

# LEDBURY NDP Issues and Options Survey May-July 2021

## Executive Summary

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# Ledbury NDP

## ISSUES AND OPTIONS SURVEY MAY – JULY 2021

### Executive Summary September 2021

#### Version History

Version 0.01 – draft sent to Ledbury NDP Steering Group

Version 0.02 – amended draft sent to Ledbury NDP Steering Group

Version 0.03 – edited by NDP Steering Group

Version 1.0 – Final report to NDP Steering Group

#### Introduction

The currently adopted Ledbury Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) does not contain policies upon several important matters, particularly a settlement boundary. Ledbury Town Council is undertaking a limited revision of its NDP to address these omissions. This survey did not cover topics that were covered in the adopted Ledbury NDP which provided sufficient evidence to develop policies, such as housing.

#### Methodology

During June and early July 2021 all Ledbury parish residents were sent a paper information leaflet and questionnaire asking for views about proposed key issue revisions to the NDP before the Town Council draws up a new version of the plan. A paper questionnaire was sent out to 6,600 households across the parish. The survey was also available online either to complete instead of the paper version or if there were additional residents in the household (over 16); alternatively, further paper copies were available from Ledbury Town Council Offices. In addition to this, there was a wide marketing plan to ensure that residents knew this consultation was being developed and when it was open for responses. The questionnaire was discussed with young people in the Sixth Form at John Masefield High School, results of which are shown throughout the report. The questionnaire was also distributed to voluntary and

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community groups within the parish, results of which are still being returned so not included in this report at this current time.

## Results

In total there were 842 responses, approximately 13% of 6,600 households, plus 16 responses from pupils at the Sixth Form of John Masefield High School, as indicated by the following symbol.



Paper questionnaires were sent to nearly all households in Ledbury Parish, which encouraged respondents to fill in the questionnaire online with the link provided within the documents sent; or alternatively, to fill in the paper questionnaire. 458 responses were completed online and 384 returned a paper copy.

There is no definition of an acceptable response rate, given there are many factors which affect it. The aim was to post the questionnaire to all addresses within the Ledbury Parish area and widely publicise the online survey through various methods currently in use in the Ledbury area, to encourage as high a response rate as possible.

## Executive summary

### 1. Defining a settlement boundary for the town.

There was a clear preference with higher numbers of respondents ranking **Option C** as their first choice; 85%. Respondents would like a settlement boundary including existing and all currently approved permitted developments plus protection for the Riverside Park and areas for recreation and employment southwest of Little Marcle Road.

**Option C:** As Option B plus protection for the Riverside Park and areas for recreation and employment southwest of Little Marcle Road. This is the option recommended by Ledbury Town Council, Herefordshire Council and our professional consultants.

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If any areas were to be added, respondents recommended areas around or close to new or planned development sites near Gloucester Road and the roundabout, the Bypass, Dymock Road and Bromyard Road.

There were also a number of comments about where development should not be. There were several specifically about the Bloor Homes development at the Viaduct/Bromyard Road site. These concerns were in relation to access, impact on traffic and the visual impact on the historical viaduct.

Protecting green space was important, which included suggestions around Ledbury Park, Riverside Walk/Park, protecting Dog Wood and having green space for community groups to use.

There was some concern about the current level of infrastructure of the Town. Comments were made about the medical facilities, schools, roads and recreation facilities being already strained; additional development would therefore increase this pressure.

Industrial and commercial development also received a number of comments (25) where residents suggested areas where they would be happy to see further development and also where they were less keen.

- Protecting existing industrial units: specific ones mentioned were the Old Wharf Industrial Estate, the Pugh's site, the old Countrywide/cheese factory site.
- There was more opposition to developing around the UBL site, with concerns about the impact on the current green space and the impact of more transport on the current road network and how that is used by walkers/cyclists.

There were also about 14 comments made about needing improved access to the railway station, both in terms of getting to the train station by car and also access to the eastbound platform as a passenger.



It is very important for the young people of Ledbury to have adequate recreation and employment. Poor facilities/employment opportunities will cause young people to leave Ledbury (and Herefordshire as a whole).

## 2. Employment and Recreation.

There was strong support (86%) for **providing land to expand provision for sport** being a high priority for this NDP update.

There was agreement (79%) that any **new adult and junior shared football facility should be on the indicated site off Little Marcle Road.**

In terms of **other recreational or leisure needs** for which land should be identified, there was felt to be a general need for more open space, more diversity of sports to be considered and the importance of space to walk and cycle. There needed to be facilities for children, young people and elderly and the space needed to be accessible for elderly, disabled and those with push chairs. Accessibility was mentioned in terms physical access, but also in terms of an accessible location, so that children and young people could use it safely by themselves without having to be taken by car or walked by a parent.

Within the diversity of sport, most commonly mentioned were:

- Football
- Rugby
- Hockey
- Tennis (both in terms of Ledbury Tennis Club, but also free publicly available courts)
- Netball
- Basketball
- Indoor sports in general
- Outdoor/field sports in general.
- Swimming
- Skateboarding
- All weather Astro turf pitch

There was support for **cycling facilities** either for better cycle lanes on roads, mountain bike trails through the woods, cycling tracks in general or a specific bike track such as a

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pump track (a looped sequence of rollers and berms (swoopy, banked turns) for bike riders).

There was also support for a running track and opportunities for athletics.

There was support for open space in general for walking, picnicking and free play more suitably aimed at families, a space such as a community garden or walled garden that was quieter, had more seating, flower/sensory beds that would be more suited for a peaceful outdoor experience. A separate dog park/area where dogs could be let off the lead safely.

Open space for nature, fauna and flora, was called for, also the addition of a lake.

Other requests for recreation and leisure opportunities include:

- Archery
- Allotments
- Education classes/learning new skills
- Making better use of a canal path/basin/marina
- Other youth groups such as Scouts, Guides, Cadets
- More community use of facilities at John Masefield High School

There were comments made in relation to the football facilities on the site accessed from Little Marcle Road: queries about the viability of using this site; questions around ownership of land; getting agreement from land owner and what money would be used to buy it; suitability of access off Little Marcle Road; and whether this could all be combined on the current Rugby pitches as they are.

There was agreement (72%) that more than one site should be considered to meet the requirement of 12 hectares (approx. 30 acres) of **new employment land** to the south of Little Marcle Road.

There was agreement (75%) that the Land by the Full Pitcher roundabout and adjacent to the new housing development (Hawk Rise) should be considered for **employment restricted to uses suitable near to a residential area**.

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There was agreement (62%) that smaller areas elsewhere on the edge of the town should be identified to **accommodate new or expanded businesses**.

### **3. Land North of the Viaduct and Railway Line.**

There was strong support from respondents (81%) that the option to create **vehicular access off the Hereford Road** to the viaduct housing development be preserved for the future.

There was strong support from respondents (81%) agreeing with the provision of ground level eastbound platform access, improved platform services and additional car parking at the railway station.

Comments around this included that **disabled access** to both platforms was absolutely needed, the **proposed access to the north of the station** was potentially not the best solution with concerns around loss of green space and adding to the traffic congestion already around that location with risks that it will get worse with further planned development.

There was differing views shared about the need for **additional parking**, with views that there was enough parking, but with high parking charges the allocated parking was not used with many using nearby residential streets. Therefore, there was a request for reduced parking charges. On options suggested if parking was needed, these could be located where current businesses are if they were to relocate to alternative industrial sites, or that parking at the 'Smiths Coaches' site be explored.

### **4. Supporting the Town Centre.**

The majority of respondents wanted **areas added to the currently defined town centre**. There were only 106 respondents out of 795 who wanted to keep the Town Centre as it was defined in the Unitary Development Plan (only Red option). There is a therefore a clear wish from respondents to extend the Town Centre definition. Results

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are inconclusive, however, as to where it should be extended to, as there was support for each of the areas Purple, Blue and Green.

Comments received were about wanting to keep Ledbury as it is; the lack of, particularly, free car parking; whether all of Lawnside should be included or not, keeping Ledbury attractive and the need for additional medical facilities.



Young people's comment: We need to expand to allow new retailers and small businesses to be accommodated but don't spread out too much, so the high street loses its focus and footfall.

Overall, there was agreement (78%) that, in planning terms, there should **be no differentiation between primary and secondary shop frontages** and that shops, restaurants, cafes, drinking establishments, financial and professional services, and hot food takeaways should be allowed within this combined frontage.

There was agreement (84%) that a **co-ordinated approach to the regeneration of Lawnside and Market Street** to benefit the town centre, its conservation area and community services be proposed in the NDP.

There was strong support (88%) for the NDP to promote the **retention of health facilities in the town centre.**

## 5. Green Infrastructure.

There was strong support from respondents (90%) that the **new and extended corridors and enhancement zones identified** in Figure 7 should be added to the existing green infrastructure identified in the Herefordshire Green Infrastructure Report.

There was even stronger support from respondents (93%) that within those areas **green infrastructure should be protected, enhanced and extended** where possible.



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There was strong support (96%) that all green and open spaces shown in Figure 8 should generally be **afforded protection as contributing to green infrastructure** within and surrounding the town.

The largest number of comments were to keep whatever green space that was there already or that could be created, and to better maintain the green space that is currently there; the paths on the Riverside Walk were specifically mentioned. Ledbury Park needed protection, as well as the land underneath, around and to the north of the viaduct needed to stay green space, especially to accommodate the flooding that happens there.

There was agreement (87%) that **allotments and/or community gardens** should be encouraged.

There was more support for allotments than community gardens. A key point that was raised about allotments particularly was the need to have them in the central location within easy walking distance. There was also a lot of support for the triangle of land on Full Pitcher roundabout to be used for this type of development. Additional views received were that new developments should all have space for allotments/community gardens.

In terms of **footpaths, cycleways or other connections** that could be improved or created to benefit residents and give access to green space and wildlife, the largest number of comments were about the state of repair of the current footpaths and cycleways, and a need to improve them, all of them in general as well as the Town Trail and Riverside Walk (from Ross Road to Hereford Road) specifically.

There were quite a wide variety of locations where **safer footpaths** were requested, the more commonly cited ones were North of Ledbury to Wellington Heath, up Knapp Lane to provide a safe walking route to Frith Wood and Dog Wood, pavements both sides of the roads by the bypass and passage between Ledbury and the parishes 3 -4 miles out towards Hereford.

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There were many comments specifically about having **safe cycleways**, although the largest common response was to have safer cycleways on every route, additional routes mentioned were passage between Ledbury and the parishes 3 -4 miles out towards Hereford, along the river and from new developments to the town centre.

Other issues raised but not as strongly as those identified above, were: a need for improved accessibility of the footpaths/walks within Ledbury; better linking up of footpaths, (there are sufficient footpaths if they are maintained); better signage is needed; new crossings and the canal being regenerated.



Young people's comment: *Generally having cycle paths in as many places as possible will cut down on need for small journeys by cars, encourage a healthy activity and make it safer/ encourage young people to cycle more. Between the schools, any leisure & recreation facilities and housing would be the most beneficial.*

There were more respondents who felt **more or improved children's play areas are needed**, than those who didn't. A common issue raised was the current sites for play needing to be maintained or repaired or the equipment in it updated.

Play areas/space was needed for all younger children, older children and teenagers. A play park and having open space to allow for adventure activity/creative play were the two most commonly mentioned types of play area needed.

Overwhelmingly there was a strong view that all **new housing developments** should provide a play area for the new residents (53 comments), with many feeling that this should be part of the planning application process and agreement.

The recreation ground, or the rec, received mixed views, with support to expand this play area, maintain it and update it. However, there were also several that expressed their concerns about the anti-social behaviour exhibited in these areas such as vandalism, alcohol and drug use.

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There were some clear, strong messages that respondents felt **better maintenance** was needed to support the green infrastructure already in place in Ledbury.



Young people's comments:

*Yes because the more active young people can be the better.*

*Need both play equipment for the younger, open spaces for all for running around, football etc.*

*Also having a bike course with obstacles, bump etc would be great*

*Need better AstroTurf for all-year-round use.*

## 6. Design and the Environment

There was agreement (83%) from respondents that the NDP should include policies covering as **wide a range of design matters** as possible

There was strong agreement (88%) that the NDP should include policies to support **sustainable development** to mitigate the climate and ecological emergency.

## 7. Other Matters.

The largest single category of comments was about the need for additional and better medical facilities, GPs, dentists, hospitals. These views were made in relation to the current waiting times to access them, as well as the additional pressure they would be under with further housing development.

There were similar views about other infrastructure in Ledbury that would be put under pressure resulting from additional housing development, specifically schools and nurseries, sewage provision and the waste/recycling site.

Traffic was also a concern, both as a result of additional housing development and from current traffic levels.

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Parking was mentioned, specifically the challenges of parking within Ledbury, the cost of parking, lack of availability, the impact of on-road parking, residents' parking and parking requirements for existing and potential new health facilities.

There were a number of comments which specifically mention opposition and disappointment surrounding the Bloor Homes/viaduct development. There were concerns that residents' views had not been taken into consideration and disappointment surrounding the appeals process. As part of this were concerns about the access to the development, impact of flooding on the site and the surrounding area, and the impact it might have on traffic on the Bromyard Road. There were also queries as to whether this would fulfil the housing requirement for the rest of the NDP plan timescale.

Understandably, this issue has also led to some reservations on the impact this consultation may or may not have, how much weight will be given to public opinion and how accessible this consultation was. In contrast, there were some very positive comments about the current NDP process and consultation.

There were requests for new building and developments to be more sustainable in the first instance, as opposed to retrofitting. New builds to have access to sustainable energy, such as solar panels, ground/air-heat pumps, rainwater harvesting and options to plug in electric vehicles.