



OPEN REPORT LOCAL PLAN SUB COMMITTEE

Local Plan Sub Committee – 30th November 2023

Derbyshire Dales Local Plan – Settlement Hierarchy

Report of Director of Regeneration and Policy

Report Author and Contact Details

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Wards Affected

All Wards Outside the Peak District National Park

Report Summary

This report sets out the outcomes of work that has been undertaken to review and update information relating to the assessment of the relative roles and functions of mid and lower tier settlements across the plan area and the extent to which they can contribute towards meeting future needs.

The report recommends that the Sub Committee note the findings of the updated settlement hierarchy assessment and that the contents of the assessment are to be used to inform the strategic development framework in the Derbyshire Dales Local Plan.

Recommendations

1. That the Sub Committee notes the updated Settlement Hierarchy assessment as set out in Appendix 1.
2. That the evidence from the updated Settlement Hierarchy Assessment be taken into account in the development of a revised strategy and policies for the location and scale of development within the revised Derbyshire Dales Local Plan.
3. That a further report be presented to this Committee which utilises the evidence from the updated Settlement Hierarchy to develop an appropriate strategy for development across the plan area.

List of Appendices

Appendix 1 – Settlement Hierarchy Review Report (November 2023)

Background Papers

[Adopted Derbyshire Dales Local Plan](#) (December 2017)

[National Planning Policy Framework](#) (July 2021)

[Planning Practice Guidance](#) (June 2021)

[Settlement Hierarchy Report](#) (September 2016)

Consideration of report by Council or other Committees

Revised policies and proposals in the Derbyshire Dales Local Plan, which are based upon the evidence in the Settlement Hierarchy will be subject to Council approval at the appropriate time.

Council Approval Required

No, this is a technical report, providing information and evidence only.

Exempt from Press or Public

No

Derbyshire Dales Local Plan – Settlement Hierarchy

1 Background

- 1.1 As Members will be aware the review of the adopted Derbyshire Dales Local Plan commenced in November 2020. Since that time work has been ongoing on the review of the Local Plan, including updating the evidence base; a detailed assessment of the availability of land to meet potential future housing needs; and a review of the existing policies in the adopted Plan to ensure that they are up to date and in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).
- 1.2 The review of the Local Plan was considered in a report presented to Council on 19th January 2022, where it was resolved that for the purposes of the Regulation 10a of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 the review of the Derbyshire Dales Local Plan had been completed and that several of the existing policies required modification to ensure that they were considered up to date.
- 1.3 The new administration, elected in May 2023, made it clear that it would like to take a ‘fresh approach’ to the Local Plan. The Local Plan Sub Committee on 3rd July 2023 confirmed the scope of the Local Plan review and resolved (Minute 37/23) that a review of the current Settlement Hierarchy be undertaken to determine the extent to which communities across the Local Plan area are ‘sustainable’ and that the results of this review be reported to a future meeting of this Sub-Committee. This report presents the outcome that review process.
- 1.3 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development and identifies three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, environmental and social. The NPPF sets out that planning policies in Local Plans should play an active role in directing new development in the most sustainable locations, taking local circumstances into account, to reflect the needs, character and opportunities of each area (Paragraph 9 NPPF). To promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain vitality of rural communities.
- 1.4 Paragraph 79 of The NPPF also sets out that planning policies should provide opportunities for villages to grow and thrive, especially where this will support local services. The NPPF also indicates that where there are a group of settlements, development in one village may support services in another nearby village. The aspirations of the Progressive Alliance, therefore, align with the policy objectives of the NPPF.
- 1.5 The development of a settlement hierarchy is a commonly used policy tool, as it provides a useful basis for planning in a sustainable way. It seeks to guide development to those locations which are considered to be more sustainable, and where local services and employment opportunities are available to the local community in a way which minimises environmental impacts and the need to travel.

- 1.6 The adopted Derbyshire Dales Local Plan sets out the existing strategy for development in the plan area under Policy S2: Settlement Hierarchy. This was informed by a comprehensive assessment of the relative sustainability of settlements across the plan area and led to the establishment of the Settlement Hierarchy as set out in the Local Plan. The assessment¹ that underpinned Policy² in the adopted Local Plan used a ranking and scoring system, based upon the availability and accessibility to a range of services and facilities, and the settlement's economic role to development within each location.
- 1.7 The adopted Settlement Hierarchy identified 32 settlements across five main tiers, defined by their role and function and have been assessed by the range of services and facilities available in each settlement.
- 1.8 The 5 tier settlement hierarchy within the adopted Derbyshire Dales Local Plan is as follows:

Tier 1	Market Towns	Matlock, Ashbourne, Wirksworth
Tier 2	Local Service Centres	Darley Dale
Tier 3	Accessible Settlements with Some Facilities	Brailsford, Clifton, Cromford, Darley Bridge, Doveridge, Hulland Ward, Matlock Bath, Middleton, Northwood, Rowsley, Sudbury, Tansley
Tier 4	Accessible Settlements with Minimal Facilities	Bonsall, Brassington, Carsington, Kniveton, Kirk Ireton, Marston Montgomery
Tier 5	Infill & Consolidation Village	Bradley, Ednaston, Hognaston, Hollington, Longford, Osmaston, Roston, Shirley, Yeaveley, Wyaston

Table 1: Derbyshire Dales Settlement Hierarchy

¹ <https://www.derbyshiredales.gov.uk/documents/cd43-derbyshire-dales-local-plan-settlement-hierarchy-pdf668-kb-june-2016/download>

- 1.9 Settlements in the Tiers of 1 & 2 are considered to be the most sustainable locations for new development, offering residents relatively easy access to a greater range of shops, services and facilities, without the need to travel by car or public transport. Tiers 3, 4 & 5 settlements generally have relatively fewer services and facilities, less infrastructure and are more isolated in terms of transport links.
- 1.10 To ensure that the aims and objectives of delivering thriving and flourishing communities can be achieved a review of the Settlement Hierarchy has been undertaken. This has sought to identify whether any changes have taken place in the relative sustainability of each of the settlements across the plan area. To enable comparison essentially the same methodology as used previously in 2016 was adopted.

2. Summary of Review Methodology & Findings

- 2.1 The current range of services of facilities in Ashbourne, Matlock, Wirksworth and Darley Dale continue suggest that these locations remain the most sustainable settlements across the planning authority area. On this basis no reassessment of these settlements has been undertaken.
- 2.2 The current assessment has therefore focused upon the 28 settlements within Tiers 3, 4 & 5 of the adopted Derbyshire Dales Local Plan. It has sought to ascertain whether they continue to be sustainable communities and provide essential services and facilities to residents in Derbyshire Dales sufficient to support future growth in those settlements. The current assessment seeks to provide evidence for Members about the relative sustainability of the different settlements across the plan area. It also seeks to provides Members with evidence that can be used in setting the future strategy and policies for development across the plan area.
- 2.3 A desktop audit of services and facilities available in each settlement was undertaken, and complemented by Officers visiting each of the settlements to ascertain the accuracy of their initial assessment. This sought to identify changes that had taken place since the original study undertaken in 2016. Parish Councils were invited to confirm the existence of the service and facilities within their jurisdiction. A review of the availability of bus and train services to residents in each settlement formed part of this assessment.

Key Businesses, services and facilities review

- 2.4 To ensure, so far is possible, that the assessment is objective and provides a fair comparison, each of the 28 settlements have been scored against a number of assessment criteria. The total score achieved for each settlement being indicative of its relative sustainability and provides the general basis for the grouping of settlements into the different Tiers. The detailed methodology and assessment of each of the settlements is set out in Appendix 1 to this report.
- 2.5 The indicators used for the scoring and ranking of settlements are as follows:

Economic Indicators

2.6 The following two indicators were used to assess the relative accessibility of local employment opportunities to residents. The greater the potential for employment opportunities locally the more sustainable that settlement:

- the number of businesses or organisations providing employment within each settlement - The resulting figure for the number of businesses/organisations is an indicator of the diversity of the settlement's economy;
- the proximity of the settlement to strategic employment centres and major/large employment sites.

Social Indicators

2.7 The following nine indicators have been used to assess the availability of services and facilities in each settlement:

- the frequency of public transport services, accessibility to the nearest town,
- community halls,
- convenience shops,
- public houses,
- GP Surgeries,
- post offices,
- pharmacies,
- primary schools.

2.8 This current assessment has included a review of the availability of the following five features across each of the 28 settlements. These were not part of the 2016 assessment, but are considered important and valuable facilities used by residents to improve health and well-being of communities:

- Children's play areas
- Sport & Recreation Facilities
- Allotments
- Places of worship
- Mobile services, including libraries & shops providing convenience goods.

2.9 The current assessment, as with the previous assessment, has not included any review of the environmental context of each settlement. It is considered that these are best assessed on a site-by-site basis. This means that whilst settlements may be grouped into the same tier of the hierarchy as a result of their social and economic characteristics, it does not necessarily follow that all settlements within the same tier will be able to accommodate a similar level of future development. Environmental constraints and development opportunities are likely to vary from settlement to settlement resulting in different capacities to accommodate future development.

Findings

2.10 The scores for each settlement are shown in the Table 2 below. As a brief guide:

- A high score on the economic factors reflects a settlement which has a reasonable number of businesses providing employment within the settlement and a short drive time to employment centres or large employment sites. A low score on the economic factor reflects a settlement with few local businesses and longer drive times to employment centres or large employment sites;
- A high score on the social factors reflects a settlement with good public transport services, spare capacity in its primary school or schools, and a good range of facilities such as convenience shop, doctor's surgery, post office, community hall, etc. A low score on social factors reflects a settlement with few facilities, no recent capacity in the primary school and poor public transport services.

2.11 The scores for each of the settlements is summarised below in Table 2:

Settlement	Economy Characteristics 2023	Social Characteristics 2023	Overall Score 2023
Cromford	14	16	30
Rowsley	12	15	27
Matlock Bath	14	11	25
Tansley	10	15	25
Sudbury	11	12	23
Brailsford	6	19	25
Doveridge	5	13	18
Middleton By Wirksworth	6	15	21
Northwood	12	5	17
Clifton	6	10	16
Darley Bridge	6	10	16
Bonsall	3	9	12
Brassington	3	9	12
Carsington	1	11	12
Osmaston	5	7	12
Kniveton	2	9	11
Hulland Ward	2	8	10
Kirk Ireton	0	8	8
Hognaston	1	7	8
Bradley	2	6	8
Marston Montgomery	1	4	5
Ednaston	3	2	5
Wyaston	2	3	5
Roston	1	3	4
Longford	0	2	2
Yeaveley	0	2	2
Hollington	1	1	2
Shirley	0	2	2

Table 2: Scoring of Settlements for Settlement Hierarchy (2023)

2.12 Table 3 below shows a comparison between the scores for each of the settlements on a like for like basis between 2016 and 2023. The scores in Table 3 exclude the additional community services and facilities, such as place

or worship, children’s play areas, recreation & Leisure facilities and allotments that have been included in the most recent assessment.

Settlement	Overall Score 2016	Overall Score 2023
Cromford	28	26
Rowsley	26	23
Matlock Bath	25	22
Tansley	20	22
Sudbury	27	20
Brailsford	17	19
Doveridge	17	17
Middleton By Wirksworth	14	17
Northwood	16	16
Clifton	15	12
Darley Bridge	16	13
Bonsall	12	10
Brassington	11	8
Carsington	8	9
Kniveton	9	8
Hulland Ward	17	8
Kirk Ireton	7	5
Marston Montgomery	9	4
Longford	2	2

Table 3 – Comparison Scores 2016 to 2023

Settlements with a population of less than 400 residents were not included in the scoring system in 2016. They have, however, been subject to an assessment in 2023. For the purposes of comparison Table 3 does not include those settlements which had previously excluded from the Settlement Hierarchy assessment.

- 2.13 On the basis of the results set out in Table 2 & Table 3 the main changes identified from the assessment undertaken in 2016 are that 14 settlements scores have a lower score, 4 settlements scores have improved, and 3 settlements have the same score.
- 2.14 Although Cromford, Rowsley and Matlock Bath had the highest overall scores in 2023, their current scores are lower than 2016. However, these settlements still have strong local economies and benefit from their proximity to Matlock Town and Wirksworth Town Centre. All of these settlements also attract large numbers of tourists which help to sustain businesses in the longer term.
- 2.15 Sudbury displays similar characteristics to Cromford, Rowsley and Matlock Bath in that it is close to strategic employment centres on the edge of the District, including Marchington Industrial Estate and Dovefields Industrial Park. It has, however, suffered the loss of its post office, a convenience store, pub and a decline in the number of buses serving the village. The remaining settlements have relatively weak economy scores, reflecting low business numbers and reflecting poor accessibility to employment centres and large employment sites.
- 2.16 The main changes that have generated a lower score for half of the settlements has included the continued decline of bus services in some villages, whereby the number of services provided on a daily basis has been significantly reduced. In some of the other villages, there are no longer any regular bus services provided. There has also been a number of closures of post offices, convenience stores and pubs across the plan area. Some services have been

relocated to run as a shared service within other community facilities. The biggest influence upon the scores has been the changing capacity of primary schools. There are currently 10 primary schools in the district that have either significant overcrowding or significant under capacity issues that, in the longer term, need to be addressed.

3. **Conclusions and Recommendations**

3.1 On the basis of the results of the current assessment Members are recommended to adopt to the Settlement Hierarchy as set out below in Table 4.

Tier 1	Market Towns	Matlock, Ashbourne, Wirksworth
Tier 2	Local Service Centres	Darley Dale
Tier 3	Accessible Settlements with Some Facilities	Brailsford, Clifton, Cromford, Darley Bridge, Doveridge, Hulland Ward, Matlock Bath, Middleton, Northwood, Rowsley, Sudbury, Tansley
Tier 4	Accessible Settlements with Minimal Facilities	Bonsall, Brassington, Carsington, Kniveton, Kirk Ireton, Marston Montgomery
Tier 5	Infill & Consolidation Village	Bradley, Ednaston, Hognaston, Hollington, Longford, Osmaston, Roston, Shirley, Yeaveley, Wyaston

Table 4 – Recommended Settlement Hierarchy

3.2 As Members will be able to see from Table 4 it is being recommended that the Settlement Hierarchy be the same as set out in the adopted Derbyshire Dales Local Plan.

3.3 The overall scores tiers reflect the relative sustainability of each settlement. This does not mean that, for example, Tansley is a better location for development than Sudbury merely because it has a higher score. The purpose

of the scoring is to enable settlements of broadly similar scores to be assigned into ranks or tiers.

- 3.3 Members will note that there are a couple of inconsistencies in the scoring where it is considered that further explanation and justification is required.
- 3.4 Whilst Osmaston scores highly in terms of its relatively close proximity to Ashbourne Airfield and Ashbourne Town Centre as employment centres, it also scores relatively well in terms of its community facilities. However, given the rural nature of its location and its poor accessibility in terms of the highway infrastructure and lack of public transport facilities, it is not considered an appropriate location for development. As such it is recommended that it remain in Tier 5.
- 3.5 Although Marston Montgomery has been subject to some new development since the adoption of the Local Plan in 2017 resulting in a new village hall, overall its score has dropped. This is primarily due to its poor proximity to employment centres and poor accessibility. As such it is considered appropriate that the settlement remains in Tier 4.
- 3.6 Hulland Ward is another settlement whereby its scoring does not reflect its overall sustainability and suitability to accommodate additional development. The settlement scores poorly as it has lost its GP practice, post office and convenience store in recent years, however the location of the village is relatively more accessible and has better public transport links than some of the smaller villages. Hulland Ward Primary school also has surplus capacity projected over the next five years to 2027 to accommodate additional pupils. Therefore, it is considered appropriate that Hulland Ward the settlement remain as a Tier 3 settlement.
- 3.7 The role and function of settlements can be influenced by a number of other factors that do not relate to housing and employment growth. These can play an important role in the way in which settlements grow and flourish into sustainable communities including, home working; the way some businesses operate and numbers commuting to and from certain places; the increase and availability of internet services and facilities; parental choice in respect of school places can influence capacity at individual schools across the Plan area; and higher proportions of second homes in some villages resulting in seasonal demand for services and facilities which may affect the viability of those services.
- 3.8 The purpose of Derbyshire Dales Local Plan is to provide a guide to development and growth across the plan area. To assist the Local Plan in delivering its objectives of supporting thriving and sustainable communities will require partnership working with other departments within the District Council, and external partners to help secure funding to introduce new facilities and services required to meet demands within the smaller settlements of the District.
- 3.9 A copy of the updated evidence from the Settlement Hierarchy Report (November 2023) is set out in Appendix 1 of this Report.

4 Financial and Resource Implications

- 4.1 The Derbyshire Dales Settlement Hierarchy is a technical document and has no direct financial and resource implications for the District Council.

5. Legal Advice and Implications

- 5.1 This report set out 2 recommended decisions to be made. The proposals accord with the provisions of the relevant legislation, the legal risk has been assessed as low.

6 Equalities Implications

- 6.1 The Derbyshire Dales Settlement Hierarchy report has no direct equalities implications. The review of the Derbyshire Dales Local Plan will be subject to a comprehensive Equalities Impact Assessment.

7. Climate Change Implications

- 7.1 The Derbyshire Dales Settlement Hierarchy Report has no direct climate change implications. The review of the Derbyshire Dales Local Plan will include revised policies which will seek to mitigate the effects Climate Change and be subject to a Climate Change Impact Assessment.

8 Risk Management

- 8.1 At this time the risk associated with the preparation of the Derbyshire Dales Settlement Hierarchy is low. The Derbyshire Dales Local Plan is one of the pivotal plans and strategies ensuring the delivery of the District Council's aims and objectives as out in its Corporate Plan. Any significant delays in undertaking the review of the Derbyshire Dales Local Plan will increase the risk to the District Council of delivering its key aims and objectives.

Report Authorisation

Approvals obtained from: -

	Named Officer	Date
Chief Executive	Paul Wilson	16/11/2023
Director of Resources/ S.151 Officer	Karen Henriksen	20/11/2023
Monitoring Officer (or Legal Services Manager)	Kerry France	20/11/2023