

BEWDLEY NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

PRE-CONSULTATION DRAFT JUNE 2020

	Foreword	1
1.	About Neighbourhood Planning	2
2.	Vision	4
3.	About Bewdley	5
4.	Community & Well-Being	16
5.	Managing Housing Supply	22
6.	Jobs & the Local Economy	27
7.	Improving the Infrastructure	34
8.	Protecting the Countryside	42
9.	Heritage & Culture	51



BEWDLEY
Town Council



FOREWORD

by the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

Over the last two hundred years, Bewdley has undergone a stream of building and construction projects. Looking back, it is difficult to find a time when the Town hasn't found another way of regenerating. Of course, one of the first and most significant of these projects was the construction of the Telford Bridge, completed in 1801. In many ways, in planning and land use terms, the next twenty years are as vital to the Town's development and future as the previous two hundred years.

In a changing world, Bewdley needs to know its position and its role within planning and land use and the Neighbourhood Plan is the heart of this. The Neighbourhood Plan is the gatekeeper of our future. It is built upon the views and aspirations of the people of Bewdley, aiming to ensure a preserved cultural and historical perspective, yet understanding the need for an eye on the future and a desire to embrace the needs of all aspects of the community.

Neighbourhood planning is a vital tool being used by local councils across England, not only to shape and influence development in their area but also to suitably and appropriately increase affordable housing, help communities become more resilient and support economic development.

Changing the planning framework for Bewdley will address a range of issues that have faced us all; as a society and as a town as a whole. Having greater autonomy over who influences what building and development takes place, how this impacts on our future and how we feel that these changes affect our historic home is vital.

The draft plan has been drawn together by the Steering Group from the Town Council and guided by the wide-ranging consultations that have taken place. What we present to you now is our collective vision of how our Town can move forward in the 21st century, ensuring we remain bright, better and balanced.

Councillor Rodney Stanczyszyn (Chair)

And formerly

Councillor Philip Edmundson

Councillor John Beeson

Councillor Linda Candlin

Councillor Calne Edginton-White

Councillor Derek Killingworth

1. ABOUT NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING

Background and Overarching Planning Policy

Localism Act 2011

- 1.1 The Localism Act of 2011 reformed the planning system to give residents of towns, villages and wards new rights and powers to shape the development of the communities in which they live.
- 1.2 These rights and powers include:
 - New freedoms and flexibilities for local government;
 - New rights and powers for communities and individuals;
 - Reform to make the planning system more democratic and more effective; and
 - Reform to ensure that decisions about housing are taken locally.
- 1.3 The Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) encompasses the use of land for all types of development, including use, design, density and affordability. It will preserve those areas of land which are of benefit to the wider community, such as sites of historical interest, areas of natural beauty and community facilities.

Neighbourhood Planning

- 1.4 Although the Government's intention is for local people to have greater influence with the changes to their towns, the Localism Act sets out some important guidelines. One of these is that all Neighbourhood Plans must be in line with higher level planning policy, the overarching policy for England: The National Planning Policy Framework produced in March 2012 (known as the NPPF) was revised in June 2019. The priorities of 2012 NPPF have shifted, with more emphasis placed on supporting the provision of new homes, improving affordability and ensuring delivery. At the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which can be defined as 'meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Therefore, planning policies and decisions should take local circumstances into account, to reflect the character, needs and opportunities of each area.
- 1.5 The NPPF (2019) "provides a framework within which locally-prepared plans for housing and other development can be produced".
- 1.6 The NDP can introduce planning policies to which planning applications in the plan area have to adhere to, as long as they are in compliance with neighbourhood planning regulations, the NPPF and the Wyre Forest District

Council (WFDC) Local Plan. Examples of such policies concern the planning of new homes, leisure facilities and opportunities to increase employment. The NDP aims to focus on guiding land use rather than stopping it. However, it also aims to protect existing facilities and areas, such as sports fields and local green spaces, from unwelcome and inappropriate development.

1.7 Neighbourhood Plans:

- Must contribute to the achievement of sustainable development
- Cannot be used to restrict development
- Cannot be used to promote a quantum of development smaller than set out in WFDC's emerging Local Plan, with which it must be in general conformity
- Must take regard of national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State
- Must not breach and is otherwise compatible with EU obligations and is not likely to have a significant effect on a European site either alone or in combination with other plans and projects

WFDC's emerging Local Plan (2016-2036) indicates the housing need for Wyre Forest as a whole has increased to 276 dwellings per year using the 2014-based Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) household projections.

1.8 Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

Neighbourhood Plans must not breach, and must be compatible with, EU and Human Rights obligations. Neighbourhood Plans therefore need to be considered against the Habitats and Strategic Assessment Directives and associated regulations and might, subject to their scope and the issues they are seeking to address, be required to produce an Environmental Assessment if the Plan is determined as likely to have significant environmental effects. Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEA) are required by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (the Regulations). This regulation also prohibits the adoption or submission of a Plan before the responsible Authority has determined whether the Plan is likely to have significant effects on the environment. A SEA is therefore an integral part of the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) aimed at promoting sustainable development and is used to inform plan-making.

2. BEWDLEY VISION STATEMENT

2.1

“to make Bewdley a vibrant, exciting, accessible town founded on the town’s history, character and picturesque setting.

to build on Bewdley’s past to guide its future and make Bewdley a Bright, Better and Balanced place to live, work and visit.”

2.2 The Neighbourhood Plan is an important framework which gives the people of Bewdley a real say over future development in the town. Through community consultations and collaborations, this has been created to see Bewdley’s planning and land use needs and requirements established for the next fifteen years.

2.3 The purpose is to ensure that the Neighbourhood Plan:

- Refines and clarifies how Wyre Forest District Council’s planning policies and the emerging Local Plan should be applied to development proposals that affect the BNP area,
- Set out specific development objectives for certain defined areas within the Town,
- Document a number of aspirations that are intended to help determine the suitability of possible future development proposals,
- Set out local design principles for new development,
- Set out a number of policies that should be considered in relation to specific types of development that may be proposed in the Town.

2.4 Through the objectives and the corresponding policies, the Plan aims to establish the necessary structure for the town to develop according to the wishes of its residents through these areas:

- Community and Wellbeing (Chapter 4)
- Managing Housing Supply (Ch 5)
- Jobs and the Local Economy (Ch 6)
- Improving the Infrastructure (Ch 7)
- Protecting the Countryside (Ch 8)
- Preserving Heritage and Character (Ch 9)

3. ABOUT BEWDLEY

3.1 This Section sets out:

- An overview of Bewdley, setting out the key opportunities and problems that affect the town;
- A summary of the issues raised by local people during the consultation events that have formed part of the process of producing the Neighbourhood Plan; and
- A summary of the key issues that the Neighbourhood Plan needs to address.

3.2 This information is drawn from two documents that support the Neighbourhood Plan:

- The Evidence Base Summary, which draws together information from a variety of documents (principally those produced by the Wyre Forest District Council (WFDC) in its role as planning authority for the area) to provide a summary of the physical, social and economic issues affecting Bewdley; and
- Consultation reports that will be brought together to form a single Consultation Plan once this Neighbourhood Plan is finalised. These reports explain what consultation has taken place, and the feedback received from residents and other stakeholders and how this has been addressed in the Neighbourhood Plan.

3.3 These documents may be downloaded from Bewdley Town Council's website: www.bewdleytowncouncil.org. The designated Neighbourhood Plan area is outlined on the map, Figure 1. A larger copy is included as Appendix A.

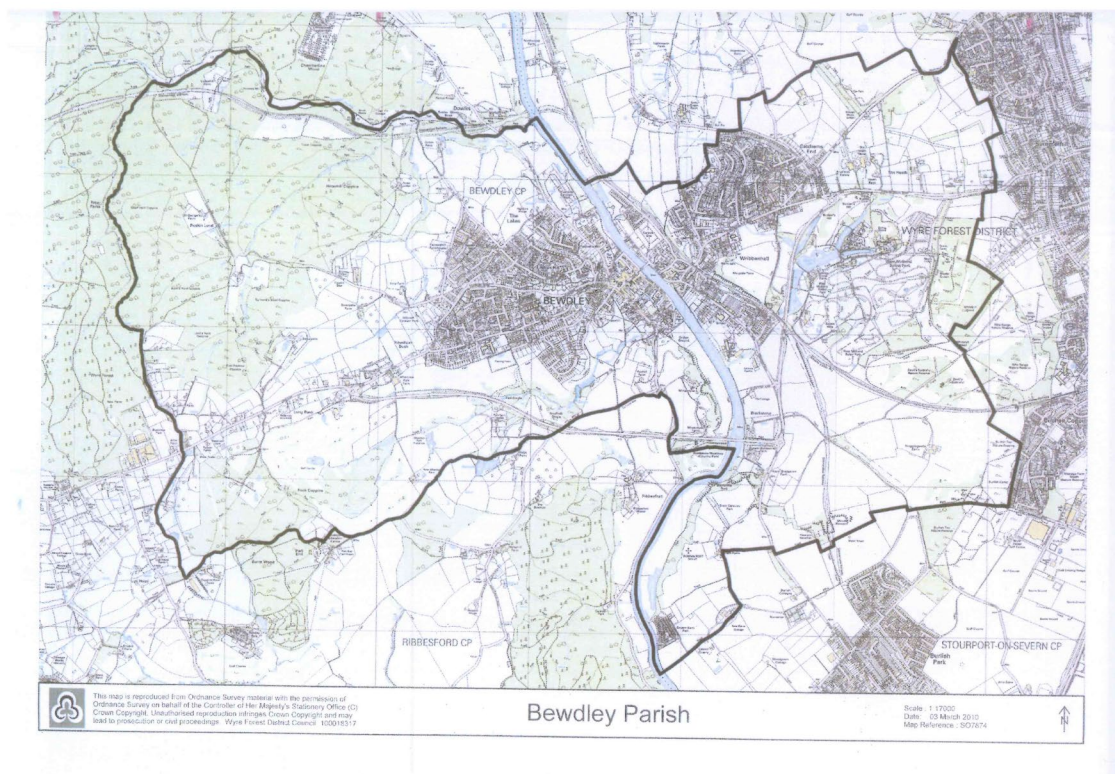
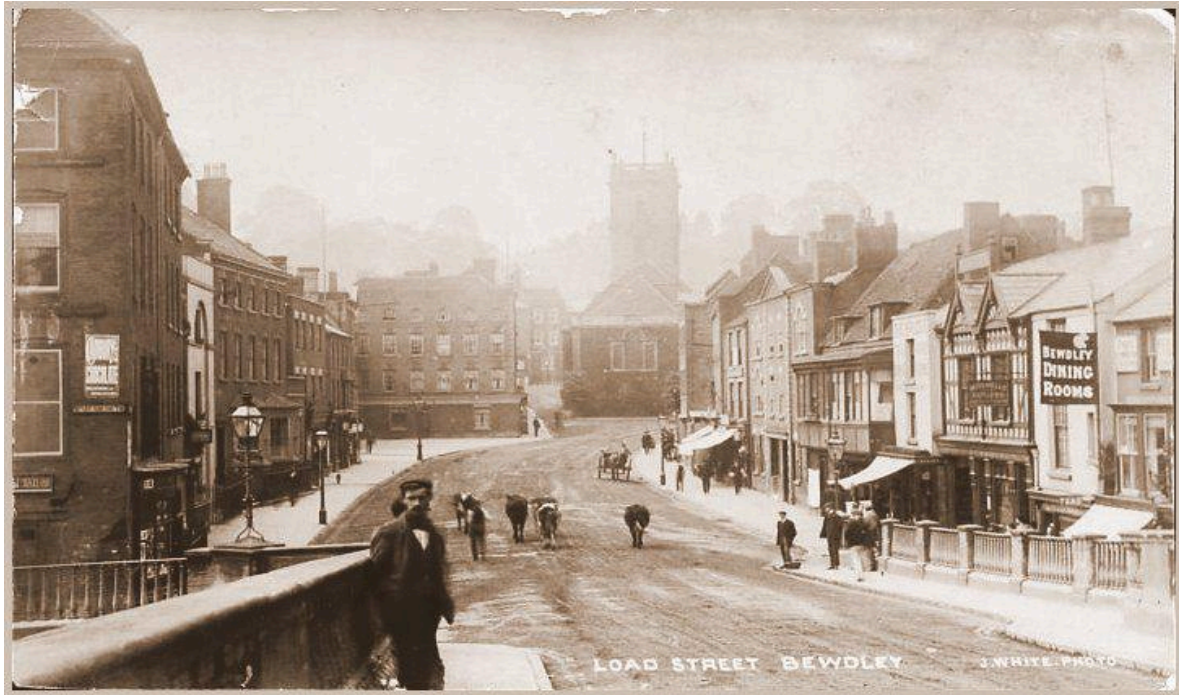


Figure 1 – Bewdley Neighbourhood Area

History



- 3.4 Bewdley has a long history based upon its location as a river crossing, adjacent to the ancient woodland of the Wyre Forest and as an historic inland port and market town.
- 3.5 Wribbenhall, on the east bank of the Severn, was mentioned in the Domesday Book and the significance of the Wyre Forest, the River Severn and Royal



patronage over the centuries established the importance of the town of Bewdley on the Severn's western bank. The town's heritage and patronage, which led to its market town development, underpins the rich historic character and picturesque setting which makes it popular with tourists and visitors today.

- 3.6 During the 18th Century Bewdley was a fashionable centre, the scene of many balls and assemblies. In 1737 a workhouse was founded in High Street, followed in 1745 by St Anne's Church, a Grade 2* listed structure, which is still a magnificent centre piece in Load Street. The town's only Grade 1 listed structure, Bewdley Bridge, started in 1798 and completed in 1801, was built to plans by the noted engineer Thomas Telford.



3.7 Load Street is flanked by many distinctive buildings, some mediaeval in origin, with Georgian facades creating the current architecture. These distinctive buildings, in stark contrast to the original workers' cottages of Welch Gate, Wyre Hill and Lax Lane, were built for the wealthy merchants and notables of the town. Many of these buildings are now Grade 2 Listed. Other significant buildings can be seen at Beales Corner and on the approaches to the town from Wribbenhall.



- 3.8 Bewdley's prosperity continued despite a downturn following the opening of the canal network in Stourport, and the Severn Valley Railway which took river trade away from the town. Three times Prime Minister, Stanley Baldwin was born in the town and a statue recognising his work has been erected in the town centre.
- 3.9 Today, Bewdley is a popular tourist destination with a thriving town centre, town museum, riverside walks and a strong community spirit.

Population

- 3.10 According to the 2011 Census, the Bewdley Neighbourhood Plan area has a population of 9,240. Bewdley therefore consists of around 10% of the population of the district of Wyre Forest which, as of 2011, had a population of 97,975.
- 3.11 Bewdley has an aging population and the proportion of the over 65 element is expected to increase over the next 10 years. Estimates from the Worcestershire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (WSHMA) report of 2012 suggest that not only will the number of those in the Wyre Forest district of "retirement age" increase from 22% of the population to near 36%, the numbers of those aged 85 and over will increase from 2.3% to 6.9% in the period to 2030.
- 3.12 The 9,240 residents of Bewdley live in 4,234 households which means that the average household size in the town is 2.18 persons, below the national average of 2.3. This is another indicator of the slightly aging population of the town and the smaller households that older people live in. Indeed, household sizes are predicted to decrease further in Bewdley as the population ages. Consequently, single person and couple households are predicted to increase in number and family households are likely decrease as a proportion of the whole.
- 3.13 The level of ethnic diversity is very low within Bewdley. It is however not dissimilar from the overall analysis for Wyre Forest as a district. 97% of the population of Bewdley classify themselves as 'White: British'- slightly higher than the district average of 95% but significantly higher than the national average of 80%.

Tourism

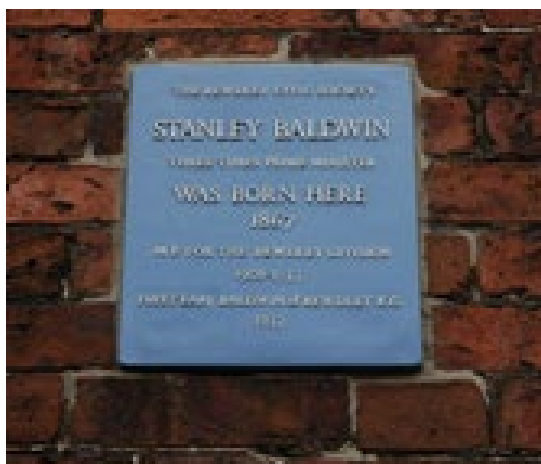
3.14 The River Severn is the major attraction for visitors to Bewdley. The river's historical importance in the growth of the town remains a key element of Bewdley's principal economic activity – tourism. The river attracts a range of activities including walking, rowing, fishing, eating, drinking and is the focal point for many annual events and markets.



3.15 The town's heritage buildings are also a key attraction to those exploring Bewdley's rich history as an ancient settlement, a traditional market town, a royal borough and a producer of goods for export. Significant buildings of interest to visitors include former Prime Minister, Stanley Baldwin's, birthplace and the former butcher's Shambles which now houses the town's museum.

3.16 The Severn Valley Railway which has a preserved station in Bewdley also provides a focal point for visitors, as does the ancient Wyre Forest which has a visitor centre just outside of the town's boundary. The West Midlands Safari Park is also located within the town's boundary on the Kidderminster side.

3.17 Beaucastle, which lies just outside Bewdley, is a Victorian mock-Gothic house, built in 1877. It was developed by the industrialist and former Mayor of Birmingham and Bewdley, George Baker. Beaucastle was designed by John Ruskin and Richard Doubleday with stained-glass windows by Edward Burne-Jones.



- 3.18 Stanley Baldwin, who served as Prime Minister three times between 1923 and 1937, was born at Lower Park House, Lower Park, Bewdley in 1867. He served as MP for the town from 1908 for nearly thirty years and later became Earl Baldwin of Bewdley. His portrait is displayed in the Council Chamber in the Guildhall. Bewdley Civic Society commissioned the well-known sculptor, Martin Jennings, renowned for his figure of Sir John Betjeman at St. Pancras Station, to create a life size statue of Baldwin as a permanent memorial. This was placed on Load Street in October 2018. It is anticipated that this will attract more visitors to the town.

Shopping and the Town Centre

- 3.19 The Town Centre's main focus is Load Street where the majority of shops are located. Most are independent retailers selling gifts, antiques and interiors along with the more traditional services like a florist, a cobbler, chemist, optician and dentist. Food suppliers include, two bakers, a greengrocer and three chain convenience stores.



- 3.20 There is an artisan market in the Town Centre twice a month which also stocks local produce as well as crafts and collectibles.
- 3.21 Bewdley Town Centre performs an important shopping function for the local population as well as for residents of neighbouring villages. For goods not found in Bewdley, Kidderminster and Stourport have a range of supermarkets and retail parks which are approximately three miles from Bewdley.
- 3.22 In addition to shopping, the Town Centre includes St George's Hall, a multi-purpose venue for music, cinema and arts. There are numerous pubs, cafes and restaurants which provide Bewdley with vibrant leisure and 'evening economy' activities.

Housing

- 3.23 Overall Bewdley has a wide choice of properties and a type and size of homes that is broadly in line with the trend for England as a whole. The relatively small

supply of one-bedroom properties does not necessarily reflect the aging demographic of the town. That is to say that the number of one person households in Bewdley is likely to increase which in turn would lead to an increase in the demand for smaller properties.

- 3.24 Thirty-six percent of dwellings in Bewdley are detached houses which is significantly higher than the average for England (22%) and the district (29%). The proportion of semi-detached homes is in line with the national average while there are fewer terraced homes and fewer flats. This is to be expected in a small town such as Bewdley. The size of dwellings in the Bewdley Neighbourhood Plan area is broadly in line with district and national averages; however, it is notable that there are more two-bedroom and four-bedroom properties and fewer one-bedroom and three-bedroom properties than is the case both for the wider local area and for the country.
- 3.25 The town needs to supply around 220 homes over the period 2016-2026 according to the Housing Needs Survey with “low cost” and starter housing being most in demand if the town is to retain its younger generation to ensure a vibrant, thriving community in Bewdley.

Business and Employment

- 3.26 The West Midlands Safari and Leisure Park is the biggest employer in BNP area. As of 2019, the business employs about 200 permanent workers with an additional 500 seasonal workers.
- 3.27 The education sector is also another key employment provider within the neighbourhood plan area. The Bewdley School (formerly called The Bewdley School and Sixth Form Centre) has a workforce of about 130 people. Both Bewdley Primary School and St Anne’s Primary School presently employ 13 staff.
- 3.28 The public consultation exercises that have been carried out indicate that the community want the Plan to maintain and enhance the market town status of Bewdley, to strengthen retail offerings and to attract more office-based businesses to the area. As Bewdley lies within a commuter belt to larger conurbations such as Birmingham and Worcester, it is vital to create and maintain employment locally so as not to displace workers and keep money within the local economy. It also highlighted the community’s concerns with the lack of banking facilities and the shortage of parking spaces in the town centre.

Travel

3.29 Bewdley is well connected by road to the neighbouring towns of Kidderminster and Stourport with onward rail services from Kidderminster station. There is a very high level of car use within the town.

3.30 The A456 provides a by-pass to the town for motorists passing through, although it is generally felt that this road is not used often enough by through traffic with motorists favouring the relatively simple route through the town centre.



3.31 Bewdley is a compact town with a large number of public rights of way connecting the town with the surrounding countryside. Pedestrian connections across the river using the Telford bridge are poor, with walkers having to negotiate the narrow pavements alongside the cars and heavy goods vehicles accessing the town centre and car parks.

3.32 Bus services operate until around 8pm, running hourly into Kidderminster via Wribbenhall housing development, and less frequently to Ludlow. The quality of the vehicles used has been subject to complaints by residents and the future use of eco-friendly buses using Welch Gate may help to reduce pollution in the town centre. There are no bus links at all on a Sunday. The nearest Network Rail station to the town is in Kidderminster.

Education

- 3.33 Bewdley has three schools – The Bewdley School, Bewdley Primary School and St Anne’s Primary School.
- 3.34 The Bewdley School is located to the east of the town and is a “good” Ofsted rated school. The intake numbers 958 and the school is currently at capacity. This is a popular school with students travelling to it from outside of Bewdley due to its facilities and good teaching performance.
- 3.35 Both the primary schools, one to the east and one to the west of the town are both rated “good” by Ofsted and have a capacity of 630 between them.



Services

- 3.36 Bewdley has a new medical centre which was officially opened in 2016. The building also houses a pharmacy and the town’s library. This is located just off the main shopping area but adjacent to the main public car park in the town.
- 3.37 The town’s fire station in Dog Lane was permanently closed in mid March 2020.
- 3.38 Bewdley is well served by local services including a community cinema, pharmacies, florists, estate agents, solicitors, two funeral parlours, Post Office and a Tourist Information Centre within the Bewdley Museum.

Community and Sport

- 3.39 Bewdley has a strong sense of community with a number of local organisations providing a range of activities and services. These include a civic society, community transport service, eight churches and a community café and cinema.
- 3.40 The town has thriving football, cricket, tennis, bowls, and rowing clubs; the latter holding two annual regattas. The town council’s website acts as a community directory listing all the groups and events that enrich the community.



Environmental

3.41 There are a number of environmental issues that must be considered in planning the future of Bewdley, and these are:

- Flooding: any development must be sensitive to issues of flooding and the plan supports the introduction of permanent flood defences along the River Severn at Beales Corner,
- Landscape and views: the River Severn Valley is a key part of the historic character of the town, and any new development must be sensitive to the landscape within which it sits and the views across this area. The Plan does not support large-scale development on the western side of the River Severn,
- Open spaces: these perform many different roles - some are important for recreation, whilst other spaces surrounding the town are ecologically important. The consultation reinforced views of local people who feel that open spaces should be retained and enhanced for recreation, particularly providing younger people and children with play facilities,
- Protection of the biodiversity and natural environment assets, particularly within areas proposed as housing development sites, is a key environmental consideration and an integral part of neighbourhood planning. All development will be expected to mitigate risks to the natural environment and countryside and seek measures to enhance and integrate with the existing green infrastructure and biodiversity assets.



3.42 Worcestershire County Council's emerging Minerals Local Plan, which will form part of the overall Development Plan for Wyre Forest District, shows that within Bewdley, Wribbenhall and Ribbesford there are some potential building stone resources and deposits of terrace and glacial sand and gravel, as well as solid sandstone. Two areas identified for sand and gravel are Brant Farm and Blackstone. Neither site has been identified from British Geological Survey as containing 'key' or 'significant' mineral resources requiring future safeguarding.

Heritage

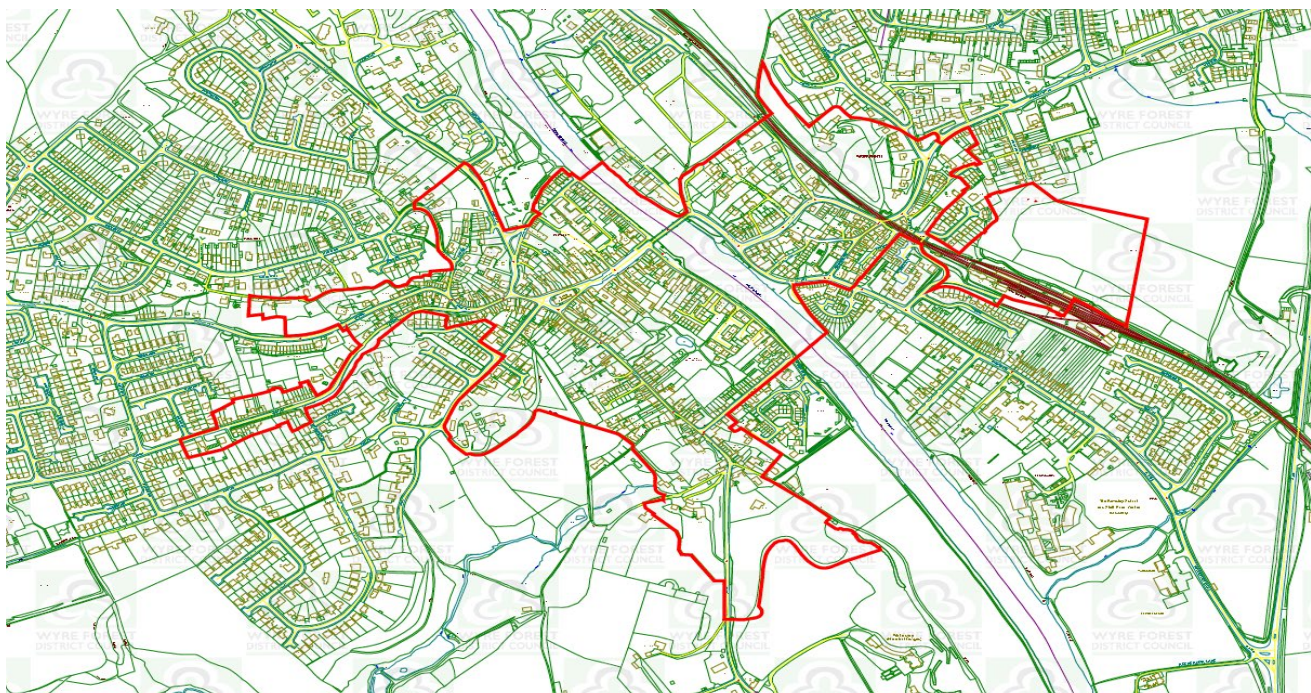


Figure 2 - Bewdley Conservation Area – highlighted in red

- 3.43 Bewdley's Conservation Area (Figure 2) is at the heart of the town and is centred around the parish church of St Anne. There are many statutory listed buildings within the town including most of the buildings on Load Street, High Street and Lax Lane as well as some other areas of distinct character such as the ancient settlements of Wribbenhall and Wyre Hill. There are also many other historic buildings and monuments of significant local interest which are held on local registers.

4. COMMUNITY & WELL-BEING (CW)

OBJECTIVE A - To ensure that there are green, open areas in Bewdley Parish for play, recreation and sports activities to take place

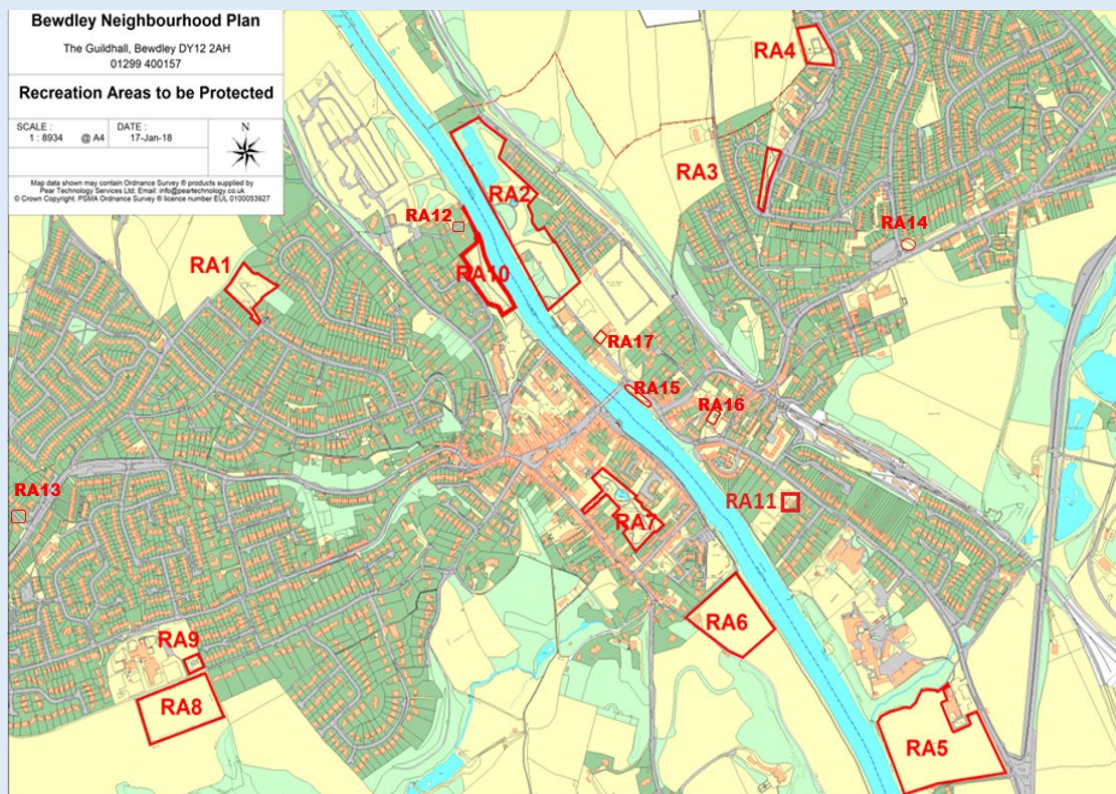
Consultation Key Findings

- There is wide support for improved recreational and leisure facilities for children and young people

POLICY CW 1 – PROTECTION OF EXISTING RECREATIONAL AREAS AND PUBLIC OPEN SPACES

All sports fields and areas currently used for amenity, play and recreation (as shown on the map below) will be protected, and where possible, proposals to enhance them will be supported.

Proposals to remove any of these facilities will only be supported where a facility of equal size is provided prior to the removal of the existing facility.



Key:

RA1 – Bark Hill Play Area	RA2 – Riverside North Park
RA3 – Millenium Green, Wribbenhall	RA4 – Shaw Hedge Play Area
RA5 – Leisure Centre/Playing Field	RA6 – Cricket Club
RA7 – Queen Elizabeth II Gardens	RA8 – St Annes School Field
RA9 – Wyre Hill Play Area	RA10 – Severnside North Amenity Area
RA11 – Tennis Club	RA12 – Greenacres Lane Greenspace
RA13 – Derwent Drive Greenspace	RA14 – Queensway Greenspace
RA15 – Beales Corner Riverside Walk	RA16 – Wribbenhall Garden of Rest
RA17 – Bowling Club	RA18 – Rowing Club

- 4.1 The Plan will protect existing community facilities and services which are considered important for a vibrant community and support the development of new facilities to benefit local people and visitors by encouraging:
- New facilities that enhance connections with the natural environment and wildlife;
 - Developments or uses associated with a positive visitor experience which encourage repeat visits to the town;
 - The protection of existing community buildings, recreation areas and services.
- 4.2 The NPPF (paragraph 83) provides a clear framework for the promotion, retention and development of local services and community facilities such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship in order to promote a healthy community.
- 4.3 In the BNP area, there is a thriving community with education, health, social and leisure facilities which contribute greatly to the local quality of life. Recent years, however, have seen the loss of high street banks which means that the town's residents no longer have access to a local branch. The community is concerned that there should be no further loss of facilities, in particular health services, the Post Office and the library, and there is strong support to seek the improvement and retention of these vital community assets in the interests of community wellbeing and sustainability.
- 4.4 Before granting planning permission for a change of use or redevelopment, which would result in the loss of any of these facilities, the Plan requires compelling evidence that the facility is no longer needed by the local community.
- 4.5 Bewdley itself also serves as a centre for a much wider rural catchment area and its facilities are of value to residents living well outside the parish boundaries. Through the safeguarding of local community facilities and

services and the provision of new services, the Plan aims to strengthen Bewdley's role as a key settlement in line with the district settlement hierarchy.

- 4.6 The consultation results show that the community value Bewdley's open spaces and the Plan will therefore seek to protect existing recreation, sport and leisure areas and facilities. Although there was no strong desire amongst the community to increase the numbers of these facilities, the Plan will consider favourably applications for new recreational spaces which enhance connections to and are sympathetic towards the town's natural environment and historic setting.
- 4.7 Open spaces in Bewdley include Jubilee Gardens, Riverside North Park with its children's play area, Bewdley Leisure Centre with its outdoor sporting facilities, the Millennium Green in Wribbenhall, Sabrina Drive riverside area, and an extensive network of public footpaths that lead into the wider countryside. The Town also has three dedicated children's play areas based around local housing estates. Bewdley Rowing Club, established in 1877, whose building and car park are located on the east bank of the river, provides and promotes competitive rowing and sculling, as well as coaching and training for newcomers wanting to try rowing.

POLICY CW 2 – NEW RECREATIONAL SPACES AND FACILITIES

Proposals for new recreational activities and facilities will be supported provided the siting, design and scale of the development conserves the quality of the town's natural environment, including its townscape and surrounding countryside. New housing developments within the Green Belt will be expected to provide new public open space in order to support recreation and provide compensatory improvements in the Green Belt.

- 4.8 The NPPF(2019), paragraphs 91 and 92, requires new developments to include recreational facilities and public open spaces in order to promote healthy communities. This has also been affirmed by residents of Bewdley with strong support for policy CW2 at consultation.
- 4.9 Encouraging new sport and recreation facilities to Bewdley can increase opportunities to boost health and well-being amongst the community, provide jobs and has the potential to increase visitor numbers to the town.

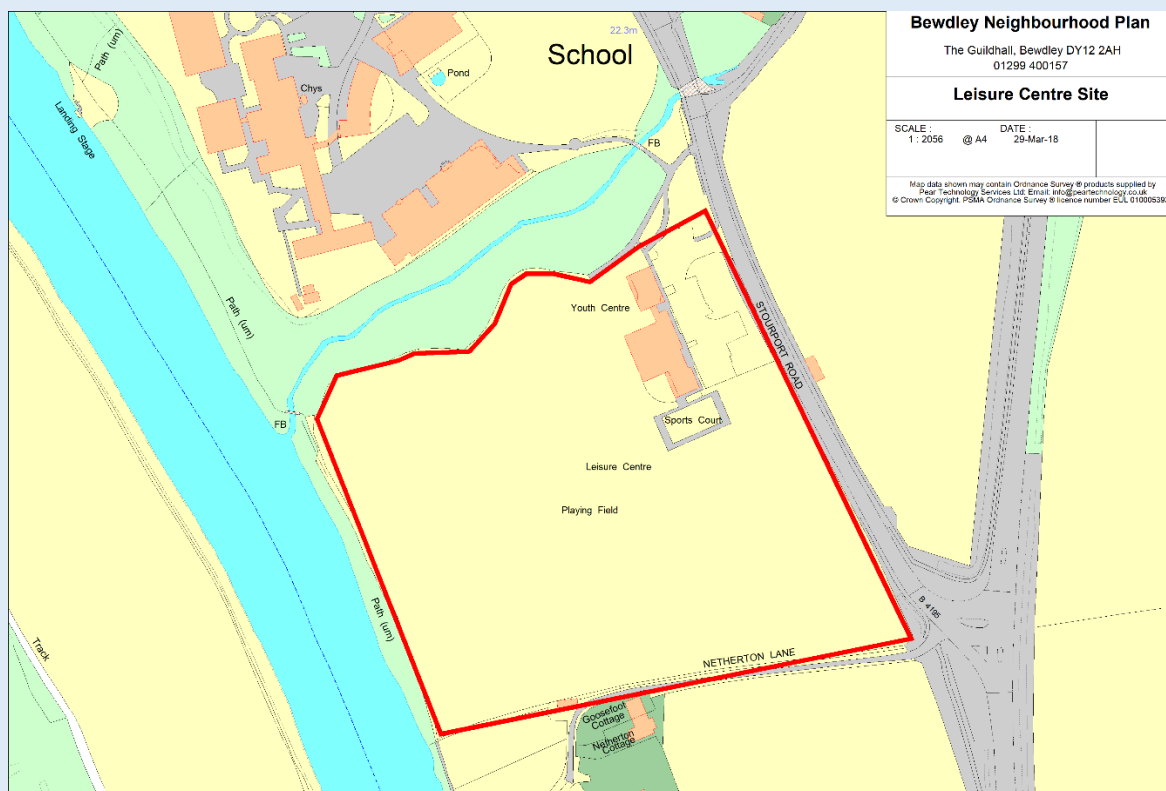


POLICY CW 3 – SPORTS CLUBS

Proposals to enhance facilities for sports clubs at the Bewdley Leisure Centre site (see Map 2) will be supported provided that the space remains accessible for community recreational use.

Applications for development of Sports Clubs within Bewdley Parish will be considered based on current playing field land national guidance.

MAP 2



- 4.10 Bewdley Football Club is currently based in the parish of Ribbesford which does not have a parish council. Owing to the ground's location within the floodplain, the pitch regularly floods and the venue is not easily accessible. The Town's Football Club is viewed as an important asset in terms of the local economy, and for the health and well-being of young people in the town. More generally, sports facilities "provide the valuable space required to maintain and enhance opportunities for people to take part both in formal team sports and in other more informal activities" according to Sport England.
- 4.11 Along with sporting benefits, good quality, accessible playing fields also contribute to maintaining active and healthy communities and securing wide-reaching benefits for the wider community.

POLICY CW 4 – OTHER RECREATIONAL OR CULTURAL FACILITIES

Proposals for new recreational and/or cultural facilities will be supported where the development has no adverse impact upon any adjoining residential amenities and has no conflict with matters of highway safety and requirements detailed in Policy HS1.

- 4.12 Recreational and cultural facilities aimed at all demographic groups can help to foster balanced and inclusive communities. The NPPF seeks to promote healthy communities and paragraph 96 sets out guidance to ensure that planning policy and development positively supports the provision and use of sports venues and cultural buildings.
- 4.13 The Plan objective "to ensure that there are green, open areas in Bewdley for play, recreation and sports activities to take place" received very strong community support.

POLICY CW 5 – COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Proposals that would result in the loss of community facilities will not be supported unless:

- it can be demonstrated that the facilities are no longer needed or viable; or
- it can be demonstrated that suitable alternate provision exists in the area to serve the community; or
- suitable alternative provision is included in the development proposal itself.



4.14 Bewdley as a market town is relied upon by a wider rural network of small villages and hamlets for providing essential community services such as schools, doctors' surgeries, pharmacies, library, community centres, and Post Office.

4.15 The community indicated that it is important for Bewdley to provide such community facilities. Paragraph 92 of the NPPF makes it clear that planning policy should "guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services, particularly where this would reduce the community's ability to meet its day-to-day needs".

5. MANAGING HOUSING SUPPLY (HS)

Consultation Key Findings

- **More starter/low cost homes and retirement housing are recognised as being required - but no large housing developments or significant increase in the number of new houses**

OBJECTIVE B - To ensure that all future housing development provides a mix of homes to meet identified housing needs and contributes positively to the unique and natural characteristics of the BNP area.

POLICY HS1 – HOUSING GROWTH

Proposals for small-scale affordable and market housing development within the settlement boundary that meets local needs and is in keeping with the scale, demands and population profile will be supported where:

- new developments are well located and designed and supported by the necessary infrastructure including appropriate access and parking facilities,
- it is not in an area which has significant value in terms of recreation, landscape, wildlife, national or historic importance within Bewdley, or is liable to flooding or subsidence,
- small windfall sites which enable older people and or people with specific needs to live close to amenities and vital services, i.e. accessible locations such as the town centre,
- plans for development include measures to safeguard and enhance indigenous biodiversity and promote wildlife corridors and the creation of appropriate new habitats in order to demonstrate 'Net Gain' for biodiversity to avoid losses of irreplaceable/vulnerable wildlife in line with government targets. Important sites for biodiversity are listed in the emerging Local Plan and include Wyre Forest SSSI and NNR, and geodiversity designations at Wribbenhall and Bewdley.

Developers, landowners and their agents are encouraged to enter into early pre-application discussions with the local planning authority and local community about potential housing schemes.

Proposals will not be supported where:

- Development would lead to the concentration of types and tenures in separate groups on a site,
- Plans for development do not comply with the Design Code (see Appendix XX) and are of poor design or fail to maintain, and where possible enhance, the character and quality of the area,
- Access arrangements for development proposals do not comply with government standards as regards to road and traffic safety,
- Development extends existing ribbon development and reduces areas of separation,
- Development plans do not include measures to mitigate any potential harmful effect of the new development on the character, surrounding setting, environmental habitat and biodiversity of the area in which it is located,
- Proposals for development falling outside the Local Plan Development Strategy.

Planning conditions, obligations or management agreements will be used, as appropriate, to secure implementation of this Policy.

- 5.1 It is recognised at Bewdley that there is a need for new housing to include affordable housing for rent or sale. Controlled development will ensure that future housing needs are met in a sympathetic and appropriate manner.
- 5.2 The principle motivation behind the production of a Neighbourhood Plan is to give the community more influence over development by establishing robust planning policies for the use of land, such as where new dwellings should be built whilst retaining important green and open spaces.
- 5.3 The 2011 Census shows that the Plan area had a population of 9,240 which was approximately 10% of the population of Wyre Forest district at that time.

The 2018 independent Housing Needs Study commissioned by Wyre Forest District Council states that the population of Wyre Forest District is projected to increase by 4.9% over the course of the Local Plan period (to 2036). There may be a marked increase in the number and proportion of older residents. This Neighbourhood Plan recognises that the varying housing needs of the expanding population must be met.

- 5.4 At consultation, 66% of respondents felt that more low cost and/or starter homes were needed, but not necessarily social housing. Houses prices in Bewdley tend to be higher than those in Stourport and Kidderminster and retirement living is a feature of the local market. More than half of respondents want more retirement housing, whereas very few felt that more luxury housing is required. Most people felt Bewdley had the right amount of housing.
- 5.5 The Housing Needs Survey 2018 considered the aspiration of households planning to move by age group and household type. An important conclusion was the need for smaller properties.
- 5.6 This Plan reflects the community's desire not to support large housing developments and deliver Bewdley's allocation on smaller, sustainable sites which integrate well into the existing townscape and local community and meet the town's specific needs.
- 5.7 Wyre Forest District Council's Housing Need Survey, using current government guidance, sets out a housing requirement of 5,520 dwellings (276 dwellings per year) plus 487 Institutional (Care Homes) bed spaces to be built in the 20 year plan period to 2036.

The emerging Local Plan allocates the following sites in Bewdley (map at Appendix A)

Site Ref	Site Description	Indicative no. dwellings
BR/BE/1	Bewdley Fire Station	15
WA/BE/1	Stourport Road Triangle	100
WA/BE/3	Catchem's End	75
WA/BE/5	Land south of Habberley Road	35
	TOTAL	225

The decision to allocate these sites follows extensive work undertaken by the District Council. In 2014 a 'Call for Sites' began which led to the publication of the Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) in 2016. The HELAA therefore provided the sites from which decisions have been made by the Planning Authority as suitable for allocation for housing development. The new Local Plan will replace the current Adopted Core Strategy and, once

adopted, will shape the future of Wyre Forest District up to 2036. The policies in the plan will be used to help make decisions on planning applications in the district. The District Council's Development Plan timetable indicates that final adoption could be completed in 2020-21.

- 5.8 During community consultation, the residents of Bewdley overwhelmingly supported policies which sought to restrict development in open countryside and those which retain Bewdley's unique character and setting within the landscape (see chapter X - Protecting the Countryside). More specifically, development on the western side of the River Severn was not supported during consultation, other than "windfall" sites which fall into the definition set out in Policy HS2. Respondents clearly stated that they would not accept housing numbers above the minimum identified in the district Local Plan, even if that meant additional local services could be provided.

POLICY HS2 – DEVELOPMENT OF PREVIOUSLY DEVELOPED LAND

Proposals which involve the redevelopment of previously developed (brownfield) land, and conversion of existing buildings, will be encouraged, provided that such proposals:

- maintain the criteria detailed in Policy HS1 and those set out in the *Jobs and Local Economy* (chapter 6),
- contribute to the existing character of the area in terms of design, density and layout.



- 5.10 It is important to recognise that opportunities to make use of previously developed land or redundant buildings for housing remain open. Re-using these types of sites and buildings can help rejuvenate an area, which in turn can have a positive impact on the local environment.
- 5.11 This policy gained strong support with the community agreeing that such opportunities should be taken where possible. Any development of this kind must however take into account policies set out in the “Jobs and the Local Economy” section of this Plan which protects the central retail and business zone in the town centre.
- 5.12 Our green and open spaces and areas of separation need to be preserved and protected, in order to retain the identity of the valued landscapes within the NP area. The biodiversity, landscape and historic environment specific to Bewdley, including its river and watercourses, are vital in terms of sustaining and retaining the natural environment and these are inextricably linked to economic health and welfare. There are several sites where development is deemed suitable for housing development of a type and size relevant to the town’s needs, as shown in the emerging WF Local Plan.

6 JOBS & THE LOCAL ECONOMY (JLE)

Consultation Key Findings

- Bewdley's shopping area could be improved
- A balanced selection of shops is needed
Bank urgently required
- Regular street markets are supported
- More office-based businesses but not light industry or manufacturing in the town centre
- Improved car parking and bus services required
- Empty shop spaces need to be filled
- The town already has sufficient fast food outlets and charity shops

OBJECTIVE C - To maintain a thriving town centre and retail economy.

POLICY JLE1 – FUTURE TOWN CENTRE USES

The retail character of the primary business and retail zone (see Map 3) will be safeguarded and protected through the following ways:

A) Where planning permission is required, proposals which involve the loss of existing A1 and A2 retail uses in the primary business and retail zone will be resisted,

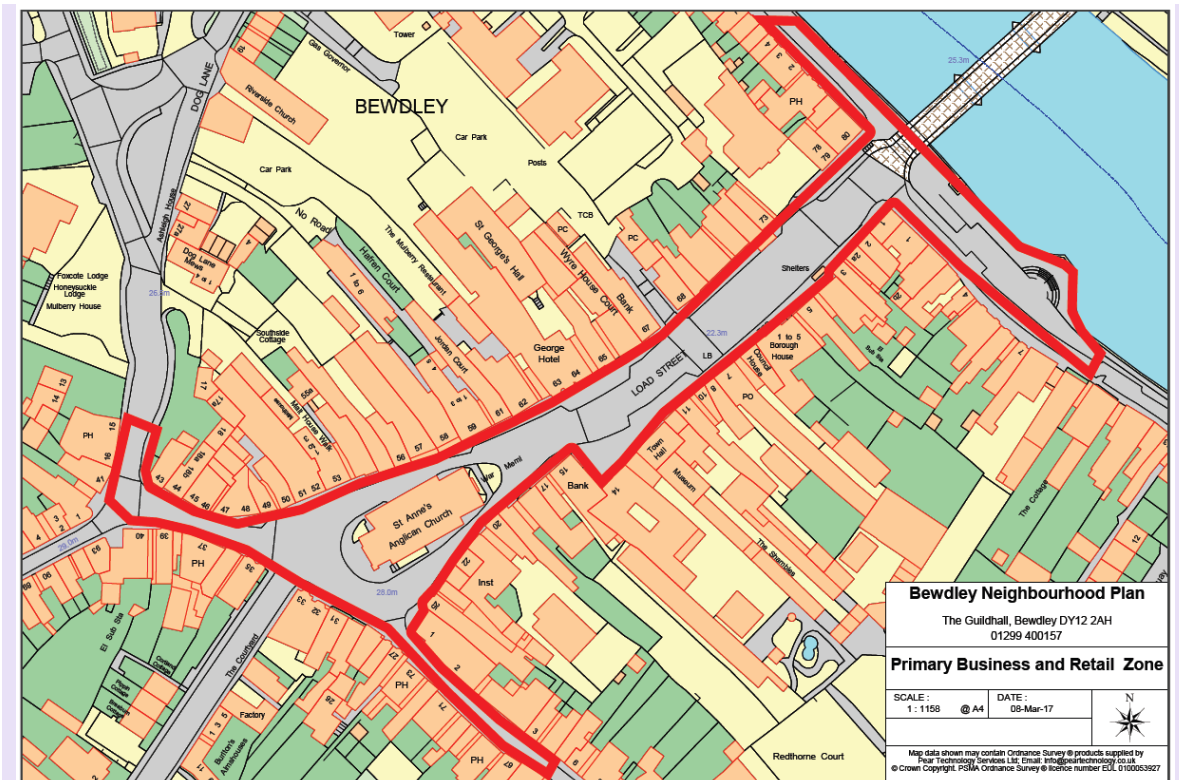
B) Proposals for new A1 uses in the retail zone will be supported,

C) In order to avoid an overconcentration of A5 (hot food takeaways) within the primary business and retail zone, the total number of A5 uses will be restricted to no more than 10% of the total number of units within the zone,

D) Proposals for uses within classes A2, A3, A4 and C1 in ground floor premises within the zone frontages will be supported provided that:

- The 'retail character' of the primary business and retail zone is not affected,
- The proposal does not result in a continuous frontage of more than three non-retail (A1) uses,
- The proposal will not cause the proportion of non-retail uses in the relevant frontage to exceed 50% taking into account both existing and permitted non-retail representation in the frontage concerned.

Exceptions to this requirement may be considered where the proposal would lead to the appropriate use of vacant premises where it can be demonstrated that it is unlikely to be use for retailing and it has been marketed as a retail shop for a period in excess of 12 months.



Map 3

- 6.1 Bewdley has been a thriving market town since 1376 when the first market was held. In the 1700s, manufacturing was the backbone of the local economy but the creation of the canal and railway systems in the 19th century put an end to this. While this would have been a blow to the local economy at the time, it led to the town becoming the picturesque tourist town that exists today. Bewdley therefore avoided the industrial redevelopments that the other two Wyre Forest towns endured at the time.
- 6.2 The biggest employment sector in Bewdley today is wholesale and retail. Bewdley faces the same challenges as other market towns when it comes to the High Street. As the transition is made to an internet dominated retail sector, it is vital to look to move with the times to ensure the long-term viability of this sector as the local shops are the life blood of the town.

- 6.3 Public consultation has shown that those who responded support the maintenance and enhancement of the market town status of Bewdley to strengthen the retail offerings and to attract more office or light industry to the area. As Bewdley lies within a commuter belt to larger conurbations such as Birmingham and Worcester, it is vital to create and maintain employment locally so as not to displace workers and keep money inside the local economy. The consultation also highlighted concerns regarding the lack of banking facilities and the shortage of parking spaces.



- 6.5 Bewdley Town Centre and Primary Business/Retail zone contains a broad range of shops and businesses that not only serve the local community but also encourage visitors to the town. In addition to several supermarkets, the town benefits from a variety of independent shops as well as cafes, restaurants, hairdressers, chemists and public houses. Bewdley's rural, riverside setting is an added attraction for shoppers, particularly during the summer months. Twice monthly markets selling a variety of craft, food and artisan items also serve to help maintain a strong sense of community and vibrancy.

- 6.6 Load Street, the main thoroughfare and 'town centre' of Bewdley, and whose name derives from lode, an old word for ferry, is notable for its width: this is because it once also served as the town's market place. It contains a variety of Georgian properties which are residential, i.e. mixed category flats above, with shops below. The business and primary retail zone sits



within the town's Conservation Area therefore business owners are encouraged to comply with the Planning Authority's 'Shop Front and Design' policy, which recognises that high quality design plays an important part in the viability and vitality of shopping areas.

6.7 Bewdley may be the smallest town within Wyre Forest District but its retailing function also serves a wide, rural community. Shoppers travel in from surrounding villages which are themselves limited in their choice of services and stores. The variety of shops in Bewdley enables people to make one trip for many reasons and avoid the necessity and expense of travelling further afield.

6.8 The range of shops and businesses is not the main reason for people loving the town according to the consultation summary of June 2016. This concluded



that "new business should be encouraged but not necessarily regardless of its type". Eighty-six percent of people who responded during consultation agreed with policy JLE1 in our 2017 Policies and Objectives consultation.

6.9 It is recognised that the town centre is the heart of the community and, as such, needs planning policies that support it as a positive and competitive environment which remains viable and vital in order to thrive.

POLICY JLE2 – FUTURE TOURISM & CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

New proposals that support tourism and cultural activities will be supported provided they:

- complement and, where possible, enhance the Town's character and street scene,
- are compatible with the size and scale of the existing settlement,
- do not have an unacceptable impact upon the existing road network,
- do not have an unacceptable on the Conservation Area or heritage assets.

- 6.10 Bewdley is widely recognised as a popular tourist destination. The town is home to the Severn Valley Railway, a heritage railway running 16 miles between Kidderminster and Bridgnorth with Bewdley the principal intermediate station. The West Midlands Safari Park, lies just out of the town, on the A456 towards Kidderminster and visitor numbers presently exceed 750,000 per year. Both venues are signposted on all motorways running through the Midlands.



- 6.11 The Bewdley Festival, featuring a variety of artistic performances, is held in the town each October, and Bewdley also hosts one of the largest inland river regattas in the country. The successful Bewdley Beer Festival is held each August Bank Holiday weekend. Bewdley also has a carnival which takes place every June. There is a distinguished music scene in the town, and Bewdley is particularly well known for its intimate music venues and its local festivals. Other attractions include the Queen Elizabeth II Jubilee Gardens that are positioned at the rear of Bewdley Museum and Severnside South..

- 6.12 Bewdley is on the south-eastern edge of the Wyre Forest, and there are many footpaths and cycle routes through the unspoilt woodlands. There is a popular Visitor Centre situated just outside Bewdley at Callow Hill on the road to Cleobury Mortimer, from where many waymarked trails through the forest start.

- 6.13 Bewdley Museum and the Tourist Information Centre explore the history of the town and have displays on local crafts and ancient skills such as coracle making, tanning, jewellery making, crochet. The Museum also stages occasional small exhibitions by contemporary local artists. It attracts around 200,000 visitors per year, includes a café, craft workshops, a programme of events, education, exhibitions, heritage weddings and a shop. It is a focal point for the local community and is joined to the Jubilee Gardens, a popular park and open space in the centre of Bewdley.



- 6.14 Tourism is clearly of major importance to Bewdley. It is therefore vital that future planning policy protects and enhances this aspect of the economy and at the

same time protects its natural and historic assets. Intensification of existing tourist attractions have to be carefully measured against additional traffic and effect on amenity, as well as compatibility with local infrastructure.

POLICY JLE3 – REDUNDANT & EMPTY TOWN CENTRE BUILDINGS

The use of empty buildings will be permitted in the town centre, where appropriate.

The adaptive re-use of redundant or functionally obsolete listed/non-listed or important buildings will be supported where this does not harm their essential character.

6.15 Bewdley's Primary Business and Retail Zone contains shop frontages at street level and flats/office space above. Any void spaces, whether above shops or elsewhere in the town centre create the opportunity for effective re-use.

6.16 During consultation, it was strongly recognised by a vast majority of those who responded that, whenever properties in the town centre become vacant, reuse should be encouraged and promoted, in sympathy with the character of the building concerned, conforming with paragraphs 85 and 118 of the NPPF.



OBJECTIVE D – To promote business by supporting provision of suitable employment land.

POLICY JLE4 – EMPLOYMENT LAND OPPORTUNITIES

Proposals for employment land which would facilitate start-up businesses and/or provide additional space for existing businesses, including B1, B2 and B8 will be supported, provided it can be demonstrated that there will be no adverse impacts upon residential areas in terms of noise, visual impact and amenity. Proposals for the use of land or buildings on existing employment sites for uses other than employment or encouragement of trade purposes will only be supported if the existing use is no longer economically viable and the site has been marketed for freehold or leasehold at a realistic market rate for at least a year without restriction.

- 6.17 It is accepted that there is need to create opportunities for people to work in Bewdley, in order to achieve sustainable growth as well as enable existing businesses to grow.
- 6.18 Large industrialisation within the Plan area is not an option which would be encouraged. However, there is a need to consider what land can be made available that would attract new employers who aim to create small/middle start-up units and flexible employment space.
- 6.19 The main type of employment in the area is focussed around tourism and leisure, with the West Midlands Safari Park, covering a site of over 200 acres, being the largest employer in the district.
- 6.20 Innovation and new enterprise is encouraged, provided it enables employment and demand can be demonstrated.

OBJECTIVE E – To preserve and promote Bewdley as a popular market town, with a regular events programme.

POLICY JLE5 – MARKETS

Development and expansion of viable outdoor and indoor markets throughout the town centre will be supported. Proposals for the development of land or buildings, to create a permanent outdoor and/or indoor market will be supported, as long as it is appropriately located and car parking/road safety issues are not compromised. Proposals for the development of suitable sites for holding events for the community will be supported.

- 6.21 Bewdley is an historic market Town. The history books show that Bewdley was granted its first market by King Edward III as far back as 1376. Regular markets have been held since then and become an integral part of the town centre attracting many visitors. The markets in Bewdley attract visitors which in turn provides potential for local shops, cafes and restaurants to benefit. The markets also provide local residents with variety and choice and creates a vibrant and unique environment and encourages visitors to the town.
- 6.22 In recent years the number and variety of stalls has increased and the area they cover has been extended. However, no regular indoor market as a suitably, large and well-lit venue has not been located, although potential for such a venue could be enabled in the future when the opportunity arises.

7 IMPROVING THE INFRASTRUCTURE (INF)

Consultation Key Findings

- Desire to improve traffic flow through the town, reduce congestion and speeding, and improve road safety for pedestrians and cyclists
- Should encourage more use of the by-pass
- More car parking spaces required in town
- Seek ways to improve public transport, particularly the local bus service between nearby towns and outlying villages

OBJECTIVE F - To improve traffic flow through the main thoroughfare of the town and seek methods to reduce congestion, pollution and speeding.

POLICY INF1 –TRAFFIC FLOW, ROAD SAFETY, CONGESTION AND POLLUTION

Proposals which would lead to increased traffic congestion in the main town thoroughfare, in particular Load Street, High Street, Welch Gate, Park Lane, Wyre Hill and Dowles Road will not be supported.

New developments which incorporate proposals to enable increased use of the Bewdley by-pass and reduce vehicular access via Welch Gate will be supported and encouraged, provided the development also meets the criteria in Section HS.

Proposals which would alleviate pressure on the traffic island linking the A456 with B4190 Kidderminster Road at the Safari Park and the junction with Habberley Road at Catchems End will be supported. This includes support for a mini roundabout arrangement at Catchems End.

- 7.1 Bewdley is a historic Georgian town set within a rural background. No major roads run through it. There are 4 gateways into Bewdley: via the B4190 (Kidderminster Road) which leads through the Town Centre and exits via the Cleobury Road and joins onto the Bewdley Bypass, the B4195 (Stourport Road) and the B4194 (Dowles Road). In 1987, a bypass was built with the aim of reducing traffic flow into Bewdley and decreasing pollution levels in Welch Gate, Bewdley, which is one of the narrowest and oldest residential streets in Bewdley.
- 7.2 Traffic congestion within Bewdley causes major inconvenience to road users, cyclists and pedestrians, and creates an unpleasant environment, particularly within the town centre. In addition, the resultant air pollution adversely affects

the quality of life of residents living in the town centre. To monitor the air pollution, an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) was declared in 2003.

- 7.3 The Plan seeks to minimise the impact of existing and additional congestion on the road network, particularly in the town centre and supports developments that encourage more use of the bypass road for through traffic. It is also a priority to lessen the impact of vehicles numbers, in particular HGVs, on the Grade 1 listed, historic road bridge over the River Severn. Any major increase in traffic volumes would be unacceptable and local concern for this has influenced the housing site preferences and criteria.
- 7.4 To help to improve Bewdley's transport issues over the longer term, Bewdley Town Council will continue to work with Worcestershire County Council to develop schemes to manage and mitigate traffic flow through the town as identified in the Local Transport Plan (4).
- 7.5 Traffic congestion in and around the Town Centre and at gateways into Bewdley is presenting significant and ongoing problems to residents, businesses and road users. While use of the Bewdley bypass is encouraged, there is little to prevent vehicles entering Bewdley Town Centre via the town's gateway roads. Despite weight restriction notices, heavy lorries continue to gain access through the Town Centre, including the B4190 and B4194.
- 7.6 The effect on the AQMA area around and within Welch Gate is detrimental to both health and safety. In addition, there are often long queues and crawling traffic causing bottlenecks and delays, due to traffic build-up, particularly at peak periods during the day. The effect on the historic Telford Road bridge, the only direct access into Bewdley Town Centre from the B4190 Kidderminster Road, has not been quantified but its historic importance and method of access is vital due to it being the only means by which to cross the river into the town and beyond.

POLICY INF2 – ROAD SAFETY

Proposals that reduce the speed of traffic through the main town thoroughfare, in particular Load Street, High Street, Welch Gate, Park Lane, Wyre Hill and Dowles Road will be supported.

Proposals for improving road safety e.g. via alternative methods of traffic flow through the town will be supported. Such proposals will need to demonstrate that they have considered the environmental and social impact and provide evidence of viability and benefit.

Proposals for shared spaces around the town centre that allow pedestrians, motorists and traders to utilise with mutual benefit will be supported.

- 7.7 Within the town's main thoroughfare, there are two pedestrian crossings (controlled via traffic light commands), there are no other designated crossings. Load Street narrows to allow traffic to drive one way around St Anne's Church and, at the rear of the church, three roads converge. Pedestrians' safety is compromised in such a location.



- 7.8 High Street is a highly populated residential narrow road, with numerous back alleys and courtyards, and several large houses which have been converted into flats. The area is also home to 5 churches and 8 almshouses. Groups of children, residents, visitors, including the elderly, regularly use this road and also to gain access to visit the public park, the Jubilee gardens.



- 7.9 High Street leads onto Load Street at a narrow junction adjacent to St Anne's Church. In two places the road narrows to an extent that only one car can travel in one direction at any time. Most of the entire length of the roadway only has a pavement on one side.

7.10 Welch Gate is also an extremely narrow residential road and, at peak periods, very busy. It has the added disadvantage of being the thoroughfare from the town for many large vehicles, particularly those serving local farms and outlying businesses along Dowles Road and beyond.



OBJECTIVE G – To improve car parking facilities in and around the town

POLICY INF3 – CAR PARKING

Proposals that enable increased public car parking on the Wribbenhall side of the river will be supported.

7.12 The need for improved car parking in and around Bewdley town centre is recognised. There are presently 3 privately owned 'Pay & Display' car parks: at the rear of The Redthorne Hotel, High Street, The George Hotel, Load Street, and rear of Bewdley Farm Shop in Dog Lane. There are also District Council



owned 'Pay & Display' car parks located at Dog Lane, Load Street and Gardener's Meadow. A considerable number of residents living in roads such as Severnside North and South, Lax Lane, High Street, Welch Gate, etc do not have private car parking space at their homes. The use of public car parks

therefore is essential, but impacts upon space available to visitors and shoppers.

- 7.13 As a tourist destination, the Town would benefit from some strategic innovation regarding parking. Wribbenhall, situated to the east of Bewdley, does not have any public parking, yet suffers similar issues to the west side of the town.
- 7.14 Bewdley's prosperity and popularity are dependent upon a thriving economy and the people who live in, work in and visit the town. It is a popular destination for retirement and relaxation, evidenced by the large number of caravan sites and holiday homes in the area. Bewdley also has an ageing population, some of whom choose not to drive or are unable to do so, but still need to reach a bank or building society neither of which are now available in Bewdley.
- 7.15 The effect of these closures has impacted significantly on trade in the town as residents, particularly those living in outlying villages around Bewdley who previously banked in town and were also able to shop, have been forced to seek other alternatives and use banks and building societies that have remained open in Kidderminster and Stourport-on Severn, or elsewhere and thus use facilities within these towns instead.
- 7.16 A reliable, regular 'bus service which serves the local and rural community as a whole and is available for daytime, evening and weekend travel would be welcomed. A significant majority of residents consulted agreed that improved accessibility is important.

OBJECTIVE I – To maintain and enhance the existing network of footpaths, cycleways and public rights of way to provide access to the surrounding countryside.

POLICY INF5 – FOOTPATHS AND CYCLEWAYS

Where possible, developments will be expected to establish publicly accessible links from development sites to the wider public rights of way and cycleway networks wherever possible.

Initiatives for improvements to and enhancement of public rights of way and cycleways will be supported.

The existing public rights of way network within the NP Area will be protected wherever possible.

Proposals which lead to the loss or degradation of any public right of way or cycleway will not be supported. Proposals to divert Public Rights of Way and cycleways should provide clear and demonstrable benefits for the wider community.

- 7.17 Bewdley's rural landscape includes part of the Wyre Forest, one of the largest areas of ancient woodland in the UK. Around two thirds of the forest have been designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), while a further fifth is listed as a Natural Nature Reserve. Dowles Brook flows through the heart of the forest, and the A456 also runs through the southern edge of the woodland.



- Historically, Bewdley has attracted walkers, cyclists and wildlife lovers due to its diverse landscape, magnificent woodland and panoramic views, incorporating the River Severn.
- 7.18 The North Worcestershire Path, a waymarked long-distance trail and also the starting point for the Worcestershire Way, runs 37 miles (60 km) from Bewdley to Birmingham. The path runs alongside the River Severn in Bewdley and follows the river to Upper Arley and beyond.
- 7.19 Route 45 of the National Cycle route turns north west into Bewdley and crosses the River Severn into a stretch of Wyre Forest.
- 7.20 Forestry England and Natural England own and manage large parts of Wyre Forest. Both organisations encourage public access and, consequently, the forest is popular with local people and visitors from the surrounding area and from across the West Midlands. Despite its popularity, however, there is no easy and safe route to get into Wyre Forest from Bewdley other than by car. Links between the town and the forest are limited and, for walkers and cyclists, in places they are even dangerous. Options for the less mobile are even more limited as it is also for those using wheelchairs or pushchairs.
- 7.21 The Town Council is committed to promoting projects that create a safe and fully accessible route from Bewdley into Wyre Forest, eliminating dangerous road crossings. A significant majority of those consulted agreed with the proposed policies.

- 7.22 With the current downward trend in public transport provision and national and local policy to reduce car travel and resultant pollution and health issues, the need for improved public footpaths and protection and retention of Public Rights of Way is vital. It will encourage and enable people to explore and enjoy the countryside.



- 7.23 Bewdley Town Council employs a Parish Lengthsman to maintain pathways in order to keep them clear and safe for all users. Worcestershire County Council is responsible for the management of the Public Rights of Way network in the county and this responsibility is carried out primarily by the Council's Countryside Service Access Team. They address issues such as vegetation growth, signposting and waymarking, repair and replacement of bridges, blocked paths, stiles and gates in need of repair and drainage and surfacing problems.
- 7.24 The Town Council recognises the importance of its Public Rights of Way and works in tandem with the County Council to preserve and maintain them. This policy received extremely strong support at consultation.

OBJECTIVE J – To enable improved linkages in and around Bewdley

- 7.25 The only access into Bewdley town centre from Wribbenhall, Kidderminster Road (B4190) and Stourport Road (B4195) is gained via the Telford Bridge, built by Thomas Telford in 1798. It is a three-span masonry arch bridge over the River Severn, 112 feet (34m) in length and 27 feet (8.2m wide). There has been a bridge at this location since 1447, each being destroyed and replaced. Severe flooding in 1795 destroyed the previous bridge. That bridge comprised five pointed stone arches. A stone gatehouse (tollhouse) on one pier was demolished in the 1960s.



- 7.26 The settlement of Wribbenhall is mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086. Prior to the bridge, a very early (possibly prehistoric) track crossed the river by ford and was responsible for the town's birth. This bridge is therefore a valued and historic feature of the town but remains vulnerable due to the volume of traffic using it, particularly heavy and large vehicles such as lorries delivering to local supermarkets, and other premises, as well as buses and coaches who have difficulty negotiating the narrow eastern approach. There are narrow pedestrian pathways on both sides but users' safety is compromised when vehicles drive recklessly over the bridge or too close to the side of the road.
- 7.27 A significant majority of those consulted welcomed proposals to create a footbridge over the river linking the town to Wribbenhall and the Severn Valley Railway and the open spaces along the river, including Riverside North Park and riverside caravan parks. The feasibility, appearance, cost and most suitable location of this proposal are future issues to be addressed.

8 PROTECTING THE COUNTRYSIDE

Consultation Key Findings

- Protecting the Green Belt, green fields, historic trees and the local wildlife is very important.
- Flooding of homes and premises is of concern, particularly at Wribbenhall.
- Uncertainty as to the effectiveness of current flood defences at Wribbenhall.
- Improved sports and recreation facilities would be welcomed.
- Improve air quality in the town centre.

OBJECTIVE K - To protect and enhance watercourses including the River Severn, Riddings Brook, Dowles Brook and Snuff Mill Brook and manage the effects of flooding.

POLICY PC1 – PROTECTING WATERCOURSES

Local habitats and wildlife corridors, including brooks and watercourses, should be protected and where possible enhanced, addressing identified recreational pressures.

Development proposals will be expected to provide appropriate treatment of foul water and runoff and demonstrate that there is no adverse risk of pollution of the water environment.

Development using land management techniques such as riparian buffers alongside sustainable drainage techniques will be supported.

- 8.1 Bewdley Town sits on the banks of the River Severn with the historic Town Centre surrounded by a sloping historic landscape, rural in character with small agricultural fields, hedgerows, coppice, orchards and the ancient woodland of the Wyre Forest on the slopes to the west of the river. There are many footpaths and bridleways across fields and along the riverside creating the opportunity for recreational access to green and open spaces. The fields, hedgerows and trees maintain a rich biodiversity which supports several rare species of flora and fauna which rely on corridors between the Wyre Forest and areas of Special Scientific Interest and the rivers and brooks. This is a rich area for walking and appreciating beautiful historic natural vistas.

- 8.2 In the 19th Century orchards adorned the slopes west of the river and Bewdley was the second largest producer of cherries in the UK, having large cherry markets and Apple days celebrating the apple harvest. In the 1950's and 60's these orchards have given way to the development of substantial housing estates including, Hales Park and Blossom Hill. There is now a move to reinstate small orchards and to restore a balance between housing need and the protection of the remaining green fields and Landscape Character on the Western slopes beyond the built settlement boundary (town centre). Protecting the remaining beautiful historic natural landscape, situated on the rising western slopes from the Severn Valley and the historic landscape character of the area surrounding the historic town of Bewdley, is a priority in this Neighbourhood Plan.

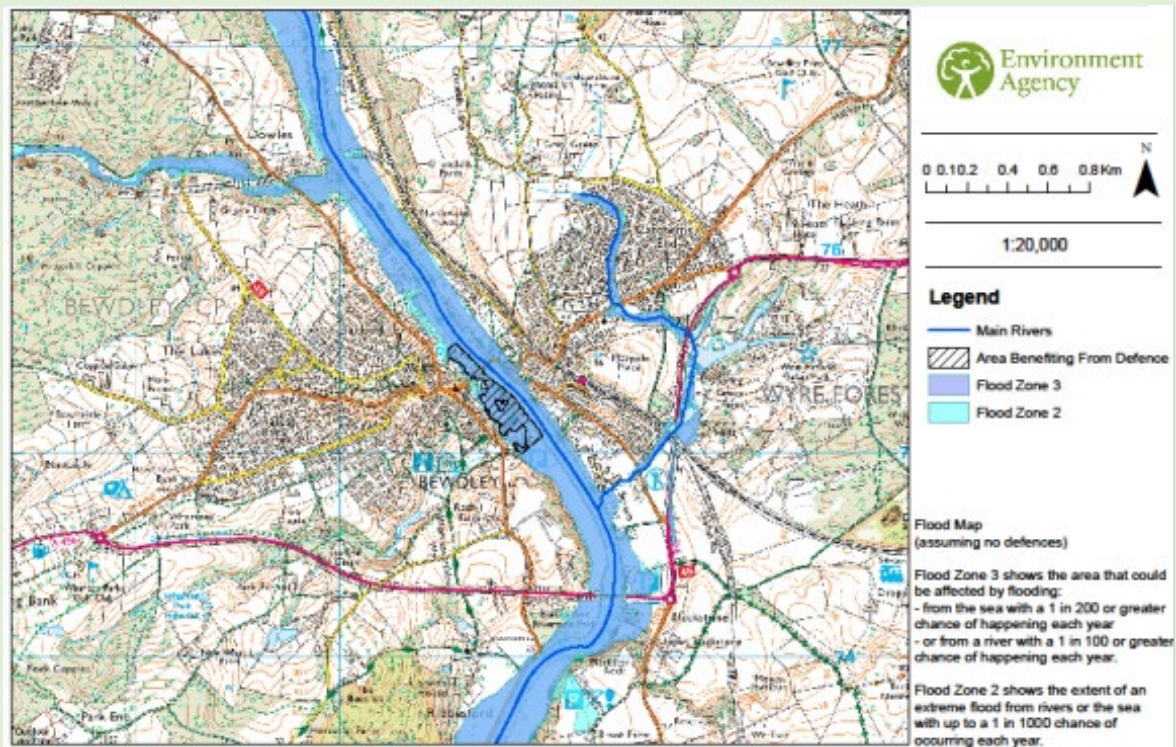


- 8.3 East of the river, Wribbenhall has a more sustainable road infrastructure and the priorities of this plan are to protect the countryside, woodland and escarpment land. Careful management of this area will ensure that we can maintain the separation of the three towns while providing some affordable housing and growth for Bewdley. The fields, farm land and Wassell Wood to the North of Habberley Road down to the river Valley also serve to protect separation from the urban areas. They also preserve the historic landscape character on both sides of the river including the wildlife corridors and the recreational vistas surrounding the ancient woodland and the locally listed Severn Valley Railway.
- 8.4 Protecting the riverside meadows and maintaining these valuable wildlife habitats and the green spaces, which provide rich leisure and recreation opportunities, is supported by residents in their consultation responses. The protection and enhancement of the picnic areas, riverside park, footpaths, bridleways and the formal sports grounds have also gained significant support throughout the consultations.

- 8.5 Trees in the town gardens and back land including into the Golden Valley through the Park and on the Railway Slopes on the East of the river make a significant contribution to the local environment enhancing the Conservation Area and the locally listed buildings. This plan also aims to provide a local strategy to support and enhance the retention and replacement of trees to supplement the local authority and national tree preservation policies.
- 8.6 The plan priorities also recognise the sensitive water management of our area. The River Severn and the three main brooks, Snuff Mill and Dowles to the West and Riddings Brook in Wribbenhall, provide extensive water courses and networks across the whole of the plan area. Each of these must be sensitively managed with regard to any proposed development. Ongoing management of flood alleviation at Beales Corner remains a priority in this plan.
- 8.7 Careful control of future development and management of all of the water courses is vital to protect from water pollution, to avert flooding, to avoid poor management of storm water and consequential flooding, erosion and to maintain the natural biodiversity of the area including wildlife corridors to and from the river and the forest.
- 8.8 The River Severn and its impact on Bewdley is clearly very important to the residents of Bewdley and protecting the water courses is strongly supported by the community.
- 8.9 The policy for protecting watercourses and water management is in line with the revised NPPF, paragraphs 155 to 165, and the WFDC emerging Local Plan. Neighbourhood Plans play an important role in contributing towards safeguarding the countryside and broader natural environment.



POLICY PC2 – ALLEVIATING THE EFFECTS OF FLOODING



Map 4

Schemes aimed at improving flood protection to properties, businesses and roads will be supported. This includes support for permanent flood defences at Beales Corner where temporary barriers currently exist. Where appropriate, new development proposals should demonstrate that any existing flood risk has been adequately mitigated. Where possible and appropriate, new development should aim to help reduce the overall level of flood risk in the area and beyond through the layout and form of the development and the appropriate application of sustainable drainage techniques.

- 8.10 In 2016 the Environment Agency embarked on a programme of Property Level Protection (Resilience)[PLP], which when complete will provide a range of flood resistance and resilience measures to 44 individual properties. Ref: Env Agency PLP Scheme and Environment Agency Policy Update 2017 “Managing the risk of future Flooding in Bewdley, Worcestershire.”

- 8.11 In conjunction with the PLP programme the temporary flood barriers will continue to be deployed, through a partnership approach with Bewdley Town Council and local community volunteers until at least March 2021.



- 8.12 If the deployment of temporary barriers ceases the PLP programme will not provide complete protection for some of the listed buildings. Keeping flood water from entering the properties through the doors will not protect the wattle and daub walls of the most historic houses at this location.
- 8.13 Permanent flood barriers at Beales Corner would provide a safer and sustainable solution, which would not only offer more protection to the listed buildings but would benefit the whole community by keeping the Telford Bridge open providing access to services for residents and care providers and keeping businesses open.
- 8.14 There is an overwhelming appreciation within the community of Bewdley of the need to alleviate the effects of flooding in Bewdley and in particular there was strong support for permanent flood defences at Beales Corner.

POLICY PC3 – ENHANCING RIVERSIDE LOCATIONS

Proposals to enhance the riverside to provide landscaped areas, formal parks and gardens for recreational purposes will be supported.

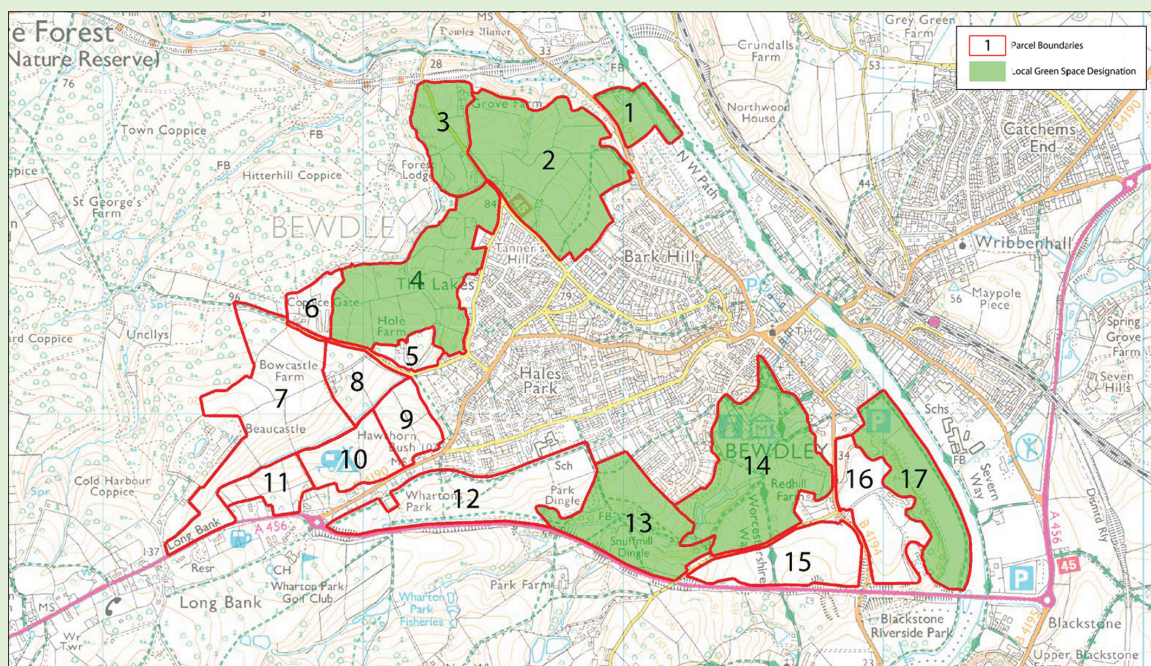
- 8.15 The green riverside spaces beyond the quay sides and car parks at Dog Lane and Gardeners Meadow incorporate the river towpaths and Worcestershire Way. These require ongoing maintenance to ensure public access and enhance recreation potential for more users.
- 8.16 Riverside North is currently a mix of offices, industrial units, residential, bowling club, rowing club and caravan site leading to a park, children's play area, wildlife area, farmland, riverside path and national footpath. The policy aims to enhance the development of this area.



OBJECTIVE L – To protect and enhance the open countryside setting of Bewdley including its open spaces, wildlife areas and green space separation from neighbouring towns to preserve the town's distinctive settlement area.

POLICY PC4 – PROTECTING OPEN SPACES

Major development on land parcels designated as Local Green Space of High Value (ref XX), shown in green on map 5, will not be supported. Proposals for development within parcels of low or medium value, which show a minimal impact on views of the surrounding countryside or features of high nature conservation, will be assessed on their merit.



Map 5

The following areas have been identified as significant and valued open spaces within the Neighbourhood Plan Area which fulfil the criteria of Local Green Space designation: Parcels 1, 2, 3, 4, 13, 14, 17.

Development on any Local Green Space, that would harm its openness or special character or its significance and value to the local community will not be permitted unless there are very special circumstances which outweigh the harm to the Local Green Space.

- 8.17 This area of Bewdley covers the slopes of the west side of the River Sever valley and is comprised of riverside and tributary meadows, farmland, valley side woodland and the ancient woodland of the Wyre Forest to the north-west. This area is drained by the small watercourses of Snuffmill Brook in the south and Hitterhill Brook in the north which drains into Dowles Brook 650m west of its confluence with the Severn.
- 8.18 Much of the area is crossed by numerous bridleways and footpaths which are public rights of way. These link Bewdley with the wooded parcels of Snuffmill, Rock Coppice and Burnt Wood to the south as well as Wyre Forest to the north. They form part of natural wildlife corridors containing a rich biodiversity of flora

and fauna and supporting the designations of National Nature Reserve for Wyre and a number of small plots given the SSSI classification.

- 8.19 The area provides many examples of the historic landscape characteristics (ref WCC/LCA) and setting for Bewdley and its Conservation Area. Protecting and preserving the views and landscape west of the Severn is a priority for its residents as evidenced by the overwhelming community support at consultation events.
- 8.20 This policy is compliant with the WFDC Local Plan Review policy 11C and the NPPF(2019) paragraphs 99 to 101.

OBJECTIVE M – To protect the identity of Bewdley as an historic riverside market town within its open countryside and woodland setting and ensure that new developments respect the landscape character.

- 8.21 The urban areas of Kidderminster, Stourport and Bewdley are separated by designated Green Belt. The function of the Green Belt is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open, it aims to check the development of large built up areas, prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another, safeguard the countryside from encroachment, preserve the setting and special character of historic towns and assist in urban regeneration by encouraging recycling of derelict and other urban land often known as brownfield sites.
- 8.22 The West Midlands designation of Green Belt for Bewdley went as far as the River Severn leaving the rural countryside setting of Bewdley west of the river with no Green Belt.
- 8.23 The community is strongly in agreement with the policy to protect areas of separation between the three neighbouring towns and prevent encroachment into the green spaces which separate them. This policy also meets the NPPF guidelines, paragraphs 133 and 136, concerning Green Belt conditions and is in line with the WFDC emerging Local Plan.
- 8.24 To maintain the historic character and setting of Bewdley it is vital that any future development is sustainable, recognising the limits of the historic road infrastructure, maintaining a connectivity with the Bewdley community and services while preserving and protecting the historic character of the surrounding countryside.
- 8.25 There are also many significant trees within the townscape on the valley slopes, town parkland in QE II Jubilee Gardens, Riverside North Park, in gardens and backland all contributing to the Conservation Area historic setting. An active programme of tree and hedgerow preservation and managed planting in the built area is essential to compliment the surrounding countryside setting.

Maintenance of the river banks, tow paths, the Worcestershire way paths and views up and downstream from the Grade 1 listed Telford Bridge also preserve, protect and enhance the historic character and setting of the Town.

9 HERITAGE & CHARACTER

Consultation Key Findings

- Bewdley is a picturesque, historic town in which the majority of its inhabitants love living
- Bewdley's historic buildings and riverside location are the town's most important characteristics
- Retention and protection of Bewdley's historic heritage and character is very important
- Bewdley should promote its heritage more successfully to encourage visitors

OBJECTIVE N – To protect and preserve the historic environment and architectural features of Bewdley, comprising the town centre, adjoining residential streets, part of the River Severn, adjoining river frontages and other landscape features and part of the old settlement of Wribbenhall.

POLICY HC 1 – HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE ASSETS

Proposals for development within Bewdley's Designated Conservation Area should consider the effect of such development on the historic character and special features of the following (as defined in the most recently adopted Wyre Forest District Council Conservation Area Character Appraisal, the National Heritage List for England and Adopted Local Heritage Lists) and demonstrate that their character and significance within the setting of Bewdley has been respected and preserved in respect of:

- Designated Heritage assets which include listed buildings and Conservation Areas and their associated features
- Undesignated heritage assets which include entries on the adopted Local Heritage Lists for Bewdley and the Severn Valley Railway as maintained by WFDC
- Classified Area of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
- Historic sites and monuments, including Bewdley's (Telford) Bridge and Statue of Stanley Baldwin, 1st Earl Baldwin of Bewdley
- Ancient woodland including Wyre Forest and Wassell Wood

Enhancement of designated heritage assets and maintenance of local distinctiveness and the character of identified features will be supported.

- 9.1 Protecting, preserving and enhancing the Heritage and Character of Bewdley is fundamental to the objectives of this Neighbourhood Plan. The 1968 Conservation Area designation, reviewed in 1978, led to a more sensitive approach to the redevelopment of riverside warehouses for residential use and the existing listed buildings. Styles Mill and Old Tannery Court are both examples of Bewdley's 19th Century commercial trade and these warehouses are now redeveloped for housing. Beyond the Conservation Area are various Listed Buildings including several lining the lower part of Wyre Hill to the east and the All Saints Church to the west of the Severn.
- 9.2 The most significant structure in our town is the gateway bridge built by Thomas Telford in 1798. This was the third Bewdley bridge and is located back on the site of the first bridge built in 1447. This Grade 1 Listed monument is currently registered "at risk." The Telford Bridge Toll House was removed in the 1960's. The quay walls and the site of the old bridge (civic space) now provides a setting for our twice monthly Riverside markets. In 1984 the Bewdley bypass and a second river bridge was built downstream at Blackstone. This new road was built to reduce congestion, pollution in Welch Gate and to alleviate pressure on the Telford Bridge and the Conservation Area.
- 9.4 In addition to the listed buildings there are many other buildings and monuments which have been registered on the Local Heritage List produced by the local planning authority in collaboration with the community. The Severn Valley Railway buildings and station are individually listed for their distinctive features.
- 9.5 Bewdley's historic landscape setting with slopes adorned by numerous fruit trees, ancient woodland and farmland was reduced in the mid-20th Century to make way for housing developments. Historic buildings along the river front were also lost due to a lack of respect and vision for the Town's historic character and heritage. In recent years, more sensitive development and



Conservation within the Town Centre, the designation of a Conservation Area and the Town Council heritage market strategy are providing an opportunity to restore the Heritage Character of the Town. A proactive attitude towards protection, preservation and enhancement of our heritage assets and the promotion of the Town's historic character for tourism is at the heart of this Neighbourhood Plan.

- 9.6 The historic town of Bewdley on the banks of the River Severn has a conservation area (see Map x) of 42.8 hectares designated in 1968 and reviewed in 2002. The Conservation Area is, “an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character of which it is desirable to preserve and enhance,” (P(LBCA)A 1990, s.69(1)) The Local Authority (LA) Local Heritage List (LHL) has almost 150 buildings and monuments listed. The Local Heritage list drawn from heritage assets that are valued as distinctive elements of the local historic environment by the community and the LA includes cottages, buildings, the old school, old pubs, a telephone box and walls. The many



historic features of the Severn Valley Railway including viaducts, the station buildings, goods sheds, bridges and signal boxes also feature in the Local Heritage List. Many of the LHL assets can be found beyond the designated Conservation Area into Wribbenhall and west of the Town centre. Paragraph 185 of the NPPF highlights the need for supporting a positive strategy for conservation and preservation of the historic environment, particularly those heritage assets most at risk due to neglect, or decay or other threats.

- 9.7 The Wyre Forest is a nationally significant area of Ancient Woodland. It starts in the North West of the plan area. The Dowles Brook travels down from the forest providing a wildlife corridor from the forest to the River Severn. A triple SSSI lies adjacent to Dowles Bridge and the B4194. The historic ancient woodland of the Wyre Forest supported many forest crafts and was the economic heart of the area. Economic forestry continues and the Wyre Land Trust actively manages the Conservation of the Wyre Forest and Wassell Wood east of the river. The farmland beyond the forest at Ruskin Land is managed by the Guild of St George. Through collaboration with the Wyre Land Trust Conservation of the forest and agricultural land and restoration of heritage practices, Conservation and landscape protection is undertaken. Given the rich history and heritage of the town it is crucial that the historic environment is protected.
- 9.8 There is overwhelming support from the community for the protection of the historic environment and the Heritage and Character objectives in this Neighbourhood Plan. The Conservation Area and the Local Heritage List establish the heritage assets for Bewdley. The Planning legislation contained within P(LBCA)A 1990 defines both Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings, both of which are designated heritage assets as defined by the NPPF Glossary, the protection of which is fundamental to the historic character of the town.

OBJECTIVE O – To ensure that future developments or changes of use enhance the existing character of Bewdley.

POLICY HC 2 – PROTECTION OF THE TOWN CENTRE & CONSERVATION AREA

Proposals that retain the provision of A1 (shops), A2 (financial and professional services), A3 (restaurants and cafes) and A4 (Drinking Establishments) uses will be supported in the town's Primary Business and Retail Zone as defined in Map 3. Proposals for commercial, office, tourism, cultural, residential and retail (including A5 hot food takeaway) uses will be supported within the Zone provided they:

- Complement and enhance the appearance and character of the town
- Are compatible with the size and scale of the existing town centre
- Do not have an unacceptable impact on the existing road network

- 9.9 The current use of buildings in the Town Centre and designated Conservation Area must respect the special architectural or historic interest of the listed buildings. Bewdley's economy is now based on heritage and tourism and its current and future economic prosperity is based on the conservation, protection and enhancement of the heritage buildings and the historic character of the riverside town.

- 9.10 Historic England report 21.09.17 “Heritage Boost to England’s Economy” recognises the importance of heritage and tourism to the economic prosperity of historic towns. Development and uses of buildings within the Conservation Area which provide an economic opportunity to protect and preserve the heritage buildings is vital.
- 9.11 The social value of our Heritage and Town Character has been strongly demonstrated in the consultation responses, where individuals and our community has shown overwhelming support (March 2017) for the Heritage and Character objectives in this Neighbourhood Plan.
- 9.12 The NPPF, paragraph 192, supports the protection of heritage assets.



OBJECTIVE P – To ensure that shop frontages and signage are in keeping and enhance the historic character of Bewdley.

POLICY HC 3 – SHOP FRONT DESIGN

Shop fronts within the Town Centre Conservation Area (see Map xx) will be expected to reflect its traditional appearance and character as defined by the most recently adopted Wyre Forest District Council Shop-Front Design Policy.

- 9.13 The buildings in the Town Centre reflect Bewdley’s heritage character. Each building is a heritage asset creating an historic street scene. The tourism economy is important to the prosperity of the Town and well-designed signage on shops and businesses which complement the Town’s historic buildings is crucial.
- 9.14 There is significant community support for enhancing the commercial premises with signage that complements the historic character of the buildings. The WFDC shop front design policy, and the revised NPPF(2018) all support this policy.

POLICY HC 4 – SHOP SIGNAGE & ADVERTISING

Facias and projecting signage are to be kept to a minimum, illumination only by means of external spotlights (not internally illuminated facias or strip lights) and will be required to be constructed of traditional or appropriate composite materials. In all cases, advertisements and signage will be supported where it is of a high standard of design, located on and relate well to the premises and business they serve and be in character and keeping with the street scene.

- 9.15 Facias and sign need to complement the character of the buildings in order to enhance the Conservation Area and protect the heritage character of the town.
- 9.16 The community support the case for a high standard of design and the use of signage which is in character and keeping with the street scene and the historic environment.
- 9.17 Protecting the visual impact of signage on heritage assets and buildings in the Conservation Area is supported in the emerging WFDC Local Plan. Paragraph 132 of the NPPF(2018), regarding listed buildings, give guidance for the appearance of building frontages and this should apply to any attached signs.

Monitoring Arrangements

- 10.1 The Government requires local planning authorities to produce Monitoring Reports to identify the effects of implementation of the Local Plan, in order that any unforeseen effects may be appropriately addressed at an early stage. It is considered that the annual WFDC Monitoring Report, together with a 5 year review of this NDP is considered sufficient.