

Report to: Strategic Planning Committee



Date of Meeting Wednesday 23 October 2024

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A

Settlement hierarchy – Upottery and Woodbury Salterton

Report summary:

This report considers the settlement hierarchy in the emerging Local Plan in relation to Upottery and Woodbury Salterton, as raised in recent discussions at the Local Plan Member Working Group and Strategic Planning Committee. Whilst it is acknowledged that these settlements have several facilities and services as well as a relatively high employment density, they are missing a shop – a key day-to-day facility – which makes them less sustainable places to live and to locate new development.

Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes No

Policy Framework Yes No

Recommendation:

That Strategic Planning Committee agree that Upottery and Woodbury Salterton continue to not be designated as service villages (Tier 4) within the settlement hierarchy in the publication draft Local Plan.

Reason for recommendation:

Upottery and Woodbury Salterton do not have a sufficient level of facilities to be considered as service villages in the emerging Local Plan (tier four in the settlement hierarchy).

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Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

- Climate Action and Emergency Response
- Coast, Country and Environment
- Council and Corporate Co-ordination
- Communications and Democracy
- Economy
- Finance and Assets
- Strategic Planning
- Sustainable Homes and Communities
- Culture, Leisure, Sport and Tourism

Equalities impact Low Impact

Climate change Low Impact

Risk: High Risk; The local plan needs to progress in a timely manner if it is to meet potential Government deadlines for plan preparation. That said there are unknowns over final deadlines that may be set by the Government and as of when they may issue new policy. The government had previously indicated that plans may proceed under the existing NPPF and what are comparatively lower housing numbers if they reach Regulation 19 stage of plan making (plan consultation) within one month of a new NPPF being published. It is unknown if this timing ruling may stay in place, or not, or when a new NPPF may be published.

Links to background information [The Role and Function of Settlements](#) ; [SPC minutes 05.10.21](#); [Settlement Hierarchy report and minutes, SPC 08.03.22](#); [Local Plan Member Working Group – Note of Discussions Honiton and surrounds – 2 August 2024](#)

Link to [Council Plan](#)

Priorities (check which apply)

- A supported and engaged community
- Carbon neutrality and ecological recovery
- Resilient economy that supports local business
- Financially secure and improving quality of services

Report in full

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report considers the settlement hierarchy in the emerging Local Plan in relation to Upton and Woodbury Salterton. In recent discussions at the Local Plan Member Working Group and Strategic Planning Committee (SPC), these settlements have been suggested as having sufficient population, jobs and facilities to be included as service villages (Tier Four in the settlement hierarchy). This report seeks to respond to requests that this issue be discussed by the committee.
- 1.2 The Role and Function of Settlements report is the key piece of evidence that has informed the settlement hierarchy and was discussed and approved at SPC in October 2021. By way of a brief reminder, the main purpose of The Role and Function of Settlements report is to build up a picture of the settlements in East Devon, and how they relate to each other – i.e. their role and function. Settlements are grouped together and placed in tiers where they share similar characteristics, known as the “settlement hierarchy”. Those places with a higher population and a greater range of jobs, community facilities, better transport and connectivity links, serving a wide area, will be placed at the top of the settlement hierarchy. Other, smaller settlements with fewer jobs and a smaller range of facilities, perform a more local but still important role and will be grouped lower down the hierarchy.
- 1.3 Identifying the settlement hierarchy sets the context for the spatial strategy which seeks to locate development in the most sustainable places, focussing development on locations which are or can be made sustainable through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes.

2. Consideration of Upottery and Woodbury Salterton as ‘service villages’

- 2.1 At SPC in February 2022, Members resolved that they wished to include more settlements within Tier Four of the settlement hierarchy (‘service villages’). At SPC, 8 March 2022, two options were presented to Members. Option 1 considered Colyford, Rockbeare, Upottery, and Woodbury Salterton as the next most sustainable settlements, although it was noted they are missing some key day-to-day facilities – there is no shop in Upottery, Woodbury Salterton or Rockbeare; and Colyford does not have a primary school. Option 2 contained a further eight settlements that had comparable levels of facilities, but again were missing key day-to-day facilities.
- 2.2 Ultimately, Members agreed with the Officer recommendation that neither of these options are appropriate and no further settlements should be added to Tier Four. The other settlements that were considered are less sustainable locations to accommodate growth.
- 2.3 Whilst it is acknowledged that Upottery and Woodbury Salterton have several facilities and services as well as a relatively high employment density, they are missing some key day-to-day facilities. The key missing facility at both Upottery and Woodbury Salterton is a shop. This means that residents have to travel elsewhere to purchase even basic provisions, making them less sustainable places to live. Notes of the Local Plan Member Working Group highlight that the pub in Upottery also serves as a shop – whilst this happened during Covid-19 restrictions, this is no longer the case.
- 2.4 In addition, Upottery does not have any ‘strategic’ facilities unlike the current Service Villages; whilst Woodbury Salterton lacks facilities such as a sports playing pitch, and allotment as well.
- 2.5 It is important to note that the exclusion from Tier Four does not preclude development at these settlements. A modest level of growth can come forward through community-led development in a neighbourhood plan or as a rural exception site, where justified.
- 2.6 Making changes to the settlement hierarchy at this late stage will also delay preparation of the Regulation 19 Publication Draft Local Plan, as it will mean that Officers will need to assess and consider sites for allocation at any extra Tier Four settlements, and then these will need to be brought to SPC to consider. These sites have previously been sifted out as being unsuitable places for development as they are not within a sustainable location.

3. Conclusion

- 3.1 It remains the case that Upottery and Woodbury Salterton do not have a sufficient level of population, jobs and facilities to be included as service villages in the emerging Local Plan (tier four in the settlement hierarchy). If Members wish to lower the threshold for settlements to be considered as a service village to include Upottery and Woodbury Salterton, for consistency Colyford and Rockbeare should also be added (noting that these settlements are missing a primary school and shop, respectively). However, this is not recommended as these settlements are missing key facilities; and changing the approach at this late stage is likely to delay preparation of the Publication Draft Local Plan. It should also be noted that the committee resolved not to include these settlements in tier 4 of the settlement hierarchy in 2022 and nothing has changed to justify revisiting that decision.
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Financial implications:

Officer time associated in producing this report have been covered within existing budgets. Making changes to the settlement hierarchy will mean that Officers incur further time and possible consultancy which will add to the cost of preparing the of the Regulation 19 Publication Draft Local Plan. There are no other specific financial implications regarding the Council's finances on which to comment.

Legal implications:

Making changes to the settlement hierarchy will require Officers to assess and consider sites for allocation at any extra Tier Four settlements and then bring these sites to SPC to consider which will delay the preparation of the Regulation 19 Publication Draft Local Plan. There are no other specific legal implications requiring comment (002533/23 October 2024/DH).