

Locality master plans - Leominster

1. About Leominster Locality

The Leominster locality has a population of 15,500 residents, covers an area of 172km² and is situated in the north of the county and shares a border with Worcestershire to the north east. It comprises 14 parishes (including Leominster town), reaching from Bodenham in the south to Ashton in the north and from the outskirts of Leominster in the west to Hatfield in the east.

Bodenham and Luston are the largest villages in the locality, although the latter is half the size of the former. The area is fairly well connected, being served by two trunk roads and a train station at Leominster. Areas in the north of the locality are as close to Ludlow in Shropshire as Leominster, whereas the south is as close to Hereford as it is Leominster. The rural area of the locality is one of the least densely populated areas in Herefordshire.

2. Services required

As a market town, Leominster 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 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 and their needs need to be explored through the emerging Locality Partnerships. A location plan of assets and a legend of facilities is supplied as part of this paper.

Leominster has a purpose built Police Station and a retained fire station, both will remain. Potential introduction of a touch-down police facility at Corn Square in the medium-long term

3. Steps already taken

Work has taken place over the summer months to co-locate childrens and family services into a new youth centre and multi-agency office at the Earl Mortimer campus. This has also involved the consolidation of Sure Start support staff to an extended Conningsby Centre building. In doing so, spare capacity has been created at the Corn Square offices, where discussions are taking place with West Mercia Police around providing a touch-down facility for town centre beat management. These moves have enabled the disposal of two rented properties, one to the rear of Corn Square and the other in South Street, resulting of a revenue saving in the region of £30k.

Following the formation of Wye Valley NHS and the development of their north locality team, work has begun to collocate their locality teams into accommodation at the Old Priory site. By the end of this year, it is hoped that all Wye Valley NHS back office staff will be resident in this location. Opportunities for further expansion at the Community Hospital site are unlikely given its landlocked location.

In terms of the front facing customer services offer, the current arrangements include a TIC which has recently been reinstated and supported by the Leominster Town Council and is located in Corn Square. The Leominster INFO offices are also within Corn Square which are collocated with Citizens Advice Bureau. This building is in a poor state of repair and has a significant amount of spare capacity, albeit inaccessible for disabled users.

Leominster Library moved from its former premises at South Street into long term (125 year) rented accommodation in the Buttercross Arcade in 2003. At present there is limited opportunity to collocate the INFO services with the library as in other market towns, although such rationalisation would be desirable.

The Police moved from its Ryelands Road premises to a new station on the Southern Avenue Enterprise Park in 2007. The station includes cells, interview rooms, a secure van dock, holding cell and separate rooms for medical treatment, fingerprinting, photography and breathalyser testing.

The Grange Court development fronted by LARC is due to be completed at the end of this financial year and is likely to provide significant community capacity beyond that already in the town. The building will be transferred to the ownership of LARC upon completion.

Discussions between the Fire and Rescue Service and Ambulation Station and their potential collocation continue. The future of the Job Centre Plus service is unclear at present and discussions around its location continue.

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

Work carried out has highlighted the following:

- Potential for the collocation and consolidation of front facing public services onto a single site
- Optimising opportunities for the rationalisation and disposal of surplus assets to include currently occupied HC owned Wye Valley NHS assets.
- Investigating the long term opportunities for the redevelopment of the Westfield Road sites which are in public ownership – potential disposal marriage value of up to £3m
There are many issues arising from this disposal and long protracted consultation is expected.

6. Other work underway

- Work is at an advanced stage on the development of a Community Led Plan for Leominster. Plans for the parishes of Bodenham are also in progress and plans for Humber, Stoke Prior & Ford Group, Luston Group and Middleton on the Hill & Leysters Group have been completed.
- There are plans for the Westfield GP Practices to relocate to a more central location where they have aspirations to expand their services. A suitable site is yet to be identified.
- In terms of the third sector, HALO presently rent premises for their head office in Lion Yard and have expressed a willingness to consider relocation if suitable premises can be identified.
- Following its multi-million pound investment at the Enterprise Park, the Police has no plans other than the introduction of a touch-down facility at Corn Square (already mentioned) in the medium-long term.
- Marches Housing are in early discussions with HC regarding the potential redevelopment/disposal of each others interests in Arkwright Court.