

Appendix 4: Review of Settlement Hierarchy Tiers

1. The Local Plan Review to 2037 uses the adopted Local Plan ie the Core Strategy, as its starting point. This review tests the appropriateness of the current tiers rather than conducting a full options appraisal. It takes into account views expressed in consultations and discussion and feedback from Town/Parish Councils and neighbourhood planning groups.
2. The following description of the level of service and facility has been used to help classify the different tiers that apply to the settlement hierarchy, in descending order:
 - The main urban areas with a wide range of services and opportunities for employment, community and education. Serving a large catchment area with good levels of accessibility and frequent public transport provided to a large number of destinations.
 - Settlements with a range of key services and opportunities for employment, community and education. They serve a wide catchment area and contain reasonable accessibility and regular public transport provided to a number of destinations.
 - Smaller settlements with a more limited, yet valued, range of key services and opportunities for community and education with some localised employment. They serve a small local catchment, contain a lower level of accessibility and provide often limited public transport in terms of destination choice and ease of commuting.
 - Settlements containing only a few services and facilities and poor/irregular access to public transport.
3. It is proposed that the highest tier of the hierarchy continues to be defined as the *urban areas* and encompasses Newbury, Thatcham, Tilehurst, Calcot and Purley-on-Thames. Without doubt, these areas still represent the largest and most sustainable locations in the District.

4. Settlements outside the *urban areas* will continue to be regarded as rural settlements. The ranking of settlements in the matrix (Appendix 3) clearly lists the higher order settlements concurrent with the *Rural Service Centres* (RSC) as the most sustainable locations, and they are the most distinctly grouped. They are well distributed to the east and west of the District with the centre dominated by the urban areas of Newbury and Thatcham. They contain the majority of the key services and facilities available to rural settlements that surround them. Information from the Parish questionnaires returned endorsed the current RSC for providing higher order facilities for their surrounding villages with the urban areas of Newbury, Thatcham and Tilehurst, Calcot and Purley-on-Thames equally accessed by the RSC, and villages in their proximity.
5. The next order in the matrix largely correspond with the current *Service Villages*. The selection is well distributed across the District. Most offer access to post office, convenience store, village/community hall and primary school. Those at the upper end tend to offer additional facility in combinations of medical and secondary educational facilities and employment land. The Parish returns support the role of most of the current service villages as hubs, such Hermitage is a hub to Curridge and Cold Ash is a hub to Ashmore Green. Compton and Chieveley were mentioned most for supporting surrounding villages with their services and facilities, principally because of the secondary school in the former and medical facilities located in both. Kintbury is valued for the access to the train station it offers to the surrounding rural area in West Berkshire and north east Hampshire.
6. The lowest settlements in the rankings offer very little service and facility to the extent that they should remain below the settlement hierarchy.
7. The Council proposes that the tiers within the current hierarchy remain appropriate for the purposes of guiding development to the most sustainable locations.

8. The Council realises the differences in the size and composition of services and facilities available to settlements within the same tier and that this will need to be recognised when considering the type and scale of development that should be accommodated.