

Borough Council of King's and West Norfolk Local Plan Review (2016 – 2036):

Consideration of the Settlement Hierarchy

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The settlement hierarchy is an established tier system, based to a large extent on the existing pattern of growth and the availability of services and facilities, its use ensures new growth is appropriately distributed and the best opportunities of supporting existing and new business and community facilities are realised.
- 1.2 The settlement hierarchy is set out within the Core Strategy (CS) as Policy CS02 – The Settlement Hierarchy. There are a number of amendments to this set out within the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan (SADMP).
- 1.3 As part of the Local Plan Review process, it is important to consider whether Policy CS02 remains appropriate or if it requires an element of refining. This discussion paper looks at the existing settlement hierarchy (including amendments introduced through the SADMP), an overview of how this was formed; and presents a review option going forward, with the NPPF in mind.

2. The Current Settlement Hierarchy

2.1 The settlement hierarchy ranks settlements according to their size, range of services and facilities, and their possible capacity for growth. As such, it serves as an essential tool in assisting to ensure that:

- New development at an appropriate scale occurs in the most sustainable locations;
- Additionally by identifying the role of settlements it offers the opportunity to support communities in maintaining and enhancing facilities serving these areas

2.2 To support these aims the current settlement hierarchy identifies six tiers based upon their role and function in the Borough. The tiers are: Sub-regional centre, Main Towns, Settlements adjacent to King's Lynn and the Main Towns, Key Rural Service Centres, Rural Villages, and Smaller Villages and Hamlets.

2.3 Land allocations in each of the settlement tiers were made in accordance with Core Strategy Policy CS09 Housing Distribution. This sought residential housing allocations across the top five tiers of the settlement hierarchy.

2.4 Over the page the current Settlement Hierarchy is presented, this is taken from the CS and incorporates the amendments made by the SADMP. Note that unlisted hamlets and smaller groups of rural dwellings which are excluded from the hierarchy are deemed to be within the countryside.

2.5 Policy CS02 also describes the level of growth expected for each tier and any policies specific to that particular tier. The criteria based approach to settlements and their subsequent classification within the hierarchy is explored within the next section of this paper.

1. Sub-Regional Centre (1)			
King’s Lynn, including West Lynn			
2. Main Towns (2)			
Downham Market		Hunstanton	
3. Settlements Adjacent to King’s Lynn and the Main Towns (4)			
North Wootton		West Winch	
South Wootton		Wisbech Fringe (Inc. Walsoken)	
4. Key Rural Service Centres (21)			
Brancaster with Brancaster Staithe/Burnham Deepdale	Emneth	Snettisham	
Burnham Market	Feltwell with Hockwold-cum-Wilton	Stoke Ferry	
Castle Acre	Great Massingham	Terrington St Clement	
Clenchwarton	Grimston/Pott Row with Gayton	Terrington St John with St Johns Highway/Tilney St Lawrence	
Dersingham	Heacham	Upwell/Outwell	
Docking	Marham	Watlington	
East Rudham	Methwold with Northwold	West Walton/West Walton Highway	
5. Rural Villages (32)			
Ashwicken	Harpley	Sedgeford	Walpole Cross Keys
Burnham Overy Staithe	Hilgay	Shouldham	Walpole Highway
Castle Rising	Hillington	Southery	Walpole St Peter/Walpole St Andrew/Walpole

			Marsh
Denver	Ingoldisthorpe	Syderstone	Welney
East Winch	Marshland St James/St John's Fen End with Tilney Fen End	Ten Mile Bank	West Newton
Fincham	Middleton	Three Holes	Wiggenhall St Germans
Flitcham	Old Hunstanton	Thornham	Wimbotsham
Great Bircham/ Bircham Tofts	Runton Holme	Tilney All Saints	Wormegay
6. Smaller Villages and Hamlets (55)			
Anmer	Congham	North Creake	Stow Bridge
Bagthrope with Barmer	Crimplesham	North Runcton	Tinley cum Islington
Barroway Drove	East Walton	Pentney	Tichwell
Barton Bendish	Fordham	Ringstead	Tottenhill
Barwick	Fring	Roydon	Tottenhill Row
Bawsey	Gayton Thorpe	Ryston	West Acre
Bircham Newton	Hay Green	Saddlebow	West Bilney
Blackborough End	Home next the Sea	Salters Lode	West Dereham
Boughton	Lakesend	Setchey	West Rudham
Brookville	Leziate	Shernbourne	Whittington
Burnham Norton	Little Massingham	Shouldham Thorpe	Wiggenhall St Mary the Virgin
Burnham Overy Town	Methwold Hythe	South Creake	Wolferton
Burnham Thorpe	New Houghton	Stanhoe	Wretton
Choseley	Nordelph	Stow Bardolph	

3. Settlement Tier Classification

3.1 King's Lynn is the **Sub Regional Centre**. Growth will support the role of King's Lynn as a Sub-Regional Centre.

3.2 There are two **Main Towns** within the Borough: Downham Market and Hunstanton. Growth will continue to support their roles by supporting employment and essential services at Downham Market, and ensuring Hunstanton develops as a successful service hub whilst strengthening its role as a tourist destination.

3.3 **Settlements Adjacent to King's Lynn and the Main Towns**. Four settlements are identified as being geographically located close to King's Lynn, the two main towns within the Borough and the town of Wisbech which borders the Borough: North Wootton, South Wootton, West Winch, and the Wisbech Fringe (Inc. Walsoken). Development that takes place at these locations must demonstrate a positive impact on the adjacent Sub Regional Centre and Main Towns and must assist in both maintaining and enhancing the provision of services, employment and local retail needs.

3.4 The more rural settlements of the Borough are split into a further three tiers, **Key Rural Service Centres**, **Rural Villages**, and **Smaller Villages and Hamlets**. Settlements were categorised based upon a desktop study of service provision in combination with responses from Parish Councils. Ten service categories, largely drawn from the East of England Regional Spatial Strategy guidance at the time, as listed below, were explored.

GP Surgery	Public House
School	Restaurant/take-away
Bus Service	Garage/Filling Station
Convenience Shop	Other shop(s)
Post Office Counter	Other employment

The settlements were then scored accordingly:

- Key Rural Service Centres require 7 or more services
- Rural Villages 4-6
- Smaller Villages and Hamlets 3 or less

3.5 The provisional classifications were refined based upon public consultation firstly through the Regulation 25 Consultation Document (2009) and secondly through the CS Proposed Submission Document (2010).

3.6 **Key Rural Service Centres (KRSC)** have been identified by a settlement hierarchy as suitable for accommodating higher levels of development, which will help to sustain the wider rural community. These Service Centres were selected on the basis of the presence of a primary school, healthcare facilities, a range of services that can meet basic day-to-day needs, and a level of public transport that can enable access to and from the settlement. Points were scored according to the presence of these criteria. The thresholds for each settlement category based on this point scoring system are shown below under each heading.

7 or more points: To qualify as a 'Key Rural Service Centre', the settlement must firstly include a school, as village schools are considered core facilities which play an important role in promoting and supporting a sense of community. Additionally, a convenience store should be present, preferably a doctors' surgery (though villages without these will be considered if scoring sufficient points), and a travel to work public transport service should be in operation.

Local scale development will be concentrated in identified Key Rural Service Centres. This will include new housing, employment and retail development.

3.7 **Rural Villages:** 4-6 points: Fewer facilities are present compared to those in the Key Rural Service Centres, with the settlement having little or no convenience shopping, an infrequent bus service and, in most cases, will feed into larger villages. Rural villages have a limited but locally important role. Smaller scale development will be considered in these locations to help sustain existing services. This should be appropriate to meet the needs of the village and its surroundings. These settlements may see some limited growth, which will help support surrounding rural areas (e.g. some small-scale infilling or affordable housing).

3.8 Smaller Villages and Hamlets: <4 points: These are villages with little or no services. In most cases no school, bus service or local convenience store will be present. Development will be limited to specific identified needs.

3.9 Once the settlements were scored, linkages between settlements were explored. Some linkages were based upon a close geographical relationship such as 'Terrington St John, St John's Highway and Tilney St Lawrence' and 'Upwell with Outwell'. This resulted in these settlements jointly being given KRSC status. Other not so obvious linkages include economic links and social links, as settlements share a service/facility which provides mutual support for the wider area, therefore reducing the reliance on visits to higher tier settlements, examples of these include 'Grimston and Pott Row with Gayton' and 'Feltwell and Hockwold'. Members considered that 'West Walton and Walton Highway', which a single Parish, warranted support as a joint KRSC.

4. Settlement Hierarchy Review

4.1 The aim of a settlement hierarchy should be to identify the most sustainable settlements within the Borough, therefore enabling growth to take place within the most sustainable communities.

4.2 A key aim of the planning system is to create sustainable communities by locating housing, jobs and services closer together. This approach is believed to improve residents' quality of life and reduce the need for travel. The settlement hierarchy facilitates an understanding of the way settlements interact and interrelate, enabling growth to be planned in relation to the range of services and facilities of each settlement.

4.3 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) at paragraph 7 outlines the three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. Policies throughout the NPPF advocate the creation of sustainable development, these include:

- Ensure an integrated approach to the location of housing, economic uses and community facilities and services;
- Aim for a balance of land uses within their area so that journey lengths can be minimised for employment, shopping, leisure, education;
- Plan for development in locations and ways which reduce greenhouse gas emissions;
- Support the rural economy: local plans should promote the retention and development of local services and community facilities in villages such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship;
- Locate housing in rural areas where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities

- 4.4 The Local Plan Review, offers an opportunity to re-examine the existing settlement hierarchy to ensure that the Review directs new growth to the most appropriate and sustainable locations, having regard to the NPPF. Since the adoption of the CS services and facilities may have come into existence or ceased to exist in settlements, this could be due to shifting economic and social trends, an example of this may be a reduction in the number of public houses. Similarly technological advancements have seen a shift to increased online activities from banking to shopping, with commodities/goods being delivered to the home or collection points/stores, the impact of this upon would be captured.
- 4.5 The existing settlement hierarchy has been used to direct growth to sustainable settlements since the adoption of the CS in 2011. Overall this mechanism appears to be working, as seen through the SADMP allocations and the grant of planning permissions. In light of this the approach proposed within this paper is to review the existing model rather than construct a completely new version and approach.
- 4.6 This review would allow the opportunity to reassess the tier each settlement has been assigned to. Throughout the CS and SADMP process there were representations made suggesting the promotion or relegation of certain settlements. The linkages between the settlements could be explored once more, should settlements that have been linked to create a joint KRSC be un-coupled, should new joint KRSC's be created, and should additional settlements be added to existing joint KRSC's, for example, the potential addition of Three Holes to the joint KRSC of Upwell with Outwell.
- 4.7 With all of this in mind it is suggested that the assessment criteria be modified to take account of the NPPF, as overleaf:

Health Care	GP Surgery	Pharmacy		
Public Transport	Rail Link	Bus Routes		
Educational Facilities	High School	Primary School		
Retail	Supermarket	Shops	Post Office	Petrol Station
Community & Social Facilities	Community Hall	Library (Inc. mobile)	Place of Worship	Public House / Restaurant
Leisure Facilities	Sports Hall	Playing Field	Gym / Swimming Pool	
Employment Provision	Other Employment			

4.8 The proposed new categories take into account the NPPF. The removal of ‘take-away’ is due to the promotion of healthy living, and the incorporation of ‘restaurants’ with ‘public houses’ is proposed as often these co-exist due to diversification. ‘Garage filling station’ has been renamed ‘Petrol Station’, and included in retail as often they tend to be multipurpose offering fuel in combination with a convenience shop to the local community.

4.9 The scoring system would also need refinement due to the additional category numbers. But until we have the data it is difficult to suggest this upfront as certain services/facilities may have closed or opened, and we need to ensure a scoring system that doesn’t provide too few or too many settlements in each category.

4.10 The growth was then distributed by the SADMP based upon the settlement’s existing population, as those larger settlements are considered able to absorb new growth most closely related to its scale in a sustainable manner; however this wasn’t a rigid approach as it took account of constraints (including flood risk), advantages that could be provided and views of the local community. In the settlements where growth is suggested, the accommodation of this development would still be dependent on the availability and deliverability of sites taking into account a range of sustainability factors including flood risk. These implications will be considered further during the Local Plan Review process, including

supporting documents such as the Sustainability Appraisal and the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA).

- 4.11 With the need for the raw data before the review can progress, forms have been sent to the Parish Councils for their input, See Appendix 1. Previously this approach didn't yield a high response rate and was supplemented by the views of officers who either live or cover the settlements in their work, and available online sources. In order to achieve 100% coverage it is proposed to use this method once more if required.

Appendix 1 Correspondence with Parish Council's

Settlement Hierarchy Review – What Services /Facilities does your Village have?

We would appreciate some help to assist the review of the facilities within your Parish for our Local Plan.

The easiest way to provide this information is to select 'forward' in your email options, complete the form and send it back to us via email. However if you would prefer to print it out, I have sent you a copy as an attachment.

Please can you complete details by inserting your Parish Name and also the number of each type e.g. GP Surgery 1, Pharmacy 2:

Parish Name:				
Health Care	GP Surgery	Pharmacy		
Public Transport	Rail Link	Bus Routes		
Educational Facilities	High School	Primary School	Specialist School	
Retail	Supermarket	Shops	Post Office	Petrol Station
Community & Social Facilities	Community Hall	Library (incl. mobile)	Place of Worship	Public House/Restaurant
Leisure Facilities	Sports Hall	Playing Field	Gym/Swimming Pool	
Employment Provision	Other Employment/Businesses			

The current Local Plan for King's Lynn and West Norfolk will soon comprise the Core Strategy (2011) and the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies plan (anticipated to be adopted 2016). This covers the time period from 2001 to 2026.

As part of the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies plan the Borough Council has committed to an early review of the Local Plan.

This process offers the opportunity to review the adopted settlement hierarchy to ensure that the Local Plan Review (2016 -2036) directs growth to most appropriate and sustainable locations.

The settlement hierarchy assists in this process by identifying the most sustainable settlements within the Borough, therefore enabling growth to take place within the most sustainable communities.

A key aim of the planning system is to create sustainable communities by locating housing, jobs and service closer together. This approach is believed to improve resident's quality of life and reduce the need to travel. The settlement hierarchy also facilitates an understanding in which way settlements interact and interrelate, enabling growth to planned in relation to the range of services and facilities of each settlement.

If you have any questions regarding this email please do not hesitate to contact me.

Many thanks for your assistance in this matter.