

Settlement Hierarchy

1. Introduction

The Sevenoaks District Settlement Hierarchy was first prepared in 2007/2008 and has been updated to July 2009. The Hierarchy identifies several tiers of settlements based on the scale of future development that they are likely to be able to accommodate. As such, it serves as an essential tool in helping to ensure that new development occurs in the most sustainable locations. Together with other policy considerations and evidence, the Hierarchy will inform the strategic policy options for the location and scale of new development within the Local Development Framework (LDF) and, in particular, the Core Strategy Development Plan Document (DPD).

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

- provides a brief overview of the national and regional 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 planning policy*

National planning policy provides a clear message - that new development should take place in the most sustainable locations. Planning Policy Statement 1 (PPS1) (para 27) states that new development should be "located where everyone can access services or facilities on foot, bicycle or public transport rather than having to rely on access by car, while recognising that this may be more difficult in rural areas."

With specific regard to housing, for example, PPS3 (para 10) states that the planning system should deliver housing developments in suitable locations, which offer a good range of community facilities and with good access to jobs, key services and infrastructure. Although national policy does acknowledge that some development should take place in more rural areas, the importance of ensuring that this development takes place in the most sustainable locations remains. PPS7 (para 3) in particular stresses that "away from larger urban areas, planning authorities should focus most new development in or near to local service centres where employment, housing (including affordable housing), services and other facilities can be provided close together" and that such centres "should be identified in the development plan as the preferred location for such development."

2.2 *Regional Planning Policy*

The importance of ensuring that new development is focused in sustainable locations is reflected in both regional and county planning guidance. Policy SP3 of the South East Plan, for example, states that "The prime focus for development in the South East should be urban areas, in order to foster accessibility to employment, housing, retail and other services, and avoid unnecessary travel".

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 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 Green Belt boundaries but clearly associated with the settlement, have been included in the survey, provided they are within 400m approx 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 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 Appendix A):

- Population
 - Range of shops and services
 - Access to education
 - Access to health services
- } assessed via a Services and Facilities Audit

Population

An approximate population figure for each settlement was derived from the 2001 Census using Output Area (OA) data (supplied by Kent County Council). In many cases Output Area boundaries do not coincide with defined settlement boundaries. If part of the settlement fell within a particular OA then this was included in the total for the settlement, which means that the quoted population in Appendix A 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 roll (adding an extra 25% for those not eligible to vote) .

Services and 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 and facilities 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 such services/facilities are highlighted in Appendix A.

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 then 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 according 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 Green Belt boundary.

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 10,000 m². 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

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

"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 and 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. Principal Town	5. Service villages Group A and B
2. Urban District Centre	6. Small villages
3. Rural Service Centre	7. Hamlets
4. Local Service Centres	

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

4. Settlement Classification

4.1 *Principal Town Centre: Sevenoaks Urban Area*

The Sevenoaks Urban Area, comprising Sevenoaks Town, Riverhead, Dunton Green, Chipstead and Bessels Green, has been classified as the District's Principal Town Centre. It has the largest population (22,667) and widest range of services and facilities of the District's settlements (reflected by its Service Score of 487). According to the Sevenoaks District Retail Study (2007 update), Sevenoaks is a "vital and viable town centre. The retail offer provides the local shopping catchment and tourist population with a good range of shopping facilities". Sevenoaks is also the District's main transport hub, with a range of bus services and excellent rail connections, and the main employment centre with around 64,000 sq m of office space (Sevenoaks District Employment Land Review, 2008). Consequently, the Sevenoaks Urban Area offers the greatest potential to accommodate new development in comparison to other settlements in the District.

The South East Plan (Policy TC1) classifies Sevenoaks as a Secondary Regional Centre. The policy states that primary and secondary regional centres will be a focus for town centre uses set out in Planning Policy Statement 6 which include:

- Retail;
- leisure, entertainment facilities, and the more intensive sport and recreation uses;
- offices, both commercial and those of public bodies; and
- arts, culture and tourism.

4.2 *Urban District Centre: Swanley*

Swanley has the second largest population of the District's settlements (15,879) and is also one of the District's major employment centres, although unlike Sevenoaks, the South East Plan does not recognise Swanley as a Secondary Regional Centre. Compared to the Sevenoaks Urban Area, Swanley has more of an urban district centre function providing convenience shopping and services and primary and secondary education. (Sevenoaks District Retail Study, 2007 update.) This is illustrated by its service score 140.

4.3 *Rural Service Centre: Edenbridge*

Edenbridge has a relatively large population of 7808 inhabitants and a good range of services and facilities (including a major indoor leisure centre) reflected by its Service Score of 134. However, the settlement does not provide the full range of services and facilities (e.g. a secondary school) or employment opportunities needed to be self-contained.

4.4 *Local Service Centres: Westerham, Otford and New Ash Green*

Local Service Centres do not have as wide a range of services as the larger centres but they

do offer a significant range of services and facilities including employment opportunities, which cater for the daily needs of the local communities and the surrounding smaller settlements. Of these Westerham has the greatest range of services and New Ash Green the least, even though it has the highest population.

4.5 *Service Villages* The category is divided into two groups:

- A) *West Kingsdown, Seal, Hartley, Kemsing and Hextable; and*
- B) *Eynsford, Crockenhill, Leigh, Brasted, Farningham, South Darenth, Halstead, Shoreham, Horton Kirby, Sevenoaks Weald, Knockholt Pound and Sundridge.*

These villages are smaller than settlements further up the hierarchy and offer a more limited range of services for their local communities than the Local Service Centres. The majority of these settlements however have 4 or more “key sustainability services/facilities”. They also have defined Green Belt boundaries which means that within these boundaries there are opportunities for minor development. However, in view of the limited range of services compared with settlements further up the hierarchy, these settlements will only be suitable for small scale development. Settlements in Group A have more facilities and tend to be larger.

4.6 *Small Villages: Penshurst, Ide Hill, Chiddingstone, Chiddingstone Causeway, Four Elms, and Fordcombe.*

These villages generally have smaller populations and significantly smaller number and range of services/facilities than the Service Villages and Local 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.

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

These Hamlets have very small populations (under 1,000 inhabitants) and provide a very limited range of services and facilities (all have Service Scores of 5 or less). All of the above settlements with the exception of Badgers Mount are washed over by the Green Belt. As such, it is unrealistic to expect these Centres to accommodate growth.

Appendix A: Settlements ranked by Services and Facilities Score

Settlement	Population of Settlements (1)	Service facilities Score	4+ Key sustainability services/ facilities	
Sevenoaks Town inc Riverhead, Dunton Green, Chipstead, Bessels Green	22667	487	Y	Principal Town Centre
Swanley	15879	140	Y	Urban District Centre
Edenbridge plus Marlpit Hill*	7808	134	Y	Rural Service Centre
Westerham	3504	93	Y	Local Service Centres
Otford	3258	58	Y	
New Ash Green	6289	52	Y	
Hartley	5532	40	Y	Service Villages (Group A)
West Kingsdown	4528	38		
Seal	1511	32	Y	
Hextable	4398	28	Y	
Kemsing	4014	28	Y	
Brasted	990	23		Service Villages (Group B)
Crockenhill	1603	23	Y	
South Darenth	1802	21	Y	
Eynsford	1744	20	Y	
Farningham	1289	20		
Leigh	1440	18	Y	
Shoreham	1123	17	Y	
Sundridge	1150	17	Y	
Sevenoaks Weald	1153	16	Y	
Horton Kirby	1140	14	Y	
Knockholt Pound	1166	14		
Halstead	1494	13	Y	
Four Elms	535	12		Small Villages
Penshurst	958	12		
Ide Hill	687	12		
Chiddingstone Causeway	600	10		
Chiddingstone	406	8		
Fordcombe	521	6		
Ash	305	5		Hamlets
Hodsoll Street	476	5		
Cowden	765	5		
Fawkham	402	5		
Hever	307	5		
Knockholt	-	5		
Stone Street	160	5		
Crockham Hill	574	5		
Underriver	259	4		
Badgers Mount	599	4		
Swanley Village	709	4		
Toys Hill	331	3		

Sevenoaks District Settlement Hierarchy: July 2009

Bough Beech	-	3		
Mark Beech	294	3		
Knatts Valley	413	3		
Bitchet Green	93	2		
Godden Green	-	2		
Chevening	41	1		
Chiddingstone Hoath	-	1		
Heaverham	182	1		
Well Hill	-	1		

Note 1: Population figures are estimated from the 2001 Census using Output Area boundaries, which include areas that extend beyond defined Green Belt 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 5.