

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

DISTRICT PLANNING EXECUTIVE PANEL – 17 DECEMBER 2015

REPORT BY THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

INTERIM VILLAGE HIERARCHY STUDY (DECEMBER 2015)

WARD(S) AFFECTED: ALL

Purpose/Summary of Report

- This report presents an Interim Village Hierarchy Study
- The report explains that the Study will be finalised following further consultation with selected Parish Councils

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DISTRICT PLANNING EXECUTIVE

PANEL: That Council, via the Executive, be advised that:

(A)	the Interim Village Hierarchy Study be noted, with a decision on the final study deferred until further consultation with relevant Parish Councils has taken place.
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1.0 Background

1.1 Members will recall that Stage 1 of the Village Hierarchy Study was presented to District Planning Executive Panel on 10th September. The Stage 1 study ranked the villages of East Herts in terms of their sustainability by assessing access to service and facilities and public transport provision.

1.2 The study also stated that further work would be required before a final village hierarchy could be identified. This subsequent report presents the outcome of this additional work. When complete, the final village hierarchy will inform the rural strategy contained within the emerging District Plan.

2.0 Report

- 2.1 As noted in the previous report that was presented to Panel in September, there is no specific guidance set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) on how to undertake a settlement hierarchy. The NPPF is, however, clear that development should be guided toward those settlements that are deemed the most sustainable. Settlements that can provide a range of local facilities and services, or provide reasonable accessibility to higher order settlements to easily access those services, should be considered the most sustainable.
- 2.2 The Stage 1 study presented the methodology that was used to undertake an initial assessment of the sustainability of 34 villages in the District. The villages that were included were those that are identified as Group 1 or 2 villages in the Draft District Plan and the Category 1 and 2 villages in the 2007 Local Plan Second Review (where these differ).
- 2.3 The methodology and draft scoring assessments were sent to all Parish Councils for comment and accuracy checking. The Stage 1 study subsequently presented an updated position based on the feedback received.
- 2.4 Having undertaken this initial work it was considered that, in order to make the Village Hierarchy as robust as possible, it would be necessary to include a wider selection of villages within the assessment. Therefore in addition to the 34 villages originally identified, the draft final study also includes an assessment of some of the larger Category 3/Group 3 settlements in the District. These villages are as follows:
- Albury
 - Anstey
 - Ardeley
 - Bramfield
 - Brent Pelham
 - Great Hornead
 - Hare Street
 - Little Berkhamsted
 - Wareside
- 2.5 In order to ensure that the scoring of these additional villages is

accurate, it will be necessary to undertake a further period of consultation with the relevant Parish Councils. The final Village Hierarchy Study therefore cannot be agreed until this consultation has taken place and any amendments to the scoring are made.

- 2.6 The ranking of villages presented by the Stage 1 study identified the most sustainable settlements based on access to services, facilities and public transport. Following that stage, further work has been undertaken in order to understand whether there is any reason why the more sustainable villages should not be identified as Group 1 settlements within the final hierarchy. This additional work includes an assessment of the following:
- Land availability. This assesses the potential to provide limited small scale growth as envisaged by Group 1 village policy in the emerging District Plan. The assessment of land availability is based on the Strategic Land Availability Assessment (SLAA); and
 - Primary School capacity. This has been informed by ongoing discussions with Hertfordshire County Council.
- 2.7 The Interim Village Hierarchy Study, which can be found within **Essential Reference Paper 'B'**, suggests that, of the higher scoring settlements, both Stanstead Abbots and St Margarets and Hertford Heath are highly constrained, both in terms of land availability and primary school capacity. It is therefore considered that it would be inappropriate to identify either village as a Group 1 settlement.
- 2.8 Having presented this additional work, the Study identifies a draft final hierarchy of Group 1, Group 2 and Group 3 settlements that, when finalised, will inform the rural strategy contained in the emerging District Plan. Moving forward, it is the role of the District Plan to identify policies that will determine the way in which the hierarchy is implemented in terms of directing future development in the rural area.
- 3.0 Implications/Consultations
- 3.1 Information on any corporate issues and consultation associated with this report can be found within **Essential Reference Paper 'A'**.

Background Papers

- Village Hierarchy Study, Stage 1: August 2015.
(<http://www.eastherts.gov.uk/index.jsp?articleid=31938>)

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