

Policy COM2: Settlement Hierarchy

Within the boundaries of the settlements identified in the hierarchy (Table 7) and identified on inset maps 1 - 43 the principle of development and redevelopment will be permitted provided that it is appropriate to the other policies of the Revised Local Plan.

Development outside the boundaries of settlements in the hierarchy (as identified on map 1 - 43) will only be permitted if:

- a) it is appropriate in the countryside as set out in Revised Local Plan policy COM9-COM15, LE10, LE16- LE18; or**
- b) it is essential for the proposal to be located in the countryside.**

- 5.44 The hierarchy shows that the settlements with the widest range of facilities are Andover and Romsey which have been identified as major centres. Charlton, Stockbridge, North Baddesley, Nursling and Rownhams and Valley Park are identified as key service centres. The latter three are located close to Southampton and Chandler's Ford. All these settlements have access to at least eight of the identified facilities. Chilworth is also identified as a key service centre, and is located close to both Southampton and Chandler's Ford, but does not have the same number of facilities as the others listed. The proximity of facilities outside of the settlement boundaries and those outside the Borough boundary have been considered.
- 5.45 The settlements within the 'Rural Villages' category do not contain the range and number of facilities and services or have the accessibility of the first two categories to support strategic development allocations. However, because of the level of facilities available to help support and sustain communities either individually or shared, some additional development may be appropriate.
- 5.46 The Council is committed to creating and maintaining sustainable settlements. To do this it supports the principle of the social and economic element of sustainable development whilst ensuring that proposals do not conflict with the policies which aim to respect the environment for example the character of the area or important landscape features. The policy recognises that development and redevelopment within the settlements identified in the hierarchy is acceptable in principle. The approach taken by the Council is to define new boundaries for each settlement within the hierarchy. Those areas outside of the defined boundary are classed as countryside for the purpose of planning policy.

- 5.47 Some schemes, such as those submitted under the rural exception affordable housing or community led development policies, are likely to come forward on sites outside of the defined settlement boundary. Such schemes may be acceptable if they meet social or economic needs of that community. Parish Councils may wish to bring forward Neighbourhood Development Plans which include proposals for additional development. The choice of sites could be either within or outside of settlement boundaries provided that the site selection takes into account the principles of sustainable development and the relevant policies within the Revised Local Plan.
- 5.48 Proposals for small-scale employment development within existing settlements can help to sustain the economy as well as provide jobs that are easily accessible to local residents. The Council will adopt a flexible approach to the development of new employment sites or the expansion of existing employment uses in settlements provided that the impact on the area and nearby residents is acceptable when judged against the relevant planning policies.
- 5.49 Development away from the defined settlements is unlikely to meet all the elements of sustainable development particularly the access to a range of facilities. Any proposals would need to demonstrate that the overall social and economic benefits outweigh the disadvantages of a location which is relatively remote from facilities. In some cases it is essential for a development to be located in the countryside. For example occupational accommodation or the re-use of buildings.

Table 7: Settlement Hierarchy

Hierarchy Designation	Associated Scale of Development	Settlement
Major Centres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic allocations • Windfalls • Replacement dwellings • Community-led Development • Strategic Employment Sites • Small scale employment development • Main Town Centre Uses 	Andover
		Romsey*
Key Service Centres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic allocations • Windfalls • Replacement dwellings • Community-led Development • Rural Affordable Housing sites 	Charlton
		Chilworth*
		North Baddesley

	(Stockbridge only) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic Employment Sites • Small scale employment development 	Nursling & Rownhams <hr/> Stockbridge* <hr/> Valley Park
Rural Villages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Windfalls • Rural Affordable Housing sites • Replacement dwellings • Community-led Development • Small business uses • Re-use of Buildings 	Abbotts Ann*, Ampfield*, Ampport*, Appleshaw*, Awbridge, Barton Stacey, Braishfield*, Broughton*, Chilbolton*, Enham Alamein*, Fyfield, Goodworth Clatford*, Grateley, Hatherden, Houghton, Hurstbourne Tarrant, Ibthorpe, Kimpton, King's Somborne, Leckford, Lockerley, Longparish*, Longstock*, Michelmersh & Timsbury*, Monxton*, Nether Wallop*, Over Wallop*, Palestine, Penton Grafton/Mewsey*, Shipton Bellinger, Thruxton*, Upper Clatford/Anna Valley*, Vernham Dean*, West Tytherley, West Wellow*, Weyhill, Wherwell
Countryside	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Replacement dwellings • Reuse of buildings • Rural Affordable Housing sites • Community-led Development • Employment sites in the Countryside. • Small business uses 	All other villages

* adopted village design statement

Identifying Strategic Sites

5.50 In identifying the proposed strategic sites the Council was informed by the sustainability appraisal process in combination with the evidence collected and national guidance. The principles of sustainable development were the starting point. The appraisal has taken account of the influence of settlements outside the Borough including Chandler's Ford, Eastleigh, Southampton and Ludgershall.

5.51 The Council's approach to assessing the options for allocating strategic sites has followed a number of steps. Firstly broad areas of search were identified and appraised. The merits of sites within the preferred areas of search were then appraised and compared one with another. The merits of the sites within the broad areas which had fared less well were also appraised to ensure that the more strategic approach had not overlooked the potential of individual sites.

5.52 The sites identified were those promoted through the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA)¹ that lie within the broad areas of search. Those SHLAA sites that fall within the broad areas of search, and have a capacity of 50 or more dwellings, have been appraised. These sites are listed in Annex C. Those sites within the broad areas of search which have a capacity of 5 or more dwellings and are immediately adjacent to another SHLAA site which could form part of a wider strategic site have also been appraised.

5.53 In respect of assessing the reasonable alternatives, i.e. the combination of sites, the Council considered a number of options and combinations before identifying the preferred strategic allocations. The outcome of this process is summarised in the sustainability appraisal.

Southern Test Valley

5.54 The character of the area is one of settlements separated by areas of countryside. These areas help create a sense of identity which is valued by these communities. At the same time it is important to recognise the economic and social links between them and the larger urban areas outside of the Borough. The area forms part of the South Hampshire sub-region identified in the former South East Plan and is part of the Partnership for Urban South Hampshire (PUSH).

5.55 For Southern Test Valley, the broad areas of search considered were; two on the edge of Southampton, one near Chilworth and one around Nursling and Rownhams, Valley Park, Romsey and North Baddesley. The relationship between the settlements of Southern Test Valley and the adjoining areas of Southampton and Chandler's Ford is important to recognise for access to employment and services.

5.56 The Council looked at the merits of individual sites and a combination of sites to meet the needs of Southern Test Valley. Focussing all the strategic development in one area was considered to be a potential risk to local infrastructure capacity. An alternative option would be dispersed development across the area, incorporating a number of different sites. The merits of these alternatives were considered in the Sustainability Appraisal which is available on the Council's website.

5.57 In general terms the sustainability appraisal identified that none of the sites assessed performed better than all the others in all regards. In addition, none of the sites were absolutely ruled out by any of the constraints. However, there were factors that resulted in some sites being considered less suitable, for example as a result of ecological interests, landscape impacts or accessibility.

1 Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment, Test Valley Borough Council, 2013

5.58 The appraisal process has highlighted the impact of development in the undeveloped areas which separate settlements in Southern Test Valley, including the areas of woodland, which reinforces the sense of separation and distinctiveness. Access to facilities is reasonably good with access to the bus and rail stations at Romsey highlighting the town as being well placed to promote non-car modes of travel compared with other settlements.

Northern Test Valley

5.59 The appraisal of the impact of development and the options for where it could be located has followed the same approach as for Southern Test Valley. The details for Northern Test Valley in terms of broad areas of search, individual sites and combinations of sites are contained within the Sustainability Appraisal.

5.60 For Northern Test Valley, the broad areas of search were focused on Andover, the existing settlement, as well as areas to the north, north east, south, south east, south west and north west of the town. There are no broad areas of search relating to the potential for new settlements, this is based on issues of delivery and infrastructure availability. No broad areas were identified in the rural areas due to focusing allocations on sustainable settlements apart from Stockbridge and on the edge of Ludgershall (within Wiltshire) given their level of facilities.

5.61 The appraisal process has indicated that the existing built up area of Andover performs best out of the broad areas of search; however there may be limited opportunities for development within this area. Stockbridge performs least well out of the broad areas of search. The broad areas on the west side of Andover, along with the edge of Ludgershall option, perform less well than the options to the north, east and south of Andover – this reflects a combination of accessibility, landscape and heritage factors.

5.62 The appraisal has identified that most of the sites reviewed performed very similarly. The key differences highlighted related to ecology, flood risk and settlement character. In focusing future development at Andover the effect on a number of rural villages which are separated from the town by areas of undeveloped land is a factor. These areas play an important role in defining both the setting of Andover and the villages themselves.

5.63 In considering the scope for a combination of sites the Council reviewed a number of options, such as focusing development on a single location or dispersing development across a number of sites. The potential for some residential development in Andover town centre, as part of a mixed used scheme, has also been considered.

5.64 A smaller number of locations could minimise the impact on the landscape setting and the separation of the town from surrounding villages. A dispersed option would need to allocate sites in potentially sensitive locations.

5.65 Based on the evidence, the sustainability appraisal and taking account of national guidance the Council has identified the following sites. This includes the importance of retaining settlement character of the area and focusing development with access to non car modes of travel. The details for the choice of strategic sites are contained within the sustainability appraisal.

Southern Test Valley

- 5.66 The southern part of Test Valley comprises seven parishes. The main settlements are the historic market town of Romsey; the settlement of North Baddesley; Valley Park which lies to the west of Chandler's Ford; Nursling & Rownhams and Chilworth, which lie just north of Southampton; and the small village of Ampfield. These settlements are set in a landscape of extensive woodland and small fields.
- 5.67 To meet the housing requirement in Southern Test Valley the Council has three existing sites with planning permission at Abbotswood and Romsey Brewery in Romsey and Redbridge Lane in Nursling. To meet the remaining requirement allocations are proposed at Whitenap, Romsey and Hoe Lane, North Baddesley. A site at Stoneham is proposed and could come forward as part of development proposals within Eastleigh Borough Council.