



**Hinckley & Bosworth
Borough Council**

Settlement Hierarchy Paper 2026

**Supporting Document: Regulation 19 Pre-Submission Hinckley & Bosworth Local
Plan 2024-2045**

1. Introduction

- 1.1 As part of the preparation of the new Hinckley and Bosworth Local Plan (2024–2045), the Borough Council has undertaken a review of the adopted settlement hierarchy, last reviewed in 2021. The settlement hierarchy plays a vital role in shaping the spatial strategy of the Local Plan by identifying how different settlements across the Borough function, and guiding where new development should be located in the most sustainable and appropriate way.
- 1.2 The current settlement hierarchy stems from the strategy in the adopted Local Plan (the Core Strategy 2009 through to the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Development Plan Document 2016). It needed to be updated to reflect more recent evidence, changes in population, local services and facilities, infrastructure provision, recent development quantities, and local circumstances. It is also essential that the hierarchy aligns with national planning policy and supports the Council's ambition to deliver sustainable growth while protecting the distinct character of settlements and sense of community. The methodology underpinning this review was consulted upon at Regulation 18 in autumn 2025.
- 1.3 This review of the hierarchy helps demonstrate that the proposed distribution of future housing, employment and infrastructure across the Borough is appropriate. It considers the role and function of each settlement, the availability of key services and facilities, and how well connected communities are to the wider transport network and surrounding settlements.
- 1.4 There is no specific requirement in national policy to include a settlement hierarchy in a local plan, but it is a commonly accepted approach to do so. In Hinckley and Bosworth, the settlement hierarchy has formed a fundamental part of plan-making and decision-making, and the aim is to continue this nationally acknowledged approach in the new Local Plan.
- 1.5 A settlement hierarchy is just one element of a Local Plan that assists in achieving sustainable development, alongside the Plan's vision, aims and objectives.

2. Scope

- 2.1 This paper considers:
 - The overall reasons, context and approach to determining a settlement hierarchy;
 - The scoring matrix for the quantitative elements of the data collection;
 - The qualitative analysis of settlements;
 - The evaluation of the qualitative and quantitative data combined;
 - The revised settlement hierarchy; and
 - The implications of the revised hierarchy.
- 2.2 This paper looks at the settlement hierarchy itself; it does not set the future strategy for development, including the amount of development required, or the distribution of that development to individual settlements. These matters are determined by other means in the Local Plan and its accompanying documents. It also looks at the current function of settlements to categorise them into tiers but does not consider constraints to future development.
- 2.3 Nevertheless, the finalised Settlement Hierarchy Paper helps to inform the following:
 - The final list of proposed site allocations and the overarching development strategy;
 - Infrastructure planning and service delivery;
 - Settlement boundaries, infill opportunities and rural exception sites; and
 - Monitoring and future reviews.
- 2.4 The strategy for development in the current adopted development plan is to direct the majority of new development to settlements in the higher tiers of the settlement hierarchy. Evidence gathered for the

new Local Plan, including national policy, suggests there should be no change in that overall conclusion. Further evidence has been produced to consider the potential distribution of development to lower tiers or settlements within the hierarchy, including the small sites topic paper and the site justification paper.

3. The study area

- 3.1 The settlement hierarchy review covers the entirety of Hinckley and Bosworth Borough. The Borough is bounded by North West Leicestershire District to the north, Charnwood District to the north-east, Blaby District to the east and south-east, Rugby District to the south, Nuneaton and Bedworth District to the south-west, and North Warwickshire District to the west. Hinckley and Bosworth is a Borough with both an urban and a rural feel; Hinckley, Burbage, Barwell and Earl Shilton form the urban south, and the rest of the Borough forms the suburban, rural and countryside areas.
- 3.2 Overall, 60 settlements have been identified across the Borough, ranging from large urban areas to small groupings of residential properties or employment-based areas. Figure 1 below, from the Hinckley and Bosworth Rural Strategy (2024–2028), shows the geographical spread of settlements and locations across the Borough (this does not include all settlements in this paper, but provides a geographical representation of the Borough’s make-up).



Figure 1: Representation of the geographical locations of the settlements of the borough (HBBC Rural Strategy 2024–2028, not to scale)

- 3.3 The settlements (residential-based or otherwise) covered by this paper are listed in Table 1 below. This list is inclusive of all settlements within the Core Strategy (2009), those identified within the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies DPD (2016), and those identified afterwards in various documents such as the Rural Strategy, and from local knowledge.

Settlements included in this review		
Atterton	Earl Shilton	Osbaston
Bagworth	Far Coton	Peckleton
Bardon	Fenny Drayton	Pinwall
Barlestone	Field Head	Ratby
Barton in the Beans	Groby	Ratcliffe Culey
Barwell	Higham-on-the-Hill	Shackerstone
Batram	Hinckley	Sheepy Magna
Bilstone	Kirkby Mallory	Sheepy Parva
Botcheston	Lindley	Shenton
Bradgate Hill	Little Orton	Sibson
Brascote	Market Bosworth	Stanton-under-Bardon
Bull in the Oak	Markfield	Stapleton
Burbage	Merry Lees	Stoke Golding
Cadeby	Nailstone	Sutton Cheney
Carlton	Newbold Heath	Thornton
Congerstone	Newbold Verdon	Twycross
Copt Oak	Newtown Unthank	Upton
Cross Hands	Norton-Juxta-Twycross	Wellsborough
Dadlington	Odstone	Witherley
Desford	Orton-on-the-Hill	Wykin

Table 1: The settlements included in the settlement hierarchy review

4. Policy Context

- 4.1 The review of the settlement hierarchy is grounded in the principles and requirements set out in national planning policy, particularly the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2024) and associated Planning Practice Guidance (PPG). These documents provide the overarching framework for promoting sustainable development and guiding the spatial distribution of growth.

Presumption in favour of sustainable development

- 4.2 The NPPF (2024) sets out the presumption in favour of sustainable development, which applies to plan-making as well as decision-taking. Plans should promote a sustainable pattern of development that meets local development needs, aligns growth with infrastructure, improves the environment, and mitigates and adapts to climate change. Although the NPPF does not specifically prescribe a settlement hierarchy approach, it supports the principle of guiding development to the most sustainable locations. The settlement hierarchy plays a key role in delivering these objectives by identifying which settlements are best placed to accommodate growth based on their existing infrastructure, services and accessibility.

Strategic planning and local decision-making

- 4.3 The NPPF (2024) emphasises effective strategic planning across local authority boundaries, particularly in addressing housing needs, infrastructure delivery and climate resilience. It also reaffirms

the role of locally-prepared plans in guiding development, with the settlement hierarchy forming a key part of spatial strategy. It is important to note the wider catchment of settlements' services — for example hospitals, schools, leisure provision and public transport — which are not defined by boundaries and can serve a wider, strategic population.

- 4.4 The settlement hierarchy also plays a role in decision-making following adoption of the Local Plan. It provides a clear basis for assessing planning applications that remains relevant in the long term, helping to determine whether a proposed development is appropriate for its location by considering the role of the settlement within the wider spatial strategy. Larger towns and service centres at the top of the hierarchy are typically expected to accommodate a greater share of housing, employment and infrastructure growth due to their existing services and transport links, while applications within smaller villages or hamlets may see development limited to meeting local needs or enhancing rural sustainability. The sliding scale of sustainability within a tier is discussed further in Section 9.
- 4.5 The hierarchy supports consistency and transparency in planning decisions. By setting out which settlements are suitable for different types and scales of development, it helps planners, developers and communities understand the rationale behind approvals or refusals. This is particularly important in managing speculative development pressures and ensuring that growth is plan-led, and it aids in resisting inappropriate development in unsustainable locations, thereby safeguarding environmental assets and maintaining the character of rural areas.

Supporting rural communities and preventing decline

- 4.6 The NPPF (2024) continues to support thriving rural communities, encouraging sustainable growth in rural areas where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of settlements. This includes ensuring access to services and reducing reliance on the car, which are central considerations in settlement hierarchy assessments. An appropriate rate of redevelopment and growth is critical for keeping local settlements alive by addressing population and age-group decline, supporting local services such as schools and shops, and providing new infrastructure. A mix of open-market and affordable housing across the Borough's settlements allows younger generations to stay while also accommodating older residents wishing to downsize, and can help to sustain local high streets, shops and services.

National Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)

- 4.7 The PPG reinforces the need for a clear and evidence-based approach to settlement classification. It advises that Local Plans should be informed by an understanding of the role and function of settlements; that authorities should consider the availability of services, employment opportunities and transport links when determining the sustainability of settlements; and that the hierarchy should be used to guide the distribution of development in a way that supports local communities and aligns with strategic objectives. Together, these national policy documents provide a robust framework for assessing the relative sustainability of settlements.

5. The adopted Local Plan and existing hierarchy

- 5.1 The current adopted Local Plan consists of four main documents: the Core Strategy (2009), the Hinckley Town Centre Area Action Plan (2011), the Earl Shilton and Barwell Area Action Plan (2014), and the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies DPD (2016). The settlement hierarchy was established in Chapter 4 of the Core Strategy, which defines the hierarchy as: Urban Area (comprising Hinckley, Burbage, Barwell and Earl Shilton); Key Rural Centres (split into 'relating to Leicester', 'standalone' and 'within the National Forest'); Rural Villages; and Rural Hamlets. The adopted Core Strategy (2009) settlement hierarchy is set out in Table 2 below.

Tier	Settlements
Urban	Hinckley; Burbage; Barwell; Earl Shilton
Key Rural Centres – Relating to Leicester	Desford; Groby; Ratby; Markfield
Key Rural Centres – within the National Forest	Bagworth; Thornton

Tier	Settlements
Key Rural Centres – Stand Alone	Barlestone; Market Bosworth; Newbold Verdon; Stoke Golding
Rural Villages	Higham-on-the-Hill; Stanton-under-Bardon; Sheepy Magna; Nailstone; Twycross; Witherley; Congerstone
Rural Hamlets	Barton in the Beans; Botcheston; Cadeby; Carlton; Dadlington; Fenny Drayton; Kirkby Mallory; Norton Juxta Twycross; Orton on the Hill; Peckleton; Ratcliffe Culey; Shackerstone; Sibson; Stapleton; Sutton Cheney

Table 2: The adopted Core Strategy (2009) settlement hierarchy

- 5.2 Further to the identified hierarchy, a number of other hamlets existed in the Borough but were not identified in the Core Strategy at that time as they did not have a defined settlement boundary.

The new Local Plan (2024–2045)

- 5.3 The Council embarked on a new Local Plan in 2017 and has consulted several times since. The most up-to-date Local Development Scheme (LDS) confirms that the Council intends to submit the plan to the Secretary of State in 2026. The Settlement Hierarchy Review Paper 2021 set out a proposed settlement hierarchy for the new Local Plan. In summary, the key changes proposed in that review were that Bagworth and Thornton were reclassified from Key Rural Centre to Rural Village; Nailstone was reclassified from Rural Village to Rural Hamlet; and several additional smaller settlements were assessed and classified as Rural Hamlets.
- 5.4 Although the 2021 paper undertook a full review of the hierarchy, the context for the new Local Plan has since changed due to a variety of factors, including a revised NPPF issued in December 2024 and, as a result, increased housing targets arising from the revised standard method and the re-introduction of mandatory targets. The Local Planning Authority reverted to the Regulation 18 stage to ensure that its proposed strategy and policies reflect this updated national position and the new increased housing requirement. It was therefore deemed appropriate that the methodology underpinning the settlement hierarchy was reviewed again, to ensure it remained suitable and applicable, to demonstrate that the proposed strategy is sustainable, and to ensure the Council can support its communities and sustain or improve their infrastructure, facilities and services over the plan period. Following the Regulation 18 consultation in autumn 2025, the consultation responses were examined and settlements were reviewed for any circumstantial changes. This paper is the result of that process and informs the Regulation 19 Submission Local Plan (2026) and beyond into submission and examination.

6. Methodology

- 6.1 There is no available guidance at the national level regarding the establishment of a settlement hierarchy. A variety of approaches have informed settlement hierarchies in different local plans nationally that were found to be sound at examination. These approaches all look at common themes such as the availability of services, facilities and public transport. Other factors considered in some studies include retail provision, population size, Office for National Statistics (ONS) classifications, and distance from other settlements. Some local authorities take a more comprehensive approach than others, dependent on local circumstances.
- 6.2 Hinckley and Bosworth's settlements vary greatly in their size, character, function and form. The setting of a settlement hierarchy plays a vital part in the Local Plan strategy and helps inform other matters, such as the spatial pattern of development, the approach to site allocations, and whether or not settlement boundaries are required. The Council therefore considers it appropriate to follow a comprehensive assessment process, combining quantitative scoring with qualitative analysis and officer judgement, so that all relevant factors are considered for all the different types of settlement.

7. Audit and Scoring

Quantitative

- 7.1 A quantitative audit of each settlement was undertaken to take stock of current facilities and services. Various evidence base documents, local knowledge and mapping services were used to gather information on: key daily services (for example schools, a shop or convenience store, bus/train services, broadband and employment); important occasional services (for example a GP, dentist, post office, library or leisure facilities); transport accessibility (frequency and connectivity); and other wider-catchment services (such as hospitals, SEN education and leisure facilities).

Scoring and weighting

- 7.2 Scores have been assigned to services based on their frequency of use and importance. Higher weighting is given to facilities that serve a wider catchment (i.e. beyond the particular settlement, of higher importance and of wider Borough or out-of-Borough significance) and to essential daily services. The scoring of facilities and services is set out in Table 3 below. This has been amended from the previous 2021 review to add and clarify categories.

Facility	Criteria (summary)	Score
Particular Services tier – serving a wider catchment		
Secondary School	State-funded secondary schools serve a wider catchment than the settlement they are in; many pupils travel by public or school transport, and schools provide a focus for community activity.	15
Leisure Provision	Publicly accessible leisure centres/sports complexes; to score 15 the offer must include sports halls, swimming pools and gyms and/or health facilities and children's play.	15
Railway Station	Passenger railway services (not heritage or freight) providing services five days a week or more.	15
Community and/or A&E Hospital	Hospitals providing specialist services or accident and emergency; they serve a wider population and are critical health infrastructure.	15
Employment Opportunities	Access to employment sites/areas, assessed on a sliding scale from 15 (closest, large-scale, varied opportunities) to 5 (local-level availability), using mapping, evidence and officer judgement.	5–15
Special Educational Needs (SEN)	SEN schools serve a wider catchment than the settlement they are in, owing to their specialist nature and limited numbers across the area.	15
Primary tier		
Primary School	State-funded primary schools cater for local demand and provide an accessible day-to-day facility that can act as a community hub.	10
GP Surgery	Doctors' surgeries provide an essential healthcare service; includes permanent and part-time surgeries.	10

Facility	Criteria (summary)	Score
Supermarket / Convenience Store	A supermarket or grocery store is a regular necessity; village shops are important for day-to-day goods, particularly for those without a car.	10
Post Office	A key community facility; more permanent post offices (open more than three days a week) score higher.	10
Pharmacy / Chemist	Plays an integral role in community health; larger pharmacies with retail and an on-site pharmacist (e.g. Pharmacy First) score higher.	10
Frequent Bus Service	A good service covering multiple destinations, at least hourly and more than six days a week.	10
Secondary tier		
Daily Bus Service	A service covering some destinations, daily and six days a week.	5
Pre-school / Nursery	Childcare, nurseries and pre-schools (separate to schools); important for working families.	5
Other Educational Facilities	Fee-paying/independent schools, which serve a wider catchment and play a more limited local role.	5
Library	An important service supporting education, IT access, learning and community groups.	5
Public House	A community focus that can diversify into other services (community room, shop, games/sports).	5
Mobile / Part-time Post Office	A key but time-limited service; open fewer than three days a week.	5
Takeaway / Restaurant / Café	Provides food-outlet choice and employment; counted separately where a distinct service.	5
Place of Worship	In addition to its primary purpose, provides facilities for social and recreational activity.	5
Dentist	Beneficial to overall healthcare provision; demand is usually less frequent than for a GP.	5
Opticians	Beneficial to overall healthcare provision; demand is less frequent than for a GP.	5

Facility	Criteria (summary)	Score
Indoor / Outdoor Sports and Play	Play provision, outdoor sports facilities, indoor sport/recreation and sports halls/pools (from the Open Space Study).	5
Other Retail / Services	Regularly-used comparison retail and services (hairdressers, salons, bakeries, greengrocers etc.) that reduce the need to travel.	5
Community Centre / Village / Church Hall	A key facility enabling social, recreational and cultural activities, clubs, groups and events.	5
Bank / Building Society / Pop-up Banking	Re-introduced given branch closures; includes pop-up/face-to-face banking available for limited days.	5

Table 3: Scoring matrix for the quantitative audit of settlements.

- 7.3 Access to employment opportunities has been assessed in a slightly different manner from the other facilities and services in the scoring matrix. Unlike a school, GP surgery or post office, employment provision is not always a single facility within a settlement boundary and can include a range of opportunities within, adjoining or closely related to a settlement. It may also include nearby employment areas that are functionally connected to a settlement by road, public transport or established commuting patterns.
- 7.4 A sliding scale has therefore been used to reflect the scale, proximity and diversity of employment opportunities available to each settlement. A score of 15 has been applied where a settlement contains, or is immediately adjacent to, significant employment areas offering a broad range of employment opportunities, including strategic or borough-wide employment provision. A score of 10 has been applied where a settlement has a moderate local employment offer, or good access to nearby employment areas, but where the scale or diversity of opportunities is more limited than in the highest-scoring settlements. A score of 5 has been applied where employment opportunities are limited, localised or primarily rural in nature, or where access to wider employment is more dependent on travel to a larger settlement or employment area.
- 7.5 The employment score is therefore a judgement-based measure informed by the Employment Land and Premises Study, mapping evidence, known employment areas, settlement function, accessibility and officer knowledge. It is not intended to represent a precise count of jobs or businesses, but to provide a proportionate indication of the relative employment role of each settlement as part of the wider sustainability assessment.
- 7.6 Scores in this category are justified through the employment scoring approach set out above and the qualitative assessment of each settlement's role, function, accessibility and relationship to nearby employment areas. Scoring interpretations on the sliding scale are explained below:
- Employment Score 15: Significant employment role. Settlement contains or is immediately adjacent to major employment areas, strategic employment locations or a broad range of job opportunities.
 - Employment Score 10: Moderate employment role. Settlement has some local employment provision or good access to nearby employment areas, but not the scale or diversity of the highest-scoring settlements.
 - Employment Score 5: Limited employment role. Employment opportunities are localised, rural, small-scale or mainly dependent on access to employment elsewhere.
 - Employment Score 0: No meaningful identified employment role within or directly related to the settlement.

Qualitative

- 7.7 A qualitative summary of each settlement gives further insight into a number of circumstances, gathered through officer and local knowledge and online research. The qualitative reviews take into account circumstances that are not captured in the scoring but play into the wider narrative of how a settlement functions and whether it is a sustainable location for living and/or working. Some services provide a wider benefit and catchment — for example, some children from outside the Borough access schools within it, and children from other settlements travel to attend schools elsewhere — and these circumstances are important to cover in the qualitative audit.
- 7.8 Additional services and facilities considered in the broader qualitative discussion (but not scored) include:
- Emergency services – accessible to everyone via 999, so proximity to a station could skew the scoring and is instead considered qualitatively;
 - Higher Education – a matter of individual choice beyond compulsory education, so not treated as essential to a settlement;
 - Access to fast broadband – an increasingly vital part of everyday life;
 - Availability of cash points – which do not require manned desks and remain important as bank branches close;
 - Population size, demographics and diversity – which play a large role in how a settlement functions; and
 - Road networks – the availability, quality and proximity of the highway network, which directly influences sustainability.
- 7.9 Where relevant, the qualitative assessment also explains the employment role of settlements, including nearby employment areas that are functionally related to the settlement but may fall outside the settlement boundary.

Data sources

- 7.10 A variety of data sources were used to attribute scores and to write the qualitative summaries, including (but not limited to): parish council and neighbourhood plan input; local authority websites and GIS mapping; national databases (NHS Service Search for GPs, pharmacies and dentists; Network Rail; the Post Office Branch Finder); online mapping tools (Google Maps, OpenStreetMap and the Department for Transport Connectivity Tool); transport data (bus and rail timetables and community transport schemes); employment data (the Employment Land and Premises Study and business counts by parish); infrastructure data (broadband, gas and drainage coverage, and the Infrastructure Capacity Study); and the knowledge and experience of officers in the Planning team.

8. Qualitative Assessment

- 8.1 Below is a breakdown of the larger settlements of the borough and the qualitative services they provide, with the smaller settlements being grouped together when appropriate.
- Hinckley: As the key urban area within the borough, Hinckley has access to a wide variety of services and often these services have a wider catchment than just the Hinckley urban area. The presence of a police station, fire station and its proximity to George Eliot Hospital in Nuneaton mean that access to emergency services is reliable and fast. The Hinckley Campus of the North Warwickshire & South Leicestershire College provides higher education services and draws in residents from the surrounding areas. There are more than a dozen cashpoints within Hinckley providing an important service for local residents. The area can access high-speed and fibre broadband in the vast majority of locations. Hinckley is also well served by the road network sitting in close proximity to the A5, A47, and M69, and the wider network this affords. The Department for Transport connectivity tool shows a high level of connectivity to most services when using a car, and a medium level of connectivity to most services via public transport, walking and cycling. Hinckley also benefits from access to a large number of employment sites and opportunities including retail, office, logistics and manufacturing directly

in or close to the town. The town is also well connected to the MIRA Technology Park via the A5.

- **Burbage:** Due to its close relationship to Hinckley, Burbage enjoys many of the same qualitative benefits; while there is no police station, fire station or hospital directly in the settlement boundary the close proximity still allows for fast and reliable access to emergency services. The same holds true for access to higher education with the college in Hinckley being easily accessible by public transportation and active travel. There is access to a cashpoint directly within the settlement. The area can access high-speed and fibre broadband in the vast majority of locations. Burbage is well served by the A5 and M69, and the wider network this affords. Burbage has a number of employment opportunities and sites within the settlement including large logistics hubs to the west and south of the settlement. Burbage is also well connected to employment opportunities in Hinckley and along the A5 corridor. Burbage has excellent connections by car, and strong public transport connections into Hinckley.
- **Earl Shilton:** Earl Shilton is located to the northeast of Hinckley and benefits from its location nearby to the A47 and A447. This allows for access to facilities located in Hinckley and Burbage such as the college, and emergency services, and wider connections towards Enderby and Leicester. Earl Shilton has several employment opportunities within and around the settlement including retail stores on the high-street and an industrial estate with a mixture of office, logistics and industrial employment space. Earl Shilton can access high-speed broadband. There are multiple ATMs in Earl Shilton providing residents access to some financial services without the need for a bank. There is also a building society within the town centre. The Department for Transport connectivity tool shows that Earl Shilton has good public transport and walking connections to leisure and retail services but average connections to employment services. Its driving connections are strong to all types of services.
- **Barwell:** Barwell is located to the northeast of Hinckley and is closely related to Earl Shilton. The A47 runs directly south connecting Barwell to Hinckley to the west and wider connections towards Enderby and Leicester. Barwell contains three large employment areas to the southwest, southeast and centre of the settlement providing access to a wide range of employment opportunities including retail, office, manufacturing and logistics. Barwell can access high-speed broadband. There are several ATMs within the settlement allowing for access to a limited number of financial services without the need for a bank. Much like Earl Shilton, Barwell has strong driving connections to all services, and slightly above average public transport and active travel connections.
- **Market Bosworth:** Market Bosworth is a historic market town located in the heart of the borough. The town is connected to the A447 to the east and A444 to the west allowing access to services in the wider borough. The town has a fire station allowing for fast, reliable access to emergency services, but relies on Hinckley station for policing. There is a mixture of employment opportunities within the town, including the historic high-street, a large industrial park to the west of the town and a variety of rural services at the edge of the town including the hotel and spa, and the water park. The town has access to high-speed broadband, but there is no ATM located in the town. The Department for Transport connectivity tool shows that Market Bosworth has poor connectivity to all types of services via public transport and active travel, but strong connectivity by car.
- **Desford:** Desford is a large village located to the east of the borough and related to Leicester. It is connected to the A47 to the south by Leicester Lane, and the M1 to the northeast by Station Road. Hunts Lane connects the village to Newbold Verdon to the west and provides access to the wider borough. The village does not have its own police or fire station with the closest police station being Braunstone Station in Leicester, and the closest fire station being Market Bosworth. There is a limited amount of employment space directly within the town, however, there are two large employment spaces located just outside the village boundary in the Caterpillar site to the south and the Poundstretcher head office to the northeast providing a significant number of jobs. There are two ATMs within the village, and the village has access to high-speed broadband. The Department for Transport connectivity tool shows poor connectivity to services via public transport and active travel, but strong connectivity by car.
- **Groby:** Groby is located to the northeast of the borough and closely related to Leicester. Groby is well connected to the transport network with the A46 to the east, A50 to the north and the M1 to the west. There is no fire or police station within the village and instead Groby relies on Leicester for its emergency services. The village is well connected to employment sites with a large industrial estate to the north of the village, and a large amount of distribution and warehousing space south of the village on the A46. There is one ATM in the village and the

village has access to high-speed broadband. The Department for Transport shows that Groby has good access to education services via public transport and average access to other services. Groby has excellent connectivity to all services by car.

- **Ratby:** Ratby is located to the northeast of the borough and is closely related to Leicester. The M1 runs directly north of the village, and the town has quick access to the A46 and A50 as well. There is no fire or police station within the village and instead Ratby relies on Leicester for its emergency services. There is a limited amount of employment space within the village with some shops on main street and a large industrial space to the south of the village, however, the village is located in close proximity to the Poundstretcher head office to the south and a large logistics hub to the east. There is no ATM in the village, but there is access to high-speed broadband. The Department for Transport connectivity tool shows that Ratby has average connectivity to all services by public transport and active travel, but excellent connectivity by car.
- **Markfield:** Markfield is located to the north of the Borough directly on the border with Charnwood Borough Council. The A50 runs to the north of the village and the M1 runs to the west. There are no emergency services within the town, with the closest all being in Coalville via the A511. To the south of the village is The Markfield Institute of Higher Education, a leading Islamic higher education institute attracting pupils from a wide geographic area. There are several employment facilities located close to the village including a large industrial estate to the northwest, several quarries outside of the village boundaries to the northwest and other employment sites all located close to the village. There are two ATMs within the village and the village has access to high-speed broadband. The Department for Transport connectivity tool shows poor access to health and education by public transport and average access to all other services by public transport, but excellent access to all services by car.
- **Newbold Verdon:** Newbold Verdon is a rural town located in the centre of the borough. The A447 is the closest major road to the village and can be accessed by Bosworth Lane. There is no fire or police station within the village and instead Newbold Verdon relies on Hinckley for its emergency services. There is a small amount of employment space within the village, but there are several larger employment areas including the Merrylees industrial estate that are located close to the village. There are no ATMs in the village, but the village does have access to high-speed broadband. The Department for Transport shows that there is poor access to all services by public transport and active travel, but good access by car.
- **Stoke Golding:** Stoke Golding is located just to the north of Hinckley. The village is connected to Hinckley by Stoke Road. There is no fire or police station within the village and instead Stoke Golding relies on Hinckley for its emergency services. There are several areas of employment space in the village or close-by including the high-street, industrial spaces to the north, east and west, and the village is close to the MIRA technology park. There are no ATMs in the village but there is access to high-speed broadband. The Department for Transport connectivity tool shows slightly above average connectivity by bike, and slightly below average connectivity for all other forms of public and active travel, connections by car are good.
- **Barlestone:** Barlestone is in the centre of the borough to the north of Newbold Verdon. The A447 is located directly to the east of the village providing connections to the wider borough. There is no fire or police station within the village and instead Barlestone relies on Hinckley for its emergency services. There is a limited amount of employment space located directly within the village or the surrounding area. There are no ATMs within the village but there is access to high-speed broadband. The Department for Transport connectivity tool shows poor access to most services by public and active travel, but good access to services by car.

The following settlements are defined as rural villages; it should be assumed they all rely on a larger nearby settlement for the provision of emergency services and accessibility will be dependent on the settlement's connections to the wider road network.

- **Thornton & Bagworth:** Thornton and Bagworth are two villages located to the north of the borough. They are two distinct settlements, but they have a very similar level of qualitative services, and are located within a mile for each other, and as such have been grouped together. Neither settlement is located in close proximity to the major road network with them both being around 2 miles away from J22 of the M1. Neither settlement contains an ATM but both have access to high-speed broadband. Both villages sit near one major employment hub, with the Aldi distribution centre situated just to the west of Bagworth and the Merrylees industrial estate to the south of Thornton. The Department for Transport connectivity tool shows that both villages have poor connectivity to services by public transport and active travel, but good connectivity by car.

- Stanton-under-Bardon is located at the north of the borough on the border with Charnwood. The A511 runs to the north of the village, and there are several employment sites close to the village including several quarries and employment space at the junction with the A511. There is no ATM in the village but there is one located at the A511 junction, the village has access to high-speed broadband. The village has average access to services by bicycle but poor access by other forms of public transport. Access to services by car is good.
- Kirkby Mallory: Kirkby Mallory is located north of Barwell in the centre of the borough. There are no major roads close to the village. The village sits next to Mallory Park racing circuit which hosts motorsport, cycling, swimming, triathlons and other community events. This provides employment space and a significant tourism draw. The village is also close to the Caterpillar site. There is no ATM within the village but there is high-speed broadband. The Department for Transport connectivity tool shows that there is poor connectivity to all services by public transport and active travel, and good connectivity by car.
- Congerstone: Congerstone is located to the west of the borough. It has access to the A444 to the west and access to high-speed broadband. There is no ATM within the village. The Department for Transport connectivity tool shows poor connectivity for public transport and active travel, with above average connectivity by car.
- Higham-on-the-Hill: Higham-on-the-Hill is located to the west of Hinckley. The A5 runs directly to the south of the village and MIRA technology park lies directly to the east. There is no ATM within the village. There is high-speed broadband in the village, and the Department for Transport connectivity tool shows average access to services by public transport and active travel, and good access by car.
- Sheepy Magna: Sheepy Magna is located to the west of the borough. There are no major roads that run close to the village and no significant employment sites nearby. There is no ATM within the village. The village has access to high-speed broadband and according to the Department for Transport connectivity tool poor access to services by public transport and active travel, but good access by car.
- Twycross: Twycross is located to the west of the borough and the A444 runs through the centre of the village. Twycross Zoo sits to the northwest of the village providing employment land and drawing in tourism. There is no ATM within the village. There is also a small amount of employment land to the north of the village. There is access to high-speed broadband. According to the Department for Transport connectivity tool there is poor access to services without a car and good access to services with one.
- Witherley: Witherley is located to the west of the borough on the border with Atherstone. The A5 runs directly south of the village and there is access to a significant amount of employment land across the border with Atherstone. There is no ATM within the village. The village has access to high-speed broadband. According to the Department for Transport tool access to services by public and active travel is average, while access to services by car is excellent.
- Nailstone: Nailstone is located in the centre of the borough. The ALDI Nailstone distribution centre sits to the north of the village providing employment space. There is no ATM within the village. The village has access to high-speed broadband. According to the Department for Transport connectivity tool there is poor access to services without a car and good access to services with one.
- Other rural hamlets: All other settlements in the borough are defined as rural hamlets and have little to no 'qualitative' infrastructure to speak of. Some will have access to high-speed broadband, but few have employment in close proximity to the settlement or reliable transport links without a car.

8.2 The full breakdown of infrastructure provision can be found in the Infrastructure Capacity Study.

Population data

- 8.3 The following section contains the population data for Hinckley, Burbage, Barwell and Earl Shilton from the 2021 census. For the other settlements within the borough the 2021 census does not provide data directly for the settlement as the area surveyed included multiple defined settlements (i.e. wider parish or larger area).
- 8.4 For settlements where direct census data is not available, population is likely to broadly correspond with their position in the settlement hierarchy, with larger settlements generally supporting larger populations. This relationship is indicative only and should not be applied as a fixed rule; population data should therefore be used qualitatively, and only where it is available and considered reliable.

- 8.5 At the 2021 census Hinckley had a population of 34,218 making it the largest single settlement in the borough. The population has a gender split representative of the borough average¹ but a higher proportion of minority ethnic residents. The size of this population supports the settlement's wide range of functions and affirms its position as the Borough's key urban area.
- 8.6 Burbage has a population of 16,508 as reported in the 2021 census with a gender and racial makeup representative of the borough's average. The size of this population supports Burbage's role as a key urban area capable of supporting a wide range of services.
- 8.7 At the 2021 census Earl Shilton had a population of 10,630 with a gender and racial mix representative of the average for the borough. The size of this population supports Earl Shilton's role as a key urban area capable of supporting a wide range of services.
- 8.8 At the 2021 census Barwell had a population of 9,153 with a slightly higher percentage of male residents than the borough average and a less racially diverse population. The size of this population supports Barwell's role as a key urban area capable of supporting a wide range of services.

9. Quantitative Assessment and the Revised Hierarchy

Combining the quantitative and qualitative evidence

- 9.1 The audit of settlements was undertaken as per the matrix in Table 3, giving an overview of the elements of each town, village and hamlet. A qualitative assessment was also undertaken, as outlined in Section 8. The full facilities audit and scoring for all 60 settlements is provided in the accompanying Settlement Hierarchy Scoring and Tiers spreadsheet; a summary of each settlement's total score and concluded tier is provided at Appendix 1.
- 9.2 The evaluation of the quantitative and qualitative data combined has been used to justify the inclusion of individual settlements within each tier. Importantly, the score is one input rather than the sole determinant. As set out in the methodology, the total facilities score is read alongside a qualitative assessment of each settlement's size, form, function, character and catchment, and the professional judgement of officers. This reflects the reality that raw facility counts alone do not always distinguish, for example, a large market town that serves a wide rural catchment from a settlement of similar service provision that forms part of the contiguous urban area. Where a settlement's score sits close to a tier boundary, the qualitative narrative and officer judgement determine the final classification. Indicative score ranges for each tier are provided in the Scoring and Tiers spreadsheet; because the final tiering combines the score with qualitative judgement, these ranges overlap at the margins.

The structure of the hierarchy

- 9.3 The Regulation 18 methodology consultation (autumn 2025) sought views on whether the structure of the hierarchy should be expanded. In particular, the Council canvassed the possibility of splitting the Rural Villages tier into 'Large' and 'Small' villages, introducing an additional tier above Key Rural Centres (to capture settlements with high service scores but not the full function, size or diverse demographic of a town), and adding a distinct 'Other Countryside Settlements' tier below Rural Hamlets.
- 9.4 Having reviewed the consultation responses and completed the full audit, the Council has concluded that the established four-tier structure — Urban Areas, Key Rural Centres, Rural Villages and Rural Hamlets — remains the most appropriate, robust and readily understood framework. It provides continuity with the adopted Local Plan and with decision-making practice, and the completed scoring did not reveal a clear, defensible break in the evidence that would justify either splitting the villages into two tiers or introducing an additional intermediate tier. The range of service provision that exists within each tier is instead addressed through the sliding scale of sustainability within a tier, explained below, and the qualitative narrative for each settlement, which together provide sufficient flexibility for the spatial strategy and for decision-making.

The sliding scale of sustainability within a tier

¹ For the borough-wide population statistics see the Equalities Impact Assessment (EQIA)

- 9.5 The settlement hierarchy is best understood as a sliding scale of sustainability; settlements placed within the same tier are not identical: they differ in size, form, population, service and facility provision, employment role, accessibility and relationship to neighbouring settlements, and the total facilities scores of settlements within a single tier vary. The tier expresses the broad role and function of a settlement, and its relative capacity to accommodate growth sustainably, when compared with the other settlements of the Borough. It does not indicate that every settlement within that tier is equally sustainable, or sustainable in the same respects.
- 9.6 The scoring exercise accordingly provides a broad indication of a settlement's relative position within the hierarchy. It is not intended to be applied rigidly or read literally, and a small difference in score between two settlements should not of itself be treated as a substantial distinction. As explained above, the total facilities score is one input, read alongside the qualitative assessment of each settlement and the professional judgement of officers as to its overall role, function and characteristics.
- 9.7 The sliding scale also operates over time. The audit records the services, facilities and accessibility available to each settlement at the point at which the assessment was undertaken. Those circumstances change: services and facilities open and close, new infrastructure and public transport provision come forward, development is completed on the ground, and the functional relationships between settlements alter. The relative position of settlements within a tier may therefore change over the plan period, including which settlement within a tier has the widest range of services and the highest total facilities score. A change in relative position within a tier does not, of itself, alter the tier to which a settlement is assigned. More substantial or sustained change may, however, mean that a settlement is more appropriately placed in a different tier; the tier applicable to each settlement is that set out in the Local Plan, and any such change would be identified through the monitoring framework and taken forward through a review of the Local Plan, as set out in Section 13.
- 9.8 In applying the hierarchy to the determination of planning applications, applications will continue to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Within that framework, case officers should be able to exercise their professional judgement and to take account of site-specific circumstances, including the position of the settlement on the sliding scale within its tier, the particular services and facilities that are accessible from the site in question, and any material change in circumstances since this paper was prepared.

Other Countryside Settlements

- 9.9 The Council has, however, formally recognised a category of 'Other countryside locations'. This captures the many small, scattered or predominantly employment-based locations that are not of a size or function to form a distinct residential settlement, but which are referenced in other Council strategies (such as the Rural Strategy 2024–2028) or have been identified through mapping and local knowledge. These locations do not have a settlement boundary and are assessed against the Local Plan's countryside policies. In addition, and consistent with the Settlement Boundary Review, it is no longer considered appropriate to define settlement boundaries for Rural Hamlets, owing to their limited built form, lack of services and strong relationship with the surrounding countryside; these areas are treated as open countryside for policy purposes.

Role and function of tiers

- 9.10 The role and function of each tier is summarised in Table 4 below.

Tier of hierarchy	Role and function	Settlement boundary?
Urban Areas	The largest and most sustainable settlements, with an extensive range of services, employment, retail and strong public transport, and strategic infrastructure serving a wide catchment. Expected to accommodate the majority of new development.	Yes
Key Rural Centres	Larger rural settlements with a good to significant range of day-to-day services, facilities, employment and public transport, which often serve a wider rural catchment and act as service hubs. Suitable for a moderate level of growth.	Yes

Tier of hierarchy	Role and function	Settlement boundary?
Rural Villages	Settlements with a basic to good range of services and more limited infrastructure. Development is more restricted and focused on meeting local needs while maintaining village character. Limited but sustainable growth is possible.	Yes
Rural Hamlets	Small settlements with few or no services and poor accessibility, but with a recognisable settlement form. Development is minimal and carefully controlled. Treated as open countryside for policy purposes.	No

Table 4: The tiers of the revised settlement hierarchy – role and function

- 9.11 In addition to the four settlement tiers, a number of other countryside locations are scattered across the borough. These typically comprise scattered farmsteads, isolated groups of dwellings, small rows of properties, or employment and enterprise-based locations that do not form distinct settlements. Development in these locations is very limited and assessed against countryside policies. Due to their informal nature, they are not counted as settlements and do not have settlement boundaries.

10. The revised settlement hierarchy

- 10.1 Applying the combined quantitative and qualitative assessment, the revised settlement hierarchy for the Local Plan (2024–2045) is set out in Table 5. This hierarchy is reflected in the Regulation 19 Local Plan (see Table 3 and paragraph 6.15 of the Local Plan).

Tier of hierarchy	Settlements
Urban Areas	Hinckley; Burbage; Earl Shilton; Barwell
Key Rural Centres	Barlestone; Desford; Groby; Market Bosworth; Newbold Verdon; Markfield; Ratby; Stoke Golding
Rural Villages	Bagworth; Congerstone; Higham-on-the-Hill; Kirkby Mallory; Nailstone; Sheepy Magna; Stanton-under-Bardon; Thornton; Twycross; Witherley
Rural Hamlets	Barton in the Beans; Botcheston; Cadeby; Carlton; Dadlington; Fenny Drayton; Norton-Juxta-Twycross; Orton-on-the-Hill; Peckleton; Ratcliffe Culey; Shackerstone; Sibson; Stapleton; Sutton Cheney

Table 5: The revised settlement hierarchy for the Local Plan (2024–2045)

- 10.2 The remaining locations in the borough: Atterton; Bardon; Batram; Bilstone; Bradgate Hill; Brascote; Bull in the Oak; Copt Oak; Cross Hands; Far Coton; Field Head; Lindley; Little Orton; Merry Lees; Newbold Heath; Newtown Unthank; Odstone; Osbaston; Pinwall; Sheepy Parva; Shenton; Upton; Wellsborough; Wykin, are all classified as other countryside locations.
- 10.3 The distinction between a Rural Hamlet and an Other countryside location rests principally on the presence of a recognisable settlement form and identity rather than on the facilities score alone; some hamlets score similarly to, or the same as, other countryside locations but are retained as hamlets because they read as discrete, named settlements on the ground.

11. Changes from the adopted and 2021 hierarchies

- 11.1 The main changes introduced through this review, compared with the adopted Core Strategy (2009) hierarchy and the 2021 review, are:
- **Consolidation of the Key Rural Centres** - The three former sub-categories ('relating to Leicester', 'within the National Forest' and 'standalone') have been simplified into a single Key

Rural Centres tier: this reflects the similarity of infrastructure and services facility provision between these settlements.

- **Bagworth and Thornton** - Confirmed as Rural Villages (reduced from Key Rural Centre), reflecting the change first proposed in the 2021 review and supported by the current audit.
- **Nailstone** - Re-assessed as a Rural Village. The 2021 review had proposed reclassifying Nailstone from Rural Village to Rural Hamlet, as at the time the public house was closed. At the time of writing this paper, the current audit recognises its primary school, the re-opening of the public house, and the settlement form which confirms it as a Rural Village.
- **Kirkby Mallory** - Moved up from Rural Hamlet to Rural Village, reflecting its general store, village hall, church and food outlets, and its recognisable village form.
- **Other Countryside Locations** - A category of Other Countryside Locations is recognised in this paper and briefly within the Local Plan 2024-2045 to capture scattered and employment-based locations, but they do not form distinct settlements or a tier on the hierarchy.
- **Settlement boundaries for Hamlets** - Settlement boundaries are no longer defined for Rural Hamlets, which are treated as open countryside for policy purposes.

12. Settlement Profiles

- 12.1 The following profiles summarise the role, function and service provision of the settlements. The total facilities score for each settlement is set out in full in Appendix 1. Rural Hamlets and Other Countryside Locations are summarised as groups at the end of this section, as the individual settlements/locations do not have a settlement boundary in the Local Plan 2024-2045.

Settlement	Score	Summary
Tier: Urban Areas		
Hinckley	210	Hinckley is the Borough's principal settlement and largest urban area, comprising a continuous built-up area incorporating the historic town centre, extensive residential neighbourhoods, strategic employment, retail and community infrastructure. It offers a comprehensive range of services, including secondary schools, specialist SEN provision (Dorothy Goodman School), the Hinckley and Bosworth Community Hospital, Hinckley railway station, Hinckley Leisure Centre, a library, multiple GP surgeries, pharmacies, supermarkets, post offices, frequent bus services, and a wide retail, banking and cultural offer. It is the focus for the highest levels of growth in the Borough.
Burbage	150	Burbage is a substantial, predominantly urban settlement closely related to Hinckley and contained by the railway corridor, the Ashby Canal, the A5 and the M69. It benefits from a secondary school (Hastings High School), specialist SEN provision (Sketchley School), a GP surgery, a community library, pharmacies, post offices and a good range of convenience retail and food outlets, together with significant employment at Sketchley Meadows, Logix Park and adjoining business areas. It functions as part of the wider urban area, relating particularly to Hinckley, with good connections via the A5 and M69 to the wider region.

Settlement	Score	Summary
Earl Shilton	145	Earl Shilton is a substantial urban settlement on a prominent ridge, forming part of the wider urban area alongside Barwell, Hinckley and Burbage. It offers a secondary school (Heath Lane Academy), specialist educational provision, a health centre, a library, pharmacies, a post office, a supermarket, and a range of retail and food outlets, along with local employment areas. It retains a distinct identity derived from its industrial heritage and historic town centre.
Barwell	130	Barwell is one of the Borough's principal urban settlements, forming part of the wider urban area to the east of Hinckley, with an identity rooted in its hosiery and footwear heritage. While it does not have its own mainstream secondary school (served by Earl Shilton and Hinckley), it has a strong day-to-day service offer: Barwell Medical Centre, primary and infant schools, notable SEN provision (Meadow View Farm School and Fusion Academy), a pharmacy, post office, supermarkets, and several community halls and employment areas. Its service provision and role place it firmly within the Urban Areas tier.
Tier: Key Rural Centres		
Market Bosworth	135	Market Bosworth is a historic market town with a compact, nucleated core, functioning as the principal service centre for the rural north of the Borough and serving a wide catchment. It has a secondary school, SEND provision, a GP, pharmacy, post office, library, convenience retail, and an exceptional hospitality, cultural and tourism offer linked to Bosworth Battlefield. Despite a service score comparable to the smaller urban settlements, it is classified as a Key Rural Centre owing to its modest population and market-town function.
Desford	115	Desford is a compact Key Rural Centre relating to Leicester, with a made Neighbourhood Plan. It benefits from a secondary school and sixth form (Bosworth Academy), a GP, supermarkets, a primary school, a nursery, a library and a good range of food outlets, together with strong employment access including the nearby Caterpillar operations, and frequent bus links to Leicester.
Groby	110	Groby is a well-defined, compact Key Rural Centre with a suburban character, relating to Leicester and bounded by the A46 and A50 corridors. It has a secondary school and sixth form (Brookvale Groby Learning Campus), primary schools, a GP, a supermarket, a post office, a library, nurseries and a range of local services, with frequent bus links to Leicester.
Markfield	110	Markfield is a large, well-established rural centre on the edge of Charnwood Forest, close to M1 Junction 22. It has a primary school, a medical centre, a supermarket, a pharmacy, a post office, a library, a range of pubs, cafés and food outlets, and strong employment access, with frequent bus links.

Settlement	Score	Summary
Ratby	110	Ratby is a well-contained Key Rural Centre relating to Leicester, bounded by the M1 motorway corridor. It benefits from a primary school, two GP surgeries, a chemist, a dentist, a supermarket, a post office, a library, and multiple convenience stores and pubs, with frequent bus links.
Newbold Verdon	100	Newbold Verdon is a large, well-defined rural centre with a historic linear core. It has a primary school, a GP, a supermarket, a pharmacy, a post office, a library, a community hall, sports facilities, a pre-school and a range of convenience retail and food outlets, serving a standalone rural catchment.
Stoke Golding	80	Stoke Golding is a well-defined rural centre with a strong historic core along High Street and Station Road. It has a primary school, a GP, a shop, a post office, a nursery, community facilities, pubs and a café, and serves a standalone rural catchment in the south of the Borough.
Barlestone	80	Barlestone is a compact rural centre with a made Neighbourhood Development Plan, focused on its historic core. It has a primary school, a GP, a supermarket, a post office, a community centre, a dental practice, pubs and food outlets, and serves a standalone rural catchment.
Tier: Rural Villages		
Thornton	70	Thornton is a compact village on a prominent ridgeline above Thornton Reservoir, within the Charnwood Forest and National Forest landscape and covered by the Bagworth, Thornton and Stanton-under-Bardon Neighbourhood Plan. It has a primary school, a combined convenience store and post office, a pub, a social club, cafés and a garden centre, a playgroup, and access to recreation. It was reclassified from Key Rural Centre to Rural Village in the 2021 review, which the current audit confirms.
Bagworth	50	Bagworth is a village of dual character — a compact western neighbourhood and a linear eastern arm — within a National Forest setting, and covered by the Neighbourhood Plan. It has a convenience store, a post office, a café, a community hall, a social club and recreation, together with employment at established industrial areas. (N.B. It was reclassified from Key Rural Centre to Rural Village in the 2021 review).
Stanton-under-Bardon	45	Stanton-under-Bardon is a compact village within the Charnwood Forest and National Forest landscapes, covered by the Neighbourhood Plan. It has a primary school, a convenience store, a pub, a community facility and churches, with a clearly defined settlement form.
Kirkby Mallory	40	Kirkby Mallory is a small, nucleated village with a general store, a village hall, a church, a café and restaurant, and the adjoining Mallory Park circuit (a leisure, tourism and employment asset). It has been assessed as a Rural Village in this review, moving up

Settlement	Score	Summary
		from its former Rural Hamlet classification, reflecting its services and recognisable village form.
Congerstone	35	Congerstone is a compact historic village with a Conservation Area, contained by the River Sence corridor and surrounding farmland. It has a primary school, a pub, a church and a village hall.
Higham-on-the-Hill	35	Higham-on-the-Hill is a compact village with a strong agricultural character and a clearly defined historic core. It has a primary school, a community centre, churches and a pub.
Sheepy Magna	35	Sheepy Magna is a compact village with a recognisable historic core and dispersed heritage assets, including the Grade II* Church of All Saints. It has a primary school, a pub, a church and a community facility.
Twycross	35	Twycross is a compact, nucleated village with a strong rural setting, adjoining Twycross Zoo — a major visitor attraction and employer. It has an independent school, a restaurant and café, a church and a community facility.
Witherley	35	Witherley is a compact village on the River Anker, separated from Atherstone by the A5 corridor and open land. It has a primary school, a church and a public house.
Nailstone	30	Nailstone is a small, linear village with a compact historic core focused on All Saints Church. It has a primary school, a church and a pub. The 2021 review had proposed reclassifying Nailstone as a Rural Hamlet; the current audit confirms it as a Rural Village given its primary school, the re-opening of the pub, and the settlement form.
Tier: Rural Hamlets		
Barton in the Beans, Botcheston, Cadeby, Carlton, Dadlington, Fenny Drayton, Norton-Juxta-Twycross, Orton-on-the-Hill, Peckleton, Ratcliffe Culey, Shackerstone, Sibson, Stapleton and Sutton Cheney.		The Rural Hamlets are small settlements with a recognisable form and identity but few or no everyday services. They typically contain a church, a village or community hall and/or a public house; some have notable tourism or heritage assets, such as the Battlefield Line heritage railway at Shackerstone and the Bosworth Battlefield Heritage Centre in the parish of Sutton Cheney. These locations do not have settlement boundaries and are assessed against the Local Plan's countryside policies.
Non-tiers: Other Countryside Locations		
Atterton, Bardon, Batram, Bilstone, Brascote, Bradgate Hill, Bull in the Oak, Copt Oak, Cross		The Other countryside locations are scattered farmsteads, isolated groups of dwellings, small rows of properties or predominantly employment/enterprise-based locations that are not of a size or function to form a distinct residential settlement. Several are

Settlement	Score	Summary
Hands, Far Coton, Lindley, Little Orton, Merry Lees, Newbold Heath, Newtown Unthank, Odstone, Osbaston, Pinwall, Sheepy Parva, Shenton, Upton, Wellsborough and Wykin.		recognised in the Rural Strategy (2024–2028) or have been identified through mapping and local knowledge; some, such as Bardon, are predominantly employment or quarrying locations. These locations do not have settlement boundaries and are assessed against the Local Plan’s countryside policies.

Table 6: Settlement Profiles

13. Implications and Next Steps

- 13.1 The revised settlement hierarchy provides the spatial framework for the Local Plan and directly informs a number of other workstreams and documents. In particular, it informs the final list of proposed site allocations and the overarching development strategy, directing the majority of growth to the most sustainable locations at the top of the hierarchy while supporting the vitality of rural settlements. It also informs infrastructure planning and service delivery, the settlement boundary review, and the approach to infill opportunities and rural exception sites.
- 13.2 The hierarchy is not fixed for all time. It reflects the function of settlements at the time of assessment and will be kept under review through the Local Plan monitoring framework. Changes in service provision, infrastructure investment or development on the ground may, over time, alter the role of a settlement and its position within the hierarchy, and future reviews of the Local Plan will provide the opportunity to reflect any such changes.

14. Conclusion

- 14.1 This paper sets out a robust, transparent and policy-compliant framework for assessing settlement sustainability, combining a quantitative audit of services and facilities with qualitative analysis and officer judgement. It demonstrates how the Council has arrived at the revised settlement hierarchy, which retains the established four-tier structure of Urban Areas, Key Rural Centres, Rural Villages and Rural Hamlets, supplemented by a recognised category of Other countryside locations. The hierarchy ensures that the Local Plan promotes development in the most appropriate and sustainable locations, supporting vibrant, accessible and resilient communities, and will support both plan-making and decision-making over the plan period. This paper forms a supporting document to the Regulation 19 Pre-Submission Local Plan (2026) and will be submitted alongside the Local Plan for examination.

Appendix 1: Settlement Scoring Summary

The table below summarises the total facilities score and concluded tier for each of the 60 settlements. The full audit, showing the score attributed to each individual facility, is provided in the accompanying Settlement Hierarchy Scoring and Tiers spreadsheet.

Settlement	Score	Concluded tier
Hinckley	210	Urban Area
Burbage	150	Urban Area
Earl Shilton	145	Urban Area
Barwell	130	Urban Area
Market Bosworth	135	Key Rural Centre
Desford	115	Key Rural Centre
Groby	110	Key Rural Centre
Markfield	110	Key Rural Centre
Ratby	110	Key Rural Centre
Newbold Verdon	100	Key Rural Centre
Stoke Golding	80	Key Rural Centre
Barlestone	80	Key Rural Centre
Thornton	70	Rural Village
Bagworth	50	Rural Village
Stanton-under-Bardon	45	Rural Village
Kirkby Mallory	40	Rural Village
Congerstone	35	Rural Village
Higham-on-the-Hill	35	Rural Village
Sheepy Magna	35	Rural Village
Twycross	35	Rural Village
Witherley	35	Rural Village

Settlement	Score	Concluded tier
Nailstone	30	Rural Village
Sutton Cheney	25	Rural Hamlet
Sibson	25	Rural Hamlet
Shackerstone	25	Rural Hamlet
Dadlington	20	Rural Hamlet
Ratcliffe Culey	20	Rural Hamlet
Stapleton	20	Rural Hamlet
Botcheston	15	Rural Hamlet
Cadeby	15	Rural Hamlet
Carlton	15	Rural Hamlet
Fenny Drayton	15	Rural Hamlet
Norton-Juxta-Twycross	15	Rural Hamlet
Orton-on-the-Hill	15	Rural Hamlet
Peckleton	15	Rural Hamlet
Barton in the Beans	10	Rural Hamlet
Copt Oak	15	Other countryside location
Shenton	15	Other countryside location
Bardon	10	Other countryside location
Osbaston	10	Other countryside location
Upton	10	Other countryside location
Wellsborough	10	Other countryside location
Battram	5	Other countryside location
Brascote	5	Other countryside location

Settlement	Score	Concluded tier
Newbold Heath	5	Other countryside location
Sheepy Parva	5	Other countryside location
Atterton	0	Other countryside location
Bilstone	0	Other countryside location
Bradgate Hill	0	Other countryside location
Bull in the Oak	0	Other countryside location
Cross Hands	0	Other countryside location
Far Coton	0	Other countryside location
Lindley	0	Other countryside location
Little Orton	0	Other countryside location
Merry Lees	0	Other countryside location
Newtown Unthank	0	Other countryside location
Odstone	0	Other countryside location
Pinwall	0	Other countryside location
Wykin	0	Other countryside location

Table 7: Summary of settlements and scores