

Settlement Hierarchy and Development Potential

housing | open space | employment | community | transport | education



1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Council is in the process of preparing a new Local Development Plan, and is currently considering the Issues and Options which will inform the development of the strategic vision and objectives of the Plan (see Vision, Objectives and Strategic Growth and Spatial Options paper), and assist in the identification of critical issues and alternative strategic growth and spatial options. Ultimately the key themes will feed into the Preferred Strategy.
- 1.2 As part of the process of gathering information to inform the Vision, Objectives and Strategic Growth and Spatial Options stage, a range of information was gathered relating to the individual settlements (51 in total) which form the current spatial distribution of towns and villages in the County Borough, and fed into Settlement Profiles (see appendix 1 for full list of information gathered). The purpose being to understand the function which those settlements currently perform (including the range of services and employment opportunities they provide), potential development opportunities in and around each settlement, and potential constraints on development.

Purpose of the Paper

- 1.3 The purpose of this background paper is to set out the analysis of information gathered for the individual settlements and produce a settlement hierarchy based on the function of each settlement. An understanding of the function of each settlement, as well as the development potential and constraints can be used to inform options for the location of future development (with a particular emphasis on residential development). It is not the intention of the background paper to categorically state where development should, or should not occur. Its intention is to inform on those locations which would be most appropriate, and best able to accommodate development over the lifetime of the LDP.
- 1.4 A tiered approach is used to group settlements of similar characteristic in terms of facilities, services, and growth opportunities. The information can be used to direct development to appropriate locations, and ensure sustainable and proportionate growth levels.
- 1.5 It should be noted that this paper will be updated periodically throughout the LDP process once new or updated information becomes available.

2. Policy Context

The following section outlines the policy context which guides development plans in relation to settlement strategy and sustainable development.

Sustainable Development

- 2.1 The Planning System is central to achieving sustainable development in Wales. In this context sustainable development means enhancing the economic, social and environmental well-being of people and communities, achieving a better quality of life for our own generations in ways which: promote social justice and equality of opportunity; and enhance the natural and cultural environment and respect its limits – using only our fair share of the earth’s resources and sustaining our cultural legacy¹.
- 2.2 Local Development Plans are highlighted as key components in delivering sustainable development in Wales². To meet their required function, development plans must set out an Authority’s objectives for the development and use of land in its administrative area and general policies to implement them. Planning Policy Wales (PPW Edition 7, 2014), is the national statement of planning policy and identifies a number of priorities for Local Planning Authorities when allocating land. It also provides specific guidance both on the scale and location of housing growth.
- 2.3 Planning Policy Wales states that Development Plans should secure a sustainable settlement pattern³ which meets the needs of the economy, the environment and health. Overall the key messages regarding a sustainable settlement pattern⁴ in policy are:
- Well connected – locating development to reduce the need to travel by maximising accessibility to employment opportunities, services and facilities by walking, cycling and public transport. Improving linkages between urban areas and their rural surroundings
 - Concentration – development should be directed to existing urban areas which are well served by public transport, and benefit from concentrations of jobs, facilities and services. In rural areas development should be focussed on settlements that act as local service centres for surrounding areas or clusters of settlements where a sustainable functional linkage can be demonstrated.

¹ Planning Policy Wales Edition 7 – July 2014 – Chapter 4 Planning for Sustainability. Paragraph 4.1.4.

² Planning Policy Wales Edition 7 – July 2014 – Chapter 2 Development Plans. Paragraph 2.4.2.

³ Planning Policy Wales Edition 7 – July 2014 – Chapter 4 Planning for Sustainability. Paragraph 4.7.2.

⁴ Planning Policy Wales Edition 7 - July 2014 - Summary of key points from Para 4.7.2.

- Quality services – meeting the needs of present and future communities by focussing development in areas where services are viable and can be realistically maintained or enhanced.
- Robust and vibrant communities – where people are satisfied and value where they live and are able to participate in a range of community activities.
- Self-containment – settlements should be more self-contained, providing the opportunity to both live and work in the same area, with access to facilities and services to meet the needs of the communities.

2.4 In producing their development plans, local planning authorities should devise a settlement strategy which establishes housing policies in line with their local housing strategy and a spatial pattern of housing development balancing social, economic and environmental needs⁵.

Priorities for Urban and Rural Areas

2.5 Welsh Government's priorities for urban areas are, through integrated approaches, to: secure environmentally-sound and socially inclusive regeneration in those urban areas which require it, so that they become more desirable places in which to live and work; and foster sustainable change, in particular making it possible to live with less noise, congestion and traffic pollution, and improving the quality of life⁶.

2.6 Priorities for rural areas are to secure: sustainable rural communities with access to affordable housing and high quality public services; a thriving and diverse local economy where agriculture-related activities are complemented by sustainable tourism and other forms of employment in a working countryside; and an attractive, ecologically rich and accessible countryside in which the environment and biodiversity are conserved and enhanced⁷.

Wales Spatial Plan

2.7 The Wales Spatial Plan (WSP) was updated in 2008, and whilst work is progressing on the Planning Bill which is likely to come into force over the lifetime of LDP preparation, it still remains a useful and relevant reference for planning in the wider sub region. The document contains an overall vision for the whole of Wales along with individual visions for the 8 spatial plan area strategies. Wrexham County Borough is located within the North East Wales – Border and Coast (NEWBC) spatial plan area, with Wrexham Town identified as a Key Settlement of National

⁵ Planning Policy Wales Edition 7 – July 2014 – Chapter 9 Housing. Paragraph 9.2.5.

⁶ Planning Policy Wales Edition 7 – July 2014 – Chapter 4 Planning for Sustainability. Paragraph 4.6.1.

⁷ Planning Policy Wales Edition 7 – July 2014 – Chapter 4 Planning for Sustainability. Paragraph 4.6.3.

Importance with 'a focus on investment in future employment, housing, retail, leisure and services'.

- 2.8 Ultimately the spatial strategy chosen for the Wrexham LDP should reflect these national policy objectives, and the analysis of the information gathered relating to the individual settlements in the county borough attempts to reflect those national policy priorities.

Settlement Function and Location of Development

- 2.9 National Policy outlines where development should be directed in order to achieve a sustainable development pattern, and it is possible to extrapolate from this the role and functions key settlements should perform:

- well connected to transport infrastructure including sustainable travel options;
- provides a range of retail and community services;
- have a range of employment opportunities;
- well serviced by existing infrastructure; and
- co-location of housing and employment.

- 2.10 In the case of Wrexham, development should be directed to those settlements which best perform the functions set out above.

- 2.11 Whilst it is likely that larger settlements in a more urban setting will tend to perform the key functions outlined above, it is important to recognise the rural areas which make up a significant part of the County Borough. National Policy highlights the interconnectedness of urban areas and rural hinterlands⁸. Subject to effective transport links, larger settlements can provide a range of services and employment opportunities for those living in rural areas. However, in more remote locations or where transport links are poor, this assumption may not be correct. In those instances consideration regarding the location of development may need a different approach. National Policy advises that development in rural areas should be directed towards local service centres, or clusters of smaller settlements where sustainable functional linkages can be demonstrated⁹.

⁸ Planning Policy Wales Edition 7 – July 2014 – Chapter 4 Planning for Sustainability. Paragraph 4.7.2.

⁹ Planning Policy Wales Edition 7 – July 2014 – Chapter 4 Planning for Sustainability. Paragraph 4.7.7.

3. Setting the Context

3.1 The settlements (51 in total) assessed in this background paper previously formed the basis of the spatial strategy for the Unitary Development Plan (UDP). The UDP sought to regenerate brownfield sites within the built-up area together with limited outward growth. The strategy was applied within three policy sub-areas:

- Wrexham – This is the principal town in the County Borough. It is the hub of the local transport network and is where most of the main retailing, employment, leisure and public services are concentrated. It is therefore the most sustainable settlement, and the location most suited to significant additional development.
- The Urban Villages - These comprise the larger settlements to the north, west and south of Wrexham Town. While their range of services is narrower than Wrexham, they are capable of supporting some additional growth, particularly on derelict or underused land. However, in some urban villages, recent developments have been rapid and extensive.
- The Rural Villages - The range of services available in these settlements is generally confined to those meeting purely local needs. The settlements themselves are surrounded by attractive countryside and some are not conveniently accessible by public transport. New development is therefore restricted to small sites.

3.2 Overall the strategy was successful, with the majority of sites having been developed or having gained planning permission. The strategy has resulted in the majority of brownfield sites in the County Borough having been developed. Following the preparation of an Urban Capacity Study (2013), and consultation with land owners, the approximate capacity on brownfield sites is 1486 units (Urban Capacity Sites excluding sites with planning permission). It is therefore inevitable that the LDP spatial strategy will differ from the UDP strategy. Whilst it will seek to direct development to brown-field sites, an element of green field allocation is inevitable due to the limited capacity on brownfield sites.

3.3 At this stage all the settlements are being assessed with regards to the function they perform as well as their potential to accommodate new development. Consideration may have to be given to the removal of settlement boundaries for those settlements which are identified as having little or no services and no potential for development. However it is not the intention of this background paper

to identify the settlements for which this course of action might be appropriate.
This will be part of Deposit LDP, due for consultation in November 2016¹⁰.

¹⁰ Wrexham Local Development Plan 2013-2028 – Revised Delivery Agreement 2014.

4. Assessment of Settlement Function and Development Opportunities

- 4.1 In order to assess the settlements of the County Borough, information was gathered and fed into a Settlement Profile for each settlement, each profile includes information in respect of community services, economic opportunities, travel options, development opportunities and constraints (see appendix 1). This information has been used to understand the function of each settlement, the development potential (focussed on residential development), including constraints to development, and decide upon its location within the settlement hierarchy
- 4.2 In order to set out the approach taken to assessing the settlements a matrix using a traffic light system has been used (see appendix 2). Whilst each indicator is assessed differently (the matrix and explanatory sections in this chapter give further detail) in order to decide whether it appears green, amber or red generally the colour represent the following values:

Green – A positive which would not hinder development

Amber – A factor which could have a moderate impact on development potential

Red – A hindrance to development

- 4.3 The following section sets out in further detail the approach taken in the matrix for assessing the various indicators.

Settlement Function

Employment/Economic Opportunities and Function

- 4.4 Four indicators have been used in order to understand the economic/employment opportunities and function of the settlements. The percentage of the working population economically active (labour force) is intended as an indicator of the overall economic activity within the settlement. Whilst it is accepted that not all those economically active necessarily work within the confines of that settlement, it does give an indication as potential supply of workers in that settlement of working age. A rate of 5% above and below the Wrexham average has been used in order to give an indication where there may be higher or lower levels of economic activity within a settlement.
- 4.5 Similarly the unemployment rate gives a further indication regarding the economic activity of that population. A rate of 4% above and below the average Wrexham unemployment rate has been used to measure variations. A figure of 4% above or

below the average has been used as this would ordinarily be considered high or low in a developed country.

- 4.6 The location of allocated employment areas is an additional indicator regarding employment opportunities. The intention is to indicate that employment opportunities exist in the settlement, and that it performs an economic role in land use terms. Where a settlement does not include an employment area a distance of 5 miles from the approximate geographical centre of the settlement has been used as a cut-off point. The centre of the settlement was used in order to ensure a consistent approach. In the absence of any prescriptive guidance, a distance of 5 miles was considered a reasonable distance in order to assess access to employment areas. This is in line with national policy which encourages self-contained development, which allows people to live and work in the same area¹¹.
- 4.7 The Employment Land Review¹² information seeks to measure the level of quality of employment areas, if present within a settlement. The work carried out for the Employment Land Review used a grading system to classify employment areas, through assessing various factors (see appendix 3 for full explanation of the grading system). The overall grade is an indication of the quality of the employment areas and future viability over the plan period.

Community Services and Retail Role

- 4.8 A number of indicators have been selected in order to understand the range of services provided by a settlement. A number of key facilities are considered alongside other secondary facilities. The facilities cover a range of uses including education, community and retail.
- 4.9 The education indicator relates to whether primary and secondary schools are present in the settlement. A settlement is considered to provide a full range of education facilities (and appear green on the matrix) if both primary and secondary schools are present. The data does not include any comment in respect of school capacity at this stage, mainly as this could be addressed via contributions, should new development be deemed appropriate within the settlement.
- 4.10 With regards to health care provision a differentiation is made between key local facilities which include a hospital, GP surgery, or health centre, and other health care related provision which includes dentists, pharmacies, and opticians. A settlement would appear green in the matrix if a key local facility is present,

¹¹ Planning Policy Wales Edition 7 - July 2014 - Para 4.7.2.

¹² Employment Land Review – Wrexham County Borough Council & Flintshire County Council (2014).

irrespective of whether other medical facilities are present. If no key local facility is present, but other medical facilities are present it would appear amber. If no medical facilities are present, it appears red.

4.11 In relation to retail provision the presence of a district shopping centre is considered a key local facility as it would provide a range of different retail services, allowing residents in the settlement to access a range of services. Whilst it is inevitable that people will travel further afield for certain goods, the presence of a wider range of retail units does allow people to access day to day provisions with a reduced need to travel (which is beneficial in sustainability terms). If a district centre is present the settlement appears green on the matrix. If there is a smaller range of facilities, for instance a local centre, then it appears amber. If there is no or very limited provision, for example a single village shop, then it appears red.

4.12 The section relating to 'other facilities' seeks to capture information relating to a range of other facilities that may be present in certain settlements (but which do not fall under the education, health and retail sections). These facilities can include pubs, post offices, hotels or community centres. A grading system of good, moderate and poor has been used. A rating of good would mean that the settlement has a varied range of different services. In reality Wrexham Town is the only settlement which has an extensive range of services within the County Borough. However other settlements appear green on the matrix as they have a good range of other facilities. Inevitably residents would need to travel further afield for certain specialised services, however a wider range of services should reduce the need to travel which is preferable in sustainability terms. A moderate rating would mean that the settlement had some other services but that the range was limited. A poor rating would mean a settlement with very few if any other services, for example a small village with only a pub and small shop.

4.13 The indicator relating to recreation capacity uses data from the Public Open Space Survey (2009). The work is due to be updated in 2015. This indicator is based on whether a deficit or surplus of public open space exists in the ward in which the settlement is located. A differentiation is made between a deficit of under (amber) and over 2 hectares (red). Whilst it is recognised that those areas with a deficit of less than 2 hectares should not be overlooked, a differentiation was necessary in order to understand where the problem was more pronounced. There are limitations to using the Public Open Space survey as it is currently ward based and not settlement specific; however it does give an indication regarding overall access to open space at a point in time. This element will be updated in future once more up to date information is available.

Sustainable Travel Options

- 4.14 A key consideration is the connectivity of a settlement, in particular in relation to the provision of public transport and other sustainable modes of transport (walking and cycling). This section considers the provision of public transport, and the extent of facilities accessed via walking and cycling.
- 4.15 The Public Transport Provision (bus) section splits into three categories; good, moderate and poor. The centre of Wrexham is a hub for public transport in the area, with a bus station and two railway stations. The majority of services assessed are based on links from the settlement in question to the centre of Wrexham. This is considered acceptable as Wrexham provides a wide range of services, and can be used as a point to travel on to areas outside of the County Borough. The provision would be considered good if there is a frequent service (several an hour), including weekends, and late and early buses (green). A moderate provision would mean a less frequent bus service (for example hourly) Monday to Saturday generally limited to the daytime, with limited service Sundays (amber). A poor provision would mean either no service at all, or a very in-frequent service (red).
- 4.16 The Public Transport Provision (train) section splits into three categories; settlements with a train station (green), settlements with a train station within 2 miles of the geographical centre of the settlements (amber), and settlement 2 miles or more from a train station (red). The 2 mile cut-off point was used as studies have shown that 2 miles is the approximate average distance people tend to travel to access train services¹³.
- 4.17 An assessment of the opportunity to access services sustainably via walking and cycling is also measured. There are two key factors to consider in the assessment. Firstly whether there is a range of facilities within the settlement; in some instances there may be appropriate infrastructure and favourable topography, but an absence of services to access, therefore the ability to access services sustainably is reduced. In other cases there may be a range of services; however a lack of appropriate infrastructure, unacceptable distances to services, or the topography of the area, means accessing them via walking or cycling is restricted. Due to the fact that each settlement has its own set of circumstances a standard distance from services has not been used. Nor is it deemed appropriate in this instance due to the large variety in settlement characteristics.

¹³ Multimodal public transport: an analysis of travel time elements and the interconnectivity ratio: Transport Policy (P.266)

- 4.18 A settlement appears green if there are a range of community and retail services within walking/ cycling distance using existing infrastructure to the majority of the settlement, with minimal obstacles as a result of topography. A settlement appears amber if there are a range of community and retail services within walking/ cycling distance using existing infrastructure to parts of the settlement, and some obstacles due to topography may be present. A settlement appears red if there is a lack of access to community and retail services within walking/ cycling distance using existing infrastructure and/or topography acts as a barrier.
- 4.19 A conclusion regarding which tier of the settlement hierarchy each settlement should be located on is made at the end of this section. This brings together the employment/economic opportunities and function section, community services and retail role section, and the sustainable travel options sections. The settlements are split into five tiers (see chapter 5 for definitions) according to their assessment in each section.

Development Opportunities

- 4.20 The development opportunities section considers both brownfield and greenfield sites which have been assessed to date. These include sites that form part of the Urban Capacity Site Update (2013), candidate sites submitted by developers and landowners along with other officer sites. Initial assessment of those sites based on constraints and the search sequence for site selection identified in PPW¹⁴ has resulted in the sites being categorised into green, amber, and red based in their location (inside, outside, or on the edge of settlement) and the ability to mitigate any identified constraints.
- 4.21 In order to come to a total number of units that could potentially be developed in a settlement (using a standard 30 dwellings per hectare), all brownfield and greenfield sites which were identified as green (the most appropriate sites for development when assessed against the methodology), and amber sites (sites which may have some constraints, but which are still worthy of consideration) were counted. Red sites were not considered. Settlements which have a high number of units (500+) capable of being located on sites appear green on the matrix. Settlements which have a moderate number of units (51-499) capable of being located on sites appear amber on the matrix. Settlements which have a low number of units (50 or less) capable of being located on sites appear red on the matrix.

¹⁴ Planning Policy Wales July 2014 – Chapter 9 Housing – Paragraph 9.2.8. – 9.2.10.

4.22 The Strategic Affordable Housing and Community Levy (CIL) Viability Assessment, will be used to update this work in due course.

Constraints

4.23 This section considers the various constraints associated with each settlement and not site specific constraints which are dealt with in the Candidate Sites assessment. It should be noted that whilst some constraints may fall under a red category when assessed against the matrix, this does not necessarily mean that development cannot occur. It merely highlights that a major constraint exists. Often constraints can be overcome; however in circumstances where major constraints do exist and other issues relating to the settlement are present e.g., lack of community services or poor transport connections, the combination of issues may result in the settlement being an inappropriate location to accommodate development. The distribution of future development will also have to be informed by the ability of settlements to accommodate growth, taking into account recognised constraints.

4.24 The section on flooding is divided into those settlements where there is no or a low risk of flooding (flood risk areas A and B as defined in Technical Advice Note 15: Development and Flood Risk (2004), and no surface water flood issues (green). A moderate flood risk relates to settlements where there is an identified surface water flood risk¹⁵, and/or limited areas of the settlement or adjacent areas which fall under flood risk areas C1 and C2 (as defined in TAN 15) (amber). A high flood risk relates to areas of identified surface water flood risk and where large parts of the settlement or adjacent areas fall under flood risk areas C1 and C2 (as defined in TAN 15) (red). In some settlements there may be areas of flood risk which do not directly impact potential development areas, however the settlement may still appear amber or red in order to ensure a consistent approach. Again, it may be possible to mitigate the effects of flooding on a site by site basis, but it is not the intention of this work to look at site specific issues.

4.25 In relation to sewerage/ waste water treatment the assessment is based on comments provided by Dwr Cymru/Welsh Water and Dee Valley Water. Where no comment has been received from the utility companies it appears blank in matrix. Where there are no issues the settlement appears green, where there are identified issues (which can be resolved subject to investment in infrastructure) it appears amber, and areas where there are significant constraints on infrastructure e.g. Bettisfield where there are no public sewers, and high groundwater levels, appear red.

¹⁵ Local Flood Risk Management Strategy – Wrexham County Borough Council (2013)

- 4.26 The ecology section divides settlements into categories of ecological constraints. No significant constraint (green) relates to a settlement with no local designations, or protected species present. A moderate ecological constraint (amber) relates to a settlement which has local designations in or adjacent to the settlement and/or constraints relating to protected species. A significant ecological constraint (red) relates to a settlement which has national/ international designations (SSSI, SAC etc.) in close proximity and/or the presence of protected species. Again, individual sites are not being assessed here; the purpose is to provide a broad assessment of the context of the settlement rather than individual site details, which it may be possible to mitigate.
- 4.27 Initial comments regarding the potential impact of Candidate Sites on landscape were provided. Further assessment of landscape impacts is necessary once there is further certainty regarding the specific location of development. This work will be updated accordingly.
- 4.28 The agricultural land section is based on the Welsh Government Agricultural Land Classification System¹⁶. Where a settlement is surrounded by the Best and Most Versatile (BMV) agricultural land (grades 1, 2 and 3a)¹⁷ further investigation will be required if green field sites are being allocated. In some instances it might be that higher grade land could be lost which acts as a significant constraint on development in the area.
- 4.29 A settlement appears green on the matrix if the potential sites do not impact on protected agricultural land. A settlement would appear amber if sites have a potential impact on protected agricultural land, and which will require further investigation. Justification for its loss may be required prior to development. A settlement appears red if there is a significant impact on identified protected agricultural land. Whilst a settlement may appear red, development may still be acceptable if sufficient justification can be provided. Further analysis to understand the impact of development on agricultural land will be necessary once there is more certainty regarding the location of development.
- 4.30 The mineral resource section is based on information relating to the existing mineral resource located in proximity to the settlement¹⁸. Where the resource has already been sterilised, or there is no mineral resource, it appears green. If further investigation into the resource is necessary, it appears amber. If a known resource

¹⁶ Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food Agricultural Land Classification of England and Wales. Revised guidelines and criteria for grading the quality of agricultural land (October 1988)

¹⁷ Planning Policy Wales Edition 7 - July 2014 – Chapter 4 Planning for Sustainability – paragraph 4.10.

¹⁸ Minerals Planning Policy Wales – December 2000

exists, which would require prior extraction before development was possible, it appears red.

4.31 School Capacity relates to the current situation relating to schools either within the settlement limit, or where no schools are present, in the wider area. In some cases there is only information available relating to primary school capacity (where only primary schools are located in the settlement). As high schools have wider catchment areas, and tend to be fed by primary schools often in different settlements, the potential impact of development in one settlement on the capacity of a high school in another settlement is not always available. Further analysis to understand the impact of development on schools will be necessary once there is more certainty regarding the location of development.

4.32 The section on school capacity is split into settlements where there is capacity (green), areas where there is limited capacity and limited opportunities to expand capacity (amber), and areas where there is no capacity and limited opportunities to expand capacity (red). It should be noted that this is a snap shot in time, and contributions from development can increase capacity even in settlements that currently have a significant shortage, therefore is not in itself a reason to preclude development.

4.33 Highways capacity is split into settlements where there is sufficient capacity/ no significant infrastructure constraints (green), localised/site specific capacity issues/ infrastructure constraints (amber), and strategic capacity issues/ significant infrastructure constraints. Again this is an area of work which requires further assessment as new development could, in some instances alleviate capacity constraints, and will be progressed as work on the LDP continues.

4.34 It should be noted that the constraints are a snapshot in time, and do not detail individual site constraints. In theory the vast majority of constraints can be overcome. However as previously stated, where major constraints do exist and there are other issues relating to the settlement e.g., lack of community services or poor transport connections, the combination of issues may result in it being an inappropriate location for development overall.

5. Settlement Hierarchy

- 5.1 Chapter 4 outlined the approach taken in assessing the function, development opportunities and constraints associated with the settlements within the County Borough. The following section sets out the settlement hierarchy, as well as providing information on the definitions used to inform it.
- 5.2 The assessment of the individual settlements is presented in a spread sheet which can be seen in appendix 4.
- 5.3 It is proposed that the LDP should follow a five-tier approach. It should be noted that there are examples of settlements that fall between two tiers and do not fit exactly the definition of one or the other. In a limited number of instances some judgement regarding the overall character has been necessary in order to decide which tier a settlement sits in.

Tier 1: Primary Key Settlement – Settlement which has a critical role to play in the success of the region, and which acts as an important local service and employment centre for surrounding settlements and rural hinterlands.

The definition of a Primary Key Settlement (based on the assessment using the matrix outlined in Chapter 4) is a settlement which has all key regional facilities represented, and are in abundance. All other facilities are fully represented, there is good public transport provision, and it has an important economic/employment function.

Tier 2: Key Settlement –Settlements which support communities, but which are dependent upon the Primary Key Settlement for some key amenities.

The definition of a Key Settlement (based on the assessment using the matrix outlined in Chapter 4) is a settlement which has two/three key local facilities (out of three) represented. Numerous other facilities are present, but not all facilities are fully represented. There is good or moderate public transport provision, and they will have important to moderate economic/employment function.

Tier 3: Local Service Centres – Settlements which have relatively good accessibility by non-car modes.

The definition of a Local Service Centre (based on the assessment using the matrix outlined in Chapter 4) is a settlement with one key local facility (out of three) represented. Generally there are fewer other facilities present than in the tier 2.

There is good or moderate public transport provision, and a moderate economic/employment function.

Tier 4: Minor Village – Limited facilities with some access by non-car modes.

The definition of a Village (based on the assessment using the matrix outlined in Chapter 4) is a settlement with no key local facilities represented and very few or no other facilities within the settlement. Moderate or poor public transport provision is available and a moderate to weak economic/employment function.

Tier 5: Hamlet – No services and limited or no access by non-car modes.

The definition of a Hamlet (based on the assessment using the matrix outlined in Chapter 4) is a settlement with no facilities at all. Poor or no public transport provision is available and it has a weak to moderate economic/employment function.

5.4 Using the definitions above the settlements that make up the County Borough are arranged into the following Settlement Hierarchy:

Settlement Hierarchy	Settlement
Tier 1: Primary Key Settlement	Wrexham Town
Tier 2: Key Settlement	Acrefair/Cefn Mawr Chirk Coedpoeth Gresford/Marford Gwersyllt Rhosllanerchrugog
Tier 3: Local Service Centres	Bangor Broughton Brymbo Glyn Ceiriog Holt Llay Overton Penley Penycae Rhostyllen Rossett Ruabon
Tier 4: Minor Village	Bersham Bradley Bronington Bwlchgwyn Crosslanes

	Dolywern/Llwynmawr Froncysyllte Garth Hanmer Llanarmon DC Marchwiell Minera Pentre Bychan Pentre Pontfadog Rhosrobin Southsea Tallarn Green Tanyfron Trevor
Tier 5: Hamlet	Bettisfield Burton Gwynfryn Halton Horseman's Green New Brighton Sydallt Tregeiriog Worthenbury

- 5.5 Tier 1 comprises the urban core of Wrexham Town. The high level of services and connectivity means that it is the most appropriate location for development in order to achieve a sustainable settlement pattern as set out in national policy (see Chapter 2, paras 2.2 and 2.4). The promotion of Wrexham Town as a location for development is also in accordance with its identified role in the Wales Spatial Plan as a Key Settlement of National Importance with 'a focus on investment in future employment, housing, retail, leisure and services'.
- 5.6 Tier 2 comprises six settlements. Located to the north, west and south-west of Wrexham Town they are characterised as 'urban villages' and sit on or adjacent the A483 dual carriageway and north-south Chester-Shrewsbury railway line. These settlements are still likely to be dependent on Wrexham for some key amenities e.g., hospitals, higher education, and comparison goods shopping; however they are served by a range of facilities and sustainable modes of transport. They tend to reflect some of those key characteristics that national policy promote (see Chapter 2, paras 2.2 and 2.4), however they contain a narrower range of services, and fewer and less varied employment opportunities. Nonetheless they are likely to be appropriate locations for higher levels of development in order to achieve a sustainable settlement pattern, as promoted by national planning policy.

- 5.7 Tier 3 includes twelve settlements. Six of the settlements (Broughton, Brymbo, Llay, Penrycae, Ruabon, and Rhostyllen) can be characterised as urban villages similar to those in the second tier, and located in the same areas to the north, west, and south-west of Wrexham Town. There are also six settlements (Bangor, Glyn Ceiriog, Holt, Overton, Penley and Rossett) which can be characterised as rural villages. These villages, with the exception of Glyn Ceiriog located in the Ceiriog Valley, are located in the rural areas to the east. The settlements in the third tier have a more limited range of services, employment opportunities, and access to sustainable modes of transport, but nonetheless act as key local service centres to the other (tier 4 and 5) settlements. It should be noted that both Rossett and Ruabon have two key facilities; however due to both settlement having fewer services overall it was considered appropriate that they be placed in the third tier.
- 5.8 Whilst the urban villages in tier 3 are generally in closer proximity to those settlement in tiers 1 and 2, and able to access the wider services offered, the settlement in the rural areas tend to be the largest in their immediate locality. It may be appropriate that development be directed towards these settlements in order that they serve as local service centres to those more sparsely populated rural areas. This is beneficial in sustainability terms, as it may reduce the need to travel further afield to access services.
- 5.9 Tier 4 contains 20 settlements, and the fifth tier contains 9 settlements. The settlements in tiers 4 and 5 tend to be very similar in character with subtle differences in the level of facilities and access to sustainable modes of transport. There is an average of 392 dwellings per settlement in tier 4 and 89 in tier 5. Whilst it is noted that there are exceptions well above or below theses averages in both groups, for example Bersham in tier 4 which has considerably fewer dwellings (approximately 89) than the average, and Burton in tier 5 which has a considerably higher number of dwellings (approximately 201), the average number of dwellings in tier 5 is lower. Whilst the number of dwellings was not used as part of the assessment of settlements, the outcomes do show that on the whole smaller settlements have made up the lowest tier. There is no accepted definition of the term hamlet (it is sometimes defined as a village without a church); however the term has been used to describe this group for ease of reference.
- 5.10 On the whole the lack of services and ability to access sustainable modes of transport in settlements in both tiers make them inappropriate locations for development in sustainability terms. However in some circumstances small scale development to meet local need may be deemed appropriate as windfall development (e.g., barn conversion, infill and rural exceptions)

Conclusion

- 5.11 The intention of the settlement hierarchy (as set out in section 1.3) is to rank the settlements within the County Borough based on the level of services they provide, their employment/economic function and their accessibility via sustainable transport methods. Ultimately the intention is to use the hierarchy to direct development to the most appropriate locations to help inform the developing LDP strategy.
- 5.12 The development opportunities and constraints associated with individual settlements will also have a bearing on the overall level of development directed towards specific settlements.
- 5.13 The LDP Vision, Objectives and Strategic Growth and Spatial Options Paper (February 2015) will outline the options for levels of growth and the potential spatial strategies which will ultimately lead to the Preferred Strategy for LDP. The outcomes of this background paper in conjunction with the above document will inform the location and level of development proposed in the Preferred Strategy¹⁹.

¹⁹ Wrexham Local Development Plan 2013-2028 – Revised Delivery Agreement 2014.

Appendix 1 – Source of information contained in Settlement profiles

Employment/Economic Opportunities and Function

Labour Force and Unemployment: The information is from the 2011 Census based on the Wrexham County Borough Council Electoral Divisions. In some cases two or more ward areas have been combined. The information is not available based on the LDP settlement designations.

Employment Opportunities: Data derived from GIS mapping. Where an employment area is not present in the settlement, the nearest is indicated in miles. N.B. The employment areas were identified during preparation of LDP1. The distance is calculated from the approximate geographical centre of the settlement for the purposes of consistency.

Existing area of employment land (ha): Established Employment sites (Employment Land Review)

Employment Opportunities: Nearest employment area calculated from the geographical centre of the settlement. No distance provided if an employment area is located within the settlement limit.

Employment Land Review: Employment Land Review – Wrexham County Borough Council & Flintshire County Council (2014).

Community Services and Retail Role

Schools: Wrexham County Borough Council Education section

Health Care Provision: Range of health care facilities

Retail Provision: Range of retail facilities in a settlement, based on various sources.

Other Facilities: Range of other non-retail facilities within a settlement, based on various sources.

Recreation Capacity: Public Open Space Survey (2009): Wrexham County Borough Council

Sustainable Travel Options

Public Transport Provision (Bus): The information regarding public transport provision relates to the routes and frequency of bus services.

Public Transport Provision (Train): Distance of train station to the approximate geographical centre of the settlement.

Accessibility by Walking and Cycling: The ability to access services via walking and cycle routes. Information derived from GIS data.

Development Opportunities

Brownfield - Within settlement limit: Urban Capacity Study (update 2014)/ Candidate Sites. Only sites identified as green or amber in the candidate sites assessment are counted. Where specific unit numbers were not provided an estimation regarding density dependant on the context of the site was used.

Greenfield - Sites adjoining the settlement limit: Candidate Sites. Only sites identified as green or amber in the candidate sites assessment are counted. Where specific unit numbers were not provided an average density of 30 units per hectare was used.

Constraints

Flooding: Technical Advice Note (TAN) 15: Development and Flood Risk (2004) advises on flood risk, and the Development Advice Maps (DAM) 2013 are used alongside Planning Policy Wales and Technical Advice Note 15: Development to identify the specific areas at flood risk. Local Flood Risk Management Strategy sets out local flood risk management measures.

Water Supply & Sewerage/Waste Water Treatment: Dwr Cymru/ Welsh Water and Dee Valley Water comments at Candidate Sites.

Ecology: Comments from Ecology Officer at Candidate Sites assessment stage, and consideration of various environmental designations.

Built Heritage: Comments from Conservation at Candidate Sites assessment stage, and consideration of various built heritage designations.

Agricultural Land Classification: Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food Agricultural Land Classification of England and Wales. Revised guidelines and criteria for grading the quality of agricultural land (October 1988)

Minerals Resource: Mineral Planning Policy Wales (2001) Minerals Planning Policy Wales (MPPW) (2001) sets out the land use planning policy guidance in relation to mineral extraction and related development in Wales, which includes all minerals and substances in, on or under land extracted either by underground or surface working. Regional Minerals Officer provided comments on individual sites at the Candidate Sites stage.

School Capacity: Wrexham County Borough Council Education section comments at Candidate Sites stage.

Highway Capacity: Wrexham County Borough Council Highways section comments at the Candidate Sites stage.

Appendix 2 – Assessment matrix

Settlement Function and Development Potential: Matrix Explanation					
Settlement Function					
<i>Employment/Economic Opportunities & Function</i>					
Labour Force (% of population economically active)	5% or higher than the Wrexham average.		Within 5% of the Wrexham average (69%).		5% or lower than the Wrexham average.
Unemployed (% of economically active population out of work)	4% or lower than the Wrexham average.		Within 4% of the Wrexham average (4%).		4% or higher than the Wrexham average.
Employment Area Located in the settlement limit / distance to nearest employment area	Employment area located within settlement limit.		5 miles or less from the settlement (distance calculated from the geographical centre of the settlement to the nearest employment area).		5 miles or more from the settlement (distance calculated from the geographical centre of the settlement to the nearest employment area).
Employment Land Review	Includes allocated employment area (grade A-C).		Includes allocated employment area (grade C-E).		No allocated employment area.
Employment opportunities/ function conclusion	Important employment function		Moderate employment function		Weak employment function
<i>Community Services and Retail Role</i>					

School	Key Local Facilities - The settlement includes both a primary and secondary School.		Primary/ Secondary only.		No Schools.
Health Care Provision	Key Local Facilities - Doctor's surgery, clinic, or health centre within the settlement. Other health care related provision (dentists, pharmacies, opticians).		No key local facilities. Other health care related provision (dentists, pharmacies, opticians).		No provision.
Retail Provision	Key Local Facilities - District Shopping Centre/s, with a range of retail and commercial units. Retail unit/s providing a range of food shopping needs.		Local Centre / Limited provision (other A1, A2, or A3 units not including food shop).		Limited/ no facilities e.g village shop.
Other facilities	Good range with access to most other local facilities (post office, pubs, hotels, community centres etc.)		Moderate range with access to some local facilities (post office, pubs, hotels, community centres etc.)		Limited/ No facilities e.g pub
Recreation Capacity (average where a settlement covers more than one ward)	Surplus of Public Open Space.		Deficit of Public Open Space.		Significnat deficit of Public Open Space (more than 2ha)
Sustainable Travel Options					
Public	Good – Frequent bus		Moderate – Moderate		Poor – Very infrequent or

Transport Provision (bus)	service.		frequency of buses, with some gaps in service e.g. weekends/evenings.		no service at all.
Public Transport Provision (train)	Train station present in the settlement.		Train station within 2 miles of the geographical centre of the settlement.		Train station further than 2 miles away from geographical centre of the settlement.
Walking/ cycling	Range of community and retail services within walking/ cycling distance using existing infrastructure to the majority of the settlement. Minimal obstacles as a result of topography.		Range of community and retail services within walking/ cycling distance using existing infrastructure to parts of the settlement. Some obstacles due to topography of the area may be present.		Lack of access to community and retail services within walking/ cycling distance using existing infrastructure and/or topography of area acts as a barrier.
Settlement Function Conclusion	First Tier - All key local facilities are represented within the settlement, and are in abundance. All other facilities are fully represented. Good public transport provision. Important employment function.	Second Tier – Two/Three key local facilities (out of three) are represented within the settlement. Numerous other facilities are present, but not all facilities are fully represented. Good or moderate public transport provision. Important to moderate employment function.	Third Tier – One key local facility (out of three) is represented within the settlement. A limited number of other facilities are present but not all facilities are represented. Good or moderate public transport provision. Moderate employment function.	Fourth Tier - No key local facilities are represented within the settlement with very few or no other facilities within the settlement. Moderate or poor public transport provision. Moderate to weak employment function.	Fifth Tier - No facilities at all. Poor or no public transport provision. Weak/ moderate employment function.
Development Opportunities					
Potential sites which can accommodate residential	High number of units capable of being located on green/amber sights (potentially 500 + units)	N/A	Moderate number of units capable of being located on green/amber sights (51 – 499 units)	N/A	Low number of units capable of being located on green/amber sights (0-50)

development (brownfield and greenfield)					
Constraints					
Flooding	No/ low flood risk.		Moderate flood risk (including areas of the settlement falling within C2 flood risk areas / surface water flood risk).		High flood risk impacting large parts of the settlement.
Sewerage / waste water treatment	No significant issues.		Issues with public sewerage system (including flooding and capacity). Solutions will need to be found to allow development to proceed.		Significant existing issues which would severely constrain potential for development.
Ecology	No significant ecological constraints		Moderate ecological constraints (local designations). Some habitat mitigation may be required in association with certain species e.g Great Crested Newts. Protected sites near or adjacent settlement.		Significant ecological constraints (national and/ or international designations) and/or presence of protected species. Development would have direct impact.
Built heritage	No significant built heritage considerations.		Built heritage constraints which will require consideration should development come forward.		Significant built heritage constraints which will directly impact the ability of an area to be developed.
Agricultural land classification	No impact on protected agricultural land		Potential impact on protected agricultural land, which will require		Significant impact on protected agricultural land.

			further investigation. Justification for its loss may be required prior to development.		
Mineral resource	No mineral resource/ resource is already sterilised.		Further investigation may be required.		Significant mineral resource, which would require prior extraction or which may prohibit development entirely.
School Capacity	There are surplus school places and capacity for additional development within this area.		There are limited spaces to accommodate all proposals within this area including recent/ongoing developments and the scope for school expansion or provision of a new school/s is constrained.		Schools are full and there is insufficient capacity to take pupils from recent/ on-going developments. There are limited opportunities to increase capacity and therefore no capacity to take any further development.
Highways capacity	Sufficient capacity/ no significant infrastructure constraints.		Localised/site specific capacity issues/ infrastructure constraints.		Strategic capacity issues/ topography or historic layout of settlement results in significant constraints.

Appendix 3 – Employment Land Review Employment Area Grading System

Grade	Definition	Action
A	High quality, prestigious, flagship business areas due to their scale, location and setting. Capable of competing for investment in the regional market place. These are prime sites for marketing to a cross section of users including new inward investors. They can also meet the needs of image-conscious, aspirational companies already in the local authority area	Protect strongly Support and expand
B	Good employment sites due to their scale, location and setting. Capable of competing for investment in the sub-regional market place. These are prime sites for marketing to a cross section of users, B1, B2 and B8, including some new inward investors.	Protect strongly Support and expand
B/C	Key employment sites with an influence over the whole local authority area, but primarily geared towards local businesses and B1 light industrial, B2 and B8 uses.	Protect Support
C		
C/D	Lower quality locations in residential areas suffering from poor accessibility and massing.	Continue to protect/review through the Local Development Plan
D		
D/E	Very poor quality areas. Widespread vacancy and dereliction in poor environments.	Promote alternative uses if possible
E		

Appendix 4 - Settlement Function and Development Potential spreadsheet

	Acrefair/Cefn Mawr	Bangor	Bersham	Bettisfield	Bradley	Bronington	Broughton	Brymbo	Burton	Bwlchgwyn	Chirk	Coedpoeth	Cross Lanes	Dolwyren/Llwynmawr	Froncysyllte	Garth	Glyn Ceiriog	Gresford/ Marford	Gwersyllt	Gwynfryn	Halton	Hanmer	Holt	Horseman's Green	Llanarmon DC	Llay	Marchwiel
Settlement Function																											
<i>Employment/ Economic Opportunities & Function</i>																											
Labour Force (% of population economically active)																											
Unemployed (% of economically active population out of work)																											
Employment Area Located in the settlement limit / distance to nearest employment area																											
Employment Land Review																											
Employment function conclusion																											
<i>Community Services and Retail Role</i>																											
School																											
Health Care Provision																											
Retail Provision																											
Other facilities																											
Recreation Capacity																											
<i>Sustainable Travel Options</i>																											
Public Transport Provision (bus)																											
Public Transport Provision (train)																											
Walking/ cycling																											
Settlement Function Conclusion	2	3	4	5	4	4	3	3	5	4	2	2	4	4	4	4	3	2	2	5	5	4	3	5	4	3	4
Development Opportunities																											
Potential sites which can accommodate residential development (green or amber sites)																											
Constraints																											
Flooding																											
Sewerage / waste water treatment																											
Ecology																											
Built heritage																											
Agricultural land classification																											
Mineral resource																											
School Capacity																											
Highways capacity																											

	Minera	New Brighton	Overton	Penley	Pentre Bychan	Pentre	Penycae	Pontfadog	Rhos	Rhosrobin	Rhostyllen	Rossett	Ruabon	Southsea	Sydallt	Tallarn Green	Tanyfron	Tregeiriog	Trevor	Wrexham North East	Wrexham North West	Wrexham South East	Wrexham South West
Settlement Function																							
<i>Employment/ Economic Opportunities & Function</i>																							
Labour Force (% of population economically active)																							
Unemployed (% of economically active population out of work)																							
Employment Area Located in the settlement limit / distance to nearest employment area																							
Employment Land Review																							
Employment function conclusion																							
<i>Community Services and Retail Role</i>																							
School																							
Health Care Provision																							
Retail Provision																							
Other facilities																							
Recreation Capacity																							
<i>Sustainable Travel Options</i>																							
Public Transport Provision (bus)																							
Public Transport Provision (train)																							
Walking/ cycling																							
Settlement Function Conclusion	4	5	3	3	4	4	3	4	2	4	3	3	3	4	5	4	4	5	4	5	1	1	1
Development Opportunities																							
Potential sites which can accommodate residential development (green or amber sites)																							
Constraints																							
Flooding																							
Sewerage /waste water treatment																							
Ecology																							
Built heritage																							
Agricultural land classification																							
Mineral resource																							
School Capacity																							
Highways capacity																							

