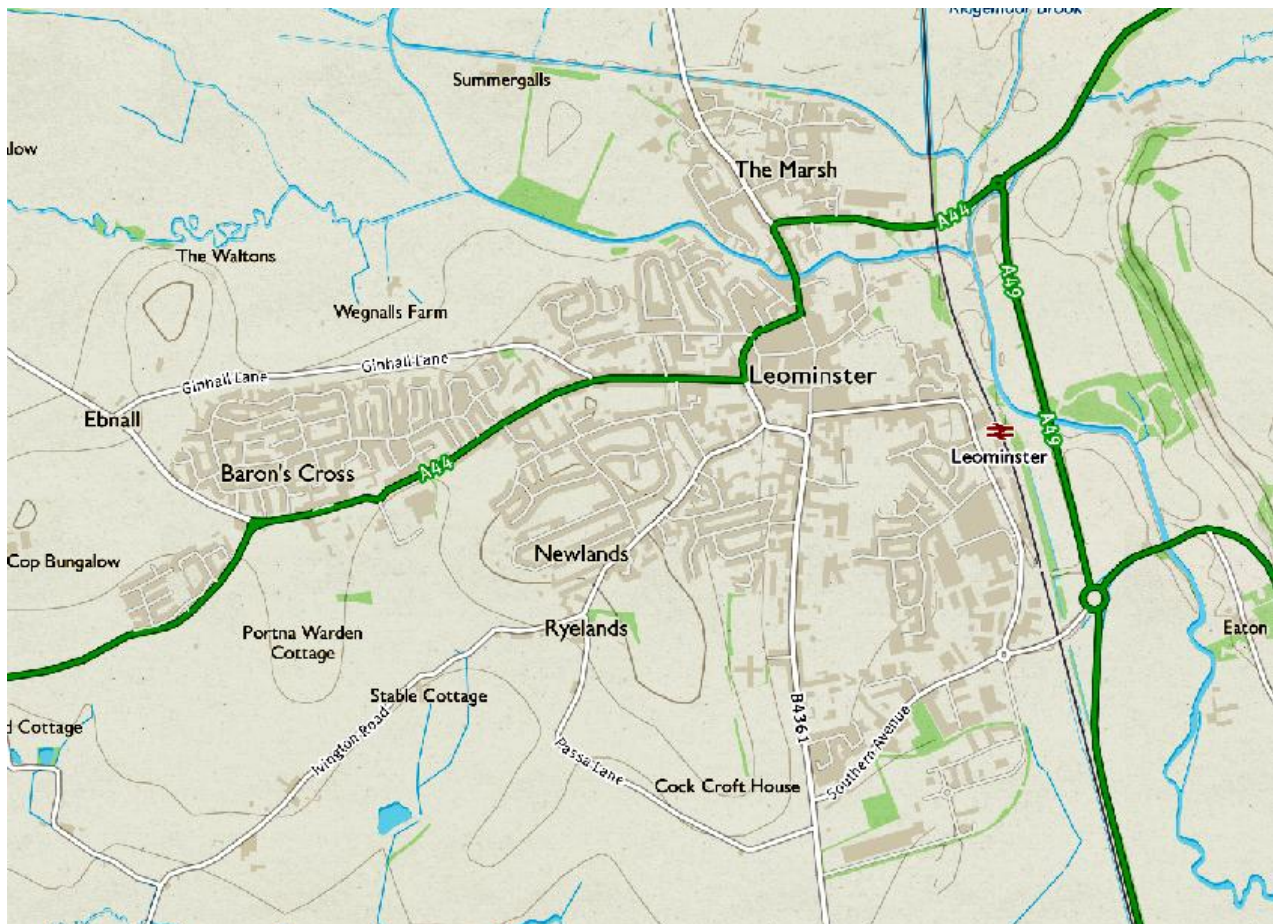


## LEOMINSTER STATION FACILITIES



Location of Leominster Station within town

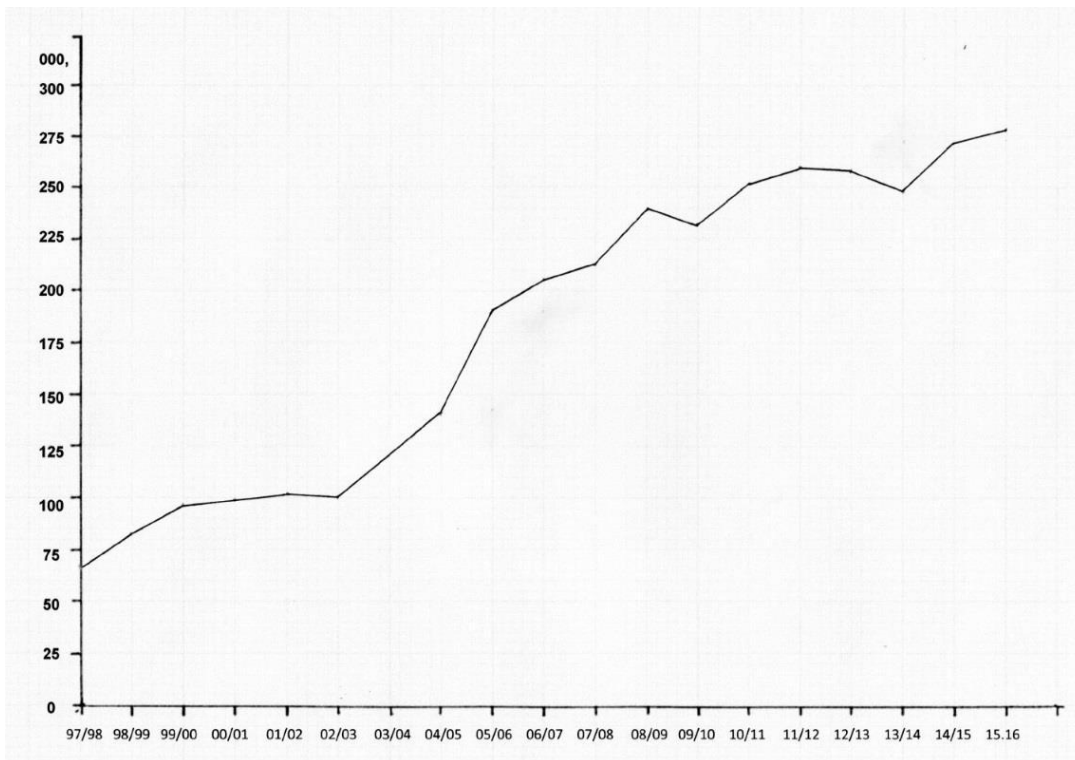
Leominster is a small market town in north Herefordshire approximately fifteen miles north of Hereford. It has a population of 11,690 (2011 census). The town is located where two major routes intersect: the A49T north-south route from Warrington to Newport (Gwent), which by-passes the town to the east and the A44 east-west route from Worcester to Aberystwyth. The town is connected to both Shrewsbury and Hereford by a main north-south rail route (the Marches Line) and also to Hereford by an hourly bus service.

The town is a centre for a large rural catchment area. To the west this includes the small towns of Kington (3,240) and Presteigne, Powys (2,210) and the sizeable villages of Pembridge (1,056), Kingsland (986), Shobdon (816), Lyonshall (575) and Eardisland (502). To the east there are the small towns of Bromyard (4,500) and Tenbury Wells, Worcestershire (3,777).

The railway station is located on the eastern edge of the town approximately 0.5 miles from the town centre. Most of the town is to the west of the centre, and virtually all of the considerable planned expansion will be in that direction as the railway forms the western boundary of the flood plain of the River Lugg. This means that there are few facilities near the station and good road access is vital.

An hourly frequency bus service (0930-1430) passes the station entrance for the town centre bus station via an indirect route (journey time 15 minutes).

Passenger numbers using Leominster station has seen an encouraging steady growth since the late 1990s with a current figure of 276,904 for the 2015-2016 year. Growth over the last decade has been stimulated by changes in higher education with the joining of Hereford and Ludlow colleges and the expansion of the curriculum to include a wide range of courses including some with degree status. This has led to a continued rise in student flows at local stations on the Marches Line



The potential for further stimulating use of Leominster railway station is therefore evident.

However, the station infrastructure has fallen behind as part of an active marketing plan to raise the profile of the station as an integral part of the town. A positive lead has been taken by the railway infrastructure and operating companies with the construction of lifts at the station to satisfy disabled needs. However a number of other areas for urgent improvement have been identified by the Leominster Rail Users Group as part of the Marches Rail Users Alliance.

1. **Car Parking:** There is an urgent need for more car parking space. This is a key as poor accessibility threatens any growth. The station is on the eastern edge of the town whilst housing development is to the west and north. There is no public car park nearby with a long stay facility. The station is easily accessible from the A49T road and the A44 road is also signposted past it. This makes it ideal to expand its role as a railhead for north Herefordshire and North West Worcestershire.

There is land adjacent to the station which could be acquired. This had planning permission for a car parking, now lapsed but the conditions imposed on the permission had been complied with so there should be no problems with the use.

2. **Station Building:** The station buildings on the town side at Leominster remain in existence and are owned by Herefordshire Council. There is an Arriva ticket office and three tenants, including the station café which is currently closed because of personal problems. There is potential for the fuller use of the range of buildings for railway and community uses. An independent ticket office, like those at nearby Ludlow (very similar in size, services and passenger numbers) and at Ledbury (a much smaller town) could offer a longer hours and a wider range of services including toilets.

The station building on the southbound platform two is totally inadequate for present usage and needs to be supplemented by an additional shelter. This is much the busiest departure platform with typically around 80 waiting passengers awaiting departures in the morning peak in college term-time weekdays.

3. **Ticket Office Facility:** The ticket office was re-established some years ago by the previous Train Operating Company, Wales and Borders, initially in a kiosk before incorporation within the main building. However, last year Arriva Trains Wales reduced opening hours including complete closure on Saturday mornings – which means it is now closed all weekend.

This is considered totally unacceptable. The Saturday morning opening should be re-established, particularly as many occasional users need advice and help at weekends. In the longer term an agency might be established offering a wider range of services to passengers, as exist already at Ludlow and Ledbury.

With café and barber's shop already in the building and hopefully improved car parking, this would improve the range of facilities to the benefit of all - and perhaps toilet facilities could be included to serve the public during opening hours.

Herefordshire Council's Draft Economic Master Plan also contains an assessment of the station, attached below as a Supplement. The site mentioned for car parking therein was suggested by Leominster Rail Users a few years ago but rejected by the Council at the time because of alleged difficulties providing access to the A49 trunk road. Either or both sites would be of great benefit.

## SUPPLEMENT

# ***EXTRACT FROM HEREFORDSHIRE COUNCIL'S ECONOMIC MASTER PLAN 2016***

## **“Leominster Railway Station Improvements**

### **Overview**

Located on the Cardiff to Manchester line, Leominster benefits from an hourly service in both directions, with typical journey times to Hereford of 16 minutes, or of approx. 40 minutes to reach Shrewsbury. Ordinarily this level of service would present significant commuting opportunities from the station both locally to Hereford, Ludlow and Shrewsbury but also more widely to Cardiff and Manchester.

Passenger numbers at the station are on the increase with the 2014/15 number of passengers rising by just over 25,000 on the 2013/14 figure to a total of just under 274,000 per annum. It is considered that passenger numbers could further increase if the facilities at the station were improved. Currently the station lacks for toilet facilities, refreshments, and an appropriately sized car park.

The current station accommodates approximately 15 car parking spaces with some additional disabled spaces. Given the relative distance from the town centre and other long term car parking options this lack of spaces significantly impacts on the attractiveness of the station from a commuter perspective.

Alternative car parking arrangements should be investigated, with a preference for a location to the east of the railway line and access direct from the A49 trunk road. Potential exists to construct new car parking facilities on land currently constrained for other uses due to the proximity to a flood plain, and the relative market unattractiveness due to being sandwiched between the A49 and the railway. These facilities would provide easily accessible, highly visible, long term car parking that could equally serve the railway station and the wider, long stay, parking requirements for Leominster.

### **Opportunity**

Potential exists to develop a surface car park on current agricultural land at a location between the A49 and Marches railway line to the east of the current railway station. An appropriate charging regime could be introduced commensurate with the car park serving long stay users and commuters.

Additional but ancillary commercial uses could be introduced where they serve the station users and provide a complementary service to the railway station and car parking. In particular it is noted that a number of basic services are currently not available at Leominster station and the addition of these, either as part of the car parking provision or within the existing station building, would be supported. “