Village Facilities and Rural Transport Survey 2018 (VFRTS) – Proposed Methodology

1. Purpose

1.1   The Village Facilities and Rural Transport Survey has been used in the past to provide evidence to indicate the <u>comparative</u> sustainability of rural settlements across Malvern Hills and Wychavon districts, to inform the application of development plan policies, most recently the South Worcestershire Development Plan 2016 (SWDP).

1.2   The survey:

- Identifies rural settlements that have a range of local services and facilities, including public transport, and then ranks them.

- Provides a useful evidence base for planning policy, planning decisions, other council services, neighbourhood plans and other agencies about the availability of rural services and facilities at a particular point in time. This then helps establish a hierarchy of rural settlements for plan making purposes.

1.3   The last fully comprehensive VFRTS survey was published in December 2012. The VFRTS is being updated in 2018 to provide evidence to help inform the review of the SWDP. It will assess the current level of local facilities, services and public transport in the rural settlements, show how this has changed since 2012, and see how this affects the ranking of settlements.

1.4   It should be noted that the Village Facilities and Rural Transport Survey provides background information on the levels of facilities and services in rural settlements but <u>it is not a policy document</u> in itself and it does not establish a strategy for the distribution of future development. "The VFRTS is not the sole basis for determining the sustainability of a location. Other factors e.g. environmental constraints, or the range of local housing opportunities etc. will also be relevant, but this information will not be collected as part of this survey, but will be informed by other evidence."

2. National planning policy background

2.1   National planning policy, and in particular the National Planning Policy Framework (2012) (NPPF) puts sustainability at the heart of its requirements for the planning system. The first sentence of NPPF states: *"The purpose of planning is to help achieve sustainable development".* Paragraph 7 outlines the three dimensions to sustainable development: an economic role; a social role; and an environmental role.

2.2   Under the objective of "supporting a prosperous rural economy", the NPPF also requires that:

Paragraph 84 Planning policies and decisions should enable:

a) The sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well designed new buildings;

b) The development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses;

c) Sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside; and

d) The retention and development of accessible local services and community facilities, such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship.

Paragraph 93 To provide the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs, planning policies and decisions should

a) Plan positively for the provision and use of shared spaces, community facilities (such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship) and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments;

b) Take into account and support the delivery of local strategies to improve health, social and cultural wellbeing for all sections of the community;

c) Guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services, particularly where this would reduce the community's ability to meet its day-to-day needs;

d) Ensure that established shops, facilities and services are able to develop and modernise, and are retained for the benefit of the community; and

e) Ensure an integrated approach to considering the location of housing, economic uses and community facilities and services."

2.3 The draft review of the NPPF, published on 5 March 2018 has an increased focus on housing delivery and Local Planning Authorities are no longer required to produce detailed development management policies but they are required to still prepare strategic policies. This is outlined at paragraph 20 of the NPPF review:

"20. The strategic policies required for the area of each local planning authority should include those policies, and strategic site allocations, necessary to provide:

a) An overall strategy for the pattern and scale of development;

b) The homes and workplaces needed, including affordable housing;

c) Appropriate retail, leisure and other commercial development;

d) Infrastructure for transport, telecommunications, security, waste management, water supply, wastewater, flood risk and coastal change management, and the provision of minerals and energy (including heat);

e) Community facilities (such as health, education and cultural infrastructure); and

f) Climate change mitigation and adaptation, and conservation and enhancement of the natural, built and historic environment, including landscape and green infrastructure. "

2.4   The revised NPPF consultation draft 2018 also states under "Local Policies"

"30. Local policies can be used by authorities and communities to set out more detailed policies for specific areas, neighbourhoods or types of development. This can include allocating sites, the provision of infrastructure and community facilities at a local level, establishing design principles and setting out development management policies.

31. Neighbourhood planning gives communities the power to develop a shared vision for their area. Neighbourhood plans can shape, direct and help to deliver sustainable development, by influencing local planning decisions as part of the statutory development plan. Neighbourhood plans should not promote less development than set out in the strategic policies for the area, or undermine those strategic policies16."

2.5   Thus, comparative information on the level of services and facilities available in settlements and their accessibility in south Worcestershire can provide a useful context for local plan policies and for those drawing up Neighbourhood Plans.

3. Identifying Sustainable Rural Settlements

3.1   The current published VFRTS methodology is considered to be fit for purpose but it still needs to be reviewed. Therefore the settlements identified in the 2012 edition of the VFRTS are to be re-surveyed. The methodology is outlined below.

3.2   As for the earlier surveys, **the 2018 survey will be a "snap shot" in time**, so it is recognised that services and facilities may be gained or lost over time, or transport services changed, but this is inevitable with any such survey work.

4. Methodology and Data collection

Part 1: Facilities and Services Survey

4.1   The information on services and facilities is to be obtained from a survey undertaken by Parish Councils, and further desktop work if required by planning officers, to verify the level of services and facilities. The liaison with Parish Councils is important, as physical surveys will not necessarily reveal all facilities and services, for example; the uses of parish halls for play groups/ GP surgeries etc. It should also be easier to verify/ add information now that some of it is published on Parish Council websites.

4.2   The survey will be carried out as follows:

- All rural settlements surveyed in the 2012 VFRTS will be revisited. The list of settlements is contained in **Appendix 1**, along with the list of Parish Councils.

- Parish Councils will be asked to complete the survey forms, with a separate response for each settlement in their parish, based on their local knowledge..

- A map of each settlement identified in their Parish area will be published on the SWDP website, with a link provided, to confirm the survey areas.

- Parish Councils will also be asked to update any information they have on the nearest location most likely to be used to access services and facilities if they are not present within the settlement. This will give some indication of the relationship between some settlements.

- Planning officers will collate the results; add any additional information if required, and apply scores based on the VFRTS scoring system, outlined below.

4.3 The survey identifies facilities and services in terms of whether they are Key Services or Secondary Services:

These are defined as:

Key Services

Shop and / or post office / general store
General Practitioner's Surgery
Primary / Secondary School Village / Parish Hall
Employment Opportunity (within 1 km of the settlement)[1]

Secondary Services:

Newsagent
Mobile Shop service (NB not internet deliveries)
Petrol filling station (if contains a shop, the shop will come under a key service, as above).
Garage for car sales / repairs
Other Shopping Facility (i.e. not a general stores or post office)
Bank
Cash Point
Other financial facility
Public House
Café / restaurant
Recreation Ground
Other recreational facility
Library / Mobile library
Church
Dentist
Pharmacy
Veterinary Practice
Other Health Facility
Pre School Nursery
Adult Evening Class

---

[1] Information on other employment opportunities nearby can also be provided and taken into account. What counts as employment: Business uses- offices, light industry, storage and distribution; care facilities, leisure facilities; farm enterprises; retail; service industry etc.

Scoring for facilities and services

4.4   A scoring system will then be applied to both key and secondary services as follows:
- 3 points awarded for each Key Service
- 1 point for each Secondary Service.

Note that the presence of more than one type of key service will not attract any additional scores, so, for example, a village with two pubs still only attracts a score of 1 point.

Appendix 3 will contain a summary of the information received on the number and type of services in each settlement.

Appendix 4 will indicate the nearest location likely to be used to access services and facilities if they are not present within the settlement, based on Parish Council advice.

Appendix 5 will indicate the locations most likely to be used to access services and facilities, based on Parish Council advice.

Appendix 6 will set out information received in respect of local employment opportunities
.
Appendix 7 will give an overall summary of the facilities and services and the resultant scores.

Part 2: Rural Transport Survey

4.5   Public transport that serves the rural settlements is mainly in the form of bus services in south Worcestershire, although a few villages are served by railway stations. Formerly, the information on rural bus services was obtained through trawling through bus timetables. This is time consuming, and is easily out of date when services are frequently amended by the County Council. The County Council have therefore been approached to help gather this information, which they may already hold in part.

4.6   The list of settlements surveyed (see **Appendix 1**) for the VFRTS Survey will also be utilised for the survey of rural public transport.

4.7   A specification for each of the journey types was established in the 2012 survey which defined the days of operation and the time required at destination. For example, the journey specification for food shopping stated that the service should run to a town centre on at least two days from Monday to Saturday and allow 2 to 4 hours at the destination, with the outgoing journey taking place after 9.30am.

4.8   In the past survey, specialised rural public transport such as community buses, supermarket buses, taxis, and dial-a-ride were not included in the survey. This was due to a lack of comprehensive information and their relative infrequency compared to normal bus service timetables. The County Council now considers that these types of transport services are more prevalent in the County and it has been decided to now include them in the VFRTS. The information will be gathered form the County Council.

4.9   To assess the accessibility of rural settlements, a range of common journey types were identified for the 2012 survey for which bus services might be used. The list has been amended for the forthcoming survey, to exclude evening trips, as it is considered that these are less important to identifying sustainable transport links than day time trips to essential services. The following journey types will now be surveyed for by bus / community transport services over a typical week:

        A.   Journey to work
        B.   Food shopping
        C.   Doctor's appointment
        D.   Hospital appointment
        E.   Social event (day)
        F.   Sport / recreation (day)
        G.   Journey to school / college / higher education

4.10   **Appendix 8:** Will summarise the nearest location used to access services and facilities by settlement surveyed (same as Appendix 5 of main VFRTS report).

4.11   **Appendix 9:** Will provide a summary of locations most likely to be used if services and facilities not present in the village (same as Appendix 4 of main VFRTS report).

4.12   **Appendix 10:** Will outline the chosen journey types, the possible locations to access the defined service or activity and the minimum service specification for each journey type. It is accepted that whilst some of the service specifications are similar, the categorisation of different journey types would allow an assessment to be made of the ability of a settlement to access different services and facilities located elsewhere.

4.13   **Appendix 11:** Will illustrate the rural transport results using the methodology described above. The 'notes' column relates to limitations of the accessibility of selected services and any assumptions made based on these limitations.

4.14   Many of the journey types identified for the public transport survey are located in town centres; therefore only limited information would be gained on public transport links between settlements in rural areas. To analyse the level of relative sustainability in the rural areas, a supplementary survey will examine public transport to the ten highest scoring settlements identified through the Village Facilities Survey. This would help provide an indication of their accessibility by public transport form surrounding settlements.

4.15   **Appendix 12:** Will outline the results from the results from the supplementary survey of the rural public transport to the ten rural settlements, which according to the results of the Village Facilities Survey have the highest scores for services and facilities. The schedule indicates those rural settlements with a daytime rural public transport service to the identified settlement.

4.16   Note that the 2012 survey also included a section on internet (broadband) accessibility. This is not included this time as the internet is now much more generally available, even in rural areas for accessing some services, and an

assumption is made that most places can access it, in some form, even if not at high speed. This therefore means that the availability of internet services is a more neutral consideration in understanding the sustainability of a settlement.

4.17 **Appendix 13:** Will show the final amalgamated result (equates to Appendix 15 in 2012 VFRTS).

5. <u>Categorisation of settlements</u>

5.1 Settlements are defined in 5 categories (cat 4 has two sub categories) to align with the 2012 survey to enable comparison. The threshold for the categories of settlements will be devised when all the survey results are known.

Category 1
Settlements in this category have at least four key services and score at least 16 points in the Village Facilities Survey. In addition they have access to all <u>daytime</u> journey types (A, B, C, D, E, F, and G).

Category 2
Settlements in this category have at least two key services and have access to at least a daily bus service for employment and shopping purposes (A and B journey types).

Category 3
Settlements in this category have at least one key service (other than a parish / village hall) and have access within the settlement to at least a daily bus service to a "designated town", or three of the <u>daytime</u> journey types.

Lower Categories:
4A Settlements in this category have access to some secondary facilities / services although there is limited or no bus service provision: (2 <u>daytime</u> journey types).

4B settlements in this category have low/medium level of public transport provision and low services / facility provision: (below category 4A levels for both).

Villages considered in the open countryside
All other villages that have no key services and limited or no bus service provision.