

Matter 5: Action 9

Proposed Modification to Policy SP2: Settlement Hierarchy Supporting Text

Following the discussion at the Matter 5 hearing session, the councils are proposing a modification to the supporting text of Policy SP2: Settlement Hierarchy. This modification to Policy SP2 provides an explanation as to where settlements previously listed within a settlement hierarchy now sit if no longer listed in the Joint Local Plan hierarchy.

[Proposed Modification – Addition of text at 5.18]

5.11 Our vision and objectives recognise the rural nature of our districts and the importance of our rural settlements in contributing to what makes our districts such a beautiful and prosperous place to live. Our strategy for the Joint Local Plan is to continue to ensure that all our communities thrive and that everyone has access to services within a short distance. This is achieved through our network of settlements and the settlement hierarchy, which ensures new facilities, homes and jobs are focused on the more sustainable locations of the districts.

5.12 The settlement hierarchy categorises the settlements within South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse based on their access to services and facilities at a point in time. The settlement hierarchy defines settlements into four tiers based on an assessment of the range and scale of services and facilities within each of the settlements, while also considering the proximity and connectivity between settlements through cycling, walking and public transport; to support the aims of the Oxfordshire Local Transport and Connectivity Plan.

5.13 Settlements with similar characteristics are grouped together within a tier. The more sustainable settlements with close links between housing, jobs and services are categorised as higher tiered settlements, and the settlements with less access to services and facilities are classified as being lower tiered settlements in the hierarchy.

5.14 Each tier of settlement has a different strategic role which is identified within the spatial strategy.

5.15 We want to support a shift to more sustainable modes of transport including active travel like walking and cycling, so we are focusing new development within the most sustainable settlements through allowing the broadest range of growth options within these settlements.

5.16 The Tier 1 and 2 settlements in Vale of White Horse retain their existing settlement boundaries which are shown by the Policies Map. The Joint Local Plan does not propose to introduce additional settlement boundaries, although boundaries could be reviewed and updated in the future through neighbourhood plans.

5.17 There is no requirement for neighbourhood plans to allocate development, however the preparation of a neighbourhood plan is supported within all settlement tiers, including the countryside, provided that they have an evidenced local need and the levels of growth are commensurate to the size of the settlement. Proposals in a neighbourhood plan must be in conformity with the strategic policies in this Plan, and policies in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

5.18 The settlement hierarchy was established through a comprehensive settlement assessment undertaken to inform the Joint Local Plan. Further details on this assessment can be found in the Settlement Assessment and Hierarchy Topic Paper. This hierarchy therefore supersedes the settlement hierarchies set out in previous development plan documents. As a result, some settlements that were previously identified within a settlement hierarchy are now not included within the hierarchy set out in SP2. Where a settlement is not listed within Policy SP2, will be treated as 'the Countryside' for the purposes of this Plan.