

1. Context

- 1.1 The policies and proposals contained within the Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) for Withington relate to the whole administrative area of the Group Parish as illustrated in Map 1. The Plan sets out a number of neighbourhood planning policies to govern land use and development within the parish for the period 2011 to 2031 (i.e. consistent with the Herefordshire Core Strategy which has the same plan period). These policies need to be read alongside existing national and County planning policies which apply within the parish. They have been written to complement the policies contained in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the Local Plan and the actions resulting from the Community Led Plan produced in 2010. Where appropriate, reference is made to these three documents in the text of the NDP and links to them, and to the key sources providing the evidence on which the NDP is based.
- 1.2 National planning policy is set out within the National Planning Policy Framework, which was published in March 2012 and is regularly updated and amended. The companion Planning Practice Guidance provides more practical advice as to how national policy is to be implemented.
- 1.3 Herefordshire Council is responsible for the production of the Local Plan, which sets out strategic planning policies governing development in the County up to 2031. The first document to be produced as part of the Local Plan was the Core Strategy. This sets out the overall context for the preparation of NDPs, notably housing requirements, as well as many other policies on relevant issues such as employment, open space and infrastructure.

2. The Parishes and the Villages

- 2.1 Withington Group parish is a group of three rural parishes located between 3 and 8 miles to the east/north east of Hereford City. The group covers some 6.7 sq. miles, and had a population of 1760 based in 680 household in 2011. The main development is in Withington. Westhide is the smallest parish with a population of 69. Preston Wynne is a parish of dispersed development along three miles of loop road, and small developments at Eau Withington, and Withington Marsh form other groups of development, the whole being separated by agricultural land and scattered dwellings. Whitestone Business Park provides the largest employment area. The parish is crossed by the A465 linking Hereford to Bromyard, and the A4103, Hereford to Worcester road. The main land use is agriculture, with both arable and livestock farms. The cultivation of hops played an important role in the agriculture of the three parishes but in recent years this has been replaced by other crops. 72% of dwellings are owner occupied and 26 % rented. 83 % of journeys to work are by private car, reflecting the rural nature of the area and the infrequency of public transport.

Withington

- 2.2 The village of Withington lies towards the south side of the parish, to the north of the Hereford to Worcester railway. The settlement was mentioned in the Domesday Book (1085 – 7) and there was a Saxon church on the site of St Peters Church.
- 2.3 In earlier years people were more widely distributed in the parish among various hamlets – Old Grove, Withington Marsh, Nunnington, EauWithington, White Stone, West Lydiatt, Veldo and the central area around Withington church. In 1851 there was a

population of 713 with a variety of local craftsmen serving the agricultural community. Withington and its manors are mentioned in the Domesday book(1085-7), the name being spelt 'Widingtune'. As with most rural villages the church was an important feature in the community. Two large private houses, two large farmhouses and several historic cottages are close to the church forming the old core of the settlement and located at the eastern end of an old 'ridgeway' (Veldo Lane).

In 1728 money was collected from the great and the good. £100 went towards a school – the original school at the Stallenge - of that - £10 built the school and £90 purchased land, the rent of which would pay the schoolmistress' salary. At the same time £550 was collected to build a new house for the Rector! It remained a predominantly agricultural village until recent times with many of the residents supporting farming. The farms produced a variety of crops and many had cattle. In the twentieth century, the main farms also grew hops and until recently hop yards were an obvious feature of the area. The hop harvest needed significant seasonal labour. Their presence and the aroma of the drying hops were a feature of every September.

In 1851 record show that the trades of blacksmith and agricultural implement maker, carpenter, wheelwright, basket-maker and tanner were present. There was also a cooper who presumably supported the various public houses.

- 2.4 In 1844 the Herefordshire and Gloucestershire canal reached Withington at Withington Marsh having 'entered' the area at the northern edge of Westhide. Several buildings were developed around the canal basin at Withington Marsh. Very soon a new railway from Ledbury to Hereford was constructed on the southern edge of the parish and a station was opened in 1861, only to close exactly 100 years later in 1961. A tile works was developed adjoining the station. The site of the works is now the thriving Whitestone Business Park. Another site to the north of the A4103 became Anvil Enterprises, a business developing timber frame buildings and then the original out-of-town supermarket known as Meadow Market, and later, as Norman's. The area today has been developed for housing and the village shop. The Post Office is close by and will shortly include a fish and chip shop.
- 2.5 A major change took place some forty + years ago when the then council built Withies Close, a relatively large social housing development in a small village. While some residents had local connections, many came from the city or elsewhere, and in the last 40 years Withington has continued to expand primarily southwards towards the Hereford to Worcester Road (A4103). In 2011 there were 610 dwellings in the Withington Parish. Many of the old cottages have been extended and modernised and houses and bungalows have been built as in-fill and five new housing estates have been erected. In addition, since 2011, over 140 dwellings have been approved and an 80 place care home. The village has a Primary School, Village Hall, Church, Chapel, Village Store and Post Office. The nearest public house is the Cross Keys at Withington Marsh. The new village hall was built in 1999 with greater and more modern facilities than the 1920's hall in Veldo Lane A new public open space, Withington Fields, has been developed by the parish council for formal and informal recreation next to the Village Hall. This 2.43 hectares site became a Fields in Trust in July 2011 and has a BMX track, play equipment and football pitches. A more recent addition is a Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA).
- 2.6 The development of the Whitestone Business Park with its wide range of business activity is a major source of employment even if the majority of people working there do not actually live in Withington. Elsewhere there are still a wide range of independent businesses based in or close to the village. Some are obvious like the garden centre, garage, car sales operation, furniture producers and kennels, but many operate more

discreetly using the internet or phone to serve their customers. The major farms employ less direct labour for traditional arable and cattle work but much of this is done by those who work as local contractors. Diversification has created employment in trees, turf, chickens, soft fruit etc.

Westhide

- 2.7 (Extract from Littlebury's Directory and Gazetteer of Herefordshire 1876-7)
"Westhide is a parish situated between the main road leading to Worcester (over Fromes Hill) and the Bromyard Road. The Herefordshire and Gloucestershire canal forms its northern boundary. Westhide is situated 6 miles NE of Hereford, 9½ miles SW of Bromyard and approximately 2 miles NE of Withington station on the Worcester Hereford branch of the Great Western Railway (West Midlands Section). It is in the Radlow hundred, Hereford union, petty sessional division, and county court district, and Ocle-Pychard (Burley Gate) polling district. The population in 1861 was 174. The soil is deep clay, subsoil is red marl, chief produce is wheat, hops, beans, fruit, roots etc. The land is very fertile and well wooded, but rather hilly. There are two quarries in the parish, one of road stone the other of an inferior kind of wall stone."
- 2.8 Westhide has changed somewhat from the detailed description above. The Herefordshire and Gloucestershire canal, which arrived in the 1840's, forms the northern boundary of the parish. The canal was never a financial success and closed within 30 years. It is now being restored by volunteers.
The number of houses now is only 33. There are very few children under the age of 17. The Church, dedicated to St Bartholomew, still holds regular services and is an important feature of the community, holding several village events. The school which was built to accommodate 42 children at the cost of £400 in 1863 is now a private dwelling. The land is still very fertile with a wide range of crops.

Preston Wynne

- 2.9 Preston Wynne is a small village situated to the north of the A465 Hereford to Bromyard road. There are just over 60 houses on a 3 mile loop through the parish, and at Preston Marsh. There is a variety of building stock, the oldest being a Grade 2 listed C14 hall house and the newest built in the last decade. There is no identifiable village centre. The land is mainly used for farming. The church of the Holy Trinity was built in 1727, probably on the site of an earlier chapel. It has a marble monument to Henrietta Pugh who left an endowment to the poor.
The old local school is now a private house, and the designated schools today are Burley Gate VC primary school and Queen Elizabeth Humanities College in Bromyard. The local children utilise a bus service to get to these schools. The Memorial Hall was erected by the villagers of Preston Wynne and Felton to remember those who fought in the Great War 1914-1918. The building was originally a receiving station on the south coast for returning wounded soldiers. After the war it was brought to Withington by train and from there it was transported to Preston Wynne.