

Proposed Neighbourhood Development Plan

November 2015



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**Community Rights
Programme**

Contents

Notice

Introduction

1. Background to our Group Parish and Neighbourhood Plan
2. National and local planning context
3. The process of producing the Plan
4. The Plan area

Our Community: Vision, Issues and Objectives

5. Vision, Issues and Objectives
6. Promoting a sustainable and thriving community – Policy HFSP1
7. Development strategy – Policy HFSP2

Our Future Housing

8. Meeting housing needs: housing development and phasing – Policy HFSP3
9. New homes in Stoke Prior – Policy HFSP4
10. New homes in Risbury – Policy HFSP5
11. New homes in Steen's Bridge – Policy HFSP6
12. Provision of affordable housing – Policy HFSP7
13. Design criteria for housing and sites – Policy HFSP8

Our community facilities

14. Development and retention of community facilities
 - Policy HFSP9: Development of community services and facilities
 - Policy HFSP10: Retention of community services and facilities

Our roads, footpaths and transport

15. Highways and transport infrastructure – Policy HFSP11

Our businesses

16. Developing and supporting local businesses – Policy HFSP12
17. Broadband infrastructure – Policy HFSP13

Our environment

18. Surface and foul water drainage – Policy HFSP 14
19. Renewable energy – Policy HFSP15
20. The natural environment – Policy HFSP16
21. Protecting local heritage – Policy HFSP17

22. Monitoring and delivery

Annexe 1: Summary of Parish Action Plan

Annexe 2: List of supporting documents available on-line

Notice

This proposed Neighbourhood Development Plan for Humber, Ford & Stoke Prior is submitted to Herefordshire Council under Regulation 15 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012, by Humber Ford and Stoke Prior Group Parish Council.

The Council resolved to submit the proposed Plan at its meeting on 18 November 2015.

18 November 2015

1. Background to our Group Parish and Neighbourhood Plan

- 1.1 Our Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) may be thought of as a vision, a summary and a guide: a vision of how we would like to see the various parts of our Group Parish evolve over the next generation; a summary of the views of all our residents who have joined in the extended process of gathering the information about what everyone thinks; a guide for the future by providing the principles to be followed to achieve our vision.
- 1.2 Our Group Parish lies a couple of miles south east of Leominster. It is rural in character with the village of Stoke Prior in the north-west and the slightly smaller village of Risbury in the south-east. There are six outlying hamlets; Humber, Fairmile, Steen's Bridge, Marston Stannett, Wickton and Ford.

In 2014 the Group Parish recorded its 40th anniversary, being an amalgamation of three former civil parishes in 1974. They were Humber (which included Risbury), Stoke Prior and, what was then the smallest parish in the County, Ford. These are now organised into two separate parishes (Humber and Ford & Stoke Prior) but under one Group Parish Council.

The outline of the Group Parish is reminiscent of that of the Isle of Wight, as indicated in the NDP logo. The land in general is undulating and rises from Ford in the west which is some 70m (230ft) above sea level, to Risbury and Marston in the east which are some 170m (550ft) above sea level.

In 2008 the Group Parish Council published a *Group Parish Guide*, which described the life, features and history of the parishes. This included in chapter 11 the results of a brief survey by questionnaire of the views of residents about life in the Group Parish and its future. The Guide also included the following (chapter 1):

"One of the intriguing aspects of our Parish is how 'ordinary' it is. We have (as far as we know) no links with famous people, no great houses to visit and no common land (except a triangle by Norman's Lane) – not even a village green. We are a pastoral community with which others can readily identify. And yet there are aspects worthy of note in addition to the quiet unspoilt countryside, the continuance of fairly traditional farming (for how long?) and some splendid views to the north, the south and especially west towards Wales. Foremost among these features must be the strong links with the distant past. There is history in these lanes and fields, though much of the detail is now lost. The iron age fort at Risbury and links with the Roman occupation come first."

- 1.3 At the time of the NDP questionnaire (see below) there were 270 homes in occupation and about 560 residents aged 16 or over living in the Group Parish.

Details of population changes of the three constituent parts of the Group Parish since 1801 can be found in Appendix 3 of the Parish Guide. The villages are mostly very rural in character, having grown slowly since 1960 out of dispersed farms and cottages, and still retain many open green spaces with views over surrounding countryside. New housing development has generally consisted of either individual dwellings, agricultural building conversions such as The Bury in Stoke Prior, or small developments such as the 8 houses built in the 1980s north-west of *The Lamb Inn*. In the hamlets and open countryside there have also been some new dwellings, but these have been much more restricted by planning policies in recent years.

- 1.4 The number of facilities in the Group Parish is not great. The only pub is *The Lamb Inn* in Stoke Prior, and that reopened in December 2014 having been closed for two years. There is no shop, but we have a part time post office in Stoke Prior. Risbury and Stoke Prior each have a village hall, but the latter has a difficult approach up long steep steps and virtually no car parking. Each hall is run by an active committee of local residents. Ford, Stoke Prior and Humber each have an Anglican church, but the one remaining Methodist Chapel in Risbury closed at the end of 2013. There is a thriving Primary School on the eastern edge of the village of Stoke Prior but many local children go to other schools because these have an associated or nearby pre-school/nursery which they have attended.
- 1.5 The 2008 *Group Parish Guide* concluded with a section on 'The Future', and noted the challenges which the community would face, and the inevitable need for change and development. These included: pressure for building more houses in rural areas; the increasing average age of residents and the consequent need for different types of housing and facilities; the difficulty for young people to afford houses in the community; new agricultural practices and opportunities for diversification; greater opportunities for people working from home as information technology improves; an increasing demand for leisure facilities for both tourists and local people; increasing pressure from new traffic on our narrow roads and the need to maintain these better; the desire to protect our countryside and the rural nature of our villages.
- 1.6 As the tier of local government closest to residents, our Group Parish Council can help shape the future of our community and tackle these challenges in a way which local people want. We can try to influence policies and decisions, and liaise with Herefordshire Council and other agencies to get things done. We can also take action ourselves on a range of matters.

A new way to shape our future came in the 2011 Localism Act, with the opportunity to prepare of our own Neighbourhood Development Plan. This is a statutory planning document, containing policies to guide future planning development. Many parishes in Herefordshire are taking advantage of this opportunity, and in 2013 the Group Parish Council decided to embark on our own Plan.

The following introductory sections explain what a Neighbourhood Development Plan is and summarise how the Plan has been drawn up in consultation with everyone in the community.

2. National and local planning context

2.1 A Neighbourhood Development Plan is a new type of planning document. It is part of the Government's new approach to planning, which aims to give local people more say about what goes on in their area. This is set out in the *Localism Act 2011* which came into force in April 2012. Although the Government's intention is for local people to decide what goes on in their area, the *Localism Act* sets out some important requirements. One of these is that all Neighbourhood Plans must be in line with higher level planning policy, namely the *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF, 2012) and – for Herefordshire – the *Herefordshire Local Plan* (2014).

2.2 The NPPF retains the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development', as defined by five principles: (1) living within the planet's environmental limits; (2) ensuring a strong, healthy and just society; (3) achieving a sustainable economy; (4) promoting good governance; and (5) using sound science responsibly.

2.3 Neighbourhood Plans are required to be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Local Plan (Development Plan) of the Local Planning Authority. "*Once a Neighbourhood Plan has demonstrated its general conformity with the strategic policies of the Local Plan and is brought into force, the policies it contains take precedence over existing non-strategic policies in the Local Plan for that neighbourhood, where they are in conflict.*" (extract from para.185, NPPF 2012). At the centre of the *Herefordshire Local Plan* is The *Core Strategy* for the period 2011-31, which underwent independent examination in February 2015 and is scheduled for adoption in 2015.

2.4 The policies and proposals of our own Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) follow the principles of the NPPF and are in general conformity with Herefordshire's Local Plan. They set out the clear wishes of the community of Group Parish in respect of the management and control of development to attain appropriate sustainable growth within the Humber, Ford & Stoke Prior Neighbourhood Plan Area.

2.5 Once this NDP is adopted as part of the statutory development plan for the Humber, Ford & Stoke Prior Plan Area, it will be a primary consideration when determining planning applications within the Plan Area.

2.6 Additionally the Plan has been prepared in strict accordance with all relevant primary and secondary legislation – principally Schedule 4B of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, as amended by the Localism Act 2011, and the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 – to ensure that it comprises a set of policies that are procedurally sound in their preparation and in accordance with the 'basic conditions', which in summary require Neighbourhood Plans to:

- Have regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State;
- Demonstrate that they continue to offer protection to any buildings or landscapes of value;
- Contribute towards the achievement of sustainable development;

- Be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the LPA development plan; and
- Demonstrate compliance with all relevant EU obligations.

The compliance of the Plan with the tests set out above is demonstrated within the Basic Conditions Statement that accompanies the Plan and is available as an appendix.

3. The process of producing our Plan

- 3.1 During 2012-13 the Group Parish Council discussed the opportunity offered by the 2011 Localism Act to prepare our own Neighbourhood Development Plan. The Annual Parish Meeting of May 2013 had the theme 'Localism in Action' at which parishioners discussed producing our own NDP, and this was followed by a decision by the Group Parish Council in May 2013 to apply for designation of the Group Parish as a Neighbourhood Area – the first step to possibly developing a Plan.
- 3.2 However, to ensure that there was better understanding of what an NDP was, and that there was a general consensus to proceed with one, the Council prepared an explanatory leaflet which was delivered personally to every household by volunteers during August and early September 2013. With the leaflet was a response form asking if residents supported embarking on an NDP and asking for volunteer helpers. 182 responses were received (67% of households), with 95% of respondents in favour of undertaking a Plan. Many residents offered to help, including more than 20 willing to serve on a Steering Committee.
- 3.3 In September 2013 the Group Parish Council voted unanimously to embark on a Plan, and set up a Steering Committee, consisting of five councillors and five other residents, supported by the Clerk, to construct the Plan and see it through to adoption. The Steering Committee has met on average approximately every four weeks, with working groups being set up from time to time to deal with particular issues.
- 3.4 Residents have been kept informed at each stage of the process through the parish web site and through *The Parish Pump* newsletter which is delivered to every house in the Group Parish each month. In addition the Clerk has, with the approval of those included, compiled a list of email addresses covering some 60% of households and using this channel sends out updates to parishioners on progress with the Plan.
- 3.5 Between October 2013 and March 2014 the initial work of setting up the project was done, including setting a project plan and successfully applying for funds to cover the costs, from a government grant from the *Supporting Communities in Neighbourhood Planning* programme, and also an award from the *Big Lottery Awards for All* programme.

3.6 The first task was to gather the views of local people. A Consultation Statement is available as an appendix on the website which explains how this was done, summarises the responses, and gives links to all of the documentation for the consultations. However, in brief, the information gathering started with public meetings in four parts of the Group Parish in April 2014 under the title *Your Community, Your Future*. Nearly 40% of residents attended one of the four meetings. From the views expressed and from similar work in other parishes a detailed questionnaire was constructed. This was taken to every household by a team of 24 volunteer distributors in late May. In nearly every case the distributor was able to explain the nature of the NDP process to each of the residents they visited, to underline its importance and then to return to the house to collect the completed questionnaire in early June. An excellent return of 82% of all residents aged 16 or more was achieved, and this was subsequently shown to be a good cross-section of our society with all age groups represented. In addition a land survey questionnaire was returned by 41 households and a young people's survey produced 72 responses (not far off 100%) from those aged 5 to 15 years.

3.7 An analysis and full report on the data collected in the questionnaires was compiled by Data Orchard CIC and passed to the Steering Committee in August 2014. The information gathered was then incorporated into a second document entitled *Our Emerging Plan* which was again delivered to every household by our team of distributors in October 2014. The Plan set out a vision for the future, with issues and options which might form the basis of our emerging NDP. A short questionnaire was included asking for the reactions of residents to the proposals so far: the replies were collected by the distributors, and just under 70% of households responded. In parallel with this, three drop-in events were held where anyone could call in to meet members of the Committee and discuss the contents of the document.

3.8 With the help and advice from a professional Planning Consultant, the Steering Committee produced the first draft of the final Neighbourhood Plan in December 2014. This was based on the proposed policies *Our Emerging Plan*, taking into account the views of residents.

3.9 A Neighbourhood Development Plan is a statutory planning document, so must be concerned with issues relevant to 'development' which is subject to planning controls. Not everything raised during the consultations is therefore appropriate to include in the Plan's policies, even though some of them are major concerns (for example highways maintenance and broadband). These issues will be tackled outside of the planning policies of the NDP, by action to be overseen by the Parish Council over the coming months and years in a separate Parish Action Plan, and Annex 1 gives an overview of this.

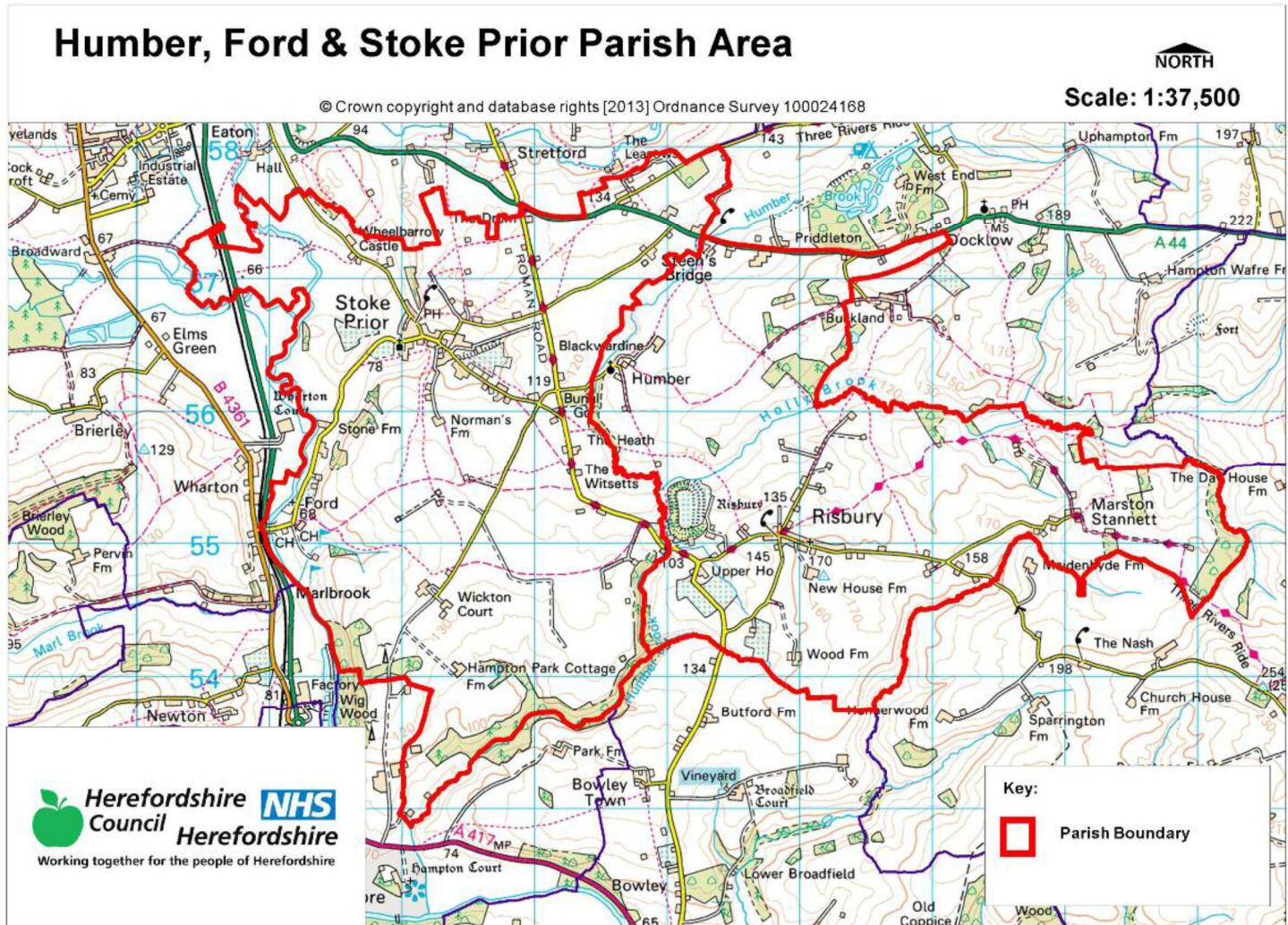
3.10 The initial draft Neighbourhood Development Plan was prepared by the Steering Committee and considered by the Group Parish Council at its meeting on 21 January 2015. A revised draft was prepared between March and June 2015 to take account of comments from Herefordshire Council's Neighbourhood Planning Team and

proposed modifications to the Core Strategy which arose from the independent inspection of the Core Strategy. It was approved by the Group Parish Council on 15 July 2015, and was published for public consultation, (including a copy being delivered to every household in the Group Parish) from 1 August to 15 September 2015.

3.11 Following the consultation period, comments were considered by the Steering Committee, responses and amendments to the draft Plan agreed, and these were published. This amended Plan was put to the Parish Council for its approval and submission to Herefordshire Council for adoption at a meeting on 18 November 2015. The Plan will now go through several further statutory stages, including inspection by an independent Inspector, who will recommend whether the Plan should be submitted to a referendum of the electors of the Group Parish. Herefordshire Council will arrange the referendum and, if the Plan is passed by a simple majority of those voting, it must adopt it as part of the county's Development Plan.

4. The Humber, Ford & Stoke Prior Neighbourhood Area

The Plan relates to the parishes of Humber and Ford & Stoke Prior and the Qualified Body to create the Plan is Humber, Ford & Stoke Prior Group Parish Council. The Plan Area was formally designated by Herefordshire Council on 3 July 2013.



5. Vision, Issues and Objectives

5.1 In preparing the Neighbourhood Development Plan for Humber, Ford & Stoke Prior, the community set a vision for our neighbourhood. What is valued by most residents about our community is the rural atmosphere, the quietness and safety of the area, and a strong sense of community, including knowing neighbours and participating in community activities. The small scale of the community and the relatively tranquil unspoilt rural environment are, for many people, things to value and preserve. However, there is also appreciation that some development is inevitable and desirable – specifically to provide mainly smaller types of housing for local people, to improve our community facilities, and to encourage the types of businesses appropriate to the neighbourhood.

5.2 This has led to setting the following Vision for our community:

Our community will be a place where people can enjoy living and working in a rural setting. The predominantly quiet, small scale nature of our villages and hamlets will be preserved, whilst accommodating the growth and development needed to meet the needs of the community and promote a sustainable and thriving community life¹.

5.3 The community has also identified several major issues to be addressed by the Plan, which are covered in the following sections:

Our future housing
Our community facilities
Our roads, footpaths and transport
Our businesses
Our environment

5.4 To support the vision the community was consulted on a number of objectives that the Neighbourhood Plan should set relating to these issues. The following were agreed as the basis for setting development proposals and development management policies:

Objective one: Accommodate future development in a way which retains the rural character of our neighbourhood.

Objective two: Ensure housing needs, particularly those of local people, are met by providing the required number and type of new houses, within the limits and provisions set for such development.

¹ For an explanation of what is meant by "a sustainable and thriving community life" see section 6.2.

Objective three: Retain and develop our community facilities.

Objective four: Lessen the harmful effects of traffic and make our roads safer.

Objective five: Support and encourage the development of small home-based businesses and traditional farming.

6. Promoting a sustainable and thriving community

6.1 Intention:

An overarching strategic policy has been set as the basis for achieving the vision and objectives and laying out the priorities identified by the community. Subsequent policies add detail to this policy. On the infrequent occasions that development proposals are advanced that may not be covered by policies within this Neighbourhood Plan decisions should be guided by provisions within this overarching policy.

Policy HFSP1: Promoting a sustainable and thriving community

The Humber, Ford and Stoke Prior Group Parish will support positive measures that promote sustainable development in accordance with the principles and policies set out in this Neighbourhood Plan. Where development proposals are advanced they should, in particular, address the following high level priorities that are considered essential for maintaining a sustainable and thriving community.

- (a) Development proposals should protect or enhance the area's amenity and environment by maintaining and reinforcing the natural environment, landscape and historic character and local distinctiveness. They should also seek opportunities to contribute to the area's biodiversity network and retain its traditional rural buildings, historic buildings and archaeological sites.
- (b) Housing development should, in particular, meet the needs of local young families. New housing should provide a mix in terms of type, size and tenure. The precise housing mix should meet needs over the plan-period, as assessed from time-to-time, and support the wider local community where the requirement for specific types of accommodation are identified.
- (c) Measures which benefit the quality of life and wellbeing of residents, through reducing isolation, increasing safety, providing or maintaining appropriate community facilities and local services will be encouraged, including through utilising financial contributions through the Community Infrastructure Levy towards their provision.
- (d) Traffic resulting from new development should be accommodated safely upon the highway network and without adversely affecting local amenity. Measures will be

introduced to reduce the effects of traffic upon communities, in particular at Steen's Bridge, including addressing excessive speed of vehicles, the effect of heavy goods traffic, improvements to pedestrian safety and promoting sustainable transport initiatives.

(e) The development needs of the local economy will be supported, provided that proposals reflect the rural nature and scale of the Group Parish. This will be through encouraging the infrastructure necessary to meet the needs of the modern economy, and specifically to enable working from home.

Development proposals must comply with the policies in this Neighbourhood Plan. Where this Plan does not cover a proposal, any decision should reflect, where possible, the community's sustainable development priorities set out above and policies within Herefordshire Core Strategy, in particular Policy SS1.

Where other material considerations outweigh policies set out in this Neighbourhood Plan, the objectives sought through Policy HFSP1 should nevertheless be addressed through compensatory or mitigation measures.

6.2 Reasoned justification:

6.2.1 This overarching policy relates to the overall Vision for the community and the five Objectives for the Plan. It is set to guide all development in the neighbourhood and place more specific policies in context. Where other policies do not specifically cover a proposal or are outweighed by other material considerations, the policy ensures that the community's Vision and Objectives still guide development. This includes ensuring, as far as possible, that where development occurs contrary to any of the policies of the Plan (because, for example, of national or local planning needs taking priority over local policies), it includes measures or features which would mitigate or compensate elsewhere for the unwanted impact of the development.

6.2.2 We want to ensure that our community is a thriving and sustainable one. Most people will easily understand what a thriving community is, but the concept of a 'sustainable' community needs some explanation. In planning jargon, sustainable development means "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs"². More generally, the concept of sustainability in communities covers a range of social, economic and environmental factors. These include having a balanced mix of age-ranges, good housing, employment, facilities and services, as well as more intangible things such as community spirit and residents' well-being. It also means contributing to, protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment.

6.2.3 For us, therefore, a thriving and sustainable community is one where people want to live and work because it meets their needs and gives them a high quality of life, and this can be sustained both socially and economically into the future without adverse

² National Planning Policy Framework, page 2.

impact on the environment. This does not mean that the community should be sustainable in isolation: a small rural community such as ours cannot have all the services and facilities which larger villages may have, and the nearby market town of Leominster will be able to meet many of the community's needs efficiently and effectively.

- 6.2.4 Some of what this means in practice is set out in paragraphs (a) to (d) of Policy HFSP1. But it permeates all the other policies in this Plan, and also goes beyond planning policies, to how the people of our community work and live together.
- 6.2.5 The principles of sustainable development in the policy are in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework and with Core Strategy SS1.
- 6.2.6 Paragraph (a) of the policy seeks to protect the rural nature of the neighbourhood, including its landscape character, biodiversity and historic heritage. This was a key theme in the community consultations (see *Our Emerging Plan – The character of our community*, and *Residents Survey Full Report* sections 2 and 8).
- 6.2.7 Paragraph (b) of the policy guides what housing development is needed. The community consultations identified the need and support for new housing to meet the needs of young families, those unable to afford to buy their own home, those wishing to self-build, and those wishing to downsize from larger homes (especially older people) (see *Our Emerging Plan – Types of Housing*, and *Residents Survey Full Report* Section 6). The *Local Housing Needs Survey* for the Group Parish (May 2014) also identified that the needs were predominantly for 1-, 2- and 3-bedroom properties, including some more rented accommodation. This is in line with the Core Strategy which emphasises the need for the right mix of housing and facilities, including more affordable housing, more family-sized and smaller homes for younger families (2- and 3-bed). The neighbourhood's age-profile is rather different from that of Herefordshire generally, in that there is a much greater number in the age-range 55-64, this being by far the most numerous group, and markedly fewer people aged under 45. This means that the neighbourhood potentially faces a more acute 'ageing population' problem than the county generally, and there will probably be a need over the next 15-20 years for some smaller housing units suitable for older people to remain living independently in the community.
- 6.2.8 Paragraph (c) of the policy addresses the importance of a sense of community and of community facilities to residents (see *Our Emerging Plan – Our Facilities* and *Residents Survey Full Report* section 3). This was illustrated by the closure of the only remaining pub in the Group Parish, *The Lamb Inn*, for two years until December 2014 and the threat of this being sold for development. This galvanised the community into being ready to buy it as a community asset. As a small community (fewer than 540 adults) with a Parish Council which has small financial reserves, there is minimal local funding available for infrastructure or facilities. Community Infrastructure Levy funding coming to the Parish Council is likely to be small, given that most development is likely to be small-scale or self-build. Therefore, wherever possible,

development proposals should include measures which will protect, enhance and develop local facilities and infrastructure.

6.2.9 The road network in the Group Parish is mostly narrow lanes, used by a mixture of local traffic, agricultural traffic, and some through-traffic including heavy vehicles (see the section of the Plan: *Our Roads, Footpaths and Transport* for details). Many residents expressed concerns in the community consultations about the impact of existing traffic levels on the environment and on safety, and about how new development would exacerbate this (see *Our Emerging Plan – Road Safety and Speeding*, and *Residents Survey Full Report* section 5). Specifically, the consultations reminded us of the need for a pedestrian footpath at Steen's Bridge from Humber Close along the A44 for a safe walk-to-school route, which has been a concern for many years. Paragraph (d) of the policy therefore requires measures to ensure that new development will accommodate traffic generated safely and without adversely affecting local amenity.

6.2.10 The local economy of the Group Parish is based on small-scale local businesses, many of which relate to rural or agricultural activities, and there is a high proportion of home-workers (see *Our Emerging Plan – Our Businesses and Residents Survey Full Report* section 7). This small-scale is considered by local people to be appropriate to the rural character, landscape and road network of the area, and there is support for some expansion of this type of development. Paragraph (e) of the policy therefore encourages this in accordance with the Core Strategy as a sustainable means of developing the local economy. Sustainable growth of the local economy, however, will require appropriate infrastructure, especially improved broadband, which the community consultations identified as inadequate (see *Residents Survey Full Report* section 4).

7. Development strategy

7.1 Intention:

A development strategy policy has been set to ensure that new development is focussed on the two main settlements of Stoke Prior and Risbury, and to a lesser extent on the smaller settlement of Steen's Bridge, and that outside of these settlements development is limited to that appropriate for open countryside.

Policy HFSP2: Development strategy

The settlements of Stoke Prior and Risbury will be the main focus for housing and community facilities development within the Group Parish. The smaller, more dispersed settlement of Steen's Bridge will be a secondary focus for development. Limited small scale employment opportunities and other forms of essential community and infrastructure development will continue to be supported both inside and outside these three settlements where they have no significant adverse effect upon amenity and the environment, especially

the landscape. The approach to accommodating residential development will be based upon the following:

- To allow for the required residential development and controlled growth in **Stoke Prior**, a settlement boundary has been defined within which residential development will be permitted, and this development shall take place in accordance with relevant policies set out in this Neighbourhood Plan, in particular Policy HFSP4.
- To allow for the required residential development and controlled growth in **Risbury**, a settlement boundary has been defined within which residential development will be permitted, and this development shall take place in accordance with relevant policies set out in this Neighbourhood Plan, in particular Policy HFSP5.
- To allow for the required residential development and controlled growth in **Steen's Bridge**, a settlement boundary has been defined within which residential development will be permitted, and this development shall take place in accordance with relevant policies set out in this Neighbourhood Plan, in particular Policy HFSP6.
- Development outside of the three main settlements will be limited to that covered by policies in Herefordshire Core Strategy relating to open countryside.

7.2 Reasoned justification:

- 7.2.1 The sustainable development of Stoke Prior, Risbury and Steen's Bridge is in accordance with Core Strategy policies RA1 and RA2. The protection of the rural character and landscape of the open countryside between the settlements is in accordance with Policy RA3.
- 7.2.2 Existing housing and other development is scattered throughout the Group Parish along the road network, but about half of this is concentrated in the three main settlements, as defined in the *Rural Housing Background Paper Appendix II* (2013). In the community consultations, two-thirds of people wanted new homes to be entirely or mostly confined to existing settlement areas (*Residents Survey Full Report* section 6), although there was also support for limited development outside these areas. This is generally in accordance with Core Strategy Policies for rural housing, which focuses growth on identified settlements (Policy RA2), but permits some development in open countryside (Policy RA3) which meets defined criteria. Policy HFSP2 therefore states an overall strategy that will focus development on the three settlements in accordance with Core Strategy policies.
- 7.2.3 There was no consensus from residents' responses on particular sites where new housing should go, although suggested sites tended to cluster around existing settlements (see *Map Data Capture* and link to Google Maps for data, and also the flagged-maps from the *Your Community Your Future* events). Many residents were concerned with the character of developments, and to avoid both sprawl and filling in all open spaces in the villages. Core Strategy Policy RA2 specifies that development in these named settlements will be "located within or adjacent to the

main built-up area(s) of the settlement”, and residents’ comments support this broad policy. Although there have already been some applications approved for specific sites, the option of allocating further specific sites for the required new housing has not been put forward because there is no consensus from residents’ responses on such sites. Instead, the view of residents supports permitting the development of new housing in the villages according to set criteria.

- 7.2.4 The broad criteria proposed in *Our Emerging Plan* (Siting of new housing for the villages and Proposal H2) included a location within or adjacent to the main body of the village, an appropriate density of development, protection of particular areas, and the need to address drainage and flooding issues. This proposal was supported by 82% of those responding to this consultation, and forms the basis for the policy in HFSP2, and also HFSP4, HFSP5 and HFSP6 for each specific settlement.
- 7.2.5 Giving effect to this general proposal requires greater definition of what constitutes the main built-up area(s) of each settlement. Numerous residents made this comment in response to *Our Emerging Plan*, especially where the villages currently have less well-defined edges. The revised Core Strategy also now requires that Neighbourhood Development Plans define settlement boundaries or some other approach to defining the built-up area.
- 7.2.6 The character of the villages is mostly of development along existing road frontages, with green spaces behind, and a key message from the consultations was to maintain this existing character (see *Our Emerging Plan – Density and design of housing*). An aim of the policy is therefore to avoid excessive in-filling between the roads, maintaining green spaces and views between the roads. One option considered to achieve this whilst allowing growth was to define the edges of the main settlement by setting ‘stop-lines’ on the roads leading into them, within which mostly single-plot depth would be permitted. The disadvantage of this approach, however, is the possible uncertainty between these stop-lines about exactly where and to what depth development may be permitted.
- 7.2.7 The option of setting a continuous boundary line around each settlement was therefore explored, recognising the possible sensitivities and difficulties of defining such a line in all places, and also needing to avoid excessive infilling of the green space in between the road network. The advantage of this approach is that it clearly and unambiguously shows on a map where the edge of the settlement is for the purpose of applying the policies for development of the main settlements, and outside of which the policies for development in open countryside will apply. In practice, it is possible to set such boundary lines to achieve the aim of accommodating the required growth mostly along road-frontages. The feasibility of this approach is also supported by the similarity of the proposed settlement boundary lines for Stoke Prior and Risbury to those in the draft 1994 Leominster District Plan (subsequently adopted in the 1996 Plan for Stoke Prior, but not taken forward for Risbury because at that time Risbury was not designated as a village for significant growth).

- 7.2.8 A policy has therefore been set of defining settlement boundaries for Risbury and Stoke Prior, these being the two settlements identified as the main focus for housing growth in the Group Parish. These are defined specifically in policies HFSP4 and HFSP5.
- 7.2.9 Steen's Bridge is a secondary focus for development under Core Strategy Policies RA1 and RA2, and is a more dispersed settlement which has a less clear 'core'. Nevertheless, for the reasons explained under Policy HFSP6, a settlement boundary has also been defined for this settlement, which would permit some limited development.
- 7.2.10 Development outside of these three settlements will be in accordance with Core Strategy policies, especially Policy RA3 – Herefordshire's Countryside – which limits development to proposals which meet specific one or more specific criteria.

8. Meeting housing needs: housing development and phasing

8.1 Intention:

A policy has been set specifying a target number of new homes to be built in the Group Parish between 2011-31, to meet identified housing needs. Other policies define where these new homes may be built, the types of houses needed, and site/design criteria against which applications will be assessed.

Policy HFSP3: Housing development and phasing

To meet housing market needs this Neighbourhood Plan will provide a minimum of 43 new homes within the Group Parish by 2031, focussed on the three main settlements. This includes existing permissions since 2011, identified available and suitable sites within settlement boundaries, and an estimate of windfall developments both within settlement boundaries and outside of these which would meet the policies for development in open countryside.

There will be a presumption that future development (including detailed permissions for outline permissions granted) should be spread over the whole plan period at a rate of up to 5 dwellings in Stoke Prior and 4 dwellings in Risbury in each five year period between 2016 and 2031. Variation from this phasing rate may take place should evidence from a housing survey show that a higher rate is required to meet an identified need. Should this occur early in the plan period, subsequent rates should be adjusted to meet the level of provision required by Herefordshire Core Strategy. Humber, Ford and Stoke Prior Parish Council will offer advice to Herefordshire Council on the suitability of adjustments to the identified building rate and housing numbers.

8.2 Reasoned justification:

8.2.1 As part of the county's strategy for meeting housing needs, Herefordshire's Core Strategy policy RA1 sets an indicative target of 15% growth in housing from a 2011 baseline in the Bromyard Rural Housing Market Area. The 2011 baseline for the Group Parish is 288 homes in the Local Property Gazetteer, giving an indicative growth target of 43 new homes by 2031. Core Strategy RA1 identifies named settlements as the focus for sensitive and appropriate housing growth to meet this target. In our Group Parish Stoke Prior and Risbury are identified the primary focus for development, and Steen's Bridge as a smaller settlement within which particular attention will be given to ensure that housing developments respect its scale, form, layout, character and setting.

8.2.2 The views of residents through consultations, and the results of a Housing Needs Analysis survey indicate that there is a need for a small number of additional – mostly smaller – houses for local people in the Group Parish. The Housing Needs Assessment for the Group Parish made by Herefordshire Council in May 2014 identified 14 households wishing to move within the group parish, of which 5 intended to self-build, 4 needed affordable/rented accommodation, and 4 needed mostly smaller open-market houses. Some housing within the group parish would be released by these moves, but might only meet up to three of the open-market needs.

8.2.3 Community consultation has not identified the need for higher growth targets than those specified in the Core Strategy (See *Our Emerging Plan – Our Future Housing, and Residents Full Survey Report* section 6), and most of this level of growth can be accommodated within or adjacent to the main body of each village without significant detriment to the surrounding open countryside.

8.2.4 A Housing Land Assessment (Appendix F) has been prepared to address how sufficient land may be made available to address the growth target, and Appendix G gives further details. Table HFSP3 summarises this information about future housing development into one of three categories: existing housing commitments (planning permissions granted but as yet unbuilt); identified suitable and available sites likely to be developed; and an estimate of other (windfall) development. Taken together, the first two categories total 43 new properties which are certain or highly probable to be built within the Plan's period, which nearly meets the indicative target for housing growth in the Group Parish. The third category includes possible sites and potential types of development which have less certainty of being built. There were no new homes completed between 2011 and the preparation of this Plan in 2015.

Table HFSP3: Housing development within the Group Parish 2011-2031

	Stoke Prior	Risbury	Steen's Bridge	Open countryside
Planning permission granted	6			2
Outline planning permission granted	8			
Identified suitable and available sites	13	10	4	
Estimated development	6			7

8.2.5 Existing housing commitments (planning permissions granted but as yet unbuilt) total 16 new homes, 14 of which are within the proposed Stoke Prior settlement boundary, and 2 in open countryside. These are detailed in Appendix G.

8.2.6 The second category includes sites which have been publicly identified as suitable, viable and available for development within the main settlements. This includes current planning applications (as yet undetermined) and sites identified publicly by landowners as likely to be the subject of future applications (including responses to

the Land Availability Questionnaire in May 2014). This category totals a further 27 homes, spread across the three settlements. These are also detailed in Appendix G.

8.2.7 The third category is an estimate of the number of new homes in addition to the above categories which could be the subject of future planning applications which would meet the criteria in this Plan and the Core Strategy. This includes sites within the proposed settlement boundaries which were identified by residents during the consultations as suitable for development (but without any definite indication of availability). It also includes an estimate of windfall developments which may receive permission outside of the settlements, based on historical rates of such development in the Group Parish and the number of farmsteads where the criteria for Core Strategy policies RA3 or H2 might be met. These estimates are detailed in Appendix G.

8.2.8 Based on the numbers of planning applications for new homes over the last 10 years, future demand for new housing is likely to be evenly spread over the plan period, mostly from residents or others with a local connection wishing to move into different-sized accommodation or to move into the Group Parish. To meet this need, and to retain the villages' character of separate and varied house-types or very small developments, the new housing will be phased over the plan period.

9. New homes in Stoke Prior

9.1 Intention:

This policy defines where housing growth will be permitted for the village of Stoke Prior, and the criteria for determining appropriate sites and types of development.

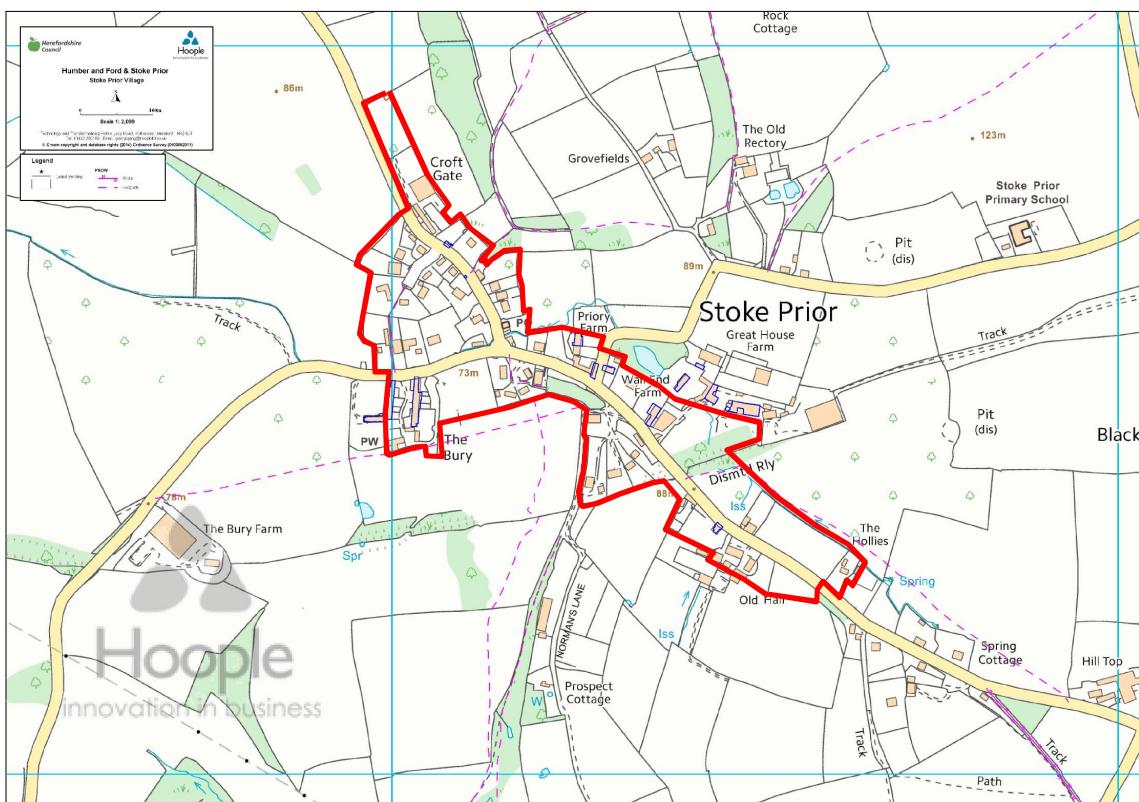
Policy HFSP4: New homes in Stoke Prior

Housing development in Stoke Prior will be accommodated through permitting new homes to be built on suitable sites within the settlement boundary as defined on the Stoke Prior Inset Map.

In all instances, development will be subject to the following criteria:

- (a) Development shall normally be single plot depth from the road frontage to complement the village character with no development extending unreasonably into the plot beyond the depth of neighbouring buildings;
- (b) Dwellings should be in scale with the general density and massing of existing properties in the vicinity and not adversely affect the amenity of adjacent properties;
- (c) Development should not result in the loss of important features such as trees, hedgerows, or small frontage gaps or green spaces that contribute to the unique character of the village;

- (d) Development should not adversely affect heritage assets, particularly listed buildings, including their setting;
- (e) Where an undeveloped site comprises a frontage of more than 30 metres, development on that site should include provision for at least one-third of that frontage to be open green space;
- (f) Development should not result in unsympathetic engineering works such as removal of or creation of gaps within banks or extensive culverting of drainage ditches that would detract from the rural nature of the village;
- (g) New housing should provide a mix of house types and tenures, with an emphasis upon family accommodation for young people, and smaller properties for older people.
- (h) Development should comply with such other detailed policies that may be relevant and set out in this Neighbourhood Plan or the Herefordshire Core Strategy.



Stoke Prior inset map, showing the settlement boundary (outlined in red) within which new housing development will be permitted.

9.2 Reasoned justification:

- 9.2.1 The village of Stoke Prior clusters around the junctions of the C1112 and C1110 roads, and its extent has well-defined existing limits to the west and north-west, but less-well defined limits to the south-east and north-east, where more opportunities exist for in-fill of gaps. The proposed growth of the village should be accommodated

within existing limits where possible, to restrict linear growth of the village into surrounding countryside, in accordance with Core Strategy Policy RA2.

- 9.2.2 As discussed under HFSP2 above, a settlement boundary has been defined within which new housing development will be permitted. This boundary has been set at or near existing settlement limits on the main roads leading into the village, and in between the roads has been set at defined boundaries which will maintain the existing depth of development on road frontages and so protect the rural character of the village.
- 9.2.3 The boundary at the western edge of the settlement, on the C1112 Ford Lane, has been placed at the limits of existing housing development, retaining the existing clear beginning of the village. Also the road from The Bury 200m west to the land-drain by the 30mph limit is subject to regular surface-water flooding in heavy rain because of the topography and the inadequacy of the drainage system. Further housing development west of The Bury would therefore be at heightened risk of flooding and would itself exacerbate an already chronic problem.
- 9.2.4 The boundary at the north-western edge of the settlement, on the C1110 Stoke Prior Road, has been placed at the 30mph zone on the eastern side of the road. This provides development space for the village on the road with best access to Leominster, and where drainage from new housing development can be accommodated best without this exacerbating existing drainage problems in the village. On the western side of the road the boundary has been placed at the limits of existing housing development, to retain the open nature of this stretch of road.
- 9.2.5 To the south-east, on the C1110 Stoke Prior Road, there is no clear existing settlement limit, as houses are located at irregular intervals from the railway embankment up to Hill Top Farm. West of the embankment on the north side of the road there are two sites with pre-2011 permission for six new dwellings which are incomplete: two new dwellings and the conversion of barns to two dwellings at Great House Barn (application 02/1159); and two new dwellings on land adjacent to Old School House (application 05/1938). There is therefore little potential development land on this road west of the embankment. A current planning application for one new house (application 143630) between Old Hall and Fir Tree Cottage is awaiting decision, and the site was supported in principle as suitable for a single dwelling by the Parish Council. A recent planning application for 8 new dwellings (application 141849) on land opposite Old Hall (on the field between The Trug and The Hollies) received outline permission in January 2015. Although the Parish Council objected to this application because it considered that the number of dwellings was out of keeping with the surrounding density of the village and would increase traffic and flood-risk unacceptably, it considered that this site was in principle suitable for development of a smaller number of houses. The site opposite this development is the subject of another application (150677) for a single property, and the Parish Council considered this site suitable in principle for a single dwelling.

- 9.2.6 The south-eastern settlement boundary on the C1110 Stoke Prior Road has therefore been placed to incorporate these sites and the neighbouring existing property to the east.
- 9.2.7 The settlement boundary does not include most of the C1112 Stoke Prior Lane leading north-east towards the School. This is because this lane is narrow and in places steep, with a difficult junction at the southern end onto Stoke Prior Road, and because of the School sited further uphill, traffic levels are already high during school-hours. The lane also provides an open view down to the village centre and Priory Farm, and up to The Old Rectory which is part of the character of the village which should be retained. The disused pit is a Local Geological Site and so inappropriate for development. New housing on land at the top of the lane would constitute a detached development from the rest of the village, and would impact on the open views over the village and beyond.
- 9.2.8 The existing rural character of the village should also be retained, this being largely single-plot-depth development of individual houses fronting the existing road network, with interspersed green spaces, trees and hedgerows. Although new housing will normally be single-plot-depth development, exceptionally departures from this policy may be appropriate for small developments of smaller houses where shared facilities are appropriate and necessary, such as sheltered housing for older people, where this does not result in the loss of village character.
- 9.2.9 There is a particular shortage in the Group Parish of smaller homes (1-3 bedrooms) both for young families and for older people wishing to downsize but remain in the neighbourhood. The demographic profile of the Group Parish indicates the need to plan for an ageing population who will need homes which facilitate their continued independent living and care needs. A high proportion of new houses should therefore be smaller homes of 1-3 bedrooms.

10. New homes in Risbury

10.1 Intention:

This policy defines where housing growth will be permitted for the village of Risbury, and the criteria for determining appropriate sites and types of development.

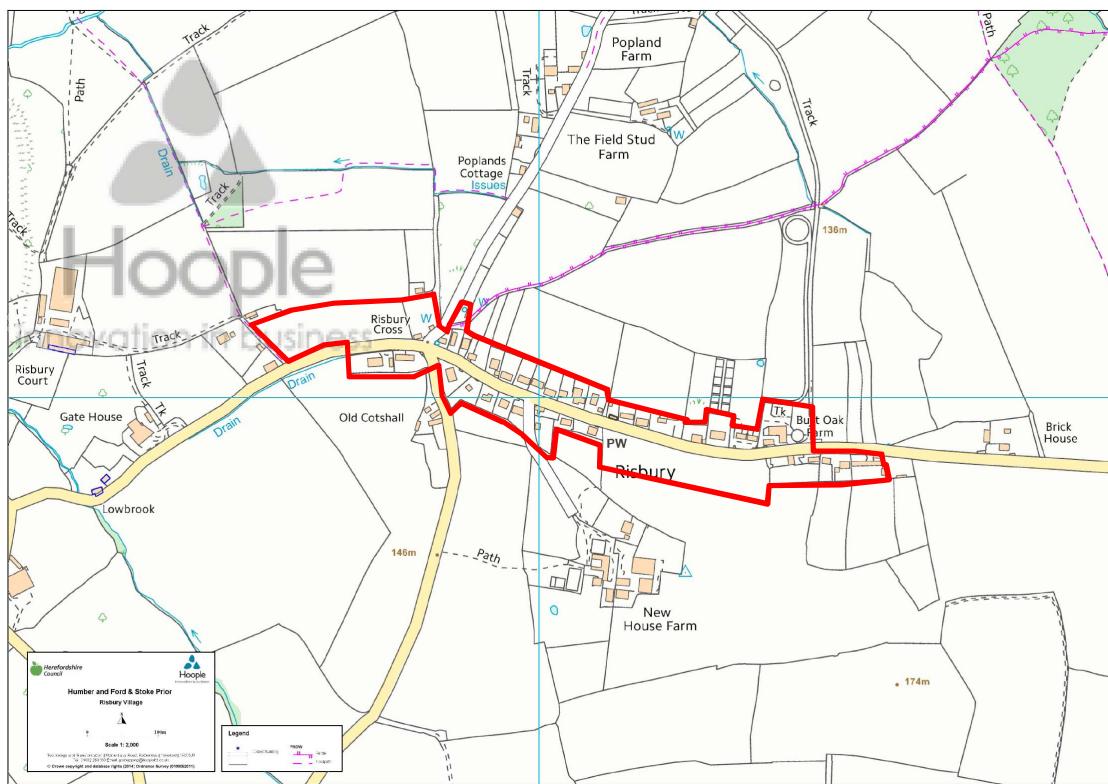
Policy HFSP5: New homes in Risbury

Housing development in Risbury will be accommodated through permitting new homes to be built on suitable sites within the settlement boundary as defined on the Risbury Inset Map.

In all instances development will be subject to the following criteria:

- (a) Development shall normally be single plot depth from the road frontage to complement the village character with no development extending unreasonably into the plot beyond the depth of neighbouring buildings;

- (b) Dwellings should be in scale with the general density and massing of existing properties in the vicinity and not adversely affect the amenity of adjacent properties;
- (c) Development should not result in the loss of important features such as trees, hedgerows, or small frontage gaps or green spaces that contribute to the unique character of the village;
- (d) Development should not adversely affect heritage assets, particularly listed buildings, including their setting;
- (e) Housing development within substantial frontage gaps on the C1110 road shall be set back behind landscaped spaces and shared access, and shall maintain one-third of that frontage as either garden land or open space;
- (f) Development should not result in unsympathetic engineering works such as removal of or creation of gaps within banks or extensive culverting of drainage ditches that would detract from the rural nature of the village;
- (g) New housing should provide a mix of house types and tenures, with an emphasis upon family accommodation for young people, and smaller properties for older people;
- (h) Development should comply with such other detailed policies that may be relevant and set out in this Neighbourhood Plan or the Herefordshire Core Strategy.



Risbury inset map, showing the settlement boundary (outlined in red) within which new housing development will be permitted.

10.2 Reasoned justification:

- 10.2.1 The village of Risbury is a largely linear settlement extending from Risbury Cross eastwards along the C1110 road to Pencombe, with well-defined existing limits to the east and the west (at the top of School Hill), within which there are some gaps. There are also some isolated houses beyond the main settlement, and a less dense pattern of housing along Poplands Lane to the north, which is a no-through road. The proposed growth of the village should be accommodated within existing limits where possible, to avoid unnecessary linear growth of the village into surrounding countryside, in accordance with the Core Strategy (Policy RA2).
- 10.2.2 As discussed under HFSP2 above, a settlement boundary has been defined within which new housing development will be permitted. This boundary has been set at or near existing settlement limits on the main roads leading into the village, and in between the roads has been set at defined boundaries which will maintain the existing depth of development on road frontages and so protect the rural character of the village.
- 10.2.3 To the west, the settlement boundary has been set to provide development space adjacent to the existing settlement, but not extending down School Hill which is not suitable for development because it is narrow with few passing places and enclosed within deep banks.
- 10.2.4 To the east, the settlement boundary has been set at the limits of the existing settlement, this including some gaps – particularly to the south – which could provide space for development.
- 10.2.5 Two relatively large substantial gaps exist within the settlement boundary frontages running east-west through the village, one at the north-west corner and one to the south. Development within these needs to ensure accesses on to the village street are kept to a minimum, not resulting in increased on-street parking along the narrow road, and avoiding the impression of creating further ribbon development. Consequently the proposed plot depth is greater than that accommodating existing development to enable shared access and a landscaped buffer between the road and the shared access to be provided, which will enhance the street scene and maintain, albeit to a limited extent, the rural appearance of the village street at these points. The plot depth for such development would need to be a minimum of 35.5 metres and ideally 40m (7m for a landscape buffer to permit land-shaping and tree-planting, minimum 3.5m wide access road, 6m minimum front garden/car-parking, 7m minimum for a dwelling, 12m minimum for a rear garden): the plot to the north-west has a minimum depth of 48m, and the settlement boundary for the plot to the south has been set at approximately 40m distance from the roadway. Although a range of property sizes should be provided if possible within these frontages, the maintenance of gaps within their development will assist this objective.
- 10.2.6 Poplands Lane (U94009) and Blacksmiths Lane (U94010) are not included within these boundaries: both are narrow lanes with inadequate passing places, which

already carry significant traffic; there is an existing clear beginning to the village at the north end of Blacksmiths Lane which should be retained, and development of housing along Blacksmiths Lane would involve eating into existing large parcels of agricultural land. Poplands Lane, however, has a different character, of dispersed cottages interspersed among small paddocks, and it offers more scope for some limited development which is in keeping with this character. Some new housing may therefore be permitted on Poplands Lane which meets the criteria in Core Strategy RA3 or the criteria for affordable housing, including self-build, in Policy HFSP7.

- 10.2.7 The existing rural character of the village should also be retained, this being largely single-plot-depth development of individual houses fronting the existing road network, with interspersed green spaces, trees and hedgerows. As with Stoke Prior, however, exceptions to single-plot-depth development may be appropriate for small developments of smaller houses where shared facilities including access are appropriate and necessary, such as sheltered housing for older people, where this does not result in the loss of village character.
- 10.2.8 There is a particular shortage in the Group Parish of smaller homes (1-3 bedrooms) both for young families and for older people wishing to downsize but remain in the neighbourhood. The demographic profile of the Group Parish indicates the need to plan for an ageing population who will need homes which facilitate their continued independent living and care needs. A high proportion of new houses should therefore be smaller homes of 1-3 bedrooms.

11. New homes in Steen's Bridge

11.1 Intention:

This policy defines where housing growth will be permitted for the village of Steen's Bridge, and the criteria for determining appropriate sites and types of development.

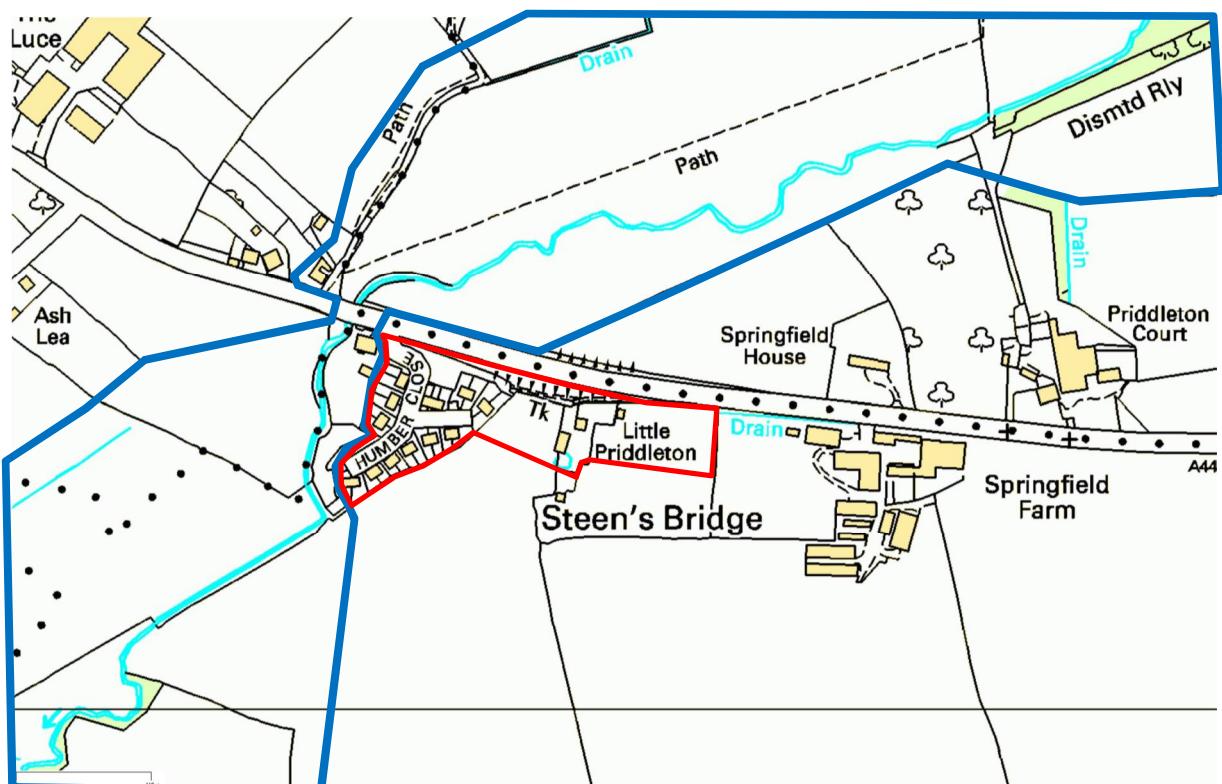
Policy HFSP6: New homes in Steen's Bridge

Housing development in Steen's Bridge will be accommodated through permitting new homes to be built on suitable sites within the settlement boundary as defined on the Steen's Bridge Inset Map.

In all instances, development will be subject to the following criteria:

- (a) Dwellings should be in scale with the general density and massing of existing properties in the vicinity and not adversely affect the amenity of adjacent properties;
- (b) Development should not result in the loss of important features such as trees, hedgerows, or small frontage gaps or green spaces that contribute to the unique character of the village;
- (c) Development should not adversely affect heritage assets, including their setting;

- (d) Development should not result in unsympathetic engineering works such as removal of or creation of gaps within banks or extensive culverting of drainage ditches that would detract from the rural nature of the village;
- (e) New housing should provide a mix of house types and tenures, with an emphasis upon family accommodation for young people, and smaller properties for older people.
- (f) Development should include a contribution towards provision of a footpath link between Humber Close and Stoke Prior Lane.
- (g) Development should comply with such other detailed policies that may be relevant and set out in this Neighbourhood Plan or the Herefordshire Core Strategy.



Steen's Bridge inset map, showing flood zone 2 (outlined in blue) and the settlement boundary (outlined in red) within which new housing development will be permitted.

11.2 Reasoned justification:

- 11.2.1 Steen's Bridge is a small dispersed settlement along the main A44 Leominster to Worcester road, centred on the bridge over the Humber Brook. The settlement falls into three parishes: Ford & Stoke Prior west of Humber Brook; Humber east of Humber Brook on the south side of the A44; and Docklow east of Humber Brook on the north side of the A44.
- 11.2.2 The settlement mainly consists of three outlying farmsteads – The Luce to the west, and Springfield Farm and Priddleton Court to the east – and two distinct groups of

houses: the first being a cluster of five properties to the west of the bridge on the north side of the A44; the second consisting of the Humber Close housing estate and two adjacent properties (Brook House and Little Priddleton).

- 11.2.3 There is a mixture of building types and ages. Humber Close consists of 25 red-brick semi-detached properties which are social rented housing. There are large areas of open fields and pastureland adjacent to the settled areas, including significant areas of flood plain along the Humber Brook, which is classified as Flood Zone 2.
- 11.2.4 The A44 road is a single-carriageway main route from Worcester to Leominster, and carries a moderately high volume of traffic, including heavy vehicles. The speed limit through Steen's Bridge is 50mph, but many vehicles travel in excess of this, and often perform overtaking manoeuvres on this stretch of road. This has led to many complaints from residents about the dangerous nature of the road, especially when entering or leaving turnings, and there have been several accidents in Steen's Bridge.
- 11.2.5 Development in Steen's Bridge is limited by two factors: the flood plain which bisects the settlement and is unsuitable for any development; and the fast road which has restricted visibility for turning traffic at both the west and east ends of the settlement and is hazardous for turning traffic and pedestrians in the central part of the settlement. The settlement also includes large areas of open countryside which should be protected under Core Strategy RA3.
- 11.2.6 A settlement boundary is therefore proposed which defines the main residential area, excluding flood zones. This provides scope for some development on the south side of the road where there is existing access onto the main road with good visibility of oncoming traffic in both directions. This includes the field to the east of Little Priddleton and a section of the field between Humber Close and Little Priddleton (defined as that area north of a low ridge approximately 100m from the A44). Further development on the west side of the bridge would be inappropriate because of the poor visibility of oncoming traffic from the west, and the narrowness of the lane running north adjacent to the bridge. This area has therefore been left outside of the settlement boundary.
- 11.2.7 There is a particular shortage in the Group Parish of smaller homes (1-3 bedrooms) both for young families and for older people wishing to downsize but remain in the neighbourhood. The demographic profile of the Group Parish indicates the need to plan for an ageing population who will need homes which facilitate their continued independent living and care needs. A high proportion of new houses should therefore be smaller homes of 1-3 bedrooms.
- 11.2.8 New development in Steen's Bridge should, if possible, incorporate a footpath link from Humber Close to Stoke Prior Lane, to provide safe pedestrian access for children and parents walking to Stoke Prior Community Primary School. This was identified as a specific need during the community consultations (see *Our Emerging Plan Our Roads, Footpaths and Transport, and Residents Survey List of Comments*).

12. Provision of affordable housing

12.1 Intention:

A policy has been set which will meet the needs for affordable housing within the Group Parish, in particular low-cost market homes for young families, and smaller homes for older people. As national policy precludes requiring affordable housing in developments of under 10 houses, the policy permits affordable housing on land outside of the villages which would not normally be released for housing.

Policy HFSP7: Provision of affordable housing outside the villages

Provision should be made for affordable homes for local people within the group parish through Herefordshire Core Strategy Policy H2 (Rural Exception Sites) and subject to the following:

- (i) The proven local need for affordable housing should be identified by Herefordshire Council in consultation with Humber, Ford and Stoke Prior Group Parish Council;
- (ii) With limited exceptions, proposed sites should normally be located close to one of the villages;
- (iii) The exceptions to (ii) should include single or multiple dwellings where the limited local need for affordable housing is within a hamlet situated within the Group Parish;
- (iv) Developments of sites providing 3 or more homes through this policy, including any market housing provision, should normally include provision for older person's housing unless there is no evidence of such a need at that time. This should be through bungalows or other suitable housing where occupancy will be restricted to local households where at least one person is over the state retirement age. For the avoidance of doubt, provision of housing for older persons should be through both affordable and market housing provision where this is required to subsidise affordable provision and the occupancy condition should apply to both;
- (v) Affordable housing shall include, in addition to those defined in the National Planning Policy Framework, both individual and multiple dwellings constructed under self-build projects funded by registered providers or community housing groups as well as individual custom built low cost housing.

12.2 Reasoned justification:

- 12.2.1 There is an identified need for low-cost market homes for young families with local connections, and also a need for smaller homes for older people needing to downsize, but wishing to stay in the community.
- 12.2.2 Several potential small sites for smaller dwellings in or close to the villages and hamlets were offered by landowners during the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan. This appears to be the most likely means of meeting the need for this type of

housing, given that the scale of housing development in the Group Parish's villages is unlikely to yield sites of more than 10 houses, which would trigger the requirement on developers to provide affordable homes.

12.2.3 Locations should be normally close to the main villages to avoid unnecessary development in open countryside, in accordance with policy HFSP2, and to ensure that affordable homes are integrated into the village community rather than placed in isolated locations. However, small developments of affordable homes in one of the Group Parish's hamlets will be permitted where there is a demonstrated need for such housing in that location, and the development should be of a scale and design which is proportionate to and in keeping with the existing hamlet.

13. Design criteria for housing and sites

13.1 Intention:

A policy has been set to ensure that new housing in the Group Parish is sympathetic in design, scale and density to its immediate surroundings; also that it does not result in increased flooding, and includes other measures to protect the natural environment.

Policy HFSP8: Design criteria for housing and sites

New housing should be sympathetic in design and size to its immediate surroundings, including nearby properties, and should reflect the existing character and building density of the area in which it is to be located. An integrated approach will be expected to achieve a high standard of design and architecture including the maximum possible reduction in the carbon footprint of any development.

Development proposals should contain a co-ordinated package of design measures which, in addition to regulatory requirements, should include:

- (a) protecting residential amenity and privacy for adjacent properties; and
- (b) incorporating locally distinctive features and traditional materials, although innovative design or features will not necessarily be resisted where they fit sensitively within the particular village frontage and street scene; and
- (c) utilising physical sustainability measures associated with buildings that include, in particular, orientation of buildings, the provision of energy and water conservation measures, cycle and recycling storage, broadband infrastructure, and renewable energy infrastructure such as photovoltaic panels; and
- (d) ensuring landscape proposals form an integral part of the site's design, in particular retaining trees unless their value is deemed low following surveys in accordance with established practice; and

- (e) retaining important features such as ponds, orchards and hedgerows which add to the natural assets of the parish; and
- (f) seeking on site measures that support energy conservation such as through tree planting and other forms of green infrastructure to provide shade and shelter; the inclusion of sustainable drainage systems; and minimising the use of external lighting to that which is necessary; and
- (g) reducing storm water run-off through a nil or minimum use of impermeable surfaces; and
- (h) including offsite measures such as infrastructure which promotes sustainable travel or a sustainable drainage system to serve a wider range of properties; and
- (i) minimising construction traffic, reducing waste and the management of soil during construction.

13.2 Reasoned justification:

- 13.2.1 Community consultations identified the importance to many residents of site and building design in maintaining the character of the neighbourhood. This included restricting the density of developments and ensuring that houses were designed to be in sympathy to their surroundings, including adjacent properties. (*Our Emerging Plan- Density and Design of Housing, and Residents Survey Full Report* Section 6).
- 13.2.2 There is no widespread single design style of buildings across the Group Parish which would justify a policy of any specific style or features, although some residents commented adversely on some recent developments which were not in keeping with their immediate surroundings, and there was support for the use of traditional rather than modern building materials and finishes appropriate to a rural rather than an urban environment.
- 13.2.3 The policy therefore seeks to avoid development which jars with adjacent properties, and to promote a high standard of design in siting, orientation, landscaping and construction, which protects the amenity of neighbouring properties. Innovative design or features, however, may be appropriate where they are incorporated sensitively into their surroundings.
- 13.2.4 Measures for sustainable design and energy efficiency are in accordance with Core Strategy Policy SD1, and were supported by many comments in the community consultations (see *Residents Survey List of Comments*, and comments posted at *Your Community Your Future*).
- 13.2.5 A major concern from the community consultations was about localised flooding, and the risk of new development causing additional flooding from increased water use and increased run-off from surfaces (see *Our Emerging Plan- Flooding, and Residents Survey Full Report* Sections 4 and 8). The policy therefore seeks that new development proposals should not result in increasing surface water flood-risk.

Proposals should show that the issue has been fully addressed and should include measures to address surface water problems in the general area. On-site measures will be looked for, including the use of permeable ground surfaces wherever possible. This is in accordance with Core Strategy SD3.

14. Development and retention of our community facilities

The Group Parish has a strong sense of community, but relatively little in the way of community facilities, and there is a desire to retain and develop those which we have.

14.1 Intention:

Policies have been set to permit and encourage the development of existing or new community facilities, and to protect existing community facilities.

Policy HFSP9: Development of community services and facilities

Proposals for new or expanded community services and facilities identified as necessary within the parish will be supported. Those currently identified as being needed to support growth resulting from development within the Group Parish during the Plan period to 2031 include:

- (a) A new village hall with associated car park for Stoke Prior.
- (b) The expansion of Stoke Prior Primary School, including car-parking space.
- (c) Accommodation for a nursery school within or close to Stoke Prior.
- (d) Children's play areas and facilities and associated open space.

All such proposals should, however, ensure that:

- (i) they will not unacceptably adversely affect the amenity of neighbouring properties through creating unacceptable noise, fumes, smell or other disturbance; and
- (ii) they will not cause unacceptable adverse traffic impact or congestion; and
- (iii) satisfactory access and off-street parking is provided without harming existing residential or other uses; and
- (iv) they will not restrict the operation of an existing use on adjacent land; and
- (v) a high standard of sustainable design is incorporated into the proposal.

New development complying with the provisions of this Neighbourhood Plan may contribute to the provision of community facilities identified as needed by residents either now or at a future date. To deliver facilities to meet essential community needs, Humber, Ford and Stoke Prior Parish Council may use monies received through the Community Infrastructure Levy and any other sources that become available during the period of the Plan.

Policy HFSP10: Retention of community services and facilities

Any proposal for development of The Lamb Inn which would lead to the loss of the site or part of the site as a facility for local people and visitors, will not be supported, in accordance with Core Strategy SC1. Should the pub become no longer viable, however, priority will be given to an alternative community use.

Proposals for development which would lead to the loss of Stoke Prior Post Office will not be supported, unless an alternative appropriate site is identified as part of the proposal.

14.2 Reasoned justification:

14.2.1 These two policies are in general accordance with Core Strategy Policy SC1 – Social and Community Facilities. This supports proposals which protect, retain or enhance social and community infrastructure. It also states that existing facilities will be retained unless they can be shown to be no longer required or viable or fit for purpose, or an alternative facility is available.

14.2.2 Policy HFSP9 specifically supports proposals for four identified needs:

The villages of Stoke Prior and Risbury each have a village hall, which are well-used but of old construction and design. Risbury Village Hall is in a good central location but suffers from a shortage of car-parking spaces. The consultations which shaped this Plan showed overwhelming support for the need to find a suitable site for the re-location and development of Stoke Prior Village Hall which occupies a difficult-to-access site up a flight of steps with no car-parking (see *Our Emerging Plan – The Village Halls*, and *Residents Survey Full Report* section 3). Four specific sites were suggested during the consultation, but at present, no specific site can be proposed: location next to the School would require land to be made available and agreement reached with the School and local education authority about any such scheme; there is no current intention for the land between the Bury and Belmont to be released for this type of project; *The Lamb Inn* has been purchased privately since the questionnaire and has now re-opened as a pub – and in any case the site would probably not accommodate the pub's business, car-parking and a village hall; St Luke's Church received little support as a possible site, but remains an option for future consideration. A general policy is therefore set which supports the future re-location of either village hall, and the Parish Council will work with Stoke Prior Village Hall Committee to identify a suitable site.

Stoke Prior Community Primary School is a highly-valued part of the community which attracts families with young children to the neighbourhood and so broadens the area's demographic profile and injects energy into the life of the community. The School may wish to expand its facilities to maintain its viability and high standards, and in particular needs to provide additional car-parking space for parents and staff.

A need has been identified for a pre-school Nursery in Stoke Prior so that children can have all their early-years education in the same school or community, rather than go to other villages where this can be provided. (See *Our Emerging Plan – Stoke Prior Community Primary School, Residents Survey Full Report* section 3 and *Young People's Survey Report*). The addition of a nursery-pre-school would enhance the village's sustainability as a community.

The only sports and recreation sites in the Group Parish are the School play-area and playing field, a small play-area at Humber Close in Steen's Bridge, and two businesses in Ford (Leominster Golf Club and Grove Golf and Bowl). Other sports and recreation facilities are available in Leominster, and demand from residents for new sports facilities is unlikely to make provision for these viable within the Group Parish, but there is a need to expand children's play facilities locally. (See *Our Emerging Plan – Sports and Recreation, and Residents Survey Full Report* section 3). The *Young People's Survey* particularly highlighted the need for better play and recreation facilities, this being the most numerous answer to the question "what things would you like to see which are not here now?".

- 14.2.3 Proposals for development of these or other community services and facilities should meet the criteria specified in sub-paragraphs (i)-(v) of HFSP9. This is intended to balance the interests of the community as a whole with the amenity of neighbouring properties, safety and protection of the environment, and the criteria are in accordance with Core Strategy Policy SD1 (Sustainable design).
- 14.2.4 The only remaining pub in the Group Parish, The Lamb Inn, re-opened in December 2014 after two years of closure and threatened loss. This had galvanised the community into supporting the Parish Council's proposed purchase of the pub as a community asset, although it was eventually purchased by a private publican. After a time without the pub, the community values more than ever this hub of social life for the neighbourhood, and wishes to protect and develop *The Lamb* as a business and as a community facility. (See *Our Emerging Plan – The Lamb Inn, and Residents Survey Full Report* section 3). Policy HFSP10 therefore seeks to avoid development proposals which would lead to the loss of the pub, in accordance with Core Strategy SC1. It should be noted that this would not in itself prevent the pub from closing, as its continued existence depends upon the viability of the facility. Should the pub no longer be viable, however, the first step should be to investigate whether an alternative community use is possible, as set out in the Core Strategy (page 170).
- 14.2.5 A part-time Post Office operates in Stoke Prior, which is particularly valued by older residents, especially following the loss of the bus service to Leominster in 2014. (See *Our Emerging Plan – The Post Office, and Residents Survey Full Report* section 3). Policy HFSP10 therefore seeks to avoid development proposals which would lead to the loss of the Post Office, in accordance with Core Strategy SC1. However, it should be noted that this would not in itself prevent the Post Office from closing, as its continued existence depends upon the viability of the facility.

15. Highways and transport infrastructure

The road network in the Group Parish consists almost entirely of 'C' roads (14.03km) and Unclassified roads (5.79km). Most of this is narrow, permitting traffic to pass either with difficulty or using infrequent passing places. Local traffic, including agricultural vehicles, mixes with some through-traffic (especially on the C1113/C1110/C1055 linking the A417 and the A44) and school-time traffic near the School.

15.1 Intention:

A policy is set to promote measures which will increase road safety and the amenity of all highway users, and avoid highway infrastructure which is inappropriate for the rural character of the area. In particular, new developments should have safe access onto roads and adequate off-road parking provision.

Policy HFSP11: Highways and transport infrastructure

Measures will be promoted, in association with Herefordshire Council, to reduce the impact of vehicles upon amenity and promote greater accessibility, including through public transport.

All development proposals should comply with the following:

- (a) There should be safe access onto the adjacent roads;
- (b) Parking provision should be made in accordance with Herefordshire Council standards for residential development and should form an integral part of the overall design and not detract from the village street scene;
- (c) In particular proposals should not result in on-street parking but should provide adequate parking for residents and visitors;
- (d) Proposals should not lead to a significant increase in speed or the volume of traffic travelling through villages within the parish or on roads that do not have sufficient capacity.
- (e) Proposals should not lead to the urbanisation of the particular village by requiring unnecessary street lighting or footpaths.
- (f) Provision should be made for additional or improved passing spaces where necessary.
- (g) Proposals should not result in the loss or unacceptable diversion of public rights of way.

15.2 Reasoned justification:

- 15.2.1 This policy is in accordance with Core Strategy MT1 (Traffic Management, highway safety and promoting active travel).
- 15.2.2 Over three-quarters of respondents to the residents' survey felt that improvements were needed to address traffic and road safety issues (*Residents Survey Full Report* section 5). Speeding traffic was also a significant concern of the young people in the Group Parish (*Young People's Survey Report*). These concerns reflected the many comments posted at the drop-in events, specifically concerns about school-time traffic in Stoke Prior, the access from Humber Close along the A44 and the presence of heavy lorries in the narrow lanes.
- 15.2.3 The consultations identified the need for some more passing places, especially in Blacksmith's Lane in Risbury, although providing too many of these could lead to an unwanted increase in traffic speeds. The policy therefore includes a requirement for developments to provide more passing places on roads where this is considered necessary by the Parish Council and the Highways authority.
- 15.2.4 Parking is not a widespread problem at present, but the consultations identified the need for more parking at the School and at Stoke Prior Village Hall. The Parish Council obtained planning permission for a new car-park behind the village hall in 2013, but this has been put on hold while the Village Hall considers the possibility of the hall's re-location. The possibility of more car-parking near the School is being pursued by the School.
- 15.2.5 Residents have significant concerns, however, about the impact of new housing on traffic levels and road safety, and especially the need for any new development to have off-road parking and adequate safe access from the road. This is especially important because of the narrow roads throughout the Group Parish.
- 15.2.6 The policy therefore requires development to have off-street parking and safe access onto the road network. The impact of new development on the immediate road network must also be taken into account in deciding appropriate development sites. Not all sites within the areas defined for development in the villages will be suitable for development because of traffic safety issues.
- 15.2.7 In the consultations, residents were concerned to maintain the rural character of the villages as they developed. Some suggested that short stretches of pedestrian footway would be helpful in the centre of Stoke Prior and outside Risbury Village Hall, but apart from this, most had little or no concern at the lack of pavements and comments opposed creating more as being out of character with our rural area. Most residents were also unconcerned about the lack of street lighting, and the proposal generally not to support more street-lighting as being out of character with the rural area was supported by a large majority (see *Our Emerging Plan, Pedestrian Footways and street-lights*). The policy therefore requires developments to avoid streetlighting or footways except where these are shown to be essential for pedestrian safety.

15.2.8 As discussed in Policy HFSP6 above, there is an urgent need for a pedestrian footpath in Steen's Bridge from Humber Close to Stoke Prior Lane, to enable children to walk safely to Stoke Prior Primary School. Any development in Steen's Bridge will therefore be expected to incorporate where possible measures which would provide this. In the meantime, the Council will endeavour to meet this need by all available means.

16. Developing and supporting local businesses

16.1 Intention:

Humber, Ford and Stoke Prior is a sparsely populated group of parishes with no major employer. The community is concerned to promote the widest range of employment opportunities through a flexible approach but would require proposals to reflect the rural scale and character of the area.

Policy HFSP12: Developing and supporting local businesses

Proposals for the development of local businesses appropriate to the local character will be encouraged where they result in sustainable economic growth. Home working and live/work units will in particular be encouraged.

The following criteria are considered important in determining whether business development is considered sustainable economic growth in the group parish:

- (a) Development proposals should be in scale with the character of the area or settlement in which the site is located, as the case may be;
- (b) Proposals should not adversely affect landscape character or heritage assets, or result in the loss of good quality agricultural land;
- (c) The amenity of nearby residents is not unacceptably adversely affected;
- (d) There will be no detrimental effect upon the local highway network as a consequence of traffic generated by the proposal;
- (e) There will be an emphasis upon the use and conversion of rural buildings to employment uses;
- (f) Proposals should avoid obtrusive external storage and paraphernalia or provide effective screening where this is necessary;
- (g) Potential polluting effects of any enterprise should be fully mitigated, and where they cannot, permission will be refused;
- (h) Physical sustainability measures associated with buildings should include, in particular where appropriate, orientation of buildings, the provision of energy and water conservation measures, cycle and recycling storage, broadband infrastructure, and renewable energy infrastructure such as photovoltaic panels.
- (i) Diversification proposals, in particular those supporting agriculture, local services and facilities, and leisure and recreation pursuits, meeting the above criteria will in particular be supported where this retains essential services and facilities through increasing their viability.

Proposals for change of use of existing business premises away from employment activity will need to demonstrate that the existing use is no longer economically viable.

16.2 Reasoned justification:

- 16.2.1 Nearly a fifth (18%) of residents run a business from within the Group Parish so it is important to nurture and facilitate appropriate businesses. This has to be compatible with both the geographical nature of our Group Parish and the overwhelming wish of the majority of residents to continue to live in and enjoy a peaceful, clean and un-urbanised environment. The terrain is predominantly rural farm land accessed by B and C class roads which at times struggle to accommodate the present volume and type of vehicle traffic. There are no regional plans to bring forward greenfield sites outside the nearby employment centre of Leominster and any industrial development, or process, will be directed to Leominster. The policy thus aims to support self-contained home based business activity and existing non industrial scale farming.
- 16.2.2 The Core Strategy identifies the economic challenges relevant to our community: diversify the economy; create more skilled jobs to reduce out-of-county commuting and retention of young educated residents; raise wage levels to reduce the earnings gap; overcome barriers to business growth and diversification; capitalise on educational achievements and improve rates of qualification; Invest in and promote tourism (Core Strategy p21). For rural areas, support is particularly given to "diversification of existing farm uses either through strengthening food and drink production, adding to environmental technologies or... home-based start-up businesses" (Core Strategy p182). Support is also given to homeworking and live-work units, compatible with a residential environment (p184).
- 16.2.3 Core Strategy Policy E1 encourages developments which create employment and help diversify the economy where the proposal: is appropriate in terms of connectivity, scale, design and size; makes better use of a previously developed site; is an appropriate extension to a business; provides for new office development in appropriate locations.
- 16.2.4 Core Strategy Policy E3 (Homeworking) allows the change of use for this to part of a dwelling, provided the dwelling remains the principal residence of the homeworker. Small extensions for the business will be permitted subject to them not adversely affecting the amenity of the neighbourhood.
- 16.2.5 Core Strategy Policy E4 (Tourism) promotes Herefordshire as a destination for quality leisure visits and sustainable tourism, including encouraging cycling, walking and heritage tourism, and retaining and expanding visitor accommodation and attractions.
- 16.2.6 These Core Strategy policies align with the local consultation responses, which showed strong acceptance for food & drink, community services, tourism, livery/stabling and craft working (see *Our Emerging Plan: our businesses*). This

reflects the desire of most residents to retain a rural atmosphere and have businesses relating to the community and to the land.

16.2.7 Many residents wished to see a village shop and there were several suggestions for a farm shop. Combining this with the paucity of public transport within the Group Parish means development should be supported that achieves any community benefit whether it is a shop, farm shop, Post Office, Pub, accessible Village Hall or a combination thereof. All development should fit into and be sympathetic to the existing prime agricultural landscape, the scattered and varied range of homes and buildings, and the many single-track lanes.

16.2.8 Therefore existing preferred businesses will be encouraged, such as farming, stabling, home-working (various including craft and food & drink), tourism (including B&B and holiday lets) and smaller business enterprises – especially sustainable live-work units. All businesses should be compatible with the mostly narrow lanes and desire by the vast majority for the peaceful enjoyment of their rural homes. In general the use of new land for businesses will not be supported; rather the use of existing residential property or commercial property will be favoured. A project for a community or farm shop will be supported if a suitable site becomes available - possibly associated with another facility.

17. Broadband Infrastructure

17.1 Intention:

A policy is set which aims to support the development of high speed broadband to every home and business in the Group Parish by the end of 2016, as envisaged in the *Fastershire Broadband* project.

Policy HFSP13: Broadband infrastructure

Proposals to provide broadband infrastructure will be supported through:

- (a) Seeking well-designed and unobtrusively located development associated with the introduction of appropriate super-fast broadband and mobile telephone equipment that provide high quality internet connectivity for business and residential users.
- (b) Requiring new development proposals to connect to high speed broadband as a minimum by means of providing suitable ducting for fibre connectivity within development sites, linked to the local/national network, as appropriate.

17.2 Reasoned justification:

- 17.2.1 Most residents of the Group Parish (85%) use a computer at home or for business, but some still do not have access to broadband, and most consider existing broadband speeds to be inadequate for their personal and business needs (see *Our Emerging Plan – computing, broadband and telephone* and *Residents Full Survey Report* section 4).
- 17.2.2 A significant proportion of residents (20%) work (paid or unpaid) from home, and faster on-line access is vital to their productiveness and the continued viability of their businesses. Tourism is also a growing part of the local economy (especially with holiday-lets) and visitors now expect broadband access as part of accommodation facilities.
- 17.2.3 The Fastershire project aims to provide at least 2mbps broadband to our area by December 2016. In many parts of the Group Parish this may be through existing telephone connections, but fibre-optic cables may be part of the new infrastructure. This policy supports development of this infrastructure by requiring all new development to provide suitable ducting to connect to any current or future fibre-optic cabling. The infrastructure itself should be designed to be in sympathy with the rural environment and character of the countryside and villages, in accordance with Core Strategy LD1.

Consultation evidence showed that residents felt it was important to retain the rural character of the Group Parish and that the natural and historic environment should be protected, but more renewable energy should be developed.

A major concern for many residents is localised surface-water flooding, particularly in Stoke Prior and Steen's Bridge, and possible pollution from unsatisfactory foul-water drainage. This flooding is dangerous to traffic and has caused damage to property.

18. Surface and foul water drainage

18.1 Intention:

This policy seeks to ensure that development incorporates sustainable drainage measures and does not exacerbate existing flooding problems.

Policy HFSP14: Surface and foul water drainage

Development should not cause or increase surface water flooding or risk of pollution from unsatisfactory foul water drainage, in particular where this might compromise the ability to achieve water quality targets for the River Wye (including River Lugg) SAC. Where any of these are identified as a potential problem, developers will need to carry out detailed assessments and identify measures to be undertaken including contributing towards addressing existing problems where their developments will exacerbate conditions.

Where the management of drainage needs to be addressed, developers should utilise sustainable drainage systems (SUDs) where this is practicable, including measures to support biodiversity.

18.2 Reasoned justification:

- 18.2.1 The capacity and condition of verges, ditches, drains and culverts have led to drainage problems affecting roads through water pooling and some properties in the villages through flooding. The incidences of flooding have increased in recent years, resulting in limited access to areas within the Group Parish and even potentially dangerous conditions. The state of our roads was the most common issue which came out of all the consultations (see *Our Emerging Plan –Roads and lanes, and Flooding*).
- 18.2.2 Development should not exacerbate these conditions and, where possible, should incorporate measures to address localised flooding. In addition, the Parish Council will work with Herefordshire Council to ensure that an annual maintenance programme that includes the cutting of verges and clearance of ditches and culverts is carried out, to ensure safe and consistent access to the village all year round, and avoid damage to property.

18.2.3 Whilst the Local Planning Authority normally deals with such requirements by way of Planning Conditions set out in the planning permission after consultation with the Environment Agency, such process has not reduced the recurrent harmful impact upon the highway infrastructure essential to sustainable growth. The consultations showed a high level of local residents' concern about further development causing additional flooding, including by using impermeable ground surfaces. Core Strategy Policy SD3 already requires new development to reduce flood risk by, for example, including flood storage features, and SD4 requires environmentally-sustainable foul drainage (usually a package sewage treatment plant or septic tank). The proposal in *Our Emerging Plan* to supplement these policies with a specific policy for our villages, specifically requiring the use of permeable ground surfaces for new developments, was supported by 97% of respondents.

18.2.4 The community therefore considers it reasonable that any development should increase the natural permeability of rainwater into the soil and reduce the load on the ditch network. Furthermore, that an appropriate financial contribution to cover the cost of maintenance of the Group Parish area rainwater dispersal system is justified, or alternatively that the development proposals provide for the requisite volume of rainwater harvesting and recycling within the site area.

19. Renewable energy

19.1 Intention:

A policy has been set to encourage and support the provision of small/domestic scale renewable energy provision within the Plan area, which do not unacceptably adversely impact on the environment in other ways.

Policy HFSP15: Renewable energy

Proposals for small scale renewable energy generation will be supported where the following criteria are met:

- (a) They make provision for benefits to the local community;
- (b) They respect the rural and/or settlement character of the locality;
- (c) They do not adversely affect local heritage such as archaeological sites and historic buildings, including their settings;
- (d) They do not adversely affect landscape character or features
- (e) They will not adversely affect biodiversity;
- (f) Local and residential amenity is protected;

Renewable energy proposals relating to individual properties will be encouraged where they do not adversely affect local amenity or the character and features of important historic buildings.

19.2 Reasoned justification:

- 19.2.1 This policy supports the objectives of Core Strategy policies SD1 and SD2 and demonstrates the community's support for sustainability and green energy generation, as well as the NPPF support for renewables.
- 19.2.2 The community consultations identified a consensus in favour of the need to introduce more renewable energy sources, with greatest support for solar power and ground/air heat schemes. Wind turbines are a more divisive topic, with almost equal numbers of residents in favour of them as against. There was a very high level of support for the proposal for there to be an obligation for new development to provide a source of renewable energy (see *Our Emerging Plan – Renewable Energy, and Summary of Consultation*).
- 19.2.3 The policy therefore links to Policy HFSP8 and 12 requiring developers to incorporate renewable energy measures as part of the sustainable design of their developments.

20. The Natural Environment

20.1 Intention:

A policy is set to protect and enhance the natural environment and particular landscape character of the Group Parish.

Policy HFSP16: The Natural Environment

Measures to protect and enhance our natural environment and landscape character will be promoted wherever possible.

To ensure development contributes positively to the area's rural character and does not adversely affect it, proposals should meet the following criteria:

- (a) Not adversely affect landscape and village character but where appropriate include measures to conserve, restore or enhance sites;
- (b) Retain important views, vistas and panoramas, as identified in Table HFSP16 below;
- (c) Contribute towards the ecological network and green infrastructure of the area with measures to support the biodiversity value of designated and local sites, and also to add to the extent of local natural and wildlife assets;
- (d) Not have a significant adverse effect on the River Lugg SSSI, which flows into the River Wye (including River Lugg) Special Area of Conservation, unless they can be satisfactorily mitigated.
- (e) Maintain and preferably extend tree cover, with Tree Preservation Orders being made where necessary;

- (f) Retain important features such as ponds, orchards and hedgerows, adding to the natural assets of the parish where opportunities are available;
- (g) Retain important local green spaces, as identified in Table HFSP16 below.

20.2 Reasoned justification:

- 20.2.1 This policy is in accordance with Core Strategy policies for environmental quality.
- 20.2.2 For most residents in the community consultations, protecting and maintaining the rural nature of our neighbourhood was one of the key issues in future development (see *Our Emerging Plan – The character of our community* and *The natural and historic environment*). This included maintaining views of the countryside and green spaces; and protecting trees and hedgerows.
- 20.2.3 A Strategic Environmental Assessment Scoping Report has been prepared for the Plan, which can be found on the NDP web-pages.
- 20.2.4 The Group Parish is located in the National Character Area 101 Herefordshire Plateau. The landscape of the Group Parish comprises riverside meadows to the west where the River Lugg runs along its edge. East of this is a settled farmsteads landscape with a dispersed settlement pattern of farmsteads and hamlets, and the village of Stoke Prior. Further east, land then rises to a plateau (Risbury and Marston) where there is a mixture of estate and timbered farmlands. Woodlands in various forms are important within all these landscape types – there are three registered Ancient Woodlands in the group parish: The Roughs (north of Risbury) and two sections of Wig Wood (south of Ford). Note should be taken of Herefordshire Council's Ecological Network Map, its Green Infrastructure Strategy and Landscape Character Assessment when considering proposals and what positive measures might be brought forward in association with development proposals.
- 20.2.5 The River Lugg within the western edge of the Group Parish is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and becomes a Special Area of Conservation just to the south beyond the Cadbury factory. As a consequence care is required in accommodating drainage through any tributaries from development to ensure the biodiversity of the river is conserved or enhanced. The value of the area's countryside in terms of supporting wildlife should be recognised – there are 9 Special Wildlife Sites and 2 SSSIs in the Group Parish: The River Lugg; and Hill Hole Dingle, which runs south adjacent to Humber Brook from Risbury Mill.
- 20.2.6 An assessment of the landscape and development character of the three main settlements was undertaken by the Steering Committee by means of village walks in Spring 2015. These focussed on characteristics and locations identified as important by residents during the consultation exercises in 2014. This resulted in the identification of the following important views, vistas, panoramas and green open spaces which are part of the landscape character of the settlements' immediate

vicinities and provide amenity to the public. These should be protected from inappropriate development under paragraphs (b) and (f) of HFSP16:

Table HFSP16: Views, vistas, panoramas and green open spaces in or adjacent to the main settlements

Location	Description	Justification for retaining
Orchard and woodlands behind Croft Gate, Stoke Prior	Mature orchard on edge of existing village.	Orchards part of the character of the village.
Pastureland opposite barns and orchard at Croft Gate, Stoke Prior	Extensive open farmland on edge of village	Affords views from C1110 across western side of village to church and hills beyond.
Orchard to west of St Luke's church, Stoke Prior	Mature orchard on edge of existing village.	Orchards part of the character of the village. Forms natural boundary to village.
St Luke's churchyard, Stoke Prior	Burial ground to north of church. Green space to south with seating area used for occasional community events.	Availability for community events. Protect character of church building.
Paddocks north and north-east of Priory Farm, Stoke Prior	Open land on approach to village on narrow lane.	Open character of the lane with views of village buildings on lower levels, especially to Priory Farm (listed).
Land to west of Wall End Farm, Stoke Prior	Pastureland on corner of road with pond	Pond holds water from The Prill and open land is characteristic of the lane into the village.
Orchards and fields on south side of C1112 School Lane, Stoke Prior	Mature orchards and fields on higher ground above village	Orchards part of the character of the village. Character of lane is open and undeveloped. Views from higher ground west across northern Herefordshire to Welsh hills.
Land between Old Rectory and C1112 School Lane, Stoke Prior	Open ground/gardens with views up to Old Rectory	Views and driveway to Old Rectory
Land north of C1112 School Lane between School House and Stoneleigh, Stoke Prior	Special interest site with old sand-workings.	Land on higher ground is open countryside with views west, and site has special interest.
Land east of Stoke Prior Primary School	Open farmland on higher ground	Land on higher ground is open countryside with views west. Could, however, provide limited additional parking for School.
Railway embankment, Stoke Prior	Heritage feature embankment	Retain heritage feature as part of character of village.
Proposed new orchard opposite Old Hall, Stoke Prior	Proposed orchard adjacent to development for 8 houses.	Green space to separate new development from adjacent properties. May provide community recreation facility.
View south / south-west on the approach to Stoke Prior from the north on the C1110 Stoke Prior Road.	This view is across farmland on the western edge of the settlement, towards St Luke's church, the mature orchard to the west of the church, and the high ground and woodlands beyond.	Part of the landscape character of the approach to the village.
View north / east on the approach to Stoke Prior from the west on the C1112 Ford Lane.	This view is along the lane with pastureland either side, with the village nestling within well-defined	Part of the landscape character of the approach to the village.

	limits against the higher ground and woodlands behind.	
View west / south-west on the approach to Stoke Prior from the east on the C1112 School Lane.	This lane is characterised by descending from the high-ground of the plateau into the village, and has an open view across the fields and orchards to the south of the lane, over the top of the village largely hidden below. The views extend to the higher ground and woodlands immediately to the west of the village, and beyond into the Lugg and Arrow valleys, and on to the Welsh hills.	Part of the landscape character of the approach to the village.
Orchards on Poplands Lane south of Poplands Cottage, Risbury	Mature orchard on edge of existing village.	Orchards part of the character of the village. Forms natural boundary to village.
Pastureland and orchards to west of New House Farm, Risbury	Open pastureland and orchards on edge of village	Affords views from lane west.
Open fields behind houses to north of Risbury	Open paddocks and pastureland, sloping downhill to Holly Brook.	Affords views between houses to the north.
View west from the road running through the centre of Risbury	Although this view is down the centre of the village, there is a clear view to the hills of Radnor Forest in the distance. Development should not interrupt or detract from this view.	Part of the landscape character of the road through the village.
View north from the road running through the centre of Risbury	Although this view is largely intermittent between houses, there is a vista of open paddocks and farmland down the slope to Holly Brook, beyond to Buckland, and to Ludlow Forest and Clee Hill beyond.	Part of the landscape character of the road through the village.

21. Protecting Local Heritage

21.1 Intention:

A policy is set to conserve and enhance the historic character and local distinctiveness of the Group Parish.

Policy HFSP17: Protecting Local Heritage

The historic character and local distinctiveness of the Group Parish will be conserved or enhanced by:

- (a) opposing development that adversely affects important buildings and other heritage assets within the village, including their setting; and
- (b) retaining the character of traditional rural buildings, the historic landscape and archaeological sites; and
- (c) where necessary, requiring proposals for development of any site to undertake an archaeological evaluation or even a full archaeological investigation. In the event of significant and/or extensive remains being found they should be preserved in-situ in accordance with paragraph 135 of the NPPF.

21.2 Reasoned justification:

- 21.2.1 This policy is in conformity with Core Strategy policy LD1 – Local distinctiveness and policy LD5 – Historic environment and heritage assets.
- 21.2.2 The three villages within the Group Parish (Stoke Prior, Risbury, Steen's Bridge) each have particular characters comprising combinations of their natural and built environments and greenspace. The community consultations showed support for retaining areas and features that contribute to the villages' distinctive character, whether buildings or landscape elements (see Our Emerging Plan – The natural and historic environment).
- 21.2.3 There are no conservation areas within the group parish although a significant number of Listed Buildings are present. There are two Scheduled Ancient Monuments: the Roman settlement at Blackwardine and Risbury Camp. The Roman settlement is defined as currently at risk, as it lies beneath farmland which could potentially be ploughed.
- 21.2.4 The policy therefore seeks to oppose development which will adversely affect the overall historic character of the Group Parish, specifically development which would impact upon Risbury Camp, the Roman settlement at Blackwardine, and listed buildings.

Monitoring and delivery

22.1 When the Plan is adopted, it will form part of the statutory Development Plan for the area, alongside the Herefordshire Core Strategy. Herefordshire Council will continue to be responsible for determining most planning applications, but the policies in the Plan will be the basis for those decisions.

22.2 Humber, Ford & Stoke Prior Parish Council will maintain regular contact with Herefordshire Council in order to monitor the implementation of the Plan and consider the need to review the Plan in response to changing national and local requirements.

22.3 The policies of the Plan will be monitored by the Group Parish Council at least annually using the following scheme:

Objective	Policies	What monitored	Targets	Target dates
One: Accommodate future development in a way which retains the rural character of our neighbourhood	HFSP1	Development proposals and approved planning applications	All approved development meets criteria in HFSP1	Continuing
	HFSP2	Location of housing developments.	Housing development takes place within defined edges of settlement for Risbury & Stoke Prior or within criteria in HFSP7 and RA3	Continuing
	HFSP8	Design details of housing developments	All approved development meets criteria in HFSP8	Continuing
	HFSP14	Drainage details of developments	All approved development meets criteria in HFSP14	Continuing
	HFSP15	Renewable energy proposals	Approved renewable energy development meets criteria in HFSP15	Continuing
	HFSP16	Impact of development proposals on natural environment	All approved development meets criteria in HFSP16	Continuing
	HFSP17	Impact of development proposals on heritage environment	All approved development meets criteria in HFSP17	Continuing
Two: Ensure housing needs, particularly those of local people, are met by providing the required number of type of new houses, within the limits and provisions	HFSP3	Approved proposals for housing development in the three settlements, including 'windfall' development	Housing as detailed in Table HFSP3; New houses phased over successive 5-year periods	Phased by 2031
		Local Housing Need Assessments (latest May 2014)	Identified need met for: 5 self-build houses; 4 move to affordable/rented; 4 move to small market houses	May 2017
	HFSP4	Approved proposals for housing development within Stoke Prior	Minimum 22 new homes. All meet criteria in HFSP4. Smaller homes for younger or	Phased by 2031

set for such development.			older people to meet demonstrated need.	
	HFSP5	Approved proposals for housing development within Risbury	Minimum 10 new homes. All meet criteria in HFSP5. Smaller homes for younger or older people to meet demonstrated need.	Phased by 2031
	HFSP6	Approved proposals for housing development within Steen's Bridge	Minimum 4 new homes. All meet criteria in HFSP6. Smaller homes for younger or older people to meet demonstrated need.	Phased by 2031
	HFSP7	Needs assessments and approved proposals for Affordable Housing	Any needs assessments approved by Parish Council, and development meets criteria in HFSP7	As required by 2031
3. Retain and develop our community facilities.	HFSP9	Proposal for new SP Village Hall	New site identified and proposal meeting criteria in HFSP9 approved	2020
		Proposal(s) for expansion of School facilities	Proposal meeting criteria in HFSP9 approved	2015
		Proposal for provision of School car-park	Site identified and proposal meeting criteria in HFSP9 approved	2017
		Proposal for provision of nursery school in SP	Site identified and proposal meeting criteria in HFSP9 approved	2017
		Proposal(s) for play areas/open space	Site identified and proposal meeting criteria in HFSP9 approved	2017
	HFSP10	Proposals affecting The Lamb	The Lamb retained as community facility	Ongoing
4. Lessen the harmful effects of traffic and make our roads safer.	HFSP11	Impact of development proposals on traffic and highways	All approved development meets criteria in HFSP11	Continuing
	HFSP8	Proposal for footpath from Humber Close to Stoke Prior Lane.	Proposal approved either as part of a development, or as highways works.	2018
5. Support and encourage the development of small home-based businesses and traditional farming.	HFSP12	Approved proposals for business development	All approved development meets criteria in HFSP12	Continuing
		Data on broadband speeds to homes and businesses	All homes/businesses to have minimum 2mbps broadband	Dec 2016
		Details of broadband connectivity in planning applications	All approved development meets criteria in HFSP13	Continuing

Annexe 1: Summary of Parish Action Plan

In addition to the Policies and Monitoring Plan set out in the Neighbourhood Development Plan, the Group Parish Council has a 'Parish Action Plan', which covers many of the issues raised by residents during the NDP consultation process, but which do not fall within the technical remit of a Neighbourhood Development Plan.

The Action Plan covers the following objectives:

Parish Action Plan P1: The Parish Council

Information about the Group Parish Council, its importance for the community, the role of councillors and how to stand for election will be publicised in advance of elections.

Parish Action Plan P2: Community information and communication

The parish website (www.hfspgroup.org.uk) will continue to be updated and improved by the Parish Council, to broaden the pages available and the completeness of the content. The Parish Pump is now available on the website. Maintenance of the website is likely to be an increasingly time-consuming activity, and the Council will consider trying to recruit a local volunteer web-master to do this.

Parish Action Plan T1: Roads and lanes

The state of our roads and lanes will be constantly monitored by parishioners and defects reported. The Parish Council will work with, and if necessary press for action from, Hereford Council and their contractors and local land owners where this may be appropriate.

Since 2012 the Parish Council has its own small local stocks of salt-grit, and these will be used to keep salt-grit bins filled and to grit dangerous stretches of road where necessary. The Parish Council will provide new salt-grit bins where needed, and push for Herefordshire Council to re-instate some local roads as gritting routes.

Parish Action Plan T2: Maintaining hedges, verges, ditches and drains

The state of our hedges, verges, ditches & drains will be constantly monitored. Where the responsibility for maintenance (hedges and most ditches) lies with the adjacent landowner, the Parish Council will liaise with the landowner and Herefordshire Council's contractors about this. For verges and drains, the Parish Council will use its Lengthsman contractor to maintain these, increasing spending on this if necessary, or liaise with Herefordshire Council's contractors for major drainage maintenance jobs.

Parish Action Plan T3: Road safety and speeding

The Parish Council will regularly review the effectiveness of current speed restrictions and will work with Herefordshire Council and its Contractors for the provision of appropriate traffic calming measures.

Parish Action Plan T4: Parking and passing spaces

The Parish Council will work with Herefordshire Council and their contractors and with local landowners to promote increased provision of passing places (consistent with road safety) and improved maintenance of those already in existence.

Parish Action Plan T5: Footpaths and Bridleways

It is the policy of the Parish Council to promote the use of our footpaths and bridleways by all residents. To this end it will encourage and support landowners in converting stiles to kissing gates of a design which ensures the safety of stock in adjoining fields. The Council will try to help to find funds for this.

The Parish Council supports expansion of the Public Rights of Way network. It will work with Herefordshire Council, their contractors and local landowners to improve the provision and maintenance of our footpaths and bridleways.

Parish Action Plan T7: Public transport

The Parish Council considers the provision of a regular public transport service, connecting Risbury, Steen's Bridge and Stoke Prior with both Hereford and Leominster, as an essential service. It will continue to press Herefordshire Council for the reinstatement of a bus service to Leominster. In the absence of funding for a bus service being provided by Herefordshire Council, the Parish Council will explore the provision of alternative means of community transport to and from Leominster, in conjunction with neighbouring parishes.

Parish Action Plan B2: Computing, broadband and telephone

The Parish Council will seek the funds for and oversee a project encouraging and enabling all residents currently not using a computer and the internet to do so.

The Parish Council will monitor the rollout of faster broadband services to the group parish, and work with Herefordshire Council and other partners to help any properties which may benefit from this.

The Parish Council will press mobile phone service providers to improve signal strengths.

Parish Action Plan E1: Reducing the risk and impact of flooding

The Parish Council will continue to review sites where flooding has occurred and work with their Lengthsman contractor, Herefordshire Council, other agencies, and property owners to ensure that:

- road drainage is kept clear and repaired/upgraded where required;
- watercourses passing through private property are maintained;
- there is a local emergency contingency plan to deal with flooding events.

Parish Action Plan E4: Litter and vandalism

The Parish Council will try to recruit more volunteers to pick litter and provide them with necessary equipment and facilities for disposal.

The Parish Council will continue to report fly-tipping and vandalism to Herefordshire Council.

Annexe 2: List of supporting documents available on-line

- A: Consultation Statement**, including appendices
- B: Basic Conditions Statement**
- C1: Strategic Environmental Assessment**
- C2: Habitat Regulations Assessment**
- D: NDP Steering Committee Minutes**
- E: Designation of Neighbourhood Area, July 2013**
- F: Housing Land Assessment 2011-31**
- G: Future Housing Development**

www.hfspgroup.org.uk

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