

Locality master plans - Ledbury

1. About Ledbury Locality

The Ledbury locality, situated in the east of the county, covers 214 km² and has a population of 18,500 residents (10% of the county's population). It shares a border with Worcestershire and Gloucestershire. It comprises 23 parishes (including Ledbury itself), reaching from the edge of Malvern in the east to Tarrington in the west and from Much Marcle in the south to Stifford's Bridge in the north. The largest villages are Colwall (largest in the county) and Cradley; other large villages include Bosbury, Much Marcle, Tarrington and Wellington Heath. Whilst Ledbury is the main service centre in the locality, Colwall also acts as a service centre for the rural area. Malvern borders the locality and is also likely to be important as a service centre to this locality.

Ledbury is fairly well served by transport links with train stations in Ledbury and Colwall, the M50 motorway just a short distance from the town, as well as a number of trunk roads that run through the area. These links provide relatively easy access to employment and other services outside of Herefordshire, reflected in high out of county commuting rates in parts of the locality. The town and in particular the rural area are some of the most affluent in the county.

2. Services required

As a market town, Ledbury serves the needs of its residents, as well as those of the surrounding rural areas. In asset terms there is a requirement for Council services (including library services, customer services, registration services, a cemetery, primary and secondary education, children's and family services, household waste site, sports facilities and cultural offer), integrated health and social care services, blue light services and voluntary services. Parish and town councils are also likely to have more responsibility for the delivery of services needed by local communities.

Ledbury has a Police Station and a retained fire station; both will remain.

3. Steps already taken

A major project aimed initially at the replacement of the non-DDA compliant and otherwise unfit for purpose, Ledbury Library has undergone several changes. With the review of the council's capital programme and following the announcement of CSR10, it was resolved that the development of a standalone new build library would be unsustainable in both capital and revenue terms. In Autumn 2010, E C Harris were commissioned by the council to support them in bringing forward proposals around the feasibility of creating a new customer services hub in the town. Three initial options were considered and following consultation with members and a number of local stakeholders, it was resolved that the public services hub would be centred around a refurbished Master's House.

Following six months of consultation, detailed plans have been developed which incorporate accommodation for the following functions and services:

- Customer Services (combining former INFO services with library services);
- Registrars;
- Ledbury Wye Valley NHS locality team;
- Community Voluntary Action Ledbury
- Shopmobility; and
- John Masefield displays and archive

A detailed timetable for the construction work which will need to be let in phases, is currently under consideration, as is a potential Heritage Lottery Fund application to restore the central hall. There is currently a shortfall in funding to realise the entire project and this could be in the region of £0.5m-£1m (depending on the outcome of the Lottery Fund application).

West Mercia Police had identified considerable opportunities in collocating within the Master's House and new build library. However, with the downscaling of the project, the Police are currently concentrating on their existing premises in order to accommodate other parts of the service which are hosted elsewhere. The opportunity to co-locate with the Fire Service in the medium term is being assessed.

Ledbury's Community Health and Care Centre opened in 2002. The Centre was developed and is operated through a Public Private Partnership with Shaw Healthcare which provides a range of health and care services/facilities to the Ledbury locality. These services/facilities include community hospital services, a nursing home for older people, a GP surgery, a NHS dental access centre, and an office base for the Wye Valley NHS locality team. With the rehousing of the locality team into more cost effective back office accommodation at the Master's House, there exists significant spare capacity within the Community Health and Care Centre which may be suitable for extending secondary care provision. This is yet to be formally discussed.

In 2011 work was completed at the Ledbury Children's Centre site to incorporate a multi-agency office to facilitate flexible locality working for children's services professionals and staff from supporting agencies.

4. Asset reviews

A series of asset reviews have been undertaken within the county over the past 12 months. Potential options including the identification of opportunities for services to co-locate, as well as those properties no longer suitable for service delivery and therefore surplus to operational requirements and available for disposal (either to achieve a capital receipt or a community asset transfer) have all been assessed with the following objectives:

- More effective/efficient use of assets
- Improved public access to services
- Increased co-location and co-working across all sectors
- Reduced revenue expenditure by sharing and redesigning services
- Reduced county carbon footprint

5. Proposed work programme for locality

- **Long term developments at the Lawnside site** – Will need to be considered by the Locality partnership. This site comprises several publicly owned buildings and there is considerable private sector retail interest in the redevelopment of the entire site, should services be able to relocate.
- **Barratt Browning Institute (used by the Library Service)** – Surrender of the lease would enable the library to be moved into an integrated service hub. Whilst this would result in a £25k revenue saving, there are maintenance liabilities of £250k.
- **St Katherines Barn (vacant)** – This is a listed building and its community asset transfer would remove (notional) maintenance liabilities of £600k.
- **Heritage Centre** – Discussions are underway regarding its potential community asset transfer.
- **Youth Centre (used by CYP)** – Feasibility work required into sustainable future use of the building/site.

6. Other work underway

- Ledbury, along with many other parishes in the locality (Bosbury & Coddington, Colwall, Cradley & Storrige, Pixley Group, Putley, Tarrington and Wellington Heath) have produced Community Led Plans.
- The Police has identified possible collocation with the Fire and Rescue Service in the medium term. Similar opportunities may exist for the Ambulance Service.

- Due consideration needs to be given to the long term future of the swimming pool and youth centre, as both require considerable capital investment if they are to continue to operate in their current form.