

West Berkshire Local Plan Review to 2036

Review of settlement hierarchy

Guidance note for town/parish councils and neighbourhood planning groups

As part of our Local Plan Review (LPR), we are undertaking a review of the settlement hierarchy. The existing settlement hierarchy is set out within Policy ADDP1 (under Section 4 ‘The Spatial Strategy’¹) of the adopted West Berkshire Core Strategy 2006-2026 Development Plan Document.

Urban Areas	Wide range of services and the focus for majority of development	Newbury, Thatcham, Eastern Urban Area (Tilehurst, Calcot and Purley on Thames)
Rural Service Centres	Range of services and reasonable public transport provision – opportunities to strengthen role in meeting requirements of surrounding communities	Burghfield Common, Hungerford, Lambourn, Mortimer, Pangbourne, Theale
Service Villages	More limited range of services and some limited development potential	Aldermaston, Bradfield Southend, Chieveley, Cold Ash, Compton, Great Shefford, Hermitage, Kintbury, Woolhampton

Below the settlement hierarchy there are two additional types of area where there will be more limited development, including affordable housing for local needs:

- *Smaller villages with settlement boundaries - suitable only for limited infill development subject to the character and form of the settlement,*
- *Open countryside - only appropriate limited development in the countryside will be allowed, focused on addressing identified needs and maintaining a strong rural economy.*

What is the settlement hierarchy?

The settlement hierarchy indicates in broad terms which settlements are best placed to deliver sustainable development, accommodating West Berkshire’s requirements, and therefore helps underpin the approach to the location of development in the Local Plan. The settlement hierarchy categorises or groups the towns and villages according to the level of accessibility of each settlement to facilities and services and helps define the role and function of those settlements within the District.

At the top of the hierarchy are the larger settlements that have the best infrastructure in terms of facilities and services and are the most accessible by sustainable forms of travel. The smaller settlements with the least facilities, services and accessibility to public transport are at the bottom of the hierarchy. This helps determine which settlements are the most sustainable.

¹ <https://info.westberks.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=36377&p=0>

What approach are we taking?

Our proposal is to base the approach and methodology on that used for the current Core Strategy. This was endorsed following our consultation at the end of 2018. It involves both a quantitative and qualitative assessment of the services and facilities available to a settlement. The assessment does not by itself determine settlement capacity or advise on the suitability and likely level of future growth to be accommodated. It will sit alongside other technical studies, such as Sustainability Appraisal, Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, transport modelling, and will be used to ensure that:

- the amount and scale of new development planned for is appropriate, and takes into account the different characteristics for the settlement in question;
- new development is adequately supported by existing infrastructure and services or improved through the Local Plan Review; and
- new development helps lower carbon emissions by reducing the need to travel where possible.

‘Settlements’ are defined as those having a settlement boundary as identified within Policy C1 of the West Berkshire Housing Site Allocations Development Plan Document². They are listed below. These settlements are being assessed for inclusion within the settlement hierarchy, with the exception of Newbury, Thatcham, Tilehurst, Purley on Thames, and Calcot which will continue to act as the District's urban areas.

The other rural hamlets and isolated groups of development across the District that are very small with limited services and without a settlement boundary will not form part of this assessment. However, if as a result of the settlement boundary review they are included, then that settlement will be assessed for its place within the hierarchy.

Aldermaston	Compton	Lower Basildon
Aldermaston Wharf	Curridge	Mortimer
Ashmore Green	Donnington	Pangbourne
Beenham	East Garston	Peasemore
Boxford	East Ilsley	Stockcross
Bradfield	Eastbury	Streatley
Bradfield Southend	Eddington	Tadley / Pamber Heath
Brightwalton	Enborne Row	Theale
Brightwalton Green	Great Shefford	Tidmarsh
Brimpton	Hampstead Norreys	Upper Basildon
Burghfield	Hermitage	Upper Bucklebury
Burghfield Bridge	Hungerford	West Ilsley
Burghfield Common	Kintbury	Woolhampton
Chieveley	Lambourn	Wickham
Cold Ash	Leckhampstead	Yattendon

² <https://info.westberks.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=43955&p=0>

What stage are we at now?

The first stage has been to carry out an audit of all the services and facilities against a criteria following guidance from the Government's National Planning Policy Framework. We compiled a list made up of three elements:

- Key services and facilities
- Connectivity and transport services
- Other Community Services and Facilities

We identified what services and facilities were present or absent in each settlement using web searches, our prior knowledge and site visits. Each criteria has a score attached and we consulted on the suggested criteria and those scores in 2018 as well. The draft list has been refined and extended in the light of comments and more work is being done on the scoring. Ultimately this will comprise the quantitative assessment.

However, we do not intend to determine the position of settlements in the hierarchy solely on a numerical ranking. We wish to include a qualitative assessment. An essential element will be the experience and knowledge of the local community accessing those services and facilities, and so we are asking for your help. Note that this is access in relation to the settlement and its role and function in the hierarchy, not in terms of the performance of the particular service or facility such as waiting times for doctor appointments, etc.

What do we want you to do?

To draw out that experience and knowledge, we have put together a questionnaire which we would like you to complete for each relevant settlement in the Parish. To help in its completion we also attach:

- the draft audit criteria for services and facilities; and
- an audit by settlement of the services and facilities we have compiled thus far.

We have opted for a 'tick box' approach to make the task easier whilst appreciating that the judgement in common from the community might be tricky. So please use the sections for commentary to qualify your views further.

Where settlements are adjacent to, or cross parish boundaries, you may wish to confer with them.

Also, please take the opportunity to fact check the audit for accuracy and annotate accordingly.

What do you do when you have finished?

Please send back to us at the address below, the completed questionnaire(s) by settlement and any of the annotated audits. We will use the information alongside the quantitative assessments to carry out further analysis of the role and function of the settlements and to propose a revised settlement hierarchy for consultation this autumn.

Timescale

We are giving you just over 6 weeks to complete the exercise and so our deadline for the return of all maps is **27 March 2020**. Any queries in the meantime just contact us using the detail below and we will do our best to help.

Many thanks

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