



Shaping our Place 2026

Model Farm

Supplementary Planning Document

September 2008

Prepared on behalf of Ross Area Partnership
& Herefordshire Council
by
Hunter Page Planning

Local Development Framework

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

This development brief outlines the approach that should be taken to the development of Model Farm, Ross-on-Wye for employment purposes. Model Farm has been allocated for employment use in the Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan (adopted 23rd March 2007).

The brief sets out a clear objective for the development of the site, including the incorporation of a number of employment uses and associated development. This brief has been prepared by Hunter Page Planning on behalf of Herefordshire Council. Any enquiries relating to the brief should be directed to:

Mr C. Botwright
Forward Planning Team
Herefordshire Council
PO Box 4
Plough Lane
Hereford
HR4 0XH

Telephone: 01432 260133
Email: cmjbotwright@herefordshire.gov.uk

1.2 Status of the Brief

This document is to be formally adopted by Herefordshire Council as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) to assist in the delivery of the designated employment allocation set out in Policy E3 of the Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan (UDP) at Model Farm, Ross-on-Wye. Once adopted, the brief will form a material consideration in the determination of any future planning application on the site.

In accordance with the Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement and Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004 the arrangements for consultation have been complied with in the preparation of the brief. The Consultation Statement details the consultation carried out on the SPD to date and how the results have been taken into account in the preparation of the final SPD. Furthermore, a Sustainability Appraisal has been undertaken in accordance with the Herefordshire UDP approach and that set out in *Sustainability Appraisal of Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Documents* (November 2005, DCLG). It demonstrates how social, economic and environmental constraints and opportunities can be considered and utilised, consistent with the delivery of sustainable development.

Purpose of the Brief

The principal aim of the brief is to set out Herefordshire Council's clear vision for the development and delivery of the site to meet the needs of Ross-on-Wye. It will guide the

sustainable development of Model Farm and also help prospective developers achieve a high quality development, maximising the site's contribution to the development of the local economy. In doing so, this brief will need to:

- Provide guidance on the existing planning policy framework which will influence the delivery of any future planning application.
- Identify the development requirements and constraints of the site.
- Provide guidance on the delivery of high quality design and landscaping principles for the site.
- Provide guidance on the delivery of access and movement to, from and within the site.
- Ensure that the development can become fully integrated with the surrounding area.

1.3 Site Context and Surrounding Area

The site is located in the Hildersley area of Ross-on-Wye, with the town centre located approximately 1 mile to the west of the site. Ross-on-Wye is the principal service centre serving the large surrounding rural hinterland in South Herefordshire. Whilst adjacent to the built form of the settlement, Model Farm is located within the settlement boundary of Ross-on-Wye, as identified on the UDP proposals map.

The site consists of a farmyard, including a farm house and a number of agricultural buildings of varying architectural merit, along with the surrounding agricultural land. The A40(T) forms the southern boundary. The north, west and eastern boundaries are not clearly delineated and lie across open fields. The established residential development to the west is separated from the site by a green buffer zone. The northern and eastern boundary of the site is flanked by open countryside.

An existing employment site, Hildersley Farm Industrial Estate, is located on the opposite side of the A40, to the south of the site.

The site is widely visible from the surrounding area, although is not distinct in appearance. The topography of the site undulates, although not significantly. From the A40, the land slopes gently down to the existing farm yard and then elevates slightly to the north towards Highfield Farm. There are a number of existing hedgerows, mature and semi mature trees located across the site. A small pond is located to the south east of the farm yard. In addition, the site is within the source protection zone of the Alton Court aquifer.

There are no public rights of way across the site, although access to Highfield Farm is achieved via a track through Model Farm.

In the wider context, Gloucester and Hereford are both located approximately 12 miles from the site, which also benefits from good access to the M50 motorway and surrounding transport network. The site is located on the A40(T) Hereford to Gloucester trunk road, near to the Ross-on-Wye bypass which connects onto the M50 which in turn links to the M5, the A49 to Hereford and on to Shrewsbury, and the A449 to South Wales.

1.4 Sustainability Analysis

A Sustainability Appraisal has been undertaken for the site and is available separately to this development brief. However, a brief summary of the key sustainability considerations is provided here.

Public transport opportunities exist in proximity to the site and potentially can be enhanced further. There is limited existing pedestrian access to the site and this must be enhanced, along with the implementation of cycle links, to and from the site to the town centre.

The employment based development of the site provides an opportunity to enhance the sustainability of Ross-on-Wye as a whole, minimising the need for residents to commute to other sources of employment and delivering economic development objectives for the town and surrounding area.

Furthermore, any future proposal will include measures for the delivery of a low carbon development where possible. Including the retention of existing buildings where appropriate, maximising solar gain and utilising renewable energy sources.

There are a number of natural features on the site which are considered to be of environmental value, including the Alton Court Aquifer, mature hedgerows and a series of water features. Measures should be taken to protect the environmental assets on the site in conjunction with any development. **This should include restoration and enhancement of the sites biodiversity value with appropriate management of existing and new assets.**

1.5 Planning Policy Context

This development brief has been prepared within the existing planning policy framework at national, regional and local level. At a national level, the government guidance is provided through a series of Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPG) and Statements (PPS). A number of PPG's and PPS's are relevant to the future development of Model Farm, which are as follows:

- PPS1 –Delivering Sustainable Development (adopted January 2005)
- PPG4 – Industrial and Commercial Development and Small Firms (November 1992)
- Emerging PPS4 (Consultation Paper) – Planning for Sustainable Economic Development (December 2007)
- PPS9 – Biodiversity and Geological Conservation (adopted August 2005)
- PPG13 – Transport (adopted March 2001)

PPS1: Delivering Sustainable Development (January 2005)

PPS1 promotes the delivery of sustainable development by emphasising the need to ensure high quality development through good and inclusive design. At the same time

PPS1 seeks to ensure that new development should generally enhance existing communities and improve access to jobs.

Future proposals will be required to demonstrate consistency with the information contained within PPS1.

PPG4: Industrial and Commercial Development and Small Firms (November 1992)

PPG4 provides guidance on the location of new industrial and commercial developments. The locational demands of business and commerce are key considerations in the preparation of development plans, including access to the workforce catchments, the market, other business and other transport considerations.

Consultation Paper on a New PPS 4: Planning for sustainable Economic Development (December 2007)

The emerging PPS4 sets out the forthcoming guidance on the delivery of new economic development. Once adopted it will replace the existing PPG4 and will form a material consideration in the determination of planning applications relating to the delivery of new commercial development. The document provides guidance on the location of new economic development in light of recent advances in technology, the global economy and spatial planning trends.

PPS9: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation

PPS9 confirms the Government's vision for conserving and enhancing biological diversity. It includes the broad aim that planning, construction, development and regeneration should have minimal impacts on biodiversity and enhance it wherever possible. It sets out the most important sites of biodiversity and geological conservation value and key principles to ensure the potential impacts are fully considered.

PPG13: Transport

PPG13 sets out policies for the integration of planning and transport. Within it, the emphasis is placed upon reducing the need to travel, especially by the private motor car. The site location enables access to be achieved by modes of transport other than the car and any proposed development will be expected to make provision for green cycle and pedestrian links between the site and the town centre.

Any future planning application will be required to demonstrate the contribution the proposal will make to the utilisation of sustainable forms of transport.

Regional Spatial Strategy for the West Midlands (June 2004)

The Regional Spatial Strategy for the West Midlands provides the region specific planning guidance for the area, including Herefordshire. Ross-on-Wye is located within the Rural Regeneration Zone (RRZ).

Future proposals for Model Farm must demonstrate consistency with the relevant development objectives set out in the RSS.

Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan (adopted 23rd March 2007)

The adopted Herefordshire UDP provides the local planning framework which guides development within the County during the plan period (2001 – 2011). Ross-on-Wye is designated as one of 5 market towns suitable for additional growth required to meet the County's strategic and local development objectives. The UDP allocates Model Farm for employment use in Policy E3.

Policy E3 refers to Model Farm, and states:

'The need for additional employment land at Ross-on-Wye was initially considered and discounted during the preparation of the South Herefordshire District Local Plan. The Inspector recommended that the need for additional land be reviewed through Plan formulation. Accordingly, a study has been undertaken as part of the process of preparing the UDP. This compares employment land supply with the land and premises requirements of indigenous firms, inward investment and start ups, and concludes that a site of 10 to 13 hectares capable of accommodating a range of requirements for Part B uses will be required within the Plan period.'

A 10 hectare site to the south east of Ross-on-Wye has been identified at Model Farm to meet the need of employment land. The site is located at an important entrance to the town and consists of a farm and surrounding agricultural fields with a field buffer to the nearby residential area. The site is bounded by the A40 to the south, agricultural fields to the east and north and residential properties to the west. A high quality development for B1, B2 and B8 uses will be accommodated on the site. The site is located on the source protection zone of the Alton Court aquifer and the Environment Agency will need to be satisfied that any future development include suitable pollution prevention measures in order to protect ground and surface waters. A pond is located on the site which will need to be carefully integrated within a scheme. Access to the site will be directly onto the A40. The developer of this site (together with that of the proposed housing at Tanyard Lane) will be required to make a contribution to the design and geometry of the Overross roundabout to achieve a nil detriment in traffic terms together with the creation of suitable pedestrian and cycle connections to encourage 'green traffic' movements between the site and the town centre. Further negotiations relating to these requirements will need to be undertaken between the Highway Agency and the Council. The land is open to long distance views, particularly from the east. A comprehensive landscaping scheme will form a key element of any proposal and will need to address this issue as well as include a landscape buffer between the site and residential properties to the west. The open land concerned is designated as subject to policy HBA9. A development will be prepared to guide development.'

In addition, the UDP sets out a number of further policies which should be taken into account in the determination of planning applications and these will guide any future development of the site. These policies have been given due consideration throughout this development brief and are listed in Appendix 1.

2. Development Requirements

2.1 Development Objectives

The principal development objective identified for the site is the creation of a pathfinder employment development, assisting in the growth of the local economy and providing diversified sources of employment away from traditional industries. There will be a preference for the development of innovative knowledge based businesses which will act as a catalyst for future employment and economic growth within the area. The Ross-on-Wye economy is currently dominated by a number of large storage, distribution and general industrial uses. This brief will guide the development of Model Farm away from traditional employment provision, providing a catalyst for economic diversification within the town.

In order to achieve this objective, the proposal will include the delivery of a mix of employment uses including high quality commercial space, offices and an element of live/work development. The necessary support infrastructure will also be required to assist in the creation of a new business cluster, for example the provision of a business hub to promote integration and support for companies.

In addition to the delivery of a pathfinder employment development within rural market towns, any future proposal will deliver a scheme which:

- Is a highly sustainable low carbon development
- Innovative in design **respecting the character and appearance of the locality**
- Promotes vibrant community development
- Is affordable
- Promotes the development of a modern enterprise cluster within the area

2.2 Land Use

Paragraphs 6.4.22 and 6.4.23 of the UDP provide an outline of the principal development requirements for Model Farm, which include:

- Provide a high quality development for B1, B2 and B8 uses on the site
- Include suitable pollution prevention measures for ground and surface water within the source protection zone for the Alton Court aquifer, which satisfy the Environment Agency
- Integrate the existing pond into a future development scheme.
- Provide access from the A40
- Make a contribution (along with the developer of the proposed housing at Tanyard Lane) to the design and geometry of the Overross roundabout to achieve at least a nil detriment in traffic terms together with a suitable pedestrian and cycle connections to encourage 'green traffic' movements between the site and the town centre.
- Provide a comprehensive landscaping scheme to ensure that **the-local and** long distance views of the site are not detrimentally affected.

- Provide a buffer between the existing residential properties to the west and the site **appropriately landscaped and managed to protect amenity.**

Land uses proposed should be informed by the existing and future employment requirements and economic climate within the area. Flexibility should be applied to the employment use proposed on the site in order to respond to the changing economic demands of the area in order to benefit the overall development of the local economy and employment opportunities within Ross-on-Wye.

A mix of small start up business and employment uses will be preferred to the dominance of larger B8 uses such as has previously taken place on other employment sites particularly at Overross, due to its attractive location for distribution along the motorway network. **This will ensure that the whole development integrates well together and particularly the live / work element.**

2.3 Building Form and Layout

A comprehensive design approach will be taken to the site as a whole to ensure full integration of all components of the scheme, including the different business uses proposed. Consideration of the site in its entirety will enable the design and layout of the scheme to develop in a cohesive manner and create a sense of identity.

A key consideration of sustainable design, in accordance with the delivery of sustainable development, is the concept of local distinctiveness. The relationship between landscape, the pattern of land uses and activities, morphology, local building materials and styles which define the character of the local area and a sense of place are central to the design of any future proposal. The development proposal should serve to reinforce local distinctiveness, having regard to the setting and its key characteristics. However, a responsive modern approach to enhancing the local character will be promoted.

Future proposals will be accompanied by a BREEAM assessment of new buildings and initiatives to reduce the carbon footprint of the proposed development **by 10%**, in accordance with the delivery of sustainable development. The completion of a BREEAM assessment will aid in improving the environmental performance of buildings. Passive design measures, (e.g. building orientation to maximize natural light) are strongly encouraged in order to increase and promote sustainable development not only on this site, but also countywide.

In addition to the passive reduction measures referred to above, the inclusion of appropriate renewable energy generation should also be considered.

External lighting should be necessary but not excessive, minimise light spillage into adjoining areas and the sky and respond to the setting of the locality.

With regard to the layout of the proposal and the incorporation of a number of employment uses on the site, the amenity of neighbouring residents should be considered.

UDP policy DR2 sets out the guidance for consideration in the delivery of varying land uses and activity.

2.4 Access and Movement

Vehicular access will be directly from the A40(T) only. The point of access should be in accordance with the details submitted as part of planning application ref: DCSE2007/3140/O. The access will be provided to the standards and requirements of the Highways Agency. Access will also need to be maintained to Highfield Farm to the north, which is currently achieved via Model Farm.

Consideration will also need to be given to the movement of commercial and domestic vehicles within the site.

A pedestrian and cycle link will be required between the site and Ross town centre. This will also enable access to the buffer area identified between the existing residential area to the west and Model Farm. **The opportunities afforded by the disused railway line to the north should be given full consideration in providing such a link.** Access to public transport should also be a consideration in any future development proposal. Access to and from the site by modes of transport other than the car should be a genuine option for future users. Specific regard should be given to UDP Policy DR3 which sets out the local planning policy for movement within new developments. Specific guidance on the provision for cycling within new developments is also included in Policy T7 and should be considered accordingly.

A significant amount of car parking will be required, given the size of the site and its commercial use. However, any future proposal should aim to try and reduce the dominance of the car within the commercial elements of the site. Car parking courts should not be visually dominant. Shared surfaces should be utilized within any live/work development to further reduce the dominance of the car. Future proposals should also promote access and movement by non car modes and make provision for cycle parking. Consideration should be given to the provision of parking for commercial vehicles such as delivery lorries. Proposals for additional parking should be in accordance with the guidance set out in UDP Policy T11 and PPG13.

Planning applications will need to be accompanied by a comprehensive transport assessment, which demonstrates the ability of the existing infrastructure to absorb the proposal and how alternative modes of transport will be promoted for future users and residents. Regard will be had for the information contained within PPG13, the Local Transport Plan and circular 04/2001 in the completion of a Transport Assessment.

Applicants are advised to have regard to the specific access requirements of people, including those with disabilities. A comprehensive design and access statement will be required with any planning application. This will need to set out how the requirements of people with disabilities have been taken into account in the design of the proposal. Consideration should be given to the advice contained within UDP Policy T16 which refers to the provision of access to all in new developments.

2.5 Archaeology

Prior to submission of any planning application, investigatory work will be required to determine the presence of any archaeology on the site. Suitable mitigating works will be required to preserve archaeology in situ or its removal in accordance with the preparation of a working brief to be approved by Herefordshire Council.

2.6 Green Buffer

The green buffer to the west of the site is protected through UDP Policy HBA9. This buffer should provide an area of open space between the two land uses, which not only protects the amenity of the neighbouring residents but is also a facility of benefit to the local area.

Proposals should incorporate the area of open space into any scheme and make provision for its use for community benefit. The area will be protected from any future development, maintaining an open space between the two adjoining land uses. **Incorporating biodiversity enhancement into the design of the buffer area would be a means of achieving positive biodiversity gain and would also enrich the experience of people using the area.**

2.7 Landscaping/Boundary treatments and Nature Conservation

A number of mature hedgerows have been identified as important in an initial ecology survey undertaken on the site (available separately); it is recommended that these are incorporated and preserved within any proposal. There are also a number of semi-mature trees across the site. Whilst it is recognized that not all existing vegetation is of significant ecological or arboricultural merit or practical to retain as part of a comprehensive development, it is considered that the retention of vegetation identified as being of value is retained. It is recommended that an arboricultural assessment is undertaken prior to the submission of any planning application and any trees or vegetation of value are identified and incorporated within the proposal.

In terms of the proposed landscaping, the design of the site should address the existing biodiversity requirements of wildlife found on the site. Ecology surveys have been undertaken and their findings should be attended to. This requirement will influence the proposed layout of the scheme, in terms of the need to retain identified areas of vegetation and existing ponds, as identified in Policy E3.

The site is widely visible within the wider landscape; therefore a combination of soft and hard landscaping should be utilized to minimize the impact of the development. A comprehensive landscaping scheme and design will be required to ensure that the development does not unacceptably impact on appearance of the wider area and should include a range of tree planting and landscape enhancements. **Landscaping undertaken should also contribute to positive biodiversity gain, for example by planting native species of local provenance or by improving hedgerows.**

Suitable mitigation for the species identified on the site will be required with any planning application.

2.8 Flood Risk Assessment

Although the site is not within Flood Risk Zone 2 or 3, a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) is required, as per the requirements of PPS25. Early consultation with the Environment Agency is recommended as they will be a statutory consultee in regards to any planning application on the site.

Detailed proposals will be in accordance with the information set out in the FRA submitted as part of planning application ref: DCSE2007/3140/O and provide details of the drainage arrangements for the scheme.

2.9 Drainage and Aquifer

Any proposal will need to ensure that suitable pollution prevention measures are incorporated in order to protect ground and surface waters. The Environment Agency will need to be consulted regarding the proposed measures and be satisfied that they are suitable and appropriate, in accordance with UDP Policy E3.

Drainage proposals **which should give consideration to permeable paving solutions and sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS)** will be required to ensure that they do not detrimentally impact on source protection zone of the Alton Court Aquifer. The Environment Agency should be satisfied with the proposed drainage scheme. **Pollution protection measures should include appropriate storage of polluting substances and managing physical disturbance during foundation construction.**

2.10 Planning Obligations

Herefordshire Council's Planning Obligations SPD, available as a separate document, will inform planning obligations expected from the development of the site. This provides advice and guidance to developers and applicants on the use of planning obligations and how UDP policy DR5 is implemented.

Planning obligations will as a minimum be required to secure any necessary highway improvements, including a nil detriment effect at the Overross roundabout, the delivery of the identified live/work hub and to secure the promotion of sustainable modes of access to the site.

Draft Heads of Terms for any section 106 and section 278 Agreements will be expected to form part of any planning application and should incorporate a commitment to completing within the defined timescales.

2.11 Planning Application Requirements

Developers are encouraged to hold early pre-application discussions with the Council. The developer will be responsible for obtaining all necessary planning permissions, Building Regulation Approvals and any other relevant consent.

Planning applications should include the following information, as detailed within this development brief:

- Transport assessment and travel plan
- Arboricultural assessment
- Ecology surveys and proposals
- Design and access statement
- Landscaping scheme
- Statement of community involvement and consultation
- Pollution protection measures for the Alton Court Aquifer
- Sustainability appraisal
- Flood Risk Assessment
- Contaminated Land Assessment

The statement of community involvement and consultation is part of the requirement to undertake community involvement in the production of a detailed proposal, consistent with the delivery of sustainable development and the guidance within PPS1. Accordingly, applicants will need to:

- Inform local community groups and residents of the proposal
- Arrange a public meeting or exhibition, presenting the proposals to the local community at an accessible venue. An opportunity for members of the public to provide their response to proposals should also be provided.
- The findings and considerations raised through the public consultation process should be detailed in a Statement of Community Involvement to be submitted with the planning application.

Applications should be accompanied by coloured plans and illustrative material that is easily understood for the benefit of planners, councillors, residents and other statutory consultees.

Regard must be given to Herefordshire Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement (SCI), available online at www.herefordshire.gov.uk.

In respect of groundwater protection and pollution prevention measures, developers should refer to the Environment Agency website www.environment-agency.gov.uk.

3. Live/work Concept

3.1 Inclusion of Live/work

Improvements in the cost and accessibility of advanced telecommunications, changes in work/life balance, removal of the need to commute and the opportunity to combine work space and the home under one roof are among some of the reasons driving the growth in the live/work sector in both rural and urban areas. The footloose nature of many home based businesses enables rural areas to become attractive locations.

Furthermore, a growth in the live/work employment sector provides a significant opportunity for the diversification and growth of rural economies, previously dependant on agricultural and traditional economies. Planning guidance on live/work is contained in the draft PPS4, informed by the Planning White Paper (2007) and the Barker Review of Employment Land use suggests new forms of economic development including live/work

units. The Model Farm site is an appropriate one to deliver these emerging policy objectives.

The inclusion of an element of live/work development on Model Farm could contribute to the creation of a critical mass for home-based businesses contributing to the local economy. Furthermore, the provision of a sufficient number of units in the cluster would ensure that they can support a hub facility which in turn will provide business services for the units. Further information regarding the Live Work concept, benefits and in the context of Ross on Wye can be found in appendix 4.

4. Design

4.1 Design and Access Statement

Inline with the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, a design and access statement is required with any planning application. The design principles will need to be set out in detail and it should be established how the design principles have arisen within the wider context of the surrounding area. It should not be just a descriptive analysis of the proposal.

UDP Policy DR1 sets out the requirements for design and more detailed guidance is provided in the Council's Design and Development Requirements Supplementary Planning guidance (July 2004).

4.2 Design Principles

In summary, the following principles will need to be addressed within any development proposal:

- Create a high quality commercial development to include high quality employment uses and associated infrastructure.
- Produce low carbon building through sustainable construction methods and high eco-ratings, following the completion of a BREEAM assessment.
- Address energy efficiency of buildings and introduce renewable energy sources where possible and viable.
- Retain existing buildings where appropriate.
- Provide a design which reflects the character of the local area and the setting of the site.
- Provide for a range of users, including the provision of affordable units for both new and established businesses.
- Respond to the site constraints identified
- Respond to the design advice regarding the building form and layout of the proposal.
- Incorporate appropriate **and well maintained** landscaping proposals to ensure the character of the area is maintained and minimize the potential impact on the surrounding landscape.
- Mitigate any adverse effects on biodiversity and retain existing areas of particular biodiversity merit, as identified in the accompanying ecology surveys.

- Ensure that the mix of uses is appropriate in respect of any impacts that they may have on adjacent users and ensure that the amenity of neighbouring residents is preserved.
- Promote **safe** access to and from the site by modes of transport other than the car.
- ~~Enhance~~ **Improve safe** walking and cycling links to Ross-on-Wye town centre.
- Integrate the site with existing infrastructure.
- Design a permeable built environment, with due consideration given to ensuring that commercial and domestic traffic is mixed and segregated where appropriate.
- Promote shared surfaces and the reduce the dominance of the vehicular traffic
- Use sustainable drainage techniques where possible.
- **Incorporate pollution prevention measures.**
- Incorporate the principles of 'designing out crime'
- Design for waste minimization principles in regards to both the construction of the site, and the future use of the site, through the provision of recycling facilities and other appropriate waste management techniques.
- **Use water efficiency techniques.**
- Promote an inclusive environment through design, with users of all dispositions in mind.

5.0 Conclusion

The development of this site provides the opportunity to develop a modern, well designed and innovative employment development that will:

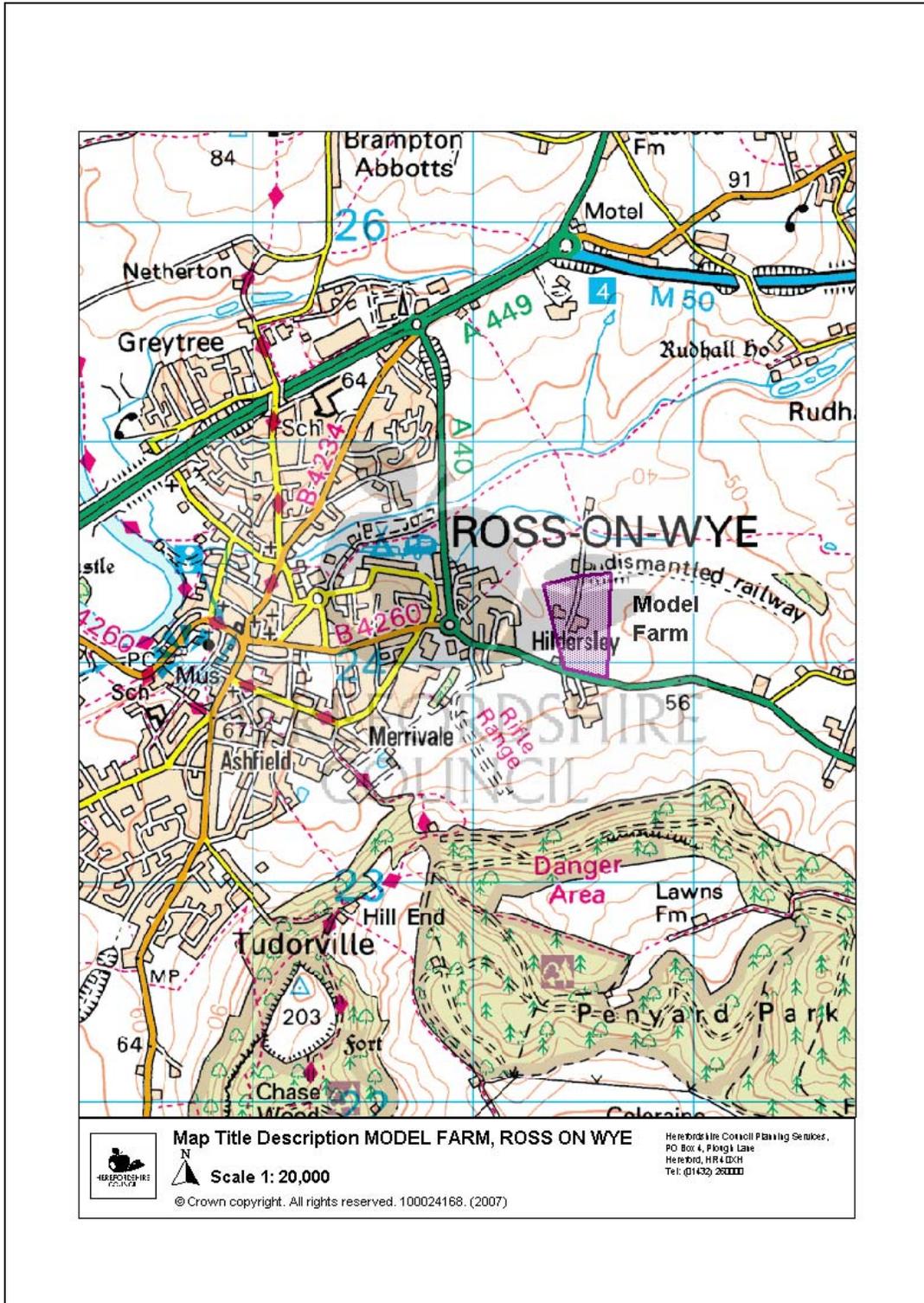
- Create a high quality employment development promoting innovative business uses
- Promote the development of an enterprise business cluster within the area
- Utilize sustainable construction methods
- Be affordable to a range of users
- Be integrated within the landscape through design and layout.

Appendix 1 - UDP Policies

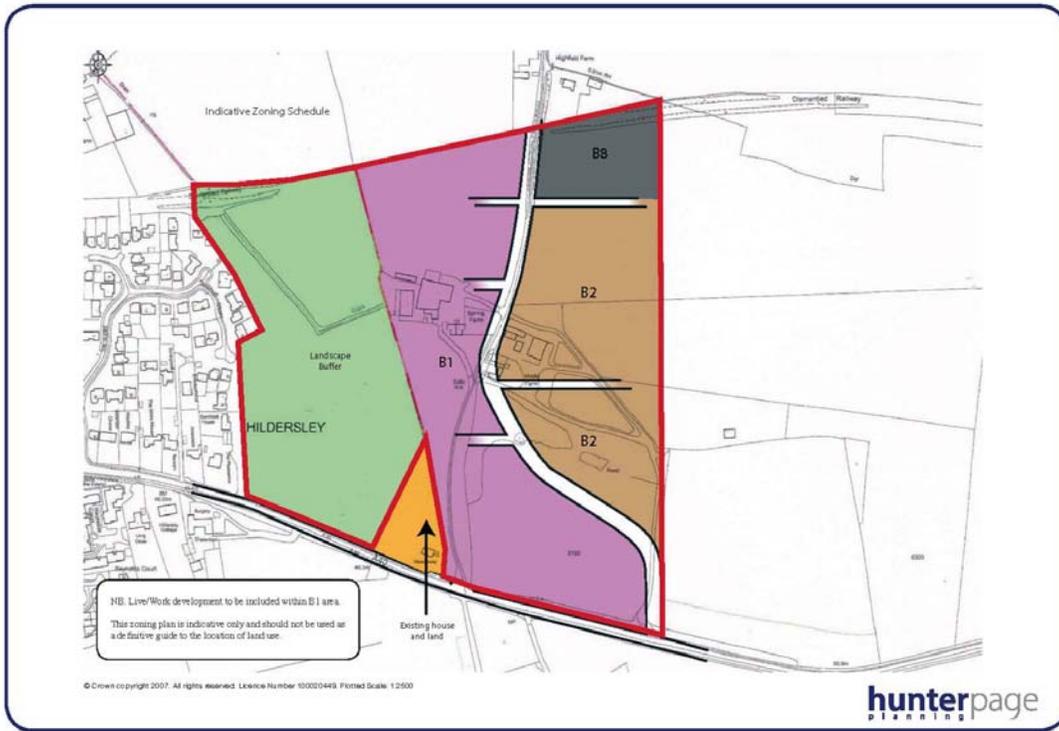
Relevant UDP Policies:

- S1 Sustainable Development
- S2 Development Requirements
- S4 Employment
- S6 Transport
- DR1 Design
- DR3 Movement
- DR4 Environment
- DR5 Planning Obligations
- DR6 Water Resources
- DR7 Flood Risk
- E3 Employment
- E8 Design Standards for Employment Sites
- T1 Public Transport Facilities
- HBA12 Re-use of rural buildings

Appendix 2 - Site Location Plan



Appendix 3 - Indicative Master Plan



Appendix 4 - Live/work Supplement

The potential benefits of live/work property at Ross-on-Wye

1. What is live/work?

Typically a live/work property is for those who need much more than a room in a house to run their business from home. This can either be because of the nature of the business (eg textile design, photography). Or because the business proprietor has staff and finds a normal home inappropriate for this.

The growth of live/work - purpose-built mixed-use property - is closely linked to the ongoing growth in home working in the UK, which has doubled in ten years. Over two million now work mainly from home and over 40% of all businesses are now home based, according to a 2006 DTI survey.

One of live/work's key sustainability benefits is its reduced use of natural resources:

- one property is constructed not two (owner would otherwise require a separate home and workspace)
- one property to power and heat not two – a significant reduction in waste of electricity, gas, water.

Live/work is often constructed on brownfield sites. And live/work units are ideal for businesses in sectors with low environmental impact.

This is not a wholly new idea. Living above your workshop, shop or office was a common way to use buildings before the industrial revolution.

2. Economic benefits of live/work

There are many different types of live/work property, each attempting to fulfil a different role. There is no one ideal model. The needs of rural and city centre schemes, for example, are very different – one to establish a thriving business environment where little exists, the other to cut the costs of premises for start up businesses seeking to be near centres of economic activity. However, if the purpose of a live/work scheme is to **boost enterprise** and well paid knowledge-based work, the factors below are important in all areas:

3. Building design that includes workspace

Schemes that are marketed as live/work but have no special design features to enable work, just a spare room, are least likely to sustain work use.

Those designed with functional work space – preferably separate from the living space – are the most likely to do this. In particular, units should enable work to continue if the owner is away. Staff should be able to work there without feeling they are in their manager's home. And owners should be able to visit clients or go on holidays knowing

that their accommodation is secure and their colleagues are continuing the business from the part of the unit designed for this.

The whole scheme's look is also important. If it looks businesslike (especially if it looks attractive and modern, with good signage and each unit having a 'shop front' for its workspace) it will encourage business.

A scheme needs to be well landscaped, ideally with shared communal space to enable resident live/workers to become familiar with neighbouring businesses. But the units must also appeal as comfortable living space, perhaps with its own aspect looking away from the work areas. The best live/work schemes combine both and have an inherent live/work 'feel'.

4. Creating a live/work business 'cluster'

Live/work developments often include a shared 'hub' building for residents (and non residents), to use equipment such copiers/scanners, to have meetings and to network with one another. Some hubs also have reception staff and even facilities such as video conferencing.

Having a hub at the heart of a live/work scheme makes it easier to create a successful business cluster - a dynamic enterprise community. The aim is to encourage businesses to collaborate and become stronger by working with one another, as well as using each other's services. A graphic designer may need IT support. An e-commerce operation may need a delivery or marketing company, and so on.

5. Flexibility for business growth

A mixed live/work unit should enable the equivalent of at least 1.5 jobs, ideally with space for 3, 4 or more. It should also have sufficient space for a business to take on more staff and (significantly in the live/work sector) the use of freelance/occasional subcontractors. Without this flexibility, a small business will find it hard to expand/contract to suit its needs. If there are larger units (or normal workspace-only units) nearby, that will also encourage businesses to stay and grow within the vicinity – further strengthening the cluster.

6. Work-life balance

If possible the units should keep working and living areas separate within the building. Open plan shared space can work for some, but it can also disrupt home life. This is not a problem for young start up businesses, but as these people become older, they may well need space that is separate from work. If possible, a separate floor or separate areas within the live/work unit (underneath or to the side) – each with a different feel – would achieve this.

In more open-plan units (which have the advantage of flexibility), split floor levels are particularly popular. But where families are involved, it is advisable to completely

separate live and work, but keep the workspace easily accessible to the family members that use it.

7. Affordability

By combining workspace and home costs in one building, a live/worker can make their money go further, enabling them to invest more in their business. They can also reduce the risk of their business failing.

By its very nature, live/work is more affordable than having to pay for a separate home and workspace. On larger schemes, it may also be possible to have a number of lower cost affordable live/work units offered as part of the mix. These can be available to rent or for shared ownership and can be prioritised for local people, managed by a housing association.

8. Saving time

With a live/work unit, there is no need to commute to work. This can save businesses a considerable amount of time, which in itself will allow more time to be spent on business and also on the family. The national average commute time is 45 minutes per day. Five days a week at this rate means wasting at least half a working day every week commuting - not to mention the time it takes to recover from the journey when you reach work or home.

Live/work units are a good way to make the most of that precious modern commodity - time.

9. Environmental benefits

Live/work helps promote sustainable development in many ways. Use of one property not two by businesses that would otherwise be considering separate premises will significantly reduce carbon used in the construction process and in fuel/power use afterwards:

- one property is constructed not two (owner would otherwise require a separate home and workspace)
- one property to power and heat not two – a significant reduction in waste of electricity, gas, water.

A live/work development can also help to sustain a modern 'daytime economy' - people working locally rather than commuting. This can boost spending on local services, for example post office facilities, pubs and restaurants etc. A more sustainable business base is possible with enhanced daytime buying power and recruiting power. Live/work can also result in increased security at night, with more properties occupied 24 hours, reducing fear of crime in town centres and other neighbourhoods.

Live/work is often constructed on brownfield sites. And live/work units are ideal for businesses in sectors with low environmental impact.

The other key sustainability benefit of live/work is its ability to cut commuting. With no need for owners to commute to work, there will be fewer journeys, reducing carbon emissions. This will be particularly relevant in comparison with the likely levels of in-commuting during rush hours, were the site to be restricted only to traditional employment use.

Part of the live/work scheme's aim should be to attract those who might otherwise commute to run their business from home in a more sustainable market town location. The green aspects of live/work can also make live/work attractive to potential live/workers.

Sustainability impact summarised: what can live/work deliver at Ross-on-Wye?

- a live/work **community** all on one site
- reduced reliance on **commuting**
- **sustainable use of property** - one building not two, less land and materials used, lower fuel emissions and energy use
- attraction of **higher value businesses** and associated spending power to the neighbourhood
- enhanced range and quality of employment **opportunities** locally, including for skilled graduates
- lower costs for those struggling to **afford** separate premises - workspace and home
- suitable premises for **higher value** micro-businesses, particularly in the creative, technology and knowledge sectors
- suitable premises for **workshop/studio** type businesses that require more space than normal residential property provides
- more powerful **broadband** connection for resident businesses and potentially other local residents, businesses and home-workers
- improved neighbourhood **security** through continual occupation.

Prepared by Live Work Network for Ross Area Partnership, July 2007

If you need help to understand this document, or would like it in another format or language, please call the Forward Planning Team on 01432 260500 or send an email to: ldf@herefordshire.gov.uk



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