

Matter 1 - Sustainability Appraisal

1.2 Is there any correlation between the position of a settlement in the settlement hierarchy (SD9) and the quantity of development allocated to that settlement?

- I. **Why does Backwell as the most sustainable village have an allocation of 65dws, whereas Yatton as the 3rd most sustainable have an allocation of 676 dws, and Churchill in 6th place in the hierarchy have an allocation of 219 dwellings?**
 - II. **Long Ashton is in second place in the hierarchy but has no allocated housing sites. Can this be explained?**
 - III. **Bleadon is identified as having few job opportunities – is this correct, and if not was it considered for a higher level of housing allocations?**
1. The SA Main report (SD 7) at paragraph 3.7 sets out the rationale of the hierarchy of settlements of the Core Strategy. It is *'based on the level of social, economic and community facilities that are available. Weston-super-Mare is a designated sub-regional centre and is considered to be the most sustainable location within the district. This is followed by the towns of Nailsea, Clevedon and Portishead (Policy CS31), the service villages (Policy CS32) and finally infill villages (Policy CS33)'*.
 2. The Site Allocations Plan (SD1) (paragraphs 4.7 – 8 and Table 1) sets out the broad distribution of residential development to meet the housing requirement. The distribution reflects the North Somerset Core Strategy spatial strategy. This is where the majority of growth is steered to the Weston urban area, with decreasing proportions at towns and service villages. Only very limited development is proposed at the infill villages and within the countryside.
 3. This demonstrates a clear correlation between the Core Strategy settlement hierarchy and the quantity of development allocated to settlements within the hierarchy.
 4. The purpose of Document SD9 is not to revisit the North Somerset settlement hierarchy. The settlement hierarchy has been clearly set out in the Core Strategy. The Inspector's report (Nov 2016) for the Core Strategy remitted policies confirms that the settlement strategy is appropriate. <http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/North-Somerset-core-strategy->

[inspectors-report.pdf](#) Paragraph 13 of the report states *'It is neither reasonable nor realistic to think that, at this advanced stage in the life of the plan, alternatives might be devised to take the settlement strategy in a different direction.'* It concludes at paragraph 14 that the Council's approach was sound - it was neither necessary nor appropriate to evaluate reasonable alternatives.

5. The Inspectors report also states at para 34 that the spatial strategy is appropriate to accommodate the additional housing requirement: *'The increased housing requirement has been distributed among the towns and villages in such a way as to reflect and support the previously-identified hierarchy and support the Priority Objectives, notably concentration at Weston-super-Mare, enhancements and regeneration in North Somerset's towns and support for the existing Green Belt.'*
6. The Site Allocations Plan has to conform to the Core Strategy and the Core Strategy has clearly set out which settlement is in which category of the settlement hierarchy. There is no scope for Site Allocations Plan to revisit this.
7. As stated within the first paragraph in the introduction of SD9 (page 3), the purpose is to *'provide an up-to-date evidence to support the settlement hierarchy in North Somerset.'* Contrary to the comment received by Persimmon Homes Severn Valley (3361153/20), page 34 of SD9 does not attempt to present a hierarchy of villages. The report in no way attempts to set an additional hierarchy for villages across the district.
8. The purpose of SD9 is further clarified within para 4.17 of SD7 which states that *'we recently reviewed our assessment of service villages and infill villages... from this assessment, it can be identified which settlements display the most and the least sustainability characteristics.'* The RAG ratings applied through assessment are useful to provide an indication of where a settlement displays good sustainability credentials or otherwise, it should not be translated into scoring with which to rank villages or to set a hierarchical distinction between villages. It is therefore inappropriate to apply scorings to the RAG ratings and translate these into corresponding site allocation requirements (as conducted by Persimmon Homes in their representation). It would not be appropriate to allocate housing sites based on RAG ratings from the assessment.
9. The detailed assessment has been carried out for service and infill villages and page 7 of SD9 confirms *'this will enable the settlement classification to be tested through a broad ranking of settlements in terms of their relative sustainability.'* There is no expectation that a further classification for service and infill villages will be provided or that individual positions should be given to individual settlements within the hierarchy. All of the nine service villages are at the same level in the settlement hierarchy. The Core Strategy does not rank them or prioritise certain settlements.

10. As stated on page 11 of SD9, the table showing the *'relative sustainability at a glance'* (page 34) *'provides a visual impression of how different settlements compare in terms of their RAG ratings under all the sustainability criteria assessed.'* *The information will be used as a Framework for considering the role and function of settlements.'* It does not state that it should be used to determine which settlements are more sustainable and by implication should host more development than a village that displays fewer sustainability characteristics.
11. SD9 also states that other assessments will determine the preferred location of new development: *'We will use other technical studies to determine the appropriate amount and location of new development and to ensure that it is adequately supported by necessary infrastructure and services.'* (page 4)
12. In relation to quantum of housing earmarked for Backwell, Yatton and Churchill, all of these are service villages. There is no hierarchy between the service villages. It is also important to remember that assessing sustainability is a two stage process. Although a settlement may be judged to be relatively sustainable, there may not be suitable sites within any one village to host a particular number or percentage of the district housing requirement.
13. In relation to Yatton, it should be noted that the allocations reflect recent permissions that underpin the provision of a second primary school in the village.
14. In relation to Long Ashton, it should be noted that the village is a tightly defined inset within the Green Belt and it would contravene both local and national policy to allocate residential development adjacent to the village. The Neighbourhood Development Plan for Long Ashton confirms there is no significant potential for infill or redevelopment within the village.
15. Bleadon is an infill village and site allocations are a reflection of the classification as an infill village within the Core Strategy settlement hierarchy. When the assessment was carried out, it was judged that Bleadon did have fewer job opportunities. It should be noted that the information provided within the assessment was verified by Parish Councils and was subsequently subject to two rounds of public consultation. No previous comments were received with regards to Bleadon to warrant any re-assessment.