

- pitch targets for travellers;
- deliverable sites for residential pitches for the period 2014-19 to set against targets;
- identification of broad locations for further developable residential sites for travellers over the period 2019-2031;
- identification of need for, and approach to, the provision of transit sites for the plan period;
- consideration of the need for, and approach to, provision for travelling showpersons within the county for the plan period;
- consideration of the need for a rural exceptions policy to enable sites to be brought forward solely as affordable gypsy and traveller sites; and
- consideration of support for the authorisation of long-term unofficial sites where they meet the criteria in policy H4 above or the making available of alternative provision where they are lost for whatever reason.

5.1.24 A pitch is defined as the 'area of land on a gypsy and traveller caravan site developed for a single family.' A plot means a pitch on a "travelling showpeople" site (often called a "yard"). This terminology differentiates between residential pitches for "gypsies and travellers" and mixed-use plots for "travelling showpeople", which may/will need to incorporate space or to be split to allow for the storage of equipment.

5.1.25 As at January 2015*, there are 114 authorised residential pitches within Herefordshire with a further 21 pitches on unauthorised, but tolerated sites. Numbers of caravans on these sites have fluctuated over the past two years from 148 to 161 and averaging 157. Some pitches accommodate more than one caravan.

* Caravan count conducted by Herefordshire Council (January 2015)

5.1.26 The private sector may need to provide for further residential site needs until the Travellers' Sites Document is adopted in 2016 and policy H4 sets out the basis upon which planning permission will be granted during this period. The criteria in this policy may also apply when the defined need for residential gypsy and traveller sites has been met, yet further need is accepted.

5.1.27 In the same way that a rural exception policy is applied to housing development, rural exception sites can also be applied to affordable traveller sites and the Travellers' Sites Document will consider this issue. A rural exception site policy enables small sites to be used, specifically for affordable traveller sites in perpetuity, in small rural communities, that would not normally be used for traveller sites.

5.1.28 The assessment of need for transit sites or plots for travelling show people will be reviewed as part of the work for the Travellers' Sites Document. Should any need arise in the interim; proposals will need to satisfy the criteria set out in Policy H4.

5.1.29 In bringing proposals forward it will be important to ensure that sites are appropriately landscaped in order to limit their visual impact and should provide access to local facilities and services such as shops, schools and healthcare. It is also important to recognise that provision is included to meet the live-work nature of gypsies and travellers and adequate provision is made for play space for children.

Social and community facilities

5.1.30 The Core Strategy aims to achieve sustainable communities across Herefordshire and improve the well-being of its people. This requires an effective balance between the provision of new housing and employment and providing the social and community facilities required to support growth. There is a need to support and seek improvements to local services and facilities; particularly in rural areas where

facilities have been in decline since the post-war period. Less prosperous groups in remote rural areas are arguably in a worse position than similar income groups in towns, because their access to services, employment, leisure and shopping facilities is severely limited. For people living in the rural areas, access to essential facilities and services depends on access to a car or living close to a public transport route.

- 5.1.31 The lack of local services and facilities in rural areas and their increasing concentration in the towns has been identified as a key issue in Herefordshire. Included within the ambitions of the Herefordshire Community Strategy, are the retention and improvement of services and facilities and the provision of excellent training and learning opportunities - for people of all ages within the county.
- 5.1.32 Social and community facilities can be defined as physical facilities for different individuals and communities, which are provided by a range of organisations (public, private and voluntary). They provide for the health, welfare, social, educational, spiritual, recreational, leisure and cultural needs of the community. These facilities play an important role in the development of a vibrant community by creating a sense of place and providing a place for people to meet and interact socially. They also offer services that are essential for education, health and well-being; and support community cohesion and benefit the general quality of life of residents.
- 5.1.33 Social and community facilities can include: public services, community centres and public halls, arts and cultural facilities including theatres, public art and heritage centres; policing and criminal justice facilities, fire and ambulance services, health and education facilities including GP surgeries and NHS walk-in centres; public houses, local shops, public toilets, youth centres, social care facilities including day centres and child care facilities; places of worship, and services provided by the community and voluntary sector - for example scout and guide premises.

Policy SC1 – Social and community facilities

Development proposals which protect, retain or enhance existing social and community infrastructure or ensure that new facilities are available as locally as possible will be supported. Such proposals should be in or close to settlements, have considered the potential for co-location of facilities and where possible be safely accessible by foot, by cycle and public transport.

New development that creates a need for additional social and community facilities that cannot be met through existing social facilities - will be expected to meet the additional requirements through new, or extension of existing, provision or by developer contributions which meet the relevant tests of paragraph 204 of the NPPF .

Proposals involving the provision or expansion of social and community facilities will be expected to provide publicly accessible toilets (including facilities for disabled people and baby changing).

Existing facilities will be retained, unless it can be demonstrated that an appropriate alternative facility is available, or can be provided to meet the needs of the community affected; or it can be shown that the facility is no longer required, viable or is no longer fit for purpose; and where appropriate, it has been vacant and marketed for community use without success. Viable alternative facilities must be equivalent to those they replace, in terms of size, quality and accessibility.

The provision or improvement of higher education facilities and the continuing enhancement of existing, or provision of new, training and skills facilities will be actively promoted.

- 5.1.34 Population growth will generate a range of service needs throughout Herefordshire, particularly concentrated within the major growth locations, and it is essential that these service needs are supported by appropriate levels of social and community infrastructure. This should come forward either as an integral part of the development (adaptable, mixed use and made available at an early stage), or by way of a developer contribution/Community Infrastructure Levy monies which meet the relevant tests of paragraph 204 of the NPPF.
- 5.1.35 Notwithstanding the diverse spatial requirements of local clubs, societies and faith communities, the council is moving towards the co-location of community premises such as meeting halls, places of worship and schools - for example, a mix of community uses/resources at one location to encourage efficient use of space and integrated provision to meet the needs of all sectors of our community. The council recognises however, that whilst shared space will be a suitable way forward for some, there are many who require their own space for activities, including worship and teaching.

Loss of existing facilities

- 5.1.36 Local retail premises, village halls, churches and public houses, particularly in the rural areas are often at the heart of the community and provide a place for the local community to meet, to use function rooms, to socialise and to fulfil the day to day convenience needs of the local community. In some locations it is becoming increasingly difficult to retain services, shops and public houses; however it is essential that support is given to enable businesses to continue to serve the local community. In such cases, flexibility should be given to enable local shops, services or public houses to diversify into ancillary retail and tourism opportunities or community ownership through the 'Community Right to Bid' process. This flexibility may enable the business to continue to serve the local community. Where a business is shown to be no longer viable, the first alternative should be to investigate whether an alternative community use is possible. In order to demonstrate that alternative community uses have been considered, evidence of marketing for a period of at least 12 months should be provided with any proposals involving the loss of community facilities.

Education and skills

- 5.1.37 Some of the main socio-economic outcomes of the Sustainable Community Strategy are to improve educational attainment, increase the number of young people entering education or training at 16 and create a highly skilled workforce. These are also wider regeneration objectives of various agencies and important components of delivering the economic vision for Herefordshire. The council is therefore exploring the potential for a university gateway at Hereford in order to provide opportunities for local people to access jobs in growth sectors, including green technologies and help the city become a magnet for businesses in knowledge intensive industries. In doing so, the skills of the current labour market will be improved and the knowledge and research infrastructure aligned with particular growth sectors of the economy.

Culture

- 5.1.38 The council also acknowledges the contribution that culture can make to the economy. Culture is fundamental to the character of Herefordshire, with national and local research showing that it is important to people, and has the potential to make us happier and healthier; as well as providing opportunities for social interaction and learning. However, the rural nature of Herefordshire, with its dispersed communities and limited public transport, means that access to cultural facilities can be difficult. One of the aims of Herefordshire's Cultural Strategy 2008-18 is to facilitate easy and affordable access to high quality cultural activities and facilities for all.