



Accessibility Study & Settlement Hierarchy

Borough of Redditch
Core Strategy
Background Document

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ACCESSIBILITY STUDY AND SETTLEMENT HIERARCHY

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Introduction

The Core Strategy Issues and Options Document discussed the need to develop a Settlement Hierarchy and associated Development Strategy. It has to be determined which settlements within Redditch Borough should be considered as the main settlements, the sustainable settlements or the local needs settlements. The fundamental purpose of defining a Settlement Hierarchy is to help direct new development to the most sustainable locations and to areas with the capacity to accommodate further growth.

In order for rural areas to remain sustainable or achieve a desired level of sustainability, access to services is fundamental. The Commission for Rural Communities identifies that there has been a steady decline in many rural services¹. A sustainable community is defined as a place where people want to live and work, now and in the future². The West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy Phase Two Revision Draft Preferred Options (December 2007) states that "New development can create durable places where people want to live. This means the delivery of sustainable communities that are designed and planned at an appropriate size, scale, density and mix. Each location needs to be chosen to be accessible to a range of employment, and to be large enough to support essential services." Therefore rural settlements need to provide good access to services and facilities and meet the needs of their residents in order to be considered sustainable.

This accessibility study considers whether new development can help to enhance facilities and services in some settlements in Redditch Borough and it will primarily be a tool for justifying a suitable Settlement Hierarchy to be set out in the Borough of Redditch Core Strategy Development Plan Document and this will be applicable when preparing the whole of Redditch Borough's Local Development Framework.

The key elements assessed to determine accessibility are those which are considered to be the key basic services and facilities required by a person living in a village, for example, food, access to education, recreation, employment and transport. A town or village without these key elements is more than likely to result in its residents having to travel by private car to be able to access them; however, some towns and villages which do contain a many of these key elements can be considered more sustainable.

¹ Commission for Rural Communities (CRC) (2007) Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities: A New Agenda

² <http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pagelId=919821> (09/07/08)

Aims of Study

- Identify which settlements in Redditch Borough are the most sustainable;
- Recommend a Settlement Hierarchy to be considered as part of the Local Development Framework (Core Strategy).

Objectives of the study

- Identify the settlements in Redditch Borough;
- Provide context information on each settlement;
- Identify the key elements in each settlement;
- Measure accessibility to services and facilities;
- Score each settlement against a list of pre-determined criteria;
- Compare and contrast the accessibility and sustainability of each of the rural settlements with a view to highlighting potential areas for service and/or facility improvement, a potential Settlement Hierarchy and the likely settlements capable of potential growth.

Scope of study

This accessibility study is considered to be a relatively simple exercise in Redditch Borough because there are only three recognised settlements including:

- Redditch;
- Astwood Bank;
- Feckenham.

There are other rural hamlets in the rural area of Redditch Borough but these hamlets do not have sufficient population or built form to be classed as settlements.

The requirement for a Settlement Hierarchy comes as a result of the production of the Local Development Framework (LDF). The Core Strategy Development Plan Document (DPD) as part of the LDF must set out a clear and flexible order of preference for the location of new development. This accessibility study will form part of the evidence base for the LDF, initially to support the Preferred Draft Core Strategy.

The most appropriate Settlement Hierarchy for Redditch Borough will be decided in this study after reviewing the context and following an assessment of the services and facilities of relevant settlements. The Settlement Hierarchy is a reflection of the size and range of provision available in a settlement as well as the policies relevant

to the future growth of that settlement. The purpose of a Settlement Hierarchy is to establish which settlements can support growth, and it will be used as a framework against which future levels of development can be determined.

Policy Context

National Planning Policy Guidance

When considering the likely Settlement Hierarchy in Redditch Borough the key points from Planning Policy Statement 7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas (PPS7) are:

- Promote more sustainable patterns of development by:
 - focusing most development in / next to existing towns and villages;
 - preventing urban sprawl;
 - discouraging development of 'greenfield' land and where it must, it is not used wastefully;
 - promoting a range of uses maximising potential benefits of the countryside fringing urban areas;
 - providing appropriate leisure opportunities enabling urban / rural dwellers to enjoy the wider countryside.
- Away from the urban areas, focus most new development in / near to local service centres. Identify these centres in the development plan as preferred;
- Establish policies for allowing limited development in / next to rural settlements that are not designated as local service centres, to meet local business / community needs and to maintain their vitality.

When considering the likely settlement hierarchy in Redditch Borough the key points from Planning Policy Guidance 13: Transport (PPG13) are:

- Promote accessibility to jobs, shopping, leisure facilities and services by public transport, walking and cycling;
- Reduce the need to travel, especially by car;
- Ensure development which comprises jobs, shopping, leisure and services offer a realistic choice of access by a variety of means.

When considering the likely settlement hierarchy in Redditch Borough the key points from Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing (PPS3) are:

- The contribution to be made to cutting carbon emissions from focusing new development in locations with good public transport accessibility and/or by means other than the private car and where it can readily and viably draw its energy supply from decentralised energy supply systems based on renewable and low-carbon forms of energy supply, or where there is clear potential for this to be realised;

- The availability and capacity of, and accessibility to, existing major strategic infrastructure, including public and other transport services, and/or feasibility of delivering the required level of new infrastructure to support the proposed distribution of development;
- The accessibility of new development to existing community facilities.

Regional Planning Policy

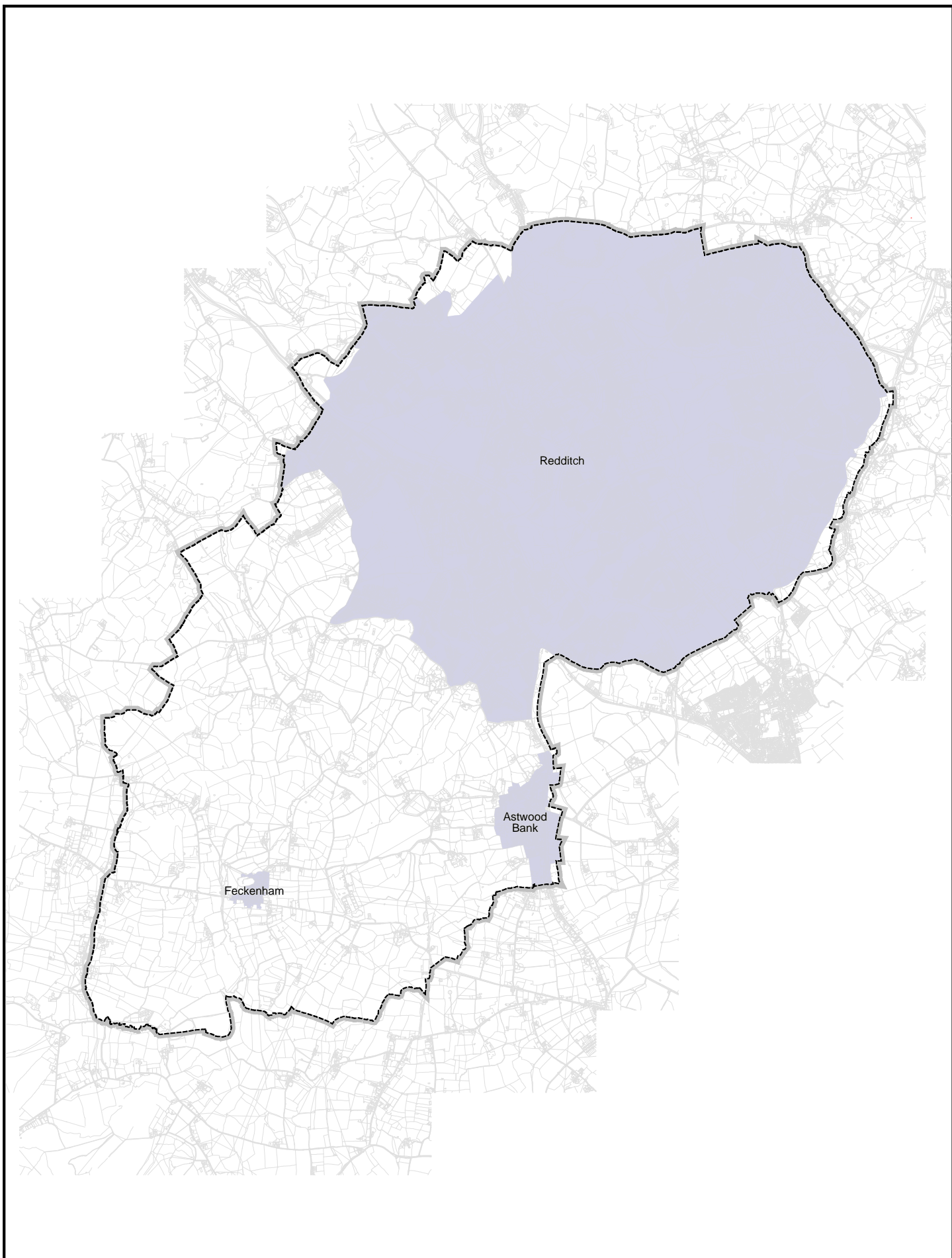
The West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy (WMRSS) Phase Two Revision Draft Preferred Option (December 2007) identifies Redditch as a sub-regional centre. Redditch is also noted as a Settlement of Significant Development. In essence, these designations preclude the need for the town of Redditch to be assessed as part of this study in terms of its accessibility. The evidence demonstrates that Redditch should be at the top of the Redditch Borough Settlement Hierarchy, above Astwood Bank and Feckenham without the need to compare Redditch as a settlement. Other key policies or issues within the WMRSS impacting on this study include:

- Policy RR4 'Rural Services' – Ensuring access to services within rural areas is fundamental to the quality of life in rural areas. The policy states that Development Plans should set out how services will be provided within rural areas;
- Policy T1 'Developing accessibility and mobility within the Region to support the Spatial Strategy' – This policy aims to improve accessibility and mobility.

Methodology and Data Collection

Settlements to be considered

The urban area and settlement of Redditch is the key service centre for the Borough and Redditch Town Centre is designated as a tier 4 centre in the WMRSS. Redditch has therefore been excluded from the accessibility elements of this study because of its regionally defined status. The only other settlements in the Borough are Astwood Bank and Feckenham. These two settlements have a defined settlement boundary which was set out in the Borough of Redditch Local Plan No.3. The map on the next page is intended to illustrate the geographical location of these settlements in relation to Redditch Borough.



Key

- Borough Boundary
- Settlement

Settlement Information Map

Data Collection

The study collects two main datasets:

- Contextual and demographic information;
- Information on key services, facilities and accessibility to services/facilities.

Contextual Information

Contextual information has been collected using a variety of sources of information, some of which was collected as part of the Redditch Borough Council Local Development Framework Scoping Report. The information below lists the contextual information collected for Astwood Bank and Feckenham.

Profile:

- Previous Local Plan/Strategic Planning Policy designation: *Used to give an understanding of previous designation.*
- Settlement Area (ha): *Used to give an indication of the physical size of the settlement*
- Population (latest estimate): *Used to give an indication of how many people live in each rural settlement and therefore how many people the settlement support.*
- Population change (dates from and to): +/- %: *Used to give an indication as to whether the settlements have grown or decreased in population size.*
- Location description: *Used to describe the area.*

Key Services, Facilities and Activities Accessibility Information

A list of key services and facilities has been produced in order to assess the level of service provision, and consequently enable an informed view of the accessibility to be established. Table 1 below lists the criteria used to assess the accessibility of settlements and it provides a brief explanation of why each criterion was selected.

Table 1 – Scoring criteria

Criteria	Facility	Service	Activity	Comment
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Criteria	Facility	Service	Activity	Comment
Bus Stop	✓			The presence of a bus stops indicates whether the settlement can be accessed by public transport (bus)
Bus Frequency		✓		Where a settlement has a more frequent bus service, it can be considered more sustainable as they provide residents with a higher level of accessibility to key service centres.
Proximity to defined on/off road cycle routes	✓			The presence of a cycle route indicates whether a settlement is accessible by sustainable modes of transport.
Dial-a-ride bus/community transport		✓		Dial a ride/community bus service is an important measure of a settlement's accessibility to distant destinations.
School bus service		✓		Provision of a school bus service allows students to access educational facilities.
A1 convenience	✓			A local food store can reduce the need for residents to travel further to buy everyday essentials.
Post Office	✓			Post offices have traditionally provided a vital service to rural areas allowing access to a wide range of services. Especially important to the elderly who may not be able to travel outside the settlement and/or may not have access to internet services.
Post Box	✓			Post boxes allow people to correspond with others and to order goods and services which may not be available locally.
Chemist/pharmacy	✓			Provide additional health care services and allow residents to pick up prescriptions without having to travel long distances.
Hairdressers	✓			Can reduce the need for residents to travel.
Car repair garage	✓			Can offer choice to residents and provide local employment opportunities.
Petrol Station	✓			Provide a vital service and reduce the need to travel.
Any other shops	✓			The presence of other shops in a settlement can provide additional options for residents, possibly reducing the need to

Criteria	Facility	Service	Activity	Comment
				travel.
Bank/Building Society	✓			Can reduce the need for residents to travel.
Cash points/ATM	✓			Where it is not feasible to have a bank and/or building society or post office in a rural area, the presence of a cash machine can provide access.
Public House	✓			Can often be the heart of a local community.
Take-aways	✓			Provide residents with a choice of food outlets.
A3/A4/A5 uses	✓			Provide a social outlet. They can also be a source of local employment.
Telephone box	✓			Although mobile phones are now common place, their presence is considered a useful facility.
Milk round		✓		A local milk round can reduce the need to travel, particularly for those people with limited mobility.
Paper round		✓		This may help reduce the need to travel, particularly for those people with limited mobility.
Grocery round/delivery		✓		This may help reduce the need to travel, particularly for those people with limited mobility.
Library	✓			A local community service provides information, allows people to make informed decisions, supports education and provides affordable access to literature and other media services.
Mobile library	✓			Where there is no library, a mobile library can reduce the need to travel to access this service.
Place of worship	✓			Can play an important role in community cohesion.
Village hall/community centre	✓			Provides a location for community activities and events.
Fire Station	✓			Impacts upon response time if settlements

Criteria	Facility	Service	Activity	Comment
				are remote from a fire station.
Police Office	✓			A police office can help increase a feeling of safety and security, provides a police presence in the village and reduces the fear of crime.
Community safety		✓		A community safety patrol can help reduce the fear of crime.
Equipped Area for Play	✓			Provides children with a place to play.
Parks	✓			Provides open space for all to enjoy, allows exercise to take place for informal recreation.
Recreation ground/sports pitch	✓			Provides open space for more formal recreational activities to take place.
Sheltered/social housing	✓			Can offer people a choice of accommodation to meet needs. It may allow elderly residents to continue to live in the village with some support care.
Meals on wheels		✓		Provides a vital service to the mobility impaired and elderly and may allow residents to continue living in their home for longer.
Broadband		✓		The use of internet services is increasing and the provision of broadband can allow quicker access to these services.
Youth groups			✓	Can provide a useful extra-curricular activity for younger members of the population.
GP surgery/doctors health care	✓			Access to a doctor is important to provide for the ongoing health needs of residents.
Hospital	✓			Access to a hospital is important in terms of emergency health needs.
Dentist	✓			Dentists are an important healthcare facility.
Opticians	✓			Opticians are an important healthcare facility.
Public nursery	✓			Local childcare can be particularly

Criteria	Facility	Service	Activity	Comment
				important for working families.
Private nursery	✓			Local childcare can be particularly important for working families.
First school	✓			Reduces the need for children to travel long distances.
Middle school	✓			Reduces the need for children to travel long distances.
High School	✓			Reduces the need for children to travel long distances.
College or further education	✓			Likely to be more concentrated in one area; however, access to this provision is still important for the education of local young people.
Town Centre		✓		Access to a Town Centre is important for residents who need access to a wide range of services and facilities. Access to the Town Centre is also important in terms of employment provision.
Defined District Centre		✓		Access to a District Centre gives residents a choice of local retail outlets.
Primarily Employment Area		✓		Distance to the nearest primarily employment area shows the potential minimum distance residents may have to travel to access work.
Other employment opportunities B1, B2 and B8 uses		✓		This can help to show the possible location of other employment opportunities.

A traffic light scoring system has been developed in order to undertake a sustainability assessment of each settlement based on the accessibility. The key (Figure 1) below illustrates the levels of sustainability, and Table 2 illustrates how each criteria was scored in terms of assessing its sustainability based on accessibility.

Settlement analysis was carried out in two ways:

- desk top surveys; and,
- physical surveys.

Where a settlement did not contain a particular service/facility, a distance was measured to the nearest service/facility. This illustrates where there is a deficiency in a service/facility and the level of accessibility to the nearest available service/facility.

Figure 1 – Levels of sustainability

SUSTAINABLE
IMPROVEMENTS REQUIRED TO IMPROVE SUSTAINABILITY
UNSUSTAINABLE – MAJOR IMPROVEMENTS REQUIRED TO BE SUSTAINABLE

The table (Table 2) below displays the system which will be used to determine the sustainability of Astwood Bank and Feckenham, known as the scoring matrix.

Table 2 – Scoring Matrix

	Facility	Service	Activity	Score	Green	Score	Amber	Score	Red
Bus Stop	✓			2	Available in the village	1	Within 400m of the village boundary	0	Over 400m from the village boundary
Bus Frequency		✓		2	Hourly or less	1	2 hourly or less	0	More than 2 hourly
Proximity to defined on/off road cycle routes	✓			2	Available in the village	1	Within 800m of the village boundary	0	Over 800m from the village boundary
Dial-a-ride bus/ community transport		✓		2	Available in the village	1	N/A	0	Service not provided
School bus service		✓		2	Available in the village	1	N/A	0	Service not provided
A1 convenience	✓			2	Available in the village	1	Within 400m of the village boundary	0	Over 400m from the village boundary
Post Office	✓			2	Available in the village	1	Within 800m of the village boundary	0	Over 800m from the village boundary
Post Box	✓			2	Available in the village	1	Within 400m of the village boundary	0	Over 400m from the village boundary
Chemist/ pharmacy	✓			2	Available in the village	1	Within 800m of the village boundary	0	Over 800m from the village boundary
Hairdresser	✓			2	Available in the village	1	Within 800m of the village boundary	0	Over 800m from the village boundary
Car repair garage	✓			2	Available in the village	1	Within 4000m of the village boundary	0	Over 4000m from the village boundary

	Facility	Service	Activity	Score	Green	Score	Amber	Score	Red
Petrol Station	✓			2	Available in the village	1	Within 4000m of the village boundary	0	Over 4000m from the village boundary
Any other shops	✓			2	Available in the village	1	Available within 800m of the village boundary	0	Over 800m from the village boundary
Bank/ Building Society	✓			2	Available in the village	1	Within 800m of the village boundary	0	Over 800m from the village boundary
Cash points/ATM	✓			2	Available in the village	1	Within 800m of the village boundary	0	Over 800m from the village boundary
Public House	✓			2	Available in the village	1	Within 800m of the village boundary	0	Over 800m from the village boundary
Take-aways	✓			2	Available in the village	1	Within 400m of the village boundary	0	Over 400m from the village boundary
A3/A4/A5 uses	✓			2	Available in the village	1	Within 800m of the village boundary	0	Over 800m from the village boundary
Telephone box	✓			2	Available in the village	1	Within 800m of the village boundary	0	Over 800m from the village boundary
Milk round		✓		2	Available in the village	1	N/A	0	Service not provided
Paper round		✓		2	Available in the village	1	N/A	0	Service not provided
Grocery round/ delivery		✓		2	Available in the village	1	N/A	0	Service not provided
Library	✓			2	Available in the village	1	Within 800m of the village boundary	0	Over 800m from the village boundary
Mobile library	✓			2	One or more visits per week, or permanent	1	Less than one visit per week, no permanent	0	No visits and no permanent facility

	Facility	Service	Activity	Score	Green	Score	Amber	Score	Red
					facility within 800m		facility within 800m		within 800m
Place of worship	✓			2	Available in the village	1	Within 400m of the village boundary	0	Over 400m from the village boundary
Village hall/community centre	✓			2	Available in the village	1	Within 600m of the village boundary	0	Over 600m from the village boundary
Fire Station	✓			2	Available in the village	1	Within 1000m of the village boundary	0	Over 1000m from the village boundary
Police Office	✓			2	Available in the village	1	Within 800m of the village boundary	0	Over 800m from the village boundary
Community safety		✓		2	Available in the village	1	N/A	0	Service not provided
Equipped Area for Play	✓			2	Available in the village	1	Within 400m of the village boundary	0	Over 400m from the village boundary
Parks	✓			2	Available in the village	1	Within 800m of the village boundary	0	Over 800m from the village boundary
Recreation ground/sports pitch	✓			2	Available in the village	1	Within 1200m of the village boundary	0	Over 1200m from the village boundary
Sheltered/ social housing	✓			2	Available in the village	1	N/A	0	Facility not within village
Meals on wheels		✓		2	Available in the village	1	N/A	0	Service not provided.
Broadband		✓		2	Available in the village	1	N/A	0	Service not provided.
Youth groups			✓	2	Available in the village	1	Activity provided in neighbouring village	0	Service not provided.
GP surgery/doctors	✓			2	Available in the village	1	Within 1000m of the	0	Over 1000m from the

	Facility	Service	Activity	Score	Green	Score	Amber	Score	Red
health care							village boundary		village boundary
Hospital	✓			2	Available in the village	1	Within 5000m of the village boundary	0	Over 5000m from the village boundary
Dentist	✓			2	Available in the village	1	Within 1000m of the village boundary	0	Over 1000m from the village boundary
Opticians	✓			2	Available in the village	1	Within 1000m of the village boundary	0	Over 1000m from the village boundary
Public nursery	✓			2	Available in the village	1	Within 600m of the village boundary	0	Over 600m from the village boundary
Private nursery	✓			2	Available in the village	1	N/A	0	Service not provided
First school	✓			2	Available in the village	1	Within 600m of the village boundary	0	Over 600m from the village boundary
Middle school	✓			2	Available in the village	1	Within 1500m of the village boundary	0	Over 1500m from the village boundary
High School	✓			2	Available in the village	1	Within 1500m of the village boundary	0	Over 1500m from the village boundary
College or further education	✓			2	Available in the village	1	Within 4000m of the village boundary	0	Over 4000m from the village boundary
Town Centre		✓		2	Within 2000m of the village boundary	1	2000 – 5000m from village boundary	0	Over 5000m from the village boundary
Defined district centre		✓		2	Within 800m of the village boundary	1	800 – 2000m from village boundary	0	Over 2000m from the village boundary
Primarily Employment Area		✓		2	Within 2000m of the village boundary	1	2000 – 5000m from village boundary	0	Over 5000m from the village boundary

	Facility	Service	Activity	Score	Green	Score	Amber	Score	Red
Other employment opportunities B1, B2 and B8 uses		✓		2	Available in the village	1	Up to 2000m from the village boundary	0	Over 2000m from the village boundary

Sources of information for scoring matrix

The distances in the scoring matrix above are based on the following source:

Barton, H. Grant, M. and Guise, R. (2003) *Shaping Neighbourhoods: A guide for health, Sustainability and Vitality*.

This does not provide distances for all of the facilities listed above; therefore the distance of a similar facility has been used.

Survey Results and Analysis

Assessment of key characteristics

This section looks at the key characteristics of the rural settlements of Astwood Bank and Feckenham. It highlights the differences and the similarities of the two settlements.

Profile: Astwood Bank

Previous Local Plan/Strategic Planning Policy Designation: The Worcestershire County Structure Plan (1996-2011) defined Astwood Bank as a sustainable rural settlement. That designation is for villages or urban areas with basic level of service provision (Policy SD.8). As such, the Borough of Redditch Local Plan No. 3 (adopted May 2006) states that development will be permitted to an appropriate level to meet local needs for housing, employment and/or other community facilities and services within the settlement boundary. Furthermore, Local Plan No.3 states that outside the urban area of Redditch, Astwood Bank will be the focus for local needs development which is genuinely required to meet the needs of the rural areas throughout the plan period (Policy B(RA).8).

Population: 2885 (ONS mid 2006 Population Estimates)

Population change (2001 to 2006): Increase of 3.96%

Location description: A settlement in the name of Astwood grew in the vicinity of Astwood Court (mentioned in records as early as the 14th Century) and the description 'Bank' was added later as the village developed on the higher land along the Ridgeway. In 1617 it is thought that the first dwellings were built on Astwood Common – the area that later became the village of Astwood Bank. For the next 200 years cottagers and craftsmen set up in the vicinity. In 1816 the common was enclosed and Astwood Bank grew in a more systematic way with roads being laid out. Astwood Bank experienced rapid growth in the 19th Century with the development of the needle industry.³

³ http://www.goredditch.co.uk/astwood_bank.aspx

Astwood Bank is situated only 2.5 miles south of Redditch Town Centre. Astwood Bank District Centre forms part of the Borough's secondary level of shopping, meeting daily needs for basic items.

Profile: Feckenham

Previous Local Plan/Strategic Planning Policy Designation: Local Plan No.3 considers Feckenham to be an unsustainable rural settlement, due to its lack of local facilities. As such, Policy B(RA).9 restricts development in the settlement of Feckenham to the limited extension, alteration, conversion or replacement of appropriate buildings; infilling within the settlement boundary and; affordable housing on exceptions sites.

Population: 1276 (ONS mid 2006 Population Estimates)

Population change (2001 to 2006): Increase of 7.50%

Location description: A settlement has existed at Feckenham since Roman times and grew up alongside the Saltway, a Roman trading route. Feckenham was listed in the Domesday Book as 'fecceham' (meaning a clearing by a stream, or an enclosure or homestead) and was once a significant site situated on the ancient Saltway between Alcester and Droitwich (now the B4090).⁴ There has been significant royal interest attributed to its location deep within the Feckenham Royal Forest. Royal interest was severed during the 16th Century as disafforestation for the salt industry and building purposes had drastically reduced the size of the forest. Although weaving and glove making have been important local industries in Feckenham, the needle-making industry has had the greatest impact. Several buildings were purpose built for the industry and many houses adapted to accommodate the needle makers. There was little change in the latter part of the twentieth century and the village of Feckenham is remarkable for having altered little in form or scale over the centuries, remaining relatively compact with its historic street pattern clearly defined.⁵ Barretts of Feckenham has been a feature in the village since the 1850s when John Barrett began trading as a country saddler, a tradition maintained for over 100 years by his family. Post-war, the Barretts store expanded to sell camping equipment and today has an extensive range of outdoor equipment.

⁴ Feckenham Parish Plan, October 2006.

⁵ A detailed history of Feckenham can be found in the Feckenham Conservation Area Character Appraisal (adopted by Redditch Borough Council April 2006).

Feckenham is approximately 5 miles from Redditch Town Centre and the village is focused around the village square. Along with Barretts there are two pubs and two parish churches. The village also has its own school and well used Village Hall.

Settlement Size

Table 3 – Settlement size

Astwood Bank	Feckenham
73 hectares	10 hectares

Settlement size can be used as a function to determine the status of a settlement. However it should be noted that the settlement size does not always correspond to the population size therefore making assumptions from this information should be done with a degree of caution.

Comparisons between Astwood Bank and Feckenham

In relation to Astwood Bank and Feckenham there is a significant variance in population. Astwood Bank has a much larger population than Feckenham; this is an indication that Astwood Bank provides a different function than that of Feckenham. In theory, the fact that Astwood Bank supports a larger population means it should also provide a greater level of services. Settlement size and population will have a significant bearing on the classification of Astwood Bank and Feckenham within the settlement hierarchy.

Determining the sustainability of rural settlements

In order to assess sustainability of the settlements a number of factors were considered, these include:

- Transportation and accessibility;
- Convenience services;
- Community Services;
- Health care;
- Education provision;
- Access to employment and services.

The following section considers each of these factors as they relate to Astwood Bank and Feckenham. There are tables which score both of the settlements according to the traffic light scoring matrix set out above. The 'yes' and 'no' columns in the tables indicate whether or not the service is available in the settlement. Appendix A provides the overall settlement scores.

Transportation and Accessibility

Transport links to Redditch Town Centre and other centres such as Stratford-on-Avon or Worcester are vital to the sustainability of Astwood Bank and Feckenham. Public transport links are particularly important, in terms of frequency and actual provision. Where there are high frequency service levels there is more of an opportunity for residents to access higher tier areas such as Redditch Town Centre without the use of a car. Therefore the actual distance of a service or facility to a settlement is not necessarily the most important factor because they may not be accessible via public transport. This assessment considers whether services/facilities can be accessed via walking or cycling.

Table 4 presents the scores for Astwood Bank and Feckenham in relation to transport services.

Table 4 – Transport Scores

Settlement	Transport score	Total number of services/facilities within the village
Astwood Bank	8	4
Feckenham	6	4

In terms of scoring for transport services/facilities in Astwood Bank and Feckenham there is little variation in the scores. The highest possible score is 10, and therefore Astwood Bank is close to achieving a high level of sustainability against this scoring system (with 8).

Astwood Bank	Yes	No	Distance (m)	Score
Bus Stop	✓			2
Bus Frequency	✓			2
Proximity to on/off road cycle routes		✓	1919	0
Dial a ride/community transport	✓			2
School bus service	✓			2

Feckenham	Yes	No	Distance (m)	Score
Bus Stop	✓			2
Bus Frequency		✓		0
Proximity to on/off road cycle routes		✓	5599	0
Dial a ride/community transport	✓			2
School bus service	✓			2

The bus service for Astwood Bank runs every half an hour, whereas the service for Feckenham is very infrequent. The fact that Feckenham has a bus stop enables it to obtain a 2 score, although the important factor in terms of public transport is how often an area is served. Where there are frequent bus services connecting rural areas with service locations such as Redditch Town Centre, there is an increased choice of means of accessing the services/facilities they need. Therefore Astwood Bank serves its residents well whereas Feckenham ranks poorly.

Despite Astwood Bank being served by a half hourly bus service, after 7pm there is no service to or from Astwood Bank, therefore this reduces the opportunity to access the evening economy in Redditch Town Centre or further afield via public transport directly from Astwood Bank.

Convenience Services

Convenience services are those services that are considered to be essential or needed on a frequent basis. For the purposes of this assessment, the list of convenience services includes:

- A1 convenience;
- Post Office;
- Post Box;
- Chemist/pharmacy;
- Hairdressers;
- Car repair garage;
- Petrol Station;
- Any other shops;
- Bank/Building society;
- Cash point/ATM;
- Public House;
- Take-Aways;
- A3/A4/A5 uses;
- Telephone box;
- Milk round;
- Paper round;
- Grocery round/delivery.

Table 5 below provides the total scores for Astwood Bank and Feckenham.

Table 5 Total Convenience Services Score

Settlement	Convenience score	Total number of services/facilities within the village
Astwood Bank	32	16
Feckenham	19	9

Both settlements benefit from a degree of convenience services and the highest possible score was 34. The tables below illustrate the matrix of the services offered in Astwood Bank and Feckenham.

Astwood Bank	Yes	No	Distance (m)	Score
A1 convenience	✓			2
Post Office	✓			2
Post Box	✓			2

Chemist/pharmacy	✓			2
Hairdressers	✓			2
Car repair garage	✓			2
Petrol Station	✓			2
Any other shops	✓			2
Bank/Building society		✓	2854	0
Cash point/ATM	✓			2
Public House	✓			2
Take-Aways	✓			2
A3/A4/A5 uses	✓			2
Telephone box	✓			2
Milk round	✓			2
Paper round	✓			2
Grocery round/delivery	✓			2

Feckenham	Yes	No	Distance (m)	Score
A1 convenience		✓ ⁶	3385	0
Post Office		✓	3385	0
Post Box	✓			2
Chemist/pharmacy		✓	3379	0
Hairdressers		✓	3374	0
Car repair garage	✓			2
Petrol Station		✓	3524	1
Any other shops	✓			2
Bank/Building society		✓	6581	0
Cash point/ATM		✓	3385	0
Public House	✓			2
Take-Aways		✓	3374	0
A3/A4/A5 uses	✓			2
Telephone box	✓			2
Milk round	✓			2
Paper round	✓			2

⁶ Proposed for 2008

Grocery round/delivery	✓			2
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Astwood Bank is well served and only fails to have a bank or building society within its boundary. In comparison Feckenham is served very poorly for convenience goods. In relation to adjacent services the residents of Feckenham have to rely either on the services available in Astwood Bank, Studley (Warwickshire) or Redditch to accommodate their convenience needs.

Based on these scoring criteria Astwood Bank can be considered to have sustainable access to convenience services. Based on the population size of Feckenham and the limited level of convenience services the area can be considered to be unsustainable.

Community Services

Community services are services which are provided for the use of the community. For the purposes of this assessment, they include services such as:

- Library;
- Mobile library;
- Place of worship;
- Village hall/community centre;
- Police Office;
- Community Safety Patrol;
- Equipped Area for Play;
- Parks;
- Recreation grounds/sports pitch;
- Sheltered or social housing;
- Meals on wheels;
- Broadband;
- Youth Club.

Table 6 below provides the scores for Astwood Bank and Feckenham in relation to community services.

Table 6 Total Community Services Score

Settlement	Community service score	Total number of services/facilities within the village
Astwood Bank	21	10
Feckenham	19	9

The community services scores for Astwood Bank and Feckenham are fairly comparable. The highest possible score was 28; however neither settlement was close to achieving this, but neither settlement performs particularly poorly. Astwood Bank is considered slightly more sustainable than Feckenham in relation to community services based on its higher score. The Tables below provides the scores for Astwood Bank and Feckenham.

Astwood Bank	Yes	No	Distance (m)	Score
Library		✓	2649	0
Mobile library	✓		Visited every week	2
Place of worship	✓			2
Village hall/community centre	✓			2

Fire Station		✓	5410	0
Police office		✓	2039	0
Community safety patrol	✓			2
Equipped area for play	✓			2
Parks	✓			2
Recreation ground/sports pitch		✓	377	1
Sheltered or social housing	✓			2
Meals on wheels	✓			2
Broadband	✓			2
Youth clubs	✓			2

Feckenham	Yes	No	Distance (m)	Score
Library		✓	5897	0
Mobile library	✓		Visited on the 1st Wednesday of every month	1
Place of worship	✓			2
Village hall/community centre	✓			2
Fire Station		✓	7531	0
Police office		✓	4507	0
Community safety patrol	✓			2
Equipped area for play	✓			2
Parks	✓			2
Recreation ground/sports pitch	✓			2
Sheltered or social housing		✓	3228	0
Meals on wheels	✓			2
Broadband	✓			2
Youth clubs	✓			2

The above tables illustrate that both settlements are relatively well served by Community Facilities, although certain community facilities are less well established, for example people living in both settlements have to travel some distance to a dentist and opticians.

Health Care

Access to basic health care facilities can be used as a measure of sustainability. The provision of health care should be within a distance that people can easily travel to and via a range of transport options. In relation to this assessment the categories include:

- GP surgery/doctors health centre;
- Hospital;
- Dentist;
- Opticians.

Table 7 below presents the healthcare scores for Astwood Bank and Feckenham.

Table 7 Total Healthcare Scores

Settlement	Healthcare score	Total number of services/facilities within the village
Astwood Bank	2	1
Feckenham	2	1

The highest possible score for healthcare facilities was 8; both Astwood Bank and Feckenham only scored 2. The below tables provide the matrix of responses for Astwood Bank and Feckenham.

Astwood Bank	Yes	No	Distance (m)	Score
GP surgery/doctors health centre	✓			2
Hospital		✓	2095	0
Dentist		✓	1952	0
Opticians		✓	4200	0

Feckenham	Yes	No	Distance (m)	Score
GP surgery/doctors health centre	✓			2
Hospital		✓	5736	0
Dentist		✓	4439	0
Opticians		✓	6442	0

The above tables illustrate that both settlements have access to a GP surgery, but can be considered unsustainable when measured against the other criteria. However the fundamental point is that the residents of Astwood Bank have a greater range of

methods for accessing these facilities in terms of public transport. The healthcare services are also a lot closer to Astwood Bank and Feckenham. Therefore this should be given consideration when assessing the overall level of sustainability of both the settlements.

It is not unusual for rural areas to lack significant access to healthcare facilities, generally due to the size of a settlement not necessarily needing a significant healthcare provider.

Education Provision

Access to education is another good measure of sustainability. However it is noted that with education in particular, children living in the area may not go to the local school, and therefore the results in this section should be treated with a level of caution. The categories include:

- Public nursery;
- Private day nursery;
- First school;
- Middle school;
- High School;
- College or Further Education.

Table 8 below presents the scores for Astwood Bank and Feckenham in relation to education.

Table 8 Total Education Scores

Settlement	Healthcare score	Total number of services/facilities within the village
Astwood Bank	6	3
Feckenham	4	2

The highest possible score for education was 10, although it should be noted that although both settlements are not served by a private nursery they are both served by a public nursery. Therefore there is nursery provision within the area, although it is accepted that there is not significant choice of nurseries. The below tables provide the matrix of responses for Astwood Bank and Feckenham.

Astwood Bank	Yes	No	Distance (m)	Score
Public nursery	✓			2

Private day nursery		✓		0
First school	✓			2
Middle school	✓			2
High School		✓	2180	0
College or Further Education		✓	2180	0

Feckenham	Yes	No	Distance (m)	Score
Public nursery	✓			2
Private day nursery		✓		0
First School	✓			2
Middle School		✓	3183	0
High School		✓	5859	0
College or Further Education		✓	5859	0

Both settlements are serviced by a school bus service although it should be noted that Astwood Bank is closer to schools than Feckenham and therefore can be considered more sustainable. Access to school bus services is fundamental to the rural settlements to ensure they have access to education facilities.

Location of employment opportunities and services

This section looks at the provision of employment opportunities and access to defined shopping areas. For the purposes of this assessment the categories include:

- Town Centre;
- Defined District Centre;
- Primarily Employment Area;
- Other employment opportunities (non retail).

Table 9 below presents the scores for Astwood Bank and Feckenham in relation to employment and defined shopping areas.

Table 9 Total Employment and Services Scores

Settlement	Employment and Services score	Total number of services/facilities within the village
Astwood Bank	6	2
Feckenham	1	0

The above table indicates that Astwood Bank is well served by employment opportunities whereas Feckenham has limited scope for employment opportunities. It is accepted that with a higher population, Astwood Bank should have a greater provision of opportunities than Feckenham. It is also accepted that although the opportunity of employment is available in terms of individual companies, there may not be any capacity at the companies to accommodate employees.

Astwood Bank has a defined district centre, but is not within close proximity to Redditch town centre, this is the only criteria that Astwood Bank fails to achieve under this category, and therefore Astwood Bank can be considered to be relatively sustainable against this scoring system. In comparison Feckenham ranks very poorly against this scoring system and does not even have one service/facility within its boundary.

The below tables provide the matrix of responses for Astwood Bank and Feckenham.

Astwood Bank	Yes	No	Distance (m)	Score
Town Centre		✓	6800	0
Defined district centre	✓			2
Protected Employment Area		✓	1224	2
Other employment opportunities (non retail)	✓			2

Feckenham	Yes	No	Distance (m)	Score
Town Centre		✓	12,600	0
Defined district centre		✓	3379	0
Protected Employment Area		✓	3388	1
Other employment opportunities (non retail)		✓		0

Although Astwood Bank has employment opportunities within its boundary it should be noted that a number of industrial units have closed within the area and the land remains vacant.

Total Scores

Table 10 presents the total scores for Astwood Bank and Feckenham after their assessment against each of the sustainability scoring criteria. It also identifies the total number of services and facilities available within the boundary of each settlement.

Table 10 Total Sustainability Scores

Settlement	Sustainability score	Total number of services/facilities within the village
Astwood Bank	75	36
Feckenham	51	25

The overall scores for Astwood Bank and Feckenham indicate that Astwood Bank is considerably more sustainable than Feckenham. There are some clear similarities in terms of the facilities/services on offer for example the provision of a GP surgery. However where both settlements are determined to be 'red' in terms of scoring, there are still differences between the two settlements, for example although Astwood Bank is scored as 'red' for accessing a library it is still considerably closer than that of Feckenham.

It can be argued that further development within both settlements will help meet the needs of local residents; this is particularly prevalent for health care provision.

Overall the total scores reflect the level of service provision within each settlement.

Sustainable Settlements

The sustainability of a settlement is in part determined by the level of access to services/facilities. An important component of this is ensuring that the services remain viable and can be retained.

The sustainability of a settlement together with the availability of suitable sites, will impact on the ability of the settlement to accommodate further growth. However it should be noted that where a settlement is deemed sustainable this does not mean it will necessarily be recommended to accommodate significant growth.

A fundamental purpose of the study was to highlight levels of sustainability in Astwood Bank and Feckenham. Astwood Bank has demonstrated that it has a higher level of sustainability than that of Feckenham.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Redditch as a town is considered to be the most sustainable of all settlements in the Borough.

Overall the report has illustrated that Astwood Bank is more sustainable than Feckenham, and that the settlement of Astwood Bank can be considered to be a sustainable rural settlement, whereas Feckenham should be classified as an unsustainable rural settlement.

Key Recommendations and Issues to consider

The audit of services and facilities, and the analysis of contextual data, has demonstrated the respective sustainability of Astwood Bank and Feckenham. This information has been used to draw up a settlement hierarchy which should be considered as a suitable approach for the Core Strategy Development Plan Document to progress with.

The key issues to consider are the omissions from this report, such as the capacity of existing services and the actual capability of Astwood Bank/Feckenham to expand.

Establishing the Settlement hierarchy

The draft West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy (WMRSS) identifies Redditch Town Centre as a tier 4 centre. Redditch town provides the highest level services/facilities provision and it is also designated as a Settlement of Significant Development, Local Regeneration area and Strategic Centre. It was for these reasons that Redditch was excluded from this Borough-wide study.

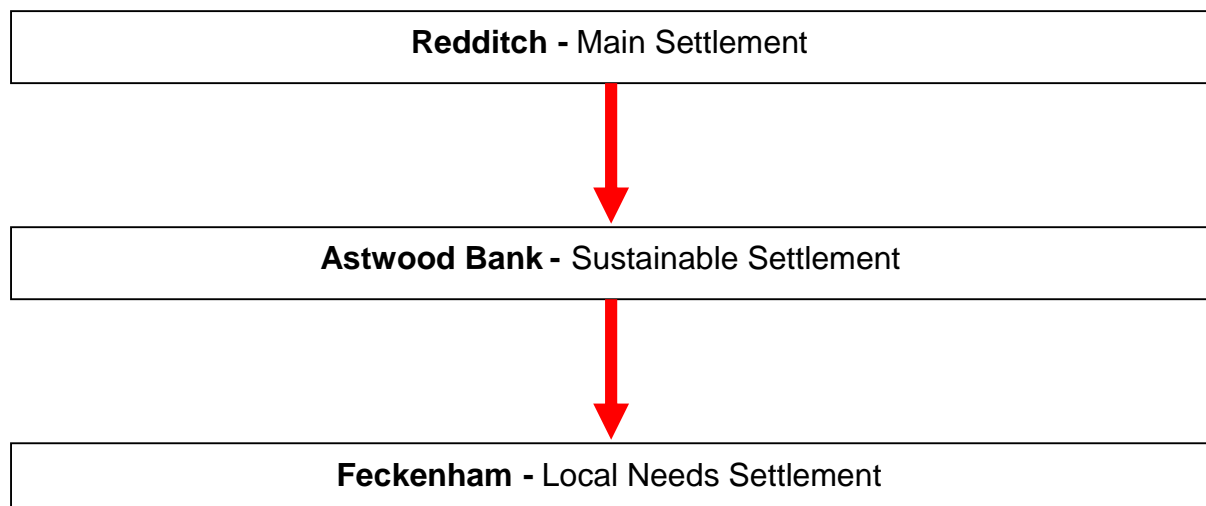
The assessment of sustainability demonstrates that Astwood Bank offers a range of services and facilities, many of which are accessed by the residents of Feckenham.

It should be noted that this study has not looked at the capacity of Astwood Bank and Feckenham to expand, nor has it identified whether services/facilities are at capacity. Therefore if growth is to be considered in either of the settlements further work should be carried out.

Clearly the level of services/facilities in Feckenham makes it an unsustainable settlement, whereas Astwood Bank can be considered to be a sustainable rural settlement.

Figure 2 below sets out the recommended settlement hierarchy:

Figure 2 – Proposed Settlement Hierarchy



Appendix A – Settlement Scores

Astwood Bank	Yes	No	Distance (m)	Score
Bus Stop	✓			2
Bus Frequency	✓			2
Proximity to on/off road cycle routes		✓	1919	0
Dial a ride/community transport	✓			2
School bus service	✓			2
A1 convenience	✓			2
Post Office	✓			2
Post Box	✓			2
Chemist/pharmacy	✓			2
Hairdressers	✓			2
Car repair garage	✓			2
Petrol Station	✓			2
Any other shops	✓			2
Bank/Building society		✓	2854	0
Cash point/ATM	✓			2
Public House	✓			2
Take-Aways	✓			2
A3/A4/A5 uses	✓			2
Telephone box	✓			2
Milk round	✓			2
Paper round	✓			2
Grocery round/delivery	✓			2
Library		✓	2649	0
Mobile library	✓		Visited every week	2
Place of worship	✓			2
Village hall/community centre	✓			2
Fire Station		✓	5410	0
Police office		✓	2039	0
Community safety patrol	✓			2

Astwood Bank	Yes	No	Distance (m)	Score
Equipped area for play	✓			2
Parks	✓			2
Recreation ground/sports pitch		✓	377	1
Sheltered or social housing	✓			2
Meals on wheels	✓			2
Broadband	✓			2
Youth clubs	✓			2
GP surgery/doctors health centre	✓			2
Hospital		✓	2095	0
Dentist		✓	1952	0
Opticians		✓	4200	0
Public nursery	✓			2
Private day nursery		✓		0
First school	✓			2
Middle school	✓			2
High School		✓	2180	0
College or Further Education		✓	2180	0
Town Centre		✓	6800	0
Defined district centre	✓			2
Protected Employment Area		✓	1224	2
Other employment opportunities (non retail)	✓			2

Feckenham	Yes	No	Distance (m)	Score
Bus Stop	✓			2
Bus Frequency		✓		0
Proximity to on/off road cycle routes		✓	5599	0
Dial a ride/community transport	✓			2
School bus service	✓			2
A1 convenience		✓*	3385	0
Post Office		✓	3385	0

Feckenham	Yes	No	Distance (m)	Score
Post Box	✓			2
Chemist/pharmacy		✓	3379	0
Hairdressers		✓	3374	0
Car repair garage	✓			2
Petrol Station		✓	3524	1
Any other shops	✓			2
Bank/Building society		✓	6581	0
Cash point/ATM		✓	3385	0
Public House	✓			2
Take-Aways		✓	3374	0
A3/A4/A5 uses	✓			2
Telephone box	✓			2
Milk round	✓			2
Paper round	✓			2
Grocery round/delivery	✓			2
Library		✓	5897	0
Mobile library	✓		Visited on the 1st Wednesday of every month	1
Place of worship	✓			2
Village hall/community centre	✓			2
Fire Station		✓	7531	0
Police office		✓	4507	0
Community safety patrol	✓			2
Equipped area for play	✓			2
Parks	✓			2
Recreation ground/sports pitch	✓			2
Sheltered or social housing		✓	3228	0
Meals on wheels	✓			2
Broadband	✓			2
Youth clubs	✓			2
GP surgery/doctors health centre	✓			2

Feckenham	Yes	No	Distance (m)	Score
Hospital		✓	5736	0
Dentist		✓	4439	0
Opticians		✓	6442	0
Public nursery	✓			2
Private day nursery		✓		0
First School	✓			2
Middle School		✓	3183	0
High School		✓	5859	0
College or Further Education		✓	5859	0
Town Centre		✓	12600	0
Defined district centre		✓	3379	0
Protected Employment Area		✓	3388	1
Other employment opportunities (non retail)		✓		0

*** Proposed for 2008.**