

## **Appendix A: Sevenoaks District Settlement Hierarchy for the AMR 2015**

### **1. Introduction**

The Sevenoaks District Settlement Hierarchy was first prepared in 2007/2008, with the last update in July 2009. The Hierarchy identifies several tiers of settlements based on an audit of existing services and facilities. As such, it serves as a useful tool in helping to advise on options for new development taking account of the most sustainable locations. Together with other policy considerations and evidence, the Hierarchy will therefore help inform the strategic policy options for the location and scale of new development within the new Local Plan.

The purpose of this report is to outline the Settlement Hierarchy for the Sevenoaks District. The Hierarchy:

- Provides a brief overview of the national and local planning policy context;
- Describes the broad methodology used to develop the Hierarchy; and
- Outlines and justifies the classification of each of District's settlements included within the Hierarchy.

### **2. Policy Context**

#### **2.1 National Policy Context**

National planning policy states that any development should take place within the most sustainable and deliverable locations. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that a series of land-planning principles should be used when undertaking plan-making and decision-taking, in order to maintain sustainable development. Paragraph 17 of the NPPF outlines the principles of development stating that “[...] every effort should be made objectively to identify and then meet the housing business and other development needs of an area and respond positively to wider opportunities to grow”, while promoting “[...] mixed use developments, and encourage multiple benefits from the use of land in urban and rural areas, recognising that some open land can perform many functions (such as wildlife, recreation, flood risk mitigation, carbon storage, or food production)”.

The NPPF additionally states that the plan-making processes for development should “not simply be about scrutiny, but instead be a creative exercise in finding ways to enhance and improve the places in which people live their lives” (para. 17). Furthermore, Local authorities should define a network and hierarchy of centres that is resilient to anticipated future economic changes.

The NPPF sets out individual planning policies for specific elements of development, in order to achieve sustainable development. In regards to the development of town centres, paragraph 23 states that local planning authorities should “recognise town centres as the heart of their communities and pursue policies to support their viability and vitality” with “[...] town centres in decline, local planning authorities should plan for positively for their future to encourage economic activity”. This includes the development of strong rural economies, which is important for a majority of settlements within the Sevenoaks District. Paragraph 28 of the NPPF states that Local Authorities should promote and retain the local services and community services within village as these are important community assets.

## 2.2 Local Policy Context

Sevenoaks District Council is now beginning to prepare a new Local Plan. The Council has produced adopted policies through the Sevenoaks District Core Strategy (adopted February 2011) and the Allocations and Development Management Plan (ADMP) (adopted February 2015) to reflect national planning policy and guidance. The over-arching aims of the Core Strategy's Spatial Vision promote sustainable development within the District in the plan period, up to 2026, including the commitment "to locate development in sustainable locations on previously developed land, ensuring that the main focus for major developments is in Sevenoaks, Swanley and Edenbridge (ADMP para. 1.5).

The policies within the ADMP are reflective of the adopted policies within the Core Strategy, while maintaining compliance with the NPPF at the national level. ADMP Policy SC1 sets out that all development within the District will be in favour of sustainable development whereby "[...] the Council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained within the National Planning Policy Framework".

This allows the Sevenoaks District to develop in a positive and sustainable manner. The Council is aware of the constraints that affect development within the District and have adopted policies that take these into account. This accounts to the protection of community services and amenity, within settlements of the District especially rural settlements. The ADMP recognises that local shopping provision is important to many settlements within the District and small scale retail development should be allowed in scale with the settlement. This can be split into town and local centre. A town centre can be defined with uses including:

- Retail development (including warehouse clubs and factory outlet centres);
- Leisure, entertainment facilities and the more intensive sport and recreation uses (including cinema, restaurants, drive-through restaurants, bars and pubs, night-clubs, casinos, health and fitness centres, indoor bowls centres and bingo halls);
- Offices; and
- Arts, culture and tourism development (including theatres, museums, galleries and concert halls, hotels and conference facilities)

For a local centre, it can be defined as locally significantly areas of retail to which specific retail policies apply, in accordance with the NPPF.

Under Core Strategy Policy LO7, the Council seeks to retain local services and facilities, in order to manage the sustainability of rural locations and settlements, including the local character and the needs for services. This has been extended within the ADMP whereby neighbourhood services within urban confines are equally important as those services that can be lost in rural settlements (ADMP Policy CF2).

## 3. The Survey

A total of 55 settlements are included in the Hierarchy. For the purposes of this particular study the word "settlement" covers all towns, villages and hamlets etc. where there are services or community facilities which can contribute to their sustainability.

Where the settlements have Green Belt boundaries these have been taken as the basis for the extent of the settlement. However services/facilities not within the Greenbelt boundaries but clearly associated with the settlement, have been included in the survey, provided they are within

approximately 400m of the centre and are easily and safely accessible on foot. In the remaining settlements, where possible, the built up area has been taken as the extent of the settlement but again facilities clearly associated with the settlement have been included.

Due to geographical proximity and character, Sevenoaks Town, Riverhead, Dunton Green, Chipstead and Bessels Green have been grouped together as the Sevenoaks Urban Area, as has Edenbridge and Marlpit Hill. This acknowledges not only their close geographical proximity but also the fact that they share many services and facilities.

The Hierarchy is based on the range of criteria set out below (the results for each settlement are provided in Table 3):

- Population
  - Range of shops and services
  - Access to education
  - Access to health services
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- Assessed via a Service and Facilities Audit

#### *Population*

An approximate population figure for each settlement was derived from the 2011 Census using Output Area (OA) data. In most cases, Output Area boundaries do not coincide with defined settlement boundaries. If part of the settlement falls within a particular OA, then this was included in the total for the settlement. The quoted population in Table 3 will tend to exceed the population living within the defined settlement boundary. For some very small settlements it was not possible to calculate a settlement's population due to the geographical limitations with OA data. Where this was the case, an estimate for each settlement is given based on the electoral role (adding an extra 25% for those not eligible to vote).

#### *Services & Facilities Audit*

A range of services and facilities were identified as contributing to the sustainability of settlements. These were taken as the basis for an audit of each settlement (see Table 1). None of the individual services have been prioritised or weighted apart from public transport where, for example an all day service scores higher than a peak only service.

Some services were deemed as making an essential contribution towards the sustainability of a settlement especially when grouped together. These were classified as “key sustainability services/facilities” (highlighted in **bold** in Table 1). Those settlements with four or more services/facilities are highlighted in Table 3.

On-site surveys were undertaken to determine what services each of the District’s settlements provided. This was based on a points system whereby a single point would be awarded for each service/facility present within a settlement (for example, if a settlement contained two primary schools, two points would be awarded). The results of each Audit were recorded in an Excel spreadsheet and sent to Parish/Town Councils for factual checking and any resulting amendments were made.

A total “Service Score” was then calculated for each settlement which enabled them to be ranked accordingly to the range of services and facilities they currently provide. Having calculated the service score an additional point was added per 1000 head of population and for the settlement having a Greenbelt boundary. The population figures were not rounded up to accommodate this.

Although not subject to a detailed study, consideration was also given to local employment opportunities based on the Employment Land Review 2008. This study identifies individual business areas in Sevenoaks Urban Area, Swanley, Edenbridge, South Darenth and Westerham of over 10,000m<sup>2</sup>. An extra point has been added to the scores of these settlements to take account of the level of sustainable employment opportunities.

**Table 1:** Services and facilities included within the Audit

Transport	Education	Employment	Health	Retail Service Providers	Community Facilities
<b>Rail Services (3, 2 and 1 services/hr peak and all day)</b>	<b>Primary School</b>	Business Areas	Doctors Surgery	<b>Post Office</b>  Bank/Building Society	Community Hall  Permanent Library
<b>Bus Services (3, 2 and 1 services/hr peak and all day)</b>	Secondary School		Dentist	<b>Superstore (over 2,500 sqm trading floorspace selling food and non-food)</b>  <b>Supermarket (under 2,500 sqm trading floorspace selling food and non-food)</b>  <b>Small Local Store</b>  Other Shops & Services (e.g. butchers/ hairdressers)  Pubs / Takeaways / Restaurant / Tea Rooms	Place of Worship  Recreation Ground  Cricket Ground  Synthetic Pitch  Major Indoor Sports / Leisure Facility  Children's Play Area / Provision for Children and Young People

“Key sustainability services/facilities” are in bold

**Table 2:** Transportation service weighting

Frequency of Service	Score	
	Peak Only	All Day
≥ 3 services/hr	3	4
2 services/hr	2	3
1 service/hr	1	2

### *Settlement Tiers & Classification*

An assessment was made of each settlement. This looked at the total scores and at the combination of the services and facilities in each settlement as the presence of a single service or facility will not mean the settlement is sustainable. The settlements were then classified as one of the following:

- |                          |                                 |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Principle Town Centre | 5. Service Villages Group A & B |
| 2. Urban District Centre | 6. Small Villages               |
| 3. Rural Services Centre | 7. Hamlets                      |
| 4. Local Services Centre |                                 |

Each tier is representative of the role and function performed by a particular settlement together with its potential for accommodating future development (in descending order). The classification of each of the District's settlements is detailed in Section 4.

## **4. Settlement Classification**

### *4.1 Principle Town Centre: Sevenoaks Urban Area*

The Sevenoaks Urban Area, comprising of Sevenoaks Town, Riverhead, Dunton Green, Chipstead and Bessels Green, has been classified as the District's Principle Town Centre. It has the largest population (28,282) and the largest amount of services and facilities out of the District settlements (as reflected by a total service score of 511). As the ADMP states "Sevenoaks has a successful town centre, which faces outside competition from larger centres outside of the District [...] there is likely to be some capacity for additional retail provision in Sevenoaks Town during the short and medium term" (ADMP para. 5.10 & 5.11). Sevenoaks is the main transport hub in the District with excellent bus and rail connections to London and the surrounding areas. There has been a decrease in available employment land (27.2ha) according to the Sevenoaks Employment Land Review Update (2010). Nevertheless, the Sevenoaks Urban Area offers the greatest potential to accommodate new development in comparison to other settlements in the District.

### *4.2 Urban District Centre: Swanley*

Swanley has the second largest population in the District with 15,747 residents. It is also one of the District's major employment centres. Swanley has good rail and bus connections to surrounding areas and central London, with retail provision focusing towards convenience facilities and services. Additionally there is primary and secondary school provision. This is reflected in the total service score (141), which represents little change from the last Settlement Hierarchy Update.

### *4.3 Rural Services Centre: Edenbridge*

Edenbridge is the third largest settlement within the Sevenoaks District, with 8,172 inhabitants. There are a good range of services and facilities that are available for residents (including a Major Indoor Sports & Leisure Centre), yet lacks in providing a full range of services (i.e. a secondary school) or employment opportunities. Nonetheless, the total service score of 141 reflects a number of developments that have happened since the last Update. Edenbridge has been designated as a Rural Service Centre due to a lower population in comparison to Swanley, despite matching service scores.

#### 4.4 Local Service Centres: Westerham, Oxtord & New Ash Green

Local Service Centres are not as large as the three Service Centres described above and do not offer a wide range of services. However, they do offer a proportionate range of services, facilities and employment opportunities for the daily needs of the local community and surrounding settlements. Of these Westerham has the highest total service score (97), yet New Ash Green has the highest population of the three settlements (5892). There has been no change in order since the previous Update.

#### 4.5 Service Villages:

- (A) *Hartley, West Kingsdown, Seal, South Darent, Kemsing and Hextable; and*
- (B) *Brasted, Crockenhill, Enysford, Halstead, Farningham, Knockholt & Knockholt Pound, Sevenoaks Weald, Leigh, Shoreham, Ide Hill, Horton Kirby and Sundridge*

These settlements are smaller than those further up the Hierarchy and offer a limited number of services and facilities than those settlements categorised as Local Service Centres. However, the majority of these settlements have 4 or more “key sustainability services/facilities”. In addition, they have defined Greenbelt boundaries which mean that, within these boundaries, there are opportunities for potential small scale or minor development. This is reflective of the total service scores for each settlement. Settlements in group A have more facilities and tend to be larger than those listed in Group B. There are two changes to the Service Villages classification following the 2009 Update:

- South Darent has moved up the Hierarchy from Service Villages Group B to Group A. This is representative of the development that has occurred in these settlements, including the redevelopment of the Paper Mills in South Darent.

#### 4.6 Small Villages: Penshurst, Ide Hill, Chiddingstone, Four Elms and Chiddingstone Causeway

These villages generally have smaller populations and significantly smaller number and limited range of services and facilities available than in Local Service Centres and Service Villages. Due to the limited range of services/facilities, there is little scope to support potential growth in the settlements. These settlements are all washed over by the Green Belt which severely restricts their potential to accommodate new development. There is one amendment to the classification following the 2009 Update:

- Fordcombe has moved down the Hierarchy as there appears to be increase of services and facilities within the Small Villages category.

#### 4.7 Hamlets: Fawkham, Badgers Mount, Hever, Fordcombe, Crockham Hill, Cowden, Underriver, Ash, Hodswell Street, Toys Hill, Bough Beech, Chiddingstone Hoath, Swanley Village, Stone Street, Mark Beech, Marsh Green, Well Hill, Knatts Valley, Chevening, Heaverham, Godden Green and Bitchet Green

These Hamlets have very small populations (fewer than 1,000 inhabitants) and have a very limited range of services and facilities (all have service scores of 7 or less). All the settlements in this classification are washed over by Green Belt (excluding Badgers Mount). As such, it would be unrealistic to expect these settlements to accommodate new development. Since the 2009 Update, Marsh Green near Edenbridge has been added to the Hierarchy.

**Table 3:** Settlements ranked by Service and Facilities Score

<b>Settlement</b>	<b>Population of Settlement<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Services Facility Score</b>	<b>4+ Key Sustainability Services/Facilities</b>	<b>Classification</b>
Sevenoaks Urban Area (Sevenoaks Town including Riverhead, Dunton Green, Chipstead & Bessels Green)	28282	511	Y	Principle Town Centre
Swanley	15747	141	Y	Urban Town Centre
Edenbridge (including Marlpitt Hill)	8172	141	Y	Rural Town Centre
Westerham	3303	97	Y	Local Service Centre
Ottford	3465	60	Y	
New Ash Green	5892	55	Y	
Hartley	4660	41	Y	
West Kingsdown	4715	33	Y	Service Villages (Group A)
Seal	1544	32	Y	
Kemsing	4013	31	Y	
South Darenth	1954	30	Y	
Hextable	4092	29	Y	
Brasted	844	26		
Crockenhill	1521	24	Y	Service Villages (Group B)
Eynsford	1633	24	Y	
Halstead	1016	22	Y	
Farningham	1158	19		
Knockholt & Knockholt Pound	753	18	Y	
Sevenoaks Weald	805	18	Y	
Leigh	1257	18	Y	
Shoreham	800	17		
Horton Kirby	959	15		
Sundridge	794	15		
Penshurst	708	13		Small Villages
Ide Hill	719	13		
Chiddingstone	424	12		
Four Elms	683	12		
Chiddingstone Causeway	411	11		
Fawkham	465	7		Hamlets
Hever	370	7		
Fordcombe	298	7		
Crockham Hill	291	7		
Cowden	517	6		
Underriver	359	6		
Ash	273	5		

Hodsoll Street	476	5	
Toys Hill	339	5	
Bough Beech	424	5	
Swanley Village	310	5	
Stone Street	188	5	
Badgers Mount	656	4	
Mark Beech	230	4	
Chiddingstone Hoath	54	3	
Marsh Green	424	3	
Well Hill	271	3	
Knatts Valley	467	3	
Chevening	34	2	
Heaverham	205	2	
Godden Green	111	2	
Bitchet Green	83	2	

Note<sup>1</sup> : Population figures are estimated from the 2011 Census using Output Area boundaries, which include areas that extend beyond defined Greenbelt boundaries for settlements. For very small settlements, estimates have been made based on the electoral roll. Further information is contained in the *Population* section on page 3.