

REVIEW OF SETTLEMENT HIERARCHY

Topic Paper

West Berkshire District Council

LOCAL PLAN REVIEW to 2037

Regulation 18 consultation

November 2020

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. West Berkshire District Council (WBDC) are currently in the process of a Local Plan Review (LPR) which will also extend the Plan period up to 2037. The purpose of the LPR is to assess the future needs and delivery for new homes, employment land and infrastructure provisions in the District.
- 1.2. Part of the LPR includes a re-assessment of our existing settlement hierarchy. The settlement hierarchy will guide the broad location of new and sustainable development. It provides a snapshot in time of the facilities and accessibility to services within the different settlements of West Berkshire to help establish their level of sustainability. It categorises the District's settlements according to their different roles, and groups them accordingly. At the top of the hierarchy will be the larger towns that fulfil the most functions and which are the most sustainable. The smaller less sustainable settlements with fewer functions will be towards the bottom of the hierarchy. The Council fully recognises that all places, regardless of size, role and category, are important to those that live and work in them.
- 1.3. For the LPR, the overall spatial strategy will continue to build on the existing settlement pattern with the aim of maintaining a network of sustainable communities while protecting and enhancing the environmental assets of the District. Urban development will continue to be maximised and a combination of strategic urban extensions and other small and medium sites will continue to be identified and delivered whilst respecting the distinctiveness represented in each of the spatial areas.

2. Purpose of study

- 2.1. It is acknowledged that the provision of services and facilities within settlements can change over time and that it is necessary to update our existing assessment of settlements as we plan for the period to 2037. This

will ensure the foundation of the spatial strategy of the LPR remains an accurate reflection of the role settlements play across the West Berkshire. This may mean that some settlements enter into the existing hierarchy, fall out of the existing hierarchy, move category or remain in the same category.

- 2.2. The assessment takes from the previous WBDC study published as part of the evidence base for West Berkshire Core Strategy (2006 – 2026) Development Plan Document adopted in 2012, to provide an up-to-date and comprehensive review of West Berkshire settlements.
- 2.3. The revised settlement hierarchy will assist in determining the location of future development in West Berkshire up to 2037. It will ensure that new development planned through the LPR continues to be directed to the more sustainable settlements, is appropriate for the settlement in question and is adequately supported by infrastructure and services.
- 2.4. The assessment does not by itself determine settlement capacity or advise on the suitability and likely level of future growth to be accommodated. This will be determined through the LPR taking into account the settlement hierarchy and various other studies forming the evidence base, such as the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA), Sustainability Appraisal, Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, transport modelling etc.
- 2.5. The availability of suitable sites will ultimately regulate levels of development at each settlement following site assessments undertaken as part of the HELAA. It will not follow therefore that every settlement within each category of the hierarchy will accommodate the same level of growth up to 2037.

3. Policy context

- 3.1. This section of the paper provides an overview of government guidance and local policy context relevant to the process of undertaking a settlement hierarchy review.

National planning policy and guidance

- 3.2. Government’s planning policies for England are set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2019 which provides a framework for local development plans. The NPPF does not provide specific advice and guidance for the production of settlement hierarchies. However, there is now a greater emphasis in national planning policy on sustainable development, a major component of which is reducing the need to travel. Within the NPPF the clear ambition for the planning system to contribute is set out in chapter 2 ‘Achieving sustainable development’.
- 3.3. As such, the NPPF states that: *‘Planning policies and decisions should play an active role in guiding development towards sustainable solutions, but in doing so should take local circumstances into account, to reflect the character, needs and opportunities of each area ¹’*. Moreover, the NPPF states that: *‘Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development ²’*.
- 3.4. Table 1 reflects the core planning principles and main aspects of sustainability and consideration of community facilities from the NPPF, with the corresponding choice of indicators used in the settlement hierarchy assessment criteria.

Table1: NPPF guidance on aspects of sustainability and community facilities

NPPF guidance	Indicator used
NPPF Paragraph 103 (Promoting Sustainable Transport) - <i>Significant development should be focussed on locations which are or can be made</i>	Access to public transport

¹ Paragraph 9 of the NPPF, 2019

² Paragraph 11 of the NPPF, 2019

NPPF guidance	Indicator used
<p><i>sustainable, through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes.</i></p> <p><i>However, opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas, and this should be taken into account in both plan-making and decision-making.</i></p>	<p>Community Transport Schemes</p> <p>Superfast broadband</p> <p>Proximity to urban areas</p>
<p>NPPF Paragraph 92 (Promoting healthy and safe communities)</p> <p><i>To provide the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs, planning policies and decisions should:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>plan positively for the provision and use of shared space, community facilities (such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship) and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments;</i> - <i>ensure an integrated approach to considering the location of housing, economic uses and community facilities and services.</i> 	<p>Supermarket</p> <p>Convenience store</p> <p>Village hall/community facility</p> <p>Public house</p> <p>Employment opportunities</p> <p>Place of worship</p>
<p>NPPF Paragraph 94 (Promoting healthy and safe communities)</p> <p><i>It is important that a sufficient choice of school places is available to meet the needs of existing and new communities.</i></p>	<p>Primary school</p> <p>Secondary school</p> <p>Play group/Nursery</p>
<p>NPPF Paragraph 96 (Open space and recreation)</p> <p><i>Access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity is important for the health and well-being of communities.</i></p>	<p>Sport/Recreation ground</p> <p>Children play area</p> <p>Indoor sports/leisure facility</p>
<p>NPPF Paragraph 8 (b) (Achieving sustainable development)</p> <p><i>Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways:</i></p> <p><i>(b) a social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a</i></p>	<p>General medical facility</p> <p>Pharmacy</p> <p>Library</p> <p>Mobile library</p> <p>Post Office</p>

NPPF guidance	Indicator used
<i>sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering a well-designed and safe built environment, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being;</i>	Dentist

- 3.5. In the rural context of WBDC, the NPPF states that: *'To promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities'³*. Following on from this it states that: *'Planning policies should identify opportunities for villages to grow and thrive, especially where this will support local services. Where there are groups of smaller settlements, development in one village may support services in a village nearby'⁴*
- 3.6. The National Planning Practice Guidance (PPG⁵) provides more detail which states that: *'A thriving rural community in a living, working countryside depends, in part, on retaining local services and community facilities such as schools, local shops, cultural venues, public houses and places of worship. Rural housing is essential to ensure viable use of these local facilities'*.
- 3.7. PPG⁶ further states *"that assessing housing need and allocating sites should be considered at a strategic level and through the Local Plan and/or Neighbourhood Plan process"*. However, it continues to set out that *"all settlements can play a role in delivering sustainable development in rural areas and so blanket policies restricting housing development in some settlements and preventing other settlements from expanding should be avoided unless their use can be supported by robust evidence"*.
- 3.8. The NPPF ⁷ and PPG ⁸ both state the requirement to gather up-to-date and relevant evidence to inform the preparation of local plans.

³ Paragraph 78 of the NPPF, 2019

⁴ Paragraph 77 of the NPPF, 2019

⁵ NPPG: Rural Housing, Paragraph: 001 Reference ID: 50-001-20160519

⁶ NPPG: Rural Housing, Paragraph: 001 Reference ID: 50-001-20160519

⁷ Paragraph 31 of the NPPF, 2019

⁸ Paragraph 034 of Guidance on plan-making, 2018

Existing local policy

3.9. West Berkshire Core Strategy DPD (2012) Policy ADPP1 sets out the existing settlement hierarchy for the District. The assessment for the existing settlement hierarchy was outlined in topic papers which supported the adopted Core Strategy 2012.

3.10. In the Core Strategy hierarchy there are 19 settlements categorised as either 'Urban Areas', 'Rural Service Centres and Service Villages' as Table 2 below illustrates. Below the hierarchy, smaller settlements with settlement boundaries are considered suitable for infill development

subject to the character and form of the settlement, with the rest of the District considered to be open countryside for planning policy purposes.

Table 2: The existing settlement hierarchy as set out in Policy ADPP1 of the Core Strategy 2006 -2026

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.*

4. Approach to Settlement Assessment

- 4.1. The starting point for this assessment was the existing settlement hierarchy in the West Berkshire Core Strategy DPD 2006-2026.
- 4.2. ‘Settlements’ were defined as those having a settlement boundary as identified within Policy C1 of the West Berkshire Housing Site Allocations DPD. They are listed in Table 3 below. These settlements have been assessed for inclusion within the settlement hierarchy, with the exception of Newbury, Thatcham and the Eastern Area 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 minimal services and without a settlement boundary do not form part of this assessment and will continue to be classed as open countryside for the purposes of planning policy.

Table 3: The existing settlement boundaries identified within Policy C1 of the Housing and Site Allocation DPD 2017

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

4.3. The methodology for the existing hierarchy used a scoring system. This was based on an audit of services and facilities to assess the sustainability of settlements. Each settlement was then considered against other qualitative factors which determined its final position in the hierarchy.

4.4. The Council proposed that this approach was still the most appropriate and that the assessment should be carried out in Stages. This was the subject of the Regulation 18 consultation held between November and December 2018 and the methodology for reviewing our settlement hierarchy was set out in the Appendix B of that document. Further feedback came from Town Councils, Parish Councils and Neighbourhood Planning Groups in March 2020 following locally held presentations and discussion, and subsequent completion of a questionnaire.

5. Consultations

5.1. To the consultation, the Council received a total of 71 individual responses. The comments were summarised in the West Berkshire Local Plan Review to 2036 – Regulation 18 consultation Nov-Dec 2018 Consultation Statement (June 2019). In response, the Council acknowledged that:

- The overall approach to having a settlement hierarchy was generally endorsed and the two stage quantitative and qualitative process was also supported.

- The provision of services and facilities within settlements can change over time needing an up to date assessment of settlements at an early stage of planning to ensure the spatial strategy accurately reflects the role of the settlements in the District.
- Further work will be needed to assess whether the existing categories within the hierarchy continue to remain the most appropriate.
- It is acknowledged that the main concerns of consultees relate to the actual detail of the methodology, particularly the clarity surrounding the points given to specific services or facilities. We therefore intend to undertake further work on the points system in light of the comments made. This will include:
 - whether additional weighting should be given to the part time provision of services; the sharing of services; accessibility by public transport; the distinction between rail and bus services and; the provision of a secondary school;
 - consideration of whether some criterion should be removed e.g. dental surgery or bank/building society;
 - consideration of the additional criterion proposed;
 - scoring thresholds;
 - clarification of some of the definitions used.

Changes following 2018 consultation

- 5.2. Although the general two stage approach was endorsed by the consultation, comments concerning the clarity of definitions and detail in the methodology have suggested that the stages should be more explicit. A revised methodology is set in Section 6 below.
- 5.3. Further work has been carried out with respect to increasing the sensitivity of the scoring and consideration of the addition or removal of criteria so that the assessment gives a clearer understanding of a particular

settlement's role and function and can be more refined in determining the hierarchy:

- The scoring for bus services has been graded to reflect the hierarchy of service in the West Berkshire Local Transport Plan 2011. The importance of public transport and its role in reducing car miles was seen as a primary consideration.
- The score for railway station has been raised to three to better value the access to higher order locations.
- Supermarkets have been added but given the same weight as convenience stores as they reduce car mileage and Parishes place a high value on them to the local community.
- Separate scoring has been introduced for primary and secondary schools. Although secondary schools offer a greater facility, primary schools are given the same weighting as Parishes place a high value on them to the local community.
- General medical practices and pharmacies are retained as key services. Although not accessed by all on a daily basis, nevertheless they are a vital local service for older and more vulnerable citizens. Dental services have been moved to a lower score as not being a critical need.
- Scaled scoring has been introduced for the proximity of settlements to major urban areas. These are Newbury, Thatcham and Reading. The rural nature and relatively small size of the District and most of its settlements places a higher reliance on the major centres.
- At the suggestions for a more complete assessment the following services and facilities have also been added: Superfast Broadband, Community Transport Scheme, Mobile Library.
- Similarly, Banks and Building Societies have been removed due to predominance of on-line services. Outside of the major urban areas, only Hungerford retains branches.
- Population has been suggested as a criteria and is a clear indication of a settlement's size and general ability to support a greater or lesser range of services and facilities. However, it is not

a service or facility. It is taken into account for the qualitative assessment where relevant.

- Parishes were asked about part time and/or shared services. Apart from a few shared services such as Churches being used for other regular community services, which have been scored, there were no other part time uses put forward. Where post offices are located in stores, these have been scored for each service.

5.4. In February 2020 the Council held events with Town/Parish Councils and neighbourhood planning groups (28 attended) seeking their feedback on the desktop audit of the services and facilities in each of their settlements in order to validate or correct the collated data. They were also asked to comment through a questionnaire on the relative use, accessibility and importance of the facilities and services available and those that should be improved to help sustain the settlement in the future. All Councils and neighbourhood planning groups including those that could not attend the events, were sent the desktop audits and questionnaire along with guidance notes to aid completion. A total of 26 returns were received. The information and comments were then used in the various stages of the assessment methodology to inform the final scoring, ranking, and categorisation of the settlements into the settlement hierarchy, reflecting their role and function in the District.

5.5. Towns/Parishes and neighbourhood planning groups strongly endorsed the selection of the key and other services and facilities. These included those added following the 2018 consultation. See paragraph 5.3 above. Of the key facilities, their importance to the community was rated very highly with over 80% of them being marked as 'high' importance, with the exception of employment at 54%. Most valued were clearly the primary school, village/community hall, convenience store and general medical practice. Overall accessibility to those services were more variable with primary school and village/community hall rated at over 80% excellent or good, 65% for post office, secondary school and convenience store, about 50% for supermarkets and medical services and 30% for employment.

- 5.6. West Berkshire has a dispersed rural settlement pattern with a relatively small population in rural areas. Access to public transport is already a well-known problem which the Parish returns confirm. 70% of the public transport service is rated as fair/poor. Nevertheless, the majority of the Councils consider the service highly important to their community. Whilst there is recognition of the desire for better public transport services there is also an inherent dependency on the car. Common representations for road improvements to ease congestion and for more car parking illustrate the tension.
- 5.7. Beyond the settlements, returns endorse the current Rural Services Centres 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 Rural Service Centres, and villages in their proximity. In neighbouring local authorities, Swindon, Wantage, Didcot and Reading are cited also as desirable destinations.
- 5.8. Village settlements do serve each other in occasional facilities but it is not apparent that they form clusters of mutual dependency, although the 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 and medical facilities.

6. Revised Methodology

- 6.1. The revised methodology holds to the principle of a quantitative and qualitative assessment that was endorsed in the consultation responses. The stages involving the audit of services and facilities and criteria by which they have been selected remains (Stage 1 and 2). The construction of the hierarchy combines both a quantitative measurement through the overall scoring, and some qualitative selection by introducing determining factors to differentiate the range of access to key services and facilities

and connectivity to public transport and thereby further test the sustainability of the settlements (Stage 3). Those settlements that do not meet all the determining factors or have changed tier from the Core Strategy or looked anomalous from local knowledge, are taken forward for further qualitative analysis before assigning each settlement to the appropriate tier (Stage 4).

STAGE 1. Audit criteria for services and facilities

6.2. The criteria to appraise each settlement and points assigned to each criterion are set out in Appendix 1. The scoring system with different criteria weighted depending on the relative importance and the extent to which it contributes to the overall sustainability. The weighting of scores fell within the range of 1-3 points, so that no single criteria had a disproportionate effect on the overall score. An additional point was awarded where there was more than one or more of a particular key service or facility.

6.3. The assessment focuses on criteria for each of the following elements:

- Key services and facilities
- Other services and facilities
- Connectivity and public transport.

It has taken account of the changes listed in paragraph 5.3 above, following the consultations. For ease of reference to the changes, the right hand column in Appendix 1 shows the original scores proposed in the Regulation 18 consultation in 2018.

6.4. The definition of “key services and facilities” are those which are likely to be accessed by many people in a community on a daily basis and those which may not be needed daily, such as healthcare services, but it is important that they are readily available to certain sections of the community. The key services and facilities are each given 3 points each. “Other community services and facilities” which add diversity and help

build communities are given 1 point. The difference of two points in the weighting is to emphasise the more important measures of sustainability.

STAGE 2. Audit of services and facilities in each settlement

- 6.5. An audit (Appendix 2) was carried out of services and facilities for each settlement from desk top and site visits. Included in the audit were service and facilities which were considered to be of most importance for the sustainable functioning of settlements, drawing on the national guidance. The ease and ability to access the services and facilities were taken into account in determining settlement sustainability. A standard 1 kilometre radius area of search from the centre of settlements (using GIS polygon centroids) was applied to all services and facilities with the exception of accessibility to a railway station and an employment area where a 2 kilometre radius was applied. These distances were considered a maximum across the range of services and facilities and as yet to be determined locations for development, and therefore proportionate for the purposes of reviewing the hierarchy. In addition, the availability of bus services took account of the frequency and hours of operation, and the proximity of urban areas with higher order facilities was considered. The feedback from Town/Parish Councils and neighbourhood planning groups was essential to validate or correct the collated data and the information has been amended accordingly.

STAGE 3. Construction of the settlement hierarchy

- 6.6. The data and information from the audit has been applied to the scoring criteria to form an audit matrix (Appendix 3) of the total scores for each settlement for ease of comparison. The highest and lowest scores represent the settlements at the top and bottom of the hierarchy respectively.
- 6.7. At this point the current settlement hierarchy was examined to assess whether the existing categories within the hierarchy continue to remain the most appropriate (Appendix 4). Taking account of the initial ranking and its resonance with the current settlement position in tiers along with

comments as a result of consultation so far, it is proposed that the classification tiers in the adopted settlement hierarchy continues to be used.

- 6.8. Scoring has marginally 'clustered' each of the three settlement types (Rural Service Centre, Service Village and Smaller Village) but do form some benchmark for each type, with the Rural Service Centres being much more distinct. Table 4 below provides a preliminary classification.

Table 4: Settlement Hierarchy based on overall scores alone

Classification	Scores	Settlement
Rural Service Centre	31+	Hungerford, Theale, Tadley/Pamber Heath, Pangbourne, Mortimer, Lambourn, Burghfield Common, Compton
Service Village	16-30	Kintbury, Streatley, Chieveley, Hermitage, Cold Ash, Woolhampton, Bradfield Southend, Great Shefford, Ashmore Green, Upper Bucklebury, Stockcross, Aldermaston Wharf, Aldermaston Village, Curridge, Yattendon, Burghfield Village, Hampstead Norreys
Smaller Village with settlement boundary	0-15	Beenham, Tidmarsh, Upper Basildon, Wickham, East Ilsley, Brightwalton, Brimpton, Boxford, East Garston, Brightwalton Green, West Ilsley, Peasemore, Burghfield Bridge, Eastbury, Lower Basildon, Bradfield, Leckhampstead, Enborne Row

- 6.9. Additional determining factors for sustainability were applied to discern the scope of facility and accessibility by measuring the extent of the key services and public transport available in combination with the overall score. By applying those factors the hierarchy is adjusted in Table 5

below. Those settlements that do not meet the determining factors are highlighted in red.

Table 5: Settlement Hierarchy with determining factors included

Classification and Description	Determining Factors	Settlement
<p>Urban Areas</p> <p>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.</p>	N/A	Newbury, Thatcham, Tilehurst, Calcot, Purley-on-Thames
<p>Rural Service Centre</p> <p>Settlements with a good 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.</p>	Those settlements that scored over 30 points, have between 7 and 9 of the key services and facilities and have access to a train station or Local Transport Plan Level 1 (Primary Network) of at least an hourly bus service Monday to Saturday 0700 – 1900.	Hungerford, Theale, Tadley/Pamber Heath, Pangbourne, Mortimer, Lambourn, Burghfield Common, Compton
<p>Service Village</p> <p>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</p>	Smaller settlements that scored between 16 and 30 points, have between 4 and 6 of the key services and facilities and have access to a train station or Local Transport Plan Level 2 (Secondary Network) of at least a 2-hourly bus	Kintbury, Streatley, Chieveley , Hermitage, Cold Ash , <u>Woolhampton</u> , <u>Bradfield Southend</u> , Great Shefford, Ashmore Green ,

Classification and Description	Determining Factors	Settlement
transport in terms of destination choice and ease of commuting.	service Monday to Saturday 0700 – 1900.	Upper Bucklebury, Stockcross, Aldermaston Wharf, Curridge, Burghfield Village, Yattendon, Aldermaston Village, Hampstead Norreys
<p>Smaller Village with settlement boundary</p> <p>Settlements containing only a few services and facilities and poor/irregular access to public transport.</p>	<p>Villages scoring 0 - 15 points, have between 0 and 3 of the key services and facilities and have access to a railway station or Local Transport Plan Level 3 (Community Connect) of less than 2- hourly bus service Monday to Friday 0700 – 1900. This reflects the limited availability of services and facilities in these settlements.</p>	<p>Beenham, Tidmarsh, Upper Basildon, Wickham, East Ilsley, Brightwalton, Brimpton, Boxford, East Garston, Brightwalton Green, West Ilsley, Peasemore, Burghfield Bridge, Eastbury, Lower Basildon, Bradfield, Leckhampstead, Enborne Row</p>

STEP 4. Qualitative assessment of selected settlements

- 6.10. All those settlements that did not meet all the determining factors or had changed tier from the Core Strategy or looked anomalous from local knowledge, were taken forward for further qualitative assessment of their

role and function, with commentary provided to corroborate or otherwise the suggested position in the hierarchy (Appendix 5).

- 6.11. This was partly to verify whether specific circumstances were present which suggested that a settlement's position in the hierarchy was inappropriate for any particular reasons. It was also an opportunity to consider the value and importance attributed to the facility by the local community. The assessment also considered cross-boundary functional relationships where West Berkshire settlements bordered others in neighbouring administrations.
- 6.12. Streatley has been added to join Aldermaston Village and Bradfield Southend and Woolhampton because at this stage the assessment indicates a change in their classification from the Core Strategy. Streatley again with Tadley and Pamber Heath are assessed in relation to Goring (South Oxfordshire District Council) and Tadley (Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council) respectively. Stockcross and Curridge have been added for further examination due to their proximity to other more dominant settlements. The relevant settlements are:-
- Rural Service Centre/Service Village – Compton, Tadley and Pamber Heath; and
 - Service Village/Smaller Village – Streatley, Chieveley, Cold Ash, Woolhampton, Stockcross, Curridge, Bradfield Southend, Ashmore Green, Upper Bucklebury, Aldermaston Village, Aldermaston Wharf, Burghfield Village, Yattendon and Hampstead Norreys.
- 6.13. The resulting settlement hierarchy is set out in Table 6 below.

Table 6: Proposed District Settlement Hierarchy

Urban Areas	Newbury, Thatcham, Calcot, Purley-on-Thames, Tilehurst
Rural Service Centres	Hungerford, Theale, Pangbourne, Mortimer, Lambourn, Burghfield Common
Service Villages	Compton, Kintbury, Chieveley, Hermitage, Cold Ash, Woohampton, Great Shefford, Bradfield Southend