



Allerdale Borough Council

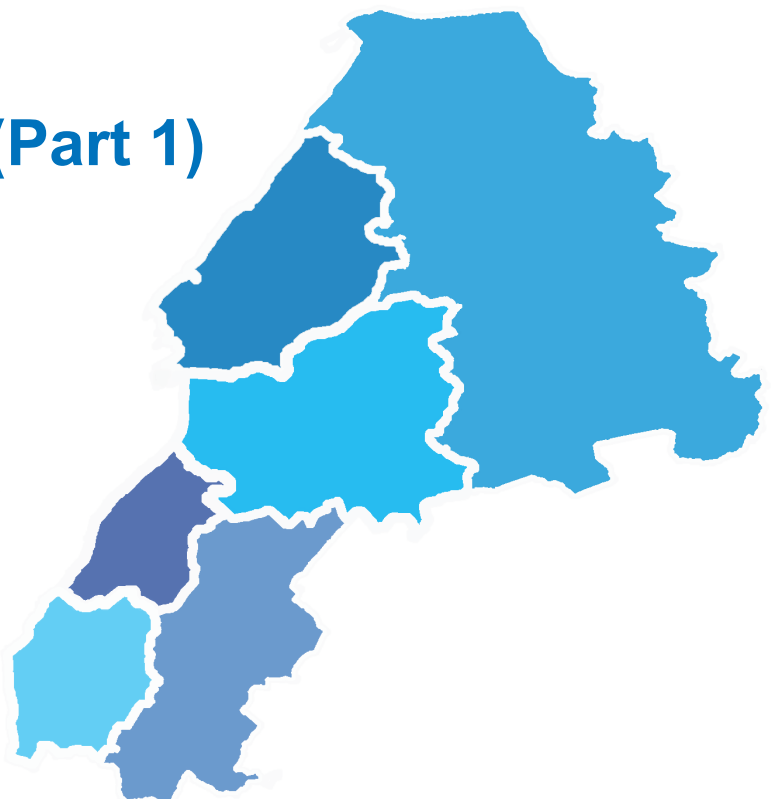


Allerdale Local Plan (Part 1)

Position Statement Main Matter 11:

The Settlement Hierarchy

January 2014



Matter 11 – Settlement Hierarchy

Introduction

1. This Statement has been produced by Allerdale Borough Council to outline its response to the matters raised by the Inspector for the Hearings into the Submitted Allerdale Local Plan (Part 1) Development Plan Document (DPD) **[CD1]**.
2. These Statements form the main basis for the Council's submission to the Hearings. They relate to the elements of the DPD that have been raised by the Inspector as matters to be discussed. Where appropriate the Statements draw upon and cross-refer to the main sources of information used in the preparation of the DPD such as the outcomes of public consultation, the Sustainability Appraisal, the evidence base and the supporting Topic Papers. Core Document numbers are given where appropriate.

Position of the Council regarding Matter 11

3. The Council considers that the proposed settlement hierarchy is sound, based on a transparent and robust methodology and established assessment criterion. The Council maintains that the position of individual settlements within the tiers accurately reflects their role, function and overall level of sustainability.

Justification for approach taken

4. There is no specific national planning guidance on how a settlement hierarchy should be defined, however, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) does provide some key issues that need to be addressed. It states that:
 - o Local Plans should actively manage patterns of growth to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling, and focus significant

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development in locations which are or can be made sustainable (Paragraph 17).

- In order to promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities and where there are groups of smaller settlements; development in one village may support services in another (Paragraph 55).
 - Local Plans should prepare 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. Local Plans should also ensure an integrated approach to considering the location of housing, economic uses and community facilities and services (Paragraph 70).
 - Local Plans should address the spatial implications of economic, social and environmental change. Local Plans should set out the opportunities for development and clear policies on what will or will not be permitted and where (Paragraph 154).
 - Local Plans must be based upon adequate, up-to-date and relevant evidence about the economic, social and environmental characteristics and prospects of the area (Paragraph 158).
5. In developing the settlement hierarchy, the Council has had regard to these national policy requirements. Regard has also been given to spatial objectives and implications of the policies, plans and programmes set out with the following Evidence Base documents **[EB1], [EB2a], [EB2b], [EB2c], [EB2d], [EB2e], [EB3a], [EB3b], [EB4], [EB6], [EB6a], [EB22], [SD4], [SD34], and [SD38]**.

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6. The spatial strategy for the Allerdale Local Plan has been developed following robust research and analysis of local evidence and issues, both quantitative and qualitative. It has been underpinned by extensive engagement and consultation with local residents, businesses and stakeholders to ensure the strategy reflects the collective vision and aspirations of the local community.
7. Policy S3 of the Local Plan sets out the spatial strategy for development across the Plan Area and sets out the quantum of development the Council consider is needed to meet housing and employment needs (projected growth), where this growth is to be directed (settlement hierarchy) and scale of development apportioned to individual settlements (distribution of growth).

Criteria for designation

8. Spatial Strategy Topic Paper **[TP3]** sets out in detail the genesis of the settlement hierarchy, the methodology adopted and the selection criterion that underpins it.
9. In developing the spatial strategy and settlement hierarchy the Council has sought to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. The majority of growth is directed to the main urban areas in line with national policy and economic and environmental sustainability objectives: to support sustainable economic and housing growth and safeguard the character of the countryside and important biodiversity and geodiversity assets.
10. However, the Council considers that the social element of sustainability – supporting cohesive and vibrant local communities, providing housing to meet identified needs and maintaining accessible local services - constitutes an integral component and has particular resonance for rural communities in Allerdale. Therefore the Council maintains that spatial strategy and settlement hierarchy for

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Allerdale, as a predominantly rural authority, should enable minor proportion of overall housing growth to be directed towards the smaller rural settlements to support social sustainability objectives.

11. From an economic perspective rural businesses make a significant contribution to the Allerdale economy. On this basis, and the national policy requirement to build strong and competitive local economies, the Council considers that the spatial strategy and settlement hierarchy should support the prosperity of the rural economy by providing appropriate employment opportunity in the smaller rural settlements.
12. The top tiers of the proposed settlement hierarchy that include Workington, Maryport, Cockermouth, Wigton, Aspatria and Silloth are well established having been identified in the same format in previous Allerdale local plans and the now revoked North West Regional Spatial Strategy and the Cumbria and Lake District Structure Plan. Due to the rural nature of the Borough and the dispersed settlement patterns within it, the settlement hierarchy has traditionally cascaded down to include small rural villages in order to sustain rural communities and meet local housing and employment needs.
13. Relevant regional and sub-regional spatial evidence base documents The Cumbria Sub Regional Spatial Strategy **[SD34]** and The North West Key Service Centres - Roles and Functions **[SD38]** continue to identify Workington, Maryport, Cockermouth, Wigton, Aspatria and Silloth as Key Service Centres within the Allerdale Plan Area. Both identify Workington as being the ‘principal’ centre in the Borough and the focus of future housing, employment and retail development.
14. The inclusion of the Local Service Centres tier followed the recommendation of the Cumbria Sub Regional Spatial Strategy **[SD34]** to identify a level below the

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Principal/Key Service Centres that would accommodate a smaller scale of development in order to sustain rural services and meet local housing needs. As outlined in the Spatial Strategy Topic Paper **[TP3]** the criteria for settlements to be included in the Local Service Centre tier were the presence of shop, school and public transport links to Principal or Key Service Centres. The Survey of Town and Village Services 2011 **[EB22]** identified eleven settlements that fulfilled these three criteria.

15. The role of the Local Service Centres extends beyond their defined settlement boundaries. The services and facilities they provide (e.g. shops and schools) not only support the sustainability of the settlement itself but also the smaller and deeper rural communities that surround them. The Local Service Centres are distributed throughout the Plan Area and exhibit a variety of physical, environmental and infrastructure characteristics.
16. The decision to incorporate the lowest tier, Rural Villages, into the settlement hierarchy was taken by the Council in response to consultation feedback **[LLP1b]** which indicated broad support for dispersed settlement pattern. This both reflects, and is sympathetic to, the rural nature of the Borough. Furthermore, the Council considered that such an approach was necessary in order to support the strategic objectives of the Local Plan in relation to strengthening the rural economy and sustaining village schools.
17. The settlements within the Rural Village tier were selected on the basis of being previously categorised as infill villages in the 1999 Local Plan with an additional requirement for the settlement to be located within 2.5 miles from a primary school. On the basis of these criteria forty three settlements were identified.

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18. There is a broad spectrum of settlements within the Rural Villages tier, in terms of spatial size and resident population. To enable the position of the settlement in the hierarchy and its overall level of sustainability to be more accurately reflected, the tier was split into two further categories ‘Limited Growth Villages’ and Infill/Rounding Off Villages’. The spatial size of individual settlements and resident population were used as a basis for this split.

Sustainability Appraisal

19. The Core Strategy Preferred Options **[LPP4]** presented five different options for the settlement hierarchy. The preferred option, the hierarchy identified in Policy S3, performed the most strongly and was considered the most sustainable option in the Core Strategy Preferred Options Sustainability Appraisal Report **[CD5d(1)]**.

Habitats Regulations Assessments

20. The Habitats Regulations Assessment **[CD6]** determined that Policy S3 would not, either directly or in conjunction with other policies, have any likely significant effect on Natura 2000 sites. On this basis the policy was screened out of the Appropriate Assessment.
21. Due to the environmental constraints affecting Cockermouth and Silloth, the levels of growth identified in Policy S3 was taken forward into the Appropriate Assessment stage to consider potential impacts on the water quality and qualifying features. It was concluded that Plan would not have an Adverse Effect on the Integrity of Natura 2000 sites in this regard. This issue is addressed in more detail in the Statement covering Main Matters 10 and 18.

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Transport sustainability

22. Policy S22 of the Local Plan, 'Transport Principles', is complementary to, and supportive of, the settlement hierarchy in relation to the issue of transport sustainability. The policy requires new development, for the most part, to be directed to the most sustainable locations in terms of accessibility and services and utilities provision. This reflects the settlement hierarchy and the level of growth apportioned to each tier with the majority, at least 74%, being directed to Principal/Key Service Centres.
23. There is however a degree of flexibility in Policy S22 to allow suitable development in rural areas where proposals do not meet all the sustainability criteria. This will support the rural development strategy embedded within the Plan and enable the delivery of the remaining 26% of growth identified for the smaller settlements.

Future decisions about the scale and location of housing

24. The Council consider that Policy S3 provides sufficient strategic guidance for future decisions about the scale and location of housing across the Borough and between different settlements and properly informs choices to be made in the Site Allocations DPD. This issue is addressed in more detail in the Statement covering Main Matter 5.
25. With specific regard to the Local Service Centre and Rural Villages tiers where the levels of growth are identified on an aggregate level in allocating sites and/or reviewing settlement boundaries, through the Site Allocations DPD, the Council will have regard to a number of criterion which are set out in Paragraph 71 of the annotated Allerdale Local Plan (Part 1) **[CD2]**. This will ensure that future growth of rural settlements contained within the hierarchy is equitable and guided by:

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- The level of current housing commitments, as indicated in Appendix 4 of the annotated Allerdale Local Plan (Part 1) **[CD2]**
- Physical, utilities and social infrastructure requirements and constraints
- Key environmental constraints such as the natural environment (including Natura 2000 sites), landscape capacity and the historic environment
- The context of the settlement and its ability to accommodate growth without harming its character, setting or the surrounding landscape.