

Hi,

I have a couple of comments I wanted to make regarding the contents of the document.

Firstly. Section 2.30

I recognise this isn't the detailed investigation but this section overlooks key factors in identifying locations for new development such as:

The current utilisation percentage and capacity for a service to grow.

The feasibility and long-term future of a service.

The accessibility of a service.

The local access and parking surrounding each service.

Otherwise this objective will wholly fail to 'sustain the vibrancy of our rural communities'.

Linked and in response to Section 3.36

- The proposed Settlement Hierarchy is overly simplistic and contains misleading data by only considering current amenities and not the amenities capability for growth or future. It also overlooks one of the most fundamental key facilities which is safe access and capacity for additional load.
- I also think that all rural settlements should be broken down into areas of no more than 1.5 miles, ideally 1 mile in the largest dimension. The need to drive within a 'settlement' to access any facility is at odds with the plans desire to discourage the sustainable and environmental reduction of the use of vehicles. Given a typical walking speed that is a walking journey time of up to 30 minutes which is 1hr return. Already more than most people would bother with and this time would be larger for young children, the elderly, or anyone with restricted mobility. If the expectation is that people will drive then each facility/service should only be allowed to be considered if it can be proven to have sufficient capacity and parking.
- What constitutes 'good' public transport should also be defined. The existence of a service is not sufficient if it is not regular enough, direct enough, or with enough destinations to make it useful.

More specifically I can only comment on what I know so I am commenting on Grateley but I feel that many of these points make an example which could apply to other villages when they are considered more carefully.

- The pub is currently closed without a landlord. This is a recurring theme over the last few years and the future (ongoing financial feasibility) of the pub should be considered before proudly counting it as an asset. The pub next to the station and the shop both closed a number of years ago for not being viable.
- I do not know how full the village school is but it has no land or additional buildings to be able to increase capacity. It should not be possible to count an asset as supporting growth if it has not been established to have sufficient room for growth itself to support this. Even if the school has spaces there is no parking and the roads are already busy and dangerous to pass at school drop off and pick up times and

with parked cars reducing visibility and creating obstacles and no pavements or street lighting for winter nights.

- The road through Grateley village between the High Street and the turning to St Leonards Church is already dangerous. It is the main route through the village so is busy with cars, bikes, tractors, delivery drivers, buses, school coaches, lorries etc but has a large number of sharp blind bends and in many places is barely wide enough for two cars to pass, certainly not bigger vehicles which is further exacerbated with the parked cars often alongside the school. As a pedestrian who has to walk this section of road it is extremely unpleasant with poor visibility and I have witnessed a number of near misses, and as a driver have been closer to many other vehicles than I'd have liked. I already worry for when my child is old enough to attend school and we have to walk this bit of road together but there is no credible alternative.
- The village hall parking is limited and, when full, prevents access to the public amenity of the glass bottle recycling banks. There is no suitable overflow parking.
- I think the Settlements of Grateley Station, Palestine and Grateley should not be considered as one whole. This is a span of about 2.7 miles which is not a distance that can be considered walkable for access to each of the services and facilities which are being counted. There are minimal pavements (around Grateley Station only) and no road space to add any but the adjoining roads are not fun to walk as an adult, worse with a dog or a young child and utterly impractical in the dark. The need to drive within the 'settlement' to access each facility is at odds with the plans desire to discourage the sustainable and environmental reduction of the use of vehicles.

Finally I couldn't see that this was mentioned but for rural development any new properties should be mandated to have a minimum of three parking spaces. Few of the villages have roads suitable for the on-road parking of visiting vehicles and the average rural household has at least two cars and it can easily be foreseen that even a one bed flat is likely, within its lifespan, to have two tenants each with their own vehicle that it will need to accommodate. It would be inexcusable not to consider this (and the impact of not allowing for this) for rural new builds.

Please note I am genuinely in support of considerate rural development but it needs to be done intelligently and safely.

Kind Regards,  
Rhiannon

