



East Cambridgeshire  
District Council

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# Settlement Hierarchy in East Cambridgeshire

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November 2017

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*Note: This Report, dated November 2017, supersedes all previous version of this Report*

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## 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 It is common practice, particularly for more rural districts, for a Local Plan to identify a settlement hierarchy, which in turn will help inform the approach to growth in the district. This report sets out the approach taken and the analysis which underpins the East Cambridgeshire settlement hierarchy.
- 1.2 An early version of this Report was issued alongside the Preliminary Draft Local Plan (Feb 2016). That report was updated, and re-issued alongside the Further Draft version of the Local Plan (Jan 2017). Following representations received, together with up to date data from the County Council, we have updated this Report once again, and issued it alongside the Proposed Submission version of the Local Plan (Nov 2017). As part of each of the two earlier consultation stages, we invited comments on the content of the settlement hierarchy policy (i.e. what should be included and what should be left out) and the Settlement Hierarchy report. This provided an opportunity for Parish Councils and residents to update us on the village facilities and whether its place in the settlement hierarchy was sound. There is no present intention to update this Report again, prior to the Local Plan being submitted for examination.
- 1.3 In light of the comments received, together with the new data from the County Council, we have made some amendments to the settlement hierarchy, as explained in this Report.

## 2.0 National and Local Policy Context

- 2.1 National policy<sup>1</sup> states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development – the ‘social role’ is one of three key dimensions to sustainable development which should support strong, vibrant and healthy communities by providing the type of development that reflects the community’s needs and supports its health, and social and cultural well-being.
- 2.2 Local Plans need to take account of the different roles and character of areas in promoting sustainable development, especially rural areas. Developments, such as housing and employment, should be located where service and facilities exist, and where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities.

## 3.0 Why is there a need for a settlement hierarchy?

- 3.1 The current East Cambridgeshire Local Plan (2015) does not identify a settlement hierarchy. Instead, it uses an approach to direct growth to the main towns (Ely / Soham / Littleport) and, to a lesser degree, the largest village (Burwell) – which have a wide range of jobs, services and facilities. Then, in very broad terms, it distributes other growth on the basis of which communities wanted growth. Whilst there is considerable merit in this approach, it did result in some anomalies. For example, some large villages with a good range of facilities received very little or even nil growth, whilst some small villages with limited services and facilities did receive growth. The development of a settlement hierarchy aims to have ‘the best of both worlds’, helping to develop a plan which has a more balanced spread of growth, whilst not preventing those smaller communities who want growth to come forward with development sites.
- 3.2 The lack of a settlement hierarchy in the current adopted Local Plan also contributed to the high proportion of growth (around 85%) being directed to the four largest settlements, and a considerably higher proportion than their population base (around 55% of East Cambridgeshire residents live in Ely / Soham / Littleport / Burwell). Whilst larger settlements

### Important Note

This strategic distribution of growth is as equally important as the settlement hierarchy in terms of making final decisions on precisely which settlements should receive growth, and how much.

<sup>1</sup> NPPF 2012 DCLG

receiving a greater than pro-rata amount of growth is not necessarily a bad thing, the very high proportion in the current Local Plan led to the allocation of relatively large sites, all of which will take time to deliver homes, which in turn limits the Council's ability to demonstrate it has a five year land supply of deliverable homes in the early part of the plan period. A settlement hierarchy, which assists in distributing some growth, on smaller sites, to a wider range of settlements, will help overcome this issue.

#### **4.0 What is a settlement hierarchy?**

- 4.1 A settlement hierarchy ranks settlements, usually taking account of their size and range of services and facilities. It ultimately provides a framework to assist decisions about the scale and location of new development, and the targeting of investment in any new services and facilities. In general terms, a hierarchy helps in decision making that will promote more sustainable communities – bringing houses, jobs and services closer together in settlements that already offer the best range of services and facilities.
- 4.2 A settlement hierarchy also helps to protect the character of the landscape, by maintaining and reinforcing the distinction between built-up areas and countryside, and placing a restriction on the forms of development that would be unacceptable in the countryside.
- 4.3 In East Cambridgeshire there are a number of settlements ranging in size from the City of Ely, market towns, villages (of varying sizes), hamlets and individual, isolated dwellings. One of the particular characteristics of the local authority area is that it is not dominated by a single settlement, but rather a collection of settlements, albeit Cambridge to the immediate south exerts a considerable influence on the area.
- 4.4 It is emphasised that the position of a village in the hierarchy *only offers a pointer to its suitability (or not) for further development*. It does not follow that new development is either appropriate or necessary. For example, if there is limited need to identify sites for development in the rural area, then a village which is highly placed in the hierarchy may not need to have much or any site allocations. Or, a village may be highly placed in the hierarchy, but subject to constraints which restrict the scope for further development. Such constraints would not alter its position in the hierarchy, but would be a critical factor in determining its suitability for any growth.

#### **5.0 Settlement hierarchy methodology**

- 5.1 There are a number of ways a settlement hierarchy can be determined. One of the simplest ways is to categorise the settlement according to its population. Another is to examine the facilities or services located in each of the settlements to determine the hierarchy. A common approach is to combine both these options. Where this approach leads to an anomaly (eg a village with a low population, but high range of facilities), then a judgement has to be made as to where in the hierarchy the settlement should a village fall – this should be clearly explained in such instances. If necessary, the sphere of influence of a settlement may be examined to further refine the settlement hierarchy.
- 5.2 It is emphasised that place names in this report are references to villages, not parishes, as there are instances where a village extends across parish boundaries and therefore includes properties in more than one parish.

## Settlement Hierarchy based on population

- 5.3 Table 1 below shows how a settlement hierarchy could be devised if based on the population of settlements alone. In preparing previous versions of this Report, the county council had not published specific settlement populations for all villages, but rather just a parish population for some areas. This parish based figure was, therefore, used in those instances. However, in this version of the report the population data is based on the settlement, because the County Council has now published specific settlement data. As such, parish only data need not be relied upon.
- 5.4 The table demonstrates that four categories exist, with settlements relatively 'neatly' falling into clear categories, with reasonably large 'gaps' between the settlement at the bottom of one layer, and the next settlement at the top of the next layer. An exception to this rule appears to be Burwell, which has a population someway off Littleport (which is bottom of the top layer in the hierarchy) but equally a considerably larger population than Sutton, which is the next highest ranked settlement according to population. No such situation occurs between Large and Medium Villages, where a very large gap exists between the bottom of 'large' and the top of 'medium'. Whilst not so clear cut, there is still a reasonably large gap between 'medium' and 'small' villages.
- 5.5 The hierarchy as outlined in Table1 also shows Ely to be most the dominant settlement in East Cambridgeshire in population terms, with nearly twice the population of the next biggest settlement Soham. However, its population is not so large as to warrant it being in a class of its own (which it might, if it had a population of, say, 40,000 or 50,000).
- 5.6 It should be noted that, compared with previous versions of this Report, Newmarket Fringe has moved up the settlement hierarchy (based on population alone), from medium to large village, though of course Newmarket Fringe doesn't fit comfortably in the hierarchy at all, because it is not a settlement in its own right, but, in effect, a suburb of the much larger Newmarket conurbation, in Suffolk. In addition, Dullingham has slipped down a tier, from medium to the top of small villages. Further commentary on these two matters is set out later in the Report.

**Table 1 – Settlement hierarchy based on population**

Hierarchy	Settlement	Population (Mid-2015) <sup>2</sup>
Main Settlements	Ely	19,530
	Soham	10,090
	Littleport	8,400
Large Villages	Burwell	6,190
	Sutton	3,870
	Haddenham	2,730
	Fordham	2,440
	Witchford	2,290
	Bottisham	2,200
	Isleham	2,030
	Little Downham	1,930
	Newmarket Fringe	1,780
Stretham	1,600	

<sup>2</sup> Cambridgeshire Research Group's Mid 2015 Population Estimates

Medium Villages	Mepal	850
	Wilburton	850
	Lode and Long Meadow	810
	Cheveley	800
	Swaffham Bulbeck (incl Commercial End)	730
	Little Thetford	660
	Swaffham Prior	630
	Wicken	620
	Ashley	570
	Woodditton and Saxon Street	540
	Stetchworth	530
Small Villages	Dullingham	420
	Witcham	380
	Chippenham	340
	Brinkley	310
	Prickwillow	300
	Reach	300
	Pymore	260
	Burrough Green/ Borough End	230
	Kennett	230
	Aldreth	220
	Coveney	210
	Kirtling & Upend	190
	Snailwell	190
	Stuntney	150
	Black Horse Drove	150
	Queen Adelaide	120
	Wardy Hill	100
	Chettisham	90
	Wentworth	80
	Westley Waterless	70
Upware	40	
Barway	30	

**Table 2: Summary of categories (population based)**

<b>Settlement Hierarchy Category</b>	<b>Settlement Population Range</b>
Main Town	7,500 or more
Large Village	1,500 to 7,499
Medium Village	500 to 1,499
Small Village	Below 500

## Settlement Hierarchy based on facilities

- 5.7 The second method of determining a hierarchy is based on the facilities contained in the settlement. Six essential facilities are listed in Table 2. These facilities are retail, employment, community, sports and recreation, schools, and public transport. Each facility is given marks out of 5 where a score of 5 is given to a settlement that is considered to have an excellent quantity and quality for such a facility and zero given where the facility does not exist. Maximum points that a settlement could score is 30 using this method. However it should be noted that this is a subjective assessment, and also depends on the accuracy of information we hold or is provided to us, and of course is subject to change at any time (e.g. shop closure).
- 5.8 We have consulted on earlier versions of this report and we received a number of comments especially from the parish councils and others. Some of the information on the facilities in settlements has been updated and this has affected their scores but it has not resulted in a settlement changing its category. We are fairly confident that we have reached a final version of settlement hierarchy based on facilities in the village and this has been reinforced by the comments that we received.
- 5.9 Table 3 records the results of assessing settlement hierarchy based on the facilities in the settlement.
- 5.10 Whilst perhaps less clear cut than the population method, settlements could be grouped into four categories, based on points scoring of 19+; 12-18; 8-11; and 0-7.

**Table 3 – Settlement hierarchy based on the Village Facilities**

Hier-archy	Village	Village Facilities*						Total
		Retail	Empl-oyment	Comm-unity	Sport & Recr-eation	Schools	Public Trans- port	
Main Towns	City of Ely	5	5	4	5	5	5	29
	Littleport	3	3	3	4	4	4	21
	Soham	4	3	3	3	4	3	20
Large Villages	Burwell	3	3	3	3	3	3	18
	Fordham	3	3	3	3	2	3	17
	Bottisham	3	2	2	2	4	3	16
	Isleham	3	3	3	3	1	2	15
	Haddenham	3	2	3	2	2	2	14
	Sutton	3	3	2	2	2	2	14
	Little Downham	3	2	3	2	1	2	13
	Witchford	2	2	2	1	4	2	13
Medium Villages	Stretham	2	2	2	2	1	2	11
	Swaffham Bulbeck	2	2	2	2	1	2	11
	Wilburton	2	2	2	2	1	2	11
	Mepal	2	1	3	2	1	2	11
	Cheveley	2	3	2	1	1	1	10
	Lode and Long Meadow	2	1	3	2	0	2	10
	Swaffham Prior	0	3	2	1	1	2	9

	Kennett	0	2	2	1	1	3	9
	Dullingham	0	2	2	1	1	2	8
	Ashley	1	2	2	1	0	2	8
	Burrough Green/ Borough End	0	2	2	1	1	2	8
	Chippenham	1	2	3	0	0	2	8
	Little Thetford	0	1	2	2	1	2	8
	Stetchworth	2	1	2	1	0	2	8
Small Villages	Witcham	0	2	2	1	0	2	7
	Brinkley	0	1	2	1	0	2	6
	Kirtling & Upend	0	1	3	1	0	1	6
	Stuntney	0	1	2	1	0	2	6
	Aldreth	0	2	1	1	0	1	5
	Chettisham	0	2	1	0	0	2	5
	Coveney	0	1	2	1	0	1	5
	Prickwillow	0	1	1	2	0	1	5
	Snailwell	0	1	2	0	0	2	5
	Wicken	0	1	2	1	0	1	5
	Woodditton and Saxon Street	0	1	2	1	0	1	5
	Pymore	0	2	1	1	0	0	4
	Reach	0	1	2	0	0	1	4
	Wardy Hill	0	1	1	1	0	1	4
	Wentworth	0	1	1	1	0	1	4
	Westley Waterless	0	1	2	0	0	1	4
	Barway	0	2	0	0	0	1	3
	Black Horse Drove	0	0	1	1	0	1	3
Queen Adelaide	0	1	1	0	0	1	3	
Upware	0	1	1	0	0	1	3	
Newmarket Fringe	1	0	0	1	1	0	3	

\* each facility is marked out of 5, 0=no facility to 5 = excellent facilities

5.11 As a summary, a settlement hierarchy based entirely on the village facilities could be devised as summarised in a table below:

**Table 4: Summary of categories (facilities based)**

<b>Settlement Hierarchy Category</b>	<b>Settlement Facilities Score</b>
Main Town	19 or more
Large Village	18 to 12
Medium Village	11 to 8
Small Village	7 to 0

5.12 Based entirely on this method, therefore, there are a handful of villages which are located either higher or lower than the population based method, namely:

<b>Settlement higher up the hierarchy (compared with population based method)</b>	<b>Settlements lower down the hierarchy (compared with the population based method)</b>
Burrough Green / Borough End	Stretham
Chippenham	Woodditton and Saxon Street
Dullingham	Wicken
Kennett	Newmarket Fringe

5.13 The next section explores a combination of the two approaches.

## Settlement Hierarchy based on population and village facilities

- 5.14 This process combines the population of the settlement with the facilities contained within it. Combining both methods will generate a more robust hierarchy especially where there are agreements between the two. Nevertheless, combining two methods will raise some anomalies where a settlement is placed in the different category i.e. small in one and medium in another. The settlements with differences, as highlighted in the previous section, are:
- Burrough Green / Borough End
  - Chippenham
  - Dullingham
  - Kennett
  - Stretham
  - Woodditton and Saxon Street
  - Wicken
  - Newmarket Fringe
- 5.15 Each of these settlements is discussed in turn:
- 5.16 **Burrough Green/ Borough End** latest population estimate of 230. Burrough Green is a village located 5 miles south-west of Newmarket and Borough End is a small hamlet about a mile west of Burrough Green, with a clear connection to Burrough Green. Most of Burrough Green village is included in a Conservation Area and there are a number of attractive buildings and several thatched cottages. The Green forms a focal point for the village, providing recreation opportunities for the residents. The village has a good level of facilities and, by a single point, just puts it in the 'Medium Villages' category when applying the facilities method. It does have a low population, but it is interesting to note that there have been only 15 housing completions in the past 13 years (to 31 March 2016), a signal perhaps that the population has failed to keep up with its historical size. Importantly, it has a school, and it is this factor in particular upon which it is concluded that **Burrough Green/ Borough End should be classed as a Medium Village (rather than Small Village).**
- 5.17 **Chippenham village** has good facilities for the size of the village, which places it (by a single point) in the medium villages category of that method, though importantly it has no school. Its population (340 mid 2015) put it in the small villages category, in the population based method. It is clearly a village which is on the fringe of the two categories. The village has a 'historic core' which is included in the Conservation Area that features a row of artisan cottages with long front gardens. There are many other listed buildings in the village, including the village church and Chippenham Hall. To the south is Chippenham Park, an historic estate with vast grounds; to the west is Chippenham Fens which is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest and a European protected Special Area of Conservation. It is, on balance, the lack of a school combined with the set of constraints which leads to the conclusion that **Chippenham should be classed as a Small Village (rather than Medium Village).**
- 5.18 **Dullingham** village is located 4miles south of Newmarket and 14 miles east of Cambridge. It would be classified as a small village due to its population being under 500, albeit it is the top of the list of small villages in terms of population. Conversely, it has facilities that would classify it as a medium village. The village has a primary school and more importantly has a train station which is rare for this size of the village. The village has two public houses, community hall, sports field and children's play area. With this level of facilities, Dullingham village function more as medium village than a small village and **therefore should be in the 'Medium Villages' category.**
- 5.19 The village of **Kennett** (population 230) is located in the eastern tip of Cambridgeshire. The village has a good level of facilities including a train station and a school which elevates it up comfortably within the 'Medium Villages' category by the facilities method. However, the village is made up of two main areas; one around the railway station and The Bell public

house and the other around the school and church. There is some linear development between the two, mainly lying east of B1085. Despite its relatively low current population (which would put it in the small village category), it is the range of services and facilities which it contains which lead to the conclusion that **Kennett should be a Medium Village (rather than Small Village)**.

- 5.20 **Stretham** is another village which appears to sit on the fringe between two categories, this time between the Large and Medium Village levels. Its population (1,600 mid-2015) is quite large, yet its facilities relatively limited for its population base. On balance, however, it is considered that it should fall within the **Large Village** category, as the perception of the village is that **it is more similar to those other villages in the large category**, rather than those in the medium category.
- 5.21 **Woodditton and Saxon Street** has the population (540 mid-2015) that would classify it, just, as a medium sized village, though it is accepted this population is not tightly knit within one location, and is more a collection of villages in a locality. Each individual village would fall into the small village category, population wise. This sporadic nature probably results in the low level of facilities. Whilst these villages have links to Newmarket (and associated facilities), on balance that it would be most appropriate for **Woodditton and Saxon Street to be categorised as a 'Small Village'**. This is a tier lower than in previous versions of this Report, where it was classed as a medium village, though it was noted then to be a very marginal decision. In addition, **it is more appropriate to separate Woodditton and Saxon Street into two separate villages**, both of which are small.
- 5.22 **Wicken**, due to its population (620 mid-2015), would be classed in the 'Medium Villages' category but it has limited facilities which, on this basis, would indicate that it should be included in the 'Small Villages' category. It is perhaps surprising the lack of facilities for its size and relative (for East Cambridgeshire) isolation from other settlements. It is obviously nationally famous for Wicken Fen, which is located immediately south of the village, and attracts large numbers of visitors to this National Trust managed European protected wetland site (and which itself includes a tourist souvenir shop, a café, an education centre and a bike hire facility, which are not recognised in the scoring system in this report). Importantly, there is no school in Wicken, and only 1 bus service a week. On balance, despite its population, its lack of facilities and its relative isolation from services and facilities elsewhere, **it is considered appropriate to label Wicken as a 'small village'** rather than a medium village. This is a lower tier than in previous reports
- 5.23 **Newmarket Fringe** is included in the 'Medium Villages' category although the size of its population would categorise it as a 'Large Villages'. Newmarket Fringe is part of Newmarket that lies within East Cambridgeshire's administrative boundary. But Newmarket Fringe does not function as a separate settlement and is considered as the southern suburbs of Newmarket. It looks to Newmarket to provide services and facilities and this is reflected by very few facilities located in the area despite its high population base. This area is difficult to categorise in this settlement hierarchy, but on the basis of facilities being nearby (rather than in the area), it is determined that, for the purpose of the settlement hierarchy and from a practical point of view, **it should be classed as a 'medium village' (rather than a small Village due to facilities or a Large Village due to its population )**.
- 5.24 In addition to above, it is recommended that **Kirtling and Upend are split into two separate villages**, as there is some considerable distance between the two. This has no practical consequence for the settlement hierarchy, because combined the location was a small village, and when split into two separate locations, this remains the same.

## 6.0 Overall Conclusion

6.1 Table 5 contains the final settlement hierarchy taking account of the evidence in this Report, and taking account of the latest evidence and representations received on earlier versions. This revised settlement hierarchy Report is published to accompany the Proposed Submission Local Plan.

**Table 5 – Final Settlement Hierarchy (for inclusion in the Proposed Submission Local Plan, Nov. 2017)**

<b>Hierarchy</b>	<b>Village</b>
<b>Main Settlements (3)</b>	City of Ely
	Soham
	Littleport
<b>Large Villages (9)</b>	Bottisham
	Burwell
	Fordham
	Haddenham
	Isleham
	Little Downham
	Stretham
	Sutton
	Witchford
<b>Medium Villages (13)</b>	Ashley
	Burrough Green/ Borough End
	Cheveley
	Dullingham
	Kennett
	Little Thetford
	Lode with Long Meadow
	Mepal
	Newmarket Fringe
	Stetchworth
	Swaffham Bulbeck
	Swaffham Prior
	Wilburton
<b>Small Villages (23)</b>	Aldreth
	Barway
	Black Horse Drove
	Brinkley
	Chettisham
	Chippenham
	Coveney
	Kirtling
	Prickwillow
	Pymore
	Queen Adelaide

Reach
Saxon Street
Snailwell
Stuntney
Upend
Upware
Wardy Hill
Wentworth
Westley Waterless
Wicken
Witcham
Woodditton