7 In the north to east and east to south sectors, apart from Wellington Heath and Colwall (both in the north to east sector), settlement is characteristically very sparsely-scattered, comprising a few small villages and hamlets (including Old Colwall, White-leaved Oak and Bromesberrow); settlement clusters (such as Bradlow, Hollybush and Parkway); individual dwellings (large and small, old and modern, roadside / isolated); traditional farmsteads; and occasional hostelrys.
- 5.7.8 This is partly because the land is hilly / sloping / undulating / wooded and the network of lanes is winding and narrow, but also due to the presence of large country houses (often medieval manors, or in the case of Eastnor, a castle) surrounded by extensive private estates (parks and / or farmland), on which there is usually very little built form (occasionally estate villages, lodges and associated dwellings / farm buildings).
- 5.7.9 In addition, because the landscapes are of high quality and value (for these reasons), they are covered by the AONB designation: this means that in most cases, new development must be carefully considered and fully justified before it is allowed, and of a commensurate level of quality.

- 5.7.10 The patterns of settlement in the south to west and west to north sectors of the study area reflect human responses to opportunities offered by the flatter, more accessible and very fertile lowlands which characterise the landscapes west of Ledbury. Here, the land was more easily-exploited for commercial production: with Ledbury being a strategically-located, bustling market town, the area attracted and established the wealthier classes.
- 5.7.11 In these sectors, unsurprisingly, the density of settlement and built form is highest in the areas closest to Ledbury (Wall Hills is an exception, perhaps due to factors such as topography and the scheduling), and reduces markedly the further west one travels, only increasing again when approaching the outskirts of Hereford (for example at Bartestree / Lugwardine, and Rotherwas, respectively c. 14 and 16km from Ledbury).
- 5.7.12 A few small villages / hamlets / clusters of dwellings are widely scattered throughout, including Parkway, Leddington, Preston Cross, Little Marcle, Aylton / Putley Green, Pixley, Trumpet and Staplow. There are also roadside dwellings (but little ribbon development).

Approach to Parkway from south, along A417 (image © Google)



Staplow, along B4214 north west of Ledbury (image © Google)



- 5.7.13 Traditional farmsteads are characteristic in the area, often brick-and-timber and featuring an oast house; however, many have been significantly enlarged in recent times (from the mid-1970s onwards), and are now large, intensive agricultural complexes comprising modern, industrial-scale units which dwarf the original cluster (in several cases, the original farmhouses and outbuildings are listed).

Farm complex at Wall Hills with oast and Grade II listed barn (image © Julian P Guffogg)*



Traditional farmhouse (Grade II listed), Plaistow (image © Google)



Aerial view of Plaistow farm complex (image © Google)



- 5.7.14 The larger farm complexes tend to be relatively well-separated, but the landscapes between Ledbury and Marcle Ridge (which forms the eastern edge of the Woolhope Dome on the east side of the River Wye, and lies within the Wye Valley AONB) are open, and tree cover is sparse. This increases the physical and visual association between the large complexes (particularly where polytunnels are used), and the effect occasionally becomes cumulative, especially when seen from elevated viewpoints (as shown in the photographs in Section 5.6).
- 5.7.15 Although there are a few country houses within private parkland, the estates appear to be 'minor' in comparison to the large individual landholdings east of Ledbury, such as Eastnor and Bromesberrow.

Eastnor Castle and park (photo courtesy Jan Sedlacek)



- 5.7.16 The southern and western outskirts of Ledbury saw considerable expansion of built form in the mid- to late-20th century, which continues to the present day. This is described in more detail below: the town's wider historical context is described in Section 5.11 Landscape History and Historic Landscape Character.

Ledbury Town Evolution of Present-Day Character

- 5.7.17 The town itself probably originated in the late 7th century (c. 690 AD) as a cluster of dwellings at Lower Cross. For millennia, this had been the main crossing point of north - south and east - west trackways to and from sites of cultural significance including early hillforts. Ledbury is located along a pilgrimage route between Hereford and the Malvern Hills, famed for their natural spring water which was considered sacred.
- 5.7.18 In those times, major crossing points were good places to meet, rest and trade, and eventually, to settle. Ledbury marked the point along the route to the Hills where the terrain became more challenging, so it was a logical point at which to pause. It was also a good location for settlement: there were abundant natural resources including springs, it was accessible, lay above the flood plain, was sheltered by wooded hillslopes, and commanding views could be gained from the more elevated locations.

- 5.7.19 When the Domesday Book was compiled in 1086, Ledbury was a rural manor in the episcopate of the Bishop of Hereford (Richard de Capella, d. 1127); it was recorded as Liedeberge. The Bishop created a new town or borough, with a market place in what is now High Street.
- 5.7.20 There was a large minster church in Ledbury at the time of the Domesday survey, in the same location as the present Grade I-listed St Michael and All Angels church, on the town's central eastern edge near an important routeway junction. The site is in an elevated position, the area forming the transition between the steep-sided hills to the east and the lower-lying river valley to the west. Worship at the site may have commenced during the 8th century, when the Bishop of Hereford sent a group of his clergy to establish a Christian presence there. The church was rebuilt between c. 1120 and 1140.

Ledbury church spire, looking towards town from west, British Camp on skyline



- 5.7.21 The presence of the minster and the ownership of the town by the Church influenced its layout - with triangular marketplace and burgage plots along the main north - south road - and how it has grown since.
- 5.7.22 Houses extended north along 'The Homend' (name first recorded in 1288) then along Southend. Bye Street was probably developed next, and finally New Street, where houses had been built by 1186. This 12th century town plan was barely altered until the building of the canal and railway in the late 18th and mid-19th centuries respectively, and it is clearly legible in the town centre today.
- 5.7.23 St Katherine's Hospital was founded in 1231 by Bishop Hugh Foliot, and it is one of the most important surviving medieval hospital sites in the country. Along with its almshouses, this is now a Grade II*-listed building (see photographs overleaf).

St Katherine's Hospital and Almshouses, looking east



St Katherine's Hospital and Almshouses, looking west



St Katherine's Hall



- 5.7.24 Hospitals like this were fairly common in the Middle Ages, but few have been retained in their entirety. At the same time, the second rebuilding of the church began, including the construction of the detached bell tower.
- 5.7.25 The Chapter House was built in the early 14th century, probably before Katherine of Ledbury's time and certainly before 1330. The reason for building it is unknown: nothing to do with the Benedictines as is often supposed - apparently it was never consecrated and has never contained an altar; nor was it built as a shrine to a local saint, (who was never formally canonised), Katherine of Ledbury.
- 5.7.26 In the mid-14th century, Ledbury was affected by the Black Death, which resulted in significant loss of population and economic decline, and the town only began to expand again in the 15th century, when the wool trade brought wealth to the area. This allowed the town to be rebuilt, although the original layout of streets and central market place below the church were retained.
- 5.7.27 A great deal of the work was carried out between 1570 - 1620, as the town prospered from its trade in wool and the weaving of cloth: the Civil War caused but a brief hiatus.
- 5.7.28 In fact, the majority of the historic buildings in the town centre today date from the 15th - 17th centuries, and all make highly important contributions to Ledbury's sense of place, identity and local distinctiveness.

Ledbury town centre and marketplace - High Street looking north



- 5.7.29 Notable examples from the earlier part of this period include: the Master's House built in 1487 - 8 (Grade II*-listed, part of the St Katherine's Hospital complex); the Heritage Centre aka the Old Grammar School (1489 - 90, part Grade II* but see note in Section 5.12); No.1 Church Lane (1510 - 11); the Feathers Hotel (1560 - 70, Grade II*); the Butcher Row House (1581 - 2); the Old Talbot Inn (c. 1596, Grade II*) and Ledbury Park (c. 1595, Grade I).
- 5.7.30 These and many of the other buildings are very good representations of the vernacular of their respective periods, resulting in a diverse mixture of styles and materials (timber-framed 'black-and-white' being highly characteristic); yet the arrangement - still following the ancient cross-roads street pattern (somewhat disrupted by market encroachment some time before 1617, resulting in the 'hidden' entrance to Church Lane - see photo overleaf) - gives rise to a strong sense of order and unity.

'Hidden' entrance to Church Lane, off marketplace



Church Lane



5.7.31 Work started on a new building in the market place in 1617, although it took 51 years to complete (1668 - the man who was responsible for the building works, John Phillips, died in 1655). Today, the Market House is one of Ledbury's most distinctive (and probably most-photographed) buildings. It is Grade-I listed and is considered to be one of the finest examples in England. It still hosts the Charter Market (granted by Queen Elizabeth I in 1584) on Tuesdays and Saturdays.

5.7.32 The listing description states: *'Begun circa 1617 and completed after 1655, and attributed John Abel, the King's Carpenter. Timber-framed with a gable-ended tiled roof. 2 storeys. The upper storey is supported on 7 posts on the long sides and 3 at the ends all with curved braces. The posts are of local Spanish chestnut, on stone bases, they are moulded grooved and tapered with moulded bases. Upper storey projects on all sides with chamfered bressummers and exposed timber framing, herring bone patterned on the west and south, the other sides with square panels... Market House with all the listed buildings on the east side of High Street form a good group'.*

The Market House



5.7.33 In fact, there are inaccuracies in the listing, which dates from 1953, and there is now doubt that the work was carried out by John Abel. In 2006, the Market House had to be jacked up in order to treat a wasp infestation. This gave experts and interested parties the opportunity to inspect every part of the building, which was re-roofed at this time. Duncan James (expert in timber-framed buildings of Herefordshire) produced a report called *An Analysis of the Historic Fabric of Late 16th and early 17th Century Buildings in Ledbury, Herefordshire* (June 2007). The Market House is discussed on pp 14-18. The 'posts' are not 'local Spanish chestnut', they are in fact '16 tapering oak pillars'.

5.7.34 The Reformation (1517 - 1648) also resulted in certain changes in Ledbury; in particular, the Church no longer owned the town - it had been sold off, and had passed into the ownership of a small group of families who also owned many of the surrounding estates. The town was among a bundle of lands including another 26 chantries in Herefordshire plus a few in Worcestershire, which were sold for £957 6s. 2d. on 21 August 1549 (today worth c. £670k). The purchasers were Richard

Willason of Ledbury, gentleman (who was married to Ann Elton) and John Harford of Bosbury [ref. *Patent Rolls*, 1549].

- 5.7.35 In the early 18th century, the Ledbury Turnpike Trust Act 1721 attempted to improve the roads, and in the late 18th century, the Herefordshire and Gloucestershire canal was built to improve the movement of heavy loads; however it was the coming of the railway in 1861 which affected growth of the town the most.
- 5.7.36 The Victorian age resulted in the coming of running water, sanitation and power supplies. The first OS map of 1887 (see Appendix C) shows the town still surrounded by fields and woodland but expanding, now with recently-constructed housing, much of it associated with the railway. The station opened in 1861, and a new cattle market opened in 1887. In 1892, a private electricity plant was built at Fairtree on the town's western outskirts (this later became a jam factory, and is now the site of United Beverages Limited (UBL)).
- 5.7.37 Construction of dwellings at Happy Land and Newtown began in the 1850s. They were built using locally-made bricks - there was a brickworks in New Street and another in Victoria Road. The Happy Land housing was built for the working classes in Bridge Street, with more expensive individual housing in Newtown's Victoria Road and Albert Road. The project was carried out with the aid of the Ledbury Benefit Building Society, with members making contributions into a mutual fund which was used to purchase land and build the houses.
- 5.7.38 Newbury Park was developed from 1886 over a period of about twenty years by the Ledbury Building Society; Bank Crescent followed from the 1890s. Land was purchased, divided up into plots, sold and gradually, individual homes were built.
- 5.7.39 The expansion of the town continued during the 20th century, albeit relatively slowly. After World War (WW) I, new housing was built as 'Homes for Heroes', and during the early decades of the 20th century, plots were sold for the building of individual homes. Between WWII and the late-1970s / early 80s, many new houses were constructed, including a large housing estate on the former Deer Park (of Ledbury Park - see Sections 5.11 and 5.12 below), and several apartment blocks. However, there was little further growth in the town until the start of the 21st century.
- 5.7.40 In 1971, Ledbury town's population was 3,911; it then stabilised for some time. By 2011 (the date of the last Census), the town's population had grown to 9,636, and since then, many new homes and other developments have been built.

Post-WWII houses in Ledbury



- 5.7.41 Historically, the direction of Ledbury's outward growth was usually determined by the presence of natural and man-made features. The railway formed the northern limit of the settlement until the mid-20th century, although properties such as Old Kennels Farm lay beyond it well before then. Units were built on fields north of the railway, on the west side of the Bromyard Road, perhaps before or during WWII.
- 5.7.42 The land to the east of the town is wooded, hilly, and only accessible via narrow lanes, and since 1959 has been designated as an AONB; both factors act as forms of constraint to development. The River Leadon and its floodplain lie to the west, a natural constraint, although in recent years some large, modern and visually unattractive developments have been allowed, for example the UBL factory on Lilly Hall Lane, and the auction site on the south side of the Ross Road, opposite the rugby club. Both industrialise an otherwise good quality and tranquil rural landscape.

UBL factory, looking north west along Lilly Hall Lane



UBL factory, looking north from Ross Road



UBL factory, looking south east from Herefordshire Trail, Wall Hills



Auction site from the air (image © Google)



- 5.7.43 In the 1980s, a new relief road was built west and south of the town: the final Hereford Road section to join the Leadon Way roundabout was completed in 1989. This provided a much-needed by-pass around Ledbury, diverting traffic from the medieval town-centre streets and allowing it to flow well-beyond the modern built-up edges of the town.
- 5.7.44 It was designed to effectively contain the settlement, clearly separating town from countryside, and to act as a defensible boundary to the town's southern and western edges. By that time, large new housing estates had been developed south of the town centre, on land lying between the A417 and Mabel's Furlong (Wild House Farm) - Leadon Way ran south of these.
- 5.7.45 Landscape buffers, some with acoustic bunds, were established between the new road and the settlement, many of which are now belts of semi-mature woodland.

Eastern end of Leadon Way, looking south west (image © Google)



- 5.7.46 Leadon Way also enclosed several fields which have all since been built on, mainly by the New Mills housing (late 1990s) and Lower Road trading estate (from 1969). However, it excluded the industrial estate at Old Wharf (site of engineering works in late 19th century, developed as industrial estate in 1970s, enlarged / modernised in 1980s and 90s).
- 5.7.47 Infill of various spaces with houses since the millennium include the estate (on the site of the old abattoir, which was built in 1926) beside the old goods yard at the station (now a trading estate) and homes built on the ground between the Hereford Road and the viaduct.
- 5.7.48 Much of the new development (residential and commercial) has been located on land west and south of the town centre. The profile for NCA 100 notes that '*In 2009 the former Robertson's factory site on the outskirts of Ledbury [now UBL] was redeveloped presenting a substantial development with potentially wide-reaching implications on the local landscape*'.
- 5.7.49 Also, recently, a large area of land to the north of the town was granted outline planning permission for residential and employment use (the previously-allocated viaduct site, or Bloor scheme, which was the subject of the public inquiry in 2020).
- 5.7.50 Planning permission has also been granted for housing on the former football and cricket pitches at the lower end of New Street. Building work has commenced on the cricket pitch site. The old Full Pitcher pub car park will be the entrance to this new estate.
- 5.7.51 Currently, c. 320 new homes are being built south of the town on land (formerly fields) south of Leadon Way (the Barratt scheme). Due to the consequences, this was one of the more unfortunate decisions relating to new development in south Ledbury, as it allowed Leadon Way to be breached for the first time (HC recommended refusal, but it was allowed at appeal and is now under construction).
- 5.7.52 The inspector concluded that *"The appeal scheme would result in a noticeable and significant degree of change when viewed from Dymock Road, the introduction of built development onto the currently open appeal site extending built development into an agricultural landscape. However, given the*

context set out above, **the development would not introduce new or unexpected components into the view**²⁸. Similarly, the inspector concluded that in terms of views from the Full Pitcher roundabout, "Whilst the development proposed would result in a noticeable change, introducing built development into an agricultural landscape **it would not, given the context set out above, introduce new or unexpected components**" (author's emphases).

5.7.53 In fact, as shown in the following photographs, the development does introduce 'new and unexpected components' into these and other views, with harmful visual consequences (especially as the siting, layout and design of the houses is ubiquitous and does not reflect Ledbury's history or qualities at all).

5.7.54 Looking north east from Dymock Road, the houses' context and backdrop are not the adjacent settlement, but the wooded hills of the eastern edge of the Malvern Hills AONB. The houses intrude into and urbanise the skyline. Looking south east from The Full Pitcher Roundabout / along Leadon Way, houses also now define and urbanise the skyline, blocking views of the open rural landscapes beyond. Views from the new roundabout created to serve the development from further east along way are also now highly urbanised.

Views of Barratt development from Dymock Road



²⁸ APP/W1850/W/15/3009456



View of Barratt development from Leadon Way (image © Google)



Barratt development from footpath LR7



- 5.7.55 The scheme has also resulted in the loss of Leadon Way's function, and it has now become a barrier to safe and easy access pedestrian / cycle from the new residential area into the town. Given that the Barratt scheme resulted in such change to the landscape and visual baseline situation in this part of Ledbury, it was almost inevitable that permission would be granted (as it was in August 2020) for the construction of up to 140 new houses on the Bovis / Vistry Homes site south of Leadon Way, adjacent to the Barratt site's eastern boundary.
- 5.7.56 A number of more spacious homes are being built at St Catherine's Grange.
- 5.7.57 As mentioned above, until recently, the town covered an area of some 2.5 sq km (approximately 10% of the parish area). With development on the viaduct site and the approved sites south of Leadon Way in place, the area will be c. 3 sq km - an increase of 20%.
- 5.7.58 In the past, Ledbury has regularly received national plaudits, being recognised as one of those rare and very special places that stands out from its peers.
- 5.7.59 As mentioned previously, Ledbury features several times in the NCA 100 profile, noted as being an historic, strategically-located market town; for example the profile says that '*Hay-on-Wye to the west and Ledbury to the east act as 'gateways' into the area, from Wales and from the Malvern Hills respectively*', and under the heading 'Assets / attributes: main contributors to service', Ledbury is identified (along with Hereford and Leominster) as contributing to *A sense of place / inspiration*.
- 5.7.60 The *Sunday Times* newspaper put the town in its selection of both 2019 and 2020 top-ten places in which to live in the Midlands, one year calling it a '*humdinger of a half-timbered market town, with a winning roster of schools, scenery and independent shops*' and with '*a handsome history*'. In the following year, it said, '*Its half-timbered main street is the model of old-fashioned affluence. Few streets can match Ledbury's Church Lane for timeless charm. Cobbled alleys and crooked gables may offer a beguiling hint of mystery, but happy gentility is the watchword here. Rowdy it isn't, classy it definitely is. Party time arrives with an annual poetry festival that is the biggest in Britain - Margaret Atwood attended last year. This is a place where you sip your cappuccino in a coffee house or coffee lounge, not a l, and buy your underwear at Bra Boudoir rather than M&S*'.
- 5.7.61 Similar praise for Ledbury was once published by *The Guardian* newspaper in its property pages 'Let's move to': '*If you want a refresher, Ledbury's your place, its streets an utterly charming jumble of redbrick Georgian townhouses, ickle cottages and, its speciality, black and white timber-framed Tudor, twisted and tottering on to the pavements. It wears its beauty lightly. Were this not in Herefordshire, hardly in the thick of things, it would have become self-aware, pretentious. Ledbury keeps it real, with butchers, bakers and gunmakers on its streets and a twee-free atmosphere, give or take the odd gifte shoppe. There is something irresistibly timeless about the place, in our age of freneticness*'.



5.8 Approaches and Gateways

- 5.8.1 Ledbury town grew from a small cluster of dwellings, built at a point where several routes converged - perhaps opportunistically set up as a trading post. Many of the modern-day approaches to the town centre - whether main roads, public footpaths, or tracks through private land - are ancient routeways. Some are likely to have once been post-glacial trading routes such as saltways, which later linked the sites of cultural significance which grew up along them, such as Longtown at the edge of the Black Mountains and British / Midsummer Camps in the Malvern Hills.
- 5.8.2 Today, at certain points along the main vehicular approaches there are clear 'gateways' into the town: some approaches have outer and inner gateways, others only have one gateway. The locations of the gateways are shown on Figures 12A and 12B.
- 5.8.3 Each approach and gateway is different, reflecting its locality's natural, historic / cultural and social influences. The treatment and levels of quality vary from place to place: on the whole, they appear to be appropriate for their location and well-managed, although in some cases there is scope for improvement - whether to the overall arrangement, or to the details (see Recommendations in Section 7).
- 5.8.4 Some of the approaches and / or views from them are characterised by significant, mature vegetation (described in Section 5.9). For example, in views along the approach to Ledbury from the north west, travelling in from Hereford, and from the south west, travelling from Ross, the town appears to nestle in its surrounding wooded ridges below the prominent steep drop of Bradlow Knoll; approaching from the east, the road enters the green tunnel formed by Conigree Wood on one side and the wooded grounds of the Upper Hall estate on the other, and then suddenly emerges into the light, virtually in the centre of the town.

Approach to Ledbury from Ross Road, looking north-east (image © Google)



Approach to Ledbury from north east along A449, looking south west (image © Google)



- 5.8.5 Because parts of the settlement have extended outwards over time (and will continue to do so in future - the viaduct and Barratt / Bovis sites are examples), the town's outer gateways are not static and thus they are not necessarily 'historic'; generally, they lie at points where the rural landscape transitions into a suburban one, and where there is clearly a first experience of built form which is closely associated with the settlement, often at the settlement's outer boundary (along some of the main vehicular approaches, these points are marked by decorative 'Ledbury' road signs).
- 5.8.6 In fact, the outer gateways to the north west, west, south and south east of the town are recent, being at roundabouts along Leadon Way which was built in the late 1980s.
- 5.8.7 However, the character of most of the approaches and gateways is greatly influenced by the various natural and cultural features which together create Ledbury's highly distinctive and special sense of place (more detailed information about the various landscape features and factors with which both approaches and gateways have interinfluence / intervisibility are described in other sections and in the relevant LSCA Area schedules).
- 5.8.8 The roundabouts are described and illustrated in the gateway schedules below. Each now has a sponsor who pays for its upkeep. They are mostly attractively landscaped, with a striking sculpture on one (Gloucester Road roundabout) and well-planned, well-maintained mixed planting on most. The Full Pitcher roundabout is perhaps the exception, being plainer and more suburban in both its planting and location.
- 5.8.9 The inner gateways are historic, most having been established during an early stage of the town's growth.
- 5.8.10 Top Cross probably was and still is the most important town gateway, being at the point where the main routes from the east, south and west converge.

Top Cross, looking south east (image © David Lovell)



- 5.8.11 During medieval times, the northernmost gateway would probably have been near the Homend / Hereford Road / Bromyard Road junction, by the railway station (see Gateway E below). Long before the railway arrived in 1861, this junction of the Turnpike Trust had one toll-keeper collecting from each of the two junctions, making it doubly profitable.
- 5.8.12 The extent of a gateway's area of influence varies depending on a number of factors such as sense of arrival / what is being announced; views at / towards / from the gateway; whether there are characteristic / key features at or near / within sight of the gateway; and so on.
- 5.8.13 The outer gateways in particular are important because their character and design reflect key aspects of the host community's character - how the town sees itself, and is, or wants to be, seen by others.

Gateway A(i):- Gloucester Road Roundabout

Approaching the roundabout from the south along the A417, there are views of high scenic value looking east to the foothills of the Malvern Hills, and west towards Marcle Ridge. These include open views of undulating farmland, and on elevated ground to the south of Leaddon Way, a distinctive and prominent clump of trees planted in the 18th or early 19th century as an 'eye-catcher' within a wider designed parkland (for further information see Sections 5.9 and 5.11).

The roundabout, which lies just beyond the decorative signs for Ledbury, is an outer gateway to the town. It is attractively landscaped with a central, imposing metal sculpture. It is bordered to the east by coppice and shrubs with glimpses of the historic Underdown estate and its mature parkland trees (see Section 5.12 Heritage Assets).

The settlement's built form begins with housing west of the roundabout, currently screened from view by coppice and some evergreens.

Gateway A(i):- Gloucester Road Roundabout



Gateway A(ii): Southend

There is a greater sense of arrival at this southern, historic gateway by the old toll house. This is an inviting inner gateway with views to the east of the brick wall to Ledbury Park and some mature coniferous trees behind it (see Section 5.12 Heritage Assets). To the west, the view is defined by a blend of historic, mainly eighteenth century, brick houses.

Gateway A(ii): Southend



Gateway B: Full Pitcher Roundabout

Gateway B is not historic, but a significant junction of roads which now form an outer gateway to the town. It is where the B4216 from Dymock and the A449 from Ross-on-Wye join the Leadon Way and New Street, the latter leading to the town centre.

The approaches via the Dymock and Ross roads pass through good quality, gently rolling, sparsely-settled countryside, with fine views to the distant wooded hills in the AONB beyond Ledbury, including Conigree and Dog Hill Wood.

Where the Dymock Road joins the roundabout, to the east there is a housing estate (the Barratt site, under construction at the time of writing) which is a significant detractor in what was once a high quality and characteristic view of the wooded hills at the western edge of the AONB. To the north is a large, grassed triangle of land (LSCA Area 9) which is currently bordered by wooden rails and some small trees / bushes; opposite, to the west, there are several single storey industrial units.

From the Ross Road, the roundabout is bordered by some older housing on the right, and by the Riverside Park and its trees on the left (an important GI corridor - see Section 5.16).

Both the roundabout and the general view looking north east towards Ledbury at Gateway B are quite plain and suburban, with a sub-station to the left of New Street and the red-brick Full Pitcher pub to the right.

As this roundabout entrance is close to dense new housing and a site yet to be developed (opposite the Full Pitcher), care needs to be taken with future landscaping of both the roundabout and its surroundings. Any new building design in this vicinity should be appropriate and trees planted to enhance Gateway B and reflect the character of the neighbouring Riverside Park.

Gateway B: Full Pitcher Roundabout



Gateway C: Little Marcle Road Roundabout

This is again an outer gateway, created when Leadon Way was built to bypass the town. It is a green gateway, with the river, Riverside Park, verges and trees on all sides, some of which screen housing beyond Leadon Way. To the north west is the highly distinctive feature of Wall Hills Camp, a scheduled monument which comprises the remains of a large, early Iron Age multivallate hillfort, covering c. 10.1ha. It is possible that the Camp has even earlier origins, as flints dating from the Bronze Age have come to light in this area (see Section 5.12 and the Heritage topic schedule for LSCA Area 12 in Appendix D). The landscapes north of the gateway and west of the River Leadon form an integral part of the Camp's setting, and make a highly important contribution to the setting and context of the town.

There is also a first view of housing on the western outskirts of Ledbury (Lower Road) and of the built form continuing up the slope to the wooded ridge of Dog Hill Wood at the edge of the AONB, and which forms an integral part of the town's distinctive context and setting (variously described in this report - see for example Section 5.9 Significant Vegetation).

Gateway C: Little Marcle Road Roundabout



Gateway D: Hereford Roundabout

The approach from Hereford on the A438 passes through open countryside featuring orchards and far-reaching views of high scenic value towards Frith Wood and the Malvern Hills' summits beyond. Ledbury and its church are also glimpsed, spread out against the wooded hill slopes at the edge of the AONB behind the town. Wall Hills lies to the south west. As with Gateway C, the landscapes south of Gateway D (which is at the roundabout where the A438 joins the ring road and old route into Ledbury from the west) form an integral part of the Camp's setting, and also make a highly important contribution to the setting and context of the town. However, some large, more recent industrial buildings in the foreground detract.

Gateway D is an outer, green gateway. From the decorative sign for Ledbury, houses lining Leadon Way are screened by trees. The roundabout is attractively landscaped with contrasting light and darker green deciduous and evergreen trees.

Gateway D: Hereford Roundabout



Gateway E: Bromyard Road

The approach from the north via the B4214 is a rural, valley route until it reaches industrial development, the Bromyard Road trading estate.

This outer gateway, close to a decorative sign for Ledbury, has built form to the south and west, but open views towards the distinctive wooded hills which lie to the north, east and south east.

There is scope for improvement at this location both now, in terms of maintenance at the decorative sign, and in future, especially when the neighbouring viaduct site is developed for both housing and business units.

Gateway E: Bromyard Road



Gateway F: Knapp Lane

The approach from the east is narrow and rural, surrounded by pastures and the steep wooded slopes of Dog Hill Wood (see reference to this and adjoining woodland in Section 5.12).

Gateway F is just beyond the 30mph signs at the junction of Knapp Lane and Upperfields. Here, Knapp Lane descends steeply with detached houses either side of the road and far-reaching views down to the Leadon Valley and good quality open countryside beyond.

Gateway F: Knapp Lane



Gateway G: Worcester Road

The approach from the north-east on the A449 is again of high scenic value, within the AONB and with views of the Malvern Hills and wooded hill slopes on the east side of Ledbury.

As the road reaches the outskirts of the town, it becomes more enclosed and winds between the steep wooded slopes of Conigree Wood to the south and many mature trees, including evergreens associated with Upper Hall estate, to the north (see Section 5.9 Significant Vegetation).

Gateway G, an inner gateway just before the 30mph signs, is where this enclosed, wooded route transitions to housing and the built-up area.

Gateway G: Worcester Road



Approach to Gateway G (image © Google)



5.9 Significant Vegetation

Introduction

- 5.9.1 The term 'significant vegetation' is used here to describe predominantly mature trees and hedgerows which form noticeable / distinctive features and patterns in the landscape. Other types of significant vegetation such as grassland are described in Section 5.14 Biodiversity, but are noted here where relevant.
- 5.9.2 The information is also useful for understanding local and wider ecological connectivity, and in determining which 'corridors' are likely to be most valuable, which are intact and in good health, and which could benefit from restoration. The same applies to landscape character elements and features, and GI assets and functions.
- 5.9.3 Significant vegetation includes designated / other high value features such as:
- ASNWs
 - Priority Habitat Inventory (PHI) and Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Priority Habitat sites
 - NFI areas
 - Trees covered by TPOs
 - Ancient / veteran trees
 - Traditional / old orchards.
- 5.9.4 In para. 180 (c), the NPPF notes that ASNWs and veteran trees are 'irreplaceable habitats'.
- 5.9.5 Google Earth is used for the analysis in the first instance, as this makes it much easier to identify the vegetation and draw it onto the baseline maps (see Figures 6A and 6B, and also the aerial photographs on Figures 3A and 3B); the information is then verified and augmented during the on-the-ground surveys. In Ledbury's case the majority of the information was gathered, recorded and written up by the parish Tree Warden.
- 5.9.6 It must be borne in mind that this study represents a snapshot in time, and anyone using it as a source of reference should check the baseline situation carefully, to determine whether or not it has changed since it was last published.

Ledbury's Significant Vegetation: Overview

- 5.9.7 Whether individually and / or in combination, within the study area (and within the town itself), stands of trees and other mature vegetation make a significant contribution to landscape character, setting / context and function, and thus visual amenity.
- 5.9.8 They also affect how views are experienced, as they often screen, filter, or frame them. In addition, they add to the diversity of visual experience by changing the landscape's colours and textures with the seasons, and offer shelter and shade.

Woodland east of Ledbury (photo courtesy Jan Sedlacek @Digitlight)



- 5.9.9 The wide variety of species and types of planting arrangements throughout the area is a defining and distinctive characteristic. Each of the different types reflects different aspects of Ledbury's natural, cultural and social history and influences, giving rise to a unique sense of place.
- 5.9.10 Much of the tree cover in the area is considered to be locally-characteristic, especially when it comprises fully mature native species, but it is always changing. Often the change is so gradual that it is hardly noticed, as explained below.
- 5.9.11 However, in some areas, the vegetation is uncharacteristic and a visual detractor, and / or has little ecological value. In places where the vegetation is in poor health and condition, the quality of the landscape deteriorates, especially in combination with other detractors.
- 5.9.12 Also, clearly some of the trees are reaching the ends of their useful lives. Factors include old age, damage, pests and diseases. There is evidence of ongoing field boundary hedgerow removal. In many areas, the loss of tree / hedgerow cover would result in highly noticeable changes to both local and wider landscape character, and to views / visual amenity (see Recommendations in Section 7).
- 5.9.13 The significant vegetation identified during the study, much of which is 'irreplaceable', includes:
- woodland including ancient semi-natural;
 - individuals and groups of mature ornamental trees including evergreens (many planted in the Victorian era), associated with older, larger properties / historic parks, and churchyards;
 - several ancient, veteran and notable trees;
 - native hedgerows with escaped mature trees (field boundaries and roadside) - several of the hedges are very old and are likely to be classified as Important under the Hedgerows Regulations 1997;
 - orchards, both traditional and modern; and
 - decorative trees in gardens, public areas and open spaces.

5.9.14 In terms of its visual appeal and character, Ledbury town owes much to its location and in particular its significant vegetation, being cupped by wooded limestone ridges to the north and east, and more distant high wooded ground to the west. This is confirmed by a glance at Figure 8B, which shows the extensive areas of significant vegetation within and around the town.

5.9.15 In views along the approach to Ledbury from the north west, travelling in from Hereford, and from the south west, travelling from Ross, the town appears to nestle in its surrounding wooded ridges below the prominent steep drop of Bradlow Knoll; approaching from the east, the road enters the green tunnel formed by Conigree Wood on one side and the wooded grounds of the Upper Hall estate on the other, and then suddenly emerges into the light, virtually in the centre of the town.

Approach to Ledbury along A438 Hereford Road, looking south east (image © Google)



5.9.16 From certain locations on the hills north east of Ledbury, such as Bradlow Knoll, the town appears to be enveloped in woodland, with the wooded ridge of Dog Hill in the foreground and Conigree rising to the left, and the land rolling away towards May Hill on the horizon. The only sign that Ledbury is there at all, not far away, is the sight of the church spire rising above the trees.

View from Bradlow Knoll, looking south west



- 5.9.17 So, we are fortunate indeed to find ourselves living in such a well-wooded and green place in a country that has been losing its woods and trees and fields and meadows, especially in close proximity to towns, at an alarming rate. We have woodland and open countryside on our doorstep that is not only beautiful, but easily accessible from the town, and it is possible to spend all day wandering in our woods without ever being very far from home.

Woodland

- 5.9.18 While all woods are valuable, Ledbury's woods are particularly special because Dog Hill, Frith, Conigree, Hospital and Mayhill Woods to the east of the town, and the woods around Wall Hills hillfort and along the ridge adjacent to Falcon Lane to the west of the town, are all classified as ASNW (Ancient Semi Natural Woodland). Ledbury is lucky to have so large an area of this rare habitat within the parish.
- 5.9.19 ASNW is woodland that has existed continuously since at least 1600, and in many cases it will have been woodland of one sort or another for even longer than that - an area of woodland that is still part of Frith Wood is mentioned in the Domesday Book.
- 5.9.20 In most ancient woods, some of the trees would have been left to grow to full size and then cut down for timber, but most, plus the 'understory' shrubs such as hazel, would have been periodically coppiced over centuries as part of the management cycle. Provided that the area has remained as woodland, the stand is still considered ancient. Since it may have been cut many times in the past, ancient woodland does not necessarily contain very old trees, but where coppicing was part of the management, as it invariably was, some of the coppice 'stools' may be very old indeed, and there will often be trees of a great size that were once boundary markers, perhaps, or grew outside the wood originally.

- 5.9.21 Some of these are now within the existing wood that has grown up around them, for example the large oak pollard (pollard means cut at head height or above and the regrowth harvested periodically in the same way as a coppice stool) visible from a footpath that winds through the lower slopes of Conigree Wood, and some are still on the edges of the wood, for example the huge lime pollard on the western boundary of Frith Wood, visible from the footpath that skirts it on the Wellington Heath side (see also below). Some woodlands are classified as 'replanted' ASNW, which usually indicates plantation, often coniferous, on the same site.

Ancient small-leaved lime pollard in Frith Wood



- 5.9.22 However, replanted or not, features of ancient woodland often survive on and under the ground, providing a unique habitat with irreplaceable communities of soil life, plants, mosses, lichens and fungi, and all the insects, invertebrates, birds and small mammals that they support.
- 5.9.23 Ancient woods are, or have been until recently, continuously worked by people: this means they are also full of human history and signs of human presence. Ledbury's woods are no exception, and the signs are there to see in the form of boundary banks, terraces, pollarded trees, trackways, remnants of quarries, lime kilns and charcoal pits (see landscape history and heritage sections below).
- 5.9.24 In the past, trees within many areas of the woods will have been coppiced (cut to the ground and the regrowth harvested on a continuous cycle) for wood products, and some of the coppice stools visible today in parts of Frith and Conigree Woods are huge, and are likely to be the oldest trees still living there now because, counterintuitively, continuous coppicing of a tree has the effect of prolonging its life (see also ancient trees below).
- 5.9.25 Following the Norman conquest of England in 1066, William the Conqueror established a royal forest; forest law was established at the same time.
- 5.9.26 The term forest suggests to us now a large expanse of dense woodland, but this was not its original meaning: a 'forest' was an area of land designated for the hunt, under the ownership of the king and with its own laws. Although there would have been wooded areas with trees and scrub, there would also have been marshes and lakes, open 'lawns', rides, glades and commons (the latter used

for a wide variety of purposes), as well as small fields around scattered settlements. The areas of open ground made it possible for species like oak to establish and reach a great size as 'open-grown' trees, many of which we can still see in the remains of this ancient landscape today.

5.9.27 In the mid-13th century, hunting rights in the royal forests on both sides of the Malvern Hills were transferred from the monarch to the bishops of Hereford and Worcester, a section of the boundary running along the Malvern Hills ridgeline / the Shire Ditch. The Worcestershire forest became Malvern Chase, whilst the Herefordshire forest became known as the Bishop's Chase.

5.9.28 In contrast to the Malvern Chase, which is described as being 'densely wooded' and containing wolves and wild boar, the Bishop's Chase appears to have been unwooded since clearance prior to the 11th century. The chases remained in use for 400 years until disafforestation in 1632.

Extract from 1590 tapestry showing chases west and east of Malvern Hills



5.9.29 Early in the year, violets and primroses speckle the ancient woodland floor, and in spring the woods light up with wood anemone, wild daffodils and bluebells, taking advantage of the light before the canopy closes, and all associated with ancient coppiced woodland. There are many other wild flowers and plants associated with this habitat: dog's mercury, spurge laurel, sanicle, yellow archangel, wood vetch, and the rare herb paris, if you are lucky enough to find it.

Typical ancient woodland flora



Herb paris (image © Trevor Dines / Plantlife)



- 5.9.30 The same elusive quality applies to the spreading bellflower that might, just might, appear along the rides on the west side of Frith Wood. This is a mysterious plant, associated with the disturbed ground along old trackways, possibly including old droving routes. The Forestry Commission, who manage Frith Wood, have carried out some coppicing to open up the area where the bellflower has been found in the hope that it will respond to these more favourable conditions.

Spreading bellflower



- 5.9.31 There are of course many other wild flowers that appear along the rides, no less lovely for being more common: bugle, stitchwort, yellow pimpernel, enchanter's nightshade, several types of thistle and willow herb, red campion, tutsan and St John's wort to name but a few.

Trees Outside Woodland

- 5.9.32 As well as its woodland, the parish benefits from the presence of many trees, in gardens, open spaces, hedgerows, and field trees.
- 5.9.33 The town and its surroundings are very tree-rich. To get an idea of just what an impact this has on the visual quality of the general feel of the town, and what it adds to the experience of living here, look around from just about anywhere in or around the town and imagine what it would look like with them gone.
- 5.9.34 This is of immeasurable importance not just visually but in terms of air quality, screening, shading and sound; the latter not only in softening the sounds of traffic and other human-generated noise, but the delight of birdsong, in the quiet of the dawn and dusk, and often throughout the day in the gardens and public spaces in town. If it weren't for the trees and hedges, where would the birds be?
- 5.9.35 Many of the older houses in the town have gardens and often large mature trees. Private gardens inevitably will contain a wide variety of tree and shrub species, both exotic and native, deciduous and evergreen, giving year round interest. Even the newer estates are now maturing, and have skylines broken with trees and shrubs.

Gardens east of Ledbury



- 5.9.36 Within the town there are many public spaces filled with trees of both native and exotic origin; the walled garden, the churchyard and its surroundings, the recreation ground, and of course the old railway line and canal, now the Town Trail.
- 5.9.37 Ledbury Park with its open parkland and mature trees is on rising ground close to the centre of town and this, in addition to the woods, themselves on limestone ridges above the town, adds to the sense of ruralness, that Ledbury is still very much a market town in the heart of and contextualised by the unspoilt countryside around and beyond it.
- 5.9.38 The Riverside Walk skirts the west side of town: the river is lined with mature alder and willow and the northern section particularly is full of mature mixed planting including ash, oak, cherry, field maple, hornbeam, rowan and aspen. Despite only having been constructed thirty years ago, even the ring road itself is now mostly lined with dense, maturing vegetation, which acts as a valuable visual and acoustic buffer and wildlife / recreational corridor.

Northern end of Riverside Walk (image © Google)



- 5.9.39 Walk or ride out of the town in any direction and the impression of a rich, well-wooded landscape continues.
- 5.9.40 The lanes are lined with mixed native hedgerows, many of which are ancient. The abundance of hazel and blackthorn, with a generous scattering of wild cherry, plum, elder, wayfaring tree, dogwood and wild privet, fills the spring with blossom from February to May. Many of the hedges also contain mature trees or shrubs left uncut to grow on; this adds a whole new dimension in terms of landscape character, quality, visual enjoyment, sound and shade, and also increases the complexity and biodiversity potential of the lanes as habitat for wildlife.
- 5.9.41 A great example of a lane with mature trees in the hedgerow is the lower end of Lilly Hall Lane, in the south west of the parish.
- 5.9.42 There is some cropland to the west, but most of the fields around the town and particularly to the east are relatively small by modern standards; most are grazed as pasture and are bounded by hedgerows and often contain field trees.
- 5.9.43 The town is on the edge of and partly within the Malvern Hills AONB and it is largely because of this, plus the fact that it is bounded on its eastern side by Eastnor Park and its estatelands and the grounds of Upper Hall, and to the north by the parkland around Hope End House, that the town enjoys extraordinary access to so many mature and often veteran oak, ash and sweet chestnut trees, many of which are recorded in the Ancient Tree Inventory, and can be located by accessing this public resource online²⁹.

²⁹ <https://ati.woodlandtrust.org.uk/>

Historic parkland trees, Eastnor Castle and Park (photo courtesy Jan Sedlacek @Digitlight)



5.9.44 There are many fruit orchards visible from walks in and around the town. Most of them are relatively modern, but there are still a small number of sites marked as traditional orchards on the national Priority Habitat Inventory database, some of which are partly visible from PRsoW (see fruit trees below).

Commercial bush orchard at Wellington Heath, north east of Ledbury



Traditional orchard, Hazle Farm (image © Google)



- 5.9.45 Ledbury is currently undergoing a period of expansion and development, and it remains to be seen how this will impact the town and the wider countryside. It may be too early to assess the effects of the development on the south side of town because the raw quality around new development is inevitable, and it is not possible to assess if any mitigation to the loss of tree cover and green space will be enough, or effective.
- 5.9.46 Certainly the part of the new development situated on higher ground stands out and has visual impact as the town is approached from the Dymock Road, and is at odds with the impression of ruralness that the town has managed to retain by seeming to blend in with, or at least not dominate, its surroundings as it is approached from every direction. This effect may soften with time if there has been sympathetic planting and it is properly monitored and managed.

Ancient, Veteran, Notable and Other Special Trees

- 5.9.47 There are about forty trees within or on the boundaries of the parish that are recorded on the Ancient Tree Inventory (ATI)³⁰, a national database of trees in the UK that are designated as being Ancient, Veteran, or otherwise Notable.
- 5.9.48 This database is a public document and is accessible online as an interactive tool; it not only includes an interactive map of the location of all existing recorded trees, but enables members of the public to submit details of trees not recorded but they think might qualify, which will then be checked by ATI verifiers and added to the database if they meet the qualifying conditions.
- 5.9.49 These are not the same as trees with TPOs - some may have them, but many will not. The current data is by no means exhaustive, and it is extremely likely that there are more special trees within the parish that would qualify and should be recorded. It would be an excellent project to involve parish residents in looking for these trees (see Recommendations in Section 7.2).
- 5.9.50 One group of trees within the parish that is recorded on the ATI is worth a special mention: these are four veteran sweet chestnuts, easy to find because they are next to the public footpath leading

³⁰ <https://ati.woodlandtrust.org.uk/>

from Upper Mitchell Farm uphill towards the northern end of Frith Wood, perfect for a summer evening stroll out of town, or indeed at any time of year!

- 5.9.51 The largest of the four has a girth of just under 8 meters and appears to be almost unbelievably huge as you get up close to the vast trunk and look up at the spreading branches. Who knows how long these trees have stood here? Certainly many hundreds of years.

Veteran sweet chestnuts near Frith Wood



- 5.9.52 In the churchyard of St. Bartholomew's Church, Much Marcle, there is a huge, hollow yew tree which is at least 1500 years old.

The Marcle Yew



- 5.9.53 The limestone ridge of Mayhill Wood is full of ancient yew trees and is a relatively rare type of woodland, for which is designated as an SSSI (see Biodiversity section below). Evidence suggests that Druidry was practiced widely in the Malvern Hills and surrounding areas well before the Roman invasion, and Druids held trees such as yew, oak and holly sacred.
- 5.9.54 As mentioned above, in Frith Wood there are also occasional small-leaved lime pollards of great antiquity (some lime pollards in Gloucestershire are estimated to be 2,000 years old). Nowadays it is a relatively rare tree in the UK, but after the last ice age, it was common (Oliver Rackham called lime 'a living link with the Mesolithic wildwood'). Its decline may be due to the fact that its uses were mainly limited to carving, making twine and rope, so it was not grown on an 'industrial' scale (climate change may also have played a part).
- 5.9.55 Until recently when it burned down, on the Eastnor estate there was an ancient and much-loved oak tree called 'the White-leaved Oak' (after the nearby hamlet of the same name), which, given its huge girth (c. 8m), may well have started life in the 13th century, when the royal hunting forests were being created.

The 'White-leaved Oak' pre-2019



The 'White-leaved Oak' July 2020



BOUNDARY AND MARKER TREES

- 5.9.56 Humans have been delineating boundaries for millennia, for protection, control and administrative purposes.
- 5.9.57 The UK's oldest hedgerows are pre-Bronze Age, created when early farmers cleared woodland to settle, grow crops and keep animals. Often, strips of woodland were left - trees perhaps cut down to a manageable height - to form boundaries and protect humans, stock and produce. Today, some of these strips are thriving hedgerows, often delineating parish (and 'hundred') boundaries. The Romans began the practice of planting new hedges to impose order on the land and its uses, and this was embraced and continued by the Saxons - many hedges in the study area are of medieval origin.
- 5.9.58 Early boundaries followed natural features such as watercourses, ridgelines and established trackways, or were marked by ditches, stones, existing and / or newly-planted trees. Even when long-established parish boundary lines were altered, or deer park boundaries ceased to function as such, the original lines are usually still legible in the landscape today, often well-vegetated.
- 5.9.59 There is a large ash pollard that is on, or very close to, Ledbury's eastern parish boundary as it runs towards Eastnor Park ridgeway. Whether or not this tree was ever a boundary marker is uncertain, but historic descriptions of parish and other boundaries made use of distinctive landscape features such as pollarded or otherwise recognisable trees.
- 5.9.60 'Marker' trees are individual specimens or clumps which were either deliberately planted (including replacing those lost), or left standing when woodland around them was cleared, in order to mark a specific location. Often they are on high ground, either to assist with orientation on long-distance journeys³¹, or artfully placed to catch the eye when viewed from certain locations in designed parkland. In parts of Herefordshire, along well-used trackways, an oak would be planted on one side of a gateway and an ash on the other to inform people what direction they were travelling in.
- 5.9.61 A few historic 'marker' trees are present within the study area (see below), and there are also views towards iconic marker trees in the wider landscapes beyond, for example the clump on May Hill which lies c. 17km due south of the town centre.

May Hill on skyline, looking south west from Chase End over Bromesberrow Estate



³¹ Ledbury is mentioned by Alfred Watkins in his research on ley lines - see Cultural Associations section

HISTORIC PARKLAND TREES

- 5.9.62 On the southern outskirts of the town there are several large, residential properties surrounded by formal gardens and minor historic parkland. Further information on these is provided in the landscape history and heritage sections below, but in summary, some are categorised by HC as unregistered historic parks and gardens, which enjoy a certain amount of local policy protection.
- 5.9.63 However, research carried out for the LVBA strongly suggests that the designed parklands extended well beyond their currently-recognised boundaries, and combined, could have formed a broad swathe between the River Leadon south of Hazle Farm, and Conigree Wood which forms the backdrop to Underdown in views from the west and south.
- 5.9.64 Several historic landscape features are visible in these landscapes, many of which are mature trees which make highly valuable contributions to local landscape character, visual amenity and biodiversity, and tell us much about the area's social and cultural history.
- 5.9.65 One of the features is an ornamental tree clump (believed to be four oak) standing in a prominent, elevated position in the field which lies west of the A417, south of Leadon Way, and opposite Underdown, which is a small 17th century gentry estate immediately south of Ledbury Park (the associated house, also Underdown, is Grade II listed). The clump is likely to have been planted as an eye-catcher within a wider ornamental parkland (the clumps are shown as mature on the 1889 - 1892 map), possibly designed by Jacob Tonson, (d. 1735) who owned the Hazle then.

Eye-catcher tree clump south of A417 / Leadon Way roundabout (image © Google)



- 5.9.66 Another important historic feature is the formal avenue of veteran lime trees which lines the access leading to the Hazle Farm complex. Originally, the avenue crossed the Dymock Road and led to an orchard. The line is still there, now a hedge-lined trackway, but it appears that all trace of the trees has been lost.

Lime avenue at Hazle Farm



5.9.67 Also important are the three mature oak trees isolated within in an arable field south of the Hazle Farm avenue. All are covered by a TPO (Ts 11, 12 and T13 in Order no. 587 – Dymock Road Ledbury). Ts 11 and 12 are listed on the ATI, and T13 is an ancient and veteran tree. The latter is also a Tree of National Special Interest³².

Ancient / veteran oak east of Dymock Road



³² <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/media/1836/what-are-ancient-trees.pdf>

FRUIT TREES IN THE PARISH

- 5.9.68 There is a lovely old pear tree that is situated in a hay meadow just outside the town, between the Worcester Road and Knapp Lane (the meadow itself is designated as a SSSI, important grassland with many wild flowers - see Biodiversity section). The tree is a sight to behold in flower, and is the last survivor of perhaps several in that field; there was another one several years ago, but this has now gone. Interestingly, the meadow is named 'Pear Tree Walk' on the 1813 enclosure map of the parish.

A pear tree in bloom (photo by Gabrielle Merk)



- 5.9.69 In the late 17th century, George Skippe grew red and white grapes at the lower estate at Wall Hills and in his walled garden at Upper Hall, where he also had an orchard planted with many varieties of cider apples. His son John continued this interest, later planting many varieties of plums, peaches, pears, cherries and nectarines in addition to grapes and figs [ref. George Skippe's Diary, Hereford City Library, HLL W90].
- 5.9.70 Herefordshire is well-known for its orchards, which form an integral part of its natural and cultural heritage, and are a vital component of the landscape. This is recognised in Herefordshire's Core Strategy, which highlights the importance of the county's '*treasured traditional fruit orchards*'.
- 5.9.71 Apples and pears were and are still widely grown for cider and perry as well as for eating. There is also an historic local association with cherry trees and damson hedges, although the latter are sadly in decline (HC holds records of those which remain).
- 5.9.72 Currently there are significant areas of modern commercial orchard to the north and to the west of the town, and in recent years some of the older trees in the orchards towards Wellington Heath have been removed.
- 5.9.73 Traditional Orchards are UK and Herefordshire BAP priority habitats (Herefordshire's Traditional Orchard Habitat Action Plan³³ provides further information; see also Section 5.14 Biodiversity), and

³³ <https://herefordshirewildlifelink.files.wordpress.com/2015/07/traditional-orchards.pdf>

are of significant value for their wildlife potential within the landscape as well as being highly important historic landscape features in their own right. They provide habitats for a wide variety of species which are of local importance, including noble chafer and lesser spotted woodpecker, and many species of fungi and saproxylic beetles. Conservation of these habitats is especially important for the latter due to the maturity of the trees and wood decay within them.

Traditional orchard east of Ledbury (photo courtesy Jan Sedlacek @Digitlight)



- 5.9.74 Although some believe that all dead and dying orchard trees should be removed, it must be borne in mind that they are often the most valuable habitats in the orchard, providing bole cavities, rot holes and dead wood stubs making such trees of substantial importance for nature conservation. Furthermore, even if the trees have been removed, if the grass has been sensitively managed over time, it is also highly valuable for the diversity of flora and fauna it supports. Indeed, the root systems of dying trees continue to provide diverse habitats underground for some time, even after their death, due to the natural age-related root death from root-shoot balance adjustments which take place in trees in decline.
- 5.9.75 The parish has sixteen areas marked as traditional orchard on the PHI (Priority Habitat Inventory) national database. These sites are all on private land and of these sixteen sites, only eleven are visible or partly visible from a public footpath or road, so without further surveys it is not possible to comment on the five inaccessible locations.
- 5.9.76 Currently, of the remaining eleven sites, all appear to have some fruit trees on them, widely spaced in grassland as would be expected in a traditional orchard. However, it is not possible to assess the condition and extent of these sites without further access.
- 5.9.77 From this superficial and often partial viewing, six sites appear to be in reasonable condition and to occupy something like the area of land that is indicated on the map and appear to contain old trees and to have newer trees planted among them, but the remaining five look to be either neglected or derelict with just a few remaining trees, both living and dead.

Remnant traditional orchard north of Kilbury Camp



- 5.9.78 It would be an excellent project to revive or recreate one / some of these orchards in the parish as the Colwall Orchards project has done. Other possibilities, perhaps in conjunction with looking at existing and new hedges in the parish (as yet not surveyed), would be reviving the presence of damsons (and possibly other fruit trees) as hedgerow trees (see Recommendations).

BLACK POPLARS

- 5.9.79 Native black poplars (*Populus nigra ssp betulifolia*) are becoming a rare sight in the country, including in Herefordshire where there are only 239 currently known specimens in the whole of the county. Two of them - old, pollarded specimens - are along Falcon Lane, near Flights Farm.
- 5.9.80 Black poplars are distinctive and iconic trees which can grow very large (up to 30m tall). They are often associated with wet ground near rivers and streams, but most of the existing trees in the UK are now very old and getting towards the end of their lives.
- 5.9.81 There are separate male and female trees, but very few females are left, and for this reason, plus the fact that the seed is not viable for long, and needs the conditions found in wet meadows and floodplains (now rare habitat) to germinate and grow in, the tree is not regenerating naturally and would be in danger of disappearing altogether unless it were not propagated and planted by people.

Black poplar, Castlemorton Common, east side of Malvern Hills

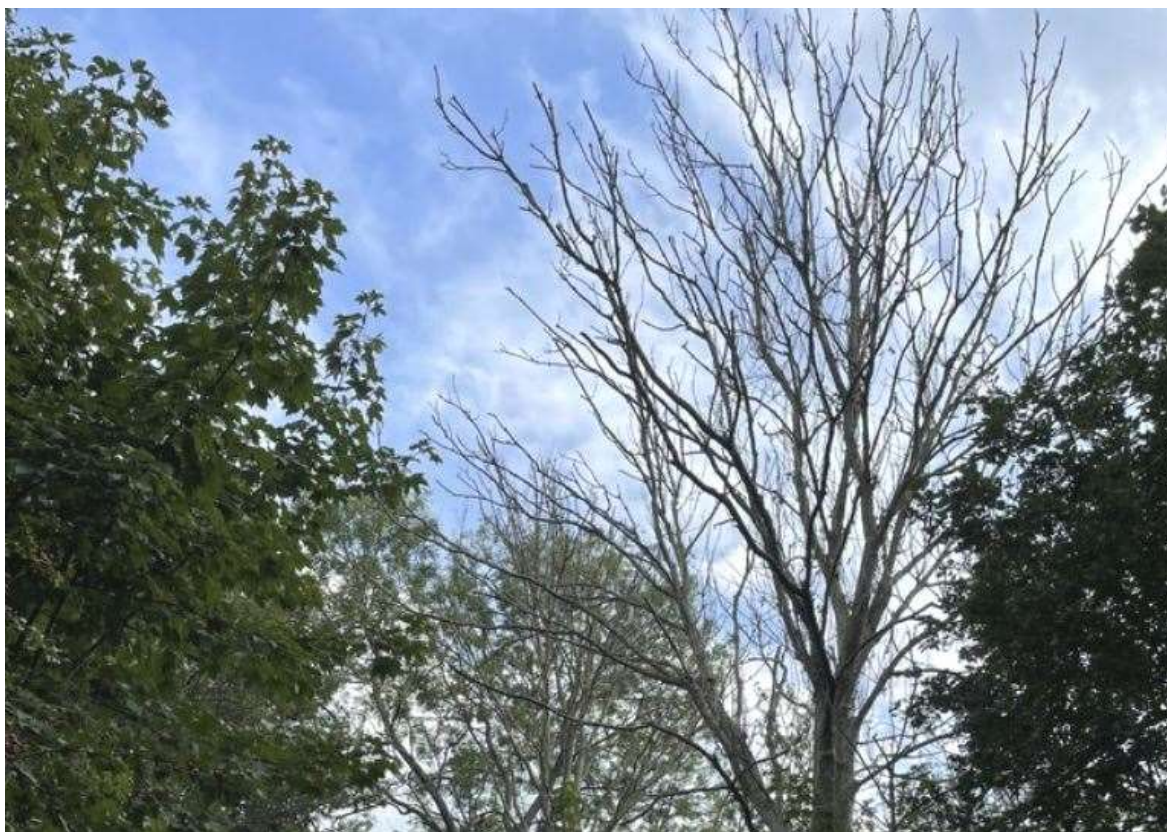


5.9.82 As parish Tree Warden I have been working with a couple of colleagues and a small group of students from the Youth Council to plant native black poplars and disease-resistant elms along the River Leadon to restore both these iconic tree species to our landscape in and around the town. Some elms have been planted at various sites along the Leadon, and we hope to plant black poplars this winter.

Ash Trees and Ash Dieback

- 5.9.83 The mention of ash trees above gives rise to the issue of ash dieback disease (*Chalara fraxinea*) and its potentially significant impact on trees not just within the parish but throughout the country.
- 5.9.84 Some may remember the arrival of Dutch elm disease in the 1960s (an accidentally-introduced fungus), which killed tens of millions of elm trees in the UK alone and had a devastating impact on character, views and biodiversity. Even now, although elm survives in hedgerows, it is attacked as soon as it grows above its neighbour's canopies, so cannot re-establish.
- 5.9.85 Given the extensive coverage of ash throughout most of lowland Britain, it is feared that the same thing may happen again (that is one reason why it is so important not to rely on vegetation to screen views - see Recommendations).

Ash dieback



- 5.9.86 Ash dieback is also a fungal disease, spread by wind-borne spores. It affects trees in the *Fraxinus* family but most notably European ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*). It has been spreading in the ash population in the UK since at least 2012 and possibly before, having been introduced on imported nursery stock. Imports and movements of ash plants were prohibited, and ash has rarely been planted since then.
- 5.9.87 As Tree Warden, I and a small team of volunteers have been conducting a survey of a selection of ash trees from around the parish for the last three years. While this is not a large sample, and none of us are experts, we are generally encouraged so far (at the time of writing, in 2021) to see that our selected trees do not appear to be significantly affected by the signs of the disease.
- 5.9.88 Some parts of the country have been badly affected and many trees lost, but I remain cautiously optimistic that ash trees may develop some resistance. However, ash dieback is present in Herefordshire and the parish, so there is always the possibility that it will escalate at some point in the future and have a significant impact, as some experts are predicting it will. So, it is important to acknowledge this and to plan for it.
- 5.9.89 In 2016 Herefordshire Council collected data on ash trees within the county, and among the conclusions were that ash is the most numerous hedgerow tree, provides more than 50% of the non-woodland tree canopy cover of the county, and ash-dominated woodland covers more than 25% of all its broadleaved woodland. Many of the county's special ancient, veteran or notable heritage trees are ash, and 79% of the descriptions of TPOs in the county include ash.
- 5.9.90 So, it is not difficult to see that significant loss of ash trees would have a devastating effect on the landscape, let alone the ecological impact of losing the species as a host to the many insects, invertebrates, fungi, mosses lichens and other taxa, some of which use it exclusively.
- 5.9.91 Another implication of diseased or dying ash trees that are in proximity to roads or other areas with public access is the risk to public safety and the burden that could impose on local authorities including town and parish councils to monitor and remove any that are dangerous.

- 5.9.92 It is not known how many ash trees there are in the parish, but ash in Herefordshire generally is a highly significant tree, as shown by the 2016 survey mentioned above, so this is likely to be true in Ledbury also. It may be that a survey could be undertaken by parish residents, and the ash dieback monitoring survey extended by recruiting more volunteers - see Recommendations.
- 5.9.93 The Tree Council has prepared some detailed guidance for local authorities entitled *Ash dieback: an Action Plan Toolkit* and it is to be recommended. It covers all aspects of good practice concerning the management of ash trees relating to ash dieback disease, but, as importantly, addresses the issue of considering the future and strategies for replacing ash as an important tree in the landscape.

Tree Preservation Orders / Trees Within Conservation Areas

- 5.9.94 There are a number of trees within the parish which are covered by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO), either individually or in groups. The locations of the TPO tree / trees are shown on Figures 6A and 6B; they can also be found on HC's website which, in some but not all cases, gives the species and perhaps some very brief description (the full Orders are available, but they have to be requested and researched and a GDPR redacted copy produced for each of the trees in question, for which a charge is made: it was agreed this level of detail would not be necessary for the LVBA, especially as Orders for some of the most notable trees are on the public record).
- 5.9.95 Within Conservation Areas (CAs), normal TPO procedures apply if a tree is already protected by a TPO; however, if a tree in a CA is not covered by a TPO, written notice of any proposed work must be given to the LPA before the work starts. This is called a 'Section 211 notice', and it gives the LPA an opportunity to consider protecting the tree with a TPO.
- 5.9.96 TPOs are in many ways a rather random designation. There will be many trees that are special and particularly loved that will not have a TPO either because no-one has applied for one, or because they don't meet the qualifying conditions. Similarly, there will be trees that have TPOs that perhaps are no more special than some without them, but someone has gone to the trouble of applying, and has been successful.
- 5.9.97 TPOs are not granted very often, and in fact are only granted if very specific conditions are met, namely that the tree is special, either because it is old, unusual, or of historic significance, is visible from a PRoW, has public amenity value, and is under threat.
- 5.9.98 However, it is worth noting that government guidance regarding the meaning of the term 'amenity value' says the following: '*Orders should be used to protect selected trees and woodlands if their removal would have significant negative impact on the local environment and its enjoyment by the public*'.
- 5.9.99 This is further defined as being the trees' '*contribution to, and relationship with, the landscape*'. The vital role that trees play in mitigating the effects of climate change and in nature conservation must also be taken into account. Indeed, the July 2021 revision of the NPPF included a new policy (para. 131) which reinforces the importance of trees and tree-planting in the planning process. The paragraph is as follows:

Trees make an important contribution to the character and quality of urban environments, and can also help mitigate and adapt to climate change. Planning policies and decisions should ensure that new streets are tree-lined [footnote 50: unless, in specific cases, there are clear, justifiable and compelling reasons why this would be inappropriate], that opportunities are taken to incorporate trees elsewhere in developments (such as parks and community orchards), that appropriate measures are in place to secure the long-term maintenance of newly-planted trees, and that existing trees are retained wherever possible. Applicants and local planning authorities should work with highways officers and tree officers to ensure that the right trees are planted in the right places, and solutions are found that are compatible with highways standards and the needs of different users.

- 5.9.100 Notwithstanding the above, currently, if a TPO is granted, the only protection it confers is that it obliges the landowner to notify the council if any work is proposed to the tree, or that will affect it, and the council has to decide whether to give permission for the work to go ahead, or not. If the tree is deliberately destroyed or damaged by an unsympathetic landowner without good reason or permission, the only remedy is a requirement that the tree is replaced (to be 'of an appropriate size and species and planted at the same place') - yet clearly some trees are irreplaceable, and their loss cannot be compensated for.
- 5.9.101 In theory, it is a criminal offence to breach a TPO. Broadly, if the breach is likely to lead to the tree being destroyed, the offence is subject to a fine of up to £20,000, and in some cases, is unlimited. All other breaches are subject to a fine of up to £2,500. It is not clear how much of a deterrent this creates when prosecution is rare, or at least is rarely publicised.
- 5.9.102 The only real protection for trees is that they are loved and valued by people and communities, who will look out for them.

Photo courtesy Jan Sedlacek @Digitlight



5.10 Aesthetic and Perceptual Landscape Qualities

- 5.10.1 The aesthetic and perceptual qualities of a landscape's character (see *Figure 1 - What is Landscape?* in Section 4) play an integral part in understanding its value and susceptibility to change.
- 5.10.2 Aesthetic qualities include a landscape's patterns and shapes, its scale, texture, colour, balance and so on. It must be borne in mind, however, that there is always a degree of subjectivity in determining what is 'pleasing' to the eye or what is 'discordant.'
- 5.10.3 Perceptual qualities include noise, smell, touch, sense of remoteness / busyness, quality of light, scenic beauty, associations and memories. It is possible to be objective about some of these up to a point – the nearby Malvern Hills are an Area of *Outstanding* Natural Beauty, and so there is consensus about many of their aesthetic and perceptual qualities. However, whilst factors such as light, noise, smell and movement can be measured, qualities which are 'sensual' and 'emotional' cannot easily be quantified, and there is always a degree of subjectivity due to people's personal preferences, and how certain places 'make them feel'.
- 5.10.4 Many of the special qualities and key characteristics set out in the Malvern Hills AONB's Management Plan include important aesthetic and perceptual qualities which can be found in the Ledbury area, such as:
- *Dramatic scenery and spectacular views*
 - *An unspoiled 'natural' environment*
 - *A rich and distinctive historic environment*
 - *Distinctive 'villagescapes'*
 - *People coming to enjoy the hills, spas and the tranquillity of the rural landscapes*
 - *A sense of remoteness and tranquillity, underpinned by dark night skies and limited noise and disturbance. People feel calm and spiritually refreshed*
 - *A strong 'spirit of place', landscapes that have inspired and continue to inspire and which have a deep cultural narrative*
 - *Opportunities for bracing walks with fine views.*
- 5.10.5 The peace and tranquillity that can be experienced within the parish's rural landscapes is one of Ledbury's most special and valuable qualities. Tranquillity is defined in the glossary of GLVIA3 as '*a state of calm and quietude associated with peace, considered to be a significant asset of landscape*'.
- 5.10.6 Tranquillity is often assumed to be synonymous with lack of sound; however, in landscape and visual assessment, that is not the case. 'Tranquil areas' should not be confused with 'quiet areas', which are defined by the European Environmental Noise Directive (END; 2002/49/EC) as '*areas... that are undisturbed by noise from traffic, industry or recreational activities*'.
- 5.10.7 In Wales, the definition of tranquillity that has been adopted by both Welsh Government (Welsh Government 2012) and Natural Resources Wales (NRW 2016a) is '*An untroubled state, which is peaceful, calm and free from unwanted disturbances. This can refer to a state of mind or a particular environment. Tranquillity can be measured in terms of the absence of unwanted intrusions, or by a balancing of positive and negative factors. These include the presence of nature, feeling safe, visually pleasing surroundings and a relaxing atmosphere*'.
- 5.10.8 On the wooded hills to the east of Ledbury especially, but in many parts of the parish, levels of aesthetic and perceptual qualities are very high, as shown in the following photographs, with spectacular views to the Malvern Hills, to the Ledbury viaduct, the town itself, and the undulating Herefordshire countryside beyond. This scenic beauty is often viewed through narrow gateways or gaps in the woods and is not openly spread out below, as in the Malverns.

Ledbury's aesthetic and perceptual qualities









5.10.9 One of the town's most special qualities is that one can walk straight out of the town into these unspoiled wooded hills without going through suburban sprawl, as shown in the photographs below.

5.10.10 Footpaths which start in the town lead to hollowed-out paths climbing up to Conigree, Frith and Dog Hill Woods. Some are along ancient tracks or drovers' roads, following the contours or winding around trees whose roots stand proud of the path, forming natural steps. Trees distort themselves to get light, growing through each other, bright lichen on their shaded sides. There is a wealth of wildlife here, a sense of timelessness and tranquillity. It's a landscape that inspired local poets such as John Masefield to write of '*silent woods, dim green boughs hushed in the twilight.*'

Woodland footpaths





- 5.10.11 The low-lying agricultural landscapes to the north, west and south of Ledbury also display high levels of aesthetic and perceptual qualities. It is still an area of undulating, largely unspoilt countryside with wide expanses of red earth, well-managed hedgerows, small blocks of woodland, orchards and old farmsteads.
- 5.10.12 Many of the features which inspired the early 20th century Dymock poets to write about a golden corner of rural England, coloured by wild daffodils and cider apples, remain unchanged. In some parts of the parish, the landscapes display a combination of both traditional and modern agricultural / other rural land uses such as forestry, as shown in the photograph below.

Traditional and modern land use on west side of Frith Wood



- 5.10.13 The aesthetic and perceptual qualities of the farmed landscape are particularly susceptible to changes in the seasons and weather, so that the quality of light, field patterns, colours and textures are constantly changing.

Fields west of Ledbury town in midsummer, looking east from Marcle Ridge (zoom lens)



- 5.10.14 Ledbury town itself has mixed aesthetic and perceptual qualities, but mostly positive ones. In most long- and middle-distance views, it appears to have a great deal of integrity.
- 5.10.15 Mature vegetation on the hillside to the east creates an attractive backcloth to the town, even in winter. As can be seen in the photograph overleaf, there is a harmonious balance between the built form and the surrounding rural landscape and little separation between, especially on the wooded, eastern side of the town.

Ledbury town, looking north east from Ross Road



5.10.16 As noted in Section 5.7, however, modern Ledbury is less well visually-integrated into the wider landscape. This is seen where ubiquitous new housing development on the Barratt site south of Leadon Way stands out sharply in terms of its inappropriate siting, density and colour.

New housing development on Barratt site south of Leadon Way



- 5.10.17 Similarly, the large industrial buildings on the outskirts of Ledbury (south of Little Marcle Road and on the Bromyard Road) detract, because of their size, form and colour, from the quality of the setting and character of the town and the wider rural landscape.

Trading estate, Bromyard Road looking south east (image © Google)



- 5.10.18 However, the centre of Ledbury displays many very high-level aesthetic and perceptual qualities. The town has an attractively simple layout, a long, snaking main axis, running south to north, parallel with the hills to the east and river to the west.
- 5.10.19 From the middle of the town, the High Street, bordered by St Katherine's medieval hospital and the iconic Market House, there are contrasting views. Looking south towards the Southend, the width of the street enables the viewer to appreciate the variety of historic facades mainly from the 16th to 19th centuries. Looking north, the relative uniformity of the facades is offset by the gentle uphill curve of the Homend.

Looking south towards the Southend from marketplace



Looking north towards the Homend from marketplace



5.10.20 Certain clusters of buildings dating from the town's prosperity in the late 16th century are distinctive and eminently picturesque, for example in Church Lane and at Top Cross. They form a wealth of black-and-white architecture for which Ledbury is renowned, black and white, close studded timbering providing pleasing colour and pattern in the town centre.

Top Cross, looking east



Church Street, looking west



- 5.10.21 Ledbury is fortunate to have a by-pass (Leadon Way), which reduces traffic and associated noise in the town centre. Church bells and a carillon can be heard here, but also - unusually in a town - the cattle in Ledbury Park and sheep in Bradlow. A wide variety of bird song / calls, even that of the occasional pheasant and owl, can also be heard in the town, especially on the Town Trail and other green spaces within and fringing Ledbury.

Tawny owl (image © Peter Preece / WTML)



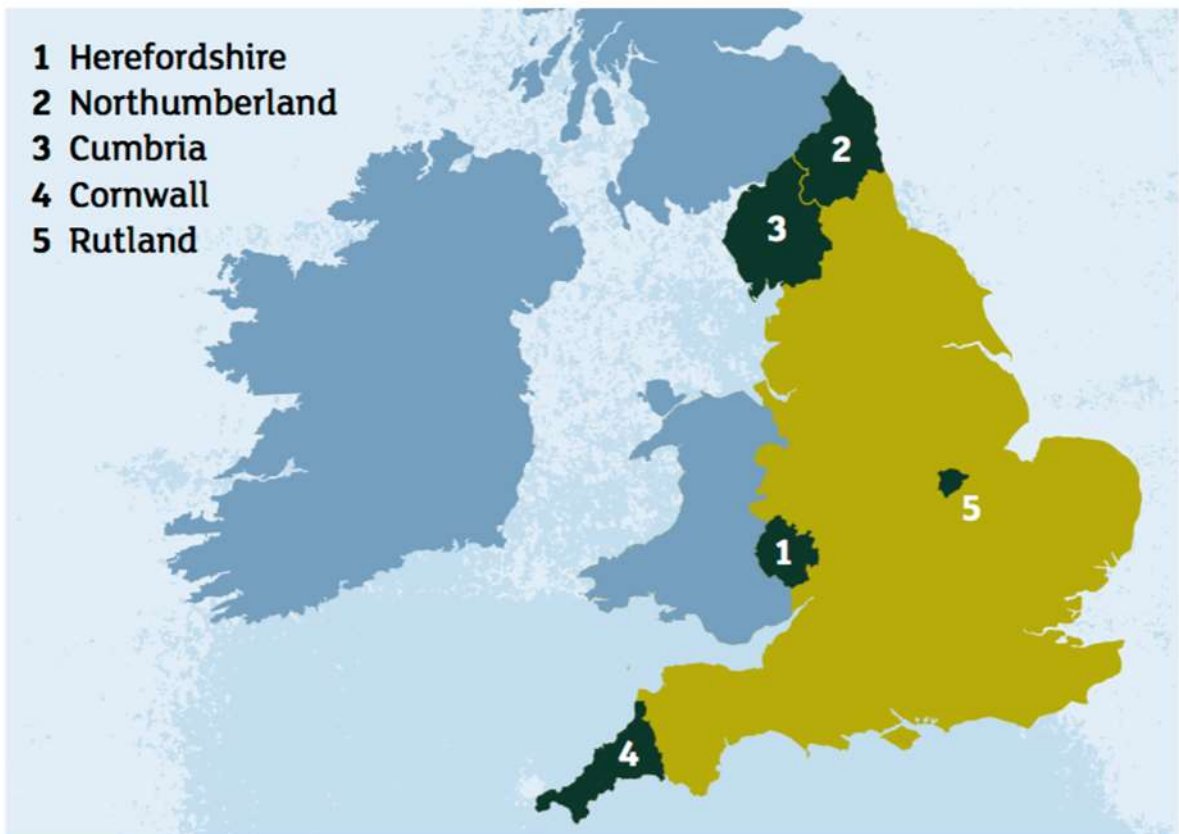
Night-time Lighting

INTRODUCTION

- 5.10.22 A rapidly-expanding population and a constantly growing economy are having an increasing and significant negative impact on the environment in England and notably in Herefordshire. One aspect of this impact is the ever-growing level of light pollution spreading out from towns and cities into what was a dark sky countryside, not only damaging the character of rural areas including National Parks and AONBs, but adversely affecting wildlife, as well as the quality of life and well-being of those who live there. A dark sky at night should differentiate rural from urban areas; however, light from a source which may be located in an edge-of-town industrial area can spread for miles around.
- 5.10.23 The Campaign for the Preservation of Rural England (CPRE) has recently produced a report which investigated light pollution in England based on average light levels across the country³⁴.
- 5.10.24 Herefordshire is England's darkest county, yet Northumberland has the highest proportion of pristine dark skies at 72% compared to Herefordshire's 60%. Herefordshire has the third highest amount of pristine night skies, with 60% in the darkest category, and 88% when combined with the next darkest category. The diagram overleaf shows the geographical location and ranking of the five darkest counties.

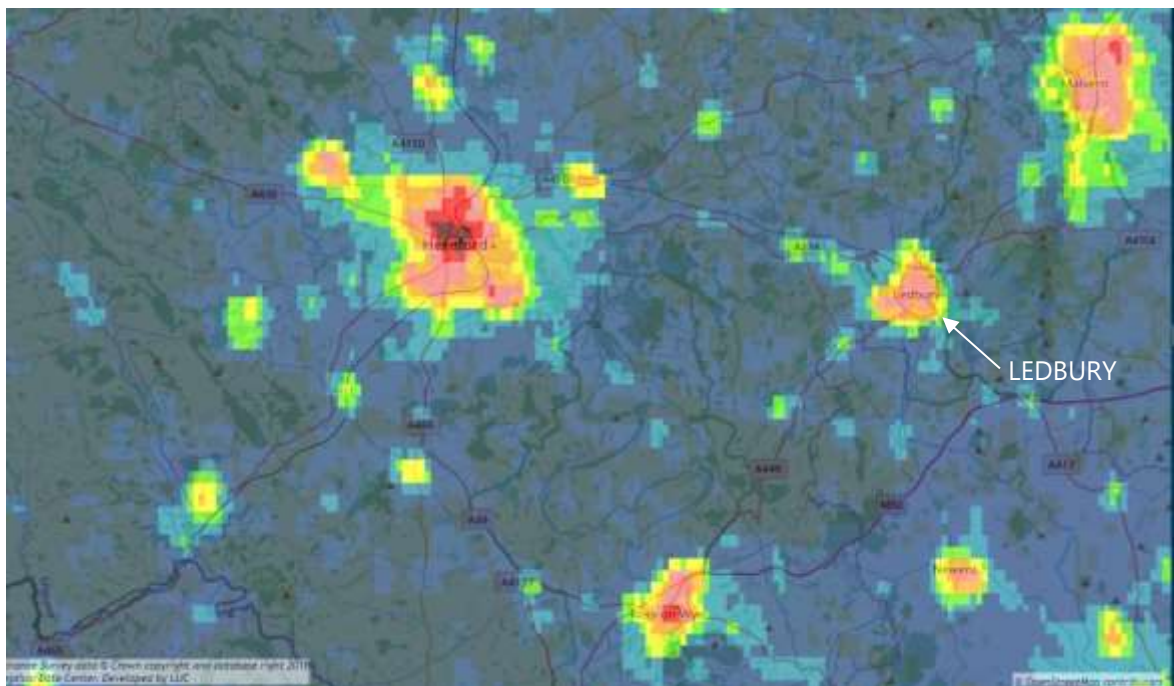
³⁴ https://www.cpre.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Night_Blight.pdf

England's five darkest counties



5.10.25 The diagram below is an extract from CPRE's *England's Light Pollution and Dark Skies* online map³⁵. This gives a very good indication of the extent of dark sky areas in Herefordshire, showing the steady creep of light pollution especially around Hereford and the market towns including Ledbury.

Herefordshire Light Pollution Map



³⁵ <https://nightblight.cpre.org.uk/maps/>

THE WIDER IMPACT OF LIGHT POLLUTION ON THE NATURAL WORLD

- 5.10.26 Along with the impact on the character of rural areas, there are many more reasons why action should be taken to limit and reduce light pollution. Many members of future generations may well never see any truly dark sky, or the awe-inspiring site of the Milky Way and the view of constellations and planets: these are experiences which inspired our ancestors to investigate and understand the universe and our place in it, and enabled navigation. While this is a real concern, it is only more recently that the true impact of light pollution on the natural world and wildlife has become more apparent.
- 5.10.27 Nature needs the night - life on Earth has evolved over millions of years with the natural cycle of daylight and night-time. The increasing use of artificial light at night has blurred this normal rhythm, creating mostly adverse conditions for the plants and animals that share our world with us. Research shows that:
- Millions of birds are killed annually on migration when they become disoriented and exhausted when circling and flying into brightly-lit structures.
 - 60% of insects are nocturnal and it is estimated that a third of those attracted to artificial light are killed as a result. Insects play a vital role in the global ecosystem.
 - The behaviour of many species of diurnal mammals, bird and insects changes significantly in artificially-lit areas, often becoming stressed to the extent that their breeding success is compromised.
 - Some predators might benefit from foraging in artificially-lit areas, but prey species that require darkness for their survival can be seriously affected.
 - Artificial light seriously disrupts the feeding pattern of some bat species.
 - Amphibians and fish are also adversely affected by artificial light.
- 5.10.28 A literature review from *Nature* magazine in 2018³⁶ states that '*early results suggest that light at night is exerting pervasive, long term stress on ecosystems, from coasts to farmland to urban waterways, many of which are already suffering from other, more well-known forms of pollution*'. The article mentions a UK study of a 13-year record of the timing of bud-opening in trees, and night-time satellite data found that artificial lighting was linked with trees bursting their buds more than a week earlier - a magnitude similar to that predicted for 2 °C of global warming.
- 5.10.29 DEFRA's *UK Biodiversity Indicators* report from 2019 shows that there has been a sharp decline in insect numbers in recent decades, with a 31% drop in insect pollinators between 1980 and 2016 and a 60% decline in the 2,890 priority species from 1970 to 2016³⁷. Similarly, the National Biodiversity Network's 2019 *State of Nature* report says that increases in light pollution particularly affect biodiversity in urbanised areas.
- 5.10.30 A 2017 *Nature* paper on the connection between light pollution and the decline in pollinating insect species suggested a serious threat to world food production in coming decades, illustrating that light pollution could have a serious long-term impact on important aspects of global human sustainability.
- 5.10.31 In Herefordshire, the main environmental concern currently is phosphate and nitrate pollution in the rivers Wye and Lugg, which as noted elsewhere in this report has seriously impacted on the water quality and wildlife in and around the rivers. It is becoming clear that industrial and commercial activities other than agriculture are also beginning to impact on the environment, one of the most important effects arising from these being light pollution.

³⁶ <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-018-00665-7>

³⁷ <https://nbn.org.uk/stateofnature2019/>

THE CORE STRATEGY IMPLICATIONS FOR LIGHT POLLUTION IN LEDBURY

- 5.10.32 Also as noted in this report, HC's Core Strategy 2011 - 2031 requires that in Ledbury, up to 825 new dwellings will be constructed, and that 12 hectares of new employment land should be developed to provide local employment. However, with ten years of the plan to go, permissions for around 1200 dwellings have already been granted, along with about 3 hectares of employment land. This represents a 20% increase in dwellings which will produce a concomitant level of increased light pollution. The housing development will mainly be to the north of the town on the viaduct site, although there are and will be significant housing developments south of Leadon Way. This means that new housing is penetrating into what was a highly rural and tranquil landscape and thus spreading the light pollution over a significantly wider area.
- 5.10.33 The allocated employment land is mostly to be located to the west of the town and south of the Little Marcle road. Although there is some industry at this location, an additional 12 hectares of commercial buildings is a very significant increase in what is a rural location.
- 5.10.34 It is clear that given the circumstances described above, the updated Ledbury NDP should include appropriate up-to-date guidelines for the design, construction and installation of domestic, commercial and industrial lighting to protect the environment and promote Ledbury as a Dark Sky town (see Recommendations).
- 5.10.35 The Core Strategy seems to have very little to say about light pollution - no doubt because it was produced many years before the adverse effects of night-time lighting were properly understood, and prior to a period of significant growth in the number of developments and activities the lighting from which pollutes dark night-time skies. It is not mentioned in the *Summary of environmental issues problems and challenges* section on page 40, nor in the *Vision for environmental quality* (pages 23 -25). However, light pollution is specifically listed in SS6 where it states that '*Development proposals should be shaped through an integrated approach to planning the following components from the outset, based upon sufficient information to determine the effect upon each where they are relevant...*'
- 5.10.36 In the list we find the following point:
- *Local amenity including light pollution, air quality and tranquillity*
- 5.10.37 The point is reiterated in SD1 (page 151) Sustainable Design and Energy efficiency with a further bullet point:
- *ensure new development does not contribute to, or suffer from, adverse impacts arising from noise, light or air contamination, land instability or cause ground water pollution.*
- 5.10.38 With this paucity of information on light pollution in the Core Strategy, it is important that specific guidance should be provided in the revised NDP.
- 5.10.39 Fortunately, the Malvern Hills AONB Partnership does understand the effects and implications of night-time light pollution, as explained in the section below.

MALVERN HILLS AONB LIGHTING ISSUES & GUIDANCE

- 5.10.40 The Malvern Hills AONB Management Plan lists dark night skies as one of the AONB's Special Qualities. For many years, the Partnership has recognised the worrying increase in adverse effects arising from the ongoing expansion of developments which pollute night skies with light. In particular, the cumulative effects arising from lighting generated by several separate developments within an area can be very damaging, although such cumulative effects are rarely considered by developers or LPAs (see Recommendations).
- 5.10.41 In October 2019, the Partnership published *Guidance on Lighting*³⁸. According to the guidance, '*in 2019, two Dark Sky Discovery sites within the AONB were approved by the UK Dark Sky Discovery*

³⁸ <https://www.malvernhillsaonb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/MHAONB-Guidance-on-Lighting-final.pdf>

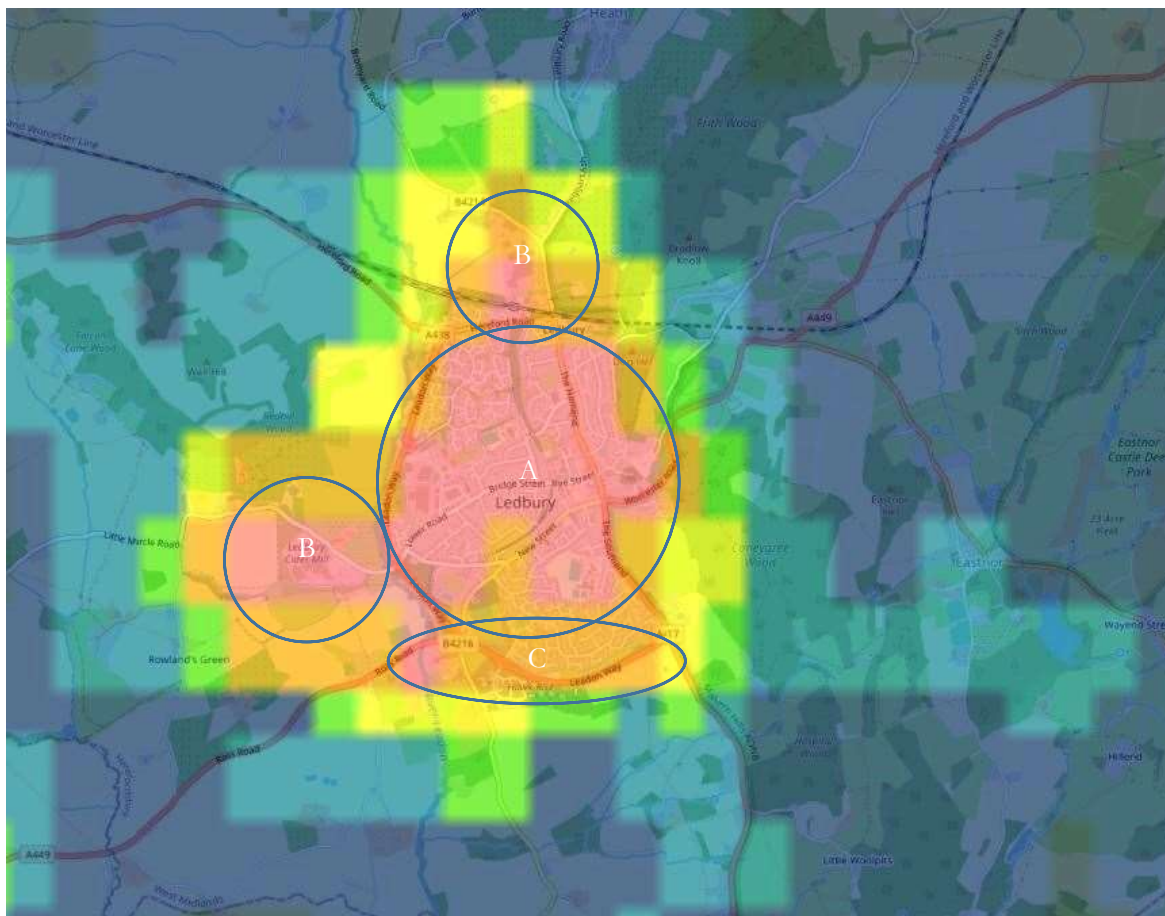
Network. These sites, at Castlemorton and Mathon, were recognised for the opportunities they offer to observe the night skies and are further proof of the importance of dark skies above the AONB'.

5.10.42 The AONB's lighting guidance had input from Chris Baddiley, a retired physicist living in the local area, who has published several scientific papers on light pollution including within the Malvern Hills AONB³⁹. He is currently continuing to monitor the situation.

5.10.43 LIGHT POLLUTION IN LEDBURY

5.10.44 The current level of light pollution in Ledbury is indicated in the diagram below, which is an extract from CPRE's *England's Light Pollution and Dark Skies* online map.

Levels of light pollution in Ledbury



5.10.45 The highest levels (red) of light pollution can be seen in the town centre, which mostly falls within circle A. This area comprises housing and the Lower Road industrial estate. Areas falling in the B circles is almost all industrial, comprising the Bromyard Road industrial estate to the north and the Little Marcle road business estate to the west. Note that the light pollution spreads well beyond the industrial area, as can be seen by the orange and yellow coded squares around the periphery of the B circles.

5.10.46 The C circle is mostly the Deer Park housing estate, which currently shows lower levels of light pollution than in the other areas. However, unfortunately, soon there will be a significant increase in levels of light pollution in the rural landscapes south of circle C due to the large-scale residential developments which are currently being constructed and /or have been granted planning permission along the south side of Leadon Way.

³⁹ <http://www.baddileysuniverse.net/>

- 5.10.47 The distribution shown on the diagram illustrates the importance of controlling light pollution from commercial operations as well as other forms of development which generate light.
- 5.10.48 In particular, the Bromyard Road industrial estate is adjacent to and within the setting of the AONB: development and expansion there have very significantly increased light pollution in nearby areas. Perhaps the main culprits at this location are ABE and Bevisol. ABE have a lorry yard which is brightly and intensively lit up all night, every night of the week. The lights are badly-designed and aligned, spilling significant amounts of light into the sky and sideways. Their operation lights up the entire area, and when misty or foggy conditions prevail, the light pollution is highly visible as it floods the night sky.
- 5.10.49 Bevisol are ABE's next-door neighbours, and the two companies work closely together in transporting ingredients and so on. Recently, Bevisol installed several very large tanks in two phases, with the last phase completed in late September 2021. Their new installations consist of many large shiny metal tanks and a large new building. These tanks, being situated right next to ABE, are spectacularly illuminated by the ABE lights, and scatter this light over a large area. Along with this, Bevisol themselves have installed additional lighting which has significantly added to the level of pollution. All of this development is situated adjacent to the AONB and has significantly degraded the environment.
- 5.10.50 It is therefore important that the NDP includes policies which help to reduce the amount of light generated by both existing and proposed industrial developments, as well as that generated by housing developments - see the recommendations for this topic in Section 7.2.

Ledbury at night (in mid-ground - radio mast at Firs Farm on Marcle Ridge on skyline), looking west from Malvern Hills (photo courtesy of Jan Sedlacek @Digitlight)



5.11 Landscape History and Historic Landscape Character

Introduction

- 5.11.1 Heritage, landscape / cultural history and historic landscape character are integral elements of landscape character assessment. This was emphasised in para. 170 of the 2012 version of the NPPF: *'Where appropriate, landscape character assessments should also be prepared, integrated with assessment of historic landscape character'*, although in the later versions, for some reason this recommendation disappeared.
- 5.11.2 Landscape assessment guidance is clear about the matter, setting out the range of historic and socio-cultural baseline information which needs to be gathered, analysed and factored in to the findings. It states, *'The history of the landscape, its historic character, the interaction between people and places through time, and the surviving features and their settings may be relevant to the LVIA baseline studies, as well as the cultural heritage topic'*.
- 5.11.3 Establishing and analysing an area's time-depth is a very important part of the landscape character assessment process.
- 5.11.4 According to *Topic Paper 5 Understanding Historic Landscape Character*⁴⁰, *'HLC/HLA is most of all concerned to trace the imprint of the past on landscape. Known as 'time-depth' (see Box 1), this is one of the landscape's most important characteristics. It can be defined as "the long-term interaction between human activity and natural processes" [5]. It recognises that the long sequence of events and actions that have produced the present environment, and which is visible within the landscape, is the result of human activity as well as natural processes.*
- 'A proper understanding of time-depth needs to recognise the various, and often complex, ways in which the landscape has been influenced by past human actions. HLC/HLA focuses on this human perspective and adds a fuller historical dimension to the basic Landscape Character Assessment process.*
- 'Time-depth is reflected within HLC/HLA through readily identifiable components like field boundaries, and through less obvious remains of settlement or communications and transport networks. It is also reflected through human influence on vegetation patterns, and in "the "hidden", buried evidence of past environments which survives across the landscape in the form of palaeoenvironmental deposits, for instance, or as cropmarks in ploughed land.*
- 'An important aspect of understanding time-depth is recognising that human influence has occurred, and can be traced, even where the landscape appears natural. It enhances our appreciation of how landscape components have changed through time, or survived through continuity.'*
- 5.11.5 Understanding historic landscape character is important because otherwise, the value of certain features may be missed, and not factored into judgements about sensitivity / capacity / potential effects. This may lead to the levels of capacity and / or effects being reported as lower than they should be.
- 5.11.6 Also, although detailed assessments of heritage assets, their significance and potential effects on their settings are beyond the scope of this study, it is important to analyse the data and use the information to build up an understanding of how the area's landscapes and settlements evolved over time, and establish factors such as intended / current interinfluence and intervisibility.
- 5.11.7 It is possible to identify features in the landscape today and trace their history back for many centuries; from this information, their rarity and value can also be determined. In this case, a range of maps and documents dating from the 11th century onwards (and old photographs) were

⁴⁰ *Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland - Topic Paper 5: Understanding Historic Landscape Character* The Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage (2002)

consulted and compared⁴¹. Historic map regression exercises were carried out to establish how and why both the landscapes and the settlements have developed as they have, and what relevance this has to current and future landscape-related matters, especially character.

- 5.11.8 For example, analysis of the 1812 preliminary OS map not only reveals a great deal about what the area's landscapes may have looked like and how they were being used at the beginning of the 19th century, it also provides a good indication of which features - especially trackways, hedges and trees - are likely to have been present at that time. The enclosure map of 1813 has been found to be more useful than the tithe map of 1841 in such respects.
- 5.11.9 The assessment found that the landscapes within the study area have significant time-depth, and a great deal of this is visible in and around Ledbury. Many of the features described above and below, and illustrated on Figures 7A and 7B, make highly important contributions to landscape character and visual / social amenity, some at a national level, others at a regional and / or local / neighbourhood level. They must also be factored in to judgements made about landscape value and susceptibility to change.
- 5.11.10 This section combines the findings of the historic landscape character assessment and the settlement pattern analysis set out in Section 5.7 (see also map sequence 1831 - 2006 in Appendix C). It sets out the history and evolution of Ledbury's landscapes, settlements and communities. This helps to explain how and why its various patterns and characteristics have developed into its present day character.
- 5.11.11 Information about the various designated and undesignated heritage assets within the study area is set out in Section 5.12.
- 5.11.12 Please note that attempts to obtain HC's HLC data have proved unsuccessful so far, so the information has not been included or factored in to the LVBA.

Ancient History

- 5.11.13 The Malvern Hills and surrounding areas have been a focus for human activity and settlement since the Bronze Age, and possibly earlier (Warners Pit in Mathon dates from the Palaeolithic period i.e. between c. 500,000 and 150,000 BP); a handaxe from the same period was found north of Colwall, and possible Mesolithic / Neolithic occupation sites have been identified in Cradley).
- 5.11.14 The Hills exert a large and extensive influence on both local and wider landscapes. They are visible from distant viewpoints, and also command exceptional views. They are an abundant source of pure spring water, and the lower-lying areas are fertile and sheltered. The Hills are also believed to have been an early sacred site, of importance for religious and cultural practices.
- 5.11.15 As a result of this, and the increase in trade of valuable raw materials such as salt, many ancient trackways and pilgrims' trails criss-cross throughout the area. 1:25,000 scale mapping shows the key routes, most of which are still in use, either as roads or public / private rights of way. The routes tended to be direct, aligned with widely visible landscape features such as hilltops for ease of wayfinding, with only minor detours where physical obstacles barred the way. (This gave rise to the concept of 'ley lines' proposed by the Herefordshire-born archaeologist and antiquarian Alfred Watkins in the 1920's; whilst some people are sceptical about the validity of the notion, it is interesting to understand the nature of real straight line markings in ancient landscapes, and what part they have played in 'the hidden history of human consciousness'.)

⁴¹ Sources of reference include: the Herefordshire section of the Domesday Book (1086); Diocesan Records from 1265; The Red Book of Hereford - surveys of the Bishopric Estate of 13th century (1288); Ledbury Parish Registers - Baptisms, Burials, Marriages from 1556; Ledbury Tithe Book (collected by William Davies, vicar of Ledbury 1595-1607); Ledbury Parish Books - Vol 1 1686-1763, Vol 2 1760-1850 and Vol 3 1852-2006; Ledbury Inclosure Act 1813; Ledbury Inclosure Award with plan 1816; and Gwatkin Ledbury tithe map 1841. Other maps include: 1831-2, 1899-1900 and 1920 Cassini historical maps; 1887 OS 1st ed 25 inch; 1932 HMRC map of town; and 1954, 1982 and 2006 OS maps.

- 5.11.16 The geology and associated topography on the west side of the Malvern Hills is very different from that on the east side, which has resulted in distinct variations in land use and social history. The east side was not favourable for settlement between the post-glacial period and the Iron Age, being predominantly flat, poorly-drained brackish marshland. The west side offered better opportunities for a safe, settled and sustainable way of life.
- 5.11.17 The shape of the hills and valleys of the district today is a legacy of the last Ice Age, which ended around twelve thousand years ago. Dense woodlands appeared after the glaciers had retreated and people slowly began to settle: their small flint tools occur in several places close to Ledbury, including the area around Wall Hills and Frith Farm. Remote ancestors left traces in the area, an example being a 300,000-year-old and still sharp hand-axe found in 1970 in a ploughed field at Hoe Farm, north of Colwall.
- 5.11.18 A recent geological study has shown that around 500,000 years ago, a large river flowed southwards along the western flank of the Malvern Hills. No Neolithic or Bronze Age settlements have yet been found in the Ledbury area. However, some Early Bronze Age circular burial mounds have been identified, including a damaged mound crowning Bradlow Knoll in Frith Wood and another levelled mound within a circular ditch revealed by aerial photography at New Mills, by the River Leadon on the western edge of Ledbury.
- 5.11.19 The Iron Age brought the construction of strategically-placed hillforts or camps (several are scheduled - see below) including the Wall Hills, British, Midsummer Hill, Kilbury, Sutton Wall, Haffield and Oldbury Camps (the latter at the southern end of Marcle Ridge). Prehistoric and Romano-British Ledbury seems to have been centred on Wall Hills.
- 5.11.20 Reference to the Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) indicates that there was other activity going on in the Ledbury area, with historic features such as a boundary bank found in Frith Wood. Also in Frith Wood there are occasional small-leaved lime (*Tilia cordata*) pollards of great age (see Significant Vegetation section above).

Roman Period - 6th Century

- 5.11.21 Although there is little evidence of Roman occupation within the study area, some scatters of pottery sherds suggest at least two concentrations of activity between Ledbury and Colwall, another in the south of Eastnor parish, and further sites south and east of Ledbury, within Wall Hills Fort and Sutton Walls (archive held in Herefordshire Sites and Monuments Record).
- 5.11.22 Further discoveries of Roman pottery and building materials at Donnington were made in the early 20th century. The Roman road to the west of the Leadon and Wall Hills suggests a trade route running roughly north - south, from Dymock on the River Leadon (four miles south of Ledbury), and Ashperton and Stretton Grandison in the Frome valley (five miles to the north-west).

7th - 10th Centuries

- 5.11.23 The episcopal see for the Magonsætan was established on the site of Hereford Cathedral in c. 680 AD, the boundaries of the diocese reflecting that of the sub-kingdom. On the west of the Mercian kingdoms, main centres of administration in the area included a number of Bishop's palaces, including those at Ledbury, Bosbury and Ross. Market towns at these administrative places grew to become important local centres along the main routes, including the Roman roads, such as Ashperton to Stretton Grandison and Leominster to Ludlow, with small communities forming stopping places in between.
- 5.11.24 Worship at what is now the site of Grade I-listed St Michael and All Angels church is believed to have commenced during the 8th century, when the Bishop of Hereford sent a group of his clergy to establish a Christian presence there.
- 5.11.25 There are no finds of Anglo-Saxon metalwork in the Ledbury district. Some clues concerning the direction of settlement can be found from place-names; those ending 'low' probably derive from

the Old English word for barrow or mound (hlæw). The first Anglo-Saxon communities migrated into the Upper Leadon district not long after 600AD and no doubt existed side-by-side with the indigenous British people (whom the English denoted as ‘Welsh’ meaning ‘foreigner’), hence there are also some Welsh place-name elements.

- 5.11.26 Boundary dykes are a feature of this migration period in Herefordshire, such as that occupied today by field boundaries extending southwards from Dingwood Park Farm just south of Ledbury to the northern limit at Haffield Park and another boundary bank at Frith Wood. Many ancient field patterns and evidence of buildings can be seen in crop marks observed by aerial photography undertaken as part of the Malvern Hills AONB National Mapping Programme. Lynchets have been found in two fields west of and within Frith Wood, c. 1.2km north of the church, in addition to banks and levelled ridge-and-furrow⁴² which have been recorded from aerial photographs as part of the Mapping Programme Project (for more detailed information about the occurrence of these features within the core study area, see the heritage topic LSCA schedules in Appendix D).

11th & 12th Centuries

- 5.11.27 The arrival of the Normans in the 11th century brought changes to landownership, and the way in which the land was used, especially in terms of hunting and agriculture: the predominantly wild, wooded landscapes were altered and tamed as manorial courts, and estates with extensive chases (hunting grounds) were established.
- 5.11.28 Ledbury is first recorded as a settlement in the Domesday Book, at which time Wall Hills lay abandoned. Its place-name is of Anglo-Saxon origin, rather than British or Welsh. In 1066, Ledbury belonged to the Church of Hereford; along with the Church’s other large manors along the west flank of the Malvern Hills, it lay in the administrative subdivision or hundred of the county called Wigmund’s Tree, later Winstree, which prior to Domesday included Much Marcle. The meeting place for the men of the hundred, where courts were held at that time in Ledbury parish, was at Wigmund’s Tree, later Winster Elms Copse, a short distance north-west of the later borough of Ledbury (near what is now the Orchard Business Park, north west of Beggars Ash).
- 5.11.29 Evidence suggests that at some time before 1066 when it was first recorded, Eastnor was formed out of the south-eastern part of an early, larger Ledbury parish (then, the easternmost part of Ledbury parish stretched to the Malvern Hills’ ridgeline, but that part was awarded to Eastnor following the Local Government Act 1888 - see below).
- 5.11.30 There is no founding charter, but the town was laid out in burgage plots by the Bishop of Hereford’s surveyors, starting with ‘Middletowne’ (first called High Street in 1461) and its triangular market place (from c. 1125). Next came the Homend, the Southend, Bishop Street (now Bye Street), and finally New Street (c. 1186). In 1138, King Stephen gave the town its Market Charter, renewed in 1584 by Queen Elizabeth I, for a weekly market and two annual fairs.
- 5.11.31 By the time of the Domesday survey, a large minster church had been built in Ledbury, no doubt replacing the earlier Anglo-Saxon timber-framed church (the present-day church is called St Michael and All Angels; in medieval times it was known as St Peter’s, or St Peter and St Paul’s church, but it was renamed in the 19th century - the reason for the change is not known).
- 5.11.32 The minster church was rebuilt from about 1120 to 1140, and again in the 1230s when the bishop founded St Katherine’s Hospital. The core was extended, and a massive, detached bell tower was built in the church yard to the north of the church (marshy ground to the west and south prevented a tower being attached in the more conventional manner to the west side of the nave or to the

⁴² Ridge-and-furrow is a relic of an obsolete type of agriculture. The pattern of ridges and furrows is often all that remains of the narrow strips (called ‘selions’) used in the open field system of agriculture – a communal method of strip farming in large village fields which has its origins in the Early Medieval period (c. CE 800 - 1200) and which continued in some areas into the early 19th century. Although ridge-and-furrow is not protected *per se*, its national importance is recognised by bodies such as Historic England <https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/publications/turning-the-plough-loss-of-a-landscape-legacy/turningplough.pdf>.

south aisle). The tower, which was topped with a short (15ft) stubby wooden shingled spire, was initially built in two stages, of yellow sandstone similar to that of the chancel, suggesting that both were built at a similar period in the early 13th century, with new bells on the upper floor being rung from the ground floor below. The existing bells, the sanctus bell in the chancel, and the bell in the west door turret, were retained within the church itself at this time.

13th & 14th Centuries

- 5.11.33 In 1231, Bishop Hugh Foliot founded the hospital in Ledbury, in the name of St Katherine of Alexandria who was martyred on a wheel. A second charter in 1233 placed the hospital in the care of the dean and chapter of Hereford Diocese. As well as offering hospitality to the poor and needy, in addition to passing pilgrims or other travellers, another duty was to offer prayers for the souls of those who donated land to the hospital; within a century they had accumulated 1600 acres, a very profitable offering. The hospital grounds beside the High Street are now a car park, but in those days it would have been a farmyard.
- 5.11.34 The church's north-facing Chapter House (previously called St Katherine's Chapel) was built in the early 14th century, probably before Katherine of Ledbury's time and certainly before 1330.
- 5.11.35 In the mid-13th century, hunting rights in the royal forests on both sides of the Malvern Hills were transferred from the monarch to the bishops of Hereford and Worcester, a section of the boundary running along the Malvern Hills ridgeline / the Shire Ditch. The Worcestershire forest became Malvern Chase, whilst the Herefordshire forest became known as the Bishop's Chase. In contrast to the Malvern Chase, which is described as being 'densely wooded' and containing wolves and wild boar, the Bishop's Chase appears to have been unwooded since clearance prior to the 11th century. The chases remained in use for 400 years until disafforestation in 1632.
- 5.11.36 The names of most of the farms which still surround Ledbury, including Hazle, Knapp, Massington and Woolpit, plus other place names within a few miles of Ledbury, were already in use in 1288, when the Bishop had his bailiffs and scribes make a rental register known as *The Red Book of Hereford*. Many of these farms were now landholdings of the bishop. The common lands provided grazing for the people of Ledbury and district - rights that were 'jealously guarded'.
- 5.11.37 While William of the Frith and Geoffrey Goldsmith lived in the comfort of Ledbury's Southend, Alured [Alfred] de la Frith and others living in Ledbury Foreign [outside the town itself] were so poor they had to provide services in place of rent to the Lord of the Manor, the Bishop of Hereford. Poor Alured had to guard the corn at harvest time, guard any thieves brought to court in Ledbury at other times, and act as postman delivering the bishop's letters anywhere within the bishopric.
- 5.11.38 These farms were the main employers, and often had tied cottages nearby for their workers and their families. All are many centuries old and still an important presence in the landscape today, defining its character. They include Burtons, Withers, Massington, Netherton, Argus, Hazle, Fairtree, Wall Hills and Woodhouse. The latter is Grade II* listed, and is probably the oldest domestic building in the parish, dating from the mid-14th century. It is partly surrounded by a moat - see illustration overleaf.

Woodhouse Farm (from Hillaby's Ledbury)



Woodhouse Farm, probably the oldest domestic building in the parish, built not long after the ravages of the Black Death. (HCL/WMC/5173)

- 5.11.39 Field boundary patterns reveal the legacy of the medieval open fields which were divided into furlongs. The presence of lynchets indicates attempts to maximise the amount of tillable land on steeper slopes. There is evidence of people exchanging land to consolidate their holdings and enclosing areas of arable land even in medieval times.
- 5.11.40 The Normans introduced rabbits (coney) and the enclosed warrens they lived in (some are still visible today, for example on Midsummer Hill (Camp) on the Malvern Hills). This was food only for the wealthy. The warren established in Conigree Wood had a professional rabbit keeper. In 1346, John the Forester, Priest of Ledbury, was convicted for poaching in the bishop's warren; after public penance in Ledbury church, he swore not to repeat the offence, and to abstain from all hunting for three years.
- 5.11.41 The Black Death arrived in Ledbury in 1349 and resulted in a significant decline in the population, as elsewhere. The loss of so much labour caused the Church to accept rent, which was much less than the profits they had previously obtained from their crops. The even greater loss of clergy meant that some of the many new priests created in several mass ordinations in Ledbury and elsewhere in the county, were less-than-suitable candidates.

15th & 16th Centuries

- 5.11.42 The Reformation in the 16th century resulted in political and religious changes which led to further changes in landownership, land use and management, which altered many of the landscape patterns and characteristics that would have been common at that time - for example, within the boundaries of the 'borough' there would have been acres of meadow and orchard to the west of the town.
- 5.11.43 At its greatest extent, Ledbury parish stretched for c. 5 miles north to south and east to west, so would not have been organised as a single communal farming entity - rather, it is likely to have

comprised many small, discrete farm-holdings with enclosed fields. Some early enclosure was recorded in Wolsey's Commission on Depopulation in 1517. The county of Herefordshire as a whole was heavily enclosed by 1600.

- 5.11.44 Due to the area's predominantly corn-fed animal husbandry, in 1586, Sir William Camden referred to Herefordshire as '*A county both for feeding of cattle and produce of corn, everywhere is excellent soil; ... And therefore says that for three W -Wheat, Wool and Water, it yieldeth to no Shire of England*'.
- 5.11.45 There had been enclosure of open fields in the 16th century and earlier, after which production rose, with the heaviest wheat crops in the county produced here. There was rotation of crops, from fallow to wheat to beans or pulse and then fallow again.
- 5.11.46 After the Reformation, the town of Ledbury, as but a small part of a collection of formerly Church property, was sold to the local gentry for the sum of £957 6s 2d (today worth in excess of £6.5m).
- 5.11.47 The two Rectors or Portionists of Upper Hall and Nether Hall were no longer clergy, so the vicar now had to survive on the tithes he collected from everyone, including even eggs and milk, all listed annually in the Easter Book.
- 5.11.48 William Davies *alias* Weaver farmed his own glebe at Mabel's Furlong. He owned both ridges (ridges) and headlands there, plus a small green off the Southend. This ground lay open in 1607, but by 1616, the glebe terrier distinguished between open land and land severely-divided (i.e. enclosed), which included 11 acres there.

17th & 18th Centuries

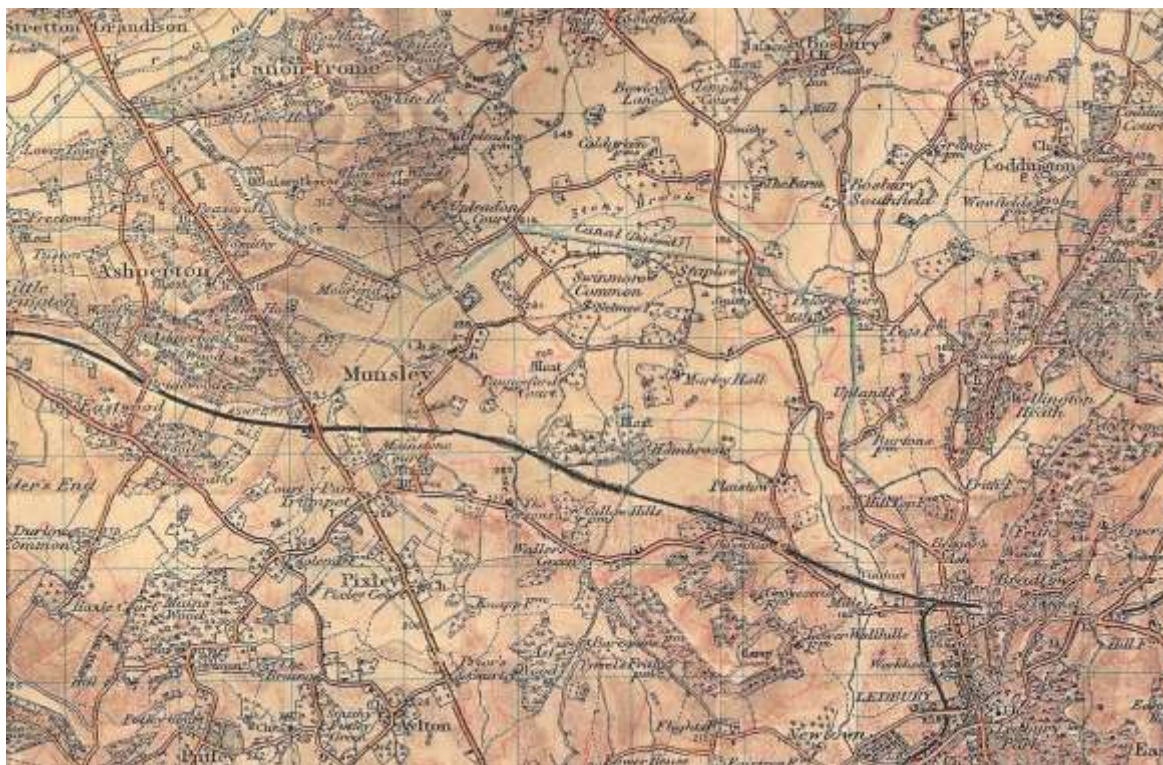
- 5.11.49 In 1593, Edward Cowper, Master of St Katherine's Hospital, wrote a letter to Lord Scudamore, the Crown's representative in Hereford, to persuade him that Ledbury needed a market house.
- 5.11.50 After more than twenty-five years of consideration of the matter, land in the market place was purchased - by John Phillips, clothier - and cleared to begin (in 1617) the erection of the Market House. This would enable crops brought to the town to be stored away from rats and mice and other vermin. It was still incomplete when John Phillips died in 1655.
- 5.11.51 Eventually, in 1668, John Skyppe II and the other trustees decided to employ charitable funds - left to provide coats and gowns for the poor - towards completing the Market House. The increased rents paid for its use was then used to maintain the buildings as well as to provide for the poor as previously. For a further two hundred years, on Christmas Eve each year, coats and gowns were still provided for the poor.
- 5.11.52 During this prolonged erection of the Market House, life was interrupted by the Civil War. Ambrose Elton, Lord of the Manor of the Hazle in Ledbury Foreign and part-owner of the Manor of Ledbury, raised a troop of Dragoons for the King. Ledbury experienced invasion of troops on at least three occasions: in 1645, during the English Civil War, a brief but terrifying pitched battle, the 'Battle of Ledbury', was fought through the orchards, gardens and streets, mercifully with little long-term damage. A glass case in the church's Chapterhouse contains a sword reputedly belonging to Major Backhouse, a Roundhead who was mortally wounded in the battle. The parish church itself was the scene of fierce fighting, and musket balls were dug from the north door by the Victorians and are now on display in the swords cabinet. The holes in the door can still be seen.
- 5.11.53 The Butcher Row House Museum also contains other Civil War artefacts, including a sword of this period, discovered about a decade ago rammed deep into a hedge on the east side of Dog Hill, perhaps by a fleeing soldier. Prince Rupert stayed at New House briefly: he and his troops fought Colonel Massey and his men, chasing them off to Gloucester.
- 5.11.54 During the late 17th and 18th centuries, changes in forest law resulted in de-afforestation. This ended certain restrictions on the use of land for agriculture; royal lands were sold and the new landowners began the process of enclosing large areas, which included common land. This resulted

in further significant changes in the landscapes in Ledbury and its surrounding districts. Strip fields began to disappear in favour of fields with border hedging. By 1800, less than 10% of land in the county was left open, and only 4% was subject to parliamentary enclosure.

- 5.11.55 The dominance of wheat did not prevent *'meadows, orchards, extended lawns and hop-grounds satiating the eye by one continued scene of luxury'*. In 1700, when Celia Fiennes viewed Herefordshire from the top of the Malverns, she saw *'a County of Gardens and Orchards, the whole country being full of fruit trees etc.'*
- 5.11.56 Newly-cultivated fields around the town's farms and estates were mostly used to grow arable / vegetable crops, although there were still many orchards. Between 1676 and 1705, George Skyppe of Upper Hall had over eighty fruit trees planted in his new walled garden, including a unique collection of peaches (as he had died in 1690, the later trees must have been planted and listed in his diary by his successor).
- 5.11.57 Frith Cottages on Beggars Ash Lane date from the 17th century, and lie within the town boundary.
- 5.11.58 At this time, Herefordshire's roads - better described as ways - were notorious due to them becoming increasingly heavily-trafficked. Hopes in the county of improving the navigation of the River Wye as a means of transport led to opposition from Ledbury and the surrounding parishes, who were too far-distant to benefit from it, or from the River Severn in Worcestershire either. An improved manner of delivering coal and other useful commodities was sorely needed.
- 5.11.59 In 1721, the Ledbury Turnpike Act was made. It was not only the first in Herefordshire, it was also only the third passed in the neighbouring counties of Gloucestershire, Worcestershire and Shropshire. The 'Gentlemen and other inhabitants of Ledbury' had petitioned parliament for a 'Bill to repair several roads leading thereto', claiming that the roads around the town were damaged by 'the heavy grain carriage' and by 'waggons carrying goods between the Wye and the Severn'. And so it became impossible to pass through Ledbury without payment of the appropriate toll - a situation which continued for the next 150 years.
- 5.11.60 To control the situation, it was necessary to have a gate and toll collector at every entry point. Given the number of roads which converged there, Ledbury had to have six, all just outside the borough boundary. A turnpike milestone is sited at the junction of the Bromyard Road and Beggars Ash Lane - such markers came into use in the 1740s and were made compulsory in the 1760s.
- 5.11.61 The local farmers were not happy with paying the tolls, and turnpike disturbances spread to Ledbury. In 1735 - despite the death penalty for 'cutting down turnpikes' - there was great disturbance in the town, and at Upper Hall, John Skyppe III had to read the Riot Act and took prisoners, who were taken to London for a show-trial. One man turned king's evidence and survived, the other unfortunate, the son of a Ledbury farmer, was hanged. A single amendment to the tolls charged was made in the 2nd Ledbury Turnpike Act of 1742, halving the toll of a wagon pulled by two horses; nonetheless English agriculture from 1730 to 1750 was a time of great depression.
- 5.11.62 The idea of a canal to solve the heavy transport problem where the turnpikes had failed led, at the end of the 18th century, to the plan to build a canal from the River Severn at Gloucester to Hereford. Begun in 1792 in Gloucester, by 1798 it had reached the Wharf on the outskirts of Ledbury. The price of coal in the town plunged overnight. However, by then, funds had run out, and work did not restart until 1830, enabled by further funding including from John Biddulph and John Martin (both bankers).
- 5.11.63 The canal then progressed, in parallel with New Street, via a flight of five locks to the New Wharf in Bye Street. It then headed north on the west side of the Bromyard road, crossing the road shortly after Beggars Ash, crossing beneath Burtons Lane. From there it went due north again up to a lock just before Prior's Court, then passed over two single-arched aqueducts, the first crossing the River Leadon, where James Barrett was the resident miller and baker in the later 1830s, the second crossing a stream. It then headed north west to Staplow (on the B4214), where one of the Ballard's

canal-side cottages was built. From there, the route wound through the lowlands (albeit there were long, straight sections, such as west of Staplow), continuing past Upleadon Court in the direction of Ashperton and on to Stretton Grandison. The canal finally arrived in Hereford in 1845 (see Cassini map below).

Extract from Cassini map (1899 - 1900)



- 5.11.64 In 1550, there were five bells in St Michael and All Angels church's bell-tower; in 1690 these were recast with extra bell metal to make eight bells. In 1727 it was proposed that the short wooden shingle spire should be rebuilt. The tower had become dilapidated following a fire, and was in need of renovation. Nathaniel Wilkinson of Worcester was engaged, from 1732 - 6, and the crenellated fourth stage of the tower built, topped by the stone spire, now 202 feet high, complete with its weathercock weighing about 28½ lbs (13 kg). (The cockerel has since come down to earth, and sits on a church windowsill in the south aisle.)

19th Century

- 5.11.65 In the 1830s, John Biddulph had become interested in the new railways which were being planned and constructed elsewhere. Linking Worcester and Hereford by rail had been discussed since the mid-1840s, which was when there was a railway boom, but it was not until 1853 that the Act permitting this was passed. Work began the following year. The most direct route would have bypassed Ledbury; however, the bankers living in the town were able to influence the route via tunnels through the Malvern Hills and Dog Hill at Ledbury, where a 31-arch viaduct was built across the Leaden valley, with about one million locally-made bricks (see Stephen Ballard entry in Cultural Associations Section 5.13). The railway opened on 13th September 1861 and became part of the Great Western Railway (GWR), which then bought the canal, closing it in 1881 and converting the Ledbury to Gloucester section into a branch line.
- 5.11.66 The earliest map of 1831 - 3 shows a track east of New Mills, leading north for a short distance, long before the railway was thought about (further on, this leads to the viaduct).
- 5.11.67 As part of the process of enclosing the remaining areas of common land and waste (by Parliamentary Act in 1813), the whole of Ledbury parish was surveyed. A series of nine very fine maps was drawn by Trophimus Fulljames and William Womak prior to the award being made in

1816. This recorded that rights of common on all pieces of common land and waste on the side of Malvern Hill, between the Hill and the turnpike road leading from Upton-upon-Severn to Ledbury, were to cease, as well as at Bradlow Common and at Wellington Heath, then part of Ledbury parish. New roads were laid out as part of the enclosure, as decided by the Enclosure Commissioner, over the common lands of Wellington Heath and Bradlow. At least thirty-nine squatters' cottages had been built on Wellington Heath by 1813 and their removal would have caused mass homelessness, so the landowners agreed to hold an auction. Some fifty-three freehold plots were sold, and as a consequence only two squatters lost their land.

Squatters' cottage at Wellington Heath



- 5.11.68 In the early 19th century, several landscaped parks and gardens were created by wealthy landowners, in accordance with the latest fashions (the registered and unregistered parks and gardens within the study area are described and their history is explained in Section 5.12). Often the new houses that lay within the emparked areas were built on sites of medieval timber-framed manorial properties which were demolished to make way for brick and stone. Landscape designers incorporated remnant features from medieval chases and deer parks, such as fish pools and woodland blocks, although these lost much of their previous 'natural' form, since an ornamental 'picturesque', 'semi-wild' character was favoured at that time.
- 5.11.69 A dispensary was established in Ledbury in 1824 by the young surgeon Congreve Selwyn, for the working poor; vaccination against smallpox was also introduced. He was joined in 1831 by Miles Astman Wood, who served Ledbury's people until 1897 along with his namesake son, also a doctor, (1875 - 1907), from their home at Orchardleigh in New Street.
- 5.11.70 The first OS map of 1887 (see Appendix C) shows the town still surrounded by fields and woodland but expanding, now with recently-constructed housing, the railway and its station (opened in 1861) and the new cattle market (opened in 1887). In 1891, the Cottage Hospital (established in 1873 in the former *Railway Hotel* on the Homend) was replaced, across the road, with a purpose-built one provided by Michael Biddulph MP. A Methodist and a Baptist church had been built in the Homend, complementing the non-conformist chapel, founded in 1607, which hid behind the High Street shops (now renamed the Burgage Hall and accessed from Church Lane). In 1898, the Plymouth

Brethren left Ledbury after many years. In 1901 the Roman Catholic Church of the Holy Trinity began services in Ledbury, finally opening a newly-built church in New Street in the mid-1970s. The Quakers now meet in their homes, and Ledbury Elim Church meet in Ledbury Primary School.

- 5.11.71 In addition to the Free Grammar School founded in the 15th century and Mrs Hall's Cookery School in the Southend for poor girls, in 1818 two new schools opened for the poor, one for boys in the old workhouse and one for girls in Church Street. Both were based on the pattern of the National Schools. There were numerous private establishments which faded away following the Education Act of 1871, as the town now had the County School for boys in the Homend, with girls and infants in Church Street opposite Lower Hall.
- 5.11.72 A new cemetery was built at the lower end of New Street, opening in 1861 (enlarged in 1908). It is now managed by LTC. This accommodates Anglicans and others, including the Baptist and Methodists whose churches were both built in the Homend in the 19th century. The Methodist Church has recently been sold due to its falling congregation and they have moved their church to the old String Factory in Bye Street. The Dissenters Chapel, hidden behind the High Street since 1607, had been rebuilt twice and served its Congregationalists until 1972 when they combined with the Presbyterians to form the United Reform Church. The chapel was abandoned but subsequently renovated, and became the 'Burgage Hall', now run by the Ledbury Civic Society on a peppercorn rent for community use.
- 5.11.73 The removal of the Butcher Row from the High Street was prolonged and costly, as it required money for two private Acts of Parliament, in 1819 and 1835, in addition to money to buy out its owners and the residents. Respectability was of prime importance in the early decades of the 19th century, and required the removal of anything noxious, which included the Butcher Row and the blood and guts of slaughter at Lower Cross, the culverting of drains and ditches and removal of piles of 'manure' (which some collected in their back yards, in the hopes of selling it).
- 5.11.74 In 1830 the Duke of Wellington was Prime Minister and Parliament passed the Beer Act, which granted, on payment of a small fee, the licence to sell beer brewed on the premises of the householder. With no safe water supply on tap at that time, everyone drank beer, which was boiled in the making and so safe to drink. Ledbury had over thirty drinking places, each tradesman working in his workshop whilst his wife sold beer in the house.
- 5.11.75 The Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 removed the duty of the parish in caring for the poor, a duty held since the days of the Elizabethan Poor Law. The old Workhouse became a boys' school, and a new workhouse was built off Horse Dealers Lane (later renamed Union Lane and now Orchard Lane) on land in Belle Orchard, for 150 persons at a cost of £3,500. It opened in 1837 and provided relief, until the welfare state took over, to the twenty parishes which formed the Ledbury Union. When no longer in use most of it was demolished, preserving the front range which now houses a series of apartments.
- 5.11.76 Water piped from a spring in Conigree Wood arrived in the town in 1592, using lead piping. The water supply prior to this had been from springs via streams or from wells, although it seems there was a conduit situated outside St Katherine's Chapel long before this, which may perhaps only have supplied the water down an open gutter: in 1585, Edward Cowper, Master of St Katherine's Hospital (d. 1596) made an entry in the Hospital Accounts to pay 'John Bond and his man for making a gutter to carry the waste water from the town conduit into the hospital pool', indicating it was causing a problem at the time. In 1587, Edmund Skinner (a weaver), left a bequest for 20 shillings (= £1 then but today worth c. £336) to 'the town of Ledbury to help the amending of the common water course into the conduit there'. Both of the above pre-date the lead piping used by Thomas Hall the plumber in 1592. Most people used wells, but from either source it was not safe to drink without first being boiled. Much later (in 1828), piped water arrived in the Southend, and later still, additional supplies came from reservoirs at Massington. The Public Health Act of 1872 led to the establishment of the Ledbury Rural Sanitary Authority. Today, Welsh Water provides Ledbury's supply on behalf of Severn Trent.

- 5.11.77 A gas supply came to Ledbury in the 1830s, from the gas works at the canal wharf, which lit the streets as well as homes. A new gas works at the corner of New Street and Little Marcle Road (then called Gas Works Lane) supplied the town from 1875 until nationalisation in 1948.
- 5.11.78 The parish of Wellington Heath was carved out of Ledbury in 1842. The arrival of roads, rail and industry gave rise to new forces for change which re-shaped landscapes and settlements once again. New residential developments in Ledbury resulted in the loss of meadows and orchards and woodland cover in the Happy Land, Newtown and Newbury Park areas on the edges of the town, providing a mix of housing suitable for workers, professionals and the retired in the latter half of the 19th century.
- 5.11.79 In the 1880s, plans were made to reform the areas of administrative bodies in England and Wales in preparation for the creation of elected councils by the Local Government Act 1888 (in the event, the recommendations of the commissioners were not carried out)⁴³. In Ledbury's case, a tidying-up exercise transferred Haffield, a small, detached portion of Ledbury parish, to neighbouring Donnington in 1885; nine years later, Wellington Heath ceded from rural Ledbury to become a parish in its own right. 1888 saw the creation of elected county councils, and six years later, elected parish and district councils were established. Ledbury Urban District was created with authority over a slightly larger area than the old borough; Ledbury Rural District embraced much of south-east Herefordshire, up to the county borders with Worcestershire to the east, along the Malvern Hills ridgeline between British Camp and Midsummer's Hill, and Gloucestershire to the south, between Clencher's Mill and Ludstock.
- 5.11.80 For reasons unknown, in c. 1860, St Peter's church was renamed St Michael and All Angels church. More work to both the tower and the spire was needed several times during the late 19th and early 20th centuries; some of the renovations were major, and lasted for years.

20th Century

- 5.11.81 In 1909, a painting of *The Last Supper* was gifted to St Michael and All Angels church by a descendant of the 18th century art collector John Skippe. Very recently, evidence has come to light which reveals that not only was the painting originally commissioned by a Venetian convent in the 16th century, it was also almost certainly the work of the artist Titian, or Tiziano Vecelli, as he was properly known (c. 1488 - 1576), typically considered one of the founders and most important members of the Venetian School of Italian Renaissance painting.
- 5.11.82 In 1914, the first electricity in the town was delivered, by way of wires strung between poles, supplied to those in the town who could afford it (a private electricity plant had been installed by Mr J C Davies in 1892 at his brickworks at Fairtree on the town's western outskirts, where later he built a jam factory, now the site of UBL). Ledbury Cottage Hospital did not get electricity installed throughout until 1922, which then enabled X-Ray equipment to be installed as well (they had had a telephone as early as 1906, due to a donation from one of the governors). The Cottage Hospital continued until 2002, when the new St Katherine's health complex (with GP surgery, community hospital and care home) opened in Market Street.
- 5.11.83 Although the date of its construction is not certain, until WWII there was a golf course in Conigree Wood. Voice of Ledbury Facebook group members' posts about this include comments such as: "*Was binned off for land ag during the war... Part of Hill Farm on Eastnor estate... Still evidence of it as I grew up, you could just about make out the greens... Remember walking up there when we were children. Up over the golf links and fairy glen [the location of the fairy glen is unknown] The trophies from the course can be found at the Worcestershire golf course in Malvern*".

⁴³ By the 1880s the issue of county government had become a major political issue. One of the most pressing matters was the necessity of boundary changes: in many cases, counties had very irregular boundaries, and the lower-level units such as boroughs, parishes, poor law unions and sanitary districts often lay in more than one county.

- 5.11.84 Other sporting facilities used by Ledbury's communities in the 20th century but which have since disappeared include a rugby field, where the Langlands was built some decades later, and an open-air swimming pool on the north side of the Hereford Road, just below the skew bridge (probably where Bradfords the builder's merchants now is). The pool took three years from planning to opening in 1914, fed by a stream of 'pure' water from the Ledbury railway tunnel, and closed down probably in the 1970s, after which the indoor pool was built in Lawnside Road.
- 5.11.85 New housing was built as 'Homes for Heroes' in Homend Crescent after WWI, and during the early decades of the 20th century, plots in Bank Crescent were for sale for the building of individual homes. During and after WWII, German prisoners-of-war were housed in the Mabel's Furlong area, shown on the OS map of 1954. This site was later used to build the secondary school which combined with the Grammar School as a Comprehensive School and has since become John Masefield Academy.
- 5.11.86 After WWII, in the mid-1950s, a small group of houses was built on a corner of Pound Meadow, off New Street, with further construction over the next few decades of houses along Pound Meadow and Pound Close, Elmsdale Road, and Oaklands Drive on the land leading down to the cemetery. In the 1950s and 60s, a large estate of council houses was built of the fields behind the west side of the Homend. In the 1960s the Langlands estate was built on the site of Old Kennel Meadow, the former rugby field. A large housing estate was then built on the former Deer Park (of Ledbury Park) and a relief road built in 1979, around the south and west of the town, providing a partial by-pass of the town centre, linking the Gloucester Road to the Hereford Road, and enclosing several fields which have all since been built on, mainly by the New Mills housing and Lower Road trading estate.
- 5.11.87 Within the town a number of blocks of apartments were built, specifically for the over-55s and offering various degrees of support. Harling Court was built in the 1950s on the site of the town's old allotments, and even received a visit in 1957 from the Queen and Prince Philip. Dawes Court was built on the site of the old Church of England Boys' School (built in 1868). Born Court, Turner Court, Bethell Court and most recently Leadon Bank, have also been built in recent years.
- 5.11.88 Once the post-WWII developments described above had been completed, there was little growth in the town. In 1971, Ledbury town's population was only 3,911, and it then stabilised for some time.
- 5.11.89 In 1951, the bells in St Michael and All Angels church were restored, the project led by the Poet Laureate John Masefield.
- 5.11.90 In 1974, the most momentous change in local government united Herefordshire and Worcestershire, in what Pinches (2009) describes as '*a forced and troubled marriage (ended by divorce in 1998), and during this period Ledbury formed part of the Malvern Hills District - an unlikely joining of two areas which had always been separated physically and in outlook by those very hills*'.

21st Century

- 5.11.91 By 2011 (the date of the last Census), the town's population had grown to 9,636; since then many new homes and other developments have been built.
- 5.11.92 In 2002, the doctors' surgery moved from the Master's House - which had been the practitioners' base for the previous twenty-five years - into a new purpose-built surgery. Before this, the surgery was in the Steppes house in New Street, home to doctors since at least 1831. Despite the St Katherine's complex having opened less than twenty years ago, it is already in need of replacement with larger premises due to the growth of the number of local residents. The doctors have expressed a wish to combine with the Market surgery on a single site, to offer a wider range of services more efficiently. The doctors of the Market Street Surgery and of St Katherine's Surgery have combined to form the Ledbury Health Partnership. A care home is also being built on Martins Way.

- 5.11.93 Infill of various spaces with houses since the millennium include the estate beside the old goods yard at the station (now a trading estate), which was formerly site of the redundant abattoir (built in 1926), and homes built on the ground between the Hereford Road and the viaduct.
- 5.11.94 Much of the new development (residential, industrial and commercial) has been located on land west and south of the town centre, for example the UBL factory and the auction site on the south side of the Ross Road, opposite the rugby club.
- 5.11.95 Also, the viaduct site has been granted outline planning permission for residential and employment use.
- 5.11.96 Currently, c. 320 new homes are being built south of the town on land (formerly fields) south of Leadon Way (the Barratt scheme). In August 2020, planning permission was granted for the construction of up to 140 new houses adjacent to the Barratt site's eastern boundary (the Bovis / Vistry scheme).
- 5.11.97 Planning permission was granted for housing on the former football and cricket pitches at the lower end of New Street - construction work commenced during the summer of 2021, starting with infrastructure and a car park.
- 5.11.98 The clock on St Katherine's Chapel, which ceased working in 2005, was taken away for repair in 2019. This turret clock, dating from 1637, has now been retired and will be on display in due course. A new electronic mechanism has been linked to the 18-inch bell, which dates from 1698, a memorial of a master who died in 1696. The bell is hung in the roof turret where it now tolls the hour in the High Street, although it is silenced at night-time.
- 5.11.99 A few years ago, St Michael and All Angels church's eight bells were found to be urgently in need of restoration, for which fund-raising began in 2018. The restoration of the tower and bells was completed towards the end of 2020, with two bells recast, six retuned, and two new lighter bells added, now making a ring of ten. The tower and its windows were repaired, also much new rewiring and carpentry completed. Some new inscriptions were added to the bells in summer 2021, including the addition on the number nine bell of an inscription referring to the Covid-19 pandemic. An exhibition is now open to the public every day portraying the history and heritage of the bells and providing information about the mechanical and physical aspects of campanology.

5.12 Heritage Assets

- 5.12.1 The baseline studies identified numerous designated and undesignated heritage assets within the study area. The locations of most of the designated / key features and sites listed below are shown on Figures 7A and 7B. Their distribution is a good illustration of how the area's character has evolved and changed over thousands of years.
- 5.12.2 The previous sections explain and provide further background context for these assets, and note their influence on / contribution to the area's landscapes and communities. Where relevant, further information is provided in the LSCA Area schedules produced for the heritage topic in Appendix D.

Scheduled Monuments

- 5.12.3 Only one Scheduled Monument (SM) is located within the parish: Wall Hills Camp, which lies in a dominant position on Ledbury's western outskirts c. 650m west of the River Leadon. It comprises the remains of a large, early Iron Age multivallate hillfort, covering c. 10.1ha.

Wall Hills Camp



- 5.12.4 Hillforts in Britain are known from the Bronze Age, but the great period of hillfort construction was during the Iron Age, between 700 BC and the Roman conquest of Britain in 43 AD. Debate continues as to whether these forts were places of occupation or simply meeting places and focal points for the communities concerned.
- 5.12.5 Historic England's description of Wall Hills Camp is as follows:
'The hillfort enclosure is irregular in plan approximately 650 long by 435m wide that is divided into two separate areas by a bank and ditch. The hillfort is defined by a steep natural slope beneath two ramparts and associated quarry ditches. The monument has four entrance gaps, with the north eastern entrance being inturned and two entrance gaps between the enclosures. Excavation of the site has revealed Roman and 12th century pottery and a Civil War cannonball.'
- 5.12.6 Evidence of flint working and flint tools, flakes and cores characteristic of the period 6000 - 4000BC have been found around and within Wall Hills hillfort (and also near Frith Farm in Wellington Heath parish), suggesting there maybe earlier sites, possibly simple enclosures lying beneath. Bradlow Knoll may be the site of a Bronze Age round barrow or burial mound (see also note on Alfred Watkins in the Cultural Associations section). A number of portable antiquities dating from the Bronze Age and later have also been found in the fields between the hillfort and the River Leadon below.
- 5.12.7 There is no public access to the hillfort, but it is described and illustrated in *Transactions of the Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club (1883-85)*⁴⁴, an extract from which is as follows:
'The camp itself is very large. It comprises within its area nearly 30 acres of ground. It has two main entrances; one from the north, through the outer portion, called "Fluck's Close," and another from the east - this entrance is approached by a deep fosse road, or covered way, from the north, and it is also defended by a traverse and deep fosse in front of it.'

⁴⁴ <https://archive.org/stream/transactionsofwo83wool#page/24/mode/2up>

'The camp is supplied with water from a spring close to the ramparts, and by two ponds in the southern side of the outer fosse. The portion on which we now stand is the bastion guarding the northern entrance, and is called "The Churchyard," but whether the human bones which have been found in the camp came from here is not stated.

'The portion termed "The Camp" is nearly rectangular, with a small projection at the eastern end, called "The Little" Camp." It is nearly 20 feet higher than the western portion. This is called "Pea" Hill, with the narrow portion near the eastern entrance, called "Humble Be" Park." [...] You will observe an entrance on the western side; this is not an original entrance. The fosse near it is called "The King's Ditch," but the origin of this name is lost.'

5.12.8 There are two other scheduled hillforts in the wider area, on the Malvern Hills: Midsummer Camp which lies c. 4.6km east of Ledbury town, and British Camp which lies c. 5.2km to the north east. Both have a starting date in the late Bronze Age (c. 800 BC). The Shire Ditch which runs along the Hills' ridgeline is scheduled, the listing describing it as a medieval boundary dyke, but evidence suggesting that it also dates from the Bronze Age. There is a degree of both physical and cultural interinfluence between these monuments, Wall Hills Camp and Ledbury town, but limited intervisibility due to the screening effects of the wooded hills east of the town - intervisibility increases in the open areas around the town (see Section 6 Visual Baseline).

5.12.9 Within the study area beyond the parish boundary there are three other scheduled monuments:

- Barton Court dovecote: Grade II* listed. South west of Colwall Green, within the grounds (unregistered historic park and garden - see below) of Grade II-listed Barton Court. Believed to date from the middle of the medieval period.
- Bronsil Castle: between Eastnor Castle and Midsummer Hill. Remnants of a mid-15th century fortified and moated manor house with a gatehouse and four towers. Built to incorporate the ruins of an earlier property, possibly belonging to the Beauchamp family.
- Moated site at Bellamy's Farm: south east of Leddington. Medieval moated site (majority in country built between 1250 and 1350). Believed to have taken its name from the Bellamy family who appear in the Dymock manor rolls of the 14th and 15th centuries.

Listed Buildings and Structures

5.12.10 Within the study area there are numerous listed buildings including several graded I and II*. Those within the parish are described below, those beyond the parish boundary are noted where relevant, usually where there is interinfluence / intervisibility between features.

5.12.11 A total of 244 listed buildings and structures were identified within the parish alone. Around three-quarters of these are concentrated in a tight cluster within the town centre, lining both sides of the four roads which meet at Top Cross (see previous sections). Most are within the Conservation Area (see below) - indeed, the majority of properties within the Conservation Area are listed.

5.12.12 The parish's three Grade I-listed buildings are all in the town centre (described in more detail in previous sections):

- St Michael and All Angels church: 8th century origins, rebuilt from c. 1120 to 1140, second rebuilding in c. 1230s (detached bell tower built with wooden shingle spire). Spire rebuilt in stone 1732 - 36, further works in late 19th and early 20th centuries.
- The Market House: begun c. 1617, completed c. 1668, timber-framed.
- Ledbury Park: late 16th century, timber-framed (see unregistered historic park and gardens below); was called New House until mid- 19th century.

Ledbury Park (Frank Kenward collection)



5.12.13 Within the town there are twenty-two Grade II*-listed buildings and numerous Grade II. The Grade II* buildings include:

- Master's House: 15th century (1487 - 8) - recently renovated.
- St Katherine's Chapel, hall and stable: 13th / 14th century.
- Feathers Hotel: 1560 - 70, timber-framed.

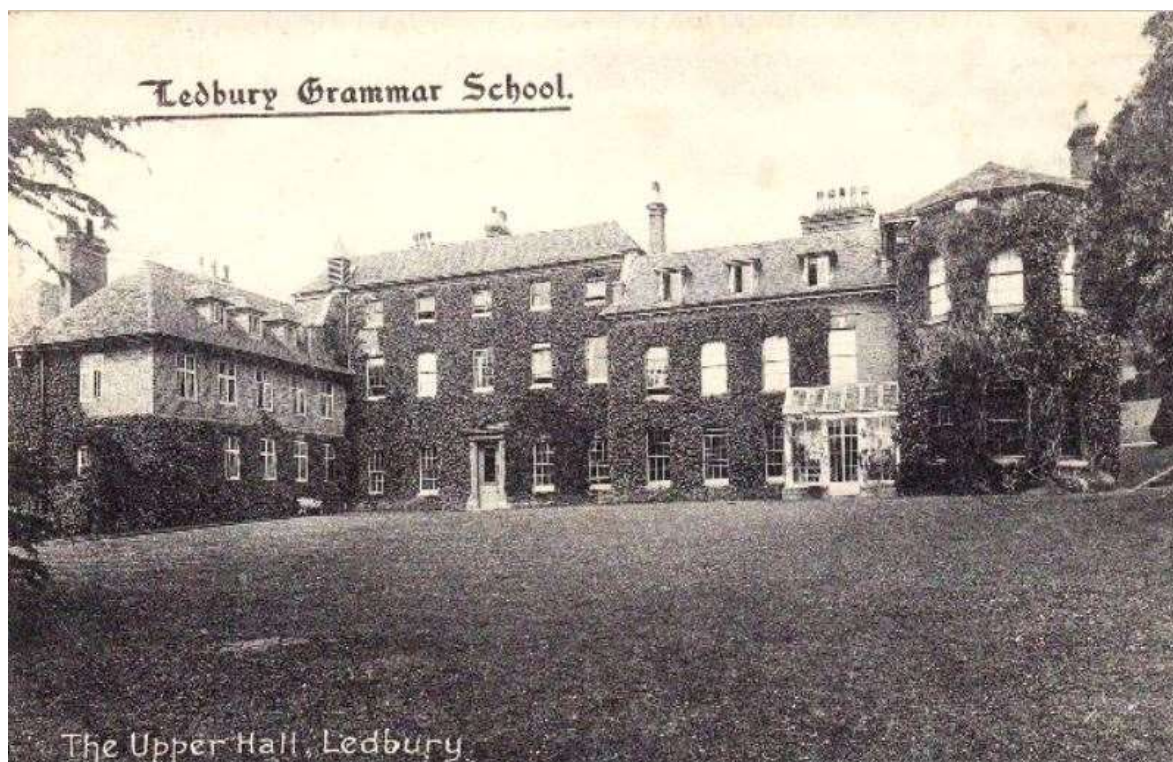
5.12.14 The 31-arch railway viaduct which crosses the River Leadon north of the town was built between 1859 and 61, out of around one million locally-made bricks. It is Grade II listed, and is a landmark feature in the local area. Ledbury Station House is also listed Grade II.

Ledbury viaduct



- 5.12.15 Beyond the settlement and within the parish there are no Grade I-listed buildings, but three Grade II*-listed buildings:
- Woodhouse Farmhouse: a Grade II* 14th century half-timbered property lying in the northern part of the parish, just south of Staplow.
 - Barn south of Wallhills Farmhouse: 15th century or earlier.
 - Dingwood Park Farmhouse: a small country house c. 1690 lying c. 1.6km south east of the town on the hill slopes east of the A417 (within unregistered historic park and garden - see below).
- 5.12.16 There is also a good scatter of Grade II buildings in the parish landscapes, many of which are 16th - 17th century farmsteads.
- 5.12.17 The Butcher Row House, now a museum in Church Lane (built c. 1581) is not listed, nor is the other part-survival of a Butcher Row house in Skippe Alley. These are good candidates for at least local listing - see Recommendations.
- 5.12.18 Part of the current Heritage Centre was formerly used as a Grammar School and dates from pre-Reformation times. Initially held in the room over the church porch entrance, Richard Wheeler, Holy Trinity chaplain, was retained as schoolmaster and paid a yearly income of 71s 3d for four boys to be taught free - others had to pay. Later, teachers were appointed by the Bishop of Hereford, and they were required to live in. However, parts of the building were used for an assortment of other things including a pin factory, and was split into sections as residential accommodation at different times, with the Grammar School only as part of the whole building. It is listed as Grade II* and has been dendrodated to 1489 / 90, just a year or two after the Master's House, also Grade II* listed. The listing is only mentioned by britishlistedbuildings.co.uk, but is not mentioned by historicengland.org.uk or victoriacountyhistory.ac.uk, which seems strange. Certainly the whole building was never used as a school.

Ledbury Grammar School c. 1940s



Registered / Unregistered Parks and Gardens

REGISTERED PARKS & GARDENS

- 5.12.19 There are three Registered Parks and Gardens (RPGs) within the study area, although none are in the parish. All are described in detail in *A Survey of Historic Parks and Gardens in Herefordshire*⁴⁵.
- 5.12.20 Eastnor Castle is a Grade II* RPG lying c. 1.7km east of Ledbury town at its closest point. The registered landscape extends to c. 100ha and comprises 19th century gardens and a pinetum with a fine deer park of late medieval origin, providing the setting for Grade I-listed Eastnor Castle.

Eastnor Castle (photo courtesy of Jan Sedlacek @Digitlight)



- 5.12.21 The Cock family was seated at Castle Ditch, Eastnor, from c. 1600. Charles Cox, MP, was raised to the peerage in 1784 as Baron Somers of Evesham, and improvement of his estate began almost immediately. In 1811, John Somers Cocks, Lord Somers, his son, commissioned a major new house, Eastnor Castle, to replace the timber-framed Castleditch, which was first recorded as an unfree tenement in c. 1288. Work on the castle began in 1812. At much the same time, the laying out of its pleasure grounds began. In the 1830s, a pinetum - to become one of the most celebrated aspects of the Eastnor landscape - began to be planted in the pleasure grounds.
- 5.12.22 The Deer Park, or New Park as it was then termed, had been created some time before 1808, probably c. 1785. It embraced, especially in its eastern part, land formerly within Bronsil Park. That had been created in c. 1460 by Richard Beauchamp of Bronsil Castle, 2km east of Eastnor, who was granted permission to create a new 1300 acre (c. 540ha) park.
- 5.12.23 The Grade II*-listed Obelisk (also known in the 19th century as The Monument) is situated at the highest point of Eastnor's parkland, on an upstanding ridge just below Midsummer Hill. Designed by Robert Smirke and built of stone, it was erected in 1811 by Lord Somers. The base memorial bears inscriptions to the first Lord Somers, lord chancellor to William III (d. 1716), and to Ensign James Cocks, killed in 1758, with an additional inscription to Lord Somers' eldest son, Edward Charles Cocks, killed in action at Burgos (Spain) in 1812.

⁴⁵ *A Survey of Historic Parks and Gardens in Herefordshire* 2001 Hereford and Worcester Gardens Trust Whitehead D and Patton J (ed)

- 5.12.24 The Obelisk stands some 90 feet (27.4m) high, and is an iconic landmark feature in the landscapes west of the Malvern Hills, having been situated so as to be visually prominent even in more distant views. Panoramic views can also be enjoyed from the Obelisk, notably to the east (hills between British Camp and Midsummer Hill), and west (to the Iron Age hillfort of Kilbury Camp).

The Obelisk, Eastnor (photo courtesy Jan Sedlacek @Digitlight)



- 5.12.25 Parts of Eastnor's park (including the Obelisk) are accessible via public footpaths which cross it, and there is an area of Open Access land⁴⁶ at Howler's Heath. According to the Castle's website⁴⁷, it is now '*an exclusive-use wedding venue, corporate team building venue and private party venue, as well as a venue for product launches and location filming*'.
- 5.12.26 Hope End Grade II RPG lies c. 2.3km north east of the town. It comprises c. 100ha of late 19th century ornamental parkland within a larger and older deer park, designed as a picturesque landscape by J C Loudon - a renowned Scottish landscape gardener and architect considered to be the most influential horticultural journalist of his time⁴⁸; he also designed the associated country house at Hope End which was later demolished. Elizabeth Barratt-Browning, one of the most prominent English poets of the Victorian era, spent her girlhood at Hope End.
- 5.12.27 Homme House is a Grade II-listed RPG which lies c. 3.5km south west of the parish boundary at Much Marcle. The designed parkland probably dates from the 1820s - 30s but some features may be earlier; it surrounds Grade II*-listed Homme House (part c. 1500), and in the gardens there is a very fine (Grade I-listed) late 17th century (Pevsner suggests c. 1670), two-storey summerhouse.

⁴⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/open-access-land-management-rights-and-responsibilities#:~:text=The%20Countryside%20and%20Rights%20of,as%20'open%20access%20land'>

⁴⁷ <https://eastnorcastle.com/>

⁴⁸ <https://www.britannica.com/biography/John-Claudius-Loudon>

UNREGISTERED PARKS AND GARDENS

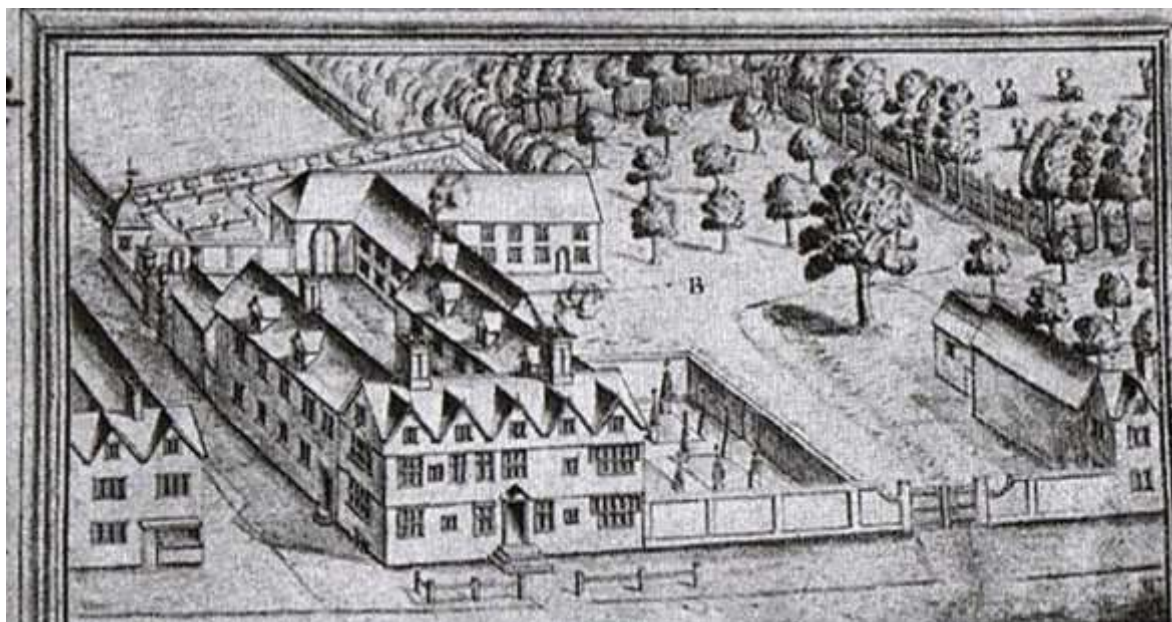
- 5.12.28 In Herefordshire, notable parks and gardens which are not on Historic England's register are given the title 'unregistered parks and gardens' (UPGs); they and their settings / view corridors are protected by planning policy (Core Strategy Policy LA4).
- 5.12.29 Eight unregistered UPGs were identified within the study area, four of which are within Ledbury parish. They are also described in the *Survey of Historic Parks and Gardens in Herefordshire*.

UPGs Within Parish

- 5.14.1 Upper Hall: The parkland associated with Upper Hall (also known as Over Hall) extends north east from the town centre on land between Dog Hill and Stoney Hill. *The Survey of Historic Parks and Gardens in Herefordshire* says that Upper Hall is 'one of two portionist estates of the church at Ledbury and before the Conquest was part of an extended precinct, which developed around the ancient minster' (evidence suggests that Ledbury's minster had been founded and endowed by the 8th century at the latest⁴⁹). In the fields to the east of Dog Hill Wood, in low light it is possible to see traces of ridge-and-furrow.
- 5.12.30 The house at Upper Hall is Grade II-listed. It is of pre-Conquest origin: a large medieval timber-framed building, with stone cellars. Largely destroyed in the Civil War, the 'Jacobean' building of five bays was built of brick between 1660 and 1680, with a contemporary walled garden, bowling green, summerhouse and fish ponds. A Georgian wing was built at the eastern end in c. 1730, with further building in 1766. The house and gardens were altered in 1841, with another wing added in 1849 and further extensions before 1867. The walled garden was removed and replaced with a pleasure ground in the late 19th century together with a new vegetable garden and complex of glasshouses, and a new summerhouse was built on Dog Hill. In WWI it became an auxiliary hospital, being sold in 1920 and used as a grammar school from 1923 to 1991. It has now become a series of apartments. *The Survey* adds, 'New dwellings have been built behind the house but the park-like setting remains. A wonderful oasis in a busy market town, and a tremendous setting for the parish church'.
- 5.12.31 Ledbury Park (also New House Park / Ledbury Deer Park) is one of Ledbury parish's most notable designed landscapes, and is of 13th century origin (possibly c. 1232). It extends from the town centre along the east side of the A417 as far as adjacent Underdown (also UPG - see below), with Conigree Wood forming the backdrop to the east, on hill slopes.
- 5.12.32 The house was built in c. 1595, and was claimed to be the finest timber-framed mansion in the land. It stands on the eastern side of the Southend on the corner of the Worcester Road, (formerly Horse Lane) at Upper Cross. The five-gabled western front originally had its front entrance centrally-placed, with a few steps down to the street; the top storey was added in the first half of the 17th century.

⁴⁹ *The Origins of Anglo-Saxon Herefordshire: A Study in Land-Unit Antiquity* Sheila Kathryn Waddington (May 2013)
https://theses.bham.ac.uk/id/eprint/4738/9/Waddington13PhD_-pdf

New house in Ledbury Park 1733



- 5.12.33 Major renovations in 1820 by John Biddulph provided the range facing Worcester Road and a lodge with the front entrance now in the courtyard on the east side. Much of the gardens have since been built on with housing and the house divided into apartments. The deer park was sold for housing which was built in the 1970s and 80s. Some consider this to have been the site of the Bishop's Palace, but it is unlikely as it is now known to have been laid out as burgage plots in medieval times; the Bishop's Palace was probably built on the north side of Worcester Road adjacent to the churchyard, but its precise location has not yet been identified.
- 5.12.34 According to the *Survey of Historic Parks and Gardens in Herefordshire*, although the tree arrangement in the wider parkland is almost entirely lost, '*the large trees in Ledbury Park... serve to emphasise what a tremendous asset this piece of 'rus in urbe' is for Ledbury*'.
- 5.12.35 Underdown is a small 17th century gentry estate immediately south of Ledbury Park. Underdown (the house) is Grade II listed, a small but elegant Georgian country house rebuilt in Ledbury Park by Anthony Keck in c. 1780. It comprises three storeys of three bays with a park and walled kitchen garden plus two walled garden enclosures, parkland lawns and shrubbery; also vineries a conservatory, peach house, plus melon and cucumber pits.
- 5.12.36 The house has since become apartments with other properties built in the grounds. Some of the land was across the main road towards Hazle Farm, where there was evidence of amenity planting and an avenue of trees radiating from the farm towards Hall House Farm (see Other Key Historic Features below).

Underdown



5.12.37 Dingwood is a park south east of Ledbury - its northern boundary is at Parkway - on land lying between the A417 and Clencher's Mill. *The Survey* notes that 'In the 13th century the bishops of Hereford had a deer-park at Dingwood' and that 'the easy curve of the road [A417] at this point is very reminiscent of the pale of a medieval park'. It surrounds a late-17th century house (now Dingwood Park farmhouse), and accommodates Woodfields Farm (now a large, modern complex).

Dingwood



5.12.38 UPGs In Neighbouring Parishes:

- Priors Court: east of Staplow. 19th century garden.
- Barton Court: south of Colwall Green. Gardens contain scheduled medieval dovecote, but house built c. 1790 and new park and gardens created in late 19th century.
- Old Colwall: adjacent to (north east of) Hope End. According to *The Survey* it developed in the mid-16th century as a minor gentry estate. *The Survey* author's view is that the park's connections with Uvedale Price and J C Loudon and proximity to Hope End RPG 'suggests that it should have an equal place on the English Heritage Register'.
- Haffield: lies south of the A417, east of Donnington, and comprises a small early 19th century estate with parkland, ornamental trees and a kitchen garden. The Haffield Estate of 120 acres was created in 1813 by John Biddulph. It contains an Iron Age hillfort within the wooded grounds, its ramparts enclosing an irregular area of 8 acres. Donnington and Haffield are now in Gloucestershire.

Conservation Areas

- 5.12.39 There are currently 64 Conservation Areas (CAs) in Herefordshire. Ledbury CA was designated in 1995. As far as it has been possible to ascertain, no formal appraisal of Ledbury's CA has ever been carried out⁵⁰.
- 5.12.40 The extent of Ledbury's CA is shown on Figure 7B. It extends either side of the main thoroughfare through the town centre, from the traffic lights on the A438 at The Homend and Orchard Lane junction, down into the High Street and then through the Top Cross crossroads onto the A449 Gloucester Road and The Southend as far as the Mabel's Furlong junction by the entrance to John Masefield High School.
- 5.12.41 Although Ledbury town's history is intimately connected to its wider rural location, which is full of historical interest of significant importance in its own right, it is within the compact CA that Ledbury's heritage is particularly fascinating and extraordinary. There is an abundance of historic material describing the very large number of the town's heritage assets (particularly impressive relative to its small market town size of just over 10,000 people). These reflect the importance of Ledbury's heritage, and why the town centre is designated as a CA.
- 5.12.42 Two publications especially demonstrate the high level of heritage experts' interest in Ledbury: *The Victoria County History of Herefordshire*⁵¹, and the Heritage Lottery Funded *England's Past for Everyone* - a four-year project that led to the publication of two books on Ledbury's heritage. But probably the most emphatic portrayal of how important the CA is as a heritage asset, and which is a combined appraisal of the CA's physical assets, is the slim but impressive 2007 publication *An Analysis of the Historic Fabric of Late 16th and early 17th Century Buildings in Ledbury*. It lists nearly seventy buildings, almost all still existing and situated within the CA.
- 5.12.43 There are also several local societies and organisations which provide historical background and show how the CA contributes to the town's important tourism trade, which is a crucial driver of the local economy.
- 5.12.44 On its aesthetic and communal heritage values the town also ranks on a similarly outstanding scale. It has an internationally-famous cultural reputation which attracts visitors from all over the world for its poetry connections. Ledbury is the birthplace of John Masefield, Poet Laureate of the United Kingdom from 1930 - 1967 (born in the town in 1878); it was also the home of Elizabeth Barrett Browning. It is closely associated with the six famous Dymock Poets (Rupert Brooke author of 'The

⁵⁰ An undated 'Appendix 1: Herefordshire Conservation Areas and Assessment' from an unidentified report indicates that no appraisal has been done; the type of conservation area is described as an 'Urban Centre'.

⁵¹ <https://www.history.ac.uk/research/victoria-county-history/county-histories-progress/herefordshire>

Soldier', Robert Frost regarded as one of the USA's most prominent poets and others with scarcely lesser reputations - Lascelles Abercrombie, John Drinkwater, Wilfrid Gibson and Edward Thomas, who lived nearby for a few years before the First World War). Local paths and buildings in which they lived mark their continued influence now, over 100 years later.



5.12.45 The Master's House, in addition to now housing Ledbury's Library, also provides a home for the John Masefield Archive, and the Dymock Poet's collection.

The Master's House (image © Tim Crocker)



- 5.12.46 Drawing on this literary heritage, the ten-day long Ledbury Poetry Festival held each July has become the leading poetry festival in the UK, featuring poets from all over the world. Its events take place in many of the historic buildings and on the streets of the town's CA, bringing them to vibrant life and connecting them inextricably into the local and visitor community. The physical heritage assets do not gather dust in splendid isolated display, but are a living part of the fabric of the town.
- 5.12.47 The volunteers who assist the Ledbury and District Civic Society and its Trust, which cares for the Butcher Row House Museum; Ledbury Places which manages the Heritage Centre; The Friends of Ledbury Church; and The Friends of the Master's House, all contribute to providing services for visiting tourists as well as for the town's residents.

Other Key Historic Landscape Features

- 5.12.48 There are numerous undesignated but valuable historic features within the study area. Many are listed in the Historic Environment Record (HER), which was a source of reference for this assessment. For more detailed information about the occurrence and location of these features within the core study area, see LSCA Area schedules for Heritage topic in Appendix D.
- 5.12.49 Of particular note are the following:
- Bronze Age features e.g. round barrows / burial mounds (Bradlow Knoll could be such a feature).
 - Unscheduled hillforts / camps.
 - Old / ancient quarries.
 - Medieval farming features such as lynchets and ridge-and-furrow.
 - Old / ancient woodland, hedgerows, alder carr, orchard, coppice etc.
 - Old / ancient trackways, bridges, fords.
 - Springs, spouts, wells, fountains, pools, ponds (especially medieval fishponds), dams, mill-races.

- Mills.
- Squatters' cottages.

Squatters' cottage Wellington Heath



- Holloways (e.g. Cut Throat Lane, Knapp Lane, Burtons Lane).

Burtons Lane



- Medieval deer park boundaries (for example, potentially at Dingwood, along the A417): the precise locations of the boundaries have not yet been established, but historic texts provide

clues; for example, in *People and Parish*, Pinches explains, 'The difference between deer kept in enclosures and parks and those roaming wild is demonstrated in the household records of Richard Swinfield, where it is recorded that the bishop's household had fat does from the parks of Colwall and Dingwood and lean ones from the open chase' [ref - Does: Swinfield Household Expenses, II, 19-20]. See also Significant Vegetation.

- The route of, and features / cultural histories associated with, the Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal and the dismantled railway.
- Historic designed landscapes and landscape features. Examples are listed below (see also Significant Vegetation section above):
 - Ornamental tree clump (probably oak) in prominent, elevated position in field between A417 and Leadon Way, just below Underdown. Likely to have been planted as an 'eye-catcher' within a wider designed parkland (the clumps are shown as mature on the 1889 - 1892 map), possibly by Jacob Tonson, (d. 1735) who owned the Hazle then.
 - Formal tree avenue, leading south west from Hazle Farm across the Dymock Road and along a track. The 1889 - 92 map shows it leading to an orchard.
 - Historic parkland trees south of the Hazle Farm avenue (subject of TPOs).
 - Minor historic parkland associated with Fairtree Farm. Farm of some antiquity - possibly 14th century, and given its location along an ancient route to Wall Hills Camp from the south, farmhouse could potentially have been built on site of earlier dwelling. Reference to 'the Fair Tree' in some sources, so possibly site is associated with a tree marking route to / from Wall Hills. Ornamental gardens / grounds with ha-ha and ornamental lake. Arrangement of trees shown on 1887 map appears to have been design intention, with mature coniferous tree species indicative of designed landscapes. Not mentioned in David Whitehead's survey and not an unregistered park, but may have deteriorated to the point where historic features aren't readily apparent except at closer quarters.

Fairtree Farm (cc-by-sa/2.0 - © Bob Embleton - geograph.org.uk/p/390303)



5.13 Cultural Associations

5.13.1 The Ledbury area has important cultural associations with a wide variety of notable individuals and events. Ledbury also lies within landscapes which form an integral part of panoramic views from the Malvern Hills, which inspired artists of all kinds.

5.13.2 Notable individuals associated with the area include (in approximate chronological order):

- Katherine (or Catherine⁵²) de Audley (1272 - 1326/7), widow of Sir Nicholas de Audley, became recluse of Ledbury. Enclosed by the Bishop of Hereford as an anchoress in the church (then called St Peter's). Regarded as an unbeatified saint in the town, her maidservant Mabel brought her food, herbs and milk from Hazle farm, along a lane which came to be known as Mabel's Furlong; there was also a field south of it called Catherine's Acre.
- William Langland (1332 - c. 1400) was probably born in Ledbury; he was educated at Little Malvern Priory, then moved to London. He may well have been one of the many 'poor unbeneficed priests of that time' who made their living by singing at rich men's funerals or as wandering minstrels. Langland's Middle English allegorical narrative poem *Piers Plowman* (c. 1370) opens on the Malvern Hills, and scholars say he incorporated the imagery around him in his work⁵³. Langland was a contemporary of Chaucer, and *Piers Plowman* has an important place in the English canon, akin to *The Canterbury Tales*.
- Thomas Dingley, son and heir of Thomas Dingley, Controller of Customs at Southampton, was born in the mid-17th century. He was schooled in London and admitted a student at Gray's Inn. When not travelling, he lived at Dilwyn, Herefordshire. He wrote on many subjects, including the Civil War and its aftermath. Dingley's *History of Marble* included a sketch of Ledbury's parish church and belltower (before the fourth stage and stone spire were added in 1733-5); this collection was published by the Camden Society (1867-8) and formed the groundwork of Richard Rawlinson's *History & Antiquities of the Cathedral Church of Hereford*.
- Thomas Blount (1618 - 1679), English antiquarian and lexicographer, son of Myles Blount of Oreleton, Herefordshire. In 1675 he wrote the *Thomas Blount Manuscript History of the County of Herefordshire*, which included a section on Ledbury (HARC ref. HAS CF50).
- Celia Fiennes, on her travels in the late 17th century, thought the view of the Ledbury countryside from the Malvern Hills was '*like a Country of Gardens and Orchards the whole Country being full of ... Fruit trees and it looks like nothing else - the apple and pear trees are so thick even in their corn fields and hedgerows*' (C Morris (ed.), *The journeys of Celia Fiennes* (1949), p. 43).
- Jacob Tonson (1655 - 1736), the noted London publisher, purchased the Hazle Estate in 1721, and later became owner of the Plume of Feathers until his death in 1736, when his nephew's daughter Mary and her husband William Baker became owner of what would later become the Feathers Hotel.
- William Baker (1705 - 1750) was a global businessman who (at different times) was chairman of the East India Company and the Hudson Bay Company. The Feathers Hotel remained in his family until 1813 when John Biddulph (1768-1845), of New House (now Ledbury Park), bought it. He was a banker, spending much time in London with Cocks, Biddulph & Co, as did John Martin (1774 - 1831), another banker of Martins Bank 'at the sign of the grasshopper', who inherited Upper Hall, Ledbury by marriage in 1812.
- John James Barralet (1747 - 1815). Of French descent, was born in Dublin, Ireland. He was skilled at drawing figures and trees, and later, at water-colour painting. Two drawings of Ledbury were

⁵² The name, whether Audley or Hospital, was originally spelt Catherine, but nowadays is always spelt Katherine: this change happened about a century ago, although it is not clear why.

⁵³ malvernmuseum.co.uk/Langland

made in the 1770s while Barralet was living in England; he is known to have exhibited at the Royal Academy between 1770 and 1776.

- Both are drawn in pen and black ink with a light grey wash on cream paper. Ledbury's church spire, rebuilt in stone in the 1730s, is the focal point of both drawings, with a landscape view from the south (below), and a portrait view of the approach to Ledbury from the Ross road (overleaf). The drawings are held in the Paul Mellon collection of the Yale Center for British Art at New Haven, Connecticut⁵⁴.

Landscape with Ledbury Church Spire John James Barralet



⁵⁴ <https://collections.britishart.yale.edu/>

Ledbury Church and Village, Herefordshire John James Barralet



- William Wordsworth (1770 - 1850), whilst returning from a visit to friends at Brinsop, Herefordshire wrote the sonnet *St Catherine of Ledbury*, inspired by Katherine de Audley (see above), the first lines of which are as follows:

*When human touch (as monkish books attest)
Nor was applied nor could be, Ledbury bells
Broke forth in concert flung adown the dells,
And upward, high as Malvern's cloudy crest;
Sweet tones, and caught by a noble lady blest
To rapture! Mabel listened at the side
Of her loved mistress; soon the music died,
And Catherine said, Here I set up my rest.*

- Lord Byron (1788 - 1824) was having an affair with Lady Oxford who lived at Brampton Bryan near Wigmore. He mentions Ledbury in not very complimentary terms in a letter written from Ledbury in 1813, which says, '*Dear H. – I am on my way to town – writing from my sordid Inn – ..*'
- Stephen Ballard (1804 - 1890) was a Malvern-born engineer who lived and worked in Ledbury and Colwall. His father, Philip, was a Herefordshire man, who married Charlotte Baylis, who came from a well-known Ledbury family, on 27th January 1795 in Ledbury.

In 1827, Stephen was appointed Clerk to the Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal Navigation Company, and received the Telford Medal from the Institution of Civil Engineers for his invention of an ice-breaker, which was first launched from the Ledbury Wharf on 20th December 1837. According to one source of reference⁵⁵, '*Soon after his appointment by the canal company, he put forward plans to make a start on the Ledbury to Hereford section. The management of the company, which included Earl Somers of Eastnor, Major-General Sir James Kyrle Money, John and Robert Biddulph of Ledbury Park, Thomas Ballard, Hubert Edy and Thomas Baylis, were by this stage looking for a route that would be capable of conversion to a railway! Excavation began in November 1839 and the water-filled canal reached Hereford in May 1845 to almost complete lack of interest from Herefordians.*

Later, Stephen Ballard was appointed as scheme engineer for the proposed Hereford to Worcester railway line. The Hereford to Worcester railway line Act was passed in 1853, and work started in 1854. Three stations were built between Hereford and Ledbury: the middle of these was at Tarrington, although it was called Stoke Edith station. The Ledbury to Colwall section was completed in April 1861, and the tunnel through the Malvern Hills - a major feat of engineering - opened the following year.

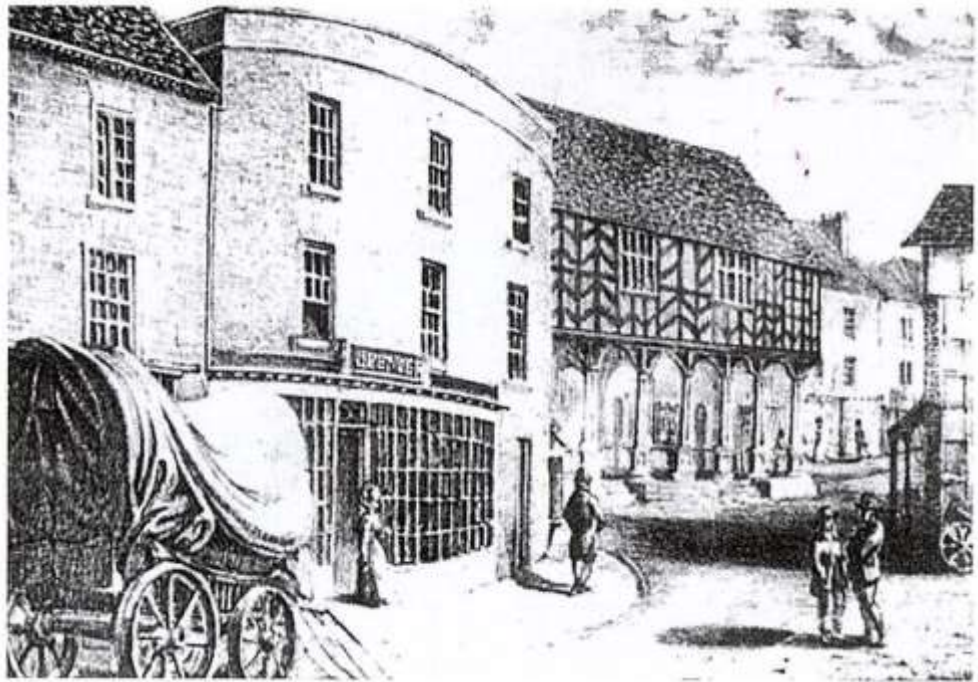
In 1859 - 60, Stephen Ballard built Ledbury railway viaduct, now Grade II listed. Its 31 arches were estimated by Ballard to contain 1 million bricks, many made from the clay dug out from the viaduct's foundations and fired on site by Stephen's brother Robert, whose brickyard was based in New Street and managed for a time by William Godwin, who left to set up a successful decorative encaustic tile manufactory at Lugwardine in the second half of the 19th century.

- Thomas Ballard was Stephen Ballard's elder brother, who also was involved in building the canal and later the Worcester to Hereford railway. Thomas was a lithographic artist, drawing scenes of Ledbury life from about 1820 onwards, including views of the Homend and High Street both before and after the Butcher Row was demolished (see below and overleaf).

He married Ann Edy, daughter of the grocer at No.1 High Street, and lived in the 4th house on the west side of the Homend from which one of his views was drawn. He painted the *Last Supper* for Ledbury parish church altar, which was presented by him and ten others as a free gift to the parish at large; on October 2nd 1824, a fair day in Ledbury, the picture was deposited in Ledbury Church.

⁵⁵ <https://www.bsswebsite.me.uk/Local-history/stephen-ballard.html>

T Ballard c. 1820 view from his home at Lower Cross



Thos. Ballard c. 1820 view of Church Lane



- Elizabeth Barrett (1806 - 1861) spent a large part of her childhood living in Hope End, attending worship at the non-Conformist chapel behind the High Street, accessed via the alley between nos 3 and 4 of the High Street. This building is now a community hall, called the Burgage Hall. The Barrett Browning Memorial Institute was named to commemorate her life.
- Alfred Watkins (1855 - 1935) was born in Hereford and lived all his life in Herefordshire. He is best known for his research on ancient trackways and leys, which feature in his book *The Old Straight Track*. A great deal of his research was carried out in and around Ledbury. In his opinion, Ledbury's offset church tower was built on a ley, and the pond in the churchyard was an ancient sighting-point. He also noted that the term 'low' in a place name indicated a mound that would have been used for sighting purposes, and 'broad' or 'brad' describes a track wide enough for wheel traffic: hence, Bradlow Knoll is likely to have been a key sighting feature along a well-used route through the ancient landscapes - indeed, tracks lead directly from Bradlow Knoll to the church.

Intriguingly, if one draws a straight line between Ledbury and Mathon church towers, not only the summit of the Knoll lies along it, but also Hope End House (built in the 18th century on the site of an earlier dwelling), ponds, and sections of road / track.

Watkins' work was highly objective and evidence-based and he made some important discoveries, many of which are still visible in the landscape today; however, in the 1960s, John Michell's book *The View over Atlantis* merged Watkins' ideas with mystical concepts not present in Watkins' work. As a result of this, today, many people dismiss Watkins' theories. In 2004, John Bruno Hare wrote: '*Watkins never attributed any supernatural significance to leys; he believed that they were simply pathways that had been used for trade or ceremonial purposes, very ancient in origin, possibly dating back to the Neolithic, certainly pre-Roman... He was an intensely rational person with an active intellect, and I think he would be a bit disappointed with some of the fringe aspects of ley lines today*'.

- H Rider Haggard (1856 - 1925), brother-in-law of the Rector Charles Maddison Green, Master of St Katherine's Hospital, opened the Barrett Browning Memorial Institute in January 1896. In addition to his exciting adventure stories, Rider Haggard also wrote on rural topics, in part based on research in Herefordshire. Rider Haggard is commemorated by a small plaque in the church, as well as one at the building he opened.
- Edward Elgar (1857 - 1934) lived in Malvern Wells between 1899 and 1904, and was a music teacher at Wells House School. From 1904 to 1912, he lived in Hereford. The Three Counties / Three Choirs landscapes greatly influenced his music - his piece *Caractacus* was inspired by British Camp (according to legend, Caractacus fought against Roman invasion from the hill fort at the Camp). Melodies arose while he was cycling around the area, often between Hereford and Worcester, passing through Ledbury on the way: in her diary, Elgar's wife Alice commented, '*There cannot have been a lane within 20 miles of Malvern that we did not ultimately find*'.
- Lascelles Abercrombie (1881 - 1938) lived in Dymock for a short time after WWI, and founded the Dymock poets' group (the other members were Rupert Brooke, John Drinkwater, Robert Frost (lived in Ledbury in 1914), Wilfred Gibson and Edward Thomas (began writing poetry in Ledbury in 1914)). Their poetry collection, donated to Herefordshire Libraries by Linda Hart, is held in The Master's House, now Ledbury's library, with new pieces added as the collection continues to develop.

In their works, the Dymock poets often celebrated the wild daffodil *Narcissus pseudonarcissus*, which is highly characteristic of ancient woodland and pasture in certain parts of the Three Counties including Ledbury (unfortunately in decline due to loss of habitat). According to the Friends of the Dymock Poets website⁵⁶, '*the Dymock Poets countryside (an informal and unofficial appellation) stretches from May Hill in the south to the Malvern Hills in the north*'. Examples of

⁵⁶ <https://dymockpoets.org.uk/Visit.htm>

daffodil mentions include Robert Frost's poem *The Road Not Taken*, which begins, '*Two roads diverged in a yellow wood...*'; the word yellow almost certainly referring to daffodils. See also John Masefield below.

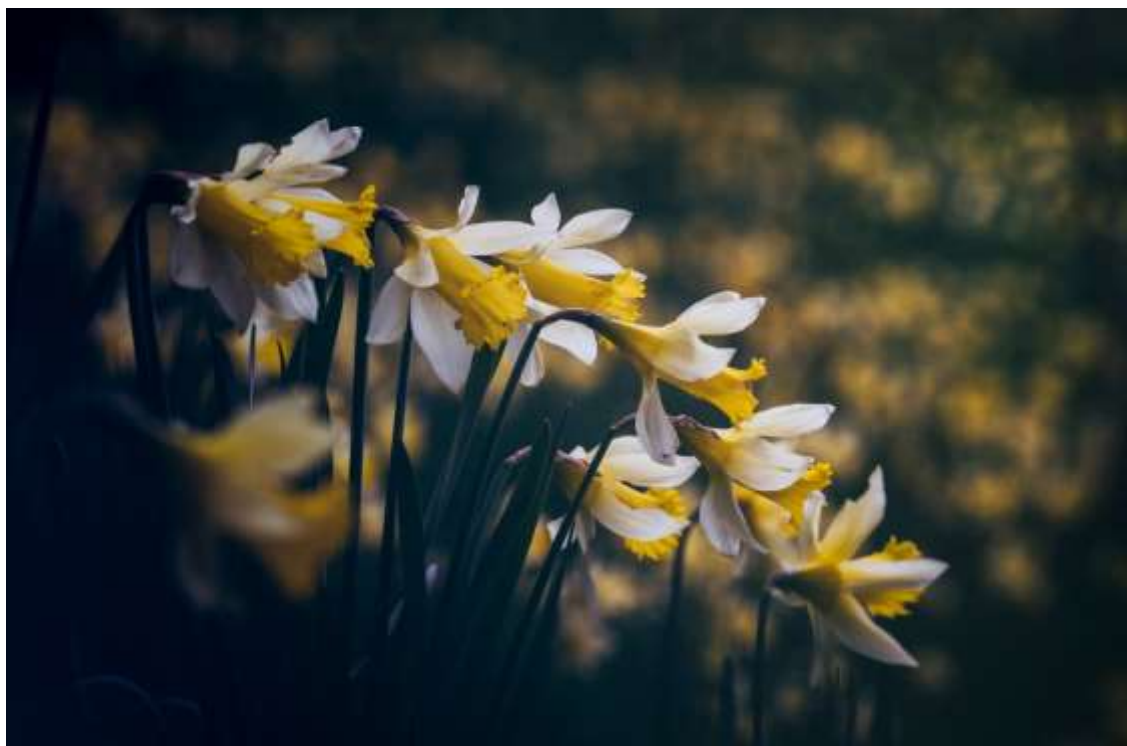
- John Masefield (1878-1967), poet laureate, was born in Knapp House in the Homend, Ledbury, the son of a local solicitor. He wrote not only poetry but also many plays and novels, some concerning life in Ledbury and the surrounding countryside. He was clearly awed by the beauty of nature.

In 1951 he wrote a booklet in support of the church bells' restoration fund, in which he explained which poems referred to Ledbury and which did not. In old age, the year before he died, he wrote *Grace before Ploughing*, recollections of his early years, vividly describing life in a market town through the eyes of a child. His archive is also held in Ledbury's library.

His poem *The Daffodil Fields* (c. 1913) evokes the Leadon Valley landscapes and communities of the early 20th century, and like Frost, he mentions the sight of daffodils growing in woodland:

*'Daffodils glimmered underfoot, the flooring
Of the earthy woodland smelt like torn-up moss;'*

Narcissus pseudonarcissus (photo courtesy Jan Sedlacek @Digitlight)



The poem also mentions daffodil-pickers: daffodils provided an early spring cash crop for farmers, their flowering coinciding with Mothering and Palm Sundays. Visitors would travel from the cities to see the 'golden tides' stretching in swathes across the countryside. The 'Daffodil Special' train ran from London to Gloucestershire bringing city dwellers to walk in the meadows, enjoy and buy the flowers. The daffodils were picked by local people including school children, and were sent to London by train to be sold at the major flower markets and delivered to hospitals.

*'And there the pickers come, picking for town
Those dancing daffodils; all day they pick;
Hard-featured women, weather-beaten brown,
Or swarthy-red, the colour of old brick.'*

Masefield wrote and illustrated a long narrative poem called *Reynard the Fox, or the Ghost Heath run*. It was published in 1919, and a copy was presented to King George V in June of 1930. According to The Royal Collection Trust's website⁵⁷, 'It was one of Masefield's most popular works, and has been compared in style to Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*'. The poem is about a fox hunt, and it could very easily have been inspired by the Ledbury Hunt, which meets in Ledbury town centre, and which Masefield no doubt would have seen regularly (according to the Hunt's website⁵⁸, 'hounds are known to have hunted the area around Ledbury for at least 300 years. The Ledbury Hunt is presently constituted and can trace its origin to 1846').

- J R Tolkien (1892 - 1973): *The Hobbit* was published in 1937. Tolkien walked on the Malvern Hills during visits to the area, and his writing was influenced by the landscapes - apparently, his inspiration for the White Mountains between Rohan and Gondor were the Malvern Hills and views to the west. He was often accompanied by his friend C S Lewis, author of the *Narnia Chronicles*, whose work was also inspired by the Hills (and features such as gas lamps).
- W H Auden (1907 - 1973) taught at the Downs school in Colwall. He married Thomas Mann's daughter in Ledbury church in 1935: as a German Jew she wanted British citizenship, so it was a marriage of convenience.
- Conroy Maddox (1912 - 2005): born in Ledbury. He was an English surrealist painter, collagist, writer and lecturer, and a key figure in the Birmingham Surrealist movement.

Other Notable Individuals Associated with Ledbury

- Cricketers Mary Duggan and James Crosbie-Smith.
- Footballers Miller Craddock (who played for Aston Villa) and Steve Emery.
- Darts player Terry 'The Bull' Jenkins.
- In 2012, actor Elizabeth Hurley sold her home in the Cotswolds and bought Donnington Hall (just south of the parish boundary, Grade II listed mid-18th century house with 13 bedrooms).

Donnington Hall



⁵⁷ <https://www.rct.uk/collection/1089615/reynard-the-fox-or-the-ghost-heath-run>

⁵⁸ <https://www.ledburyhunt.com/about-us>

Royal Visits

- Princess Victoria came to Ledbury in 1830 when she was eleven years old (she became Queen of England in 1837), and visited New House (now Ledbury Park). She planted an elm tree there, (which has since been lost, having been felled by a storm).
- Princess Mary of Teck, later Queen Consort to King George V ('Old Queen Mary') visited the town in 1893, en route to Eastnor Castle.
- In 1934, the Duke and Duchess of York (later King George VI and Queen Elizabeth) came to Ledbury during a visit to the Three Counties Show. The Duchess returned in 1960 when then the Queen Mother was visiting the Lord Lieutenant at Colwall.
- In April 1957, the Queen and Prince Philip (Duke of Edinburgh) visited the town, and came again in 2003 to visit Harling Court.
- Richard the Duke of Gloucester came to see the Master's House in 2017. He had practised as an architect until he succeeded to the title on the death of his older brother.
- In June 1960, Elizabeth the Queen Mother visited Ledbury to be presented to local dignitaries. She received flowers from a local schoolgirl, and then made a private visit to the Colwall home of the Lord Lieutenant of the county, Viscount Cilcennin.

5.14 Biodiversity

'Of the 7,615 species found in England that have been assessed using the IUCN Regional Red List criteria, and for which sufficient data were available, 971 (13%) are currently threatened with extinction from Great Britain... Over the past 10 years, 39% of our species have decreased and 32% have increased, with 29% showing little change. Our wildlife is undergoing rapid change in distribution; the proportion of species defined as showing strong changes in distribution – either increases or decreases – rose from 23% since 1970 to 45% over the past 10 years.'

Introduction

- 5.14.2 The above is an extract from the *State of Nature Report 2019 Key Findings*, published by the National Biodiversity Network⁵⁹. It highlights how important it is to prioritise the conservation, protection and enhancement of flora and fauna, and to maintain and / or create new healthy, resilient and high-quality habitats. Clean air, water and soil are prerequisites for biodiversity.
- 5.14.3 Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 places a duty on all public authorities in England and Wales to have regard, in the exercise of their functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity. A key purpose of this duty is to embed consideration of biodiversity as an integral part of policy and decision-making throughout the public sector, which should be seeking to make a significant contribution to the achievement of the commitments made by government in its 25 Year Environment Plan⁶⁰.
- 5.14.4 Biodiversity issues are an important factor in landscape and visual assessments, especially as different habitats have different characteristics and features which contribute to a landscape's character. Loss or erosion of habitats can therefore lead to adverse effects on landscape character, and thus visual amenity. Changes to landscape features, elements and landcover can also result in changes to these habitats and the species of flora and fauna they support.
- 5.14.5 GLVIA3 notes that '*... the presence of features of wildlife... can add to the value of the landscape as well as having value in their own right.*'

⁵⁹ <https://nbn.org.uk/>

⁶⁰ Natural Environment PPG para. 009. For further useful information see also paras. 10 - 35

- 5.14.6 In its guidance document *A Handbook on Environmental Impact Assessment* (4th edition 2013), Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) explains that ‘...all landscapes, everywhere, are important as [inter alia] ...an environment for plants and animals, the condition of which directly affects biodiversity conservation’.
- 5.14.7 The baseline information which needs to be gathered and considered in landscape assessments is set out in published LCA guidance; the list includes ‘literature on wildlife’ such as relevant Natural Character Area Profiles, Biodiversity Action Plans, and local Phase 1 / extended habitat and other surveys.
- 5.14.8 On-the-ground ecological surveys are beyond the scope of this and most other landscape assessments (and they must be carried out by qualified experts), and that level of detail is not normally required at the early stages of the planning process (proposals for future development should include an ecological survey in accordance with best practice⁶¹ to determine whether habitats and / or species could be affected by it). However, this study took into account publicly-available data using sources such as Defra’s Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) maps⁶², Malvern Hills AONB Partnership’s documents, including the Management Plan and the LCA, ecological studies produced / information provided by other organisations (including Ledbury Naturalists) and expert individuals, and information gathered from ecological reports accompanying planning applications for large developments. Other key sources of reference were HC’s county-wide studies *Incorporating Biodiversity into the LDF* (2010), and the *Ecological Network Map* (2013). Detailed biodiversity records are available from the Herefordshire Biological Research Centre (HBRC), but they have not been used in this study.
- 5.14.9 If obvious biodiversity potential was observed during the surveys, for example the presence of protected species and / or habitats likely to support them, it was noted (see also LSCA Area schedules); where relevant to landscape character and / or visual amenity, the information was incorporated into judgements about value and susceptibility to change.

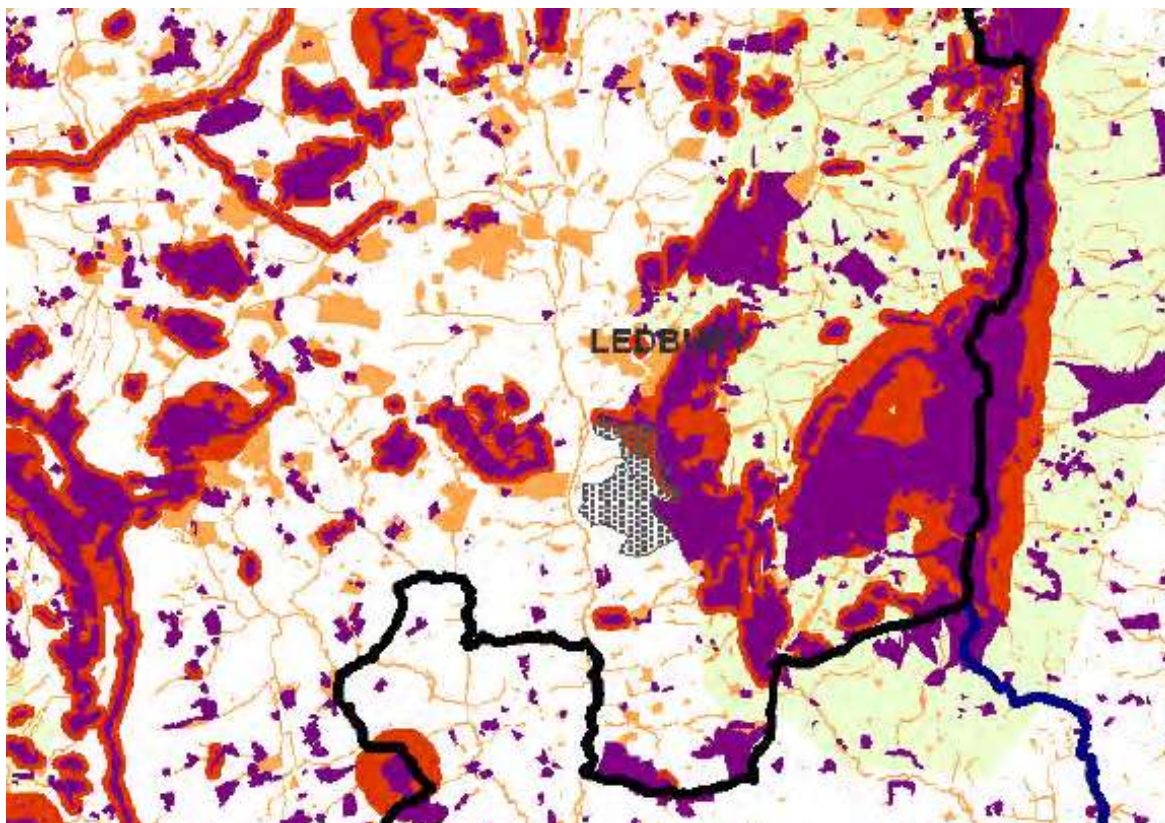
Biodiversity Within Study Area: Overview

- 5.14.10 Herefordshire’s Core Strategy para. 5.3.12 emphasises that ‘*Biodiversity and geodiversity assets provide an important contribution to the distinctiveness of an area. Herefordshire has a diverse range of geological features and wildlife habitats. ... Ecological networks are vital to the survival and dispersal of species.*’
- 5.14.11 In order for Ledbury and the surrounding areas to maintain and improve their biodiversity (they are of course interconnected), it is essential that appropriate and robust, evidence-based initiatives and guidance are built in to Ledbury’s Neighbourhood and Town Plans.
- 5.14.12 The biodiversity-related designations and key features identified in the assessment are shown on Figures 8A and 8B. From the information gathered to date, it appears that the Ledbury area has not been surveyed to any great extent, and certainly not as thoroughly as the adjacent Malvern Hills – there is scope to do more.
- 5.14.13 ‘*Conserving and enhancing biodiversity is important wherever it is and white areas on a map do not imply they have no biodiversity interest and should not be considered. It must be appreciated that Herefordshire is lacking in detailed and recent habitat survey information as resources have not been put into the preparation of habitat inventories.*’ [Herefordshire Ecological Map guidance, 2013]
- 5.14.14 HC published *Building Biodiversity into the LDF* in 2010, and the Ecological Network Map in 2013. An extract from the map is provided overleaf, showing the ecological networks in and around Ledbury.

⁶¹ For example to British Standards such as BS42020:2013 (or future versions)

⁶² <https://magic.defra.gov.uk/>

Extract from Ecological Network Map



5.14.15 The Ecological Network Map divided land in the county into four categories:

- Core Areas: Areas of high nature conservation value with habitats that are rare or important because of the wildlife they support. These areas are coloured purple on the map.
- Core Area Buffer Zones: Red on the map, these surround the core areas and play a protective role. The more important the core area the wider the buffer (importance is judged on rarity and international, national or local importance).
- Corridors and stepping-stones: Orange on the map, connecting the core areas enabling species to move, feed, disperse, migrate or reproduce e.g. rivers and hedgerows, ponds, ditches, domestic gardens, open space, verges.
- Sustainable Land Use Areas: Pale green on the map, these are areas which may include a variety of land uses but will have proposals for habitat restoration or creation.

5.14.16 The studies identified, and the above map shows, an imbalance in Ledbury Parish: the eastern side of the parish contains landscapes and habitats of international and national importance (Malvern Hills AONB, SSSIs) and locally-designated sites, while to the north, west and south, the land, including the River Leadon, is generally undesignated, with a few small, scattered islands of semi-natural habitat and a site of local importance around Wall Hills Camp with a weak connection to the River Leadon corridor via the rugby pitches.

5.14.17 This imbalance reflects the geographical and visual divisions found amongst the LCTs in the study area which are described in HC's / the AONB's LCAs (see Section 5.5), especially the Principal Wooded Hills to the east, and the Principal Timbered Farmlands / Settled Farmlands on River Terraces to the south, north and west. There are few stepping-stones and no continuous corridors between the two areas.

5.14.18 The habitats have also been influenced by planning processes, which have - at least until now - helped to protect the landscapes to the east. Thus, the most biodiverse sites are usually those

subject to statutory and non-statutory designations (such as SSSIs, Local Wildlife Sites (LWSs), Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) and PHI sites). Of course, it must be borne in mind that often, studies such as this will identify previously-unrecorded and highly valuable / nationally-rare habitats and species that remain vulnerable to certain forms of change unless / until protected by designation and / or planning policy.

5.14.19 The key biodiversity-related assets which have been identified to date are set out below.

The SSSIs

'SSSIs represent our best sites for wildlife and geology. The natural wildlife and geological features of SSSI's are irreplaceable parts of our national heritage. These are protected in order to preserve their importance, and to prevent damage and development.' [The Wildlife Trusts]

5.14.20 There are three SSSIs in the NDP area:

- Ledbury Cutting (by the railway station). The Cutting is designated an SSSI for geological reasons but is also a LWS (see below). It is categorised as deciduous woodland comprising ash, oak, sycamore, cherry, willow, hazel, elder and hawthorn. The condition of the site is judged unfavourable and declining.
- Ridgeway Wood, a fragment of which falls into the north-eastern sector of the study area, is *'one of the very few examples of a woodland with sessile oak Quercus petraea, ash and small-leaved lime where yew, normally only a minor component of woodlands, has achieved dominance over a large area.... The ground flora of the wood is rich and varied containing many locally rare species including greater butterfly-orchid Platanthera chlorantha, bird's-nest orchid Neottia nidusavis and toothwort Lathraea squamaria. There are also very large stands of wild daffodil Narcissus pseudonarcissus... The fauna includes polecat Mustela putorius – here at the eastern limits of its distribution in Britain – and dormouse Muscardinus avellanarius'*. The SSSI's condition is judged favourable
- Upper Hall Farm Quarry and grassland is *'One of the few remaining areas of unimproved Silurian limestone grassland in this part of Britain, with associated scrub and woodland. Silurian limestone grassland is nationally rare'*. Its condition is judged favourable. It is categorised as PHI lowland meadow neutral grassland. Flowering plants include cowslips, adder's tongue fern, and hay-meadow species including yellow rattle, bird's foot trefoil, knapweed, and common spotted orchid. In the woodland there is the relatively rare wild liquorice, ancient woodland indicator plants such as spurge laurel and dog's mercury, as well as other more common wild flowers - particularly violets and ground ivy, and spindle.

The SSSI also contains an area of rare and important lowland calcareous grassland that is not accessible. The various habitats support a rich diversity of insect life particularly butterflies and moths including some rare micro-moths (ref the SSSI citation).

Upper Hall Farm Quarry and grassland (photo from HWEHT website⁶³)



The Ancient Woodlands

'Ancient woods are our richest and most complex terrestrial habitat in the UK and they are home to more threatened species than any other. Centuries of undisturbed soils and accumulated decaying wood have created the perfect place for communities of fungi and invertebrates. Other specialist species of insects, birds and mammals rely on ancient woodlands' [The Woodland Trust].

- 5.14.21 A great deal of the woodland in Ledbury parish is identified as ASNW (see also Section 5.9 Significant Vegetation). ASNWs provide a rich habitat for diverse and sensitive species some of which are protected, and often includes veteran trees. Both ASNWs and veteran trees are identified in the NPPF (para. 180 c) as 'irreplaceable habitats'.

⁶³ <https://earthheritagetrust.org/herefsite-upper-hall-farm-quarry-and-grasslands/>

Ancient woodland east of Ledbury (photo courtesy Jan Sedlacek @Digitlight)



- 5.14.22 The woods identified as ancient are: Knoll Coppice; Redhill & Mallins Wood; Quarry Coppice (part); Wall Hills Coppice (part); Grovesend Wood; Baymans Wood; Ashenfield Coppice; Frith Wood; Sling Coppice; Hatfield Coppice; Dog Hill Wood; Conigree Wood; Hospital Wood; and Clenchers Mill Wood (a tiny corner of).
- 5.14.23 The designation ancient woodland splits into two categories: replanted and semi-natural - most of Ledbury's woods have a mixture of both, but Frith and Conigree are mainly replanted whilst Dog Hill Wood, Hospital and May Hill Woods are semi-natural. The woods around Wall Hills are mixed replanted and semi-natural. Although replanted ancient woodland is not likely to support the diverse fauna and flora found in semi-natural woodland, it still has the complex ancient woodland soil, and can contain remnants of the woodland specialist species. 5% of Conigree and 6% of Frith Wood were planted before 1900⁶⁴.
- 5.14.24 Ledbury Naturalists surveyed Frith and Conigree Woods in 2003 and 2005 respectively.
- 5.14.25 Frith was found to be the most biodiverse, with 154 species of flowering plants including wild daffodil, the early purple orchid, violet helleborine and spreading bellflower - both of the latter are rare and of national interest. There were 135 species of fungi, lichen and moss, 26 species of butterflies and moths and 33 species of birds including goshawk, swift, tawny owl, goldcrest and linnet. Areas of the wood are being coppiced and this encourages a diverse ground flora as the light gets to the forest floor.

⁶⁴ Forestry Commission Plan for Conigree and Frith 2021-31

Early purple orchid



Violet helleborine



- 5.14.26 Conigree had 166 species of flowering plants, 78 of fungi, 20 of butterflies and moths, and 155 of invertebrates. Flowers were found along the edges of the rides where light enters. Species included, amongst others: bluebell, dog's mercury, violets, primrose, a few wild daffodils and some patches of herb paris. The areas planted with conifers are dark, and ground flora may be entirely absent.

Bluebells in woodland east of Ledbury (photo courtesy Jan Sedlacek @Digitlight)



- 5.14.27 In both woods there was evidence of badgers and grey squirrels, and in Frith, moles, bank voles and wood mice (although mammals, amphibians and reptiles did not form part of the surveys).
- 5.14.28 The surveys are now nearly twenty years old, and it is likely there will have been some change in biodiversity since then. Other ancient woods around Ledbury have not been surveyed as far as we know, but it can be hoped that they represent a similarly diverse range of flora and fauna.

The Unregistered Parks and Gardens

- 5.14.29 The locations and descriptions of Ledbury's Unregistered Parks and Gardens are set out in the historic landscape character and heritage topic sections above. Broadly, they are designed, ornamental grounds - gardens and / or parks - associated with large houses either on the outskirts of Ledbury town or in the rural areas.
- 5.14.30 The biodiversity of these historic parklands is often high, but it varies from place to place, and depends on factors such as historic and current land use and management.
- 5.14.31 Often, the grassland swards which are found in areas which were once part of deer and other parks are of the same composition that they would have been several hundred years ago, and so are of very high value. Those which have been identified are now categorised as Woodpasture and Parkland BAP Priority Habitat sites (see below).

The PHI / BAP Priority Habitat Sites

TRADITIONAL ORCHARDS

- 5.14.32 Ledbury is traditionally a fruit-producing area; however, nowadays, much of the soft fruit is grown intensively in polytunnels, and many apple orchards are of the modern bush variety.
- 5.14.33 Traditional Orchards are UK and Herefordshire BAP priority habitats. Herefordshire's Habitat Action Plan explains that '*Orchards are more than just an important habitat for biodiversity and a source of traditional and heritage fruit varieties, they also form a historic landscape and are part of the county's folklore and traditions.*
- 5.14.34 The traditional orchard remnants which survive across the study area are highly important features in the local landscape, and support a wide variety of locally-important species including noble chafer, lesser-spotted woodpecker, various saproxylic beetles and many species of fungus. Active management of these habitats is crucial for their long-term survival - see Recommendations.

Noble chafer beetle



WOODPASTURE AND PARKLAND

- 5.14.35 Wood-pasture and Parklands are mosaic habitats valued for their trees (especially veteran and ancient), associated grasslands, and the great diversity of plant and animal species they support. They are managed landscapes, often with grazing amongst scattered mature trees (grazing animals are fundamental to the habitat's existence; the grazing is heavy enough to prevent woodland regeneration but light enough to protect the existing trees).
- 5.14.36 Woodpasture and Parklands' origins are in medieval hunting forests and emparkments, wooded commons, or pastures with trees in them. Many of these sites were later developed as landscaped parks, creating a rich legacy of layers of designed landscapes and archaeological features also of historic importance.

Typical woodpasture and parkland habitat



- 5.14.37 This classification covers the historic parklands at Ledbury Park, Upper Hall and Underwood, and the fields to the east of Dog Hill Wood which run down to the Worcester Road. All are typical of the habitat, the landcover being grazed grassland (apart from Upper Hall which is not grazed) with scattered large mature trees.
- 5.14.38 Upper Hall is partly ornamental parkland with large specimen ornamental and native trees probably planted in the mid-19th century, and partly a semi-natural parkland with a lake which is currently being managed to encourage biodiversity.
- 5.14.39 Woodpasture and Parklands are rare and threatened habitats, but it appears that the quality, condition and biodiversity of the sites in Ledbury may potentially be deteriorating. With the exception of Upper Hall, all are now quite depleted of large trees, and all are heavily-grazed - by cattle in Ledbury Park, and in Underdown, horses graze the fields to the east of Dog Hill Wood.
- 5.14.40 Horse-keeping (or 'horsiculture') is a good example of this: as well as damage to / loss of traditional pasture, hedgerows and trees, there is inevitably associated paraphernalia and clutter such as white tape fencing, coloured jumps, feeding stations, shelters and so on, as shown in the following photographs.

Horsiculture in Malvern Hills AONB (2010)





5.14.41 It is not known what the biodiversity of these historic parkland sites currently is, but potentially they provide rich feeding grounds and refuges for birds, bats, invertebrates, amphibians and reptiles. On the housing development sites to the west of Underdown Park, many species of bat have been identified including Barbastelle, which may be roosting in the parks and foraging in the grasslands. Barbastelle bats are incredibly rare: they are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, and are also listed as 'Near Threatened globally' on the IUCN Red List.

Barbastelle bat (image © Hugo Willocx / Foto Natura / Minden Pictures)



GOOD QUALITY SEMI-IMPROVED GRASSLAND

5.14.42 This classification covers areas in the north east of the study area: Kilbury Camp; the field above Conigree; Upper Mitchell Farm; and the field below Bradlow Knoll. The grassland below Kilbury Camp has lovely flora, including the delicate ladies bedstraw, the giant woolly thistle, and the tiny field madder.

Field madder



- 5.14.43 Semi-improved grasslands are on land which has been farmed but which can still retain a good range and number of grasses and valuable wildflowers such as red clover, bird's-foot trefoil, ox-eye daisy and knapweed. These are important species for bumblebees and many other insects. Under careful management, these areas have the potential to support more species.
- 5.14.44 The Ledbury Naturalists surveyed two of the sites – the field above the Conigree (Dead Woman's Thorn) in 2005, and Bradlow Field in 2003. *'The area of Dead Woman's Thorn was basically calcareous grassland with encroaching scrub. There was a typical flora of Rock Rose, Mouse-ear Hawkweed, Creeping Cinquefoil, several Violets and Wild Thyme but the advancing brambles were in danger of overcoming the tiny plants.'* In Bradlow Field, 94 species of flower were found, 27 of birds, 27 of butterflies and moths, and 31 of insects and invertebrates.

Local Wildlife Sites

- 5.14.45 LWSs are locally-designated, and are defined by the Wildlife Trusts⁶⁵ as sites with *'substantive nature conservation values... They are defined areas, identified and selected for their nature conservation value, based on important, distinctive and threatened habitats and species.... LWSs vary in size and shape... Collectively they play a critical role in the conservation of the UK's natural heritage by providing essential wildlife refuges in their own right and by acting as stepping stones, corridors and buffer...'*
- 5.14.46 In the Ledbury NDP area there are ten LWSs. All have other designations, and so are described in the sections above. They comprise:
- Ledbury Cutting - also an SSSI for its rare geology.
 - Frith Wood, Bradlow Knoll and Dog Hill - also ASNWs.
 - Ridgeway Wood - also ASNW.
 - Stitch Wood and adjoining pasture - also ASNW.
 - Upper Hall Farm Quarry and grassland - also SSSI.
 - Upper Hall grounds and lake - also unregistered park and garden.
 - Conigree and Mayhill Woods - also ASNWs.
 - Woodland north of Wall Hills - also ASNW.
 - Clenchers Mill Wood & Little Woolpits - also ASNWs.
 - Woodlands on Wall Hills - also ASNW.
- 5.14.47 Many of the County's LWSs were last surveyed in 1977, and so are sadly very out of date. For example, in 1998, in a LWS woodland near Bromesberrow, turtle doves were recorded. They now face global extinction.

The West, the South and the North

- 5.14.48 HC's document *Building Biodiversity into the LDF* (2010) classifies the land to the south, west and north of the town as 'artificial habitats and arable' (these habitats have been created or intensively-managed and 'improved', mainly for agricultural purposes). There are, however, fragments of semi-natural habitat within these areas, including along part of the River Leadon between the Dymock roundabout and the New Mills Roundabout. The rest of the Leadon is surrounded by artificial and arable habitat.
- 5.14.49 A larger area of semi-natural habitat is found to the south of Wall Hills Camp.
- 5.14.50 Despite their classification, the fields to the west, north and south of the settlement do play an important role in both the local and wider ecological networks.
- 5.14.51 To the north in particular, the River Leadon and its tributaries form a highly important and strategic

⁶⁵ <https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/local-wildlife-sites>

north - south green / blue infrastructure corridor with distinct biodiversity (see below). The 'stepping-stones / corridors' in these areas take the form of ponds, ditches, clumps and stretches of woodland, scrubby fields and a few traditional orchards, as well as hedgerows and watercourses.

- 5.14.52 The fields to the south of the Leadon Way by-pass and north of the Dymock Road have been surveyed several times for development purposes. Here, the Agricultural Land Classification is Grades 1 and 2 with field boundaries of hedge and several copses of trees. There are also open watercourses. The surveys reveal many bat species, including Barbastelle, Lesser and Greater Horseshoe, Soprano, and Noctule; and birds including redwing, song thrush, stock dove, linnet, field fare, skylark, dunnoek, yellow hammer and starling (several of which are 'UK Red List'⁶⁶ species i.e. birds of conservation concern); also, great-crested newt are present in nearby ponds.

Redwing (image © David Whitaker)



- 5.14.53 It is likely that many of these species are foraging from further afield, but there was evidence that some bats were roosting and some birds were breeding. In addition, local naturalists have noted the presence of fox, hare, rabbit, pheasant, partridge, buzzard, kite, barn owl, tawny owl, grass snake, slow worm, frog, toad and hedgehog, as well as wild daffodil and wood anemone.
- 5.14.54 To the west, the River Leadon is the main watercourse for the area, with streams and smaller watercourses connecting it to the eastern hills through the agricultural landscapes.
- 5.14.55 As noted in the Hydrology baseline section above, the Environment Agency Data Catchment information (2019) judges the state of the Leadon above Preston Cross and through Ledbury, to be 'Moderate'. However, in many categories, the river is classified 'Good' (the environmental quality categories range from high, through good, moderate and poor to bad).
- 5.14.56 The river's course is not considered to be 'artificial', nor to have been heavily modified by human activity. For fish and invertebrates, the level of water quality was judged to be 'Moderate' and 'High' respectively, the quality for fish having fallen from 'High' in 2016. Ecologically, overall the river's level was judged to be 'Moderate'; in terms of chemicals, overall it was judged 'Good' (i.e. good in that the chemical levels were low). The reasons for not achieving 'High' were pollutants

⁶⁶ <https://www.bto.org/our-science/publications/birds-conservation-concern>

relating to the water industry (waste water); agricultural and rural land management (nutrient management and livestock management); domestic general and public (private sewage), and industry. Phosphates, macrophytes, phytobenthos and dissolved oxygen are the main pollutants.

- 5.14.57 The Leadon is not a 'surveillance water body' - in other words, it is not part of the network of rivers the Environment Agency regularly samples in order to monitor environmental quality and pollution.
- 5.14.58 In other parts of Herefordshire, especially the Wye and its catchment, river pollution is high; a significant amount of this pollution comes from Wales and north Herefordshire, where there is a large concentration of intensive poultry units (IPUs) which generate large amounts of phosphates which enter watercourses from outdoor ranges and through manure-spreading.
- 5.14.59 In fact, poultry manure contains many soil-enriching nutrients (including nitrogen and phosphorus), and other excreted substances such as hormones, antibiotics, pathogens and heavy metals which are introduced through feed⁶⁷; this can be very damaging to vegetative cover, and adversely affect water and soil quality (and people's quality of life as well).
- 5.14.60 Poultry manure also contains ammonia. The toxic effects of ammonia gas can damage and kill plants, and can decrease soil PH. Northern Ireland's guidance states that *'Planning Officers must check to see if there are designated sites within 7.5km of the proposal.... These sites have the potential to be impacted upon by the proposal. All priority habitats that could be impacted within 2km must also be considered'*⁶⁸.
- 5.14.61 Furthermore, the Environment Agency classifies this type of development as an 'industrial installation', and a permit is required. This is because it involves activities which are likely to give rise to a range of potentially significant adverse environmental effects. These developments are therefore in the 'highest risk' category.
- 5.14.62 The effects on water quality arising from IPUs in particular are of course a cause of great concern to Natural England and many other bodies, organisations and individuals. In fact, the problem does not only affect biodiversity / landscape character / visual amenity / human health, it is also causing significant problems for HC's planning department: due to the high phosphate levels, since October 2019, HC has not been able to approve any planning applications that could potentially increase levels of phosphates in watercourses within the River Lugg catchment area, which covers about 40% of the county (the Lugg is a tributary of the Wye and is a SSSI). The moratorium will continue until it has been demonstrated that levels of water quality are rising to acceptable levels. Ledbury is one of the few larger settlements in the county that is not affected by the moratorium, as it is not within the Lugg catchment.
- 5.14.63 Currently, intensive farming of this type does not seem to be a major problem in Ledbury parish (although there are a few large-scale poultry units), but it is on the increase in the neighbouring areas, and levels of water quality in the Leadon could reduce further in future with devastating consequences for biodiversity and human health. Regular monitoring is vital to ensure that increases do not go unnoticed and timely action can be taken.
- 5.14.64 The Riverside Walk with its buffer planting along the east bank of mixed trees and rough grassland provides a relatively rich habitat, albeit a much-used area for walkers and dogs and so suffering from erosion. The Walk was constructed in the 1980s - part of the river between Little Marcle Road and the Ross Road was diverted to make way for the by-pass. The Ledbury Naturalists surveyed it in 1999 and recorded 154 types of flowering plants; 31 grass and 25 tree species; 13 types of fungi; 43 bird species including kingfisher, skylark and barn owl; 18 species of butterfly; and 108 insect and invertebrate species. Otter spraints were found on Little Marcle bridge, but more recent surveys for potential development sites have not found evidence of otters in this particular stretch of the river.

⁶⁷ http://www.fao.org/ag/againfo/home/events/bangkok2007/docs/part2/2_2.pdf

⁶⁸ http://www.planningni.gov.uk/index/advice/northern_ireland_environment_agency_guidance/standing_advice_19_-_livestock_installations_and_ammonia_-_issue_01_june_2015.pdf

Riverside Walk



Kingfishers



- 5.14.65 Since the 1999 survey, the trees have grown dominant, and the wide diversity of tree species, often planted in stands, provides a very pleasant environment for the large numbers of people who use it. It is highly likely that the flora and fauna have changed since the Naturalists surveyed the area. A recent project involves planting Black Poplar, a protected species, in the Little Marcle Road area - see Significant Vegetation section.
- 5.14.66 The river is lined on the west side with trees. The land beyond is a mixture of Grade 1 agricultural land to the south, and arable, orchards and vineyards and some pasture to the west, with several ponds and a network of hedges. Local naturalists have recently noted the presence of otter, several species of bat, fox, hare, rabbit, pheasant, partridge, buzzard, kite, barn owl, tawny owl, grass snake, slow worm, great-crested newt, frog, toad, and over 30 bird species.
- 5.14.67 Further west is Wall Hills Camp and its associated ancient woodlands - a rich habitat covered in the sections above but with no specific survey material available.
- 5.14.68 To the north, a large housing development adjacent to the Ledbury viaduct has been granted outline planning permission and this will no doubt be built in the near future. The River Leadon runs along the west side of the site, and there is local flooding.
- 5.14.69 When the site and surrounding area were surveyed for the proposed development, ecologists noted skylark, linnet, yellowhammer, song thrush and starling; low populations of slow worms and grass snakes along perimeters of the site; two common lizards; dormice (four nests); otter spraints; great-crested newts, and some common bats.

Dormice



- 5.14.70 The value of the isolated 'stepping-stones / corridors' is dependent on land use and management - some activities can give rise to sometimes significant adverse effects on biodiversity e.g. horse-keeping, polytunnels and intensive arable farming; conversely, unmanaged habitats, or ones which are managed for biodiversity, are likely to be highly valuable.

The Town

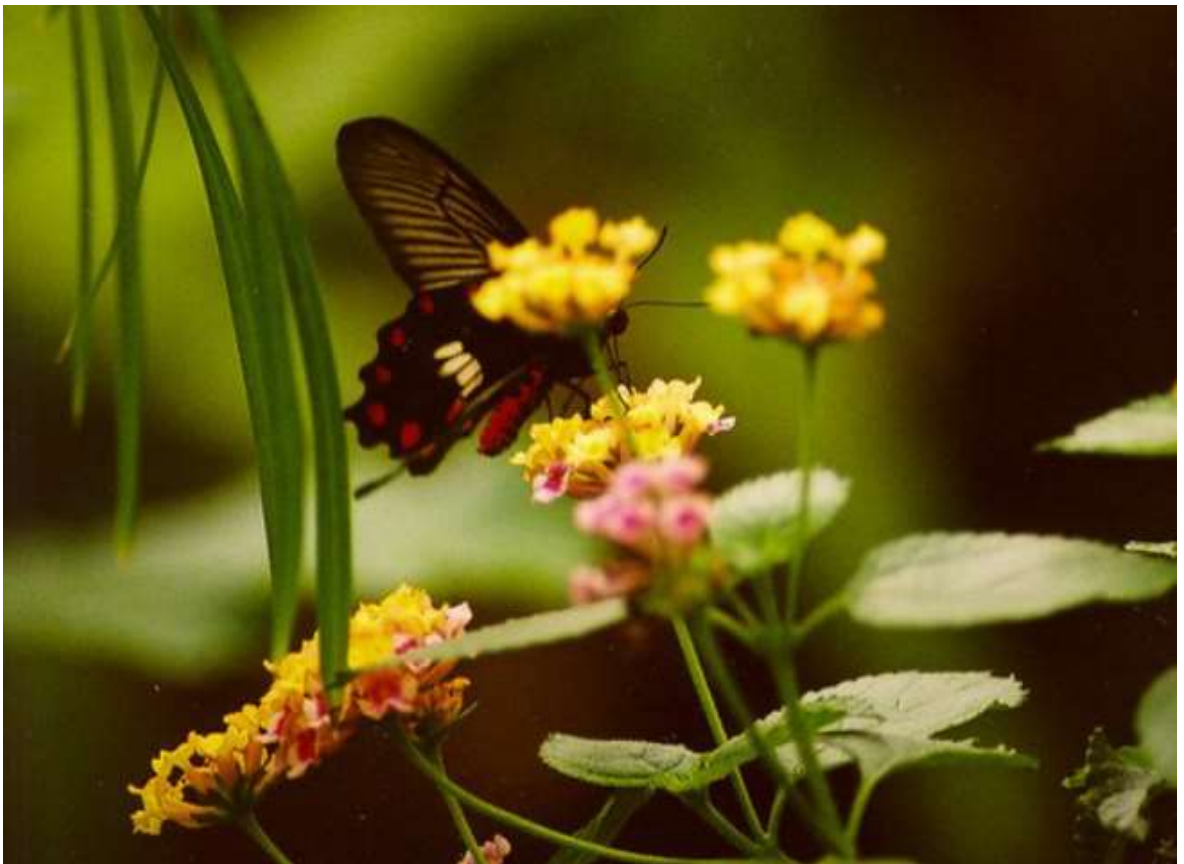
- 5.14.71 Ledbury is fortunate in having a green corridor running through its centre, following the route of the old railway / canal – the Town Trail (see previous sections and Public and Social Amenity section below). This creates a valuable biodiversity corridor, despite currently not being directly connected to the open countryside to the south and north (where it halts at the railway line).

Ledbury Town Trail



- 5.14.72 In addition, throughout the town there are significant green spaces, again unconnected, but some are semi-natural. The Town Trail was created in 1997, and was surveyed by Ledbury Naturalists in 1999 when they found: 183 species of flowers, 23 of grass, 35 of trees, 40 of fungi, 35 of bird and 15 of butterfly. Most of the birds identified were those associated with domestic gardens; the damper parts of the trail attracted many moisture-loving plants.
- 5.14.73 Broadly speaking, these studies revealed a noticeable difference in levels of ecological value between the hills and the river valley, but also demonstrated the important role that the unclassified areas of land play in the ecological network. Inevitably, erosion and loss of habitats such as woodlands, hedgerows, orchards, ponds and unimproved grasslands have resulted in the essential connectivity between them being broken in places. These are also highly valuable elements and features in the landscape; their erosion and loss lead to adverse effects on landscape character and visual amenity. However, many of these features and habitats could be restored relatively easily (see recommendations in Section 7.2).
- 5.14.74 Residential development can have direct and indirect negative effects on the landscape: the effects of loss of habitat may be quantifiable, but indirect effects arising from increased human activity (noise, lighting, disturbance, pressure on sensitive habitats and species, pollution, domestic pets preying on birds and small mammals etc.) can also arise, especially on the fringes of settlements.
- 5.14.75 However, it is also important to note that gardens can provide very good opportunities for wildlife, and may offer more diverse habitats than improved arable fields, for example, so long as wider connectivity is maintained.

Wildlife in gardens east of Ledbury (photos courtesy Jan Sedlacek @Digitlight)



5.15 Public and Social Amenity

Introduction and Overview

- 5.15.1 The medieval market town of Ledbury is the jewel in the crown of and gateway into the historic Marches region that predates Herefordshire. Its setting is astride major routes into and out of the region that date from pre-Domesday Book times. Its location, quietly nestling in the gently-rising foothills of the neighbouring Malvern Hills AONB, sets the scene for the beautiful and extensively rural landscape that surrounds the town.
- 5.15.2 Look more closely and you will also find ancient tracks and paths now used for leisure and recreation, but which once formed an important part of the economic network that eventually connected Ledbury to the county town of Hereford, along with four similar market towns of the county that have developed in over a millennium, in what is still one of the most sparsely-populated counties in England.
- 5.15.3 Ledbury's landscapes and townscapes have been described in detail in the previous sections, especially their special and diverse aesthetic and perceptual qualities; however, they are also an important aspect of this topic, since they make such a highly valuable contribution to the social amenity, quality of life, and health and well-being of the local community.

Ledbury Food Festival 2017 (photo courtesy of Ledbury Food Group⁶⁹)



- 5.15.4 As previously explained in the landscape history and heritage sections above, for hundreds of years, little changed dramatically in Ledbury. Development was slow, evolving around a medieval street layout that is still recognisable today, until the second half of the 20th century, when two big housing estates, a by-pass and the nearby M50 motorway led to rapid change and population growth. However, the town still retains its historic charm and genuine old market town attraction despite the 21st century accelerating the rate of change which threatens to destroy much of its old-England tourist-friendly ambience and irrevocably change its key landscape features for ever.

⁶⁹ <https://www.ledburyfoodgroup.org/>

- 5.15.5 However, even today, as soon as you leave Junction 2 of the nearby M50 motorway which links Ledbury and Herefordshire with the rest of the countrywide motorway network, you are immediately struck by the special feeling of unadulterated countryside as the road bends its scenic and unhurried way towards the town. Peaceful hills reach up to the Malverns on your right while sweeping vistas across an all-green landscape to your left soar over fields and woods to the mid-distance hills of wider Herefordshire, lifting the soul.

Approach to Ledbury from south east along A417, looking west



- 5.15.6 You feel at once the magical effect of unspoilt surroundings, and a feeling of relaxation and calm comes over you as you pass through the small hamlet of Parkway before reaching the by-pass roundabout on the southern access road into the town (Gateway A1 (i)). Along the way, you pass a number of public footpath fingerposts, which tempt further exploration of the countryside.
- 5.15.7 Carrying on into the town from the Leadon Way / A417 roundabout, you are quickly immersed into an historic urban landscape atmosphere of numerous listed buildings, especially the iconic town centre Grade I listed Market House which dominates the high street.
- 5.15.8 Until recently, turning left onto the by-pass, this countryside feel continued all around it, over the Ross-on-Wye road roundabout, across the historic old Little Marcle road roundabout and onto the Hereford Road roundabout at the current by-pass end. Unfortunately, the dangers of unplanned and unsympathetic development into the previous almost Tolkien-like views as you descend the by-pass, are demonstrated by a purely opportunistic and large housing construction site of several hundred houses which is a regrettable proverbial blot on the landscape (see previous sections).
- 5.15.9 It came about before Ledbury had a chance to complete its NDP with a settlement boundary, which would have ensured a development more in keeping with the town's existing built environment and rural, historic countryside (which technically they were obliged to do anyway), rather than the environmentally-bare, public amenity facilities-bereft and totally profit-driven mish-mash of crowded houses with little meaningful GI. The house designs and site layout make no concession whatsoever to consideration of the once-lovely countryside and attractive, countryfied and ancient Dymock Road access into the town.

Barratt development south of Leadon Way



- 5.15.10 To offset a consistent 24-hour roaring noise from the air vent turbines of a nearby cheese factory, the insensitivity of the developer, Barratts, was demonstrated by building a 2-metre high wooden fence to ameliorate the noise (which apparently doesn't work), totally oblivious to the public outrage that such a 'fort-like' appearance was utterly at odds with its countryside landscape location and the existing Ledbury architecture, vernacular, and spirit of place.

Acoustic barrier on Barratt site



- 5.15.11 Despite its long history and tradition, Ledbury is a modern and go-ahead town which recognises the need for development, both with houses for local people and more employment opportunities to reduce the need for travel out of the town to work (Ledbury is currently a net-outbound employment population). However, through this landscape assessment and the revision of the currently-adopted NDP to include a settlement boundary, the Town Council intends to ensure that future developments do not allow the same mistakes to happen again so that the town continues

to grow whilst keeping all of its existing well-loved public and social amenity assets intact and which help to make tourism and visitors an essential part of the town's economy.

- 5.15.12 So this section of the LVBA summarises the various factors which contribute to the public and social amenities on offer for the people living and working in and around Ledbury and the surrounding rural element of the parish, and also for those who visit - many of the features and spaces are also used, visited and appreciated by the many people who come to Ledbury from across the UK and indeed internationally. They are attracted by Ledbury's world-famous and impressive cultural history, which in conjunction with its unique heritage assets and the surrounding beautiful rural landscape, come together to make a vitally-important contribution to the local economy.
- 5.15.13 It describes the infrastructure that exists for access along various paths, trails and routes for both formal and informal recreation. It captures the various key destinations, features and local attraction facilities that are already in place, and also recommends improvements - that the parish aspires to make - to encourage more active travel utilising these assets, to enhance connectivity across the parish, and to improve active travel access to neighbouring ones in line with the objectives of the Local Plan.
- 5.15.14 These and the various publicly-accessible open spaces are held as highly valuable community assets, providing access to the multitude of special features and GI elements identified in this LVBA (see Section 5.16), and which contribute to the health, well-being and quality of life of local people (the Landscape Institute's publication *Public Health and Landscape - Creating healthy places* is a very useful source of reference on the subject of the contribution that landscape makes to health and well-being⁷⁰).
- 5.15.15 Where relevant to local landscape character and visual amenity, further information about recreation and access in and around the town is provided in the other sections of the LVBA, and in the various LSCA Area schedules (for example if an area has an important recreational function, and where public and social amenity could be affected as a result of certain changes such as new residential or other development). The LSCA Area schedules for the public and social amenity topic are contained in Appendix E.

Key Destinations and Local Facilities

- 5.15.16 Much of Ledbury town centre is designated as a Conservation Area and is of significant heritage value in its own right. This is one of the main reasons why it is a significant key destination today, and it now has a vibrant tourist economy. It has an increasingly rare combination of many listed buildings (244 in total) housing a host of mainly independent shops providing for local needs and those of visitors alike. For everyday shopping for residents and the visitor, the town centre currently accommodates two local butchers, several bakers and fruit and veg shops, a large medical centre, two pharmacies, three opticians, two newsagents, a Post Office, three hardware shops and two mid-sized supermarkets (with a third only ten minutes from the centre).
- 5.15.17 There is a well-respected John Masefield High School and Sixth Form Centre, a successful all-ability 11-18 secondary school with academy status. It is named after the poet John Masefield (the name associated with the former Poet Laureate of *Cargoes* fame and who lived in the town and was born nearby - see Cultural Associations topic in Section 15.13), and there is an equally dynamic primary school.
- 5.15.18 Recreational facilities in the town centre currently include a library, a leisure centre with swimming pool, a small 'Market Theatre' showing films and live concerts, two book shops and a community hall. The town has three funeral parlours, several barbers and hairdressers, and a smattering of the inevitable charity shops including an environmentally-friendly Hereford Wildlife Trust outlet. People come from far and wide to shop for their basics in the knowledge they visit an unusually attractive and friendly town with a surprisingly wide range of quality products with prices to suit all pockets.

⁷⁰ <https://www.landscapeinstitute.org/publication/public-health-and-landscape-creating-healthy-places-november-2013/>

- 5.15.19 But they also stay for the compelling array of hospitality sites and tourist attractions in and around the town. There are three fine coaching inns in the town (The Feathers, The Talbot, and the Royal Oak in the Southend), with the chance for those planning an overnight stay to sleep in old-style four-poster beds, as well as six public houses and numerous eating venues and cafés to suit most tastes and budgets. Many feature high-quality locally-grown / -raised food products.

The Talbot Hotel



- 5.15.20 For visitors and residents alike, the regular attractions include a Charter Market on Tuesdays and Saturdays, the Charter for which was first issued by King Stephen to Bishop Robert de Bethune in 1138. In 1584, Queen Elizabeth I granted a new charter, allowing a weekly market on Tuesday and two fairs, on the feasts of St Philip and St James (1st May) and St Barnabas (11th June). These now translate into an annual carnival day, with a traditional float parade and a two-day Mop-Fair in a closed town centre each autumn.
- 5.15.21 The most significant annual event is the world famous Poetry Festival, which earns international acclaim and attracts many visitors from all over the world. The annual town centre Christmas lights turn-on by the Town Mayor accompanied by a Town Cryer also attracts huge crowds (these days, COVID security-conscious) with its traditional old-style Christmas atmosphere.

Ledbury Town Centre 2019



- 5.15.22 Then there is a varied collection of quality gift shops to the extent that one reporter described Ledbury High Street as being 'like Chelsea in the countryside', and which appeal to cultured visitors from around the world who are initially lured to Ledbury to experience its rich poetic, literary and other arts heritage. There are several quality jewellers, a high class gents outfitter, fashionable household goods and ladies clothes shops, and several lovely old shopping alleys off the high street with a cornucopia of interesting and varied shopping experiences.
- 5.15.23 For those with an interest in the town's history and architecture, there are three Grade I and over twenty Grade II* listed buildings to visit.
- 5.15.24 The iconic 16th century Grade I listed Market House lies at the heart of the town centre. From it, the cobbled and narrow Church Lane leading up to Grade I listed St Michael and All Angels Church is as quaintly-attractive and much-photographed as any chocolate-box view anywhere. In the church there is a very important and valuable medieval painting of the Last Supper (see landscape history topic).
- 5.15.25 The other Grade I listed building is Ledbury Park, a highly distinctive, large half-timbered house in the centre of Ledbury, at the junction of the Worcester Road and The Southend at Top Cross. Ledbury Park is described in detail in the previous sections, but in summary, the house is of 13th century origin (possibly c. 1232), and the associated historic parkland - one of the parish's most notable designed landscapes - dates back to the 17th century. The park forms an important and high quality open green buffer between the town's built-up area and the woods above the town to the east, which are part of the Malvern Hills AONB. Although it is privately-owned and not normally publicly-accessible, it has at various times been host to town events such as displays by The Sealed Knot Company and the annual fireworks display.
- 5.15.26 Church Lane has a museum, a heritage centre, the Town Council's Grade II* listed building with a very old panelled meeting room and a 16th century painted room, and an old pub with live music each week.

- 5.15.27 Guided tours during the summer around the surprising richness of Ledbury's historical background are always popular, yet the town has an immediate ambience of lack of pretention as an obviously lived-in, working town, quietly aware of its charms without making an obvious show about it.
- 5.15.28 Important as all of these public and social amenities in the town are for its economy and quality of life, its sustainability is clearly threatened and vulnerable to potential out-of-town developments, changes in shopping practices, and a lack of ready access for people to easily get to the shops, services and facilities. They are not destination stores as in the larger nearby city of Hereford, which is both a strength and a weakness. Many similar market towns have failed to sustain such a delicate social fabric, with a decline in the number of shops and reduction in the visitor economy.
- 5.15.29 The town still maintains an aesthetically-pleasing appearance which is sustained throughout the town centre, even in some of its housing developments and employment sites, but protecting all these public amenities whilst growing to meet increasing need is a challenge to which the revised NDP aims to rise. The example of the hideous Hawk Rise development on the by-pass, incompatible with the spirit and ambience of the rest of the town, is a stark reminder of what is possible if the plan does not adequately address the development need while retaining what gives Ledbury its current jewel-in-the-crown status and which makes people want to come here in the first place.
- 5.15.30 In addition to the considerable attractions of Ledbury town centre, within easy traveling distance there is a host of public attractions that contribute to the high-quality resident and visitor experience of Ledbury, and people's quality of life.
- 5.15.31 Very close to the town to the east is Grade I listed Eastnor Castle and its extensive Grade II* RPG historic parkland (see Section 5.12), where regular sporting events such as Land Rover off-road experiences are held, and annual music / other festivals. Further north east there is Great Malvern, an historic spa town nestling in the Malvern Hills with a variety of hotels, antique shops, and other attractions for visitors. These can all be reached via a variety of PRsoW, many people choosing to walk or cycle along quiet winding lanes through the stunning AONB countryside.
- 5.15.32 A great deal of information about Ledbury's neighbouring landscapes was gathered during preparation for the viaduct site public inquiry: the documents for these and other studies carried out for the same purpose will be a useful source of reference in future.
- 5.15.33 South of Ledbury there are several fascinating originally Chartist settlements, with their single-storey houses which date back to the working-class male suffrage movement for political reform in Britain in the middle of the 19th century. There are also local Mormon-related sites of historic interest: Brigham Young, former leader of the movement, preached at the Market House, and the oldest Mormon chapel in the world is located at Gadfield Elm, near the local village of Redmarley.
- 5.15.34 Nearby also lies the Gloucester village of Dymock, famous for the six Dymock poets who lived there for a few years at the beginning of World War I, including in their company Rupert Brooke, famed the world over for his poem *The Soldier* (see Cultural Associations section). The houses where they briefly lived, and which they had intended to be a creative idyll, can still be seen around the village. As noted in previous sections, it is also recognised as being home to some of the best indigenous wild daffodil displays in the British Isles during the spring.
- 5.15.35 To the west, in the village of Much Marcle, we have one of the oldest dwelling houses in England: Hellens Manor (also known as Hellens House or simply Hellens). The architecture is primarily Tudor, Jacobean and Georgian, but the foundations date from the 12th century, and some elements are older still. Hellens boasts very beautiful gardens and hosts regular garden festivals, along with musical and artistic events and various courses. Also nearby is the very popular Westons Cider visitor centre offering tours of the factory, a shop and café.

Hellens



Recreation and Access

VEHICULAR ACCESS TO THE TOWN

- 5.15.36 In addition to offering easy nationwide vehicular access with close proximity to the M50 motorway, Ledbury is served by one of only four railway stations in Herefordshire.
- 5.15.37 Its location is of strategic importance to the town, sitting as it does on ancient trackways that position Ledbury at the very gateway to the Marches and beyond to the west. It allows for regular commuter and visitor journeys to Hereford city to the west, and access to the national railway network, running to the east through Worcester, to Birmingham to the north and Bristol to the south, and on to London and the south east.

Ledbury station (photo courtesy of Pauline Eccles)



- 5.15.38 Ledbury is also served by fairly regular bus services to the equidistant cities of Hereford, Gloucester and Worcester, as well as to its sister Herefordshire market towns of Ross-on-Wye, Leominster and Bromyard, then beyond to Kington. The town is therefore reasonably well-provided with a range of powered transport access options to get into the town for its residential, employment and recreational facilities.
- 5.15.39 As background to producing this section of the LVBA study into this revision of the current Ledbury NDP, it should be noted that in the 'Place Shaping – Ledbury' policies section of the Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy 2011-2031, the 'Green infrastructure and open space' paragraph 4.5.11 on page 87 says that the plan '*recognises the value of the environment as an economic asset, as the urban extension will create better access to and enjoyment of new green infrastructure for residents and tourists alike*' and that '*A review of open space needs and existing designations in Ledbury will be undertaken as part of a Neighbourhood Development Plan*'.

SPORT & ACTIVITY

- 5.15.40 As regards sport, both for outdoor and indoor access, Ledbury is recognised as being overall short of facilities and the appropriate land to provide them. Although it has excellent modern and well-equipped cricket, tennis and rugby club grounds with up-to-date clubhouse facilities, there is a dire shortage of football club grounds, despite two very active and successful clubs in the town.

Ledbury Rugby Club



- 5.15.41 The long-established adult-teams Ledbury Town Football Club resides on a very old site within the existing built-up area with antiquated facilities. It is owned by a property company keen to develop the site for housing, but with an obligation to fund like-for-like facilities on a new site.
- 5.15.42 The junior Ledbury Swifts Football Club, however, despite a large and growing membership, currently has to share the rugby club pitches and clubhouse, and although the working relationship is excellent, this puts a considerable strain on being able to accommodate increasing demand for both sports.

- 5.15.43 Despite over eight years of HC-supported effort by planners to find to find new land for football, all potential avenues to date have, for various reasons, not proved fruitful. A major factor is that Sports England, which has to approve authorised new pitches, will only sanction new facilities which provide a combined centre for all forms of football.
- 5.15.44 Both the rugby club and the football clubs, despite limited facilities for the latter, are particularly very successful in catering for youths' and women's teams, with thriving junior membership in each case catering for literally hundreds of local young people. The clubs need and deserve opportunities for growth, so helping to secure the provision of new football facilities is a prime objective of the revised NDP: success at last now seems to be near (see Recommendations in Section 7).
- 5.15.45 Other outdoor sporting and fitness sites include a bowling green and an LTC-owned outdoor gym on the LTC-owned recreation ground (the Rec). There is also a teenage skate-park near to the Rec. In addition there are outdoor sports clubs for cycling, archery and running, and Ledbury Tennis Club use the courts at Underdown.

Ledbury bowls club



- 5.15.46 Indoor sport facilities include a central swimming baths and gym (run for HC by a contractor, currently Halo), which has recently had extensive modernisation. There is also a private gym in the town centre, a rifle range by the rugby club off the Ross road, and an indoor sports hall at John Masefield High School, although since the school has converted to Academy Status the future use of facilities by the community is unclear. Indoor sports clubs for badminton, boxing and table tennis also exist.
- 5.15.47 HC's Open Space Study (entitled *PPG17⁷¹ Open Spaces Assessment - A report by Herefordshire Council and Strategic Leisure Limited November 2006*) included an assessment of outdoor sports facilities, defined as sites that provide for participation in outdoor sports such as pitch sports, tennis, bowls, athletics or countryside and water sports and which showed nine such sites in Ledbury.

⁷¹ PPG17 is Planning Policy Guidance Note 17

- 5.15.48 Following this report, HC then published an update on its Pitch Playing Strategy to add more detail, including a specific and separately-published strategy for Ledbury (*Herefordshire Playing Pitch Assessment Strategic Overview 2012* and *Section 3 Playing Pitch Strategy Ledbury Area Herefordshire Playing Pitch Assessment 2012*). All three documents have been overtaken by events since being published so are out-of-date in some key areas such as football in Ledbury, but they still serve as a good guide to the current level of sports provision in the town.
- 5.15.49 However, the Playing Pitch Strategy report particularly highlighted the potential for The Swifts if provided with the facilities needed. The report referenced the Football Association (FA) accreditation system known as the FA charter standard award which has three echelons, the highest FA award being that of the community award. The FA has set a target nationally to have 75% of all youth football being played in a Chartered Standard Club and at the time, 80.95% of youth football in Hereford was played in such a club. However, as part of this figure, within the Ledbury Area, Ledbury Swifts was identified as a Chartered Standard Club with the potential to become a Community Club.
- 5.15.50 The Open Space report gave a current standard average across Herefordshire for community accessible outdoor sport of 1.76ha per 1,000 population (although if schools with no community use are included, the standard of provision becomes 2.45ha per 1,000 population). This compares with the overall minimum standards of open space provision set by the National Playing Fields Association for outdoor playing space of 2.4ha per 1,000 population, comprising 1.6ha for outdoor sport, 0.8ha for children's playing space, and for public open space (POS), 0.4ha per 1,000 population.
- 5.15.51 So although Herefordshire as a whole is near to the recommended standard, the report recognised that Ledbury has a lack of sufficient and accessible land for sporting facilities, and as is well known locally, falls short of the recommended requirement. The report showed that at the time, Ledbury had twenty four accessible pitches for rugby, football, cricket and hockey.
- 5.15.52 Overall, the report found that Ledbury had an extensive under-provision of parks and gardens and outdoor sport. It recommended that a review of outdoor sport was needed across Herefordshire, and concluded that given an estimated shortfall in football, cricket and hockey provision, there is a need to:
- protect and preserve existing pitch sites
 - improve the quality of existing pitch sites
 - seek to provide additional pitches e.g. securing formal community access to additional school pitches.
- 5.15.53 The Open Space Study also looked at the provision of activity areas for children and young people (aged 2 - 19), defined as areas designed primarily for play and social interaction involving children and young people such as equipped play areas, multi-use games areas, skateboard areas and teenage play zones. The county population of children and young people aged 2 - 19 at that time was 38,065 (ONS 2001). The provision for children and young people equated to 12.55ha, or 0.33ha per 1,000.
- 5.15.54 In Ledbury, the number of 2 -19 year-olds then was 3,020, and the town had nine 'stand-alone activity sites' totalling 0.577ha, and just seven play areas covering 1.006ha, with a total of sixteen sites over 1.583ha. This equated to 0.52ha per 1,000 and above the Herefordshire average.
- 5.15.55 Nevertheless, locally, the play areas in Ledbury in particular are felt to be inadequate, with people saying there are too few in their local area, particularly since they are recognised as being concentrated in the north of the town and very sparse in the south.
- 5.15.56 That is why the NDP revision is seeking the community's views about the future provision of good quality play areas throughout the town.

5.15.57 In fact there are now nine known play area sites:

- In the north:
 - John Lee Road play area
 - Yeoman Close
 - Kempley Brook Drive junior play ground
 - Kempley Brook Drive kickabout area
 - Lawnside play park / skatepark
 - Prince Rupert Road
 - Browning Road Infants
- In the south:
 - Childer Road
 - Villa Way

Lawnside play park



5.15.58 The Open Space report recommended a review of the provision of play areas, including overcoming the main barriers to use of play provision, these mainly being dog-fouling, vandalism, and people's perception of not feeling safe when using the sites. Dog-only areas could be considered, as they have worked successfully in other parts of Herefordshire. The security of play areas would be improved through the introduction of CCTV or staff presence and expanding signage on all sites with site details and contact numbers.

5.15.59 Despite there being active youth provision in the 1st Ledbury Scout Group, a Ledbury Platoon ACF (Army Cadet Force) and the TS Ledbury Maritime Cadet Unit (which is linked to the town's association with the Hunt-Class mine ship HMS Ledbury which has the Freedom of the Town), there is a recognised dearth of facilities and suitable locations for them to provide much needed leisure, recreation and contextual safeguarding accommodation for the many young people in the town. A

recent twice a week youth centre (Ledbury Youth Activities Support or LYAS) which was popular with a regular volunteer network, unfortunately lost its premises before the COVID pandemic and has yet to be reinstated because suitable premises cannot be found. The Maritime Cadet Unit is also seeking a new location to allow for growth.

- 5.15.60 Other relevant activity groups in the town include an amateur dramatic society, an angling association, bell ringers, a country-and-western club, horticulture and allotment societies, community brass bands and choral societies, several walkers' clubs, and a skittles league. There is also a very active branch of U3A (Ledbury has a higher than average proportion of the elderly in its population, attracted to Ledbury for its calm, gentle demeanour, easy access and active-spirit like-minded companionship).
- 5.15.61 The key recommendations for improving or enhancing sporting and activity amenities are documented in Section 7.2.

ACTIVE TRAVEL

- 5.15.62 As regards active travel, as noted in the heritage and landscape history sections above, many of Ledbury's roads, footpaths and bridleways follow ancient trackways which date back to when Ledbury was founded, at the intersection of key routes from all points of the compass. By the 11th century it had become the principal gateway from England to the Welsh Marches. The choice of location for Ledbury as a market town and trading-post goes back over a thousand years, and is due to it being strategically sited at a place where well-used existing trackways crossed. This strategic importance still applies today.
- 5.15.63 Two long-distance footpaths connect Ledbury to the wider countryside.
- 5.15.64 The first of these is the Geopark Way⁷², a project launched in 2006 by the Earth Heritage Trust with the aim of creating a trail which highlights geology, landscape and associated heritage, and to make these accessible to all. It is a waymarked trail that runs a total of 109 miles from Bridgnorth to Gloucester. It is the first long-distance footpath to be created with the purpose of demonstrating the special qualities of a Geopark. The 1,250 square kilometres of the Geopark span four counties: Shropshire, Worcestershire, Herefordshire and Gloucestershire, in a strip of countryside that is up to 18km wide, and 83km long - see map extract overleaf.

⁷² <https://earthheritagetrust.org/the-geopark-way/>

Route of Geopark Way through Ledbury



- 5.15.65 Approaching Ledbury from the north after leaving the Malvern Hills, the trail explores the 400 million-years-old Silurian hills and valleys which form this part of the Earth's crust, and which have resulted in some of the best rural scenery in England. It traverses the south-western sector of the Malvern Hills AONB, passing through Wellington Heath, along the base of Frith Wood, into the east side of Ledbury above Upperfields and down steps into Church Street to the Market House. It then sweeps east, crossing over the Worcester Road, up into Conigree Wood, down into Eastnor, and from there up to the Malvern Hills ridge line via Colwall (where some sections are along an ancient pilgrims' trail between Hereford and that part of the Hills).
- 5.15.66 Several other long-distance walking trails pass through the Geopark and cross the Geopark Way trail, including the second long-distance footpath in Ledbury, the Herefordshire Trail.
- 5.15.67 This is a 154-mile-long walking route which circuits the county via the five market towns. The trail arrives in Ledbury from the north, running through lovely countryside and historic rural settlements, via Bromyard, Bishops Frome, Bosbury and Wellington Heath (traversing Hope End RPG and cresting Oyster Hill on the way), joining the Geopark Way in the town centre. It then veers west along Bye Street and Bridge Street, through Lower Road trading estate, across the by-pass and the River Leadon, arriving eventually in Hereford City.

Herefordshire Trail at The Frith, on west side of Frith Wood (also Geopark Way), looking south west



- 5.15.68 The Geopark Way going east towards Malvern connects to the Three Choirs Way where it runs along a section of the Malvern Hills ridgeline.
- 5.15.69 The latter is a popular 100-mile-long circular route linking Gloucester, Worcester and Hereford through countryside of hop-yards, vineyards and orchard with a theme linking the walk to the ancient music festivals still celebrated annually in the three Cathedrals (the three choirs are all that remains of a Druidic perpetual choir said to be centred at White-leaved Oak). In turn, the Way connects with the Worcestershire, Gloucestershire, Wysis and Severn Ways, and the Wye Valley Walk.
- 5.15.70 Footpaths south from Ledbury, and in particular LR7, form a continuous connection to the village of Dymock. Famous for the six international poets that came to live there in 1914, the village church is the centre of a scenic and history-packed clover-shaped network of three paths dedicated to their poetic importance - Poets Path I and II and the Daffodil Way.
- 5.15.71 Many of the fine views available from these and other footpaths have been categorised as Key Viewpoints and Key View Routes, and are described and illustrated in Section 6.
- 5.15.72 Ledbury has a number of publicly-accessible neighbourhood green spaces (NGSs), one of the most notable being the popular and well-used council-owned town-centre recreation ground, or Rec, as mentioned above. A fairly large area of community-maintained NGS, redolent of old village greens, is situated off Prince Rupert Road at the centre of a housing estate on the west side of the town - it is also an important community asset.
- 5.15.73 Other well-used NGSs are: the Town Trail, north of the Little Marcle Road; behind the new residential care home to the west of Martin's Way, a small triangular area of council-owned land at the bottom of Jubilee Close; an enclosed area of land to the east of the footpath connecting Mabel's Furlong to Biddulph Way, also accessed from Orchard Place; and a largish green area behind the Aldi supermarket with paths connecting to Browning Road and Barnett Avenue.
- 5.15.74 Other significant NGSs exist along the council-owned Green Lane, above and to the north east of the town. Further north, there is an extensive, well-used area of Open Access land (CROW Act 2000)

covering the long ridge of Frith Hill, which features Bradlow Knoll and Frith Wood. The southernmost point is the railway (at the tunnel, east of the station), the northernmost point is just south of the lane which runs between Petty France and Wellington Heath. It is accessed via a public footpath from the town centre, which is also the route of the Herefordshire Trail and Geopark Way - see above - and which continues along the west side of Frith Wood to Oyster Hill via Wellington Heath. Another public footpath crosses the Open Access land, running north - south through Frith Wood between Bradlow and the Petty France - Wellington Heath lane.

- 5.15.75 This area of Open Access land is a highly-valuable resource for the local community and visitors alike, not just in terms of its provision of high-quality informal recreation, but because of the many other GI assets it contains and GI functions it performs - see Section 5.16 Green Infrastructure below. It is especially important in providing good access to very high-quality habitats for nature which support great biodiversity, and in forming the town's landscape setting and context. It also contributes to flood attenuation and water resource management, and cooling, which helps mitigate the impacts of climate change.

Open Access Land on Bradlow Knoll



- 5.15.76 Given its long history you would expect a wealth of public footpaths to exist in and around the town, but in fact, apart from to the north, which is relatively well-served, there is a dearth of footpaths connecting Ledbury to the east, south (especially) and west. Often this is due to private land-owners having stopped-up strategic ancient trackways which crossed the area, such as routes to what is now Wall Hills Camp, usually during periods of enclosure (see heritage sections above).
- 5.15.77 Another good example can be found in the landscapes east of Ledbury. In the late 16th century, the extensive Eastnor and Bromesberrow estates were established either side of the Herefordshire / Gloucestershire border, which here runs between White-leaved Oak and Clencher's Mill (on the lane south of Eastnor). County and parish boundaries were often established along old routeways since they were well-established features in the landscape - usually well-vegetated along their length and

some having become holloways - and easy to patrol; this section of the Herefordshire / Gloucestershire border is no exception.

- 5.15.78 However, whilst many county and parish boundaries were later to become formal PRsoW, in this case only certain sections of the boundary are dedicated rights of way (public footpaths), meaning it is no longer possible for the local communities to walk the whole of their parish boundaries, or 'beat the bounds' (although this could potentially be rectified by the communities concerned if they wished - see Recommendations).
- 5.15.79 Note here, that as part of the LVBA evidence-base-gathering work (as previously mentioned, initially this was to be a full LSCA, but as circumstances changed it was agreed that a more limited LVBA would be more appropriate to the aims of this NDP revision on the grounds of objectives, time frame and cost), volunteers undertook to carry out a large proportion of the work themselves.
- 5.15.80 They visited the 14 LSCA areas which had been identified (see Section 4 and Figures 2A and 2B), and recorded and analysed the baseline situation for each area, especially noting its character and significant natural / cultural features and highlighting key views from / towards them (see Section 6 Views and Visual Amenity). These baseline assessments would help guide the proposed line for the town's settlement boundary.
- 5.15.81 In addition to a detailed assessment of each LSCA Area, an analysis of PRsoW and other active travel connectivity options was carried out, including by Ledbury's footpaths officer. Details of this work can be found in Appendix E: LSCA Area Schedules for Public & Social Amenity Topic (Footpaths). A number of recommendations were made in those studies, and they have been included with the other recommendations made for public and social amenity in Section 7.2.
- 5.15.82 The public footpaths in the town / urban area are numbered ZBxx and those in rural Ledbury, LRxx. A number of these connect with footpaths to the surrounding parishes of Wellington Heath (numbered WHxx), Little Marcle (LMxx), Eastnor (EAXx), Colwall (CWxx) and Donnington (DNxx) (see HC's *Location Plan – Public Rights of Way Parish of Ledbury* (at 1:30,000 scale and last published in 2012) on HC's website⁷³).
- 5.15.83 The key footpaths, and those which are currently most well-used by walkers to, from or through the town, are as follows:
- i) to the east, ZB17, which takes the Geopark Way towards the Malvern Hills;
 - ii) to the south, LR7, which connects to Gloucestershire;
 - iii) to the west ZB2 and LR10 (route of the Herefordshire Trail);
 - iv) to the north, ZB19, leading to LR18 and from thence north east onto LR21 (which between them also take the Herefordshire Trail from the north);
 - v) from the end of LR18 going due north; and
 - vi) LR17 into Wellington Heath and beyond.
- 5.15.84 Large new housing developments by Barratts and Bovis south of the by-pass and Bloor to the north of the viaduct will create a significant increase in demand for active travel routes.
- 5.15.85 The Bloor development proposes new footpaths and cycleways to the west under the viaduct to the Hereford Road roundabout, with a new toucan crossing over Hereford Road into New Mills Way and on to cycle and walkways into the town. Another crossing is proposed under the viaduct onto Ballard Close half-way up the Hereford Road, to again cross the Hereford Road via another new toucan crossing and onto footpath / cycleway ZB18 alongside and to the west of the Town Trail on the disused canal / railway line. These should provide safe routes for children going to school, and for shoppers and commuters - see Recommendations.

⁷³ <https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/travel-transport/highways-public-rights-way-map>

- 5.15.86 Similarly, as a condition of planning, both Barratts and Bovis (the latter now called Vistry) will be developing new footpaths and cycle ways to cross the by-pass with new toucan crossings. These new footpaths and cycleways also need to connect with those in the Deer Park estate, which need widening for shared use (see Recommendations).
- 5.15.87 The Town Council is currently negotiating with Bovis not to use their planned route for active transport, but to consider a more appropriate and logical alternative. The Bovis proposal is that having crossed over the bypass, the route would go alongside Jubilee Close, entering the close on LR7, and then east along the close onto the Gloucester Road. In fact, this route is totally unsuitable and unsafe for walkers and cyclists who need to access the town. Instead, the aim is to offer part of the NGSs at the bottom of Jubilee Close as a much safer and more accessible alternative, then onto Biddulph Way, and then onto a number of footpaths into various parts of the town.
- 5.15.88 A long-term plan is building an active travel footbridge over the by-pass (ideally a green bridge that will allow terrestrial mammals to cross safely as well). The south side of the bridge would be sited on the POS proposed between the Bovis and Barratts developments, the north side would lead into Shepherds Close and then on to Biddulph Way (the area is already earmarked for such, with green space being left for bridge footings in due course).
- 5.15.89 Recommendations on these and other footpath enhancements and / or additions referred to in this section and Appendix E can be found in Section 7.2. The Town Council is mindful that any changes to existing PRsoW, or applications for new ones, need to be applied for and registered on the Definitive Footpaths Map before 2026.
- 5.15.90 On cycling, there are few major national cycle routes in this part of Herefordshire. The nearest National Cycle Network (NCN) route is a short section in Great Malvern (as yet unconnected to the wider network, but a new NCN route to Worcester is currently being planned). Otherwise, the closest routes to Ledbury in the region are i) NCN 45 on the east side of the Malvern Hills taking in parts of the Severn Valley and Cotswolds, and ii) NCN 46, which runs between Hereford and the Wales / England border to the south west.
- 5.15.91 However, Sustrans' *Herefordshire, Worcestershire & North Gloucestershire Cycle Map (15)* does include a Ledbury Circular Day Ride route of 23.5 miles, and HC publishes a *Herefordshire Leisure Cycle Guide* with six routes, one of which comprises 17 miles of the well-signposted Ledbury Loop. The latter is part of the National Byway, a 3,000-mile-long leisure cycling route around Britain that links places of geographic, historic and cultural interest. The Ledbury Loop starts and finishes in Ledbury and takes in Eastnor, Bromsberrow, Ryton (with its Poets-based Garland Hut 'resource' facility) and Dymock.
- 5.15.92 HC also produces a *Ledbury Walking & Cycling Guide* which includes several practical commuting routes suitable for cycling, including Green Lane and the Town Trail, with a connecting cycling route from the Trail around the primary school leading down to the industrial estate on Lower Road and along Browning Road onto the length of New Mills Way.
- 5.15.93 In addition, the Malvern Hills AONB Partnership has sign-posted routes shown in their publication *By Bike in the Foothills of the Malverns*. The *British Camp & Bromesberrow Route* is a 20-mile on-road loop ride around the eastern, southern and western parts of the Malvern Hills, with sections running from British Camp to the eastern outskirts of Ledbury via Eastnor, and on to Upper Colwall (just below the Wyche Cutting) via Petty France, the railway bridge junction and Old Colwall⁷⁴.

⁷⁴ See http://www.malvernhillsaonb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/MalvernsCycleGuidemapinsiderevisedOct10_000.pdf

Cycling in and around Ledbury





- 5.15.94 An aspiration that has been discussed and agreed with neighbouring Dymock Parish Council, who are also producing their own NDP, is to extend the River Walk, which runs alongside the proposed route of the to-be-reinstated Herefordshire and Gloucestershire canal (see previous sections and Local Green Spaces below) to construct a walk and cycle way from the hamlet of Staplow (north of Ledbury), through the viaduct, along the River Walk and then along the proposed route of the canal to Dymock and potentially on to Newent, where part of the reinstatement of the canal has already been implemented.
- 5.15.95 The aim is to provide a safe, quiet and scenic route for active travel and recreation that would then form the canal towpath once the canal had been constructed (see Figures 10A and 10B Green Infrastructure; also references in sections 5.2, 5.11, and the public and social amenity recommendations in Section 7.2).
- 5.15.96 Bisecting the town from north to south and suitable for walkers and cyclists is the important Town Trail, which follows the line of the disused canal / raised disused railway line from the railway station past the town recreation ground (the Rec) across Bridge Street to the Little Marcle Road and then through woods to the Ross-on-Wye road roundabout on the by-pass. The trail connects across the by-pass to the Riverside Walk, going north alongside the east side of the River Leadon up to the Hereford Road roundabout.

View over town from Town Trail (image © M Theaker www.malvernrailway.co.uk)



- 5.15.97 Together, these two paths form a 4.4-mile-long circular tour of Ledbury, suitable in most places for walkers and cyclists, and accessible in parts by people in mobility scooters and families with prams or buggies. More detail on the Riverside Park is provided in previous sections and the GI section which follows; see also recommendations.
- 5.15.98 The Town Trail is not a PRow, although public footpaths run alongside for part of its length, but a trail owned and maintained by HC for use by all non-motorised users (including e-bikes and mobility scooters, but not horse-riders).

- 5.15.99 Along much of its length, the character of the Town Trail is very special, being a semi-natural / 'rural' corridor winding through the otherwise busy town.
- 5.15.100 Unfortunately, over the last 20+ years, surface erosion and weed encroachment have occurred along the Trail; this has resulted in a reduction in its original width and significant deterioration in its condition, rendering it unsuitable for prams / buggies, road bikes and mobility scooters.

Town Trail (image © M Theaker www.malvernrailway.co.uk)



- 5.15.101 This situation is unacceptable: one of the conditions of the Objective 5b part-funding by the EU⁷⁵ was that the Trail should be open and maintained for use by all non-motorised users (including e-bikes and mobility scooters, but not horse-riders).
- 5.15.102 In addition, the bridge on the Town Trail over Orchard Lane is very narrow (see photo overleaf), and requires widening to make the Trail accessible to all active travel user groups (see Recommendations).

⁷⁵ see <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00343409850117834?journalCode=cres20>

Town Trail bridge (photo from Ledbury Reporter)



5.15.103 Another aim is to make the River Walk more accessible by, *inter alia*, improving the current steps-only access on to the Walk by the Little Marcle Road to allow cyclists, buggies and prams to also access to the walk here and so allow a continuous walk and cycleway currently not possible for all.

Access to River Walk from Little Marcle Road (image © Google)



- 5.15.104 The above trails, paths and other routeways form a highly important resource for the local community. Many are used by people visiting from outside the area, tourists who have come to explore the lovely countryside (much of which is within the Malvern Hills AONB) with its steeped-in-history heritage. Thus, they make an important contribution to the local economy, and significantly contribute to people's health, well-being and quality of life.
- 5.15.105 Local roads, lanes and footpaths are used to varying degrees by local people for recreational, social and employment commuting purposes.
- 5.15.106 It is easy for cyclists to access local lanes via the Ross, Worcester and Coddington Roads. However, the Ross and Worcester Roads are not pleasant routes, being, in places, fast, busy and narrow. However, the Little Marcle road offers a fairly quiet route connecting to local lanes in the west, and Knapp Lane is a good route to lanes in the east.
- 5.15.107 In contrast, the only lane easily accessible to walkers is the Coddington Road, off the Worcester Road. In other directions, the roads to Gloucester and Hereford have adequate verges, but the traffic is heavy enough to make them unattractive to recreational walkers, though manageable by experienced cyclists.
- 5.15.108 A modified (wider and with an improved surface / enhanced landscaping) Town Trail is essential to correct its current deteriorated state (see above). This would make walking and cycling to reach the start point of a walk / run / ride through some of the lanes a much more pleasant experience.
- 5.15.109 Reaching both the allotments and the cricket ground on foot or bicycle means using main roads, respectively the Bromyard Road (which is quite busy and with no pavement after the Beggars Ash junction) and the Ross Road (which does have a reasonably good pavement, but is on an even busier road so neither an enjoyable cycling or walking experience).
- 5.15.110 A toucan crossing across the by-pass on the Ross Road pavement, which also needs widening to allow both cyclists and walkers, is an urgent requirement and a recommendation in Section 7.2.
- 5.15.111 In the event that land is developed for employment and / or sport and recreation to the south of the Little Marcle Road as proposed by HC and LTC, another toucan crossing across the by-pass and enhanced cycling and walking routes from the town centre will be required (also recommended in Section 7.2).

Ledbury's Green Spaces

- 5.15.112 The World Health Organisation (WHO) recommends that every city should provide a minimum of 9 square metres (0.0009ha) of urban green space for each person (equating to 0.09ha per 1,000 population). The space provided should be accessible, safe and functional. WHO also suggests that an ideal amount of urban green space could more generously be provided, with as much as 50 square meters (0.005ha) per person, equating to 5ha per 1,000 head of population.
- 5.15.113 In England, consideration is given to English Nature's Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards, which suggest that at least 2ha of accessible natural greenspace per 1,000 population should be provided. HC's 2006 Open Space Study showed that the county has a current parks, gardens and recreation grounds average standard of 1.12 hectares per 1,000, with Ledbury just above the average at 1.13 hectares.
- 5.15.114 In addition, the Open Space Study showed what Herefordshire's quota by English Nature's standard of combined natural and semi-natural greenspace should be - equating to having at least 349.74ha of provision within the county. The county currently has 4,143.38ha of such space, or 23.69ha per 1,000 population, with Ledbury having 119ha of space, or 7.96ha per 1,000 population.
- 5.15.115 The study concluded that Ledbury had an extensive 'over-provision' of natural and semi-natural greenspace (although these days we understand so much more about the importance of access to natural green spaces for people's physical and mental health, so over-provision is perhaps the

wrong term to use), but only an average provision for amenity greenspace, and for children and young people. It recommended that new provision of parks and gardens was needed.

- 5.15.116 The study also pointed out that English Nature’s standard is based on urban figures, whereas Herefordshire is a very rural county. It therefore recommended that the LPA should consider the provision of greenspace within each of the identified areas (mainly the individual market towns) to ensure that any proposed change in use is acceptable in open space impact terms, that countryside habitats are protected, and that the economically-valuable rural nature of the county is not compromised.
- 5.15.117 This is recognised as being very much the case in Ledbury, since although the town theoretically currently exceeds the standard, when viewed in the rural context, it is very much under threat from significant growth promoted by developers wishing to capitalise on the town’s attractiveness and good access, to the detriment (as demonstrated by the unplanned and visually-harmful Barratt’s development) of the rural setting in terms of protecting open space provision and the open, rural and tranquil nature of the town’s surrounds, which are as deeply interconnected as they were when the township began to establish.
- 5.15.118 The study also assessed the different uses and potential purposes of amenity greenspace (although as noted above, many of the other highly valuable GI functions that amenity spaces do or can perform have only recently begun to be recognised). Sites within this typology have been divided into four categories – local amenity, village green, civic space and allotments, and the countywide provision of amenity greenspace. The county has a provision of 80.89ha or the equivalent of 0.46ha per 1,000 population, with Ledbury on 6.03ha or 0.40ha per person, but notably, at the time, zero allotment space. PPG 17 is very much about setting local standards of provision, that in this case need to be specific to Herefordshire.
- 5.15.119 If it is necessary to benchmark against any national standards of provision, then the only national standard for amenity greenspace provided is 0.5ha per 1000 population. This is based on the current UK average of all applicable local authorities’ provision standards, as highlighted in the Government’s *Rethinking Open Space* report (2001). The current provision across the county equates to 0.46ha per 1,000 population and therefore there is a countywide deficiency of amenity greenspace. Ledbury falls below the country average and below the national standard. The Open Space report therefore recommended that Ledbury needs to protect its amenity green space.
- 5.15.120 This recommendation will be reflected in the public consultation stage of the NDP revision, giving residents the opportunity to comment on the green space areas they value and what they would like to see protected for the future.
- 5.15.121 The consultation, and suggested green space areas to consider in and around the parish (see local greenspace below), has been designed to help prepare for future iterations of the NDP, to help inform the emerging new Local Plan, and to allow for the possibility of further changes in the planning system (planning ‘zones’ may yet still feature). A predisposition for built development not being considered appropriate unless specifically for the benefit of nature and recreation (for example Nature and Recreation Areas (NARAs)) would be in NDP-recognised local greenspace areas.

LOCAL OPEN GREENSPACE NEEDS / DESIGNATED LOCAL GREEN SPACES

- 5.15.122 It is important to differentiate between Ledbury’s green spaces generally, and Local Green Spaces (LGSs), which is a specific term used in the NPPF for places which are considered to be of high community, landscape or other value and thus require protection through LGS designation (which currently confers the same level of protection on the land as Green Belt). For the avoidance of doubt, in this section we use the expression ‘local greenspace(s)’ to differentiate them from formal LGSs.

- 5.15.123 Whether or not the proposed planning reforms are adopted (as variously mentioned in Sections 1 - 3, adoption as currently proposed now seems highly unlikely), this NDP revision aims to encompass local greenspace needs as a guide for later versions of the NDP to cover in more detail, but with existing and new greenspace areas being recognised and outlined in this version. Ledbury does not currently have any formally designated LGSs and none are currently being considered in this revision of the NDP, but it is strongly recommended that this is considered sooner rather than later - see Recommendations.
- 5.15.124 Responses about local greenspace requirements will be gathered from the consultation exercises. There are also three known requirements for increased local greenspace amenity already highlighted in this report.
- 5.15.125 The first is the need to consider the planned reinstatement of the former Herefordshire and Gloucestershire canal during strategic / feasibility / other studies being carried out to inform plans for future development proposals / applications. As noted previously, the canal route is protected. Now, there is an opportunity to create a long-distance footpath and cycleway along the towpath well in advance of the canal being restored. This would bring significant economic and health benefits to the town and its community. The idea is already generating a great deal of interest and enthusiasm, especially as it would form an important part of new long-distance active trails being planned in the Three Counties, for example between Ledbury and the Malvern Hills (see Recommendations).
- 5.15.126 The second is the need to provide allotments in the parish (those that exist and which are regarded as Ledbury allotments are not actually in the parish, they are in Wellington Heath parish off the Bromyard Road about a mile from the centre of town to the north). Proposed sites for allotments in Ledbury are mentioned in this report (see Recommendations), having been requested through an earlier public consultation phase of the NDP revision.

Ledbury allotments



- 5.15.127 The third is the need for more public gardens, another key NDP consultation area. A local business, Haygrove Ltd, is a large soft fruit grower near Ledbury which is keen to develop a community garden in the town (similar to a successful one already created in Ross-on-Wye). Some consultation with the NDP and Haygrove, and with the owners of a large garden that used to be the kitchen garden of Underdown near the Gloucester Road to the east of Ledbury, have already taken place, including the scope for both parties to work together to meet this need.
- 5.15.128 A large area of scrubland (thought to be owned by HC) by the Hereford Road roundabout (part of LSCA Area 13), accessed to the south off the Hereford Road and bounded by the River Leadon and a small brook, was identified some time ago by Haygrove as a possible site, and this possibility is also part of the green space aspect of the public consultation exercise.
- 5.15.129 The photograph below shows the Hereford Road access to this scrubland at GR701386 looking south.

Access to current scrubland south of the A438 Hereford Road



5.16 Green Infrastructure

Introduction

- 5.16.1 Green Infrastructure is commonly referred to by its acronym 'GI'. Although some people differentiate between green i.e. terrestrial infrastructure, and blue i.e. aquatic, the term GI is almost always used to cover both unless stated otherwise.
- 5.16.2 Natural England's definition of GI is as follows:
- 'Green Infrastructure is a strategically planned and delivered network comprising the broadest range of high quality green spaces and other environmental features. It should be designed and managed as a multifunctional resource capable of delivering those ecological services and quality of life benefits required by the communities it serves and needed to underpin sustainability. Its design and management should also respect and enhance the character and distinctiveness of an area with regard to habitats and landscape types.'*
- 'Green Infrastructure includes established green spaces and new sites and should thread through and surround the built environment and connect the urban area to its wider rural hinterland. Consequently it needs to be delivered at all spatial scales from sub-regional to local neighbourhood levels, accommodating both accessible natural green spaces within local communities and often much larger sites in the urban fringe and wider countryside.'*⁷⁶
- 5.16.3 The Government's recently-revised (July 2019) version of the Natural Environment PPG para. 006 explains that GI 'assets' and 'functions' can help achieve the following planning goals:
- building a strong, competitive economy
 - achieving well-designed places
 - promoting healthy and safe communities
 - mitigating climate change, flooding and coastal change
 - conserving and enhancing the natural environment.
- 5.16.4 GI assets are physical / natural / historic / recreational features and elements, individually and in combination. Examples of those which are present in the study area are listed in Ledbury's GI section below.
- 5.16.5 GI functions include the provision of:
- access to nature, recreation, movement and leisure (for humans)
 - habitats for nature and support for biodiversity
 - landscape setting and context for development
 - energy production and conservation
 - food production and productive landscapes
 - flood attenuation and water resource management
 - cooling effects to mitigate the impacts of climate change.
- 5.16.6 Amongst its many benefits, GI has a vital role to play in people's health and wellbeing. Evidence shows that those who live near nature generally cope better with the stress of everyday life and are considered happier than those who do not have easy access to green spaces.
- 5.16.7 *'Proximity to greenspace is generally associated with increased levels of physical activity. This effect is particularly marked in the under 25s, who are more likely to be obese if they do not have access to greenspace. Regular participation in physical activities has been shown to improve physical and mental health. Increasing physical activity through access to high quality greenspace has the potential*

⁷⁶ <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/35033>

*to save the NHS £2.1 billion a year... The green infrastructure approach therefore integrates consideration of economic, health and social benefits to ensure that delivery against both environmental and socio-economic objectives is central to the planning, management and delivery of these spaces.*⁷⁷

- 5.16.8 The Landscape Institute's publication *Green Infrastructure An integrated approach to land use*⁷⁸ is also a very useful source of reference on the subject. GI can improve the community's experience and understanding of natural and historic places. Integrating access to green spaces with natural, cultural and heritage value into people's everyday lives can help to develop a connection with the local area and increase community participation. It can provide learning opportunities, reduce crime and encourage social activity. Education involving the natural environment and green spaces can positively influence the functioning of communities through reducing anti-social behaviour, increasing self-esteem and improving skills.
- 5.16.9 It can also benefit the natural and historic environment by creating and enhancing biodiversity, connecting wildlife corridors and networks, protecting and enhancing landscape character, and improving the quality of rivers and streams as well as conserving and enhancing heritage assets such as historic landscapes and archaeological features, and improving the setting of historic buildings and monuments.
- 5.16.10 GI is factored in to judgements about landscape value, and should form an integral part of planning for the future (it is an important aspect of both national and local, and often neighbourhood planning policy). It should be the subject of focussed studies if and when required, especially as part of planning applications. Landscape assessments *'will often need to address the effects of proposed development on green infrastructure as well as the potential the development may offer to enhance it'*⁷⁹.

Ledbury's Green Infrastructure: Background

- 5.16.11 HC's Green Infrastructure Strategy⁸⁰ dates from 2010, and forms part of the evidence-base for Herefordshire's Core Strategy. The strategy's stated aim is *'to place a framework of natural and culturally important features and functions at the heart of planning for a sustainable future for development within Herefordshire'*.
- 5.16.12 It divides existing GI into two groups: natural systems and human influence. Within these two groups there are subdivisions: geology; biodiversity; hydrology; land use; access and movement corridors; historical, cultural and archaeological value; landscape character; and formal designated and accessible open space. These divisions are dealt with at three levels: county, district and local or ward. Within each division, resources, issues and opportunities are identified.
- 5.16.13 It identifies deficiencies and needs at a county-wide level, the key findings being the fragmentation of the natural systems, their vulnerability to change, and their inaccessibility to residents. Large-scale resources are located on the edges of the county, with the interior predominantly arable agriculture. Para. 4.3.1 of the strategy states, *'Many of the most diverse and valued sites and corridors within the county are constricted and limited to small or narrow components of the landscape'*. The agricultural areas are significantly less biodiverse.
- 5.16.14 It recognises that *'ecological systems need to function at broad spectrum across whole landscapes'*. At a countywide level, the River Wye forms the core part of the strategy; the hill ranges of the

⁷⁷ Worcestershire Green Infrastructure Strategy 2013 – 2018 (WCC)

⁷⁸ https://landscapewpstorage01.blob.core.windows.net/www-landscapeinstitute-org/2016/03/Green-Infrastructure_an-integrated-approach-to-land-use.pdf

⁷⁹ GLVIA3 para. 2.10

⁸⁰ *Green Infrastructure Strategy Herefordshire Local Development Framework* (February 2010) Herefordshire Council <https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/downloads/file/2063/herfordshire-green-infrastructure-strategy>

Malverns, the Brecon Beacons / Black Mountains and north west Herefordshire hills / southern Shropshire Hills/Mortimer Forest are also of countywide importance.

- 5.16.15 Within settlements of medieval origin there is often little provision of green or open space: this is true of Ledbury town centre, where gardens are small or non-existent. Green space in new developments can often be isolated islands disconnected from other green spaces. The most deprived areas in towns are the areas with the least green space: again, this is true in Ledbury where there is little play space in the south of the town.
- 5.16.16 Relevant to Ledbury is the identification of the Malvern Hills AONB as a County Strategic Area, recognition that development in this area may impact on assets and features beyond county boundaries and may be of national importance.
- 5.16.17 A network of District Strategic Corridors (DSCs) links the six major towns (Herefordshire GI Strategy p 106). These corridors feature: nationally and locally recognised and protected sites; sites of GI significance (rivers, ranges of hills); and functional landscapes (for example river basins and woodlands which minimise the effects of flooding). Ledbury's DSCs connect to Hereford, centred on the Woolhope Dome, and Bromyard, following the River Frome and the upper catchment of the Leadon. There is no complete connection to Ross-on-Wye. At a district level, strategic District Enhancement Zones (DEZs) have been identified where landscapes could provide GI goods – public amenity, biodiversity, flood mitigation, but there are currently no DEZs near Ledbury.
- 5.16.18 Within each town, Local Strategic Corridors (LSCs) have been identified showing the framework of connected GI within the settlement and adjacent to the settlement. The area around sites identified for urban expansion in the Core Strategy have been designated Local Enhancement Zones (LEZs) where there is an opportunity to enhance GI alongside development. Finally, Local Fringe Zones (LFZs) surround each town, covering the transition between town and country and indicating the local importance and sensitivity of these transitional areas (Herefordshire GI Strategy pp 143-149).
- 5.16.19 The Regulation 16 draft of the current Ledbury NDP (pp 45 and 46) contained a GI policy – CL1.1. The Examiner in his report stated that: *'no substantive evidence is provided in respect of how this will occur, how it will be paid for, how it will be managed, or who by. There is nothing to demonstrate that Policy CL1.1 is deliverable...'* Following the Inspector's recommendation, the policy and accompanying map were deleted and there is currently no policy in the existing NDP covering GI.

Ledbury's Green Infrastructure

- 5.16.20 Ledbury is the only major town in Herefordshire which does not lie within the catchment of the River Wye. Its own river, the Leadon, is a tributary of the Severn, joining it at Over near Gloucester. In terms of district / county-wide GI connections, the Hereford - Ledbury road is a main corridor; District Zone 3 follows this route, which encompasses the distinctive Woolhope Dome and Marcle Ridge on the way. *'The Dome has a unique geological background and for the most part, its eroded hills and valleys have not been intensively farmed. As a consequence, the Dome is a rich mosaic of ancient oak and mixed woodlands, species-rich hedgerows, wildflower meadows, traditional orchards and streams, all supporting a wealth of wildlife.'* [Ledbury Naturalists Field Report May 2015]
- 5.16.21 Many of Ledbury's GI assets and functions have been identified and are described in the previous topic sections, for example Heritage, Biodiversity, Significant Vegetation and Public and Social Amenity; see also Key Landscape Functions in Section 5.17. Some are also identified in HC's Green Infrastructure Strategy, including strategic corridors running east of the town through Dog Hill Wood, west of the town along the Leadon Valley, and through the town along the Town Trail.
- 5.16.22 The strategy also identifies enhancement zones where new development is expected or planned to the north of the town (the viaduct site), and to the south west of the town where the Hawk Rise / Catherine's Grange development is being built, also the Old Wharf industrial estate and town end of the Ross Road.

5.16.23 Some of the area's key GI assets and functions are shown on Figures 10A and 10B. Where relevant, more detail about GI within the core study area is provided in the GI topic LSCA schedules in Appendix F. In summary, within the wider study area, GI assets include:

- Natural and semi-natural rural and urban green spaces – includes woodland and scrub, grassland, meadow, marsh / wetlands, open and running water, brownfield sites, bare rock / geological habitats (for example quarries).
- Parks and gardens – urban, country and historic parks, formal / public and private gardens, and institutional grounds (for example schools).
- Amenity green spaces – informal recreation spaces, play areas, outdoor sports facilities, housing green spaces, domestic gardens, community gardens, roof gardens, village greens, commons, living roofs and walls, hedges, civic spaces, and highway trees and verges.
- Allotments, orchards, suburban and rural farmland.
- Cemeteries and churchyards.
- Green and blue corridors – watercourses (including their banks and floodplains), railways, road verges, old trackways.
- Public rights of way network - roads, lanes, footpaths, bridleways, cycle routes and trails, including long-distance / themed trails.
- Sites of nature conservation value / importance (designated / undesignated); also designated local geological sites.
- Green spaces (designated / undesignated) selected for historic significance, scenic beauty, recreation, wildlife, tranquillity etc.
- Archaeological, historic and cultural sites / features (designated / undesignated).
- Functional green spaces such as sustainable drainage schemes (SuDS) and flood storage areas.
- Built structures – living roofs and walls, bird and bat boxes, roost sites.

5.16.24 For the LVBA, Ledbury's GI assets were grouped into four broad categories based on the predominant use and associated character:

- 1) The hills and woods.
- 2) The river and flood-plain.
- 3) Farmland to the north, west and south.
- 4) Green space within Ledbury Town.

The Hills and Woods

5.16.25 The hills and woods in the area are intrinsic to Ledbury's GI, providing most of the beneficial functions listed above, especially access to nature, recreation, movement and leisure (for humans).

5.16.26 Chief among the hills and woods are those at the western edges of the Malvern range, especially the town woods: Frith, Conigree and Dog Hill Wood; also, the nearby Hospital and May Hill Woods, and Wall Hills Camp. Frith Wood and Conigree lie within the AONB; Dog Hill Wood lies adjacent to the AONB boundary between the other two, and is owned by LTC.

5.16.27 Woolhope Dome and Marcle Ridge, although outside the parish, also contribute to the area's GI, with important links and physical / natural / cultural associations between all of them.

5.16.28 Direct pedestrian access to the countryside via ancient woodlands is a highly important aspect of Ledbury Town's special sense of place, and it makes a highly important contribution to the community's health, well-being and quality of life. Throughout many of the woods there are good networks of footpaths (Conigree, Dog and Frith Woods in particular - Frith Wood is also Open Access land), and bridleways, which provide access to the wider area. The network is well-used by local people and visitors alike (see Public and Social Amenity section for further information).

- 5.16.29 The hills and woods provide important habitats for nature and support great biodiversity, as set out in Sections 5.9 Significant Vegetation and 5.14 Biodiversity. They are also an integral and important part of the town's character and its unique and special landscape setting and context (another contributor to human well-being), forming the backdrop to the settlement in many views.
- 5.16.30 In addition, the woods have cultural and historic links, containing several archaeological sites and ancient boundaries. Ledbury Park, an unregistered park within the AONB boundary, slopes up to Conigree Wood from The Southend, forming an historic transition between the town and the Hills.
- 5.16.31 Furthermore, these areas make important contributions to climate change mitigation (cooling and water management), primarily provided by trees; and energy production (timber) – parts of the woods are owned by the Forestry Commission.
- 5.16.32 The Forestry Commission has published a *Plan for Conigree and Frith Woods 2021-31*. It explains that *'Frith and Conigree will be predominantly native broadleaf woodlands, with small pockets of conifers remaining to add diversity of structure and habitat, resilience to pests and diseases and opportunities for timber production'*. The vision includes clearing a percentage of the conifers in Conigree to leave open space for wildlife, ground flora and planted or regenerated broadleaves, and an ambition to establish a programme of coppicing in Frith.
- 5.16.33 Public access to the woods is allowed *'for low key recreation and connection with nature and wildlife'* – despite public requests that routes for mountain-bikers be established, it is judged that these woods are vulnerable, and that both woods are rich in biodiversity, and therefore cannot accommodate mountain-biking. Camping and campfires are also not allowed. The Commission have committed to working with Ledbury Naturalists to audit and monitor biodiversity and wildlife.

The River Leadon

- 5.16.34 The Leadon is a small river which rises 9.6 miles to the north of the town near Evesbatch, it flows north - south through the Parish, around the settlement to the west and on into Gloucestershire (see Hydrology in Section 5.6). The Leadon's most important GI role is water management: along with its flood plain, it absorbs and filters run-off from the surrounding hills. As noted previously, it is important to monitor the river's capacity for managing water from its catchment, especially factoring in climate change.
- 5.16.35 As mentioned in Section 5.4, the Malvern Hills NCA 103 profile refers to land north / north east of Ledbury town which is of relevance to ecosystem services and the regulation of water flow. It states that whilst regulating water flow is a relatively low issue for NCA 103, ***'it is an important area for its potential contribution to attenuation of flooding in downstream Ledbury, particularly through land management which increases vegetation cover (particularly trees/scrub) and surface roughness to increase evapotranspiration and infiltration and slow flows. These actions will also increase biodiversity, water availability and improve soil quality through the expansion, restoration and siting of semi natural habitats, which have a higher water storage potential'*** (emphasis added).
- 5.16.36 Many of the local soils are clay, including on the surrounding hills: this means rainwater is absorbed slowly, and with increasingly heavy rainfall, the amount of run-off can be high. Trees and vegetation on the hills bordering the town are an important means of attenuating / controlling this.
- 5.16.37 The river also provides a valuable leisure and recreational resource, and vital habitats for wildlife and biodiversity; however, currently, water quality levels are only 'Moderate' due to pollution (see Section 5.14).

Farmland

- 5.16.38 The town is surrounded and characterised by farmland, which dominates much of the parish. It is generally good agricultural land (mainly Grade 2 with a small amount of Grade 1 to the east and fragments of Grade 3 - see Section 5.6).

- 5.16.39 Farmland's chief contribution to GI is food production and occasionally energy production (for example timber and bio-energy). If managed well, agriculture can also contribute to water resource management; however, as set out in previous sections, often, agriculture contributes to excess run-off and flooding, with associated pollutants.
- 5.16.40 Also, if subject to good, sensitive management, agricultural land can benefit biodiversity and provide a variety of healthy habitats. Farmers are the main stewards of our hedgerow network and much of our woodland, and they will be subsidised in the future for managing land for environmental benefits (for example through Environmental Land Management (ELM) schemes⁸¹). It is now widely recognised that understanding and working with the land's natural capital brings economic benefits to farmers / landowners as well as local communities, along with social and environmental benefits.
- 5.16.41 Access to farmland in the local area is, however, quite limited, with a sparse network of fragmented footpaths.
- 5.16.42 The farmed landscape contributes greatly to Ledbury's setting. Rolling, hedge-bound fields, traditional and modern orchards, livestock and farmsteads are important to the character of the parish. Some forms of modern farming, however, can be intrusive or even polluting if poorly-sited / -planned and / or irresponsibly-managed. For example, polytunnels (of which there are many in this traditional fruit-farming area) can be highly visually-intrusive, do not make the best use of high grade agricultural land if sited on it (most polytunnel fruit is grown on table-tops not using the soil), and have a significant and often negative impact on the character and appearance of the countryside.

Polytunnels near Pixley, looking west to Marcle Ridge



⁸¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/environmental-land-management-schemes-overview>

Yellow polytunnels on same site, looking east



- 5.16.43 On the other hand, polytunnel farming can be highly efficient and very sustainable in terms of water, pest and disease management, enabling local food production and supporting local industry. This is a working landscape and polytunnels are one aspect of that, so a balance needs to be struck. Intensive livestock units are also on the increase as farms diversify: as noted in Section 5.14, they are responsible for a wide variety of pollutants and adverse environmental effects, and can be unpleasant neighbours.

Ledbury Town

- 5.16.44 As described in the previous section, the town has a good range of green spaces, including the large historic parklands at Ledbury Park, Underdown and Upper Hall (there is no public access to these parklands). There are two recognised town centre recreation areas: the Walled Garden and the Recreation Ground, along with a cemetery, a churchyard, school grounds and a bowling green. There are rugby, cricket and football pitches, mostly on the western fringes of the town.
- 5.16.45 The 20th century housing areas have pockets of informal green spaces, wide verges and play spaces. Gardens in the very centre of town are generally small, becoming larger at the town's edges. These spaces do not, however, form a network - many are isolated, and their ability to support GI provision, such as biodiversity and wildlife habitats is limited. On the other hand, the Riverside Walk, the Town Trail and the green space network on New Mills do a good job of linking spaces together, to the benefit of human users as well as nature.
- 5.16.46 Whilst green space within the town provides recreation and leisure to human beings, it has the potential to provide more and better GI goods than it currently does. If it were less fragmented and managed for biodiversity and wildlife it could also contribute to water resource management, as denser vegetation will absorb more rainfall and prevent run-off. Some larger spaces may benefit local people if used to grow vegetables or for community gardens.

- 5.16.47 The town has many mature and semi-mature trees (see Significant Vegetation section), notably the lime avenue on the recreation ground, trees lining the Town Trail, parkland trees at Upper Hall, stands of trees on New Mills, and semi-mature buffer planting along the river and by-pass. This buffer planting is almost continuous from the Hereford road roundabout to the Gloucester road roundabout; the belt forms a highly important and valuable multi-functional GI corridor.
- 5.16.48 Street trees are not generally a feature in the centre of town as roads are narrow. Where there are town trees (many in gardens) they are a valuable GI resource, close to where people live and available to all, protecting homes (cooling and water resource management) and contributing to human well-being as well as providing habitats for wildlife and supporting biodiversity.

PLANNED FUTURE GI WITHIN PARISH / TOWN

- 5.16.49 New developments, especially residential, can affect GI positively and negatively. To the south / south east of the town, agriculturally-productive land (Grade 2) outside the by-pass is being built on, which is an unfortunate loss. The developments also damage the visual integrity of the town and the setting of the AONB; the visual impact may lessen if / when the vegetation matures and in the seasons when trees are in leaf, but the majority of adverse effects on character and amenity / biodiversity cannot be mitigated.
- 5.16.50 Hedgerows and mature trees have been / will be lost, and replacement planting will not provide equal GI benefits for many years if at all (see Significant Vegetation). The houses on these estates have small gardens, and the public green spaces, although sometimes connected to each other and to the countryside they border, are not and will not be well-connected to the town's GI, being surrounded / cut off by roads.
- 5.16.51 To the north, the viaduct site will eventually enable the reinstatement of a section of the Hereford to Gloucester Canal, a much anticipated county-wide asset which is being implemented section by section. As well as a leisure facility the canal could provide an opportunity to boost the local network of cycle routes and footpaths both to the south (Dymock) and to the north (Staplow) (see Public and Social Amenity above, and Recommendations).

5.17 Key Landscape Functions

- 5.17.1 The baseline assessment identified certain areas of land which perform highly important functions within the landscape, and / or make valuable contributions to landscape character and visual amenity. These are factored in to judgements about landscape and visual sensitivity.
- 5.17.2 Those of most relevance are in relation to an area's contribution to / function as, and / or forming an integral and important part of:
- National and / or local landscape character
 - Rural open countryside (location and character / use)
 - Historic (pastoral / ornamental) context and setting of settlement
 - Historic landscape character (pastoral / ornamental - current land use)
 - Characteristic / historic landscape patterns
 - Heritage asset / context and setting
 - Aesthetic / perceptual qualities
 - Biodiversity
 - Significant vegetation
 - Key approach / gateway (see next section)

- Green gap (especially where preventing coalescence), and / or buffer / transition zone (desirable between densely and sparsely-settled area, and areas of tranquillity and activity, for example, and to protect wildlife and other 'sensitive' sites)
- Green corridor / link (these often perform a wide variety of functions including ecological and recreational)
- Social amenity
- Green Infrastructure asset / function
- Ecosystems / natural capital / catchment
- Views and visual amenity.

5.18 Key Constraints

5.18.1 Landscape assessments can identify some, but not all of the constraints which may have to be considered in determining the feasibility / viability of the future development of certain areas. Many of the designations and features identified in the assessment are potential constraints to development at one level or another, although they do not preclude development *per se*⁸².

5.18.2 The main constraints include:

Land covered by designation and / or specific planning policy: for example AONB, SSSI, Open Access land, LGS.

Land in Flood Zones 2 and / or 3⁸³: As well as being a constraint to development, building in the flood plain may be uncharacteristic in terms of local landscape character (see Riverside Meadows LCT in Section 5.5 and hydrology in Section 5.6).

Land with covenants: Occasionally, certain parcels of land are the subject of covenants which specifically preclude development of the land, or access to it.

Land on steep or very steep slopes: Although it may not be uncharacteristic in steeply-sloping areas, building on steep slopes usually requires extensive / intrusive engineering works which could give rise to significant adverse effects on landscape character, visual and social amenity in order to achieve modern-day standards. Even if building can be achieved, it may not be possible to get access to the land without cutting into the slope, removing roadside vegetation to achieve sightlines and so on.

No direct access from public highway: Access to some areas may be possible through adjacent developed land which does have direct access to a public highway, either now or in the future; others are perhaps only reached via fields, or narrow lanes / tracks which would require widening / 'improving' which would almost certainly give rise to adverse landscape and visual effects.

⁸² In the case of AONBs, recent revisions to the Natural Environment PPG have clarified the NPPF's intentions and requirements for how development within them (and other designated landscapes) should be approached. The PPG states that '*The National Planning Policy Framework makes clear that the scale and extent of development in these areas should be limited, in view of the importance of conserving and enhancing their landscapes and scenic beauty. Its policies for protecting these areas may mean that it is not possible to meet objectively assessed needs for development in full through the plan-making process, and they are unlikely to be suitable areas for accommodating unmet needs from adjoining (non-designated) areas. Effective joint working between planning authorities covering designated and adjoining areas, through the preparation and maintenance of statements of common ground, is particularly important in helping to identify how housing and other needs can best be accommodated. All development in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Beauty will need to be located and designed in a way that reflects their status as landscapes of the highest quality. Where applications for major development come forward, paragraph 172 of the Framework sets out a number of particular considerations that should apply when deciding whether permission should be granted.*' (Paragraph: 041 Reference ID: 8-041-20190721 Revision date: 21 07 2019)

⁸³ Within Flood Zone 1 there is a very minimal risk of flooding (less than 0.1% chance of flooding in any year, sometimes known as 'having a 1:1000-year chance'). There are very few restrictions in terms of flood risk to development on Flood Zone 1 areas, although applications for proposed development on land over 1ha in area must be accompanied by a flood risk assessment, which should consider areas deemed to be at high risk of flooding from rainfall (known as Critical Drainage Areas).

- 5.18.3 It should be noted that there are other matters beyond the scope of landscape and visual assessments which have to be factored in to judgements about whether changes to / development of a site / area is feasible and / or viable, and whether it can be achieved without giving rise to unacceptable levels of adverse effects.
- 5.18.4 For example, land-ownership and / or the protection and / or management of land may have to be considered where relevant to landscape and visual value / sensitivity to change in terms of how a landscape looks and / or functions; however, land-ownership / management *per se* is not of relevance to sensitivity and capacity, especially as the situation can change over time. From a neighbourhood planning perspective, any sites which are considered for future development would have to be feasible, viable and deliverable.
- 5.18.5 Another constraint is the former Herefordshire and Gloucestershire canal, which runs north - south through the study area, mainly within the Leadon valley except where it traverses the town. The canal is the subject of an active restoration scheme being run by the Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal Trust - see Section 5.2. The route is now protected. However, once restored, the canal is likely to present many opportunities and benefits, for example by boosting the local economy through tourism, and by providing a significant new long-distance recreational / GI corridor.

6 Visual Baseline

6.1 Introduction and Overview

- 6.1.1 As explained above, the assessment of views and visual amenity entails separate processes, distinct from, but related to, those used in the assessment of landscape character.
- 6.1.2 The Landscape Institute's guidance (GLVIA3) explains that the two distinct components of the assessment of landscape and visual effects are:
- i. Landscape effects: assessing effects on the landscape as a resource in its own right (i.e. regardless of how visible it is, or who can see it); and
 - ii. Visual effects: assessing effects on specific views and on the general visual amenity experienced by people.
- 6.1.3 It is very important to understand the difference between landscape and visual effects, and although they are interrelated, they *must* be assessed separately. Unfortunately, even experts in the field conflate the two. In summary, a landscape's character can be adversely affected by development regardless of whether anyone can see it or not.
- 6.1.4 As explained in Section 4, LVIA is normally used to assess the effects which could arise from a specific development in a defined location with known parameters; however, the principles are also applied in LSCAs, as when making judgements about sensitivity / capacity it is necessary to establish the nature of the effects likely to arise from the type of development which is the subject of the assessment, for example residential, industrial or recreational.
- 6.1.5 Both LVIA and LSCA processes involve determining a certain landscape's level of visual sensitivity (which, as with landscape character, is established by combining levels of visual value and visual susceptibility to change - see visual assessment criteria in Appendix G). The studies identify places from which it is likely that change in the landscape would be visible, who is likely to be affected by that change, and establish *How and to what degree the changes would affect what is there and those who see / experience it* (see Section 4).
- 6.1.6 Visual baseline assessments rely heavily on the findings of baseline LCAs, which include the mapping and analysis of physical features, designated sites, heritage / cultural assets, settings / areas of influence, important wildlife habitats, public and social amenity, access, well-known / well-frequented viewpoints and so on. The LCAs also identify the landscape's aesthetic and perceptual qualities.
- 6.1.7 These inform the nature of the view, and make a major contribution to visual value and susceptibility to change. However, often the value / importance of what one is looking at is not obvious on the ground - a good example is a nationally-protected wildlife site, a registered battlefield, or a view painted by a famous artist / described by a well-known poet (see cultural associations above).
- 6.1.8 The nature of a view is also influenced by matters such as how well-cared for and / or well-used the landscape is, what its character tells us about the area's sense of place, and what contribution it makes.
- 6.1.9 The visual assessment takes into account any landscape functions assigned during the LCA process, for example gap / buffer / setting / green corridor / gateway (see Section 5.17), and identifies visual functions as well.
- 6.1.10 The numbers of people experiencing the view and the reason for the visit is taken into account, and their sensitivity as visual receptors is established by combining their susceptibility to change and the value of the view.

- 6.1.11 In assessing views and visual amenity, it is important to understand the landscape context of the view. For example, in Ledbury, many views looking outwards from high ground are characterised by extensive panoramas which extend to the far-distant horizon. Looking down, the individual elements and features are perceived as forming a vast, integrated patchwork of patterns, textures and colours, creating the impression of green and tranquil rural landscapes, or discordant and chaotic urban townscapes.
- 6.1.12 As a result, the viewer tends not to focus on individual features unless they draw the eye for some reason. Examples include tall structures (e.g. church spires and pylons); large blocks of built form / colours / patterns / textures which contrast with the surrounding landscape / townscape context (e.g. red brick housing estates, fields of rapeseed, white-roofed agricultural / industrial buildings); surfaces / materials which glint and glare (water, glass, plastic, metal etc. - polytunnels, solar panels and certain modern roof tiles are particular culprits); and movement (road and rail corridors, wind turbines, and large numbers of people and / or cars can create a noticeable contrast / disturbance in an otherwise relatively 'calm' landscape).
- 6.1.13 Areas of built form which are physically separated on the ground may appear to coalesce from certain viewpoints, whereas from others, the contribution made by an open, rural gap to landscape and townscape character may be very clear and visually highly important.
- 6.1.14 The assessment took into account whether mitigation measures could be employed that would avoid / reduce probably high levels of adverse visual effects - for example by planting trees to screen views or restricting the height of any new built form - and whether such mitigation would be appropriate or not, in terms of landscape character (uncharacteristic mitigation measures can in themselves give rise to adverse visual effects, for example planting Lombardy poplar trees to screen polytunnels, as shown in the photo below).

Polytunnels north of Ledbury, west of Wellington Heath



- 6.1.15 It must be noted that when low levels of visual sensitivity are ascribed to certain areas, this may be due to views to / from the area currently being fully-screened by dense, mature vegetation. However, the nature, density and likely permanence / longevity of the vegetation needs to be considered, especially if without it, visual sensitivity would be higher and capacity lower. As

explained above, existing vegetation may not remain in place in the short-term, let alone the long-term future for a wide variety of reasons. For example, a dense, coniferous plantation woodland may provide full year-round screening, but the species are relatively short-lived and the trees are likely to be felled for timber at some point (as in Frith Wood), so the screening function is temporary. Thus, much of Ledbury's significant vegetation is vulnerable to change, and cannot be relied on to continue to perform its highly important visual (and other) functions.

- 6.1.16 Note that in this assessment, 'near-distance' views are categorised as being up to 0.5km away from the target; middle-distance views are usually up to c. 1.5km from the target, potentially further if the target is a large scale feature.
- 6.1.17 Many of the photographs in this section of the report were taken by local residents, using both cameras and mobile phones. Where it was not possible to take photos, images from Google Streetview were used.

6.2 Wider Views and Visual Amenity

Study Area Visual Overview

- 6.2.1 The LVBA considered views within, into and out of the parish, noting the edges of the visual envelope as far as possible.
- 6.2.2 Ledbury lies in the river valley of the Leadon. The river flows from north to south, and the valley has formed between two regionally-important landscape features, both of which are within wider AONBs - the Malvern Hills in the Malvern Hill AONB to the east, and the Woolhope Dome in the Wye Valley AONB to the west.
- 6.2.3 Whilst there is a relatively high degree of interinfluence and intervisibility between Ledbury and the Malvern Hills, there is none between Ledbury and the Woolhope Dome itself due to the presence of Marcle Ridge, which forms the easternmost edge of the Dome (and lies c. 1.7km east of the Wye Valley AONB boundary).

Marcle Ridge west of Oyster Hill, Hay Bluff on skyline (photo courtesy Jan Sedlacek @Digitlight)



6.2.4 The Malvern Hills form a highly distinctive and iconic feature in the wider region, and exert a strong and widespread influence on the landscape in all directions and on all approaches to Ledbury. The Hills' 13km long, hump-backed ridgeline is oriented north - south; approaching Ledbury from the south and north therefore, the silhouette changes relative to the location of the viewer - this is one of the local landscape's distinctive qualities (and is also a very useful aid to orientation on the approach, as it no doubt has been for millennia).

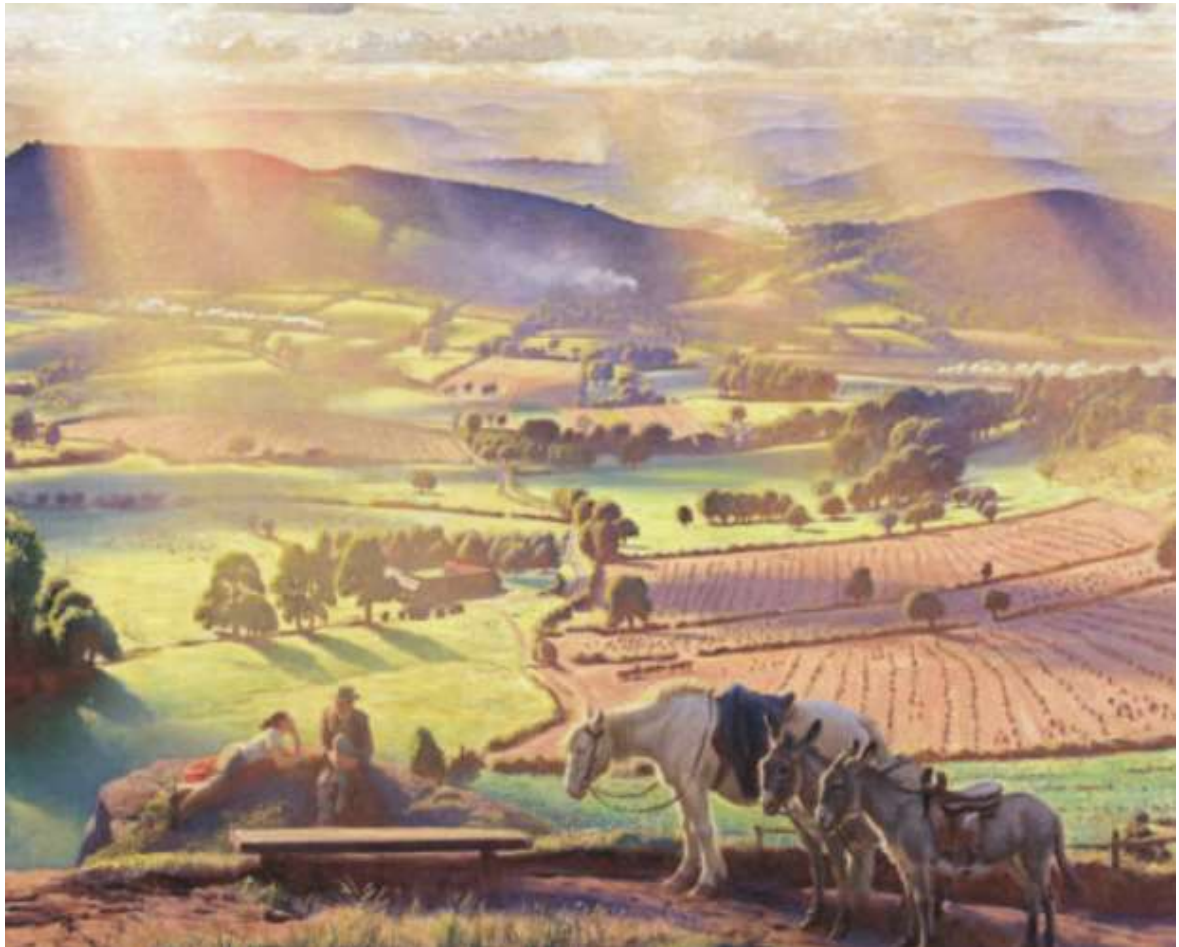
6.2.5 Due to topography and the presence of dense, mature vegetation, the Hills are only visible from places further away from the town, mainly on the east side of Oyster Hill, Frith Wood and Conigree, and approaching Ledbury from the south, north west and west, disappearing behind the woods as you enter the town. They are clearly visible when travelling north-eastwards along the A449 towards them, crossing low-lying land (a valley / plain at the upper reaches of Cradley Brook, which flows northwards) between the toe of the Hills and Frith Wood.

Malvern Hills looking north east along A449 (image ©Google)



6.2.6 The view along the A449 corridor looking in the opposite direction, i.e. west from British Camp, is the subject of Dame Laura Knight's evocative 1939 painting *Harvest*.

Harvest by Dame Laura Knight



- 6.2.7 Ledbury town is orientated north – south along the contour of the western base of three heavily-wooded hills - Dog Hill Wood, Frith Wood, and the Conigree. All are within the Malvern Hills AONB. Frith Wood is Open Access land, and a highly important recreational resource for locals and visitors alike. There are also public footpaths / bridleways through the woods. However, even in winter, trees screen most views of the town and wider landscapes, which only become visible at the woodland edge.
- 6.2.8 Since Ledbury lies below these steeply-sloping hills, built form and vegetation are seen to a greater or lesser degree from above, which makes them highly visible. The higher the viewpoint, the more the angle of view becomes two-dimensional, or 'plan-form': this has the disadvantage of exposing unsightly roofscapes and other detracting elements, features, patterns and activities which may not be visible at lower levels.
- 6.2.9 In fact, views from even the most elevated of locations, including the summits of the Malvern Hills, are rarely if ever completely plan-form, something which is often forgotten when designing roofscapes - nowadays roofs are often 'camouflaged', but the elevations end up being pale or brightly-coloured. However, from most higher-level locations the elevations are just as visible as the roofs, and the contrast can be a major visual detractor.

Roofs on Bromyard trading estate, looking west from Herefordshire Trail, west side of Frith Wood



Ledbury's roofscape, looking west / north west from edge of Conigree Wood



- 6.2.10 From the town's High Street, only glimpses of the hills and countryside beyond can be seen, but the settlement has developed eastwards up the sides of the hills and down into the valley, and as you climb up Bank Crescent or Knapp Lane, westward views open up across the valley to Marcle Ridge, May Hill (Gloucestershire) and Wall Hills Camp.
- 6.2.11 As you move westward down Bye Street and New Street, into New Mills, Deer Park and Leadon Way, looking back, views of the town are revealed, with the woodlands to the east forming the setting and context.
- 6.2.12 Views looking west from the town tend to be long, connecting the town to its county. In good light conditions, hills further west into Herefordshire and even Wales can be seen from high points in the town and the woods above it.
- 6.2.13 The nature of the mature vegetation in the area has a significant effect on views and visual amenity: lack of it often means that long, open views are available; it can also fully screen, filter and frame views.
- 6.2.14 As noted in the landscape baseline sections (and shown on the baseline figures, especially Figures 3A and 3B Aerial Photographs, and Figures 6A and 6B Significant Vegetation), many of the areas to the south, west and north of the town are characterised by open agricultural land. Mature woodland is relatively sparse here, much of it having long-since been cleared for agriculture, although there are a few good blocks and belts of ancient woodlands around Wall Hills hillfort and along the ridge adjacent to Falcon Lane to the west of the town.

Typical tree cover in lower-lying landscapes north west of Ledbury



- 6.2.15 Also, watercourses are often lined by sinuous belts of mature trees, and mature trees which have escaped from their hedgerows, or which have been left standing as isolated specimens in fields, are highly characteristic in Ledbury's landscapes, even close to the town. In addition, roadside hedges are often too tall to see over, and some of the lanes are deep holloways lined with trees.
- 6.2.16 The above factors mean that the landscapes are relatively well-wooded, so views within lower-lying areas in particular are often near-distance and intimate, with few outward views to help with orientation and sense of place.

6.2.17 Seasonally, views can vary as trees lose their leaves and vegetation dies back revealing views hidden the rest of the year and exposing the bare bones of the landscape. Changing weather conditions affect the extent, nature, quality and experience of the view (see also Section 5.10 Aesthetic and Perceptual Qualities).

Woodlands east of Ledbury in winter (photo courtesy Jan Sedlacek @Digitlight)



Eastnor park, looking north east to Malvern Hills (photo courtesy Jan Sedlacek @Digitlight)



- 6.2.18 Views have been noted from footpaths, lanes and roads. The local footpath network is especially important and of very high value in terms of the visual amenity it provides. The rural lanes are often deserted, mostly narrow, winding and undulating. Journeys along these lanes can give tantalising views of this varied rural landscape. Particularly good views can be found in the lanes to the west and north east of the study area.

Nationally-Important Views and Viewpoints

- 6.2.19 As noted in the cultural associations section above, many world-famous writers, artists and musicians have been inspired by the Ledbury and Malvern Hills areas' scenic qualities and other attributes. For millennia, and for different reasons, the Hills have been a key destination, and today, each year the Malvern Hills AONB attracts over a million visitors from all around the world. The viewpoints and views associated with the AONB, both from and towards it, are of international importance.
- 6.2.20 In 2009, the Malvern Hills AONB Partnership commissioned a study of views to and from the Malvern Hills, which formed the basis of the publication '*Guidance on Identifying and Grading Views and Viewpoints*'⁸⁴.
- 6.2.21 The guidance emphasises that key views and corridors are a material consideration in planning and decision-making, and that their protection is a priority in this respect. It also makes clear that effects on the AONB can arise, and therefore must be considered, beyond its boundaries (i.e. within its setting) as well as within the designated area: '*In 2012, Defra and Natural England advised those carrying out management plan reviews that there is a greater imperative to consider the effect of development in the setting of protected landscapes. The setting of an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is the surroundings in which the area is experienced. If the quality of the setting declines, then the appreciation and enjoyment of the AONB diminishes. Construction of a distant but high structure; development or change generating movement, noise, odour, artificial light, vibration or dust over a wide area; or a new understanding of the relationship between neighbouring landscapes may all impact on/extend the setting*'.
- 6.2.22 The AONB Unit's guidance on views, and the LVBA's preliminary desktop and on-the-ground studies, only provide an indication of theoretical visibility, and over a wide area. The Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) of a particular area or feature is usually based on bare terrain mapping only, which does not take into account built form, vegetation, or localised topographical variations. Actual visibility must therefore be determined as far as possible through on-the-ground assessment, driving and walking around the study area, to establish the Zone of Visual Influence (ZVI).
- 6.2.23 The eastern side of Ledbury parish lies within the AONB, along with part of the east side of the town (Horse Lane Orchard, south of the A449). Much of the rest of the parish forms an integral and important part of the AONB's setting.
- 6.2.24 A recent (2019) revision to National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) for the Natural Environment also clarifies how development within the setting of AONBs and other nationally-designated landscapes should be dealt with; it states:
- 'Land within the setting of these areas often makes an important contribution to maintaining their natural beauty, and where poorly located or designed development can do significant harm. This is especially the case where long views from or to the designated landscape are identified as important, or where the landscape character of land within and adjoining the designated area is complementary. Development within the settings of these areas will therefore need sensitive handling that takes these potential impacts into account.'* Paragraph: 042 Reference ID: 8-042-20190721 Revision date: 21/07/2019

⁸⁴ http://www.malvernhillsaonb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/KEYVIEWSFinalreport-lowreswebsite_000.pdf

- 6.2.25 The visual studies carried out for Ledbury's LVBA followed the Malvern Hills AONB Unit's guidance on views, and used the same system for grading the level of quality of the views, namely 'Exceptional', 'Special' and 'Representative' (see guidance for definitions); however, whilst the principles of the criteria were the same as the AONB's, they were adapted to reflect the neighbourhood (as opposed to national) value of the views, and without the focus of the view being the Malvern Hills - see following sections.
- 6.2.26 The LVBA criteria for Exceptional, Special and Representative views are as follows:
- Exceptional Views:** views which are unique / highly characteristic of the wider area / landscape / townscape, with few or no detractors. May have national and / or local cultural and / or historic significance. Encompass important landmarks / key focal points.
- Special Views:** views which are locally unique and / or special, characteristic of the local area / landscape / townscape, few detractors. May have local cultural or historic significance. Encompass locally-important landmarks / key focal points.
- Representative Views:** views which are good illustrations of the history / culture / character of the area / landscape / townscape, and which include local landmarks / focal points and locally-distinctive features / qualities.
- 6.2.27 The key views study for the AONB identifies two views which feature Ledbury – one from Marcle Ridge (Exceptional VP27), and one from Durlow Common (Special VP45). These long views are described in the following section.
- 6.2.28 The viewpoints and associated view corridors were marked / noted on the base plans (see Figures 12A and 12B).

6.3 Local Views and Key Viewpoints

- 6.3.1 As well as considering views of the parish from the nationally-important VPs, this study assessed more local key views, especially those to and from the settlement, in order to determine the nature of the views and the degree of visibility from different locations, and consider their levels of value and susceptibility to change.
- 6.3.2 The key viewpoints (KVPs) and associated views were identified by the volunteers carrying out the baseline surveys and analysis, all of whom are members of the local community. Guidance on the information-gathering and assessment process was provided by professionals along the way.
- 6.3.3 As well as KVPs, the study identified Key Viewpoints (KVPs), Key Focal Points (KFPs), and Key View Routes (KVRs). The assessment of the latter factored in the findings of the landscape baseline studies for the town's approaches and gateways (see Section 5.8).
- 6.3.4 As noted above, the key views were graded as per the Malvern Hills AONB's guidance on views, i.e. Exceptional, Special and Representative.
- 6.3.5 It is not always possible to fully assess views on the ground, as usually only places which are publicly-accessible are visited during the surveys. However, a few people were kind enough to allow us access to private land so that views could be considered from all angles. Where necessary, Google Earth was used to gain an impression of a certain view.
- 6.3.6 Key view points and view routes are identified below. Whilst there are key views at viewpoints along the routes, inevitably levels of visual interest / quality vary from place to place along them, and depend on the direction of travel and angle / elevation of view, light, weather and season. It must also be remembered that a view can be experienced even by those without sight - other sensory experiences, such as sound, smell, temperature and light levels come into play (these are also important factors to consider when evaluating levels of visual and social amenity quality / value / susceptibility to change / sensitivity / capacity).

Key Focal Points

6.3.7 The KFPs identified were as follows:

- The Barrett Browning building on the northern corner of the Bye Street / Homend junction (distinctive and taller than the surroundings).
- Ledbury Viaduct
- St Michael and All Angel's Church spire
- Ledbury and Underdown Parks (parkland landscapes on the hill slopes)
- Bradlow Knoll, Dog Hill, Conigree and Frith Woods
- The Malvern Hills
- May Hill
- Wall Hills Camp
- Marcle Ridge (especially the highly visible radio mast which punctuates the skyline).
- Last but not least, Ledbury itself (as a settlement, especially when viewed from longer distances).

Long Views

6.3.8 The majority of KVPs and KVRs are within the parish / on its boundaries (see Figures 12A and 12B).

6.3.9 Two KVPs with views towards the parish were identified beyond the boundary.

6.3.10 **KVP1** is an 'Exceptional' view; it is also the location of the AONB's Exceptional VP27, which is at a point along the Herefordshire Trail which in this area runs along a footpath / the lane running along the crest of Marcle Ridge. This route was also identified as a KVR (KVR15).

6.3.11 The Trail turns eastwards at The Wonder, zig-zagging down the slopes into the valley via Putley and Aylton, crossing the River Leadon just west of the Leadon Way by-pass, and traversing Ledbury town centre (see Section 5.15 Public and Social Amenity). Just below the radio mast, the Three Choirs Way long-distance trail joins the Herefordshire Trail, also with views over the Leadon valley and Ledbury towards the Malvern Hills. There are views over Ledbury towards the Malvern Hills from these routes as well, but at lower elevations the views are less panoramic.

6.3.12 The view corridor from this VP covers most of the study area. The view is panoramic, high quality, and very lovely at all times of year.

6.3.13 The view clearly shows the town's wider landscape context and setting - its close association with the Malvern Hills is more easily appreciated from this vantage point, since closer to Ledbury, the Hills are screened by the wooded hills to the east of the town.

6.3.14 The landscape is characterised by traditional mixed farming with arable, horticulture and pasture predominant. It is sparsely-populated. Polytunnels can clearly be seen, particularly the extensive coverage on land north and north west of Ledbury; otherwise, the landscape is rural, well-hedged, and displays a traditional field pattern - see photos overleaf.

Views from Marcle Ridge looking east over Ledbury





- 6.3.15 **KVP2** is on Durlow Common, in the vicinity of AONB Special VP45.
- 6.3.16 This is an elevated, open view across good quality rural countryside with undulating land in the fore- / mid-ground and hills in the background (from the VP, the skyline features the Cotswold Scarp to the right, Titterstone, Clee Hill and Clent Hills to the left, and the Malvern Hills' central spine, with the wider AONB on the intermediate skyline at the centre of the view).
- 6.3.17 Ledbury is at the foot of the hills in the midground. The view encompasses most of the typical local landscapes: agricultural (arable and pastureland), associated agricultural buildings / industry (farmsteads, barns, polytunnels, and food processing plants), and woodland on the hill slopes.
- 6.3.18 The tapestry of open fields and woodland cover, scattered farmland buildings and houses give an impression of a rural but settled, inviting and accessible landscape.
- 6.3.19 This is a 'Special' view, featuring both Ledbury and the AONB in their wider settings. The agri / industrial landscape features (polytunnels, modern farm complexes and the industrial units around Ledbury) counter the tranquil nature of the view, but Ledbury is a working, productive parish and in many ways is relatively modern.

View looking south east from lane between Putley Common and Woolhope Cockshoot



- 6.3.20 **KVP3** is categorised as a 'Special' view. It is located north east of Ledbury, just outside the study area boundary, along the road linking the Coddington Road to Wellington Heath via Hope End. The view is a panoramic vista, broadly looking south west over Ledbury and other parishes towards the far horizon from Marcle Ridge to May Hill, over undulating, good quality rural landscape.
- 6.3.21 Although the bulk of Ledbury town is not visible from here, the fine railway viaduct north of the town can be seen in the centre of the view, although it is hard to distinguish, being surrounded by hedges, trees, and the light-industrial buildings of the Bromyard Road Industrial Estate.

View looking south west from Loxter near Wellington Heath - viaduct visible in mid-ground



Approaches to the Town (KVRs)

- 6.3.22 Approaching the town from the south, east and north west, you see the town below the Malverns and the local hills: Frith, Conigree and Dog Hill Wood. If you are travelling by road, you glimpse the town fleetingly through gaps in hedges and gateways as the roads wind, rise and fall. Ledbury is a working town, and from these approaches, light industrial buildings at the edge of the town (and more recently, housing south of the town along Leadon Way / the Dymock Road) block what were once clear, fine views, and dominate the nearer you get to the town.

View looking towards town from Little Marcle Road



View looking towards town from the Ross Road (image © Google)



- 6.3.23 The church steeple is often the focal point in views of the town, as it would have been for centuries; however, today, other tall but modern structures such as the brewery silos on Orchard Business Park, Bromyard Road, and the UBL plant on the Little Marcle Road (see photo overleaf) also draw the eye.
- 6.3.24 These are Representative views which could be Special if the industrial buildings in the foreground didn't detract (there is considerable scope for improvement - see Recommendations).

UBL (cc-by-sa 2.0 - Open fields west of the UBL... by Jonathan Billinger - geograph.org.uk/p/3181120



- 6.3.25 **KVR1** is a 'Special' KVR. It is along the A417 Gloucester Road on the approach to Gateway A(i) at the A417 / Leadon Way roundabout (see Section 5.8). It is a fast road with wide verges, and from it, there are good views both leaving and approaching the town - looking east towards the Malverns across rolling farmland which is well-hedged and sparsely-populated, and west towards Marcle Ridge and May Hill.
- 6.3.26 As you approach the town, the land (fields and parkland) to the east slopes more steeply upwards to Conigree, May Hill and Hospital Woods. To the west are open views across the Leadon Valley.
- 6.3.27 The new housing developments to the south / south west of the town will adversely affect this approach, but the land closest to the road has been identified as visually sensitive (especially in terms of the setting of the AONB and Underdown, and it being remnant historic parkland - see character baseline sections) and should not be developed.

KVR1, looking west



- 6.3.28 **KVR2** is also along the A417 but north of the roundabout; it is also a 'Special' KVR. As the road continues into town along the Southend, there are tempting glimpses of the heart of the town, framed by the black-and-white buildings of Ledbury Park, the boundary brick wall to Ledbury Park to the east, and the attractive buildings (mostly Georgian or earlier) which line the west of the road.
- 6.3.29 Finally, you reach the Top Cross, and view the town centre with the High Street descending to the Middle Cross and Market House and then rising up the Homend.

KVR2



- 6.3.30 **KVR3** is a 'Representative' KVR. It is along the Dymock Road which leads to the Full Pitcher Roundabout, also Gateway B (Section 5.8).
- 6.3.31 Travelling north, the section south of Hazle Farm is a lovely approach to the town. At first, the settlement is barely visible due to distance, topography and intervening vegetation, then the church spire beckons.
- 6.3.32 Views to the east and north east are across very good quality open and unsettled countryside, with the wooded hills on the western edge of the AONB forming a distinctive skyline.

KVR3, south of Hazle Farm looking north east (image © Google)



- 6.3.33 However, as one draws closer to Hazle Farm, the Barratt housing development becomes more visible, and nearer to the town is highly dominant on the ridgeline.
- 6.3.34 The development damages what was once a fine, rural view along one of the main historic approaches to the town; even from some distance it very prominent as the land is flat. Hopefully vegetation will go some way to softening this view with time, if it establishes.

KVR3, south of Hazle Farm looking north east



6.3.35 **KVR4** is a 'Representative' KVR, along the Ross Road.

6.3.36 This is a slightly oblique approach to the town: until you reach the rugby pitches and auction sites, you are travelling through lovely countryside and, as with the other approach roads, attractive views of the town and hills are revealed at intervals.

KVR4



6.3.37 **KVR5** is a 'Special' KVR. The approach along Little Marcle Road to Gateway C has a rural character, despite the UBL silos which are of a scale and isolation to signify heavy industry rather than the urban feel a more well-planned and sensitively-designed industrial site might create. Large-scale soft fruit grower Haygrove is also sited on this approach, and groups of fruit-pickers making their way on bicycle or foot into town or back to their lodgings are a frequent summer sight.

- 6.3.38 The road is narrow and winds significantly, with high hedges on either side occasionally revealing views of the town and hills; the views are not stunning (telegraph poles and rural industrial buildings detract) but all are highly characteristic and pleasant. The Little Marcle Road is the only remaining approach road with a truly rural feel. This is slightly detracted from by the light industry in the first section, but the road still has a countryside character.

KVR5



- 6.3.39 **KVR6** is a 'Representative' KVR, along the Hereford Road A438. The road passes through open countryside, with Wall Hills to the east and high hedges to the west, giving brief glimpses of traditional orchards and the viaduct. The long views are of Frith Wood and the town with the Malvern Hills behind and, further to the south east, of May Hill.
- 6.3.40 These are attractive views, detracted from somewhat by the large industrial buildings and silos on the Bromyard Road trading estate beneath Frith Wood.
- 6.3.41 The road reaches Gateway D at the Hereford roundabout, the surrounds of which are suburban in character, although the very good tree planting which lines the by-pass (now about 20 years old) does a lot to mitigate the impact. If it matures as it should, helped by good management and assuming no loss from pests / diseases or other factors, its beneficial qualities should also grow.

KVR6, looking south to Wall Hills Camp



- 6.3.42 **KVR7** is also a 'Representative' KVR, along the B4214 Bromyard Road, approaching Gateway E. As it runs through a valley, the Bromyard Road has few vistas, but it is characteristically rural (winding, not too wide, not too busy) and quite pleasant.
- 6.3.43 There are fine views of the viaduct from the road across the rural floodplain (although availability is determined by hedge-maintenance height) - see photograph overleaf.
- 6.3.44 The first sign that you are approaching a town is the presence of industrial buildings on the Bromyard Road trading estate. From here onwards the feel is more urban and certainly not picturesque: you finally pass under the railway bridge and enter the town.
- 6.3.45 The character of the road will undoubtedly change and some high quality views will be lost when the viaduct site is developed: everything possible should be done to avoid further urbanisation here and mitigate the worst of the adverse effects, but the narrowness of the road and the need for extreme traffic measures to deal with the high levels of traffic unfortunately mean that this is unlikely to be achievable.

KVR7, looking south east (image © Google)



- 6.3.46 **KVR8** is another 'Representative' KVR, along Knapp Lane approaching Gateway F. This is a lovely road - too narrow to take a lot of traffic and with a pinch point at the town end which only allows single vehicles to pass.
- 6.3.47 The road cuts west from the Worcester Road rising behind Dog Hill Wood, over Knapp Ridge then descends to the town, offering views down to the river valley and up to Bradlow Knoll. Woodland and pasture in the foreground are succeeded by the 20th century developments of Bank and Homend Crescents, Knapp and Homend Rise, and Lark Rise.
- 6.3.48 There are near views to the east down to the railway station with Frith Wood alongside.

KVR8 looking south west



KVR8 looking north east



- 6.3.49 **KVR9** is also a 'Representative' KVR. It is along the A449 Worcester Road approaching Gateway G. This road leads to Ledbury Town from the Malvern Hills with very fine, high-quality open views to both sides until you reach Conigree Wood to the east and the Coddington Road to the west.
- 6.3.50 Here, the road winds and slows down. A raised pavement to the west is bordered by a low brick wall and the mature trees of Upper Hall behind. To the east is Horse Lane Orchard housing. Quickly you are in a built-up area lined on both sides with housing and walls. The brick and black-and-white buildings of Ledbury Park at the Top Cross give you a first glimpse of the historic character of the town.
- 6.3.51 Just beyond, looking down New Street, you can see Marcle Ridge, which makes an important contribution to the town's wider context and setting.

KVR9



From the Local Hills

- 6.3.52 There are many outstanding and varied views from the edges of the local hills: some are long-distance panoramas, other are near-distance, enclosed and intimate. The availability of views depends greatly on topography and the presence of dense, mature vegetation, the latter being a factor in how views are experienced throughout the year.
- 6.3.53 In summary, these views are mainly from higher ground east of the town looking westwards, in an arc from north to south, with Marcle Ridge and more distant hills on the skyline. Many of the views feature the town. The best places from which to gain an overview of the settlement as a whole are Bradlow Knoll (Frith Wood) and Dog Hill Wood.
- 6.3.54 One of the finest long-distance westward views from the local hills is from KVR12 along Dog Hill Wood's western edge looking towards May Hill, Marcle Ridge and the Black Mountains / Brecon Beacons beyond.

- 6.3.55 There are also very fine middle-distance panoramic views looking from the western edge of Frith Wood westwards towards the viaduct and Wall Hills Camp, along KVR11.
- 6.3.56 In addition, some excellent long-distance views can be gained from the eastern side of the local hills, looking in an arc from north east to south east, depending on the location, and from the eastern parts of the parish looking north east and east. The focus of these views is usually the Malvern Hills range on the skyline.

Looking north east from south of Petty France towards British Camp



- 6.3.57 An example of a fine near-distance rural view from the east hills is from Kilbury Camp, looking north west over old orchard and pasture to wooded Bradlow Knoll (photo overleaf).

View from Kilbury Camp looking north west



- 6.3.58 **KVR10** is a 'Representative' view route along a well-used footpath on the south-western edge of Conigree Wood, from which there are good, long-distance views to the south and west. Ledbury Park's historic parkland is a feature in the near-ground, sloping down to the boundary wall and the Gloucester Road. Few mature trees remain; the parkland is often grazed by beef cattle.
- 6.3.59 Moving northwards, the historic parkland of Underdown (Grade II listed building in unregistered park and garden) comes into view; historic features remain but are hard to distinguish in what is now conventional farmland.
- 6.3.60 From here there is also a very fine long view over the settlement to Marcle Ridge across the valley to the west, and to the distinctive dome and tree-clumped summit of May Hill to the south west.

View from KVR10



6.3.61 **KVR11** is a 'Special' KVR, along footpath LR21 (also the Herefordshire Trail and Geopark Way) on the western edge of Frith Wood. There are many 'Special' KVPs along the route, mainly looking west down the slope, with fine panoramic views to Wall Hills Camp (scheduled monument) and across the valley to Marcle Ridge, and May Hill in the south west. There are 'Exceptional' views of the viaduct (Grade II listed) in these panoramas, although the Bromyard Road trading estate in the foreground is a detractor. There are also 'Special' middle-distance views looking north east and north along the route.

Views from KVR11 looking west





View from KVR11 looking north



- 6.3.62 **KVP4** is a 'Special' KVP, at a place known as 'the Cricket Pitch' at the southern tip of Dog Hill Wood. From here there is a fine view looking over the town, with the High Street in the mid-ground and May Hill beyond, across the valley.
- 6.3.63 It is an important view as this wood is very much part of the town and very popular with local walkers; it also forms the beginning of many walks which go on to Frith Wood, Conigree Wood and the Malvern Hills beyond.

View from 'the cricket pitch' looking west



- 6.3.64 **KVR12** is categorised as being between 'Exceptional' and 'Special'. It is along the footpath which delineates Dog Hill Wood's western edge.
- 6.3.65 From multiple points along the path there are fine, panoramic views over the town towards May Hill (south west), Wall Hills (west / north west), and beyond to Marcle Ridge. On clear days it is possible to see even further into Herefordshire and sometimes, beyond into Wales, the Brecon Beacons featuring on the skyline.
- 6.3.66 These are important views which, despite detractors such as industrial parks on the edge of the town, are highly valued by the local community.

KVR12, looking west



- 6.3.67 **KVR13** is a 'Special' KVR on Dog Hill Wood's eastern edge, along Green Lane, which is a wide old trackway with the character of a promenade. There are 'Special' views at multiple points along the lane, including looking across to Conigree Wood.
- 6.3.68 Some of the best views are from the north-eastern end of the lane looking north east to the hills of Frith Wood with Bradlow Knoll in the foreground, and the Grade II* listed obelisk in Eastnor Castle RPG beyond. The obelisk was carefully situated so as to be a key focal point in many views in the area; it is also the location of AONB Exceptional VP40, which is looking north / north east towards the Malvern Hills.
- 6.3.69 Looking east, Conigree Wood blocks further views, but to the south east beyond Conigree you can see May Hill, with Ledbury church spire in the middle-ground. In summertime when in full-leaf, vegetation along the edge of the lane screens or filters many of these views

KVR13 looking north east



6.3.70 **KVR14** is a 'Special' view route, with fine eastward views from Coddington Road, which runs parallel with the hills, and footpath LR25 at the exit from Frith Wood. From the north east of the parish, beyond the local hills looking eastwards, the Malvern Hills dominate the views.

KVR14





6.3.71 **KVP5** is an Exceptional view, gained from footpath LR25 from the northern end of Frith Wood, which provides connectivity via LR26 to the Ridgeway and directly on to the Malvern Hills. As it exits the wood, LR25 provides a stunning panoramic view across to the Hills.

KVR15 is a 'Representative' view route along footpath LR11, beyond the Riverside Walk in the west of the study area as it heads north through pasture grazed by cattle and sheep and then across arable, crop-sown land. Looking south and west there are fine views towards Wall Hills, and to the east, good views of the town and Frith Wood.

6.3.72 **KVP6** is an 'Exceptional' view from Bradlow Knoll. The Knoll is on the south-eastern side of Frith Wood to the north east of Ledbury, within Open Access land. The viewpoint is where you enter Frith Wood on Footpath LR24. From the Knoll there are fine, panoramic views across to May Hill with Ledbury in the near middle-ground. This is arguably the best view of the town, looking down the steep slope across unspoilt fields to the church spire with the town behind.

KVP6



Within the Town (KVPs)

- 6.3.73 Ledbury's High Street is distinctive – fairly straight and widening in the middle of the town at the Market Cross; sloping down from the Southend to the Market House, then rising gently to the Homend, giving long views which encompass the whole street.
- 6.3.74 **KVP7** is categorised as being between 'Special' and 'Representative'. The view is from Top Cross looking north. Looking towards the Homend with the Market House and Barrett Browning building in the middle distance, you can see Bank Crescent / Upperfields just showing above the High Street. This view is highly characteristic of the town.

KVP7



- 6.3.75 **KVP8** is also categorised as being between 'Special' and 'Representative', and is also highly characteristic of the town.
- 6.3.76 The view is from the Market Cross / Homend looking north towards Top Cross. The multitude of fine historic buildings along the High Street, including medieval / black-and-white, Georgian and Victorian (many with rendered and coloured facades), are displayed in this view. Beyond the Top Cross you can see the Ledbury Park yew trees.

KVP8



6.3.77 **KVP9** is an 'Exceptional' view.

6.3.78 The view is looking west up cobbled Church Lane to the church, and is iconic - probably the most photographed view in Ledbury.

KVP9



6.3.79 **KVP10** is a 'Representative' view, looking east down Bye Street towards the open countryside beyond. It is a long view which anchors the town to its rural surrounds - not particularly attractive due to a few detractors, but still a good view of this small market town in its wider context.

KVP10



6.3.80 **KVP11** is a series of viewpoints looking from within the town towards the key focal points of the Barrett Browning Building and Church Spire with the wooded hills behind. The series of views contributes to a strong sense of place and is categorised as being 'Representative', showing the compact, low-rise nature of the town in its rural setting and the importance of the historic built environment to the town's character. These views are often obscured and blighted by poor quality public realm.

KVP11



6.3.81 **KVP12** is also between 'Special' and 'Representative'. The view is from footpath LR7 off Leadon Way looking east towards the hills with Underdown and Ledbury Parks in the foreground.

6.3.82 **KVP13** is another 'Special' / 'Representative' view.

6.3.83 The VP is on the eastbound platform of Ledbury railway station, looking east up to Frith Wood. The station (which is modest), and its setting, epitomise the rural nature of the settlement.

KVP13



6.3.84 **KVP14** is an 'Exceptional' view from Footpath LR11.

6.3.85 The footpath runs through fields to the west of the Riverside Walk between Little Marcle Road and the Hereford Road, and looking north there is a very clear view of the viaduct. In fact, this is probably the best view of the viaduct available in the area, and there is no development blocking it.

6.3.86 A very special and fine view encompassing the town's rural nature and rural industrial heritage.

KVP14



6.3.87 In future, the community may decide that some or all of the KVPs / KVRs are worthy of protection through an NDP policy - see Recommendations in the following section.

7 Conclusions and Recommendations

7.1 Conclusions

- 7.1.1 One of the NPPF's original 'fundamental objectives' was *'to put unprecedented power in the hands of communities to shape the places in which they live'*. This LVBA is a testament to the determination of the people of Ledbury to create an exceptional place in which to live and work.
- 7.1.2 They have grappled with, and ultimately embraced, the complexities of national planning policy, upholding the overarching aims which are to *'protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment'*, and ensure *'The creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places'*, which is *'fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve'*.
- 7.1.3 The LVBA has taken over two years to produce. The findings will be used for a variety of purposes: most importantly, it will help the community to achieve the above aims.
- 7.1.4 In the short-term (i.e. up to adoption of the current iteration of the NDP), the studies will be used to inform and guide decisions about / proposals for the settlement boundary; allocating land for specified amounts and types of use (especially employment and sports); Green Infrastructure; and NDP policies and proposals.
- 7.1.5 The LVBA also makes recommendations for a variety of matters identified during the assessments, such as additional studies / information required; strategies, guidance, environmental and recreational projects and initiatives; and developing the long-term vision for Ledbury. These are set out in Section 7.2.
- 7.1.6 In the medium-term (i.e. between this iteration of the NDP being adopted and the review of the Core Strategy), and subject to external factors, the LVBA will be updated to reflect changes to the baseline situation / circumstances, with LSCAs / LVSA's being carried out for specified uses in specified locations as and when required. The findings will be used to make informed decisions about, and draw up plans for, LTC's input into the review of Herefordshire's Core Strategy, which is already underway, and the next round of revisions to the NDP. The aim is for previously-made recommendations - for example for Ledbury's GI - to be considered, prioritised, developed and delivered, and new ones put forwards. The vision for Ledbury's future will be further developed.
- 7.1.7 In the longer-term, the LVBA, LSCAs and other forms of assessment will help to determine the direction of travel for Ledbury's growth over the next forty years. i.e. up to 2060 and beyond.
- 7.1.8 Most importantly, the assessments will be a valuable resource, both now and in the future, for the local community, decision-makers, stakeholders and developers. Also importantly, the findings will be relevant regardless of changes to planning systems and policies, as they are simply a record of what was there at that time. Such assessments will help to ensure that when changes are proposed and / or imposed, they can be accommodated without causing harm to Ledbury's valuable features and qualities. In the case of new development, they will help those responsible to ensure high standards of quality: in planning, submissions, design, construction, operation and delivery.
- 7.1.9 Having undertaken to carry out much of the work required for the studies themselves, Ledbury's folk now say they understand and value their environment far more than they ever did. They have identified, described and analysed the myriad features, factors and qualities which are integral to Ledbury's highly distinctive and very special historic character, and which contribute greatly not only to its unique sense of place, but also to its people's health, well-being, quality of life and sense of pride in Ledbury. For centuries, poets, painters and musicians have been drawn to and inspired by the town and its landscapes: the hope is that in future, they, and others, will still find this to be a naturally beautiful and healthy place, supporting a happy, thriving and sustainable community.

7.2 Recommendations

- 7.2.1 During the LVBA process, several issues were identified which have formed the basis of specific recommendations, the purpose of which is to help ensure that in future, where new development or change of any type is planned, it protects and enhances the landscape and visual / social amenity, and directly benefits nature and recreation. This will in turn benefit the local community and visitors.
- 7.2.2 The LVBA's findings will also be used to develop detailed landscape / GI / other strategies and future environmental and recreational projects / initiatives / enhancements / design guides for the parish, the town and other settlements, and individual parcels of land / allocated sites.
- 7.2.3 Some of the recommendations will form the basis for specific NDP policies, for inclusion in the current review, while others will feed into the next Core Strategy and future iteration/s of the NDP. For example, where key views are identified, a policy with the objective of their protection / enhancement would need to be taken into account in any future development proposals.
- 7.2.4 Some of the proposed recommendations are shown on Figures 10A and 10B - Green Infrastructure.
- 7.2.5 In summary, most of the key recommendations relate to the short and medium term, as follows:
- the line of the settlement boundary;
 - the protection and enhancement of valuable natural / cultural features, factors and qualities, especially the AONB and historic Ledbury town, and their settings, and views to and from them, as well as biodiversity, and significant vegetation;
 - the protection and significant enhancement of / additions to the area's GI assets and functions, in order to maintain human quality of life and well-being, support biodiversity, and mitigate climate change;
 - especially, the creation of a multifunctional GI zone around the periphery of the town, and as part of the area's GI, protecting, enhancing and augmenting the network of cycleways, footpaths, bridleways and trails to improve access to nature, recreation, movement and leisure;
 - the protection and enhancement of key views; and
 - ensuring the creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places through the commitment to and application of high standards of quality in planning, submissions, design, construction and operation.

Settlement Boundary

- 7.2.6 One of the main aims of this assessment was to provide the evidence-based information that would be used to make informed decisions about the town's future settlement boundary, and justify conclusions about where the line should be drawn.
- 7.2.7 A settlement boundary is defined as the dividing line or boundary between areas of built / urban development (the settlement) and non-urban or rural development (the countryside). Boundaries are usually drawn around whatever is determined to be the integral 'core' of a settlement. Typically included within them are built form and land associated with existing employment areas, community facilities and services, and / or land allocated as such, and the bulk of a settlement's housing stock, including any sites identified as potentially suitable / allocated for housing (in Ledbury's case, only sites *currently* proposed for housing, because the NDP will not be allocating sites for housing, and will only show existing commitments).
- 7.2.8 In planning, land outside settlement boundaries is defined as 'open countryside', the main uses usually being agriculture / forestry, tourism and outdoor sport / recreation, although parts of gardens, orchards, paddocks and other land not normally perceived as 'countryside' may also lie beyond the boundary.

- 7.2.9 In planning terms there is a presumption in favour of built development within the settlement boundary, whereas in open countryside, development is much more tightly controlled. The purpose of the settlement boundary is to act as a distinct, robust and defensible line between these areas, determining where certain types of development may be acceptable or, where protection of land is required, for a wide variety of reasons.
- 7.2.10 Theoretically, therefore, in principle it should be acceptable to build anywhere within the settlement boundary, although of course subject to the nature and scale of what is proposed, constraints, likely effects, compliance with policy / strategy / guidance, and other matters. Within settlement boundaries, policies should define where particular development might take place, with protections afforded to design, important open spaces, amenity and other considerations.
- 7.2.11 In Ledbury's case, when considering the future settlement boundary line, is it very important to consider the line's relationship to local landscape and townscape character (especially historic), patterns, forms, qualities and so on. Where possible, the line should follow existing physical features / boundaries such as roads, watercourses and historic field boundaries (the latter may ultimately need restoring / reinforcing). If this is not possible, new, locally-appropriate and robust settlement boundary line features should be created where necessary.
- 7.2.12 The following factors are relevant here:
- topographical constraints (significant to the east and north, lesser extent to west and south);
 - hydrological constraints (River Leadon and flood plain);
 - need to protect key natural / cultural / visual features, factors and qualities especially the Malvern Hills AONB / its setting;
 - need to protect existing GI assets and functions, and to establish new ones.

Landscape Character and Design

- 7.2.13 The LVBA identified several factors which relate specifically to Ledbury's distinctive and in places unique character; these will be important considerations in the planning, design and delivery of new development within the parish.
- 7.2.14 Clearly, changes to a landscape's character are likely to affect views and other experiences, so many of the recommendations relating to character are relevant to visual and social amenity.
- 7.2.15 One important point to emphasise is that the difference between landscape and visual effects is often misunderstood, even by experts in the field (see Section 6.1). If not assessed separately, there is the potential for highly valuable landscapes to be damaged / lost simply because there are no places from which the development is visible. If landscape and visual effects are conflated, levels of adverse effects will be judged as being lower than they actually would be.
- 7.2.16 For this reason it is strongly recommended that the NDP emphasises that any landscape and visual assessment which is produced either to support the NDP or to accompany a planning application should follow current guidance on the subject, and in particular should clearly differentiate between the natural, cultural and visual aspects of character (baseline and effects).
- 7.2.17 Also, it must be remembered that 'landscape' *'results from the way that different components of our environment - both natural (the influences of geology, soils, climate, flora and fauna) and cultural (the historical and current impact of land use, settlement, enclosure and other human interventions) - interact together and are perceived by us. People's perceptions turn land into the concept of landscape'*⁸⁵. The various features, factors and qualities that are integral parts of landscape are shown on the diagram *Figure 1 What is Landscape?* in Section 4.2. Thus, the recommendations for individual LVBA topics set out below are also integrally part of landscape character.

⁸⁵ *Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland - Topic Paper 5: Understanding Historic Landscape Character* The Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage (2002) para. 1.11

- 7.2.18 Problems with evaluating the effects of development can arise when planning applications are made in outline, to establish whether the principle of the proposed development is acceptable. Although the main constraints may have been identified at the pre-planning stage and do not give cause for concern, matters such as access, siting, layout, engineering operations and other details including style, materials, lighting, colour and landscaping are either only illustrative or have not yet been considered in sufficient depth to be able to identify the likely effects.
- 7.2.19 Also, as noted previously, the majority of assessments accompanying outline applications are carried out at a high level, and thus fail to identify highly valuable features / factors / qualities.
- 7.2.20 Furthermore, in most studies accompanying planning applications, only 'significant' effects are considered; but as set out above, the many smaller changes which occur can accumulate to the point where they become significant. Even if a scheme is well-designed, and urbanising influences kept to a minimum, it is difficult to control what happens in private gardens where domestic paraphernalia - sheds, cars, washing lines, bins, play equipment, ornamental lawns and vegetation etc. - are likely to be highly visible.
- 7.2.21 The baseline information in this study can therefore be used to identify the potential for effects not dealt with, or not adequately covered, in a planning application, for example effects arising from night-time lighting and disturbance. It can also help to guide the community in terms of what types of environmental and other studies ought to be submitted with a planning application, and the level of assessment / nature of information required. These issues can be raised with the planning authority during the consultation period.
- 7.2.22 An assessment of the various cumulative environmental effects of the development of several sites within a certain area should also be part of the studies accompanying the application if relevant. The extent of the study area should be agreed with relevant bodies beforehand, and should include the possibility of effects at a landscape-scale, for example pollution within whole water catchment areas, increase in traffic and associated effects on wider highways networks, and night-time light pollution especially where it could affect Dark Sky Areas (see lighting recommendations below). This is especially important if, in-combination, the threshold for EIA is likely to be breached by the accumulation of a number of separate developments. It is the LPA's responsibility to ensure that cumulative effects assessments are carried out.
- 7.2.23 Many parts of the study area are highly vulnerable to certain forms of change, so some forms of development are likely to exacerbate declining situations, increasing the rate at which erosion and loss occur. However, it is also possible for this to act as a catalyst for environmental enhancement, for example the restoration / creation of new GI assets and links and the introduction of better management practices, especially if made a prerequisite of new schemes. The redevelopment of some poor quality brownfield sites can also potentially result in improvements to landscape / townscape character.
- 7.2.24 It must be remembered that even small-scale changes in land use can cause erosion and loss of features / landcover, and that such effects can accumulate and spread over a wide area. Horsiculture is a good example, as noted in the baseline section. The Malvern Hills AONB Unit has produced guidance on horse-keeping in the landscape⁸⁶ which explains how to minimise adverse effects and manage land to improve health and biodiversity.
- 7.2.25 When planning applications are submitted, all these and other matters need to be covered in detail, especially how the long-term (ideally, 25 years +) management of the landscape will be secured, and who will be responsible for it. As noted above, this is especially important where existing and / or proposed vegetation is being relied on to screen and mitigate adverse landscape effects, and / or to protect and enhance biodiversity, since there is no certainty that vegetation will achieve the required objectives, and it cannot be relied on in the long term. This must be factored into the

⁸⁶ http://www.malvernhillsaonb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Rev.Horsepolicydocument.19.07.11_000.pdf

decision-making process: if the effects without the vegetation in place would be significantly greater, a site's capacity / suitability for development could well be reduced.

- 7.2.26 Site-specific and detailed parameters / design codes for built form and landscaping should be produced wherever required, which developers would be expected to adhere to.
- 7.2.27 The issues associated with inappropriate colours and materials in particular should be emphasised in any design guidance, and better solutions proposed. Attention to detail is essential, and the LPA should be alert to the problems of the specification of materials such as synthetic slate roofs, the glare from which can be highly visible and distracting under certain light conditions. Landowners could perhaps be persuaded to change the colour of existing high-contrast pale roofs, walls and other highly visible surfaces to dark, or replace reflective materials with matte ones, during refurbishment.
- 7.2.28 Using colours which have similar tonality to the surrounding palette helps to visually integrate built form into the wider landscape. A grey / brownish render would be a better choice than white in many situations. White trims, gable ends and other features / apparatus should also be avoided where they give rise to unacceptable / uncharacteristic contrast.
- 7.2.29 Environmental Colour Assessments (ECAs)⁸⁷ are the best way of objectively determining the most appropriate colours and materials for buildings, structures and surfaces in a given landscape context. The AONB Unit has published guidance on the subject⁸⁸. ECAs should be carried out at an early stage in the planning and design process, alongside landscape, visual and other assessments, but if they are not, and are for a proposed development, they should be a condition of planning permission if granted.
- 7.2.30 Green roofs require special mention here. It is often assumed that if buildings proposed on lower-lying ground are constructed with grassed or planted flat roofs, they will be camouflaged when viewed from above.
- 7.2.31 However, firstly, even from high hills, buildings are rarely if ever seen in plan-form, they are viewed at an angle, so roofs and elevations are read together, along with surfaces. Even if the roof is planted with vegetation which is the same as that growing in the surrounding area, the mitigation will almost certainly be negated by the materials and colours used on the elevation, which are often white / pale due to the assumption that they are not going to be visible. Or, pale materials / colours are used for the hard edge / trim around the grass roof, which simply draws the eye to the angular shape in the landscape.
- 7.2.32 Secondly, architects and developers often specify sedum, because it is a cheaper solution than grass (more load-bearing construction is necessary for grass due to the depth of water-laden soil required). Also, it supposedly requires less maintenance. The problem is that sedum turns bright red in autumn (and when conditions are dry for prolonged periods), so a red angular shape becomes very apparent in what is usually a green or late-summer gold landscape. Furthermore, recent studies have concluded that grass roofs are ecologically richer and more diverse than sedum, and much better at attenuating water disposal; maintenance need not be at all onerous.
- 7.2.33 MHAONB publications such as *Guidance on the selection and use of colour in development*, *Guidance on building design*⁸⁹ and *Guidance on how development can respect landscape in views*⁹⁰ are the first point of call when matters such colour and materials are being considered, as well as location / siting / planting and so on.

⁸⁷ For further information about ECA see The Landscape Institute's technical information note at this link: <https://www.landscapeinstitute.org/technical-resource/environmental-colour-assessment/>

⁸⁸ http://www.malvernhillsaonb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/guidance_on_colour_use_screen.pdf

⁸⁹ http://www.malvernhillsaonb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/MalvernBuildingDesignGuideLoRes_001.pdf

⁹⁰ <http://www.malvernhillsaonb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/64339-MHAONB-Guidance-on-Respecting-Landscape-in-Views-v09.pdf>

- 7.2.34 Ideally, design parameters / strategies for sites / areas would be drawn up as part of the NDP process, and would be informed by existing published guidance. Important sources of information include Natural England's NCA profiles and SEOs, as well as the Malvern Hills AONB Partnership - the website has links to its publications⁹¹.
- 7.2.35 Another matter which needs to be considered is the style of new built form. It is sometimes desirable to mimic traditional / local styles in order for built form to properly integrate into its surrounding context without giving rise to adverse effects. However, styles change with the times, as is very evident in Ledbury - in fact the diversity of architectural styles is a defining characteristic. This period in the area's architectural history and evolution is being, and will continue to be, marked by contemporary buildings, which are reflecting changing fashions, aspirations, social structures and so on.
- 7.2.36 Such buildings can certainly be accommodated, but ubiquitousness must be avoided - for example, there is a tendency for modern ecohouse designs to be systematic, resulting in long, rectangular buildings; timber cladding seems to be popular throughout the UK. It is very important that local character / vernacular influence siting, layout and design, and any proposals must clearly demonstrate how this has been / would be achieved (without resorting to pastiche).

HYDROLOGY / FLOODING

- 7.2.37 The River Severn and Herefordshire studies (2009 and 2019 respectively) recommend best practice in land use and management to reduce run-off, and restore a more sustainable and natural floodplain. These measures include encouraging increased resilience to flooding in buildings, infrastructure and businesses, and ensuring that new development is steered to areas with the lowest probability of flooding.
- 7.2.38 The River Leadon and its tributaries have had a significant influence on the area's settlement pattern. The risk of flooding has been a major constraint to the development of Ledbury west of the bypass, and this should continue to influence the location of new development. Settlement in the rest of the Vale of Leadon is rural, sparsely dispersed, often with single farmsteads.
- 7.2.39 The River Leadon and its tributaries form a highly important and strategic north - south green / blue infrastructure corridor with distinct biodiversity (see Section 5.14). However, recent studies show that this wildlife corridor is under threat because the river is not meeting required water quality standards, mainly due to pollution from intensive agricultural complexes operating in the area.
- 7.2.40 There is therefore a need for continued monitoring of water quality in the Leadon, and more proactive cross-county liaison and collaboration to support mitigation measures: advice to landowners / farmers; the creation of wetlands; understanding the implications for water quality; and taking appropriate care when planning new developments.

GEOLOGY

- 7.2.41 In future, the LGeoSs located in the area (Ledbury Tunnel Quarry, Knapp Lane Quarry, and Conigree Wood - Site 1) should be better-known and enhanced to further protect both their geo- and biodiversity. To this end, HWEHT will be consulted at the Regulation 14 stage for advice on the future of these LGeoSs.

Approaches and Gateways

- 7.2.42 Each approach and gateway is different, reflecting its locality's natural, historic / cultural and social influences. The treatment and levels of quality of both vary from place to place. On the whole, they appear to be appropriate for their location and well-managed, although in some cases there is scope for improvement, whether to the overall arrangement, or to the details.

⁹¹ <http://www.ccwwdaonb.org.uk/publications/planning-related-publications/>

- 7.2.43 This is especially the case at Gateway B: Full Pitcher Roundabout. It is in a highly important and visible location at an historic gateway to the town, and the presence of a new building here has the potential to significantly alter this gateway, for better or worse. Extra care needs to be taken with any future development in the vicinity to ensure that building design is appropriate for this location, especially in terms of its immediate association and relationship with a) other built form at the roundabout / in close proximity, and b) its wider contextual landscape, in particular the neighbouring Riverside Park.
- 7.2.44 Another example is at Gateway E, which is currently not well-managed (see photo in Section 5.8). This area needs care and attention, in terms of maintenance of the decorative sign, and in future when the neighbouring viaduct site is developed for housing and employment.
- 7.2.45 In principle, the design / treatment / management of all of the approaches and gateways should reflect and respect the character of their surrounding context. This is important, since as noted in Section 5.8, such features reflect key aspects of the host community's character - how Ledbury sees itself, and is, or wants to be, seen by others. With the exception of Gateways B and E where significant change is anticipated, the overall aim should be to maintain and / or enhance the existing quality of design and maintenance of Ledbury's gateways.

Significant Vegetation

- 7.2.46 Even though we are already tree-rich, many people would like to see more trees and shrubs, especially in the town centre, and plans are underway; there's always room for more!
- 7.2.47 However, while the presence of so many trees within the town is of great benefit, it is also true that trees can outgrow their space, and many of the mature trees in some of the public areas are species that can grow to a great size. It would be beneficial to have a professional assessment / review of the trees within the town and consider where trees might be outgrowing the space and blocking too much light or even giving concerns about safety, and consider replanting with more suitable species.
- 7.2.48 This is also true of any new planting, and it would be good to ensure that not only is it 'the right tree in the right place' - especially in terms of landscape and settlement character - but that we have as wide a range of trees and shrubs as possible to provide year-round interest with flowering and fruiting, leaf and stem colour, shape and size, and certainly habitat for birds, pollinators and other wild inhabitants of the town. Resilience to future climate change and pests / diseases is also an important factor in the selection of species for the future (see below).
- 7.2.49 An interesting community project / initiative would be to carry out surveys of trees in the town and parish, noting species, approximate ages, condition, and what they contribute to amenity / character / biodiversity and so on. Any ancient / veteran / notable trees spotted could be added to the Ancient Tree Inventory if not already on it; it is extremely likely that there are many trees which are special but not in the previous categories - these could be recorded; and, if there are trees which are not covered by a TPO but are good candidates, this could be brought to the attention of LTC's tree warden / the LPA for further consideration.
- 7.2.50 For the purpose of this assessment, LTC's tree warden made enquiries to HC about the existence of a publicly-accessible record listing the location and descriptions of all trees covered by TPOs. HC's Ecology and Arboricultural Officer explained that there is no comprehensive list available, and any details held on individual TPO trees would have to be individually requested and researched, and a GDPR redacted copy produced. This can be done, but obviously would be very time-consuming for all concerned, and if there were more than one, they would need to charge.
- 7.2.51 Therefore, the only realistic way of LTC / others compiling information on TPO trees in the parish is to use HC's online map⁹², which gives the location of the tree / trees and in some but not all cases,

⁹² <https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/elections-1/administrative-map>

the species and perhaps some very brief description. LTC's tree warden has started off this process and has transcribed what she can find from the map, but has not had the time to visit all the trees to enlarge upon it. This is a project in itself, and maybe one to undertake in the future. In the meantime, perhaps the tree warden could write up the list as far as it goes with a view to such a project at a later date, or for people to investigate themselves if they are interested.

- 7.2.52 As noted in Section 5.9, some of Ledbury's trees are reaching the ends of their useful lives. Factors include old age, damage, pests and diseases. There is also evidence of ongoing field boundary hedgerow removal. In most areas, the loss of tree / hedgerow cover results in adverse changes to both local and wider landscape character, and views / visual amenity.
- 7.2.53 A striking example of how changes to the presence / absence of trees can affect character and views is the loss of British native elm trees to Dutch elm disease, which began its devastating spread in the 1970s. In Herefordshire, elm was widely planted throughout the medieval period and through to the 20th century, mainly in hedgerows but allowed to escape. The tree's distinctive scalloped outline was a highly important local landscape characteristic, but few remember that now.
- 7.2.54 The picture by J Barralet *Landscape with Ledbury Church Spire* in Section 5.13 shows elms in the mid-ground (interestingly, there is a fine mature elm tree growing outside the Bluebell pub in Barnard's green, but it is an ornamental variety).
- 7.2.55 Old photographs and postcards illustrate how the character and visual amenity of the Ledbury area has changed in the last couple of centuries, depending on the presence / absence of tree cover. One example is a view of the church bell tower drawn in the 1670s, which is now screened by a large yew tree growing in front of it (in fact, conifers in the vicinity now screen many once-fine views from several directions).
- 7.2.56 Traditional orchards in particular are in rapid decline. These are highly important and characteristic historic landscape features in the area, as well as being of significant value for their wildlife potential. Conservation of these habitats is especially important for biodiversity due to the maturity of the trees and wood decay within them. Furthermore, active management is crucial for their long-term survival. It would be an excellent project to revive or recreate one / some of these orchards in the parish as the Colwall Orchards project has done. Herefordshire's *Traditional Orchard Habitat Action Plan* is a good source of reference for this, and both HC and the Malvern Hills AONB Unit should be contacted for advice and sources of funding (developer contributions could be feasible).
- 7.2.57 Another worthwhile project, perhaps in conjunction with looking at existing and new hedges in the parish (as yet not surveyed), would be reviving the presence of damsons (and possibly other fruit trees) as hedgerow trees, with benefits for landscape character, visual amenity, and biodiversity.
- 7.2.58 More generally, there is a real need for new tree planting where significant housing development is underway or planned (this is now a national objective). Such tree planting not only helps to reduce the effects of emissions and thereby mitigate climate change, but can also help to improve the visual appearance of new developments, both residential and industrial (see for example Area Schedules 8, 9 and 14 in Appendix B).
- 7.2.59 Most importantly, there is no certainty that any of the existing vegetation will remain in place in the short-term, let alone the long-term future. Old age, deliberate (authorised / unauthorised) removal, pests, diseases, pollution and accidents can result in its decline and loss - the native trees and hedges in particular are highly vulnerable to change. There are currently concerns about the potentially devastating effects of acute oak decline and oak processionary moth, ash dieback, horse chestnut canker, the Asian longhorn beetle and *Phytophthora* amongst others.
- 7.2.60 Regarding ash dieback disease, which as noted in Section 5.9 could potentially have a significant impact on trees not just within the parish but throughout the country, the Tree Council has prepared some detailed guidance for local authorities entitled *Ash dieback: an Action Plan Toolkit* and it is to be recommended. It covers all aspects of good practice concerning the management of

ash trees relating to ash dieback disease, but, as importantly, addresses the issue of considering the future and strategies for replacing ash as an important tree in the landscape.

- 7.2.61 Forest Research's current position⁹³ is that *'there is no technical case and no purpose to retaining national measures against ash dieback. There is much more benefit to be gained from lifting the restrictions, so that tolerant ash trees can be bred, moved and planted'*.
- 7.2.62 Lists of species which are characteristic to different parts of Ledbury and resilient to climate change, disease and so on could be drawn up for future use by LTC / developers and others.
- 7.2.63 An example of a tree species which is usually considered problematic but which may in future be a deliberate and strategic replacement for ash / other native trees in future is sycamore. It is not a native tree, having been introduced to Britain in the Middle Ages from Europe, but it is now naturalised. It spreads and colonises very rapidly, to the point where it can successfully invade and dominate ancient woodlands and hedgerows at the expense of other species, thus reducing biodiversity; nor does it support as many faunal / floral species as other trees which have been present in the landscape for much longer. However, due to climate change and tree pests and diseases in native species, it may be necessary to tolerate sycamore up to a point. On the Malvern Hills, sycamore is amongst the species now growing freely on the wooded hillslopes; MHT was consulted about their opinion on this and the response was that a decision had been taken that the sycamore would be allowed to remain, although the situation would be monitored over time.
- 7.2.64 Another important point to note is, not only is it unwise to rely on vegetation to screen views, but also, if the NPPF's aim is to increase levels of quality of built form and make our environments 'beautiful', then it should not be necessary to hide a development from view because it is ugly. It is recommended that this should be the subject of a policy in a future iteration of the NDP.
- 7.2.65 As noted in Section 5.9, historic descriptions of parish and other boundaries made use of distinctive landscape features such as pollarded or otherwise recognisable trees. This suggests another potential project, which would be locating existing trees, or planting them, as boundary marker trees around the perimeter of the parish, and perhaps even revive the tradition of beating the parish bounds once a year!

Aesthetic and Perceptual Qualities

- 7.2.66 Ledbury's landscapes and settlements display a wide variety of highly-valuable aesthetic and perceptual qualities. The aim of NDP policy is to protect and enhance these qualities through the protection and enhancement of the various features and factors which contribute to the qualities, and many of the recommendations set out in this section directly relate to aesthetics and perception.
- 7.2.67 The LVBA identified the area's dark skies as a highly valuable but vulnerable aesthetic quality; recommendations for this topic are set out below.

NIGHT-TIME LIGHTING

- 7.2.68 There are several national and international sources of guidance on reducing light pollution which should be referred to and followed when planning and designing new developments. They include:
- GOV.UK at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/light-pollution>.
 - Information from the Bat Conservation Trust on artificial lighting, and Eurobats guidelines for consideration of bats in lighting projects.
 - The Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers (CIBSE) – Society of Light and Lighting (SLL) Code for Lighting.

⁹³ <https://www.forestryresearch.gov.uk/tools-and-resources/fthr/pest-and-disease-resources/ash-dieback-hymenoscyphus-fraxineus/>

- CIBSE – SLL Lighting Guide 6: The Exterior Environment.
- International Dark Sky Association <https://www.darksky.org/our-work/lighting/public-policy/policy-makers/>
- The Malvern Hills AONB Partnership’s Guidance on Lighting (see Section 5.10). This guidance is especially useful for Ledbury, since new residential, commercial and industrial developments in the local area which are not within the AONB will still be within its setting.

7.2.69 The updated Ledbury NDP should include appropriate up-to-date guidelines for the design, construction and installation of domestic, commercial and industrial lighting to protect the environment and promote Ledbury as a Dark Sky town.

7.2.70 The most important requirements for ongoing and new / proposed developments include the following guidelines, which should ideally be reflected in a policy in the revised NDP:

- i) All outside lighting should be minimised to ensure that no unnecessary lighting is installed.
- ii) Lighting should be directed downwards and shielded / hooded to avoid sideways propagation.
- iii) There should be no light trespass in any lighting design or installation so that no light is propagated to adjacent properties.
- iv) Lights should be turned off when not needed, and lighting should not be switched on continuously; it should be automatic and / or timed or operated by motion sensors.
- v) Lighting intensity should be at the minimum required for the situation, avoiding glare.
- vi) LED lighting is energy-efficient, but only warm LEDs (<3000K) should be used.
- vii) Blue light emission should be avoided as it is scattered much more than red / yellow light.
- viii) All commercial lighting scheme proposals should be professionally assessed for minimum lighting levels, propagation directionality, scatter and light trespass.
- ix) All lighting installations should be assessed when installed, and lighting levels measured.

7.2.71 The adverse effects of lighting can and should be mitigated by good design. The most effective measures include:

- i) reducing the area of glazing;
- ii) creating deep window recesses;
- iii) forming large external overhangs; and
- iv) installing / using louvres.

7.2.72 Despite occasional requests from LPAs for it to be specified in buildings, as far as we have been able to ascertain, (lighting expert Chris Baddiley was consulted about the matter), there are no glazing products available that reduce night-time light transmission, only those which reduce day-time glare (another important consideration in planning and design).

7.2.73 As noted in Section 5.10, light spillage can be highly disruptive to fauna such as bats and birds. An example of measures recommended by ecologists to avoid / minimise levels of adverse lighting effects arising from a single dwelling house in a semi-rural area is given below, as all these measures are relevant to other forms of development, and would also reduce levels of landscape and visual effects:

- *Any lighting for the proposed development will conform to Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) guidelines. The lighting will be sympathetic to the needs of roosting, foraging and commuting bats and other wildlife such as badgers. Barbastelle bat, lesser horseshoe bat and brown long-eared bat are particularly light averse.*

- *The hedgerows, scrub and trees on the site boundaries will be left in complete darkness. This will also ensure that adjacent habitats are also not illuminated, e.g. the woodland to the east. However, if lighting is required for security only shrouded down lights will be used or lights will be positioned close to the ground on posts or bollards and directed downwards. The lights will be activated by a time sensor with a low movement sensitivity, so as not to be triggered by wildlife.*
- *The following measures are recommended:*
 - a) *All external lighting to be on timer switches, so lights go off after 'X' seconds.*
 - b) *There will be no lighting near the boundary hedgerows, trees and shrubs as these are especially important for bat commuting/foraging.*
 - c) *Use high quality infra-red lighting where security cameras are to be installed rather than actual lighting.*
 - d) *As low a Lux level as possible.*
 - e) *All lighting on the proposed development site will support the Dark Skies initiative (DEFRA/NPPF Guidance 2013). It will be essential that lighting will not illuminate any adjacent habitats (e.g. woodland in the SSSI), retained and newly planted trees, shrubs and hedgerows on the site and new bat roosting habitat on the site (e.g. bat voids on the new house and bat boxes in the trees).*
 - f) *A full and detailed lighting strategy will be produced which is sensitive to wildlife. This will ensure that ecologically sensitive areas are not illuminated.*

7.2.74 New legislation amending the NPPF will probably be necessary in order to protect England's dark skies and night-time landscapes. The All-Party Parliamentary Group for Dark Skies has produced a policy plan⁹⁴ which can deliver Dark Skies for future generations, a summary of which is produced below:

- Strengthen the NPPF: for the first time ever, make extensive specific reference to the control of obtrusive light in the framework.
- Expand the scope of the planning permission process: introduce regulations for exterior lighting that are similar to those which currently cover advertisements.
- Strengthen Statutory Nuisance Provisions: remove exemptions to give local authorities a more effective method of preventing nuisance lighting.
- Create a Commission for Dark Skies and councils to enforce regulations.
- Set standards for the brightness and colour temperature of lighting: establish legal limits to the amount of blue light that luminaires can have in their spectrum and encourage manufacturers, distributors and installers of lighting to adopt best practice in this area.
- Set standards for the direction and density of lighting: introduce a legal requirement that all lighting units are sold and distributed with instructions for the control of obtrusive light and dark skies-friendly mounting instructions and issue penalties for non-compliance.
- Create 'best practice' use for lighting: design a national programme of best practice 'Dark Sky Hours' in which categories of lighting can be either dimmed or turned off completely in consultation with the community, lighting professionals and local police.
- Create incentives for dark sky preservation and educate about the effects of light pollution as part of wider climate change awareness.
- Appoint a Minister for Dark Skies with the remit to control and prevent light pollution, as well as oversight of planning and environmental policies that concern dark skies.

⁹⁴ <https://appgdarksbies.co.uk/policy-plan>

- Create a 'Dark Sky Towns & Cities' initiative: give local government the power to go further to reduce light pollution by creating a voluntary 'Dark Sky Town/City'.

Heritage

- 7.2.75 Local interest in Ledbury's history and cultural heritage appears to have grown significantly in the last couple of years. This is almost certainly due not only to periods of isolation / boredom during lock-downs, but also the community's input into a) the LVBA process, and b) the public inquiry for the viaduct site.
- 7.2.76 The studies carried out for both of these purposes revealed enormous amounts of not just very interesting, but also highly significant information about the town and parish's past, the people who lived here, and why and how Ledbury is how it is today. Now, the high quality, value and beauty of the features and factors which make Ledbury's character and visual amenity so unique and distinctive - individually and in-combination - are better understood and appreciated, and there is a greater desire than ever before to ensure their long-term protection for the benefit of successive generations.
- 7.2.77 Importantly, whilst a good proportion of the large number of heritage assets in the town and surrounding countryside are nationally-designated and / or listed in the HER, many are not. This is no doubt in part due to them not having previously been identified, and / or their significance not recognised.
- 7.2.78 Given the importance of heritage not only to Ledbury and its people's sense of place but also to the local economy, this is a good time to celebrate, protect and enhance the heritage assets which are of high local value as well.
- 7.2.79 There are some unlisted buildings in the town centre which make highly important contributions to character, visual amenity and our understanding of the past, which would benefit from some form of protection, for example inclusion on a local if not national list:
- i. The Butcher Row House in Church Lane.
 - ii. Another part-survival of a Butcher Row house in Skippe Alley.
- 7.2.80 It is possible that some historic buildings / structures are not listed because most listings in the town were made in the 1950s, long before the features were recognised as being important to the town's history; also, many were only renovated in / after the 1970s.
- 7.2.81 Within the AONB, Ledbury Park (also New House Park / Ledbury Deer Park) is one of the parish's most notable designed landscapes, and is of 13th century origin (possibly c. 1232). It currently comprises a green area of parkland plus a few fields. A site visit to Ledbury Park a quarter of a century ago revealed indications of historic agricultural activity and the remains of parkland features including a 'delicate' stone wall, which may no longer be standing. A further visit should be made to record of what now remains. Much of the woodland is coniferous plantation, which is of much lower quality and value than the other native broadleaved and ancient woodlands in the vicinity.
- 7.2.82 Other ways in which the community could celebrate and protect their heritage include:
- i) carrying out further research projects - perhaps in collaboration with local schools and interest groups;
 - ii) creating and publicising heritage trails around the town and parish; and
 - iii) designing / installing interpretation boards / other features along routeways, to explain / highlight key historic features.

- 7.2.83 Attempts to obtain HC's HLC data have proved unsuccessful so far, so the information has not been included or factored in to the LVBA. If it does become available in future, it should be incorporated into the LVBA / other assessment.

Biodiversity

- 7.2.84 All species of flora and fauna need a habitat that provides food, water and shelter. Obviously, some habitats are not going to be available to or suitable for certain species because of factors which may include land use, disturbance, and underlying geology - for example, as far as we have been able to ascertain, no adders have been recorded in the Ledbury area but are common on the Malvern Hills as they prefer habitats associated with acidic soils; lime-loving plants are scarce in Ledbury too.
- 7.2.85 Inevitably, erosion and loss of habitats such as woodlands, hedgerows, orchards, ponds and unimproved grasslands have resulted in the essential connectivity between them being broken in places. These are also highly valuable elements and features in the landscape; their erosion and loss lead to adverse effects on landscape character and visual amenity. However, many of these features and habitats could easily be restored (see also recommendations under Significant Vegetation heading above).
- 7.2.86 There are many farms in the parish, including a few near to / almost subsumed by the outskirts of the town, and over 4500 houses, the majority with gardens: these are important wildlife habitats, stepping stones and corridors, and where meaningful and valuable improvements in habitat can be made.
- 7.2.87 In fact, the ongoing widespread decline in environmental health and biodiversity generally has resulted in the UK's gardens becoming a highly valuable resource and refuge for numerous plant and animal species, some of which are at risk of extinction. The diversity of habitats and the densely-layered planting often found in gardens mimic what happens naturally in the wild, so, when resources in the wild dry up, wildlife can find succour in gardens. Complexity is the key to success.
- 7.2.88 What has become evident in recent years is that interacting with nature significantly benefits our mental and physical health and well-being, and gardening for / with wildlife is a great way of realising these benefits. This became clear to many people during the C-19 pandemic, resulting in more interest in what exists / happens in one's own back-yard, and a much deeper understanding of what is valuable and why.
- 7.2.89 Having said that, one cannot compare the species-richness of domestic gardens with that of ancient woodlands or extensive wetlands, for example. The biodiversity of gardens compares well with farmland (which covers some 70 per cent of the entire country) simply because where intensively-cultivated / not well-managed, the latter is usually species-poor and of low abundance.
- 7.2.90 The matters of greatest importance and most relevance, especially for gardeners and farmers, are these:

AVOID PESTICIDES, INSECTICIDES AND TOXIC CHEMICALS

- The food chains for so many species depend upon the small invertebrates that will flourish if allowed.
- Organically-produced fruit and veg are so much better for human and environmental health. Clean soil, water and air are prerequisites for survival.

PROVIDE WATER

- Use any size and design of container that will hold water - kept clean it will attract a whole range of species.

- Safety is always a factor to consider, but ideally, still ponds / pools should be deep in the middle with shallow sides / beaches / means of escape / islands of refuge.
- Aquatic / semi-aquatic / marginal plants and oxygenators should be selected on the basis of the amount of space available, the nature of the site and surrounding area, the nature of the feature and future management / maintenance.
- A wide variety of habitats should be allowed to establish. Even small pools of water soon attract and provide a haven for frogs, newts, dragonflies and damselflies.
- Natural water courses should be left open and not closed / culverted.
- The River Leadon is a valuable source for the various species around the Riverside Park and is home to otters, but levels of water quality are currently a grave concern (see hydrology).

PROVIDE FOOD

- Install / hang bird feeders in the garden to supply food in the winter months (and for year-round entertainment!).
- To gardeners, a good compost heap is worth its weight in gold, and is an excellent habitat for both micro- and macro species - hedgehogs will love helping themselves to the worms.
- Flowers that have seed heads will attract goldfinches and bluetits. Butterflies, bees and other insects will love the flowers also. Shrubs with fruit / berries will serve the larger birds like blackbirds and thrushes.

PROVIDE SHELTER

- Hedges are highly valuable ecological features, being the preferred habitat for so many species because of the food they offer, the shelter they provide from rain, snow and wind, and the protection they give from predators.
- Older hedges are almost always more biodiverse than recently-planted ones - hedge-bottom flora can be as important a habitat as the plants themselves. Try to interconnect hedgelines, new and old, as they are vital wildlife corridors.
- Choose locally-characteristic hedging plants (native in most rural areas / on farms unless in gardens / historic parkland, for example, ornamentals usually appropriate in urban gardens) that flower in spring and develop berries for winter fodder, and evergreens / those which retain their leaves during the winter months such as holly, privet and hornbeam (beech is less characteristic in these landscapes).
- Purpose-made shelters such as hedgehog houses and dormouse, bat and bird boxes will also provide homes for some of our native creatures. Refugia for reptiles / amphibians can be created by leaving a pile of clean rubble topped with soil and / or a piece of corrugated tin / old carpet in a garden corner.
- Leave lawns long, mowing paths through them if needs be - you may be amazed and delighted by the variety of flora and fauna which suddenly appear!
- Trees make a great habitat for many species and provide food, shelter and roosting sites for bats, the older the better. It is also good to leave deadwood standing, felled and / or stacked in log piles, which helps insects, fungi and lichen to develop. Even piles of small sticks left to rot are ideal.

7.2.91 Planning applications for future development should normally include an ecological survey in accordance with best practice (esp. BS 42020:2013 Biodiversity: Code of practice for planning and development or later version). However, such surveys are also useful at earlier stages, as they can be used to determine levels of ecological sensitivity / capacity. Importantly, ecology surveys should consider connectivity, and the potential for remedying indirect adverse effects on the wider

landscape and well as on the area / site in question.

- 7.2.92 Another recommendation is therefore to carry out ecological surveys of areas which are currently undesignated / unprotected, particularly the River Leadon and areas in public ownership, including Dog Hill Wood, the Town Trail and the Riverside Walk and the larger public green spaces. Also, LSCA Area 8, which comprises a narrow belt of grassland between the southern edge of the town and Leadon Way. This is a very important and effective east - west green corridor, of value to wildlife, loosely linking Conigree Wood to the River Leadon / Town Trail (although the link has been compromised by the building of the care facility opposite the entrance to Hazle Close). It also acts as a noise buffer between the Ledbury by-pass and the Deer Park estate. The wooded areas would benefit from strengthening to improve habitat and connectivity, particularly at the western end.
- 7.2.93 Improvements to these and other areas could be made easily through sensitive management.
- 7.2.94 Currently, small pockets of land within the town are being managed for wildlife by Ledbury Naturalists. These could be extended, particularly to the large housing estates at Deer Park and New Mills, which both have a number of green spaces.

NATURE RECOVERY NETWORK STRATEGY / BIODIVERSITY NET GAINS

- 7.2.95 The Environment Bill 2019 requires HC to prepare a Nature Recovery Strategy. This is partly to identify how biodiversity net gain will be delivered on development sites, which will be a requirement in the future. DEFRA and Natural England are proposing the use of a Biodiversity Metric which will measure the biodiversity value of a site (in terms of distinctiveness, condition, strategic significance and habitat connectivity), both before it is developed and after development with mitigation measures in place.
- 7.2.96 Herefordshire is expected to be the defined Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) area, with HC being the 'responsible authority' which should prepare it. It is unclear what the LNRS will entail and there is no indication of what funding will be available for preparing these. The link between the local plan and biodiversity net gain (part of the new Environment Act requiring developers to achieve net gains) will need to be considered carefully. The approach used is expected to be collaborative, and local communities are likely to be asked to contribute to the strategies. LTC and other bodies / stakeholders will need to keep abreast of developments and consider what strategies will apply within the Ledbury area.

ROAD VERGES, HEDGES AND LOCAL GREEN SPACES

- 7.2.97 Road verges can also make important contributions to biodiversity (in particular when associated with hedge-bottoms).
- 7.2.98 Here, it is worth mentioning the growing interest in managing road verges for wildlife. For example, there is an initiative in the county led by our local voluntary group Verging On Wild (VOW) to locate and manage all the verges with existing special flora. The wider aim is to encourage HC to develop and adopt a general verges management policy that maximises the flowering potential of all road verges in the county (Worcestershire has designated Roadside Verge Nature Reserves (RVNRs)).
- 7.2.99 In 2021, following the recommendations of national champions for native wildflowers Plantlife, VOW will be carrying out surveys of verges in the parish and recruiting local volunteers to help with surveying and managing any special verges we find, or wish to improve.
- 7.2.100 These initiatives could potentially form the basis of an NDP policy, the aim of which would be to ensure that future development does not result in loss of or damage to high-value verges, and if it does, that any damage is made good and loss is appropriately compensated for. New development should also include species-rich verges wherever possible, using locally-appropriate / characteristic and locally-sourced species mixtures.

- 7.2.101 Likewise, there are plans to include hedges in this initiative, but this is not yet underway.
- 7.2.102 A recommendation would be to encourage local organisations (including Plantlife, Herefordshire Wildlife Trust (HWT), LTC and HC) to work together to survey and identify important hedges and verges in the neighbourhood with a view to making recommendations about protection, enhancement and wider connectivity.
- 7.2.103 Green spaces which are identified as being special to the community, and have been so for a long time (have longevity), and which cannot be covered by other forms of protection such as playing fields, amenity open space, play areas, should be considered for designation as LGSs (see public and social amenity below).

NATIONAL POLLINATOR STRATEGY

- 7.2.104 'B-lines' is an initiative by the national charity Buglife⁹⁵, which aims to create a network of unbroken pathways of flower-rich habitats for pollinators throughout the UK. This will be achieved by creating new habitats that will link existing but isolated important sites.

Public and Social Amenity

- 7.2.105 As explained previously, HC's Core Strategy requires Ledbury to accommodate a certain amount of growth (a minimum of 800 new houses during the plan period). However, already, large numbers of houses have been, are currently being, and / or have permission to be built. The majority of the sites are at the ever-increasing periphery of the town, mainly to the north and south. Within a decade, at least 1,200 new houses will have been constructed here. This represents an unprecedented 20% increase in residential households over what is in reality a very short period of time.
- 7.2.106 This revision of the NDP, alongside the policies of the Core Strategy, aims to achieve a balance between accommodating growth, and protecting Ledbury's natural, cultural and visual assets (which are what make Ledbury such an attractive place in which to live in the first place).
- 7.2.107 Also, this revision of the NDP aims to help the town accommodate the growth in the services, facilities and amenities required as a direct result of growth in housing. This will in the main part be through a) the provision of more employment land and new community infrastructure; b) protecting, preserving and enhancing existing sports and outdoor recreation / play areas and green spaces; and c) creating much-needed new ones.
- 7.2.108 The Public and Social Amenity section (5.15) of the LVBA identifies opportunities for increasing green space, leading to these recommendations for new and improved amenities.

SPORT AND ACTIVITY

- 7.2.109 There are two sport and activity recommendations – one for the provision of a modern and combined senior and junior football facility on land lying between the Little Marcle and Ross roads, the other for play areas.
- 7.2.110 As set out in Section 5.15, in terms of sports provision / facilities, Ledbury is recognised as having a dire shortage of football club grounds, despite there being two very active and successful clubs in the town. The long-established adult team Ledbury Town Football Club resides on a very old site within the existing built-up area with antiquated facilities, and is owned by a property company keen to develop the site for housing, but with an obligation to fund like-for-like facilities on a new site. The junior Swifts club currently shares increasingly-stretched facilities with the Rugby Club.
- 7.2.111 The recommendations for resolving these and other associated sports-related issues are subject to the findings of the LVSA which will have been completed before adoption of the revised NDP.

⁹⁵ <https://www.buglife.org.uk/our-work/b-lines/>

However, preliminary studies have indicated that the area south of the Little Marcle Road and the UBL factory, north of the Ross Road and west of the rugby club, is likely to have the landscape and visual capacity to accommodate the types and scales of sporting facilities which are required (and during public consultation, a large majority said they would support such a proposal).

- 7.2.112 In the event that the land is found to have sufficient capacity, it is recommended that plans and negotiations to provide a new combined football facility are brought to an early conclusion as quickly as possible. The land area and location coordinates should be agreed with the landowner, the value formally appraised, feasibility / viability, environmental and other assessments carried out, landscape, GI and other strategies produced, consultation undertaken, and a masterplan drawn up.
- 7.2.113 However, it is crucial that any proposals for sports use are considered within the context of proposals for development on land lying north west of the sports area, i.e. west and south of UBL, on the south side of Little Marcle Road. As noted previously, HC's Core Strategy identifies c. 12ha of land between the Little Marcle and Ross roads as '*an area in which new employment uses will be supported*'. The area's boundaries are not defined in the Strategy, it is simply shown as an oval-shaped zone on a plan (the plan was included in the last version of the NDP). Therefore, as well as employment use, it was agreed with LTC and HC that the LVSA for this area would consider its landscape and visual capacity to accommodate associated / combined employment / commercial uses, and perhaps educational as well, such as a 'local' university.
- 7.2.114 In fact, it is crucial that proposals for any employment, sports and / or other uses are subject to comprehensive environmental assessments, as it is very important to ensure that development only takes place in the least sensitive areas, since levels of sensitivity / capacity to specified forms of change can vary considerably across relatively small areas.
- 7.2.115 All new development must adhere to Ledbury's future GI strategy, the aim of which is to establish a healthy green multi-functional GI zone around the periphery of the town (see below, and Figure/s 10A and 10B).
- 7.2.116 Consideration should also be given to bringing all the local sport / youth / associated interest groups (including Scouts and Sea Cadets) together in the same place, which could work very well alongside sporting, employment and commercial uses. The proposed landscape areas / GI zones would form a common resource for all participants, so long as they were used and managed sensitively (involvement in the design and management of such spaces by those who use them invokes interest and engenders a greater sense of responsibility).
- 7.2.117 Regarding play areas, the Open Space report recommended a review of the current situation. In order to bring about a better balance of provision across the town for different age groups, it is recommended that this is now conducted, taking into account the feedback on the agreed need from the public consultation exercises, and carrying out LVSA's as and when considered necessary (to establish whether there are any high-value features / factors that could potentially be adversely affected and / or could offer opportunities for the areas' design / use).
- 7.2.118 The review should include identifying ways of encouraging wider use of the play area facilities by overcoming the main barriers to use of play provision, these mainly being dog-fouling, vandalism, and people's perception of not feeling safe when using the sites.
- 7.2.119 It should include recommendations for improved security of play areas, such as through the introduction of CCTV or staff presence and expanding signage on all sites with site details and contact numbers. In addition, the play areas should be designed and maintained as part of Ledbury's wider multi-functional GI network, maintaining existing and / or creating new links (for people and wildlife) to and from this wherever possible. Areas specifically for dogs should also be considered.

ACTIVE TRAVEL

7.2.120 The studies carried out for this topic have resulted in several recommendations for improvements to / reinstatement of existing public footpaths, and the creation of new public (or permissive) footpaths, cycleways and bridleways. The recommendations are as follows (some are shown on Figures 10A and 10B - Green Infrastructure):

- i) Large new housing estates are being / will soon be established north and south of the town, thus the needs of the new communities' recreational needs will extend well beyond the estates' boundaries.
- ii) As noted previously, the aim of Ledbury's future GI strategy is to establish a publicly-accessible peripheral green multi-functional GI zone around the town. Figures 10A and 10B show how this could be achieved, the studies having identified gaps in the existing PRoW network that could potentially be joined up.
- iii) An essential element in the proposed active travel plans and GI strategies for both town and parish is the early implementation of the footpath and cycleway along the future towpath line of the to-be-reinstated Herefordshire and Gloucestershire canal.
- iv) Footpaths from / to the proposed new viaduct development site north of the town should be north / south into and out of the town, linking to ZB18 across to the Hereford Road and LR11. LR11 should be re-routed to follow the path of the Riverside Park and continue across the Hereford Road roundabout and through the viaduct (see also LR11 below, and ZB18 under cycling below).
- v) Currently, pedestrian / cycle access between the appeal site and the town is problematic to say the least - there are no public footpaths or cycleways on / adjacent to the viaduct site, and the main line railway is a physical barrier. However, the proposals for the development of the viaduct site include new footpaths / cycleways within the site, with new links being created between the site and the town centre via new and existing ones (see planning application drawing no 03468-A-15-P1 by PJA, dated 17.12.18).
- vi) Two new combined footpaths / cycleways are proposed to run from the site, crossing under the railway, and joining at Ballard Close. From there, the route would cross the Hereford Road to the south (a new controlled crossing would be provided), running along a section of public footpath LB18 (to be widened, surfaced and lit, but see below) to join the Town Trail.
- vii) This link is not only a policy requirement - promoted to encourage use of modes of travel other than the private motor vehicle - it is also necessary, as it would ensure that the junction at Hereford Road / Bromyard Road does not exceed capacity when the viaduct site is operational. It is assumed that this proposal has been / will be secured as a condition of the recently-granted planning permission.
- viii) The Town Trail is a highly-valuable, multi-functional GI resource, being a semi-natural / 'rural' corridor winding through the centre of the busy town but feeling distinctly separate from it. As well as having high wildlife value, the Town Trail is a very important amenity resource, with access for all non-motorised users including e-bikes and mobility scooters (but not horse-riders). However, as noted in Section 5.15, years of surface erosion and weed encroachment have rendered the path narrow and unusable for some, and this now requires urgent attention (maintenance of the Trail was a condition of Objective 5b part-funding by the EU).
- ix) The Town Trail bridge over Orchard Lane is very narrow, and requires widening or replacement in order to make the Trail accessible to all active travel user groups. This is also proposed as part of the viaduct site development, the mechanism being the Section 106 'sustainable transport' financial contributions referred to in the Draft Heads of Terms that

- was deposited with the application. It is essential that the requisite Planning Obligation (unilateral or bi-lateral) is secured (and its wording carefully scrutinised).
- x) With the obstacles overcome and the 'missing links' in place, it would be possible to walk / cycle from one end of the town to the other without crossing main roads except where absolutely necessary, and in those cases, crossings could be controlled. The visually-attractive routes - many of which would be along surfaced / lit pathways - would provide direct, safe access to community facilities such as Ledbury's primary and secondary schools.
 - xi) However, it is very important that the improvements do not urbanise the Trail, or erode / destroy its special qualities. The use of lighting should be very carefully considered (especially as it could give rise to adverse effects on bats and other nocturnal protected / notable species as well as character and views - see night-time lighting recommendations above). Detailed designs for associated landscaping and structures / features / surfaces etc. should be informed by environmental assessments to ensure that the proposals a) do not give rise to adverse environmental / visual effects; b) reflect the area's sense of place / local distinctiveness; c) maximise opportunities for informal recreation, interpretation and so on; and d) maximise opportunities for biodiversity, especially linking to existing wildlife / GI corridors. Future maintenance and management should also be considered and secured.
 - xii) People living in the new housing estates south of Leadon Way will need to be able to walk / cycle north into the town centre, and west, south and east in order to gain access to healthy open spaces and recreational opportunities.
 - xiii) From the south-eastern edge of Ledbury, footpath LR7 currently crosses the by-pass below the Gloucester Road roundabout and enters a field just to the east of the Bovis / Vistry site which has planning permission. Traffic calming measures of some kind across the bypass are recommended for the well-used LR7.
 - xiv) As noted previously, LTC is negotiating with the developers to improve the currently-proposed active travel options from the Bovis / Vistry site to the wider Ledbury community, offering an option to cross council-owned land going north at the bottom of Jubilee Close and onto Biddulph Way instead of what are considered by LTC to be unacceptable proposals to go east alongside Jubilee close to join LR7 and thence onto the Gloucester Road.
 - xv) The Bovis / Vistry development includes two new footpath links from their POS (south of the new estate) to adjacent footpath LR7 - one to the east, and one to the south. This would be of benefit to the new residents, as they would have direct access to open countryside from those points; however, it appears that in order to join the footpaths, the proposed link to the south, and possibly the one to the east, would have to be over private / 3rd party land. It is not clear whether this proposal could be secured e.g. by way of conditions, or whether it is just an indicative 'aspiration'. This needs to be clarified / dealt with.
 - xvi) It is essential that LR7's integrity is maintained through the NDP, since this footpath also provides connectivity out to Donnington, across to Eastnor and up to the Malvern Hills, so it is an important footpath with very high amenity value.
 - xvii) LSCA Area 8 (see LSCA Area schedules for Public and Social Amenity in Appendix E) is a narrow but very important and effective east - west green corridor between the town's southern edge and Leadon Way. It is recommended that in future, it should be formally designated as a LGS (see below). The land is crossed by a public footpath, otherwise there is no public access, although there is evidence of regular informal recreational use in the area (mainly people walking).
 - xviii) Until recently it was conceived that a new east - west footpath through the area could be created, potentially linking to the public footpath that runs from the north side of the Full Pitcher roundabout to the town centre and also across the bypass onto the Ledbury Riverside Walk and the footpath up the Ross Road to the sports fields. However, with the building of a

new residential care building to the west of Martin's Way, this continuous connecting path concept going further west is not now possible. So alternatively, it is recommended that a green space area either side of the by-pass is preserved for a future active travel bridge to allow for a new active travel route between the Barratts and Bovis / Vistry developments to allow active travel connections east and west beyond these developments.

- xix) This will be proposed in the Enhanced Green Infrastructure policies in the revised NDP, which will provide a viable alternative way to connect down to the Dymock Road and then onto the Ross Road to allow footpath access to the sports fields, to the Ledbury Riverside Trail, and to the route of the proposed new canal towpath. Ideally, the travel bridge envisaged should be 'green' to allow terrestrial mammals to cross safely, and facilitate green connectivity.
- xx) As noted above, people living in the new housing estates south of Leadon Way could travel northwards into town using the existing footpath network - ideally improved, crossing Leadon Way via a new green bridge. And, it is understood that a new footpath link will be created between the Bovis / Vistry site to LR7, allowing people to walk south-eastwards and join the wider footpath network south west of Parkway. However, currently, there are no footpaths that connect the Barratt / Bovis / Vistry estates to the north west, west, south west or south of the town. This needs to be remedied.
- xxi) The ideal solution would be to create a network of new footpaths (and possibly cycleways) which start at the southern end of the new area of POS which will be formed between the Barratt and Bovis / Vistry sites (see Figures 10A and 10B):
 - Footpath A would run eastwards to join LR7 just south of (and linking to) the Bovis / Vistry site POS, creating a short local circular loop walk.
 - Footpath B would link LR7 / the Bovis / Vistry POS to the bridleway on the east side of the A417, which leads to Eastnor and beyond.
 - Footpath C would run southwards from the southern end of the Barratt / Bovis / Vistry POS to join LR6 south of Upper Highbridge Coppice (and new LR39 - see above).
 - Footpath D would run from the Barratt / Bovis / Vistry POS in a south-westerly direction, down the slope. It would cross the Dymock Road south of Hazel Farm, then run east to the River Leadon / restored canal. At this point, users could travel north / south along the new canal towpath, or head west along a continuation of Footpath D which would join / cross Orham Lane, then run north / north west, past the cricket pitch and across the Ross Road. From there, walkers / cyclists could easily access the existing / proposed sports / recreational areas, and could also travel northwards through the proposed peripheral green space / GI zone, either returning to town or joining the Herefordshire Trail just south of Wall Hills.
- xxii) Apart from one short section (see Footpath K below), the creation of the new footpaths A, B, C, D and F, along with the active travel route along the future canal towpath (Footpath J, also cycleway), and using the existing right-of-way network, would fulfil the aim of there being a publicly-accessible active travel route that encircled the town. The route would be within Ledbury parish, and it would run through the heart of the proposed multi-functional peripheral GI zone.
- xxiii) The creation of Footpath K would complete the peripheral loop walk. It is a short section connecting the future canal towpath route (Footpath J) to the existing public footpath which lies c. 100m east of the to-be-restored canal. Both paths are along a small watercourse (River Leadon tributary), which here delineates Ledbury's northern parish boundary - it is highly likely that the existing footpath would have continued south-westwards to the Bromyard Road.

- xxiv) Another recommendation is that south of the town, the ancient route of Mabel's Furlong should be restored and a new path created, from the southern edge of the Barratt site south-westwards to the Dymock Road (Footpath E).
- xxv) The creation of a new footpath along the parish's eastern boundary through Conigree Wood (Footpath F) would link up existing public footpaths / bridleways to the south and north, becoming part of the peripheral GI active travel route. It is likely (and old maps suggest) that footpaths ran along the parish boundaries in the past.
- xxvi) A new footpath / cycleway is also required along the A417 corridor, leading south from the Leadon Way roundabout to Parkway (Footpath H).
- xxvii) It is recommended that Green Lane - an old trackway along the eastern side of Dog Hill Wood leading from the town to Bradlow Knoll (see KVR13 in Section 6) - is designated as a PRoW (Footpath I).
- xxviii) There has long been an aspiration to reinstate an ancient footpath by extending LR6 coming out from the east onto the Dymock Road north of Highbridge Farm to skirt Highbridge Coppice and meet Orham Lane with a bridge across the River Leadon. This would increase connectivity in the area since it would connect with LR37 and GDY21 (Dymock) on the west side of the River Leadon - thus re-creating an important connecting link into north Gloucestershire and beyond, and which used to be an important route for workers coming into Ledbury. This was long championed by the late local paths historian and map-producer Barbara Davis, in whose honour the new path is proposed to be named as 'The Barbara Davis Memorial Path'.
- xxix) In 2020 Balfour Beatty issued a Definitive Map Modification Order ref M393 (see Appendix I) to add a new footpath (LR39) to the south of Highbridge Farm, going south west to enter into Donnington and become DN8 and then stop at the River Leadon. Unfortunately, this does not address the need to connect in this westerly direction into Gloucestershire, so the aspiration to do so by building a new bridge at the end of DN8 to achieve a connection to LR37 is also recommended.
- xxx) Importantly, in future, the canal will be restored along the line of the river, so LR39 would directly connect with the active travel route proposed along the canal towpath. It is not known whether the towpath would be on the west or the east side, but certainly one could return to the town that way, or, continue further.
- xxxi) Footpath ZB2 requires widening, from its western end as it crosses the Lower Road trading estate road until it joins with ZB1 at the River Leadon. It is an important part of the Herefordshire Trail, but at this point is very narrow and overgrown, passing between a hedge and a factory fence, making it impossible for use as a cycle route and difficult for walkers (ZB1 and ZB2 are currently footpaths on which it is illegal to cycle. However, most of ZB2 (i.e. east of the Lower Road industrial estate access road) is tarmacked, and the section from Barnett Close to ZB18 is designated shared-use, so could be used for cycling, and a 'missing link' could be restored - as it is, cyclists have to make a very contorted manoeuvre to reach the tarmacked section of ZB2 from the Lower Road end of the access road.)
- xxxii) ZB2 then crosses the by-pass to go over the River Leadon to connect with LR10, continuing west along the Herefordshire Trail and LR11 going north up to the Hereford Road. Provision of safe crossing / traffic calming measures for ZB2 across the by-pass at this point onto LR10 is also recommended, given its importance to the Herefordshire Trail.
- xxxiii) It would be logical and it is recommended to re-route LR11 onto the Ledbury Riverside Park (also known as the River Park, and basically in 3 sections: Riverside Walk from the Hereford Road roundabout to the Homebase roundabout; Weir Gardens from the Homebase roundabout to the Little Marcle Road, and Riverside Park from the Little Marcle Road to the

- Ross Road roundabout) and add a southern section so that it extends the full distance of the Ledbury Riverside Park. This would confer a very high amenity value onto LR11.
- xxxiv) This change and addition would have the important advantages of further preserving and protecting the Ledbury Riverside Park from development (as noted as being important in the schedules in Appendix E) and providing active travel connections to LR12 and LR8 which go respectively west and south into the land south of the Little Marcle Road, which could eventually become home to new employment and sporting facilities. This would extend active travel routes beyond the already well-used paths in both directions. The change would also link the extended LR11 to ZB6 and ZB20, providing active travel routes north west back towards the town and south east to the Ross Road roundabout.
 - xxxv) A very important and urgent recommendation, and particularly if the LR11 re-routing recommendation is implemented, but still necessary if not, is to build a cycling / mobility scooter / pushchair ramp alongside the current steep steps up the bank from the Weir Gardens onto the Little Marcle Road roundabout, which presently make it impossible for continuous access along the whole Ledbury Riverside Park route.
 - xxxvi) A further important element of this re-routing is to protect the line of footpath ZB1 as it runs south across current wasteland which is allocated for employment development in order to ensure that the connections to each end of the path remain in place (in particular where it leads into Childer Road and from there to the Lower Road town and by-pass access road).
 - xxxvii) It is further recommended that the integrity of LR35, which currently goes across the old cricket club ground which is earmarked for affordable housing development, is protected, since it is an important link between the Full Pitcher / Ross Road roundabout and the by-pass / new cycle and walk ways installed as part of the Barratts' development, and has important town access links with ZB12 and ZB11.
 - xxxviii) Although Green Lane, which marks the eastern boundary of Dog Hill Wood, is not a designated PRow, it could be incorporated into LR24 as a designated bridleway for continued connectivity.
 - xxxix) There is a good route through the northern edge of Hospital Wood which is not a designated PRow, but it would be good if it could be designated as it would connect EA1 to LR6.
 - xl) LSCA Area 9 is a triangular piece of land in a prominent position at the Full Pitcher roundabout, which, as noted previously, forms an important gateway into the town from the south and south west. It is bordered by the Dymock Road and the Leadon Way. If developed in future there should be a publicly-accessible path through it, connecting across the by-pass to LR35. The path could further extend across the Much Marcle / Dymock road, through the industrial estate and on to the future canal towpath active travel route.
 - xli) There are no public footpaths across LSCA Area 10, but an extension of LR6 to skirt Highbridge Coppice and meet Orham Lane across the other side of the River Leadon would increase connectivity in this area.
 - xlii) The above could complement the recent forming of LR39 which links to DN8, and which could also be extended into neighbouring Gloucestershire footpaths territory to connect across the river to also join with Orham Lane via LR37. The LR6 option is probably the most practical, but it is recommended that finding a route by one of these options to cross the river into Gloucestershire and beyond should be explored, since this would be an important enabler of the Core Strategy's connectivity objectives.
 - xliii) The Riverside Walk currently has no Core Strategy or other policy protection, but would certainly benefit from such. The Riverside Walk could be enhanced by a re-routing and

extension of LR11, which is currently on the west side of the River Leadon, into and along the whole length of the Walk.

- xliv) If not re-routed as suggested, LR11 could still be extended across the area west of the River Leadon, into the proposed viaduct development to the north and to the proposed Little Marcle Road employment and recreation / sporting site to the south. An extension of LR11 could also link to a proposed future allotment site.
- xlv) The currently narrow footpath and pavement which is currently inaccessible to other than the most sure-of-foot requires improvement, from the Southend in Ledbury to the centre of Parkway. It should then connect to footpaths going south and into neighbouring parishes (in line with the aims of the Local Plan), including Dymock with its historic Poets' Paths, the wider Gloucestershire countryside, and beyond. This would provide a much-needed and safe cycle and walking route between the town and the hamlet.
- xlvi) Last but not least, the provision of a long-desired safe walking / cycling route from Wellington Heath into Ledbury is a priority scheme. It was explored as a project and options were documented in a 2016 PowerPoint presentation entitled *Ledbury Town Council for Wellington Heath NDP ideas for a safe route to Ledbury 2016* (see Appendix H). The initiative is strongly supported by the Malvern Hills AONB Unit, who have consulted and been consulted about the proposal.

7.2.121 Ledbury Town Council is very aware that the definitive map of footpaths in Herefordshire is currently being drawn up, with a view to completing the final version by 1st January 2026. The background to this is summarised below, but given what is in neighbourhood planning terms a tight deadline, it is considered very important that the above and other aspirations are documented for exploration in the lifetime of the revision of the Ledbury NDP which is now being undertaken.

7.2.122 The National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 required every county council in England and Wales to survey their area and publish a Definitive Map and Statement (DMS) of PRsoW. The Definitive Map and Statement is the conclusive legal record of PRsoW in the county. This means that if a route is shown on the DMS, it is conclusive proof that that route is a PRoW which the public are entitled to use.

7.2.123 The Definitive Map shows the position and status of each PRoW, while the accompanying statement is a list describing its location. It may also include additional information on widths and whether there are any gates or stiles across a route.

7.2.124 The council has a legal duty to keep all of the PRsoW shown in the DMS open and available for the public to use. Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, councils are required to keep their DMSs under continuous review to incorporate changes made through legal orders such as diversions and modifications.

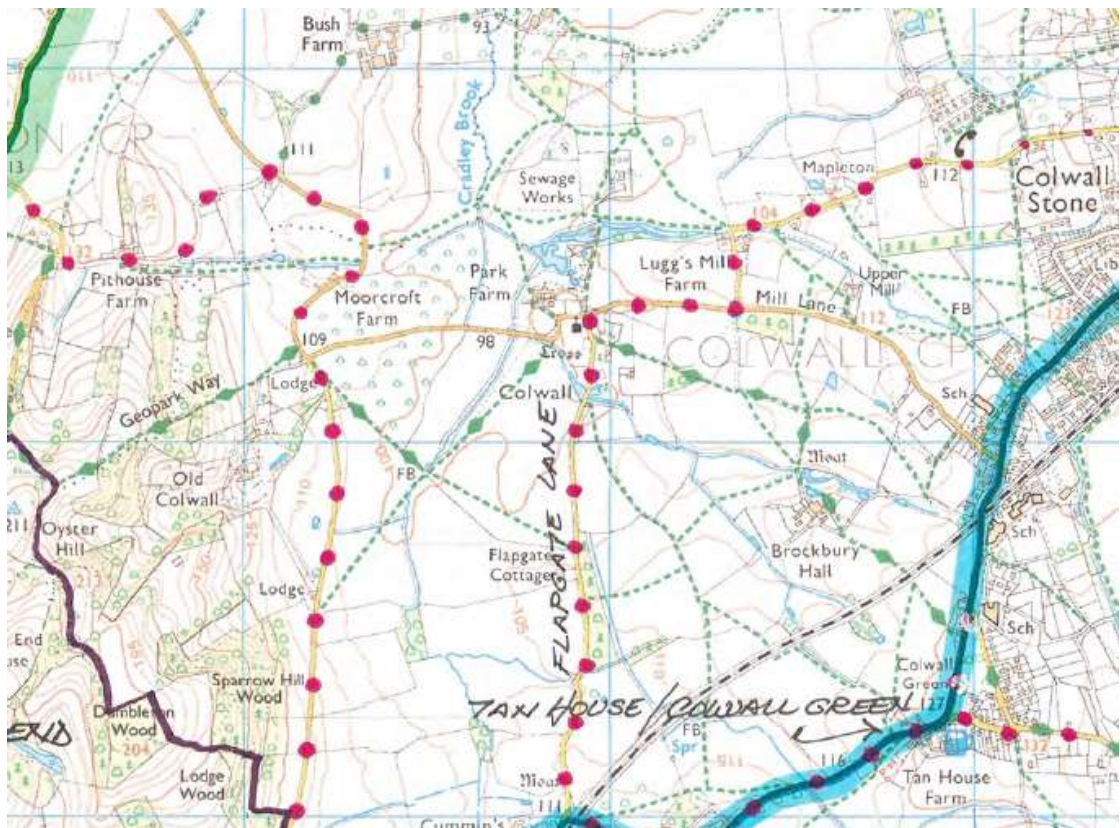
7.2.125 The information on the Definitive Map is used by Ordnance Survey to show PRsoW on their maps. However, their maps also show some non-definitive paths, and as a result, OS maps should not be used as a substitute for the legal record of PRsoW. The CROW Act 2000 introduced a provision for a cut-off date of 1st January 2026 for the recording of historic rights of way.

7.2.126 This was seen as an opportunity to bring more certainty for the public and landowners alike as to what and where the recorded PRsoW are. The cut-off date will have the effect of extinguishing certain routes not recorded on the Definitive Map by the deadline. The intention of the legislation is to prevent any claim being successfully made for the addition of a way to the Definitive Map after 1st January 2026 if the claim is solely based on documentary evidence that the rights existed before 1949.

CYCLING

- 7.2.127 As well as those mentioned above, there are several other recommendations for improving cycling facilities in Ledbury, many of these coming from people and organisations such as the Ledbury Area Cycle Forum which were consulted about and commented on the emerging NDP and draft LVBA. The recommendations, some general, some specific, others relating to walkers as well as cyclists, include the following:
- i) Improved connections for cyclists throughout the town and within the parish / onwards, including the creation of new cycle routes and links between existing routes to create a series of short- and long-distance loop-rides.
 - ii) Connections beyond the parish would require collaboration between LTC and neighbouring parishes / other stakeholders, but they would be of mutual economic and social benefit (see below), and would help achieve the aim of transport being as sustainable as possible in future.
 - iii) One example is creating predominantly off-road cycle routes (for all types of cycles and abilities) between Ledbury and the Malvern Hills. In Ledbury, the cycle routes would link directly to the cycleway along the canal towpath when created. A new canal visitor / Ledbury cycle centre could be created in advance of the canal being fully restored as well, on land near to the canal south west of the Full Pitcher roundabout.
 - iv) Another example is a short east - west connection along a lane in Colwall parish (Old Colwall, near the church of St James the Great) that would link two routes both of which join well-used routes leading to / from / through Ledbury (see plan overleaf) - the red dots are existing published cycle routes, the blue line is the boundary between Ledbury and Colwall parishes. Ledbury lies c. 5km to the south east of the lane.

Potential cycle route link (Colwall parish)



- v) An ambitious inter-parish plan to create a cycle path through the railway tunnel under the Malvern Hills could be realised. For many years, Ledbury Area Cycle Forum and others have been advocating this initiative, as it would significantly improve sustainable connectivity between the two towns, avoiding busy roads. Using the tunnel is feasible in theory, as there are in fact two tunnels: the first one was abandoned when the second one, which runs parallel to the first, was built, so the old one could potentially be opened up. Several former railway tunnels in the UK are now used for cycling, for example the Monsal Trail in Derbyshire, which is accessible to walkers, cyclists, horse-riders and wheelchair users.
- vi) New cycling connections and routes should avoid roads with heavy / fast traffic.
- vii) Dual-purpose footpath / cycleways a minimum of 3m wide should be created / provided wherever possible.
- viii) The Town Trail should be made more accessible to cyclists, in particular through widening and resurfacing (see above).
- ix) From the Barratt and Bovis / Vistry sites, new footpaths and cycleways will cross the by-pass, with new toucan crossings; these new footpaths and cycleways need to connect with those in the Deer Park estate (the latter require widening for shared use).
- x) Footpath ZB18 has been shared cycle / pedestrian use for many years. However, the northernmost part leading from Golding Way to the Hereford Road is often muddy, and there are obstructions. It leads past the new Brookfield Vets building. Planning permission for the building included upgrading this last section, but so far this has not happened. ZB18's exit to the Hereford Road is not directly opposite Ballard Close: the proposed Toucan crossing would be best placed here, with a short section of shared-use path along the wider footpath already present on the north side of the Hereford Road to Ballard Close.
- xi) New bike parks should be created in the parish for all forms of cycling, ages and abilities, from toddlers to pensioners and complete novices to experts, offering a wide variety of high-quality

experiences, from wild to urban and natural to highly technical. Ideally, they should all be linked by safe and pleasant cycling routes. Such places can be designed to benefit both recreation and nature, and can be used as educational / training resources as well.

- xii) More bridleways should be created in the parish, noting that cyclists can also ride along bridleways so benefiting both modes of active travel (some public footpaths could be re-designated as bridleways, which would also improve cycling connections).
- xiii) It is also worth noting that nowadays, it is possible to create footpaths, bridleways and cycleways across private land without any formal designation. Landowners can rent the land required for active travel corridors (and bike parks) to bodies set up for the purpose such as community-interest companies (CICs). There is a non-profit-making organisation called the Toll Rides Off-road Trust (TROT) which successfully operates a network of country-wide toll-routes for horse-riders and carriage-drivers through privately-owned, Forestry England and Woodland Trust land⁹⁶. This model could easily be extended to include walkers and cyclists.
- xiv) Interestingly, such initiatives can bring additional commercial benefits to landowners, many of whom subsequently set up associated facilities in restored barns and stables (for example cafés, markets / shops selling local produce, bicycle hire, repair workshops, and cycle- / horse-friendly accommodation).

7.2.128 Other initiatives for safe active travel options that the NDP working party has been asked to review if possible in its recreation content considerations (bearing in mind that as a revision intended to be produced in a short time scale, it may not be practical to reflect them in detail in this plan, in which case they would be recommended for fuller consideration in the next version), include:

- i) The Quiet Lanes legislation documented in The Quiet Lanes and Home Zones (England) Regulations 2006 and for which the CPRE publication *Quiet Lanes* (September 2006) is a comprehensive implementation guide.
- ii) The Slow Ways project – an ambitious project led by National Geographic Explorer to recruit an army of 500 volunteers to create the most comprehensive network of walking routes in Great Britain.
- iii) The Ramblers’ Association Lost Ways or Forgotten Paths project to identify and protect if possible, many past, but now ‘forgotten’ paths that may be lost for ever given the Definitive Map inclusion cut-off date.

7.2.129 There are several other proposals, ambitions and aspirations for active travel in Ledbury which will be explored and considered over the next few months and years with the aim of them being included in future iterations of the NDP if appropriate.

LEDBURY’S OPEN GREENSPACE NEEDS / DESIGNATED LOCAL GREEN SPACES

7.2.130 As noted previously, whether or not the Government’s currently-proposed planning reforms are adopted, this NDP revision aims to encompass local greenspace needs as a guide for later versions of the NDP to cover in more detail, but with existing and new greenspace areas, including any designated LGSs, being recognised and outlined in this version.

7.2.131 Some of the areas which are recommended for consideration as LGSs are shown on GI Figures 10A and 10B.

7.2.132 As noted previously, LSCA Area 8 is a very important and effective east - west green corridor, of value to wildlife; it also acts as a noise buffer between the Ledbury by-pass and the Deer Park estate. It is mainly privately-owned, but such is its importance to locals it is recommended that it should be better protected (particularly the western end) through an LGS designation, and if not,

⁹⁶ <https://tollrides.org.uk/about-us>

recognised and protected by another form of policy in the NDP. Community garden use has been suggested for this area. See also recommendations for biodiversity and footpaths.

- 7.2.133 There could be some habitat continuity if the green bridge across the bypass from the new developments comes to fruition; the corridor could then extend behind (to the south of) the developments and west to the Dymock road, linking to the proposed future active travel route along the canal towpath. It could also link east to the green area south of the Barratt development, which it is recommended should have LGS status, and interconnect with the various small woodlands / copses / orchards and other habitats which are scattered throughout (and characterise) the rural landscapes south of the town (see also GI recommendations below).
- 7.2.134 Other potential LGS candidates include the canal towpath, Town Trail, Riverside Park, the walled garden, churchyard, the unregistered parklands, the green copse of trees in the field through which LR7 passes, and the proposed POSs associated with the Barratt and Bovis / Vistry developments.
- 7.2.135 These and other candidate LGSs will be the subject of further consideration and consultation in the coming months (as noted previously, the criteria for LGS designation include areas / features which are '*demonstrably special to a local community*', of '*particular local significance*', and '*local in character*'⁹⁷). If the proposal for an LGS is supported, it will be recommended for inclusion in the next iteration of the neighbourhood plan.
- 7.2.136 As noted in Section 5.15, an area of scrubland which is part of LSCA Area 13 was identified by Haygrove as a possible site for a community garden, which will be further investigated.
- 7.2.137 It is critical that the POS / linear park which was proposed as part of Bloor's viaduct site application (between the Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal and River Leadon corridors - the former is the western boundary of Bloor's viaduct site) is secured by way of legal agreement (together with the pedestrian / cycle link to the Leadon Way / Hereford Road roundabout under the viaduct) - this would create a linear 'riverside park' which would link to the wider footpath / cycleway network, becoming a valuable GI asset performing several important GI functions.
- 7.2.138 It is recommended that LSCA Area 14 north west of the Bloor viaduct site is designated as an Enhanced Green Infrastructure area. It is also an ideal site for the location of an allotment area, as it would effectively be an extension of the current one just outside Ledbury Parish to the north east of the Bosbury Road, going into the area south west of the Bosbury Road which is in Ledbury Parish.
- 7.2.139 As a matter of principle, all greenspaces should be designed and managed as part of Ledbury's wider multi-functional GI network, maintaining existing and / or creating new links (for people and wildlife) to and from this wherever possible.
- 7.2.140 There is a Town Trail information board at the Bye Street / Bridge Street junction, produced by LTC, around which the ground needs repairing; the vegetation either side of the cutting from Bye Street heading west needs to be cut back regularly, especially to deter the anti-social behaviour of which there is often evidence left behind.
- 7.2.141 There is an information board and picnic area by the Riverside Park car park which could be better maintained: with enhancements - especially planting - this would make a pleasant seating / picnic area.

OTHER PUBLIC & SOCIAL AMENITY PROPOSALS

- 7.2.142 During the course of the studies, it became very clear that as the town continues to grow, and as people's needs, aspirations, values, resources and expectations change over time, more land, and a wide variety of high-quality and healthy amenities / facilities / resources / opportunities, will have to be made available, both for the local community - new and old - and those who visit.

⁹⁷ See for example <https://neighbourhoodplanning.org/wp-content/uploads/Making-local-green-space-designations-in-your-neighbourhood-plan-2021.03.15.pdf>

- 7.2.143 As noted in the introduction to this report, by 2060 it is likely that we will be living, working and travelling very differently from how we do now. Thus, over the next few years, extensive consultation and studies will be carried out and plans for Ledbury's future will be drawn up, with the aim of continually striving to improve / enhance environmental and human health, and people's well-being and quality of life.
- 7.2.144 Future iterations of the NDP will deal with matters / potential projects such as:
- i) Assessing the sport / recreational / amenity / social requirements of new communities to the north and south in particular, both within and without the housing estates, and how new communities / facilities would best integrate with / complement those which exist.
 - ii) Providing / accommodating sustainable forms of transport with a focus on cycling, and additional bus routes, especially within new developments.
 - iii) Providing additional policy-protected greenspaces and sports areas.
 - iv) Improving platform access at the railway station, and exploring the possibility of moving the existing industrial units to new employment land west of the town and creating a new car park there instead (some recreational commercial use could be appropriate as well). Also, creating new footpath connections from the south side of the station / new car park to the AONB, Open Access land, and Wellington Heath (Footpath L on GI Figures 10A and 10B).

Green Infrastructure

- 7.2.145 The aspiration for GI in Ledbury parish is to build on and augment HC's GI strategy, in particular, by identifying key gaps in the parish's GI network / provision, especially the areas / assets / functions which are subject to additional pressures due to factors such as climate change and pollution (for example the river catchment).
- 7.2.146 The network will serve the whole parish, and ideally will be unfragmented. It will also seamlessly interconnect with GI in neighbouring parishes, the three counties of Herefordshire, Worcestershire and Gloucestershire, and beyond.
- 7.2.147 The main objective of Ledbury's GI strategy is to create a publicly-accessible GI zone around the periphery of the town, with robust connections to both the wider and inner (town centre) GI networks. The extent of the peripheral GI zone is shown on Figures 10A and 10B: this was established through analysis of the information gathered during the LVBA and LVSA studies, and public consultation.
- 7.2.148 Ideally, NDP policy would be that any new development proposed within the peripheral GI zone would only be allowed if it a) was in accordance with the GI strategy, and b) demonstrably and quantifiably significantly benefited both nature and recreation.
- 7.2.149 Figures 10A and 10B also show the existing footpaths and some of the connections that would be required in order to achieve the new links described in the recommendations for active travel above.
- 7.2.150 Recommendations for specific enhancement to the GI network and GI functions include the following:

CREATING CONNECTIVITY

- 7.2.151 A policy should be included in the NDP supporting measures and a plan to identify and improve the connectivity and capacity of local GI. This should be used to influence the revision to Herefordshire's Core Strategy.
- 7.2.152 The fields to the south of the town, which now border the new housing development of Hawk Rise and the site being developed by Bovis / Vistry Homes, are a highly important and valuable GI link between the hills to the east and the River Leadon to the west. This area provides many important

GI benefits, including contribution to landscape character, the setting of the AONB, the setting of the town, social and visual amenity, key wildlife habitats and corridors, and good biodiversity. However, the features and assets need to be protected, and some improvement / enhancement is required.

- 7.2.153 The fields to the west of the town provide similar important GI benefits, and would also benefit from improvement / enhancement. As noted previously, they are especially important in terms of their function as part of the setting of Wall Hills Camp scheduled monument.
- 7.2.154 North and east of the town, interconnectivity between the numerous high-value landscapes and habitats, and connectivity between these and the town and wider landscapes / habitats, could be significantly improved, especially within the peripheral GI zone.
- 7.2.155 The above have been factored in to the GI strategy.

GREEN GAPS

- 7.2.156 The settlements of Ledbury, Wellington Heath to the north, and Parkway to the east are separated by good quality rural open countryside. Wellington Heath parish's adopted NDP has a policy to protect the gap in order to maintain the rural character of the area. This is particularly because a large area of land north of Ledbury and close to Wellington Heath (the viaduct site) will soon be intensively developed for housing and employment use. The area of Ledbury closest to Parkway is also subject to development pressure: this small settlement should be protected from coalescing with Ledbury by creating a policy-protected green gap here. The gap would coincide with the peripheral GI zone.

NEW DEVELOPMENT

- 7.2.157 New development can be an opportunity to enhance GI, particularly through creating better public access and connectivity. New developments should be required to create a good GI infrastructure within the site and ensure it connects well to existing GI beyond, in accordance with the strategy and other relevant policy and guidance. Developer contributions could be used to enhance GI within the town to help achieve this.

WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

- 7.2.158 Active water management is required at points north of the town (beyond the viaduct site), east of the town (managing flow from the local hills) and west in the floodplain of the River Leadon (see Biodiversity). This could take the form of ponds or water meadows and tree planting at strategic locations.

ACCESS TO GI RESOURCES

- 7.2.159 The majority of the factors relating to access to GI resources are covered in the recommendations for public and social amenity above, but a summary is given below:
- i) Measures should be put in place to support walking, horse-riding and cycling in the parish, including an audit of footpaths and identification of lost footpaths or sections of footpaths. This needs to be registered by 2026 (Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000) if they are not to be lost forever. Wherever possible, paths should be accessible to disabled users.
 - ii) Consider new cycle / pedestrian routes along major highways (the Hereford and Gloucester roads have wide verges in some sections, although it must be ensured that there is no conflict with the grass / wildflower verge strategies described above).
 - iii) Create better footpath / cycle links to nearby settlements of Wellington Heath and Parkway.
 - iv) Initiate projects for creating pleasant areas in the town where people can sit and socialise or just sit. The Walled Garden provides this to the west of the town, but the centre, east, north

and south lack such spaces (the Millennium Garden, a ‘pocket park’ off Bye Street, is an exception). The Recreation Ground has a small area which is being managed for biodiversity – this could become such a space with a bit more landscaping and planting. The delayed landscaping project around the Master’s House would provide another such space.

- v) Early establishment of the canalside towpath footpath / cycleway - northwards through the viaduct site and onwards towards Staplow, and southwards (via the Riverside Walk) to Dymock - would be of great social and economic benefit.
- vi) Work to better connect cycleways / footpaths / traffic-free pathways throughout the town centre is necessary. Easy and attractive routes to the Riverside Park from the centre of town would be invaluable, but these routes go through housing and industrial areas so will need to be carefully planned.
- vii) The entrances to Dog Hill Wood are inaccessible to buggies and those with limited mobility, but once accessed, Green Lane is a broad and attractive pedestrian route. A better laid access path from Church Road could be created, or some form of banister installed, sensitively-designed so as not to detract from the rural character of the pathway.

HABITATS FOR NATURE / SUPPORTING BIODIVERSITY

- 7.2.160 Encouragement and support are required for the management of public and private green spaces for biodiversity and nature. Sustainable Ledbury and Ledbury Naturalists are already working in this area, including on the Town Trail.
- 7.2.161 Ensure good working links with Plantlife and other groups championing hedgerow and verge management for biodiversity, and support local groups who are working to improve the local environment (Ledbury in Bloom, Ledbury U3A Gardening Group, Herefordshire Wildlife Trust etc.) – encourage communication and co-operation.
- 7.2.162 Keep abreast of national and regional initiatives and opportunities, for example Defra and Natural England ‘*are bringing together partners, legislation and funding to create the Nature Recovery Network. The NRN will be a national network of wildlife-rich places. Our aim is to expand, improve and connect these places across our towns, cities and countryside*⁹⁸.’ This could potentially be used as the basis for neighbourhood-level initiatives as well.
- 7.2.163 Ensure that as far as possible (by monitoring and responding to planning applications) proposals for agricultural / alternative energy developments such as polytunnels, intensive poultry / livestock units, solar and wind farms do not visually detract from local and scenic beauty and character and will not harm the environment.
- 7.2.164 The Significant Vegetation recommendations include an audit of trees in the parish and in the town. In addition, new developments including housing, employment and leisure should include proposals to plant appropriate species of trees.

Views and Visual Amenity

- 7.2.165 The recommendations about not relying on vegetation to screen views set out in the recommendations for Significant Vegetation above are also relevant to views and visual amenity.

KEY VIEWS AND VIEW ROUTES

- 7.2.166 The LVBA identified two Exceptional key views. The first is from Marcle Ridge; however, the viewpoint lies outside the parish, and therefore it could not be included as an Exceptional VP in Ledbury’s NDP, if such views were to be protected by policy in the future. The other exceptional

⁹⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nature-recovery-network/nature-recovery-network>

view is from Bradlow Knoll. In addition, there are several Special views, especially those from viewpoints on the hills overlooking the town, which require policy protection.

- 7.2.167 The majority of the key views feature Ledbury's historic town centre and / or the Malvern Hills as a focal point. Many have been categorised as Special and / or Representative, being good examples of what kind of place Ledbury town is: pretty compact and simply laid out. From the hills above the town you can see the straight line of the High Street; the river and the approach roads; and the landscape surrounding the settlement, appreciating the topographical constraints to the town's growth.
- 7.2.168 Because the most important focal points in the town are historic - the fine church steeple and the Barrett Browning building, for example - you can understand at a glance that this is an old, small town still dominated by its historic footprint: it hasn't been swamped by growth, but has grown organically. Also, the farming landscape and industrial buildings on the fringes of the town tell you this is a working landscape. These views make a highly important contribution to Ledbury's unique and very distinctive sense of place.
- 7.2.169 If new development is considered to be appropriate in a certain location but additional planting is found to be necessary to protect a key view, steps should be taken to try to incorporate this into the scheme layout and design, but subject to the previous comments about proposals being locally-appropriate, of maximum benefit to biodiversity, and the dangers of relying on vegetation to screen views.

NEW VIEWS

- 7.2.170 In some cases, high-quality views are screened by overgrown hedges and other vegetation. With landowner consent and subject to ecological assessment, selected vegetation could be removed / heights of hedges reduced, in order to allow, and perhaps frame, great views. Examples are at certain points along the eastern edge of Dog Hill Wood, and along the Hereford Road looking towards the viaduct.
- 7.2.171 The church steeple is a key focal point, as it has been for centuries; however, today, other tall but modern structures such as the UBL plant on the Little Marcle Road and brewery silos at Orchard Business Park on Bromyard Road, also draw the eye. They do not integrate at all well into their surroundings - in many views there is high colour contrast between the buildings and the darker background palette of wooded hills. Some Representative views could be Special if the industrial buildings in the foreground were improved. This could simply be a question of more appropriate choices of colours on surfaces, which could be determined through ECA - see landscape character recommendations.

Summary

- 7.2.172 All the above recommendations are worthy of consideration, especially as they are based on an in-depth understanding of what Ledbury is and why, and what it could become in future.
- 7.2.173 The vision we have is of a beautiful, healthy place which supports happy, healthy communities.
- 7.2.174 These studies demonstrate that not only does Ledbury have the will to realise this vision - it also has the way.

Carly Tinkler BA CMLI FRSA MIALE and the community of Ledbury, January 2022

The West Wind

by

John Masefield

(1878 - 1967)

*It's a warm wind, the west wind, full of birds' cries;
I never hear the west wind but tears are in my eyes.
For it comes from the west lands, the old brown hills.
And April's in the west wind, and daffodils.
It's a fine land, the west land, for hearts as tired as mine,
Apple orchards blossom there, and the air's like wine.
There is cool green grass there, where men may lie at rest,
And the thrushes are in song there, fluting from the nest.
"Will ye not come home, brother? ye have been long away,
It's April, and blossom time, and white is the may;
And bright is the sun, brother, and warm is the rain,--
Will ye not come home, brother, home to us again?
"The young corn is green, brother, where the rabbits run.
It's blue sky, and white clouds, and warm rain and sun.
It's song to a man's soul, brother, fire to a man's brain,
To hear the wild bees and see the merry spring again.
"Larks are singing in the west, brother, above the green wheat,
So will ye not come home, brother, and rest your tired feet?
I've a balm for bruised hearts, brother, sleep for aching eyes,"
Says the warm wind, the west wind, full of birds' cries.
It's the white road westwards is the road I must tread
To the green grass, the cool grass, and rest for heart and head,
To the violets, and the warm hearts, and the thrushes' song,
In the fine land, the west land, the land where I belong.*

Photograph overleaf: view from Marcle Ridge, west of Ledbury, with Malvern Hills on skyline to east

