

**Bradford Local Plan**

**Core Strategy Examination**

**Matter : Revised Settlement Hierarchy ( Policy SC4 and associated policies)**

**Written Statement**

**22<sup>nd</sup> April 2016**

**The Council proposes to amend the Settlement Hierarchy in the submitted plan to include Burley-in-Wharfedale and Menston in the category of Local Growth Centres.**

**Key issue:**

**Is the proposed settlement hierarchy in terms of the amended status and role of Burley-in-Wharfedale and Menston appropriate, justified, effective, positively prepared, soundly based and consistent with the latest national policy?**

- 1.1 The settlement hierarchy was based on robust evidence including the settlement study (EB/040 to EB/042) and the Bradford Growth Assessment (EB/037). The Council sets out further background to the settlement hierarchy in its response statement to the Inspectors matter 3.2 (PS/E003).
- 1.2 The settlement Hierarchy was based upon the now revoked Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) (PS/B001b (xii)). The RSS work was then tested further with reference to the existing settlement hierarchy in the Replacement Unitary Development Plan (RUDP) and through further local technical work. In particular the Council produced a Settlement Study (EB40/EB41/EB42) which provided an up to date review of the nature and characteristics of the settlements within the District. Further profiling of each settlement was also undertaken as part of the Bradford Growth Assessment which reviewed the environmental, social and economic characteristics of each settlement within the proposed hierarchy.

**a. What is the basis and justification for the revised settlement hierarchy, and is it based on up-to-date and robust evidence?**

- 2.1 Paragraphs 3.56 to 3.60 of the CSPD as well as the Council's response statement to the Inspectors matter 3.2 (PS/E003) explain the role and derivation of the Settlement Hierarchy. They explain that the Local Growth Centres tier was created partly due to land supply constraints in the upper two tiers and partly due to the fact there are significant differences in the characteristics of the settlements below the Principal Towns level (some having better accessibility and /or better ranges of services and facilities) and their ability to grow in a sustainable way.
- 2.2 Policy SC4 and associated evidence was fully discussed at the hearing held on 5<sup>th</sup> March 2015. This explored both the broad approach and basis for the different levels of the hierarchy as well as the categorisation of individual settlements with reference to the relevant evidence, noted above .
- 2.2 In considering the justification for the change made to Burley and Menston in the main modification it is important to note that both were originally identified in the Core Strategy Further Engagement Draft as Local Growth Centres, informed by the Council's Settlement Study, in recognition of their respective locations and accessibility to key transport links and its range of shops, services and community facilities.

- 2.3 Their status was changed within the Publication Draft as a result of the Habitats Regulation Assessment which indicated the need for restrictions of the amount of housing development in the areas within 2.5km of the S Pennines Special Protection Area (SPA) & Special Area of Conservation (SAC). It was at that point that the scale of growth was reconsidered and determined on the basis of the evidence at that time as not being locations where significant growth could be accommodated and as a consequence they were then placed in the bottom tier of the settlement hierarchy.
- 2.4 However the subsequent revisions to the HRA have removed the need to take a highly precautionary approach in limiting development within the 2.5km zone and the council revisited the housing targets and place within the settlement hierarchy of both settlements. The consideration of the changes to scale and distribution also took account of the overall land supply within the latest SHLAA and concerns regarding potential impact on significant heritage assets including the World Heritage Site in other locations. The decision was made in light of both the new evidence in the HRA and the SHLAA as well as the existing evidence within the settlement study and Bradford Growth Assessment. The change simply reinstated both settlements to Local Growth Centres and reversed the previous change at publication draft stage based on more up to date and robust evidence.
- 2.5 Further details on the changes to scale and distribution are set out under matter 3.

**b. Does the revised settlement hierarchy reflect the existing and future status, role and function of the relevant settlements?**

- 3.1 The status of both Menston and Burley within the current Replacement Unitary Development Plan (RUDP) settlement hierarchy recognised that they are located on good transport corridors ( paragraphs 8.32b and 8.32c of the RUDP) and saw them categorised alongside Steeton and Thornton above the smaller settlements in terms of where development and change should be focused in order to support sustainable development.
- 3.2 As noted above, the settlement hierarchy was reviewed with the latest evidence and taken forward into the early stages of the consultation on the Core Strategy with both settlements being categorised as Local Growth Centres. This had reflected their longstanding position in the settlement hierarchy within the local plan for the district.
- 3.3 They were only downgraded in response to the findings of the HRA linked to the change in scales of development being proposed.
- 3.4 The change proposed reinstates the settlements historical position within the settlement hierarchy which is considered justified and appropriate. While the scales of development are higher than those planned for in previous local plan, the settlements have the capacity to accommodate growth in a sustainable way. While both settlements have fewer facilities compared to higher order settlements (Regional City and Principal Towns) and lower levels of local employment opportunities, both settlements are on good public transport networks linking to major employment and services in higher order settlements in particular Bradford and Leeds. Both also benefit from existing range of facilities and infrastructure which can be developed in tandem with any growth.

**c. What are the implications of including Burley-in-Wharfedale and Menston in the category of Local Growth Centres in terms of their future role and levels of growth, and are there any cross-boundary implications?**

- 4.1 The change recognises that these settlements are considered appropriate sustainable locations which can support a slightly higher level of growth than Local Service Centres. The change to the scale of development is considered appropriate and deliverable with suitable mitigation (e.g. infrastructure investment such as education). Additionally, the scale of development will support the delivery of infrastructure/ services which lower levels of development may not.
- 4.2 The Council as part of the work under the duty to cooperate identified the key cross boundary issues which are relevant to Menston and Burley. These relate specifically to infrastructure (education and Transport) and Green belt. The identification and approach to how cross boundary issues have been considered and will be dealt with, is set out in the Duty to Cooperate Statement (SD/006). Section 4 to the statement sets out the high level approach to key issues including transport, Infrastructure and Green Belt. Appendix 4 to the Statement sets out the issues and agreed approach in the agreed Leeds City Region Template. Matter 1b sets out the approach to Infrastructure including transport and education. Matter 5b highlights the need to consider the transport implications on the A65 corridor. Matter 10 relates to green belt change.
- 4.3 While the scale of development proposed has changed within Wharfedale generally and specifically within Menston and Burley, no new cross boundary duty to cooperate issues arise as a result of the modifications beyond those which have already been identified. These recognised the need to work through as part of the allocations preparation process on the detailed cross boundary matters on both green belt change and infrastructure within these locations. In line with the agreed approach, the Council have been liaising and engaging as both Leeds and Bradford move forward detailed Allocations. This includes on-going liaison and consideration of education provision both at secondary and primary school level and implications for overall provision as well the respective catchments in the light of the scale of development and in case of Leeds the emerging site allocations. Liaison will also take place with regards to transport investment with both Leeds and the West Yorkshire Combined Authority.