

FODC226



Fermanagh & Omagh
District Council
Comhairle Ceantair
Fhear Manach agus na hÓmaí

FERMANAGH AND OMAGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

Position Paper 12

Strategic Settlement Evaluation

November 2015

Strategic Settlement Evaluation

Purpose: To provide members with a strategic evaluation of all existing settlements as identified in the Fermanagh and Omagh Area Plans, and identify their role within a proposed new settlement hierarchy for the Fermanagh and Omagh Local Development Plan (LDP).

Content: This paper provides information on:

- (i) The regional policy context for future physical development across a settlement hierarchy;
- (ii) An overview of the existing settlement hierarchies provided under the Fermanagh and Omagh Area Plans;
- (iii) An evaluation of each settlement in the context of the Evaluation Framework Table and the Hierarchy of Settlements and Related Infrastructure Wheel of the Regional Development Strategy 2035;
- (iv) An assessment of likely constraints for each settlement which may inform future land use decisions in relation to potential settlement expansion; and
- (v) A proposed settlement hierarchy for Fermanagh and Omagh taking account of the settlement evaluation.

Recommendation: That the Council notes the contents of this paper and considers the position of settlements in the proposed new hierarchy.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 This is one of a series of papers being presented to the Planning Committee as part of the preparatory studies aimed at gathering the evidence base for the new local development plan.

1.2 The Settlement Evaluation forms part of the Countryside Assessment which also comprises identification of Environmental Assets, a Landscape Character Assessment and a Development Pressure Analysis. The purpose of this paper is to evaluate the existing settlements within Fermanagh and Omagh and provide a new settlement hierarchy which identifies settlements and their

role within the hierarchy in accordance with the RDS 2035 Spatial Framework Guidance and the SPPS.

- 1.3** The first position paper, Population and Growth (presented to Council on 11th June 2014) recommended that the settlement hierarchy for the new Council area be re-examined to identify if any settlements need to be re-classified based on their function and services. At a Settlements Workshop held in August 2014, members discussed and suggested what classification each settlement should have in the new settlement hierarchy. A summary of the findings from that workshop is included in this paper. A further workshop for members was held in October 2015 to review these findings. The output from this workshop has been incorporated within this paper.

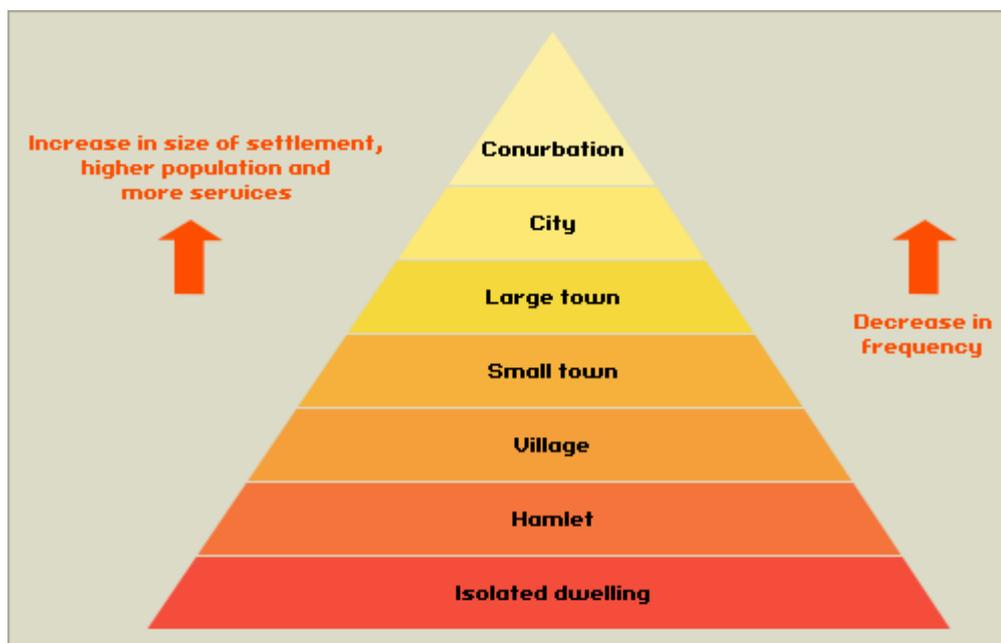
2.0 Regional Policy Context

- 2.1** The Regional Policy Context is provided by the Regional Development Strategy (RDS) 2035.
- 2.2** Spatial Framework Guidance in the RDS 2035 is aimed at achieving sustainable development, promotes economic development opportunities and population growth in the hubs and clusters. For the rural area outside of the main and local hubs, the spatial framework guidance is to sustain the rural communities living in smaller settlements (small towns, villages and small rural settlements) and the open countryside and to improve accessibility for rural communities. The RDS recognises that a strong network of smaller towns supported by villages helps to sustain and service the rural community.
- 2.3** The RDS identifies Enniskillen not only as a hub but also as an inter-regional gateway to the Republic of Ireland, being only 1 hours' drive to Sligo. Omagh is also identified as a hub, being a major administrative centre and situated on the Western Economic Corridor. Unlike other hubs such as Magherafelt, Cookstown and Dungannon, Enniskillen and Omagh are remote from each other so that there is little opportunity to cluster i.e. co-operation and sharing of services.
- 2.4** The RDS provides a Hierarchy of Settlements and Related Infrastructure Wheel which outlines the patterns of service provision that are likely to be appropriate at different spatial levels including neighbourhoods, smaller towns, regional towns and cities (Appendix 1). The model recognises the strong relationship between settlement size and the levels of service that can be supported.
- 2.5** The wheel also recognises that:
- settlements often provide either a greater or lesser range of services than the core population may dictate. It is not appropriate therefore to consider 'urban' population alone in classifying service settlements within any district – the population of rural hinterlands can also support services in urban centres;

- service centres tend to be hierarchical, with a large number of centres providing a smaller range of services, and a smaller number of centres providing a wider range. Each class of settlement provides services lower down in the hierarchy; and
- access to services and facilities is important. Creating a critical mass to support a level of services raises challenges for service providers in meeting the needs of spatially dispersed populations.¹

An example of a typical settlement hierarchy which tends to be pyramid in shape, is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: General Settlement Hierarchy



2.6 To assist the process of allocating housing land, the RDS also provides a broad evaluation framework which takes account of the varying capacities of settlements based on the following six tests:

- 1. Resource Test** – an assessment of the existence of community assets and physical infrastructure such as water, waste and sewage, including spare capacity.
- 2. Environmental Capacity Test** – an assessment of the environmental assets of each settlement and their potential to accommodate future outward growth without significant environmental degradation, the potential of flooding from rivers or surface water run-off.
- 3. Transport Test** – consideration of existing infrastructure and the potential for integrating land use and public transport and walking and cycling routes to help reduce reliance on the car.

¹ RDS 2035, Page 23.

4. **Economic Development Test** – consideration of the potential to facilitate an appropriate housing and jobs balance. Identify and detail possible major strategic development opportunities.
 5. **Urban/Rural Character Test** – an assessment of potential to maintain a sense of place and to integrate new development in a way that does not detract from the character or identity of the settlement.
 6. **Community Services Test** – details of existing community service role and function of each settlement, and potential for such roles/functions to be reinforced.
- 2.7 In defining where each settlement sits in the hierarchy, account should be taken of a wide range of factors, including the RDS spatial framework, the population of individual settlements and an assessment of the role or function of settlements.

3.0 Existing Local Area Plans

- 3.1 Both the Fermanagh Area Plan 2007 and Omagh Area Plan 2002 are now well past their notional end-by dates and were prepared long before the introduction of the RDS and in very different social and economic climates. Each plan established a settlement hierarchy upon which future development or growth was based (Appendix 2). In both plans, the main town would be the focus for most development with the smaller towns and villages identified as local centres serving the needs of their rural hinterlands. However, unlike Fermanagh, the Omagh Area Plan had small settlements or hamlets designated below village level - a fourth tier in the settlement hierarchy. These settlements could accommodate small groups of dwellings or single dwellings as long as their size, character and identity was preserved.
- 3.2 Fermanagh has 39 villages compared to 9 in Omagh and they vary greatly in size, form and function and capacity to accommodate growth.
- For example, some of the larger settlements such as Ballinamallard and Belleek are fairly urban in character, accommodating important local industries and a range of shops and services. However, there are many smaller settlements such as Whitehill and Ardess which could be described as hamlets or clusters based around crossroads that are more rural in character.
- 3.3 Another distinction between the two existing districts is that Fermanagh has Dispersed Rural Communities. In all, 11 such communities were designated to promote rural regeneration and promote some scope for some additional residential development, based at focal points or in surrounding townlands.

4.0 Settlement Evaluation Methodology

- 4.1 Each existing settlement in Fermanagh and Omagh has been appraised against the six tests set out in the RDS. They have also been evaluated

against the 'Hierarchy of Settlements and Related Infrastructure Wheel'. The evaluation has comprised of a mix of visual survey work and desk-top research.

4.2 The broad evaluation framework essentially provides an overview of the services, facilities, physical infrastructure and environmental characteristics of each settlement. Census population and household statistics from the 2011 Census are included. Where data from the Census is not available for smaller settlements, an estimate has been provided.

4.3 Thus, for each settlement, a short report (Appendix 3) has been produced incorporating the following:

- a brief overview of the settlement including population level and number of households;
- an evaluation framework.

4.4 It should be noted from the criteria set out for the Wheel, that the range of facilities within a settlement is a key consideration when determining a settlement's position in the hierarchy. It is clear that the two main towns and to a lesser extent the local towns can provide a broad range of facilities. For those settlements currently classified as villages, the range of facilities is more limited and can vary significantly between one village and another. The importance placed on a particular facility will vary from person to person depending on their needs and particular circumstances. However, the following facilities are considered to be the most important in a village providing both for every day needs and also a sense of community:

- school – either nursery or primary
- retail – convenience shop (one that sells general foodstuff) and/or a post office or ATM
- hospitality – pub, café, or restaurant
- hall

It is acknowledged that although other facilities can be very important to the local area and community, such as an open space/play facility or church, they may not be required to provide everyday needs or a sense of community.

4.5 It is also acknowledged that changes in the way we access services, service provision and rationalisation of services following reductions in public expenditure mean that some services such as banks and post offices traditionally associated with villages have reduced in number and there are several villages/settlements which previously possessed these services. In lieu of a bank, the presence of an ATM is now viewed as an important service in many of our villages and is often located within the local shop.

- 4.6** Although bus services are less frequent in rural areas, there are alternative solutions available such as community transport and other rural transport initiatives that help to address the needs of those without access to public transport or their own car.
- 4.7** The environmental capacity and urban and rural character tests provide an indication of the ability of a settlement to grow and absorb additional new development. To inform these, the following factors have been taken into account:
- Can the landscape and topography surrounding the settlement absorb more development?
 - Is the settlement within a sensitive landscape e.g. AONB?
 - Are there significant archaeological or historic environment (such as Conservation Areas, Listed Buildings, Scheduled Monuments) constraints which would prevent the settlement growing?
 - Are there significant areas of flood risk?
 - Can the settlement physically accommodate any more development without having a detrimental effect on character, appearance and setting? This involves considering the size of the existing settlement, the built form of the settlement and whether there are any physical structures such as main road that have or would constrain future development.
- 4.8** At the Settlement Workshop held on 12th August 2014, discussions on the classification of each settlement and where they should sit in the new settlement hierarchy led to the following conclusions:
- Define five levels in the settlement hierarchy – main town, small town, village, small settlement and Dispersed Rural Community (DRC)
 - Two main towns remain as Enniskillen and Omagh
 - Belleek should be investigated as to whether or not it could be classified as a small town
 - Some of the smaller villages in Fermanagh should be reclassified as small settlements
 - Three existing small settlements in the former Omagh district should be reclassified as villages
 - A number of small settlements in the former Omagh district and smaller villages in Fermanagh should be reclassified as dispersed rural communities
 - Further investigation of new, candidate small settlements/dispersed rural communities (These included Bannagh, Tursallagh, Kilycurragh and Clogh)
- 4.9** At the workshop held in October 2015, there was broad agreement on a number of villages which should be reclassified as small settlements. However, opinion was divided in relation to considering Belleek to be

reclassified from village to small town. In addition, a number of settlements including those comprised of multiple nodes were considered to be either a small settlement or a Dispersed Rural Community.

- 4.10** The designation of Dispersed Rural Communities is absent from the Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) which was published in final form in September 2015. If a form of designation similar to DRCs is to be brought forward in the Local Development Plan (LDP), their role and purpose needs to be properly defined before further considering any potential candidates. During discussions at the workshop, it was evident that members had slightly different perceptions of what constituted a DRC. Amongst the suggestions were that a DRC is a place where there is a strong sense of community with an associated local community activity and as they were not classified as settlements, there had to be some advantage in their designation which distinguishes them from the rest of the rural area. This implies a slightly more relaxed rural planning policy should be applied to them to assist in, for example, rural regeneration.
- 4.11** Given that there is a difference in view about the role and purpose of a DRC designation, it is intended to prepare a short paper which will assess if there is a need for this type of designation, the advantages of having them in the LDP and what criteria should be used to identify them.
- 4.12** However, it is important to note that the SPPS requires that all proposals for development in the countryside must be sited and designed to integrate sympathetically with their surroundings, including the natural topography, and to meet other planning policy and environmental considerations, including the policy approach to cluster, consolidate and group new development with existing established buildings (par.4.30).

5.0 Conclusion

- 5.1** Following a strategic evaluation of each settlement within Fermanagh and Omagh, a proposed settlement hierarchy has been compiled and is included in Table 1 of this paper. The evaluations confirm Enniskillen and Omagh as main towns of the District taking into account their level of service provision, potential for employment, population size and the spatial guidance within the RDS. The proposed settlement hierarchy has resulted in the confirmation of the existing classification of a number of settlements whilst a number of the other settlements have been reclassified. The recommendations are as follows:

- (a) Taking into account the level of service provision, the potential for employment within the settlement, the population size and the spatial guidance within the RDS, the following settlements are recommended to remain classified as **small towns** in the new settlement hierarchy:

- Irvinestown
- Lisnaskea
- Carrickmore
- Dromore
- Fintona

(b) Taking into account the level of service provision, the potential for employment within the settlement, the population size and the spatial guidance within the RDS, the following settlements are recommended to remain classified as **villages** in the new settlement hierarchy:

Ballinamallard	Garrison	Beragh
Belcoo	Kesh	Drumquin
Bellanleck	Kinawley	Gortin
Belleek	Lisbellaw	Greencastle
Brookeborough	Lisnarick	Loughmacrory
Clabby	Maguiresbridge	Mountfield
Derrygonnelly	Newtownbutler	Seskinore
Derrylin	Tullyhummon	Sixmilecross
Donagh	Rosslea	Trillick
Ederney	Tempo	

Note: Views were divided on whether Donagh and Greencastle should be village or a small settlement. Given their size and level of service provision, it is recommended that they remain classified as villages.

(c) Taking into account the level of service provision, the potential for employment within the settlement, the population size and the spatial guidance within the RDS, the following settlements are recommended to remain as **small settlements** in the new settlement hierarchy:

- Dooish
- Eskragh
- Garvaghy
- Kilskeery
- Knockmoyle
- Mountjoy

Note: Views were divided on whether Kilskeery and Mountjoy should be classified as a village or small settlement. Given their size and level of service provision, it is recommended that they remain classified as small settlements.

(d) Taking into account the level of service provision, the potential for employment within the settlement, the population size and the spatial guidance within the RDS, the following settlements are recommended to be reclassified as **small settlements** in the new settlement hierarchy:

Ardess	Killesher/Derrylester
Arney/Skea	Lack
Ballycassidy/Laragh/Troy	Letterbreen
Carrybridge	Magheraveely
Church Hill	Springfield
Holywell	Tamlaght
Killadeas	Teemore

Note: Although the overall view at the workshop was to have Lack remain as a village, it is recommended that given its population size and absence of a convenience shop, it should be classified as a small settlement. Holywell is an outlier of Belcoo, comprising a small grouping of dwellings and no shops or services of its own. It is recommended that it is reclassified as a small settlement, separate from Belcoo.

(e) From the workshop discussions, views were divided on whether to reclassify some settlements as a form of dispersed rural community/dispersed rural settlement or as a small settlement. There was, however, agreement to reclassify a number of other settlements (see below marked with *) as dispersed rural communities. However, until a definition of a dispersed rural community has been agreed including an understanding of what the designation is to achieve, it has been decided that for the time being, the following settlements should be classified as **small settlements** in the settlement hierarchy:

Carrontremall	Edenderry
Florencecourt/Drumlaghy	Gillygooley *
Monea	Glenhull *
Roscor *	Gortaclare/Moylagh *
Whitehill *	Gortnagarn
Altamuskin *	Newtownsaville
Clanabogan	Roscavey *
Creggan	Rousky
Drumduff *	Tattyreagh
Drumnakilly	Tircur
Dunmoyle *	Tummery *
Dunmullan	

(f) The workshops also suggested that the following should be further investigated as candidate DRCs:-

- Bannagh
- Tursallagh

- Killycurragh
- Clogh
- Gorticashel
- Scraghey
- Dregish
- Lisdoo/Knocknagore

These will be investigated once the purpose and definition of a DRC has been agreed. However, it should be pointed out that the main focal points of Scraghey and Dregish appear to be within the Derry and Strabane District Council area. The existing DRCs designated in the Fermanagh Area Plan will also be reviewed.

- 5.2** Taking into account the strategic settlement evaluations and the housing requirements set out in the Housing Allocation Position Paper, there is notionally an adequate land supply for housing in the two main towns based on existing commitments (i.e. planning permissions granted) and current zonings.
- 5.3** Similarly, none of the 5 local towns have been identified within the Housing Allocation paper as requiring additional housing as there is notionally adequate land supply for housing based on existing commitments and current zonings.
- 5.4** Although many settlements are affected to a lesser or greater degree by topography (steep slopes), landscape features such as archaeological remains, and the presence of a floodplain outside the settlement, outward growth is not unduly constrained if it is only minor in scale. For most villages and small settlements, there is sufficient scope to develop greenfield sites in addition to existing commitments and therefore it is unlikely that outward expansion would be required. However, it is noted that within some settlements where river and stream corridors run through them, flood risk is a constraint and this would impact on the amount of developable land remaining. These include settlements such as Fintona, Beragh, Ballinamallard, Drumquin, Clabby, Kesh and Maguiresbridge.
- 5.5** Initial investigation within the Housing Allocation Paper and the settlement evaluations also suggest that a number of settlements will need additional housing (more than 10 dwellings). These settlements are:
- Ballycassidy
 - Belcoo
 - Gortin
 - Greencastle
 - Lack
 - Lisbellaw
 - Lisnarick
 - Tempo

Therefore, whilst it is anticipated that the additional housing can be accommodated on greenfield sites within the settlement limits, a full investigation of development opportunities in relation to these settlements, taking into account any constraints, will take place with the benefit of public consultations and Sustainability Appraisal when preparing the Local Policies Plan.

Sewage Infrastructure Consideration

5.6 The Public Utilities position paper presented to the Planning Committee on 9th July 2015 provided information from NI Water on the headroom capacity of each settlement. This information showed that the majority of settlements have reasonable capacity based on existing properties or planning proposals. However, it was noted that several settlements had no capacity and were not identified for an upgrade in the business plan 2015/2021. These are:

- Loughmacrory
- Garrison
- Ederney
- Belleek
- Edenderry
- Church Hill

5.7 As NI Water take into account planning consultations as part of the 'committed development' calculation i.e. houses built and those that have been permitted but not yet built, there may be an element of some double counting within their assessment of capacity (i.e. existing properties and commitments). Further liaison with NI Water on this matter is required. Whether a settlement can accommodate additional housing in the absence of adequate sewage capacity is a matter to be addressed through the Sustainability Appraisal.

6.0 Recommendation

6.1 That members note the findings of the Strategic Settlement Evaluations and the proposed new settlement hierarchy for Fermanagh and Omagh and agree that they be taken on board in the Sustainability Appraisal and when making housing and other land allocations.

Table 1: Proposed Settlement Hierarchy for Fermanagh and Omagh District

Main Towns	Enniskillen Omagh	
Local Towns	Fintona Dromore Carrickmore Irvinestown Lisnaskea	
Villages	Ballinamallard Belcoo Bellanaleck Belleek Beragh Brookeborough Clabby Derrygonnelly Derrylin Donagh Drumquin Ederney Garrison Greencastle Gortin	Kesh Kinawley Lisbellaw Lisnarick Loughmacrory Maguiresbridge Mountfield Newtownbutler Tullyhummon (part of Pettigo) Rosslea Seskinore Sixmilecross Tempo Trillick
Small Settlements	Ardess Arney/Skea Altamuskin Ballycassidy/Laragh/Trory Carrontremall Carrybridge Church Hill Clanabogan Creggan Dooish Drumduff Drumnakilly Dunmoyle Dunmullan Edenderry Florencecourt/Drumlaghy Garvaghey Gillygooley Glenhull Gortaclare/Moylagh Gortnagarn	Holywell Killadeas Killesher/Derrylester Kilskeery Knockmoyle Lack Letterbreen Magheraveely Mullanaska Monea Newtownsaville Roscavey Roscor Rousky Springfield Tamlaght Tattyreagh Teemore Tircur Tummery Whitehill