

DISCUSSION PAPER 5: SETTLEMENT EVALUATION

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 The purpose of this paper is:

- a. To advise Members of the regional planning context in which settlement evaluation and the development of a Settlement Hierarchy should be undertaken;
- b. To remind Members of the existing Settlement Hierarchy as contained in the Adopted Northern Area Plan 2016; and
- c. To provide Members with information on potential constraints that may influence future settlement expansion.

2.0 The Role of Settlements and the Local Development Plan

2.1 Settlements throughout the Council area perform important functions, be it at the regional level, as a service centre for a wider area, or as a local facility to meet the day to day needs of those in the local area. One of the functions of the LDP is to determine the role of settlements across the Council area, taking into account regional guidance and local circumstances, and guide development proposals appropriate to a settlement's role and function within the settlement hierarchy.

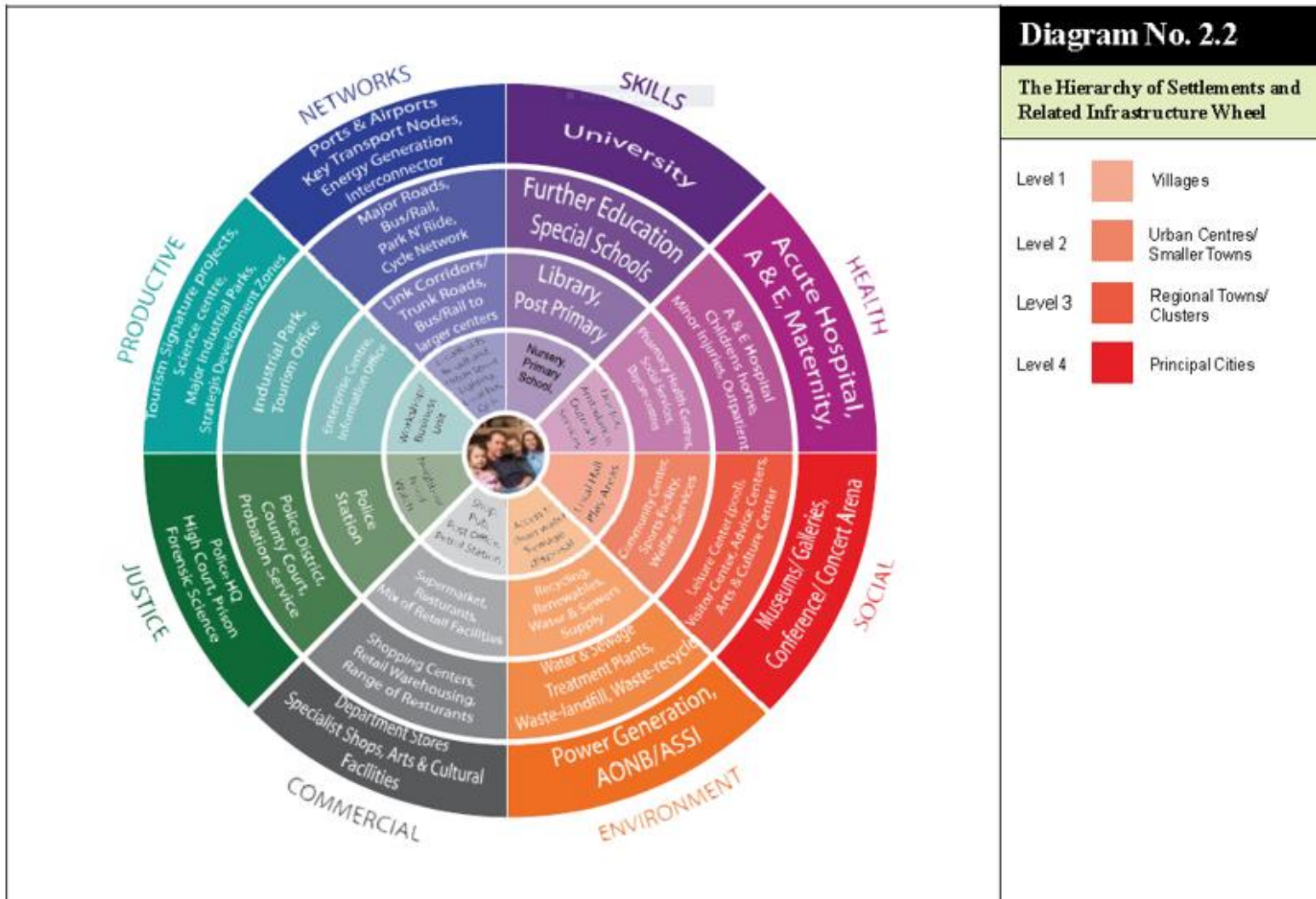
3.0 Regional Planning Context

3.1 The regional planning context is provided by the Regional Development Strategy (RDS) 2035 and the Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) published in September this year.

a. Regional Development Strategy (RDS) 2035

3.2 Members will recall The Hierarchy of Settlements and Related Infrastructure Wheel (Diagram 2.2) set out below from the RDS which was previously presented in the Employment and Town Centres report.

3.3 In addition to this, the RDS presents, in Table 3.2, page 42, a Housing Evaluation Framework which sets out six tests, and is reproduced below the Wheel. The Wheel provides a useful basis to inform the identification of settlements and their position in a settlement hierarchy, whilst the Framework may be used as a basis to consider the distribution of future housing provision and other major development to be zoned across settlements.



Source: Strategic Investment Board Limited, 2008

Source: RDS, page 24

TABLE 3.2: Housing Evaluation Framework	
Resource Test	Studies should be carried out to assess and detail the existence of community assets and physical infrastructure such as water, waste and sewage, including spare capacity.
Environmental Capacity Test	An assessment of the environmental assets of the settlement, the potential of flooding from rivers, the sea or surface water run-off and its potential to accommodate future outward growth without significant environmental degradation should be made.
Transport Test	Studies should be carried out to assess the potential for integrating land use and public transport and walking and cycling routes to help reduce reliance on the car.
Economic Development Test	The potential to facilitate an appropriate housing and jobs balance and to unlock any major strategic development opportunities should be assessed and detailed.
Urban and Rural Character Test	Assessment should be made of the potential to maintain a sense of place, and to integrate new development in a way that does not detract from the character and identity of the settlement.
Community Services Test	The potential to underpin and, where necessary, reinforce the community service role and function of the settlement should be assessed and detailed.

Source: RDS, page 42

- 3.4 As Members are aware, Coleraine and Limavady are identified as Main Hubs, and Ballycastle and Ballymoney as Local Hubs in the RDS, and these have the potential to cluster. SFG 10 (page 70) reads: *Identify and consolidate the roles and function of settlements within the clusters*. The RDS promotes economic development opportunities at Hubs (SFG 11, page 72), and seeks to grow the population in the Hubs and cluster of Hubs (SFG 12, page 72).
- 3.5 The RDS, for the purpose of its spatial framework, identifies those places outside of the principal cities and the main and local hubs as constituting the rural area (paragraph 3.90, page 73). It advises that the rural area accommodates around 40% of the total population of Northern Ireland. Paragraph 3.92 advises that few areas could be regarded as truly 'remote' as compared to other parts of the European Union, but recognises that Rathlin Island is unique as the only inhabited off-shore island. Paragraph 3.93 notes that the majority of people live within 15 miles of a hub and within 8 miles of a cluster where they can access most of the services they need. Rural SFG 13 (page 74) reads: *Sustain rural communities living in smaller settlements and the open countryside*.
- 3.6 Therefore, the policy thrust of the RDS may be summarised as:
- Promoting growth and new opportunities in the hubs; and
 - Sustaining rural communities to meet their indigenous population's needs.

b. Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS)

- 3.4 The SPPS contains little information in relation to the identification of a settlement hierarchy. Rather, it focuses on settlements and the need for options for planned growth in major settlements in the LDP's Preferred Options Paper, the need to bring previously developed land forward for re-development to assist in regeneration, creating more attractive environments and reducing the use of greenfield land. It also highlights the importance of protecting existing areas of open space to promote well being and addressing inequality through facilitating play and sport. The compatibility of development in its immediate and wider context and the settlement pattern of the area are acknowledged as important considerations.

4.0 Northern Area Plan 2016 – Settlement Hierarchy

- 4.1 The Settlement Hierarchy, contained in Designation SET 1 is reproduced below. A total of thirty seven towns and villages are identified, along with thirty four hamlets. The Settlement Hierarchy was subject to consideration by the Planning Appeals Commission (PAC). The Department had prepared criteria to help guide consideration of the designation of hamlets and objections to the omission of potential settlements as hamlets, and the PAC commented that this provided a rational basis for making decisions on the selection of hamlets, although they considered that the presence of one of these characteristics alone was not sufficient justification for conferring hamlet designation. The criteria are set out in Appendix 1.
- 4.2 Given the fact that the present Settlement Hierarchy was critically examined by the PAC as part of the IE process, it would appear to be reasonable to use this as a starting point in the consideration of the hierarchy for the LDP, taking into account the outcomes from the future settlement evaluation exercise.
- 4.3 The role and function of the Main and Local Hubs are dictated by the RDS in this future exercise. In terms of the Small Settlements (Hamlets), it should be borne in mind that the original justification for their designation, particularly in the range of their available services and facilities, may have altered in the intervening time since 2003/4 when the Northern Area Plan's designation was first proposed.

DESIGNATION SET 1:

Settlement Hierarchy

The Plan designates the following settlement hierarchy, and identifies development land, appropriate to each settlement's character and function.

Settlement Hierarchy	Ballymoney Borough	Coleraine Borough	Limavady Borough	Moyle District
Towns (Hubs)	Ballymoney	Coleraine	Limavady	Ballycastle
Towns		Garvagh Kilrea Portrush Portstewart	Ballykelly Dungiven	Bushmills Cushendall
Villages	Ballybogy Balnamore Cloughmills Dervock Dunaghy Dunloy Loughguile Rasharkin Stranocum	Articlave Castlerock Castleroe Macosquin Portballintrae	Bellarena Burnfoot Drumsum Feeny Foreglen Greysteel	Armoy Ballintoy Ballyvoy Mosside Waterfoot
Small Settlements - Hamlets	Bendooragh Bushvale Corkey Derrykeighan Drones Finvoy Lislagan Magherahoney	Ballyrashane Ballytober Boleran Boveedy Clarehill Craigavole Drumagarner Glenkeen Glenullin Loughan Moneydig Ringsend	Ardgarvan Artikelly Dernaflaw Glack Gortnahey Largy Sharvey	Church Bay Cromaghs Cushendun Glenariff (Bay) Knocknacarry Liscolman Lisnagunogue

5.0 Potential Constraints

5.1 Potential constraints on the future growth of a settlement or area within a settlement may affect its position within the Settlement Hierarchy, although these factors are more influential in the allocation of future development to particular settlements. Physical constraints would relate to the matters set out under the Resource, Environmental Capacity and Transport Tests in Table 3.2 above from the RDS and would include:

- Identified flood plains and areas at risk of flooding;

- Wastewater treatment works capacities; and
- Local road network capacities.

5.2 Other constraints relate to the Urban and Rural Character and Community Services Tests and include considerations such as the ability of the landscape to absorb development including appropriate strategic mitigation measures, and the accessibility of new development to a settlement's services and facilities. Other environmental considerations would include the potential impact on designated areas, such as AONBs, SACs, ASSIs, and on protected species under the Wildlife and Natural Environment Act (NI) 2011.

6.0 Sustainability Appraisal

6.1 A Sustainability Appraisal is an appraisal of the economic, environmental and social effects of a plan from the outset of the plan preparation process. A Sustainability Appraisal should be applied as an iterative process to inform the development of the LDP. The purpose of the appraisal is to help the Council to assess how the LPD will contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. It seeks to promote sustainable development by assessing the extent to which the Plan, when judged against reasonable alternatives, will help to achieve relevant economic, environmental, and social objectives. It can also identify and mitigate any potential adverse effects that a Plan may otherwise have. The appraisal normally incorporates the requirements of the Strategic Environmental Assessment. The appraisal will assist in determining the appropriateness of identifying settlements within the Settlement Hierarchy, and their position within it.

7.0 Conclusions

7.1 The RDS provides clear direction in the role of settlements at different levels of a settlement hierarchy, and the range of services and facilities that would reasonably be expected to assist in determining if a proposed settlement should be identified as such and, if so, where that settlement should be positioned in the hierarchy. It is clear from the regional planning context that the focus for future growth is in the main urban areas, with lower order settlements performing a lesser role. Contextually, as set out on page 13 of the SPPS, the issue of climate change is considered to be a central challenge, with a key pledge of the Executive being:

To continue to work towards a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by at least 35% on 1990 levels by 2025.

7.2 The Sustainability Appraisal will help inform both the settlement hierarchy in the LDP Plan Strategy, and the Local Policies Plan as issues such as the range of services and facilities in settlements and their environmental context will be key determinants in identifying the proposed settlement hierarchy for the Plan Strategy, and the potential expansion of settlements in the Local Policies Plan.

Appendix 1: Table Presented to PAC at the DNAP IE and Referred to by the PAC in its Consideration of Requests for the Designation of Small Settlements (Hamlets)

Key Characteristics	Main Town	Town	Village	Small Settlement
Commerce	Wide range and number of shops, retail services; financial services, restaurants, public houses; and other facilities such as a hotel; tourist office.	Reasonable range of shops and services, including a medium-sized supermarket; bank; identifiable town centre.	Shops to meet people's daily needs, such as a small supermarket; post office.	Small convenience shop; a post office
Industry and Employment	Strong employment base with several key employers/ industries	Small number of employers/ businesses.	May have small independent enterprises.	N/A
Public Utilities	STW.	STW.	STW.	STW or other shared sewerage infrastructure.
Health and Education	Hospital/local health facility, Further Education college, number of secondary, primary and nursery schools; health centres/GP practices, nursing homes, residential homes.	secondary school; primary school; health centre/doctor's surgery; residential or nursing home.	primary school; doctor's surgery; pharmacy.	primary school.
Community Services (incl leisure and art facilities)	Leisure centre; police station; fire station; bus station; arts centre/theatre; library; community centres, church/parochial halls; private sports clubs with club-house facilities incl golf.; playing fields	library; range of church/parochial halls; some private sports clubs with club-house facilities incl golf.	church/parochial halls; active local development/ community association.	Church/parochial hall; active community identity.
Transportation	Key transport corridor/A-class road; frequent daily/ regular bus services to local towns, regional/national links; access to national cycle network.	Access onto B class road; regular and frequent bus services to main town.	reasonable level of daily bus services to main/local towns.	Limited daily bus services to nearby larger settlements.