



### **South Hams & West Devon village sustainability assessment framework – summary of consultation responses**

The NPPF requires the planning system to deliver sustainable development that meets the evidence based needs of identified areas.

There are two parts to the consideration of what constitutes ‘sustainable development’. First, a proposal needs to be located in a demonstrably sustainable location. Using the NPPF definition of sustainability as a guide, this requires a site to have safe and reliable access to a range of economic, environmental and social facilities and infrastructure.

Secondly, the proposal needs to show that it contributes net economic, social and environmental benefits to the immediate site and adjoining settlement.

Consideration of whether a proposal can be considered sustainable always requires a balanced understanding of benefits and impacts. In established towns and large villages the principle of sustainability is well accepted, given the good level of access to a wide range of services and facilities that is typical in larger settlements. A proposal site still needs to show how these facilities can be satisfactorily accessed, but the balance of consideration is often, though not always, straightforward.

For smaller settlements understanding the balance of benefits and impacts can be complicated by the limited range of services and facilities found within a settlement.

The NPPF states in paragraph 10 that “Plans and decisions need to take local circumstances into account, so that they respond to the different opportunities for achieving sustainable development in different areas.”

In order to help inform the balance of considerations, an assessment of all rural settlements in the TTV policy area has been undertaken, providing an up-to-date framework that understand the behavioural patterns of rural communities, and how they interact with each other and the wider world.

Crucially, this assessment takes into account not only the physical assets of a settlement, but how a community benefits from digital connectivity, the proximity to larger settlements and the availability of public transport.

The Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan is applying a development strategy that will see the majority of growth being delivered in the most sustainable locations. This will see Plymouth and the main towns of South Hams and West Devon as the location for most new homes and jobs, but leaves some provision for new growth throughout the network of rural villages that proliferate throughout the Thriving Towns and Villages policy area.

Appropriate and proportionate growth is expected to be delivered in our rural villages, mostly through neighbourhood plans, but only within and adjoining those villages that can be considered as 'sustainable' settlements, where residents can expect to have a minimum level of access to some basic facilities and with reasonable level of connectivity to the wider world.

The JLP provides an opportunity to re-assess what we consider 'sustainability' to mean in the modern world, reflecting on the behavioural patterns of our rural communities, and recognising the impacts of an increasingly global economy, and the extent to which the internet has shaped the way that we now work, interact and shop.

Still pertinent to the way that we consider how our rural settlement function is the 2008 Taylor Report, 'The Living Working Countryside', in which Lord Matthew Taylor who laments that;

'a tick box approach has held back sensitive and appropriate development and how an inflexible range of sustainability criteria has condemned many villages to a downward cycle of decline with services lost as those who work in them cannot afford to live in them.'

Lord Taylor goes on to identify what he considers an appropriate solution to the perceived downward cycle of decline that he describes;

'What is required to escape the "sustainability trap" too many communities are caught in is a flexible planning system with a real sense of vision that is based on recognising how our rural communities can be rather than writing them off as unsustainable.'

The village sustainability assessment seeks to apply an up-to-date understanding of rural communities and the places that they live in. In order to produce a relevant and effective assessment, this assessment needs to create a framework of criteria that is not 'inflexible' as noted by Lord Taylor, but reflects the varied criteria that are relevant in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. To that end, the assessment will not focus only on the physical assets of a specific settlement, but will recognise the way that each settlements functions and relates to the wider area that it sits within.

An initial consultation was conducted that sought to clarify which criteria should be used to create a flexible and relevant framework for assessing our rural settlements.

This was conducted during September 2016. The outcome of this consultation was an agreed set of criteria, and weighting for these criteria, that would be used as an assessment tool.

During this consultation 53 responses were received. These ranged in scale and scope, from one or two lines to numerous pages. Some focussed only on a single service or facility within a specified settlement, others delved deep into the very essence of what defines a rural community

### **Village networks**

A number of responses wanted to know how housing numbers could be addressed if more than one settlement was identified within a neighbourhood plan area, and particularly if one of the settlements would not be considered sustainable in its own right.

The purpose of the village sustainability assessment is to inform the JLP development strategy – where the most sustainable settlements will be expected to deliver a proportionate amount of new homes.

Whilst the sustainability appraisal will provide an objective assessment of each settlement, it will not in itself identify definitive housing figures. The assessment scores will result in an indicative housing figure for settlement, subject to local circumstances being applied. For instance, if a settlement has been identified as being sustainable, with a good level of services and facilities, it is reasonable to expect a moderate amount of new housing. However, if that settlement is surrounded by a sensitive landscape, and few if any suitable sites can be found, it may be appropriate to look how the housing requirement could be met elsewhere. If a neighbouring settlement is not considered as sustainable, but is not as visually sensitive, has deliverable sites identified and is connected to the bigger settlement by footpaths and/or public transport, then it may well be appropriate to meet the housing need in the less sustainable settlement. As is often the case in planning matters, it depends on the balance of impacts and benefits unique to the local circumstances.

It is agreed therefore that there can be some flexibility applied in how housing is delivered, providing that the overall housing figure identified can be met, and that there is a clear relationship between the settlements in question.

### **Rural communities**

A number of responses did point out that the presence of a community facility was only one part of understanding how sustainable a community is, the other half coming from committed community groups to put these facilities to best use. We agree with this entirely, and in many instances an active rural community will make far more of limited resources than in a town where some facilities can be underused.

This assessment provides an objective assessment of services and facilities, and to measure the activity and effectiveness of community groups in each settlement would simply be too subjective and onerous for an exercise of this type. The nature

of community groups is that they can often ebb and flow depending on the level and type of interest within a community, making the accuracy of such an assessment variable at best.

### **Designated landscapes**

There were a number of responses that felt that landscape designations should be included within the assessment. It is understood that this will clearly be a consideration when it comes to the delivery of new development, although the impact of each specific site will vary from settlement to settlement. Whilst the AONB designation benefits from having the highest weight of policy protection, this does not mean that all parts of the AONB have the same characteristics or levels of sensitivity.

The nature of this exercise is to provide a starting point for discussion for neighbourhood plan groups, who can then apply local considerations to the assessment score. In some locations there will be a number of available sites that could be phased to deliver higher levels of housing than identified by the assessment, and these places will benefit from the associated levels of investment in community facilities. Other locations may be more constrained, and may be able to evidence that sufficient sites are not available to meet the identified housing growth. There will be opportunities for all NP groups to interpret the settlement assessment and tailor the assessment to their local evidence base.

### **Quality of broadband signal**

Numerous responses suggested that a qualitative assessment of broadband speeds be taken into consideration, rather a simple yes/no assessment.

All broadband information has been taken from the following Ofcom website, which shows the deployment of superfast broadband across Devon & Somerset:

<https://www.connectingdevonandsomerset.co.uk/where-when/>

For an assessment of this scale and scope, it is unrealistic to expect current broadband speeds to be assessed at individual addresses throughout the 70+ villages. The speed of connection is also subject to a number of variables outside the control of the broadband provider, and this will inevitably result in diminished speeds, but should not unduly affect the overall sustainability score of the settlement as a whole.

It was proposed that there be some intermediate grading of the quality of broadband signal, and this will be incorporated into the assessment.

### **Quality of mobile signal**

Numerous responses suggested that a qualitative assessment of mobile signal be taken into consideration, rather a simple yes/no assessment.

For an assessment of this scale and scope, it is unrealistic to expect mobile signals from all suppliers to be assessed at individual addresses throughout the 70+ villages.

The information used has been supplied by Ofcom, rather than the network suppliers themselves, and as such should be considered to be objective and impartial.

<http://maps.ofcom.org.uk/check-coverage/>

### **Access to a train line**

A number of respondents questioned why this facility had been included given that no villages in West Devon benefit from a train station. There are in fact 2 villages that are served by trains on the Tamar Valley line, both Bere Alston and Bere Ferrers. Given the location of these villages on the Bere peninsula, and the variable nature of the road network to Plymouth, the rail link makes a significant contribution to connecting the local population to the services and facilities of Plymouth.

The village sustainability assessment is intended to be used across the rural areas of the Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan area, and as such there are bound to be some facilities that may relate to some areas and not others.

### **Character of settlement**

A number of responses requested that more attention be paid to the character of the settlement, including recognition of historic buildings and the quality of the surrounding landscape. Whilst it is acknowledged that many of our rural settlements benefit from a high quality built environment, the nature of this exercise is not designed to measure all aspects of the settlement, particularly those of a subjective nature.

In planning terms the presence of heritage assets and a historic village do not in themselves impact on the sustainability of a settlement.

### **Rural services**

It was also suggested that we recognise a wider range of services specific to rural areas, such as a vet or a rural showground

The nature of this assessment is to identify our most sustainable settlements, not to produce an exhaustive list of all rural services, and it is right that the assessment continues to focus on services and facilities found within our rural settlements, rather than those that may be required in isolated parts of the countryside.

### **Distance from main settlements**

A number of responses requested that proximity to larger settlements be taken into account.

Given that this assessment is intended to add a layer of understanding to the South Hams and West Devon settlement hierarchy, it is agreed that a criterion that recognises distances between settlements would add an extra layer of understanding to the assessment.

Where there is some variation of opinion is how these distances are used. One school of thought suggests that the further away from Area Centres the less sustainable all settlements get. Conversely, it could be argued that if a village with a good level of services is distant from an area centre, it should assume greater importance given the reliance on the surrounding network of villages, and should be the focus of a greater level of growth to ensure that these valuable services can be sustained.

We are proposing to measure the distance, by road, to the nearest settlement that is higher up the settlement hierarchy – so for our rural villages this will either be a Local Centre, Area Centre, or in a few instances the City of Plymouth.

### **Quality of the road network**

A number of responses proposed that the rural road network needed to also be considered, in order to understand how a settlement connects to its surroundings.

We agree that the nature of our dispersed communities does require a greater understanding of the road network to inform the assessment framework. We are suggesting that settlements within 3 mile of the 'A' road network can be considered better connected than settlements at a greater distance.

### **Access to walking and cycling networks**

This divided opinion somewhat, although some responses seemed to be based on a misunderstanding of what constitutes a 'safe' walking and cycling route.

Whilst it is acknowledged that many rural roads can be used for walking and cycling, many cannot be considered 'safe', on the basis that visibility is often severely constrained, and very few rural roads are lit at night.

Suitable walking infrastructure would require access to village services by either footpath and/or pavements that are lit, and/or secure on the basis that they cannot also be used by motor vehicles.

In terms of cycling infrastructure, there are very 'cycle paths' in our rural areas that provide segregated routes for cycling only. However, there are a number of routes promoted as part of the National Cycle Network by Sustrans. Before a route is promoted a degree of audit has taken place to determine if the route can be considered 'safe' for cyclists of a variety of ages, experience and ability.

### **Consolidating local services**

A handful of responses suggested that many rural communities have proactively responded to the loss of some services by combining some functions under the same roof – such as a village pub also operating a shop and/or post office, often on a part-time basis. There was some suggestion that services co-located in the same building should only score once.

This assessment does not require the village shop, post office, café etc to be located in an independent building, but instead is seeking to identify the services that are provided for the benefit of each community. If these services are co-located in the

same building they will still be scored individually, recognising the different services that are available.

### **Sewerage Infrastructure**

A number of responses suggested that an assessment of sewerage infrastructure should be undertaken. Whilst this type of infrastructure could determine the extent to which a settlement could expand, most facilities in rural areas can be expanded or upgraded to accommodate the levels of growth associated with rural villages.

### **Village car parks**

Some responses felt that the ability to park within a village was an important facility to be able to access the services and facilities available. We agree with this suggestion, and have included it in the revised assessment framework.

The consultation identified a list of proposed criteria. Specific comments relating to each of these are identified below. This will be followed by details of how the assessment framework is proposed to be amended.

| Facility          | Comments                                                                                                                                          | Response                                                                                            |
|-------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Fire Station      | There was little expectation that this facility should be located within a rural village. The overwhelming consensus was to remove this criteria. | Remove from the village assessment framework                                                        |
| Police Station    | There was little expectation that this facility should be located within a rural village. The overwhelming consensus was to remove this criteria  | Remove from the village assessment framework                                                        |
| Ambulance Station | There was little expectation that this facility should be located within a rural village. The overwhelming consensus was to remove this criteria  | Remove from the village assessment framework                                                        |
| Dentist           | There was little expectation that this facility should be located within a rural village. The overwhelming consensus was to remove this criteria  | Remove from the village assessment framework                                                        |
| Health Centre     | This was recognised as contributing to the sustainability of a rural settlement, although there                                                   | Recognise that this facility was not expected to be available in villages, although some facilities |

|                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                         |
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|                                                                | was limited expectation that a health centre would be situated in a rural village.                                                                                                                                          | do exist. Retain with a lower weighting.                                                                |
| Primary School                                                 | This was recognised by most respondents as making a significant contribution to village sustainability.                                                                                                                     | Retain within the village assessment framework, and remain as a highest priority.                       |
| Village Shop                                                   | Most responses agreed that this was an important facility. Some responses suggested that post office and shop be combined                                                                                                   | Retain within the village assessment framework, and increase the weighting to reflect highest priority. |
| Post Office                                                    | More than one response proposed that the assessment is flexible enough to recognise some part-time rural services.                                                                                                          | Retain within the assessment, and keep at a medium weighting.                                           |
| Community buildings / Civic space                              | These were recognised as being important facilities, promoting social cohesion and wellbeing.                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                         |
| Outdoor / indoor play area, recreation facility                | Considered by the majority of respondents to be of importance to rural communities.                                                                                                                                         | Retain within the assessment and keep at a medium weighting.                                            |
| Commercial bus service                                         | There was some criticism that in some instances a commercial bus service could exist on one day a week only, and that this should be reflected in the scoring.                                                              | Retain within the assessment, and reduce to a lower weighting.                                          |
| Bus service that links to Area Centre before 9am and after 5pm | The quality of bus service was considered to be more important than simply having a commercially operated route. Enabling access to employment on a daily basis being much more useful than a once or twice weekly service. | Retain within the assessment and keep at a medium weighting.                                            |
| Community transport / ring and ride                            | This was recognised as playing an important role, particularly for older people who do not have access to a private                                                                                                         | Retain within the assessment and keep at a medium weighting.                                            |

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|                                                | vehicle, or are no longer able to drive.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                              |
| Local employment centre / large local employer | There was a mixed set of opinions regarding this criterion. On balance a large local employer is likely to offer some benefits to a community and reduce travel, although it is accepted that there is no correlation between having a large employer and where the workforce comes from.                                                                                | Retain within the assessment and keep at a medium weighting.                                                                                                 |
| Train station                                  | A number of responses incorrectly asserted that there no train stations serving villages in West Devon. This is not the case. Two stations serve villages in West Devon – Bere Alston and Bere Ferrers, and the presence of the train service into Plymouth not only serves as a valuable alternative mode of transport, but also saves numerous car journeys every day. | Retain within the assessment, and keep at a medium weighting                                                                                                 |
| Internet service                               | There was almost unanimous support for giving this service a much higher weighting.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Retain within the village assessment framework, and increase the weighting to reflect highest priority. Grade the scoring depending on the level of service. |
| Mobile coverage                                | There was widespread acknowledgment that mobile reception was very variable across the rural areas, and that service levels were difficult to assess.                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Retain within the village assessment framework, and increase keep at a medium weighting. Grade the scoring depending on the level of service.                |
| Petrol Station                                 | Whilst it is acknowledged that very few villages have this facility, access to a petrol station in rural areas does prevent additional journeys into Local/Area Centres.                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Retain within the assessment, and retain as a lower weighting.                                                                                               |

|            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                  |
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| Chemist    | This criterion did not attract a lot of comment, but those who did comment felt that it was beneficial to a village to be able to access a chemist/dispensary as it reduced reliance on larger settlements. It was also acknowledged that there is little expectation of a village having a chemist.                              | Retain within the assessment, and move to a lower weighting.                                                                     |
| Library    | The broad consensus was to remove 'library' and replace with 'mobile library', as this was much more relevant to rural areas.                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Remove for the assessment framework, and replace with 'mobile library' which should be afforded the lower weighting.             |
| Cash point | Contrasting responses to this criterion, from removing altogether due to the cashless society we now live in, to giving it the highest weighting as it reduces travel to larger settlements and many small rural businesses don't have card machines for small transactions.                                                      | Retain within the assessment, and increase to a middle weighting, reflecting the specific reliance on cashpoints in rural areas. |
| Hotel/B&Bs | Many respondents questioned the contribution made to the sustainability of a village by the presence of a hotel or B&B. Despite the limited contribution these facilities made to the local economy, this opinion is acknowledged, and we agree that including this facility could skew the overall assessment of sustainability. | Remove from the settlement assessment.                                                                                           |
| Pub/café   | The importance of this facility to social wellbeing was felt to be of importance to many respondents, with some proposing to put this in the highest weighting. It                                                                                                                                                                | Retain within the assessment and increase to the highest weighting.                                                              |

|                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                   | is acknowledged that the function of this facility does provide more than the lower weighting, and the role of this facility in supporting social interactions is acknowledged.                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Community greenspace / orchards / allotments / community woodland | Access to greenspace is often a reason why many people chose to live in rural areas, and retaining these areas for community access promotes health and wellbeing. The qualitative impacts of these facilities prompted many respondents to ask for a higher weighting.                                 | Retain within the assessment, and move to a medium weighting.                                                                                                                                                             |
| Cycle paths / PRow                                                | Most respondents agreed that this provision was important to rural communities. Some suggested that a higher weighting should be afforded, and it is agreed that some grading needs to be afforded between prominent, designated and promoted routes, and local and/or disjointed footpath connections. | Retain within the village assessment framework, and increase keep at a medium weighting. Grade the scoring depending on the level of provision, recognising NCN routes and promoted walking routes as the higher scoring. |
| Place or Worship                                                  | This was recognised as playing an important role in community life, particularly with reference to the range of functions that many churches have adapted to provide.                                                                                                                                   | Retain within the assessment, and keep at the lower weighting.                                                                                                                                                            |

The following was proposed for inclusion on the list of services and facilities:

| <b>Criterion to be added to the assessment framework</b> |                                                   |                              |
|----------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Distance from the A road network                         | This criterion provides a better understanding of | Insert at a medium weighting |

|                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                              |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|
|                                       | how easy it is for our rural communities to access the highway network, and provides a degree of understanding of how 'B' and minor roads impact on general accessibility                                        |                              |
| Distance from an Area or Local Centre | This criterion provides a better understanding of how a settlement fits within the wider hierarchy, and the distance at which a wider range of facilities can be accessed.                                       | Insert at a medium weighting |
| Village car park                      | This facility can often help people to stop and access local services and facilities, particularly when routes through a settlement are of a narrow width and can be prone to blockage.                          | Insert a low weighting       |
| Pre-school                            | This facility often reduces the need for additional journeys, and can help build relationships with local schools. It also helps to develop children's understanding and connection with their local settlement. | Insert at a low weighting    |

### Revised assessment framework

Following consideration of the responses that were received following the consultation, a revised assessment framework has been created. The framework reflects the qualitative nature of the responses received, and not necessarily the quantity of responses.

The assessment framework has changed considerably, most notably in the weighting of specific criteria, with the highest weighting now being attached to the services and facilities that our rural communities have said are most important to them. The full list of the revised criteria and weighting is shown below:

| High weight (3 points) |          |                    |
|------------------------|----------|--------------------|
| Village shop           | Internet | Education facility |

|                                                   |                                            |                                                            |
|---------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| Pub                                               | Community Building                         |                                                            |
| <b>Medium weight (2 points)</b>                   |                                            |                                                            |
| Post Office                                       | Within 5 miles of higher level settlement  | Within 3 miles of A road network                           |
| Outdoor/indoor/recreation/sport                   | Cash point                                 | Train station                                              |
| Ring & Ride/community transport                   | Local employment area                      | Public transport access to Area Centre (pre-9am, post 5pm) |
| Community greenspace (orchard/allotment/woodland) | Public Rights of Way, promoted cycle paths | Mobile coverage                                            |
| <b>Low weight (1 point)</b>                       |                                            |                                                            |
| Commercial bus service                            | Petrol station                             | Chemist                                                    |
| Mobile library                                    | Health centre                              | Village car park/parking facilities                        |
| Pre-school                                        | Place of worship                           |                                                            |

It was suggested by a number of consultation responses that a grading within the scoring system would provide an adequate response when a simple 'yes' or 'no' is not arrived at easily. This is accepted and a traffic light scoring system has been used within the assessment framework, which identifies a half score for some facilities where provision is part-time, or not clearly defined enough to provide a definitive yes or no.

### **A guide to assessment scoring**

Some of the criteria that may result in an intermediate score, rather than a definitive yes or no, are as follows:

#### **Internet connection**

This was a much debated criterion during the consultation. Some people insisted that only superfast broadband should be scored, others tried to define a bandwidth threshold or download speeds that could be considered acceptable. The definition of 'superfast' is a download speed of over 24Mbps, by the 'Connecting Devon & Somerset' initiative, and it seeks to deliver this standard of service 'to 100% of premises by 2020'. The assessment score has been based on the deployment of superfast broadband. It should be noted that this is measured up to the point of exchange, and many variables depend on the download speeds between the exchange and individual dwellings. In reality many users could experience lower download speeds, even though the ['Where and When'](#) interactive map shows superfast broadband as being available. The assessment may grade an intermediate score of a settlement is not entirely covered in 'green', or for areas if a level of service cannot be fully assessed. Areas consider to be 'Out of Programme' or 'Under Evaluation' will score no points.

#### **Mobile coverage**

There are numerous variables within this section, with 4 different network operators, 4 different levels of service standard and 3 different types of service identified by Ofcom. This assessment uses Outdoor Voice Calls only, and an intermediate score will be identified if less than 2 of the networks are considered good, but whilst still ensuring more than 2 networks provide a service better than 'poor'.

Given the proliferation of available communications methods via either broadband or landlines, it was considered that to measure indoor levels of service for mobiles would be superfluous and repetitive.

### **Village Shop / Post Office**

An intermediate score would be given to each of these facilities if they were not available on a full-time basis.

### **Distance from higher level settlement and 'A' road network.**

This has been mapped using rural roads, and where roads and settlements are at the upper end of the threshold, an intermediate score has been assigned. The constraints of rural roads are well understood, but often road capacity is confused with poor driving decisions, that see too many cars trying to squeeze into passing places designed for single vehicles only, compounding the problem of limited passing space. That does not presuppose that all rural road networks are the same, and there are some stretches that have very few passing places, and that experience above average traffic movements.

### **Local Employment Area / Large Local Employer**

This criterion does not place an expectation on the employer to be the place of work for all local residents, but does recognise that a range employment opportunities will come up from time to time that will meet the needs of some of the local community. There is not a direct correlation between this criterion and the local population, but does recognise that some potential benefits exist, and that where local people can work with a local employer there are reductions in work based travel. There is no threshold applied, but a local employment estate or units are recognised as providing employment opportunities, and so are large single employers/businesses.

### **Community Greenspace**

This could include anything from allotments, community orchards and community woodland, where the asset is accessible to the wider public, and where there are benefits gained from food production or access to the natural environment.

### **Public Rights of Way / Cycle paths**

This recognises a network of footpaths that offers alternatives to walking on the rural road network, ideally enhancing access to local services and/or other settlements. Access to nationally promoted routes are also recognised, such as the SW Coast Path. Sustrans promoted cycle routes are also recognised in this category.

### **Car Park / Parking**

As with the criterion above, the facility needs to be available for all members of the public to use. This rules out the use of pub car parks. A number of village hall car parks have been recognised in this category. The facility does not have to be a formal car park, but non-allocated parking spaces in proximity to local services are counted.

### **What next?**

The assessment framework is only as good as the information that is contained within it. It would be helpful if neighbourhood plan groups and parish councils look at the initial assessment scores that have been provided, and confirm that they agree with the assessment. If not, it would be useful if a revised assessment score could be provided, along with an explanation of how and why you feel the score should be revised.

This is particularly pertinent to the newly added criteria of village car park and pre-school, but also to any of the other criterion that may have changed in recent times. Desktop analysis has been used to inform the initial study, and this may vary in accuracy across the Joint Local Plan area.

It would also be useful if groups could let us know if you think we have omitted any potentially sustainable settlement from the list.

**Parish Councils and Neighbourhood Plan groups should review the assessment score and return comments to the JLP Team by the 9<sup>th</sup> December.**

Please note that we are not looking to amend the assessment framework any more, but are only focussing on the accurate assessment of settlements.

Any proposed variations may result in a discussion with the respective neighbourhood plan group or parish council before the assessment score is agreed.



This document summarises the responses to the second Joint Local Plan village assessment consultation, held between November and December 2016. This consultation presented assessment scores for rural villages that had previously been considered as 'sustainable' in the relevant adopted Local Plans of South Hams and West Devon.

This consultation sought clarification on the presented assessment scores, taking advantage of local knowledge, in order to come up with agreed final scores for each settlement. 32 responses were received, and are summarised below, along with an indication of if the assessment was amended as a result.

The final assessment will be used in the following ways:

To help inform neighbourhood plan groups of the potential minimum amount of growth that local services and amenities could support. The number identified is provided as a guidance figure, and does not take into account constraints or land availability. It is a job for neighbourhood plans to identify local constraints and opportunities, and how these two factors will influence the delivery of new growth.

The exception to this is for settlements that are located within the South Devon and Tamar Valley Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The accepted landscape sensitivity of the AONB requires Local Planning Authorities to demonstrate how landscape impact will be minimised whilst still allowing for some growth to enable rural communities within the AONB to remain sustainable and resilient to change. In order to minimise potential impact, and in keeping with the NPPF and the great weight that is afforded to the protection of designated landscapes, this

assessment identifies only 10 new homes for each sustainable settlement within the AONB. This is designed to avoid proposals coming forward that result in significant environmental harm, or constitute a major development proposal, which in general planning terms are schemes of 10 dwellings and over. This does not stop settlements within the AONB planning for more than 10 dwellings through neighbourhood plans, although any desire to do so will need to show how it is compliant with the NPPF and the relevant AONB Management Plan policies.

Those settlement that meet an identified minimum score will be added to a list of rural settlements that can be considered as ‘sustainable settlements’, and as such are appropriate as locations for development. In order to manage the delivery of that development, these settlements will have settlement boundaries drawn around them, enabling potential developers to know exactly which policy criteria apply in each location. Areas outside identified settlement boundaries will be considered as being in the countryside for policy purposes.

| Name                               | Comments                                                                                                         | Response                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Action                                                               |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Cllr Smerdon                       | 4g signal available – mobile signal good<br>Village parking available                                            | Accept comments as provided.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Amend assessment showing green for mobile signal and village parking |
| Cllr Green                         | Noss Mayo no longer has a pre-school                                                                             | Accept comments as provided.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Amend assessment accordingly.                                        |
| Michael Read,<br>Ashprington Clerk | Mobile signal is terrible, despite what Ofcom says.                                                              | In order to be consistent, the objective evidence available is applied in the same way for all settlements – thus avoiding personal or anecdotal experience. Ofcom is the industry regulator for telecoms, and such provides an impartial assessment of services. | No change.                                                           |
| Lesley Hughes,<br>Ivybridge Clerk  | Ivybridge park and ride/railway station is in Ugborough parish<br><br>Lee Mill doesn’t have a shop, as Tesco and | The facilities mentioned are located on the periphery of the parish boundaries, and form a functional part of the nearby settlements – the railway station is called Ivybridge Station, which gives an indication as to which settlement it serves.               | No change.                                                           |

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|                           | employment estate are in Ermington parish.                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| John Edgar, Lamerton NP   | <p>Carrs Garage is a mile away from the village with no safe access.</p> <p>The village does not have a cashpoint</p> <p>The school does not fit into the 0-18 category</p> <p>There are no cycle paths, a waymarked route is on public roads</p> | <p>Carrs Garage is 1.2km from the centre of the village. Whilst it does not form part of the functional settlement, it does provide a local service, with residents accessing the shop for many day-to-day provisions, as confirmed in discussion with local resident Cllr Evans. The detachment from the settlement itself is reflected in the 'yellow' scoring.</p> <p>It is acknowledged that the garage does not have a cashpoint.</p> <p>The school category is shown as 0-18 to capture all available educational facilities, and not designed to only record facilities that cater specifically for 0-18 year olds.</p> <p>The cycle criteria aims to recognise waymarked and or promoted routes, rather than a specific piece of infrastructure</p> | <p>Keep shop assessment as yellow.</p> <p>Change cashpoint assessment as red.</p> <p>No change for school assessment, but amend the age category to more accurately reflect primary school ages.</p> <p>Change wording of cycling criteria to more accurately reflect what is being assessed – promoted routes, which can include those that use public roads.</p> |
| Sue Crowther, Thurlestone | Shop and PO being double counted as they are in the same building.                                                                                                                                                                                | Whilst co-located, both the shop and PO offer different services, and as such accurately reflect the contribution they make to the local community.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | No change                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |

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|  | <p>The garage has only one petrol pump and has been counted as a petrol station</p> <p>The village is 2.6 miles from an 'A' road and narrow road should lead to reduction in score.</p> <p>No cycle paths and no footpaths that provide access to services.</p> <p>Poor mobile signal and lack of 3 or 4G.</p> | <p>The garage does indeed have a petrol pump, and as such can contribute to reduced car journeys to other petrol stations, and offers a local service to the community.</p> <p>The 'A' road network is within the identified criteria. The characteristics of the rural road network are well understood, and the road linking Thurlestone to the nearest A has sufficient capacity to carry large agricultural vehicles and commercial vehicles, so has sufficient space for private cars.</p> <p>Thurlestone is within 500m of the nationally renowned SW Coast Path, which can be accessed by at least 3 different PRoW from within the village. The assessment recognised the health and tourism benefits of designated and promoted routes, and this is a major local asset.</p> <p>The Ofcom website shows that Thurlestone has a variable level of coverage for voice calls, with service for 2 of the main 4 suppliers considered good. The lack of 3 or 4G is not considered within this criteria as people do not have the same level of expectation of rural signal than when in urban areas. Whilst this limits the usability of smart phones, the village boasts a good level of broadband service, which people can utilise on devices other than smartphones.</p> <p>The assessment looks for areas of parking that enable access to local services. There is an area of parking</p> | <p>No change.</p> <p>No change.</p> <p>No change.</p> <p>As the assessment already shows an amber rating, it is considered that the variable service is already reflected in the score. No change.</p> <p>No change.</p> |
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|            | No village car parking. Village Hall for hall users only.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | outside the village shop and post office, allowing short-term access to these facilities.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                   |
| Steve Male | <p>Incorrect internet assessment for Highhampton</p> <p>No cash point</p> <p>Available cycle paths do not link to any functional settlement or services. A red score should be given.</p> <p>An up-to-date report on village shop opening times has been provided</p> <p>The commercial bus services available for Highhampton are not as extensive as Bere Ferrers,</p> | <p>Current coverage maps identify Highhampton as being 'under review', with a small proportion of the village identified as having superfast broadband available. The original yellow score reflected the likely imminent deployment of superfast within the village, to match the availability of service that surrounds the village. Accept that the current objective assessment does not show the required level of service, so score will be reduced.</p> <p>Noted. Score will be adjusted.</p> <p>The recognition of cycle paths is not only as a way of reaching other settlements and services, but as a means of accessing the natural environment surrounding our settlements, and as a way of improving health and wellbeing.</p> <p>The assessment will be updated to reflect the extensive opening hours available to local residents.</p> <p>This criterion scores positively if there is any commercial service. The levels of service are differentiated if access to an employment centre can be achieved – this provides an additional score, which Bere Ferrers has been given, recognising the higher level of service.</p> | <p>Amend the score accordingly.</p> <p>Amend score accordingly.</p> <p>No change.</p> <p>Amend accordingly.</p> <p>No change.</p> |

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|                                        | <p>and yet both score a green?</p> <p>Other comments supplied relate to the assessment methodology, the criteria and the weighting.</p> | <p>This consultation exercise focussed only on the application of the assessment, not on the methodology, which was consulted upon in September 2016. The vast majority of responses to the December 2016 consultation accepted and endorsed the process.</p> | <p>No change.</p>                                                                                                                                   |
| <p>Rebecca Walker, South Tawton PC</p> | <p>South Tawton is not on the list?</p>                                                                                                 | <p>The starting point for settlements was the adopted WD settlement list, showing which villages had DBs. Advised that if South Tawton was likely to meet minimum criteria then clerk should advise.</p>                                                      | <p>No change.</p>                                                                                                                                   |
| <p>Theresa Drew, Ermington PC</p>      | <p>Agree with assessment</p>                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | <p>No action</p>                                                                                                                                    |
| <p>Ren Hill, Chivelstone PC</p>        | <p>Shop in East Prawle is seasonal – should be yellow?</p>                                                                              | <p>Agree with comments.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | <p>Amend assessment to show yellow for shop.</p>                                                                                                    |
| <p>Cllr Brazil</p>                     | <p>Settlements missing include Torcross, Beesands, Stokenham</p>                                                                        | <p>Agree that Torcross is a significant omission. Beesands also. Stokenham is a Key Village and not included within the scope of this assessment.</p>                                                                                                         | <p>Torcross and Beesands added to the assessment, and both meet the minimum requirements. Both settlements will be given a settlement boundary.</p> |
| <p>David Barrow, Bratton Clovelly</p>  | <p>No school within the village.</p>                                                                                                    | <p>Accept all the comments offered, with the exception of the car park at the village hall and assessment of bus services. User levels for car parks will fluctuate for all</p>                                                                               | <p>Amend and revise scores for the school, the cash point and the</p>                                                                               |



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|  | <p>there is no car park in the village</p> <p>we do not have any separate civic space.</p> <p>The Post Office has limited opening hours half days Mon - Fridays and no Saturday service, it is part of the outreach from Elburton Post Office.</p> <p>There is no ring &amp; ride in the village</p> <p>Brixton is not an employment area.</p> <p>There is no bus service on Sundays or in the evenings .</p> | <p>The assessment recognises a parking facility that enables access to local services, rather than a specific car park. On street parking is available to facilitate access to the shops.</p> <p>A community room and school hall are available for public use.</p> <p>The assessment was showing no PO facility, so these details will be incorporated.</p> <p>The Brixton Parish website shows a weekly stop by the Ivybridge ring and ride service.</p> <p>There are numerous large employers at the foot of Chittleburn Hill, larger than would normally be expected at a village of this size.</p> <p>The bus service is assessed to determine if it can enable access to local employment centres before 9am and returning after 5pm. Evenings and weekends do not form part of this qualitative assessment.</p> | <p>No change.</p> <p>No change.</p> <p>Add a yellow score to the assessment to reflect part-time hours.</p> <p>No change.</p> <p>No change.</p> <p>No change.</p> <p>No change.</p> |
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|                                        | <p>Internet service is slow and</p> <p>mobile coverage is poor and intermittent</p>                                                                                                                                                 | <p>Objective information from Ofcom shows live high-speed broadband availability in the area.</p> <p>Objective information from Ofcom shows a good level of coverage for all providers for voice calls.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | <p>No change.</p> <p>Overall score increased to 40.</p>                                                                           |
| Judy Alloway, Kingston NP              | <p>Distance from A road network is over 3 miles when measured from the village centre.</p> <p>No ring and ride service</p> <p>No cyclepaths, limited PRowS</p> <p>Bus service is once a week and is outside to/from work times.</p> | <p>The assessment measures from the edge of settlement. However, it is noted that even this reading was at the upper limit, and the comments are accepted.</p> <p>Although limited in capacity, the response does identify 2 car share services available per week. Such a community facility still provides a valuable option for people with limited accessibility.</p> <p>There are a number of PRow that leave the village in all directions, allowing access to the surrounding countryside and also the SW Coast Path. This provides valuable health and recreation benefits, and is a notable local asset.</p> <p>The assessment recognises that a commercial bus operator stops within the village, which is why a point is scored against this criteria. The fact that this service does not support journey to work times is also reflected, in that no points are scored against this criteria.</p> | <p>Amend the assessment to show a red for distance to 'A' road network.</p> <p>No change.</p> <p>No change.</p> <p>No change.</p> |
| Cat Radford, Harberton Parish Council. | Supportive of assessment framework.                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                   |

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|                             | <p>Allotments in both Harberton and Harbertonford</p> <p>Pub now open again in Harbertford, as well as a café being within walking distance from the village.</p> | Both comments accepted with thanks.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Assessments updated to show additional facilities available. |
| Eileen Parkes, Kingswear    | The assessment seeks to impose housing figures on NPs, which is contrary to what the Localism Act says.                                                           | <p>When adopted, a NP will sit alongside the adopted development plan of a local authority.</p> <p>In order to be adopted, an NP must show how it conforms with local and national planning policy.</p> <p>Local Planning Authorities have a statutory duty to meet objectively assessed housing need in full, and neighbourhood plans need to show how they will contribute to meeting that need.</p> <p>Therefore, it is appropriate for the LPA to show how, in combination, neighbourhood plan housing delivery contributes to the overall housing needs of the area.</p> <p>The figures are not imposed, but objective assessment of what each settlement could support, based on the services and facilities available in each location.</p> | No change.                                                   |
| Pete Fenwick, Stoke Gabriel | Route into Totnes is a rat-run                                                                                                                                    | The number and behaviour of users is not a consideration to be taken into account for this criteria.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | No change.                                                   |

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|  | <p>No ring and ride facility</p> <p>No access to Totnes or Paignton before 9.15am</p> <p>Small number of employment units</p> <p>Limited commercial bus service</p> <p>Petrol Station on Paignton Road</p> <p>No public car parks – privately owned or restricted to village hall users</p> | <p>The Devon County Council website shows that Stoke Gabriel is covered by the Totnes and Dartmouth Ring &amp; Ride service:<br/> <a href="https://new.devon.gov.uk/travel/accessibility/community-transport/ring-and-ride/totnes-and-dartmouth-ring-and-ride/">https://new.devon.gov.uk/travel/accessibility/community-transport/ring-and-ride/totnes-and-dartmouth-ring-and-ride/</a></p> <p>The assessment score for this criteria is currently red.</p> <p>The small number of employment units is noted. The absence of any other large employers is also noted.</p> <p>The qualitative assessment of the bus service is measured in the ‘access to employment sites’ category. There is a daily service available, and that results in a positive score for this category.</p> <p>The presence of this facility is noted.</p> <p>There is limited on-street parking directly opposite the village shop and post office. Not extensive, but it does prove a place to stop safely in order to access local facilities.</p> | <p>No change.</p> <p>No change.</p> <p>Amend the score as advised.</p> <p>No change to score for ‘commercial bus service’.</p> <p>Amend the assessment to reflect the presence of this facility.</p> <p>Accept that there is limited availability. The narrow, wall-lined nature of other roads throughout the village make it appropriate to</p> |
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|                                         | <p>No cycle paths and limited footpaths</p> <p>Community Orchard in the village</p>                                                         | <p>The initial assessment for these types of facility was a yellow, reflecting the issues raised. This criteria does not demand the presence of both facilities to satisfy a green assessment. There are at least 2 footpaths that afford access to the River Dart, which is a key local asset.</p> <p>The presence of this facility is noted.</p> | <p>reduce to a yellow score.</p> <p>No change.</p> <p>Assessment amended accordingly.</p> |
| Jenny Williams, Ringmore Parish Council | Agree with the assessment scores for Ringmore.                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                           |
| Fiona Watts, Kingston Parish Council    | <p>As above response regarding Kingston.</p> <p>Assessment should match expectations of JLP, and identify a housing of figure of 10-20.</p> | This assessment is the piece of evidence that will inform the expectations of the JLP.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Score has been amended as per the previous response regarding Kingston.                   |
| Cllr Lindsay Ward                       | The limited bus and community car service for Kingston does not in any way contribute to sustainability                                     | Sustainability for rural services cannot be assessed on the basis of one factor only. As commented previously, whilst both of these services are very limited, they do make a contribution to the community.                                                                                                                                       | No change.                                                                                |
| Joan Fletcher, Ugborough NP             | No village shop                                                                                                                             | The Sustainable Saturdays provide an opportunity to purchase local produce within the village. The infrequent nature of the event is reflected in the yellow score.                                                                                                                                                                                | No change                                                                                 |

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|                             | <p>Yellow for education as no 11-18 facility</p> <p>No cycle paths of PROWs</p> <p>Reduce score for commercial bus service</p> <p>No village car park</p> | <p>As explained previously, there was no expectation that a village should provide education facilities for all ages between 0-18.</p> <p>The extent of the PROW network are noted. The path mentioned provides a good length path into the surrounding countryside. Whilst not immediately connected to the village, the local area boasts a large number of alternative routes in all directions.</p> <p>As mentioned elsewhere, this category assesses if a commercial operator provides a service to this settlement, which it does. The frequency of the service is recognised in the 'access to employment centres by public transport' criteria. Ugborough correctly shows a red for this criteria.</p> <p>The square in Ugborough is one of the best unrestricted parking facilities of any village within this assessment. Up to 40 cars can be accommodated in this facility, and these are not restricted or allocated to residents.</p> | <p>Amend the criteria to accurately reflect school age of 4-11. No change in the assessment score. The limited facilities from the village are noted. The assessment score has been amended to show a yellow.</p> <p>No change.</p> <p>No change.</p> |
| Karen Gilbert, Staverton PC | <p>Omissions from the assessment for Staverton:</p> <p>Primary school</p>                                                                                 | <p>The nearest school is that of Landscope, and whilst it may be accepted that all children from Staverton use the facility, it is already counted towards the Woolston Green score.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | <p>No change.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |

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|                                       | Private school<br><br>Employment centre                                                                                     | The proximity of St Christophers Prep School is noted, although the assessment only recognises facilities that provide unfettered benefits for the whole community. It is noted that there are some moderate sized local employers within and surrounding the village, and the assessment will be amended to reflect this.                     | No change.<br><br>Update the assessment accordingly.                                          |
| John Robinson, Stoke Gabriel PC       | As above for Stoke Gabriel                                                                                                  | As above                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | As above                                                                                      |
| Emma James, Milton Abbot PC           | Pub currently not open.<br><br>Downgrade of mobile phone service<br><br>Anomalies regarding bus service and health centres. | Comments noted. The pub does not yet have a change of use however, and the facility does have a degree of protection by planning policy. That said, it is acknowledged that it currently provides no service.<br><br>Comments accepted.<br><br>Bug in original excel spreadsheet noted – both categories now reflect correct assessment.       | Assessment changed to show yellow.<br><br>Assessment amended to show red for mobile services. |
| Lesley Hughes, Ivybridge Town Council | Villages should include all facilities within the Parish, and not just within the settlement                                | The purpose of this assessment is to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draw refined settlement boundaries around suitable villages</li> <li>• Provide an indicative figure for future growth that is appropriate to the settlement</li> </ul> Neither of these outcomes can be done at a parish level, but only at a settlement level. | No change.                                                                                    |

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|                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | To assert that Ivybridge train station is in Ugborough Parish is to attempt to skew the assessment. Whilst technically true, the station is called 'Ivybridge train station' and clearly relates to the town and not the village.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Adam Headley,<br>Exbourne<br>Neighbourhood Plan<br>Group. | <p>Community building – green to yellow on account of no room to expand.</p> <p>Post office – green to yellow on account of it being an outreach service.</p> <p>Community green space – yellow to red, as no such facilities exist. Playing pitch is adjacent to the village.</p> <p>No cycle paths or PRoW</p> <p>Limited pre-school facility – green to yellow</p> <p>Ofcom shows only 2 of 4 providers is reliable across the village.</p> | <p>The presence of a village hall is what constitutes a green score, not the ability to expand.</p> <p>The comments are noted, and the part-time hours will be reflected in a revised assessment score.</p> <p>Comments noted.</p> <p>Comments noted</p> <p>The assessment scores the provision of a service, and does not require full-time availability for a green score. Many pre-schools operate on a part-time basis.</p> <p>Ofcom shows that 2 of the 4 providers offers reliable 4g services. The assessment is for voice calls only, which is showing a reliable service for all 4 providers. An assessment was also carried out on broadband speeds,</p> | <p>No change.</p> <p>Yellow for post office.</p> <p>Red for community green space, green for playing pitch.</p> <p>Red for this criteria.</p> <p>No change.</p> <p>No change for mobile signal. Green for broadband.</p> |

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|                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | which seem to be higher than in the original assessment, showing superfast broadband availability for the village.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                              |
| Annette Thorn,<br>Dittisham Parish Clerk | Provided updated opening hours for the shop and post-office                                                                                                                                                               | The hours represent full-time opening, and as such the scores will be amended to reflect this service                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Amend scores accordingly     |
| Carol Reeder, Natural England            | Allocations in and adjoining designated landscapes need to show how natural beauty will be protected and enhance.<br><br>NE welcomes Green Infrastructure related criteria having greater weight than the first iteration | This exercise provides an objective assessment of services as an indicator of how a settlement supports its community. The assessment does not allocate sites, and as such it cannot provide an understanding of potential landscape impact – that is a job for neighbourhood plans to do once potential sites have been identified.<br><br>Access to natural spaces is known to have positive impacts on health and wellbeing, and increased weighting of leisure/recreation, community greenspace and PRoW is considered appropriate. | No change.<br><br>No change. |
| Jo Talling, Dartington Hall Trust.       | Note that Dartington has been assessed, and scored the highest score of any village – recognising its functional links with Totnes.<br><br>Note and agree with the assessment for Rattery                                 | Dartington was considered alongside other villages, and such was the level of services and facilities identified, it was considered appropriate to move Dartington into the ‘Key Villages’ part of the settlement hierarchy.<br><br>Noted.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | No change.<br><br>No change. |

The assessment that forms part of the JLP evidence base will reflect the representations as stated above. The assessment will inform a list of sustainable settlements that will have settlement boundaries drawn around them. Other settlements may be proposed for assessment during the Regulation 19 Consultation and as such the list of sustainable settlements is subject to minor amendment.



