TOPIC PAPER

SETTLEMENT ASSESSMENT AND HIERARCHY

Joint Local Plan

Preferred Options Consultation

(Regulation 18 Part 2)

South Oxfordshire District Council
Listening Learning Leading

Vale of White Horse District Council

January 2024

This topic paper supports the Joint Local Plan 2041.

We have prepared topic papers to present a coordinated view of the evidence that has been considered in drafting the Joint Local Plan 2041. We hope this will make it easier to understand how we have reached our current position.

The topic papers will be revised following the 'Preferred Options' consultation to inform the next stage of plan preparation, which is known as the 'Publication' stage. Final versions of the topic papers will be published alongside this final stage, which is timetabled for publication in Autumn 2024.

Contents

Section 1: Introduction

1.1.   South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils are in the process of preparing a Joint Local Plan to guide development in the district's up to 2041. Having a strong understanding of the nature of the towns, villages and smaller settlements in South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse is a key part of our evidence base and assists with forming a robust strategy for the future of our districts in our Joint Local Plan.

1.2.   Our Settlement Assessment looks at settlements across our districts, to provide an understanding of how well residents' everyday needs are met living in a particular area. To do this we needed to understand the profile of settlements and the level of services available.

1.3.   We have collated information on the services and facilities available in the various settlements across our districts of South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse. The assessment looks at the provision of employment, retail services, education facilities, proximity to other settlements offering different or a wider variety services and facilities, and availability and quality of public and active transport connections. We have used this information to assess the relative sustainability of towns, villages and smaller settlements to produce a hierarchy of settlements for use in our emerging Joint Local Plan to support our approach to policymaking.

1.4.   We acknowledge that services and facilities change over time, and this assessment is a snapshot in time. During the preparation of our Joint Local Plan 2041 we will consider if updates to the assessment are needed.

Section 2: Policy Background

2.1.   The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)[1] sets out the planning policies for England and how these should be applied, whilst Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)[2] provides supplementary guidance to these policies. We summarise below what we consider to be the most relevant policy context informing our settlement assessment methodology.

National Policy

2.2.   Paragraph 7 of the NPPF sets out that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, which it defines at a high level as "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". In addition, the NPPF highlights the UK's commitment to the UN's 17 Global Goals for Sustainable Development[3]. Figure 1 shows these UN goals.

Figure 1: UN Sustainable Development Goals

2.3.   These goals should therefore inform our understanding of sustainable development and how sustainable our settlements are.

2.4.   Paragraph 8 of the NPPF elaborates that achieving sustainable development means the planning system has three overarching objectives: economic,

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[1] National Planning Policy Framework (December 2023), available from https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2
[2] Available from https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/planning-practice-guidance
[3] Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Available from sdgs.un.org/goals

social and environmental. These objectives should be at the core of the settlement assessment methodology.

2.5.   Paragraph 9 of the NPPF sets out that planning policies should play an "active role in guiding development towards sustainable solutions, but in doing so should take local circumstances into account, to reflect the character, needs and opportunities of each area". In South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse, we find a mix of urban and rural areas, areas with different characteristics and areas that have opportunities, such as Science Vale. This means a one-size-fits all approach to guiding development is not appropriate, taking account of local circumstances.

2.6.   Paragraph 83 relates to rural housing and states that planning policies should identify opportunities for villages to grow and thrive, especially where this will support local services. This is very relevant to South and Vale, which are mostly rural districts containing extensive areas of countryside. In order to identify opportunities and respond to them, we need a robust assessment of village facilities, infrastructure and connectivity in our districts. The Joint Local Plan 2041 then takes this into account in its strategy for development and in deciding how to plan for the settlements in our districts.

2.7.   Regarding supporting a prosperous rural economy, the NPPF sets out that planning policies should enable "the retention and development of accessible local services and community facilities, such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship" (paragraph 88). To be able to assist with the retention and development of local services and facilities, we need to understand where these are.

2.8.   The NPPF also states the importance of managing patterns of growth and focusing development on "locations which are or can be made sustainable, through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes" (paragraph 109), whilst recognising that "opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas, and this should be taken into account in both plan-making and decision-making".

2.9.   Regarding locations where development should not be allowed, the NPPF states that planning policies and decisions should avoid the development of isolated homes in the countryside (paragraph 84), except in the case of one or more of the five circumstances listed in that paragraph.

PPG

2.10.   Within the Government's Planning Practice Guidance (PPG), the most relevant section relates to how planning policies can support sustainable rural communities[4]. It states: "People living in rural areas can face particular challenges in terms of housing supply and affordability, while the location of new housing can also be important for the broader sustainability of rural

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[4] Planning Practice Guidance: Housing needs of different groups. Available from: www.gov.uk/guidance/housing-needs-of-different-groups

communities. Strategic policies will need to be informed by an understanding of these needs and opportunities…" (paragraph 009)

2.11. As well as: "The nature of rural housing needs can be reflected in the spatial strategy set out in relevant policies, including in the housing requirement figures for any designated rural areas. A wide range of settlements can play a role in delivering sustainable development in rural areas, so blanket policies restricting housing development in some types of settlement will need to be supported by robust evidence of their appropriateness." (paragraph 009)

2.12. This is relevant to South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse because we have significant coverage of rural areas in our districts. The settlement assessment has identified and categorised our different settlements, which has been taken account of when developing our spatial strategy for the Joint Local Plan and determining the role of settlements in the rural areas.

2.13. A settlement hierarchy needs to reflect the government's core planning principles, set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), of genuinely plan-led sustainable development that takes account of the roles and character of different areas. Our settlement assessment and subsequent hierarchy considered local circumstances, character, needs and opportunities alongside indicators of service provision and accessibility when appraising the role and rank of different settlements in our districts. The settlement hierarchy policy promotes the vitality of the larger urban areas while recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and smaller villages.

Section 3: Role of the Settlement Assessment

3.1.   Our emerging Joint Local Plan 2041 sets out a strategy for delivering sustainable growth in the districts, guiding the kinds of new housing and jobs needed and where they should go by identifying appropriate areas and sites for development, along with the necessary infrastructure to support this growth. The Joint Local Plan 2041 sets out policies that will be used for determining planning applications.

3.2.   This Settlement Assessment Topic Paper forms part of the evidence base for the Joint Local Plan 2041 and assists by classifying the districts' settlements into a range of tiers. The settlement assessment provides a snapshot in time of the facilities and accessibility to services within the different settlements, to help establish their level of provision. This can help us see which settlements have the number and breadth of facilities to be more self-contained and those which may not be functioning in a way that would be classed as 'sustainable', where development may lead to additional car trips out of the settlement. We can use the assessment to then categorise the districts' settlements according to their different roles, and group them accordingly. At the top of the hierarchy are the larger towns that fulfil the most functions and which are the most sustainable. The smaller less sustainable settlements with fewer facilities and services are towards the bottom of the hierarchy. We fully recognise that all places, regardless of size, role and category, are important to those that live and work in them and this assessment is not intended to categorise settlements in any way other than with regard to their facilities and function.

3.3.   The role of this assessment is to:

- Provide a hierarchy of settlements based upon the current level of provision of services and infrastructure and the role that the settlement plays in the districts;
- Provide an up-to-date picture of the services and infrastructure in settlements across our two districts; and
- Establish an evidence base that can assist in identifying service or infrastructure shortages which may help to underpin requirements from new developments.

3.4.   By providing these outputs the assessment helps to support the formulation of a spatial strategy for the Joint Local Plan 2041, influencing how any identified development needs are distributed across the districts and promoting a sustainable pattern of development by focussing growth to the most sustainable places.

3.5.   It is not the role of this assessment to ascertain the capacity for development of each settlement or to provide a quantum of new development that each settlement should accommodate. The overall level of new development directed to settlements in the districts will be determined through the policies

in the emerging Joint Local Plan 2041, taking account of the settlement assessment and other evidence as well as other relevant policy documents.

Section 4: Previous settlement classifications

4.1.   Both councils have existing settlement hierarchies[5], produced during the last round of local plan preparation. However, they included a different number and description of the settlement classifications and different methodologies were used to classify the settlements. While South Oxfordshire classified settlements as either Towns, Larger Villages, Smaller Villages and Other Villages, Vale of White Horse classified settlements as Market Towns, Local Service Centres, Larger Villages, Smaller Villages and Open Countryside[6].

South Oxfordshire

4.2.   For the last local plan, part of the evidence base for the adopted South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035 (SOLP) was a Settlement Assessment Background Topic Paper 2018[7], produced to support the spatial strategy. The settlement assessment undertaken to support the SOLP reviewed the methodology produced to support the Core Strategy 2012, which was the previous Development Plan produced, and then updated the information held for the settlements. The methodology focused on three main criteria:

- The levels of services and facilities on offer in each settlement;
- The proximity of each settlement to towns, larger villages and employment centres; and
- Access to public transport.

4.3.   This led to a score for each settlement that was applied against a benchmark for each settlement category, these named categories were:

- Towns;
- Larger Villages;
- Smaller Villages; and
- Other Villages.

4.4.   Settlements that did not score high enough to be considered under these categories did not feature in the settlement hierarchy. Figure 2 and Appendix A set out the settlements as they are in the current South Oxfordshire settlement hierarchy.

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[5] The existing settlement hierarchies are set out in the relevant Local Plans - South Oxfordshire: Appendix 7 of Local Plan 2035; Vale of White Horse: Core Policy 3 within Local Plan Part 1
[6] For more information on the methodologies used – South Oxfordshire: Settlement Assessment Background Paper (2018); Vale of White Horse: Town and Village Facilities Study (February 2014)
[7] South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035 Settlement Assessment Background Paper 2018, available from data.southoxon.gov.uk/ccm/support/dynamic_serve.jsp?ID=1421403196&CODE=3187906E1C19C2 DB8866C36DB9B4B380

4.5. The scoring system was used as the starting point for deciding which settlement categories a settlement would fall into. In addition, a pragmatic approach was taken to ensure local knowledge was taken account of. This ensured the level of scoring against each of the three main criteria was appropriate, before settling on the final decision for which category a settlement fell into.

4.6. The results of the assessment were determined by both a quantitative assessment of the services and facilities available in a settlement, its proximity to another settlement with services, and the level of public transport available.

Vale of White Horse

4.7. To support the production of the adopted Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 a Town and Facilities Study 2014[8] was produced. This study's starting point was existing data provided by previous studies updated by consultation with Parish Councils and desktop studies. A scoring system was then devised to rank the settlements, with the scoring being based on the relative importance of each settlement, its proximity to services and its connectivity. Whether a settlement was washed over by Green Belt, or inset from it, was also noted. The results of the Town and Facilities Study 2014 formed the settlement hierarchy, which then informed the spatial strategy.

4.8. The settlement hierarchy produced resulted in 4 named categories for settlements:

- Market Town;
- Local Service Centre;
- Larger Villages; and
- Smaller Villages.

4.9. Settlements that did not score high enough to be considered under these categories were classed as part of the open countryside. Figure 2 and Appendix B set out these settlements as they are in the current Vale of White Horse settlement hierarchy.

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[8] Vale of White Horse Local Plan Part 1 Town and Facilities Study February 2014, available from data.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/java/support/dynamic_serve.jsp?ID=910616349&CODE=A872CE62744713 B67530107E783AFEB4

Figure 2: Current Settlement Hierarchies
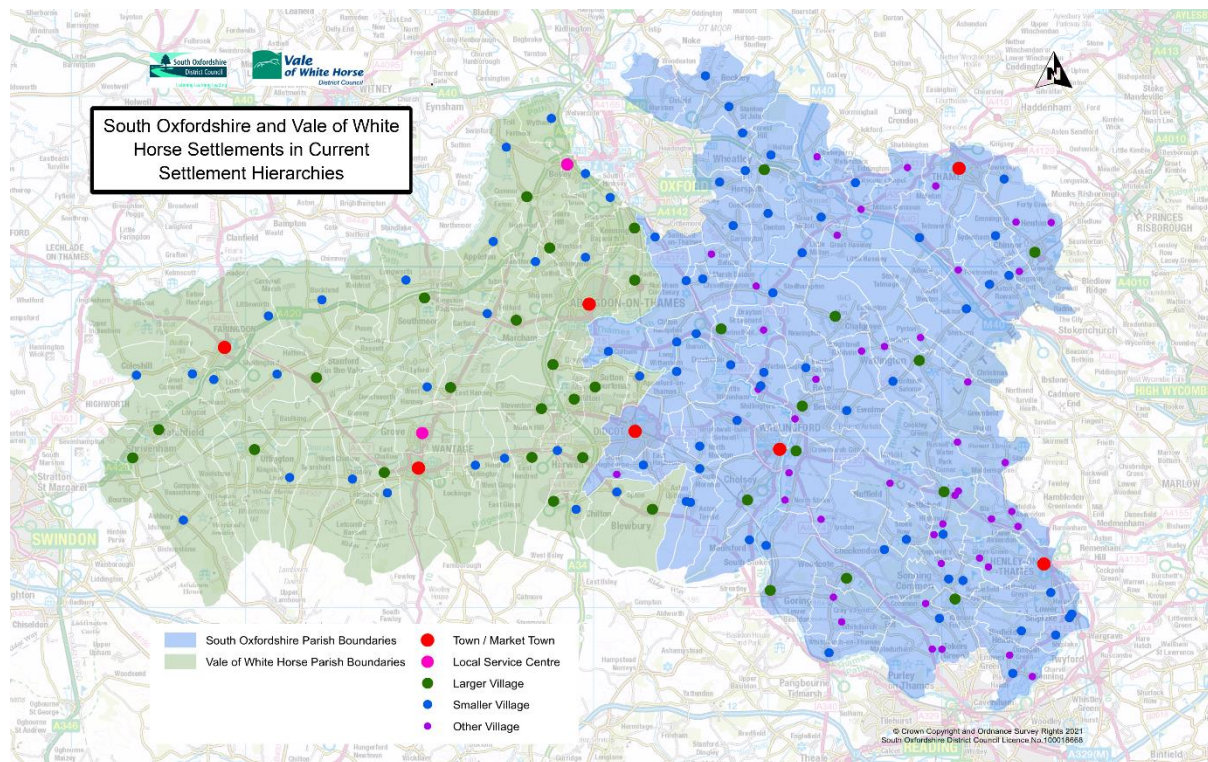
4.10.   Now that we are planning across two districts, rather than produce a roll-forward approach, this settlement assessment process has reviewed the services and facilities available in the settlements across both districts and proposes a new hierarchy with numbered tiers, so that the approach is consistent across districts.

4.11.   We have based the classification of a settlement into a tier of the hierarchy on the availability of, or access to, facilities and services for individual settlements, to indicate their relative sustainability as locations for development. Our approach for assessing settlements uses a wider range of indicators than we used to inform the current adopted Local Plans to improve our assessment of relative sustainability.

Section 5: Methodology

Drafting and consulting on the methodology

5.1.   As part of the Joint Local Plan initial issues consultation[9] in May 2022 we consulted on a draft methodology for the settlement assessment. Similar to the methodology followed for the existing and more recently adopted settlement assessment (see section 4.2) for South Oxfordshire, the draft methodology focused on three main criteria:

- The levels of services and facilities on offer in each settlement;
- The proximity of each settlement to towns, larger villages and employment centres; and
- Access to public transport.

5.2.   The consultation on the settlement assessment methodology also included asking about which services to consider as part of the process. We asked for people's opinions whether there were any facilities missing and the proposed weighting for services and facilities. The consultation responses were reviewed, and we amended the list of services and facilities we would seek information on (see Appendix C), and the proposed weightings we would use to score these facilities.

Gathering data on services and facilities

5.3.   The starting point for data gathering was a comprehensive survey which we distributed to all Town and Parish Councils in the districts for completion between July and September 2022, asking them to provide information on the services and infrastructure available in their areas. The survey was based on questionnaires sent out by the districts previously, but we expanded the questions to cover additional areas, such as sports facilities, and get a finer grain of detail to produce more robust results.

5.4.   We received responses from 65% of parish councils, although it must be noted that some parishes have more than one settlement. The responses from each parish were considered. We then reviewed the data and completed a sense-check exercise, looking at whether the data returned was for an individual settlement or for the entire parish, before establishing which settlements had not had data provided for them. The starting point for this was the settlement lists produced as part of the previous settlement hierarchies, as well as a desktop exercise reviewing mapped data to identify distinct settlements within our districts.

5.5.   We used land use data, held by the councils as part of the Local Land and Property Gazetteer (LLPG) master address dataset, to validate the

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[9] Joint Local Plan - Issues Consultation (arcgis.com)

information submitted by Town and Parish Councils, as well as to complete the assessment for those settlements where data had not been returned.

5.6. We supplemented this with additional data for all of the settlement assessments, such as healthcare facilities (including GP surgeries and hospitals), education facilities, and ultrafast broadband coverage.

Scoring the settlements

Services and Facilities

5.7. The settlement assessment scores the settlements according to the level of services and infrastructure in the area. We weighted the scores for some service/facilities to reflect the relative importance of each facility, because some services are more essential and used more frequently than others. For example, schools and supermarkets are important facilities that reduce the need to travel by car and support the vitality of the local community. Other facilities such as a village hall or a recreation ground are not weighted as heavily as they do not contribute as significantly to people's day to day needs or reduce the need to travel, although they do contribute to the social objective of sustainable development. The final list of services and facilities considered, and the weighting attributed to each is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Services and Facilities indicators

Indicator	Score	Comment
Education		
Primary School	3	
Secondary School	4	
Further Education	2	
Crèche / Nursery	2	
Healthcare		
Hospital	4	
GP Surgery	4	
Clinic	2	
Dentist	2	
Pharmacy	2	
Shops		
Food Shop	2	
Retail Shop	2	
Hospitality		
Restaurants, pubs and cafes	2	
Takeaways	2	
Financial services		
Post office	1	
Bank / Building Society	2	
Community Services		
Village / Community Hall	1	

Indicator	Score	Comment
Places of Worship	1	
Library - Permanent	2	
Leisure Centre	2	
Sport Club	1	
Entertainment facilities	1	Services such as cinema, bowling etc. This will be scored per facility.
Outside facilities / Open Space		
Public Park / Garden	1	
Sports Pitch	1	
Multi Use Games Area	1	
Playground	1	
Allotments	1	
Public Open Space	1	Public Open space includes all open space of public value that is publicly accessible. This can take many forms, from formal sports pitches to open areas within a development, linear corridors and country parks.
Broadband quality coverage		Ultrafast broadband is a connection with speeds of more than 300mbps
Ultra-fast broadband coverage 75% and higher	4	
Ultra-fast broadband coverage between 50% and 74%	2	
Ultra-fast broadband coverage between 25% and 49%	1	

Proximity

5.8.   An analysis of each settlements' proximity to major employment locations and higher tier settlements (including outside of the districts i.e. Oxford, Reading and Swindon) based on accessibility within 20 minute (10 minute each way) walk, cycle, or public transport journey time[10], was undertaken and this was used to create a proximity score as shown in Table 2.

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[10] The analysis of the cycling and walking distances and times was run using the OS MasterMap network through ArcGIS Pro Network Analyst Extension with cycling and walking at fixed speeds of 10 mph and 3 mph. The public transit times used Google API for arrival by Tuesday 2 May 2023 10:00am.

Table 2: Proximity scores

Indicator	Score	Comment
Proximity to Key Employment Sites		
Walking	6	Based upon a Key Employment site being within 20 minutes walking distance from settlement, or approximately 800m one way[11].
Cycling	5	Based upon a site being within 20 minute cycling distance from settlement, or approximately 3k one way.
Public Transport	4	Based upon a site being within 20 minutes of settlement using public transport.
Proximity to Tier 1 Settlements		Tier 1 settlements will receive maximum score
Walking	9	Based upon Tier 1 being within 20-minute walking distance from settlement, or approximately 800m one way.
Cycling	8	Based upon Tier 1 being within 20-minute cycling distance from settlement, or approximately 3km one way.
Public Transport	7	Based upon Tier 1 being within 20 minutes of settlement using public transport.
Proximity to Tier 2 settlements		Tier 2 settlements will receive maximum score
Walking	3	Based upon Tier 2 or 3 settlement being within 20-minute walking distance from settlement, or approximately 800mkm one way.
Cycling	2	Based upon Tier 2 or 3 settlement being within 20-minute cycling distance from settlement, or approximately 3km one way.
Public Transport	1	Based upon site being within 20 minutes of settlement using public transport.

5.9. We did not think it would be appropriate to assess proximity by private car, reflecting national and local policies. Whilst ultra-low and zero emission

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[11] 20 Minute Neighbourhoods, www.tcpa.org.uk/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=f214c4b8-ba4d-4196-9870-e9d240f86645 page 7, and Policy 13 of Oxfordshire Local Transport and Connectivity Plan https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/file/roads-and-transport-connecting-oxfordshire/LocalTransportandConnectivityPlan.pdf

vehicles are recognised as a sustainable mode of transport in national policy, there is no obvious mechanism for ensuring that existing settlements or places are only (or predominantly) accessed by such vehicles. There is a strong focus on reducing private car journeys within Oxfordshire County Council's latest Local Transport and Connectivity Plan[12] (LTCP), and focusing on promoting sustainable travel is important to meet the Joint Local Plan's objective 2: "Help transition to net zero carbon districts by 2030 for South Oxfordshire and 2045 for Vale, mindful of the districts' carbon budgets, by locating new housing and employment development in places which minimise the need to travel by private car, requiring buildings to be designed to the highest achievable standards for reducing energy and water use, encouraging suitable renewable energy generation, and supporting nature-based carbon and stormwater storage."

Connectivity

5.10. Each settlement was given a score based on its connectivity, which was assessed based on the frequency/availability of public transport as per Tables 3 and 4.

Table 3: Train station scoring and rationale

Train Station	Score for settlement	Score for proximate settlement	Rationale
Didcot, Oxford	25	12	High frequency, with high-speed service available
Goring, Cholsey, Pangbourne	20	10	Medium frequency, on a mainline
Radley, Culham, Appleford	15	7	Low frequency, on a mainline
Henley-on-Thames, Lower Shiplake	10	5	Low frequency, not on a mainline

Table 4: Bus route scoring

Bus	Score
Bus stops on a road with half-hourly or better service most of the day	10
Bus stops on a road with hourly bus service most of the day	6
Bus stops on a road with at least one bus in each direction a day	2

Calculating the final score for each settlement

5.11. The final score for each settlement was calculated by summing:

- Weighted facilities score + broadband score

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[12] Available from: www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/file/roads-and-transport-connecting-oxfordshire/LocalTransportandConnectivityPlan.pdf

- Connectivity score
- Proximity score

Balance of criteria

5.12.   In addition to a settlement's score, we looked at the balance between a settlement's access to services and facilities; proximity to places and employment; and access to public transport. To eliminate the situation where a settlement scored highly against the connectivity and proximity criterion, but low against the facilities criterion, and to support a shift to more sustainable modes of transport, including active travel like walking and cycling; we placed focus on the need for a settlement to have some services and facilities of its own. This was done by assigning further weighting on the facilities score to place emphasis on settlements which contain existing services and facilities. These settlements are able to support the surrounding rural areas, as settlements with good access to services will help to support those who cannot afford to or are unable to use the private car[13].

5.13.   We are also aware of the fact that to be truly sustainable, a settlement should have a range of facilities which support daily life, rather than there only be lots of one 'type' of service or facility. During a sense-check review of the final scores, we established that the retail shop score was unduly skewing the results, especially for the smaller settlements. This was often due to converted farm buildings with artisan workshops, or small industrial estates providing offices or garages/mechanics in settlements which did not necessarily have many other facilities which would meet the population's daily needs. Consequently, the relative weighting of the retail scoring was reduced to decrease the emphasis on retail shops and provide a more even balance across the facilities.

Producing the settlement hierarchy

5.14.   The settlements were listed in order of their total score (see Appendix D). Settlements with similar scores were grouped together where there were logical gaps, to establish the initial tiers. There were larger gaps at the upper end of the hierarchy, which made it clear where the boundary of the tier should fall, but it was more challenging with the lower scoring settlements. Therefore, an analysis was undertaken to review the characteristics (i.e. the type and breadth of services and facilities each grouping contained) of the settlements within each tier, particularly focusing on the settlements which were located near the boundaries of each tier.

5.15.   The characteristics analysis did not consider the quantity of facilities a settlement had, it reviewed whether a settlement had at least one of each type of service or facility. This analysis showed that settlements with similar scores also had a similar breadth of services (see Table 5). The characteristics analysis information was considered alongside the ordered list of settlements to help refine the boundaries of each tier into a best fit. As

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[13] Countryside Agency (2004) The role of rural settlements as service centres

the overall score of the settlement and the characteristic analysis were being looked at in combination, there were some settlements which did not meet the characteristic threshold of a particular tier, but had a higher score than other settlements which did have the breadth of services consistent with that tier, or vice versa. We therefore judged the best fit tier boundaries to be where the majority of settlements within each tier had the same breadth of characteristics.

Table 5: Analysis of tier characteristics

Total Score	Tier	Characteristics Analysis
Below 30	Not featured in hierarchy/classified as countryside	Often only have church, village hall and sometimes a pub
30 – 60	Tier 4	Tend to have a primary school in addition
61 – 190	Tier 3	Tend to have a nursery and post office in addition
191 – 450	Tier 2	Tend to have a GP and shop(s) in addition
451 and above	Tier 1	Contain services and facilities from all categories

5.16. Reviewing this characteristics analysis alongside the scoring, clarified that settlements which scored above 190 usually had a GP surgery and shops, and were distinct in that regard from settlements which scored less than 190. These settlements have a breadth of services and facilities that serve their own populations and a wider rural catchment area. The analysis also allowed us to ascertain where to draw the line between tier 3 and tier 4, due to a difference in the breadth of services these settlements tend to display, with tier 4 settlements having a more limited range of employment, services and facilities. We also used this process to identify the score below which a settlement would not feature in the hierarchy.

Scale/urban form

5.17. The scale of a settlement has been considered. Isolated groups of housing with no facilities do not feature in the hierarchy as these are not appropriate places for new development. These settlements scored less than 30 points overall and are therefore not considered to be appropriate locations for additional development because of their lack of access to facilities. They have consequently been considered as countryside within the updated settlement hierarchy. This approach is in line with the Oxfordshire LTCP and the need to reduce travel/ not encourage growth in smaller less sustainable settlements, given the context and characteristics our districts have.

Consistency regarding employment facilities

5.18. The previous Vale of White Horse settlement hierarchy contained Harwell Campus, and the village of Milton scored highly due to the inclusion of facilities in the business park Milton Park.

5.19.   As an enterprise zone, Harwell Campus is almost entirely an employment area, with other facilities present to mostly service its employees. It does not have the same breadth of services or the same characteristics (as per Table 5) as other settlements with a similar score. Similarly, Milton Park is an enterprise zone.

5.20.   Since the employment policies adequately deal with the approach to be taken in enterprise zones, we have focussed the settlement hierarchy on services and facilities within a settlement to support a resident population. Therefore, to be consistent with similar employment locations in South Oxfordshire, Harwell Campus and the Milton Park facilities within the calculation for Milton Village were excluded from the hierarchy.

Alternative options

5.21.   As part of the process, we considered alternatives to the approach taken. These included:

- retaining the existing settlement hierarchies
- increasing the weighting for the proximity and connectivity scores
- not having a settlement hierarchy

5.22.   The options are considered in further detail within the Preferred Options consultation document, which sets out what each option entails and explains why the alternative options have not been taken forward. The approach outlined in this topic paper is our preferred methodology and we believe produces an up to date and robust hierarchy which can be used by other policies in the emerging Joint Local Plan to direct development to the most sustainable locations. It meets the requirements of national policy and guidance and supports local objectives, such as focusing on a shift to active travel and generating fewer car trips outside of a settlement.

Section 6: Results and Conclusions

6.1.   Please note, when scoring and subsequently ranking each settlement, the settlement assessment and resulting hierarchy does not consider physical or planning land use constraints that may limit the opportunities for settlements to grow. The purpose of the settlement assessment and hierarchy is to provide a baseline of information which can be used to guide policy and assist in decision-making. It is important to note the settlement assessment process has led to the settlements being placed within a tier in a hierarchy, but any development proposals in settlements considered appropriate for development through this assessment and the Local Plan will still be considered against relevant development plan and national polices, and will be judged on a case by case basis. This includes any development in settlements washed over by Green Belt or National Landscape (formerly Area of Outstanding Beauty) designations, which would be subject to complying with local and national policies relating to these designations.

6.2.   The settlement hierarchy to support the Joint Local Plan 2041 is in Table 6.

Table 6: Breakdown of settlements within each tier

Tier in Hierarchy	South Oxfordshire settlements	Vale of White Horse settlements
1	Didcot Henley-on-Thames Thame Wallingford	Abingdon-on-Thames Faringdon Wantage
2	Chinnor Goring-on-Thames Watlington Wheatley	Botley Grove
3	Benson Berinsfield Brightwell-cum-Sotwell Chalgrove Cholsey Crowmarsh Gifford Nettlebed Sonning Common Woodcote	Blewbury Cumnor Drayton East Challow East Hanney East Hendred Harwell Kennington Kingston Bagpuize with Southmoor Marcham Radley Shrivenham Stanford-in-the-Vale Steventon Sutton Courtenay Watchfield Wootton

4	Aston Tirrold and Aston Upthorpe	Appleton with Eaton
	Beckley And Stowood	Ardington
	Checkendon	Ashbury
	Clifton Hampden	Buckland
	Culham	Childrey
	Dorchester-on-Thames	Chilton
	East Hagbourne	Dry Sandford
	Ewelme	Farmoor
	Garsington	Frilford
	Great Milton	Great Coxwell
	Holton	Letcombe Regis
	Horspath	Longcot
	Lewknor	Longworth
	Little Milton	Milton Heights
	Long Wittenham	North Hinksey
	Lower Shiplake	Shippon
	Marsh Baldon	Sunningwell
	Peppard Common	Uffington
	Sandford-on-Thames	
	Shiplake Cross	
	South Stoke	
	Stadhampton	
	Stanton St John	
	Stoke Row	
	Tetsworth	
	Tiddington	
	Warborough	
	Whitchurch-on-Thames	

6.3.   Appendix D shows the settlements ranked from highest to lowest score.

6.4.   Appendix E shows a map of settlements and where they are on the hierarchy.

6.5.   Appendix F shows the settlements considered during the assessment process but not included in the Settlement Hierarchy.

Overview of changes

6.6.   In the existing hierarchies, there are a substantially more settlements within the South Oxfordshire hierarchy, partially due to the inclusion of the 'other village' category.

Table 7: Number of settlements in the existing settlement hierarchies

Tier	South	Vale
Town/Market Town	4	3
Local Service Centre	n/a	2
Larger Village	12	20
Smaller Village	49	29
Other Village	42	n/a
Total	107	54

6.7.   Within the new hierarchy, the number of settlements included is more consistent across the districts, with 45 in South and 40 in Vale (see Table 8). As explained in paragraph 5.17, the smaller settlements are not considered appropriate places for additional housing growth, therefore all 'other villages' within the previous hierarchy for South Oxfordshire are now classified as within the countryside. In addition, the 'smaller villages' within the current hierarchies with the least services and facilities, are also classified as within the countryside in our new hierarchy classifications.

Table 8: Number of settlements in each tier of the new settlement hierarchy and which settlements have changed from another tier in the current hierarchies.

Tier	South	Vale	Difference
1	4	3	None
2	4	2	All South and up from larger village: Chinnor Wheatley Goring-on-Thames Watlington
3	9	17	South - up from smaller village: Brightwell-cum-Sotwell
4	28	18	Vale - down from larger village: Uffington
Total	45	40	

Section 7: Appendices

Appendix A: Current South Oxfordshire Settlement Hierarchy

Settlement	Classification in current hierarchy
Didcot	Towns
Henley-on-Thames	Towns
Thame	Towns
Wallingford	Towns
Benson	Larger Villages
Berinsfield	Larger Villages
Chalgrove	Larger Villages
Chinnor	Larger Villages
Cholsey	Larger Villages
Crowmarsh Gifford	Larger Villages
Goring	Larger Villages
Nettlebed	Larger Villages
Sonning Common	Larger Villages
Watlington	Larger Villages
Wheatley	Larger Villages
Woodcote	Larger Villages
Aston Rowant	Smaller Villages
Aston Upthorpe / Aston Tirrold	Smaller Villages
Beckley	Smaller Villages
Berrick Salome	Smaller Villages
Binfield Heath	Smaller Villages
Brightwell-cum-Sotwell	Smaller Villages
Britwell Salome	Smaller Villages

Burcot	Smaller Villages
Checkendon	Smaller Villages
Clifton Hampden	Smaller Villages
Cuddesdon	Smaller Villages
Culham	Smaller Villages
Dorchester	Smaller Villages
East Hagbourne	Smaller Villages
Ewelme	Smaller Villages
Forest Hill	Smaller Villages
Garsington	Smaller Villages
Great Milton	Smaller Villages
Harpsden	Smaller Villages
Highmoor Cross	Smaller Villages
Holton	Smaller Villages
Horspath	Smaller Villages
Kidmore End	Smaller Villages
Kingston Blount	Smaller Villages
Lewknor	Smaller Villages
Little Milton	Smaller Villages
Littleworth (near Wheatley)	Smaller Villages
Long Wittenham	Smaller Villages
Marsh Baldon	Smaller Villages
Moulsford	Smaller Villages
North Moreton	Smaller Villages
Nuneham Courtenay	Smaller Villages
Peppard Common	Smaller Villages
Playhatch	Smaller Villages
Rotherfield Peppard	Smaller Villages
Sandford-on-Thames	Smaller Villages

Lower Shiplake	Smaller Villages
Shiplake Cross	Smaller Villages
South Moreton	Smaller Villages
South Stoke	Smaller Villages
Stadhampton	Smaller Villages
Stanton St John	Smaller Villages
Stoke Row	Smaller Villages
Sydenham	Smaller Villages
Tetsworth	Smaller Villages
Tiddington	Smaller Villages
Towersey	Smaller Villages
Warborough & Shillingford NE of A4074	Smaller Villages
Whitchurch-on-Thames	Smaller Villages
Bix	Other Villages
Brightwell Baldwin	Other Villages
Chazey Heath	Other Villages
Chiselhampton	Other Villages
Christmas Common	Other Villages
Crays Pond	Other Villages
Crocker End and Catslip	Other Villages
Crowell	Other Villages
Cuxham	Other Villages
Drayton St Leonard	Other Villages
Dunsden Green	Other Villages
Emmington	Other Villages
Gallowstree Common	Other Villages
Great Haseley	Other Villages
Greys Green	Other Villages
Henton	Other Villages

Highmoor	Other Villages
Ispden	Other Villages
Kingwood Common	Other Villages
Lower Assendon	Other Villages
Middle Assendon	Other Villages
Milton Common	Other Villages
Mongewell	Other Villages
Moreton	Other Villages
North Stoke	Other Villages
North Weston	Other Villages
Nuffield	Other Villages
Postcombe	Other Villages
Preston Crowmarsh	Other Villages
Pyrton	Other Villages
Roke	Other Villages
Rotherfield Greys	Other Villages
Russell's Water	Other Villages
Shillingford (SW of A4074)	Other Villages
Sonning Eye	Other Villages
Stonor	Other Villages
Tokers Green	Other Villages
Toot Baldon	Other Villages
Waterperry	Other Villages
West Hagbourne	Other Villages
Whitchurch Hill / Hill Bottom	Other Villages
Witheridge Hill	Other Villages

Appendix B: Current Vale of White Horse Settlement Hierarchy

Settlement	Classification in current hierarchy
Abingdon-on-Thames	Market Town
Wantage	Market Town
Faringdon	Market Town
Botley	Local Service Centre
Grove	Local Service Centre
Cumnor	Larger Villages
Drayton	Larger Villages
East Hanney	Larger Villages
Kennington	Larger Villages
Kingston Bagpuize with Southmoor	Larger Villages
Marcham	Larger Villages
Radley	Larger Villages
Steventon	Larger Villages
Wootton	Larger Villages
Blewbury	Larger Villages
East Hendred	Larger Villages
Harwell	Larger Villages
Harwell Campus	Larger Villages
Sutton Courtenay	Larger Villages
Milton	Larger Villages
East Challow	Larger Villages
Shrivenham	Larger Villages
Stanford-in-the-Vale	Larger Villages
Uffington	Larger Villages
Watchfield	Larger Villages
Appleton	Smaller Villages
Dry Sandford	Smaller Villages

Farmoor	Smaller Villages
Frilford	Smaller Villages
Longworth	Smaller Villages
North Hinksey	Smaller Villages
Shippon	Smaller Villages
South Hinksey	Smaller Villages
Sunningwell	Smaller Villages
West Hanney	Smaller Villages
Wytham	Smaller Villages
Appleford	Smaller Villages
Ardington	Smaller Villages
Chilton	Smaller Villages
Milton Heights	Smaller Villages
Rowstock	Smaller Villages
Upton	Smaller Villages
West Hendred	Smaller Villages
Ashbury	Smaller Villages
Buckland	Smaller Villages
Childrey	Smaller Villages
Coleshill	Smaller Villages
Great Coxwell	Smaller Villages
Kingston Lisle	Smaller Villages
Little Coxwell	Smaller Villages
Littleworth	Smaller Villages
Longcot	Smaller Villages
Letcombe Regis	Smaller Villages
Shellingford	Smaller Villages

Appendix C: Additional information requested as part of the questionnaire in response to feedback from the initial issues consultation

Information requested as part of the questionnaire	Added in response to the Initial Issues Consultation
Education	
Child day care facility	
Adult day care facility	
Creche/Nursery	
Dementia day care	
Healthcare	
Health Clinic	
Dentist	
Pharmacy	
Optician	
Shops	
Food Shop	
Retail Shop	
Post Office	
Bank/Building Society	
Professional Service e.g. Estate Agent	
Local Market	
Local Centres	
Hospitality	
Restaurants, Pubs and Cafes	
Takeaways	
Food Trucks	
Financial services	
Post office	
Bank / Building Society	
ATMs/Cash Machines	
Community Services	
Village / Community Hall	
Places of Worship	
Burial Grounds	Yes
Library - Permanent	
Museum	
Place for religious instruction	
Law Court	
Leisure Centre	
Indoor Sports Facility	
Outdoor Sports Facility	
Entertainment Facilities e.g. Cinema, Bowling Alley, Dance Studio, Soft Play	
Outside facilities / Open Space	
Public Park / Garden	

Information requested as part of the questionnaire	Added in response to the Initial Issues Consultation
Sports Pitch	
Multi Use Games Area	
Playground/Play Spaces	
Skate Park	
Youth Centre	
Allotments	
Public Open Space	
Connectivity/Transport	
Public Electric Vehicle Charging Points	Yes

Appendix D: List of settlements in score order

Settlement	District	Facilities Total	Proximity Total	Connectivity Total	Grand Total	Tier
Abingdon	Vale	1430	15	10	1455	1
Henley On Thames	South	1162	9	20	1191	1
Didcot	South	1128	9	35	1172	1
Wantage	Vale	678	14	10	702	1
Thame	South	670	9	10	689	1
Wallingford	South	548	14	10	572	1
Faringdon	Vale	446	15	10	471	1
Chinnor	South	300	3	6	309	2
Botley	Vale	252	8	22	282	2
Wheatley	South	182	3	10	195	2
Goring-on-Thames	South	168	3	22	193	2
Grove	Vale	180	3	10	193	2
Watlington	South	186	3	2	191	2
Cholsey	South	128	10	26	164	3
East Challow	Vale	134	16	6	156	3

Settlement	District	Facilities Total	Proximity Total	Connectivity Total	Grand Total	Tier
Kennington	Vale	142	3	10	155	3
Benson	South	138	3	6	147	3
Sonning Common	South	138	3	6	147	3
Kingston Bagpuize with Southmoor	Vale	130	3	10	143	3
Shrivenham	Vale	116	3	10	129	3
Harwell	Vale	104	3	10	117	3
Woodcote	South	106	3	6	115	3
Watchfield	Vale	93	3	6	102	3
Crowmarsh Gifford	South	73	16	10	99	3
Radley	Vale	54	8	25	87	3
Chalgrove	South	76	3	6	85	3
Sutton Courtenay	Vale	76	3	6	85	3
Wootton	Vale	72	3	6	81	3
Steventon	Vale	60	8	10	78	3
Berinsfield	South	72	3	2	77	3
Blewbury	Vale	65	3	6	74	3

Settlement	District	Facilities Total	Proximity Total	Connectivity Total	Grand Total	Tier
Nettlebed	South	64	3	6	73	3
East Hendred	Vale	60	3	10	73	3
Marcham	Vale	60	3	10	73	3
Stanford-in-the-Vale	Vale	62	3	6	71	3
Drayton	Vale	54	3	10	67	3
East Hanney	Vale	54	3	10	67	3
Brightwell-cum-Sotwell	South	54	0	10	64	3
Cumnor	Vale	48	3	10	61	3
Dorchester	South	58	0	0	58	4
Appleton with Eaton	Vale	56	0	2	58	4
East Hagbourne	South	43	8	6	57	4
North Hinksey	Vale	32	13	12	57	4
Chilton	Vale	50	0	6	56	4
Culham	South	26	8	21	55	4
Clifton Hampden	South	40	5	9	54	4
Whitchurch On Thames	South	44	0	10	54	4
Shippon	Vale	34	13	6	53	4

Settlement	District	Facilities Total	Proximity Total	Connectivity Total	Grand Total	Tier
Frilford	Vale	40	2	10	52	4
Uffington	Vale	48	3	0	51	4
Garsington	South	44	0	6	50	4
Little Milton	South	48	0	0	48	4
Tiddington	South	38	0	10	48	4
Great Milton	South	40	0	6	46	4
Shiplake Cross	South	40	0	5	45	4
Long Wittenham	South	42	0	2	44	4
Tetsworth	South	42	0	2	44	4
Great Coxwell	Vale	42	0	2	44	4
Stoke Row	South	43	0	0	43	4
Stadhampton	South	36	0	6	42	4
Warborough	South	42	0	0	42	4
Childrey	Vale	40	0	0	40	4
Longcot	Vale	39	0	0	39	4
Horspath	South	32	0	6	38	4
Ashbury	Vale	36	0	2	38	4

Settlement	District	Facilities Total	Proximity Total	Connectivity Total	Grand Total	Tier
Buckland	Vale	38	0	0	38	4
Longworth	Vale	36	0	2	38	4
Sandford On Thames	South	20	7	10	37	4
Beckley And Stowood	South	36	0	0	36	4
Checkendon	South	36	0	0	36	4
Lewknor	South	30	0	6	36	4
Stanton St John	South	36	0	0	36	4
Ardington	Vale	36	0	0	36	4
Milton Heights	Vale	18	7	10	35	4
Holton	South	32	2	0	34	4
Lower Shiplake	South	18	0	16	34	4
Marsh Baldon	South	34	0	0	34	4
Farmoor	Vale	34	0	0	34	4
Letcombe Regis	Vale	30	2	0	32	4
Sunningwell	Vale	32	0	0	32	4
Aston Tirrold and Aston Upthorpe	South	30	0	0	30	4

Settlement	District	Facilities Total	Proximity Total	Connectivity Total	Grand Total	Tier
Ewelme	South	30	0	0	30	4
Peppard Common	South	22	2	6	30	4
South Stoke	South	28	0	2	30	4
Dry Sandford	Vale	28	2	0	30	4

Appendix E: Map showing the settlement hierarchy

South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse Settlement Hierarchy

Legend:
- Tier 1 (red)
- Tier 2 (purple)
- Tier 3 (blue)
- Tier 4 (brown)
- Vale of White Horse District Boundary (green)
- South Oxfordshire District Boundary (blue)

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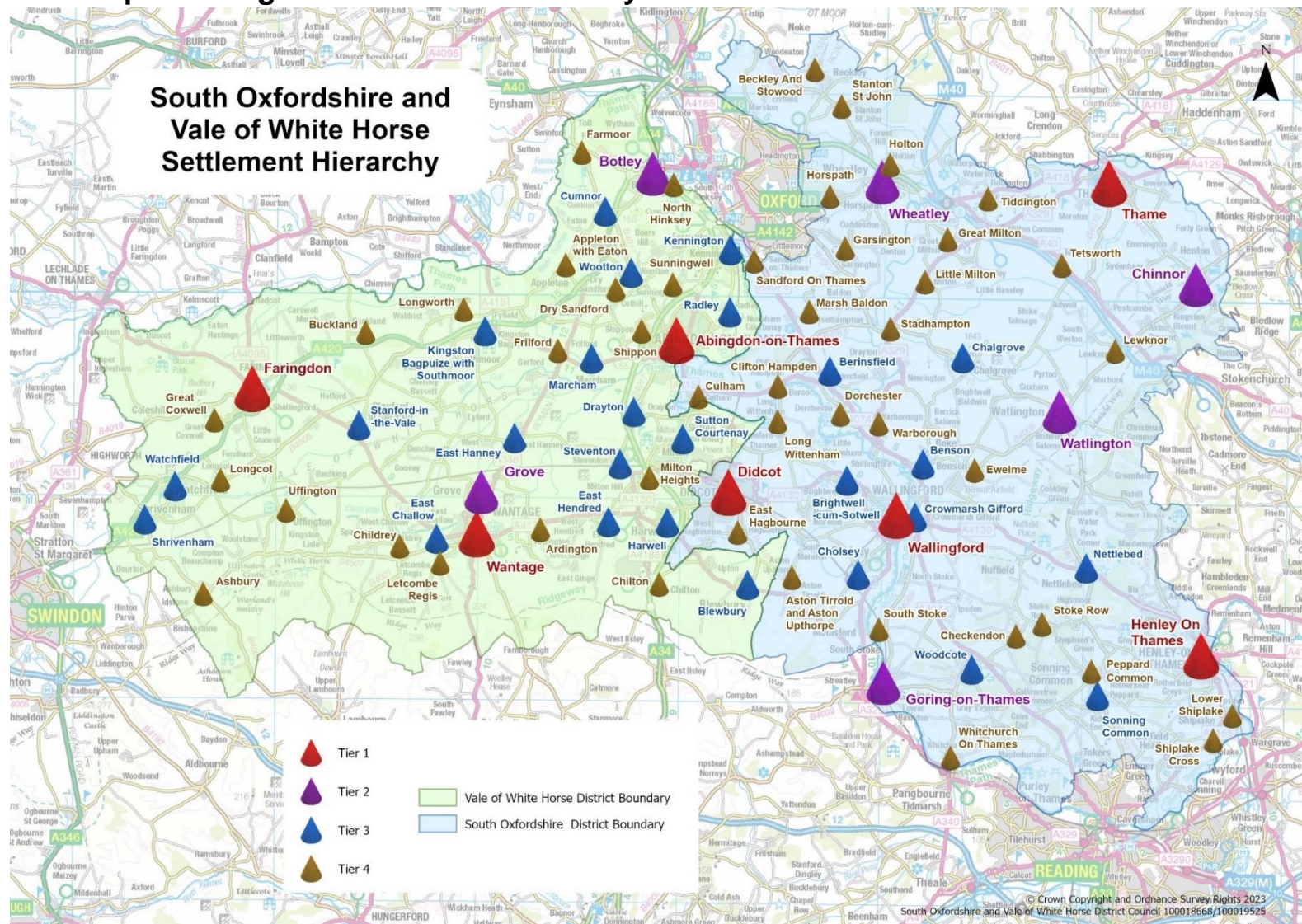
Appendix F: Settlements removed from hierarchy

Previous Tier	South	Vale
Larger Village	n/a	Harwell Campus Milton
Smaller Village	Aston Rowant Berrick Salome Binfield Heath Britwell Salome Burcot Cuddesdon and Denton Forest Hill With Shotover Harpsden Highmoor Kidmore End Kingston Blount Littleworth Moulsford North Moreton Nuneham Courtenay Playhatch Rotherfield Peppard Shillingford South Moreton Sydenham Towersey	Appleford Kingston Lisle Little Coxwell Littleworth Milton Heights Rowstock Shellingford South Hinksey Upton West Hanney West Hendred Wytham
Other Village	Bix Brightwell Baldwin Chazey Heath Chiselhampton Christmas Common	n/a

	Crays Pond Crocker End & Catslip Crowell Cuxham with Easington Drayton St Leonard Dunsden Green Emmington Gallowstree Common Great Haseley Greys Green Henton Ipsden Kingwood Common Lower Assendon Middle Assendon Milton Common Mongewell Moreton North Stoke North Weston Nuffield Postcombe Preston Crowmarsh Pyrton Roke Rotherfield Greys Russells Water Sonning Eye Stonor Tokers Green Toot Baldon Waterperry With Thomley	

	West Hagbourne	
	Whitchurch Hill	
	Witheridge Hill	

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