

Inspector's question 45

"I would welcome the Council's response to the representation (1823) by Mark Longworth of DPD Architects to the effect that the place of Weston Turville in the settlement hierarchy is unjustified and incorrect."

AVDC's Response to Inspector's question 45

Mr. Mark Longworth of DP Architects submitted representations relating to Weston Turville and the settlement hierarchy on behalf of Mr. and Mrs. Stewart Reading-Kitchen. The representations state that the Settlement Hierarchy Assessment has significant errors in the assessment and weighting of Weston Turville. The settlement is within 1.6 miles of Stoke Mandeville, has a frequent bus service, a number of food shops, hotels, café and public houses and three recreation areas. The assessment only takes one food shop and one recreation area into account, and does not consider the extensive allotments and horse riding school. The assessment does not take into account the bus and rail transport connections of Weston Turville which ensures doctors surgeries, post offices and areas of major employment are within easy reach. Weston Turville has a population 81% greater than the other settlements classified as part of the 'Medium Villages' category and a greater population than 7 of the 11 settlements listed in the 'Larger Villages' category in the settlement hierarchy. For these reasons, Weston Turville should be listed within the 'Larger Villages' category.

The Council acknowledge the points made by Mr. Longworth. The methodology of the Settlement Hierarchy Assessment consisted of a series of indicators based on five sections of criteria:

1. **Settlement size** – settlement population
2. **Settlement connectivity** – distance to large service centre and level of public transport
3. **Employment** – number of B use class units within close proximity (2km) to the settlement
4. **Facilities & Services** – split into 'key' and 'non-key' services and facilities

The indicators contribute to a **key criteria score** which is then treated as the basis of categorising settlements into the hierarchy.

The Weston Turville bus service was assessed as part of the 'public transport' indicator of the settlement connectivity, where it was given the maximum of one point towards the key criteria score for the bus service, but did not receive a further point for having a train station located in the settlement.

The Facilities & Services section provides a point towards the key criteria score based on the existence or non-existence of a number of key services including food shops, public houses and post offices. The existence of more than one of the key services would not award additional points towards the key criteria score.

The assessment does not deem allotments and horse riding schools to be key services, which means they do not provide additional points towards the key criteria score.

It is acknowledged by the Council that the population of Weston Turville does exceed some of the settlements classified as 'Larger Villages'. Paragraph 5.12 of the Settlement Hierarchy Assessment Report state out the criteria defining 'Larger Villages'. These settlements have a population between around 2,000 and 3,000 and have between 8 – 10 of the key criteria. Paragraph 5.13 states that *"It is reasonable to assume that those settlements which have at least 8 out of the 11 key criteria have a very good levels of sustainability and can therefore clearly be classified as a 'larger village'. Those settlements which have 7 of the 11 key facilities were less clear, so the qualitative assessment, combined with a consideration of the population size, plays an important role in the classification."*

Paragraph 5.15 defines the criteria for 'Medium Villages' as being a population of *around* 600 – 2,000 and having 6-7 of the key criteria.

While the Council acknowledge that the 2,115 population count of Weston Turville means that the settlement could be deemed to have a population of both *around* 600 – 2,000 and *around* 2,000 – 3,000, it is argued by the Council that as Weston Turville only meets 6 of the key criteria it is to be deemed better fit in the 'Medium Villages' category.

An adjustment to the settlement hierarchy is therefore not warranted