

# Stirling Local Development Plan 3

## Spatial Strategy Options Paper



## Settlement Hierarchy & Development Approaches

April 2026

[www.stirling.gov.uk/planning](http://www.stirling.gov.uk/planning)



## 1. Purpose of this Consultation

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*This consultation paper sets out the options currently being considered for the settlement hierarchy and the associated approaches to development, which form key components of the spatial strategy.*

*These aspects of the spatial strategy are being consulted on at this stage because they will play an important role in informing the site selection process – on which site options are also being consulted - and ensuring that future development aligns with the emerging settlement hierarchy and the overall strategic direction of Local Development Plan 3 (LDP3).*

*Your views will help shape how LDP3 guides land use and development, and safeguards valued places across the Stirling area.*

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This **Spatial Strategy Options Paper** outlines the initial options for shaping the spatial strategy of the Proposed Local Development Plan (the Proposed Plan). It focuses specifically on the **settlement hierarchy** and the **development approaches** associated with each level of that hierarchy.

A **settlement hierarchy** is a way of organising the towns, villages, and communities across the Local Development Plan area based on their size, role, and the services and infrastructure they provide. It helps identify where development is most appropriate and how different places can grow in ways that support sustainable, well-connected communities. These principles are reflected in the **development approaches** for each tier of the hierarchy.

These elements are explained in more detail in Section 2 - Explaining the Spatial Strategy.

The options presented build upon the findings contained within the approved Evidence Report – [Topic Paper 17 \(spatial strategy and policy analysis\)](#).

With this in mind, your response to this consultation will help shape how the next Local Development Plan balances future growth with the protection of Stirling's most valued places. We welcome your views on the options presented in this paper, any suggested changes, or any alternative options you feel should be considered.

## 2. Explaining the Spatial Strategy

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*A spatial strategy sets out the direction of future change within an area. Its purpose is to actively guide development towards locations that help create, shape, and sustain successful places.*

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The Stirling Local Development Plan (2018) sets out a spatial strategy to guide future growth across the area. This strategy is built around two main elements:

- 1. Hierarchy of Settlements** - is one of the key building blocks of the Local Development Plan. Its purpose is to help the planning authority decide where development should happen, what type and scale of development is appropriate for individual places, and how growth can best support communities across the area.
- 2. Development Approaches** - help translate, amongst others, the Hierarchy of Settlements of the Local Development Plan into practical, place-specific guidance for how growth and change should happen within different settlements or areas. They act as a bridge between the strategic elements of the spatial strategy and the sites allocated for specific uses, such as housing and employment.

Together, these elements provide the framework for deciding where future development should, and should not, take place.

### 3. Settlement Hierarchy

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*A successful growth strategy must be based on the foundation of a settlement hierarchy which supports and sustains local communities, while protecting the environment.*

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#### Current Settlement Hierarchy and Approach

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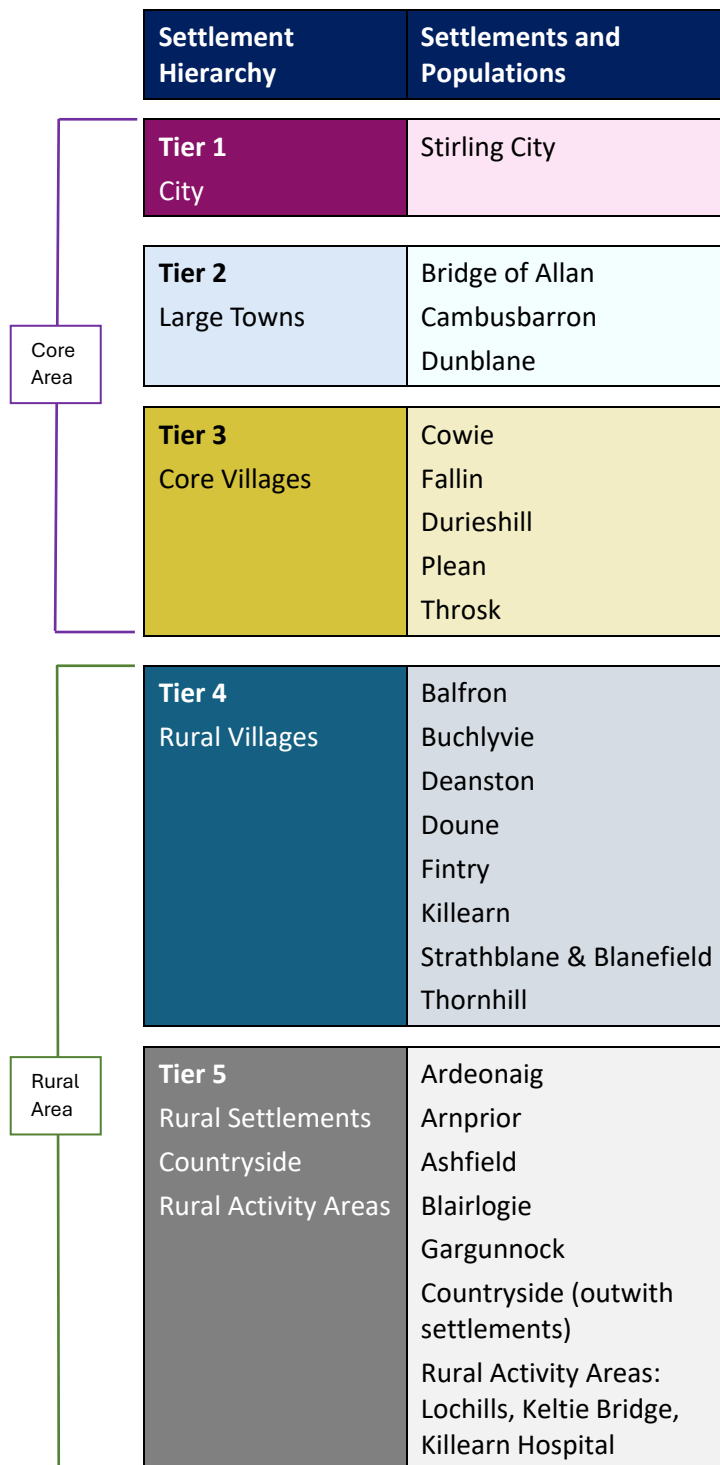
To guide future development, the current [Stirling Local Development Plan \(LDP\)](#), adopted in October 2018, sets out a hierarchy of individual settlements across its core and rural sub-areas, summarised as follows:

- The **core area**, including Stirling city, adjacent localities, and the area's larger settlements, is identified as the principal focus for growth, reflecting its role as the main location for new housing, economic activity, and infrastructure and service provision.
- The **rural area**, made up of smaller towns, villages, and countryside communities, supports only limited levels of growth. Development here is intended to sustain rural living while protecting the character of these places.

The current spatial strategy approach helps make sure that planned growth is appropriate for each settlement or area. It reflects the availability of important local services - such as shops and healthcare - as well as supporting infrastructure - like walking, cycling and road connections - while also taking local needs and environmental impacts into account.

The current settlement hierarchy is shown in the diagram on the next page.

**Diagram 1 - Current Settlement Hierarchy in the Stirling Local Development Plan**



Source: [pages 15-18, Stirling Local Development Plan \(October 2018\)](#)

## 4. Reviewing the Settlement Hierarchy & Development Approaches

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### Explaining the initial review

Reviewing the settlement hierarchy and related development approaches, as part of the process of developing the emerging spatial strategy for the Proposed Plan, generally follows the three stages outlined below.

- i. **Review of settlement hierarchy tiers** – The initial review stage involves establishing individual hierarchy tiers to reflect the range of localities and settlements across the Stirling Local Development Plan area.
- ii. **Positioning settlements and localities within the settlement hierarchy** – Settlements and localities are assigned to the tier with which they were considered most closely aligned.
- iii. **Assigning development approaches to each tier and its settlements and localities** – Lastly, development approaches are defined for settlements and localities within each tier to guide decisions on the nature and direction of growth and change.

The initial ideas and options for reviewing the spatial strategy for the Proposed Plan are presented below, under each of the headings outlined above.

## Reviewing the Settlement Hierarchy

### i. Review of Settlement Hierarchy tiers

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The initial review of the settlement hierarchy has focused on achieving closer alignment with the *Local Living* and *Infrastructure First* approaches set out in NPF4, providing a policy-based framework for assigning settlements and localities to the most appropriate tiers within the hierarchy.

This involved a review of the existing settlement hierarchy tiers (shown on page 4 above) to better reflect the range of localities and settlements within the Stirling Local Development Plan area. The initial review considered the level of infrastructure that may be required to support growth, including transport infrastructure, education and healthcare provision, and utilities and drainage. It also took account of the availability of key services, facilities, and amenities that support local living, enabling people to meet most of their day-to-day needs within a reasonable distance of their home and supporting them to *live well locally*<sup>1</sup>.

Diagram 2 on the following page illustrates the initial ideas for revising the settlement hierarchy for the Proposed Plan, including how the Local Living and Infrastructure First approaches could be embedded within it.

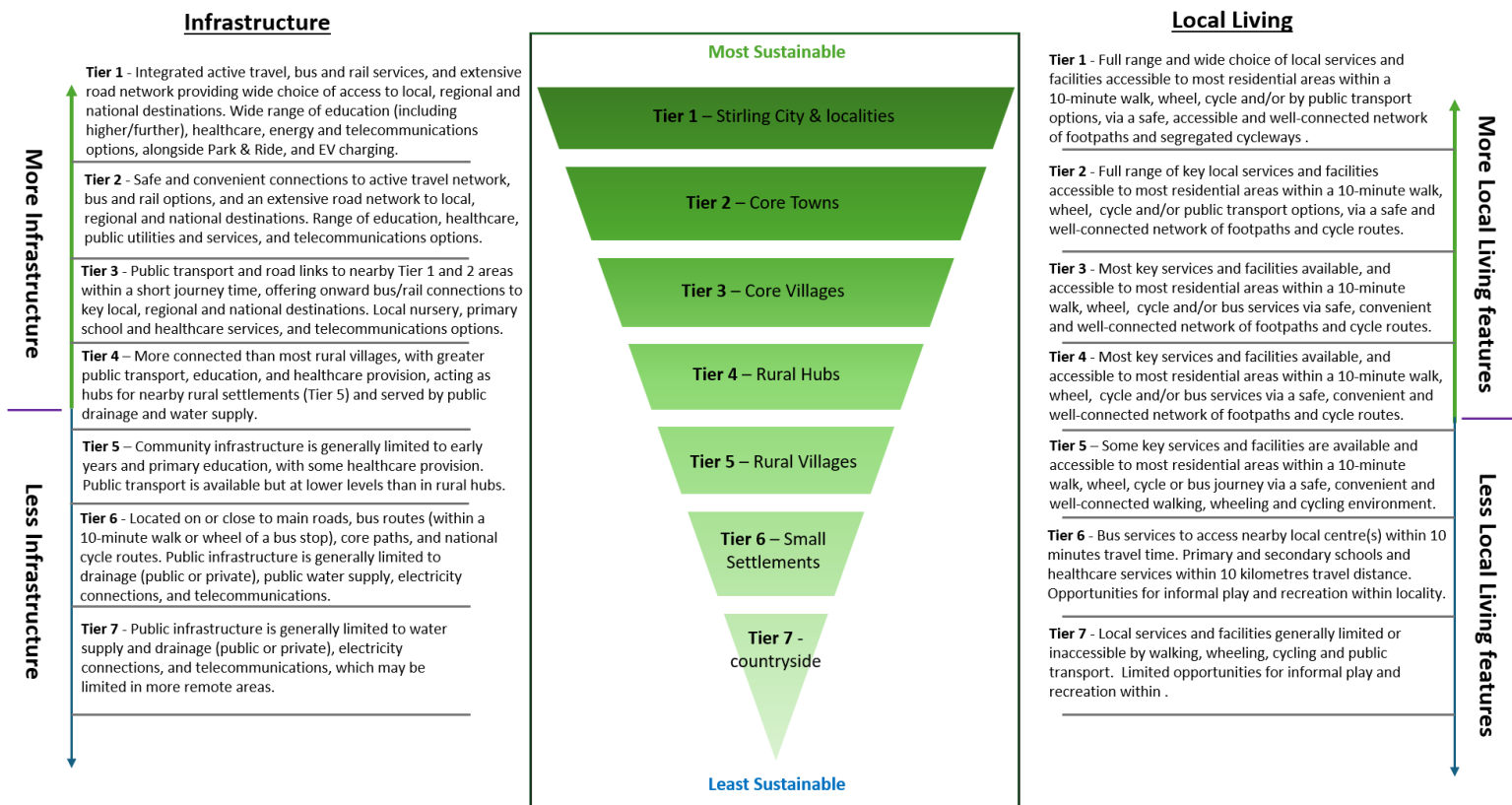
Please note:

- The settlement hierarchy presented below reflects early-stage ideas and working proposals rather than a settled position.
- At this stage, retaining the settlement hierarchy set out in the current Local Development Plan - either in full or in part - remains an option under consideration.
- The preferred or emerging spatial strategy will be established following this consultation exercise, taking account of the feedback received through this consultation, alongside relevant comments submitted as part of the site options consultation.

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<sup>1</sup> source: [Scottish Government Guidance – Local Living and 20 minute neighbourhoods](#)

**Diagram 2 – Potential changes to the settlement-hierarchy tiers, reflecting the level of infrastructure provision and the availability and accessibility of local services and facilities in line with *Infrastructure-First* and *Local Living* principles.**



[Please click here to view this diagram in greater detail, as set out in Appendix 1.](#)

The diagram above illustrates that the Core Area benefits from a wider range and choice of infrastructure, including education, primary healthcare, and transport, alongside local living features such as food shops, pharmacies, and public open space.

Stirling city centre and its surrounding urban areas sit at the top of the hierarchy, reflecting their overall sustainability. In contrast, the countryside - land outwith settlements and urban areas - forms the least sustainable typology within the Plan area.

It therefore follows that a sustainable spatial strategy should generally direct growth towards the most sustainable locations. This does not preclude development in less sustainable areas; rather, growth in such locations should be planned at a scale and in a form appropriate to the character and capacity of the place.

Achieving this approach will depend on the nature and scale of future development aligning with both environmental and settlement capacity. These matters will be assessed at a later stage in the preparation of the Proposed Plan, following this consultation. In the interim, environmental and settlement capacity are illustrated in the diagram by the bounding rectangle around the initial settlement hierarchy presented above.

## Reviewing the Settlement Hierarchy

### ii. Positioning settlements and localities within the settlement hierarchy

At this stage, the initial review involved considering the position of each settlement and locality within the settlement hierarchy shown in Diagram 2 on the previous page, based on the level of services, facilities, and infrastructure available.

The initial ideas for changes to the settlement hierarchy are illustrated in Diagrams 3 and 4 below, supported by a summary of the potential changes currently under consideration.

**Diagram 3** - illustrating the potential changes to the position of settlements within the hierarchy.

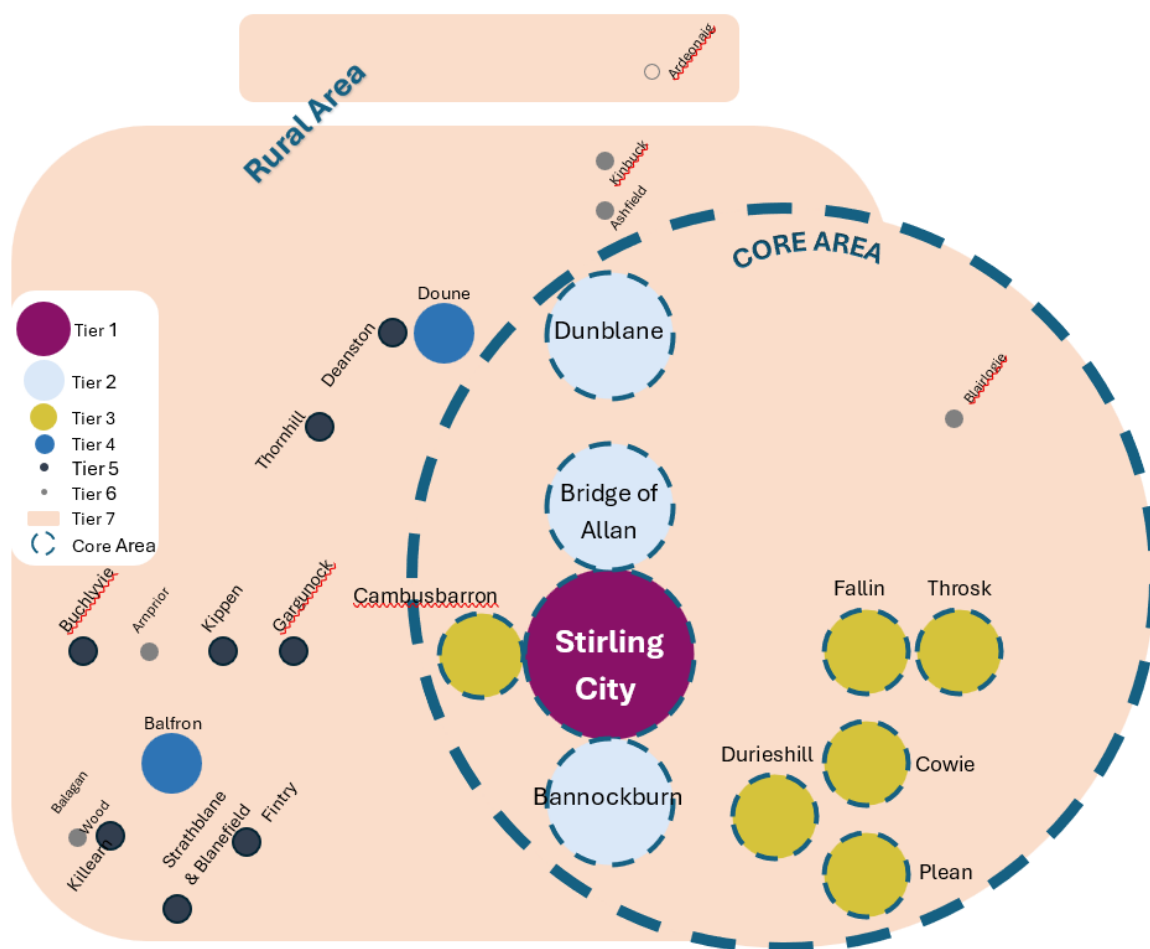
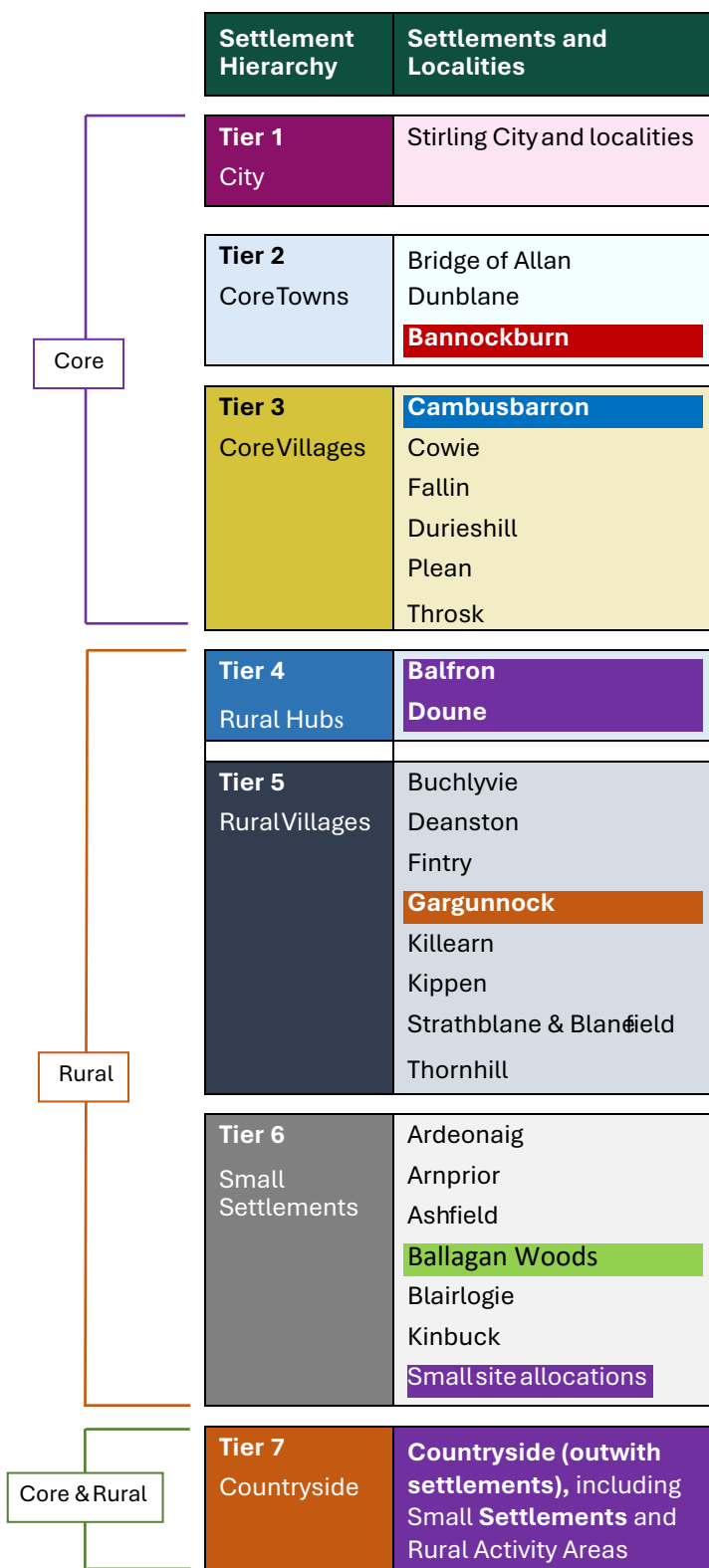


Diagram 4 – outlining how the position of settlements within the hierarchy could change.



Key	
<span style="background-color: #e67e22; border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px;"></span>	Reclassification of settlement to higher tier
<span style="background-color: #3498db; border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px;"></span>	Reclassification of settlement to lower tier
<span style="background-color: #e74c3c; border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px;"></span>	Separation of settlement from Stirling City
<span style="background-color: #2ecc71; border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px;"></span>	Newly identified settlement
<span style="background-color: #9b59b6; border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px;"></span>	New tier to support place specific growth

### Summary of potential changes being considered

**Bannockburn:** Could be considered separately from Stirling City, with recognition as an individual settlement that may follow a distinct growth approach, currently through the South Stirling Gateway expansion, contrasting with Stirling City’s growth strategy, which is largely focused within existing urban boundaries.

**Cambusbarron:** Reclassification to a lower tier could be appropriate, as the settlement appears to be of a size, and to have a level of local service provision and connectivity, broadly comparable to existing Tier 3 settlements.

**Balforn and Doone:** Potentially positioned within a newly created Tier 4 “rural hub”, recognising the distinct local characteristics of these settlements, such as access to public transport services, and their role in providing supporting facilities and services to nearby villages and surrounding areas. This function may differentiate them from other rural settlements and localities currently shown within Tiers 5-7.

**Gargunnock:** Reclassification to a higher tier may be appropriate, as the settlement appears to be comparable in scale, level of local service provision, and connectivity to other settlements currently shown within Tier 5.

**Ballagan Woods, near Killearn:** Formal recognition as a rural settlement. The area comprises a residential development on the former Killearn Hospital site, with additional land identified for future employment use.

**Small site allocations:** Potential allocation of appropriate sites for rural housing development (to be identified) within areas of countryside, outside or physically detached from existing settlements, as part of a potentially revised approach to housing in the countryside provision.

**Countryside:** The area could potentially be classified within a new Tier 7 ‘countryside’, reflecting a distinct approach to growth in open countryside, separate from rural settlements and small site growth associated with Rural Tiers 4-6.

## Reviewing the Settlement Hierarchy

### iii. Assigning development approaches to each tier and its settlements and localities

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Building on the initial ideas for reviewing the settlement hierarchy tiers and the settlements and localities within them, as set out above, the final stage of the initial review considered future land use and development through a series of options for development approaches.

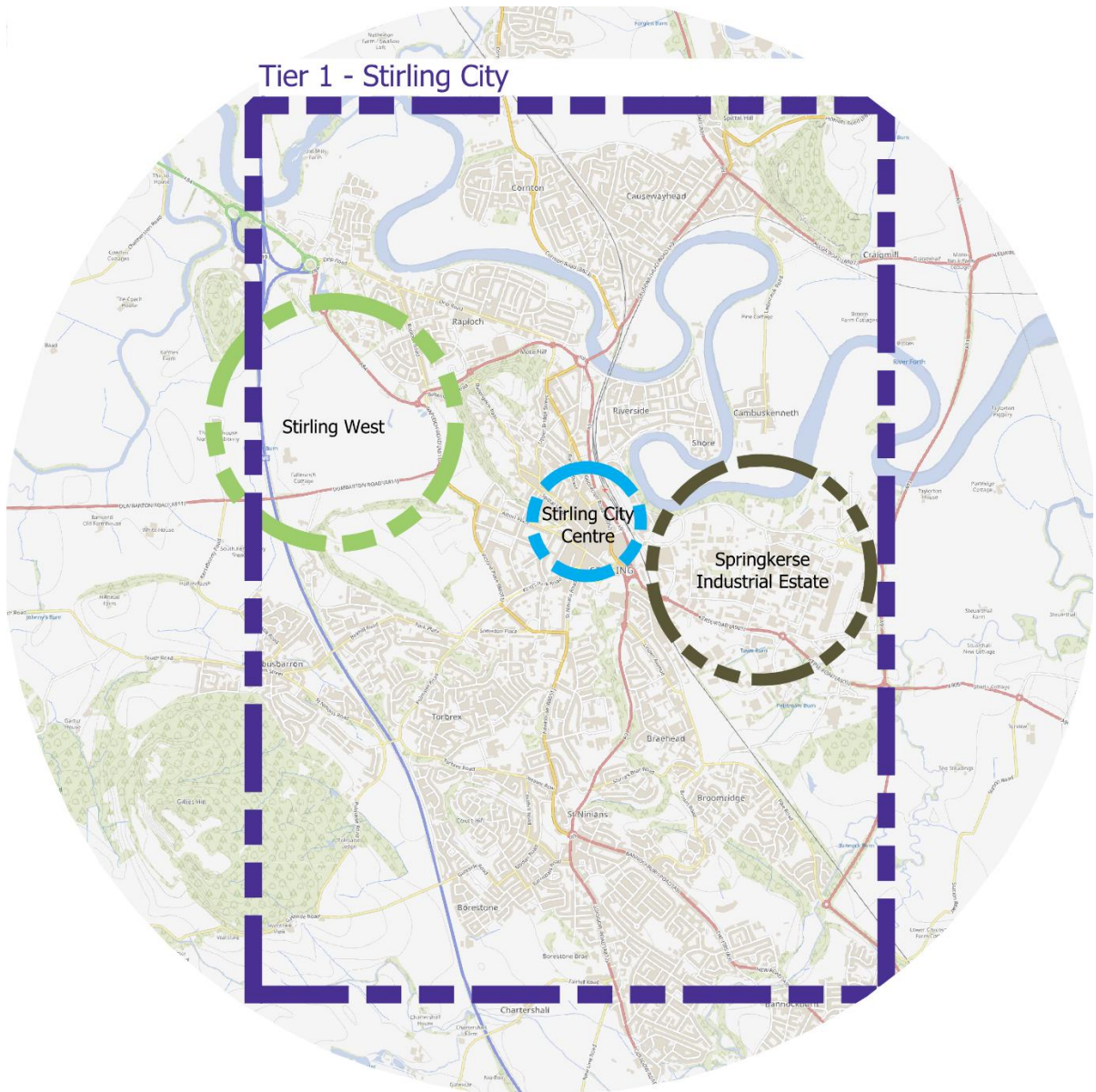
The initial options identified for each tier, and the associated settlements and localities, are set out on the remaining pages of this paper.

Please note:

- The development options are presented as initial ideas.
- The selection of preferred approaches will be undertaken at a later stage in the Proposed Plan preparation process. This will be informed by feedback received through this consultation, the relevant provisions of [Local Place Plans](#), and detailed assessments of settlement and environmental capacity to accommodate further development, alongside other relevant considerations

# Initial Development Approach Options for the Spatial Strategy

## Tier 1 - Stirling City Centre and surrounding localities



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## Option 1

Retain the development approach set out in the existing Local Development Plan, as summarised below:

**Urban Consolidation** - Focuses on limiting greenfield expansion by directing growth within the existing urban areas, particularly the City Centre, while prioritising the protection of built, natural, and historic assets and infrastructure.

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## Option 2

Adopt a **Compact Urban Growth**<sup>2</sup> approach, aligned with the corresponding Spatial Principle set out in NPF4.

This option would continue the current approach of limiting greenfield expansion while prioritising development opportunities within the settlement boundary. Such opportunities would include prioritising the reuse of brownfield land and exploring the potential for development on underutilised or lower value greenfield sites. In addition, the approach could support more efficient use of infrastructure, improved flood risk management, and the protection of landscape character, local amenity, and natural habitats.

This potential option focuses primarily on revised wording and rebranding, rather than introducing significant change when compared with Option 1 above; however, alternative approaches may be considered for specific localities outlined as follows:

**City Centre:** This approach would reconsider the spatial strategy to strengthen the city centre's vibrancy and attractiveness, responding to current challenges and opportunities by supporting a broader mix of uses that contribute to both the daytime and evening economies, and help position the city centre as a vibrant hub for commerce, employment, culture, and community life.

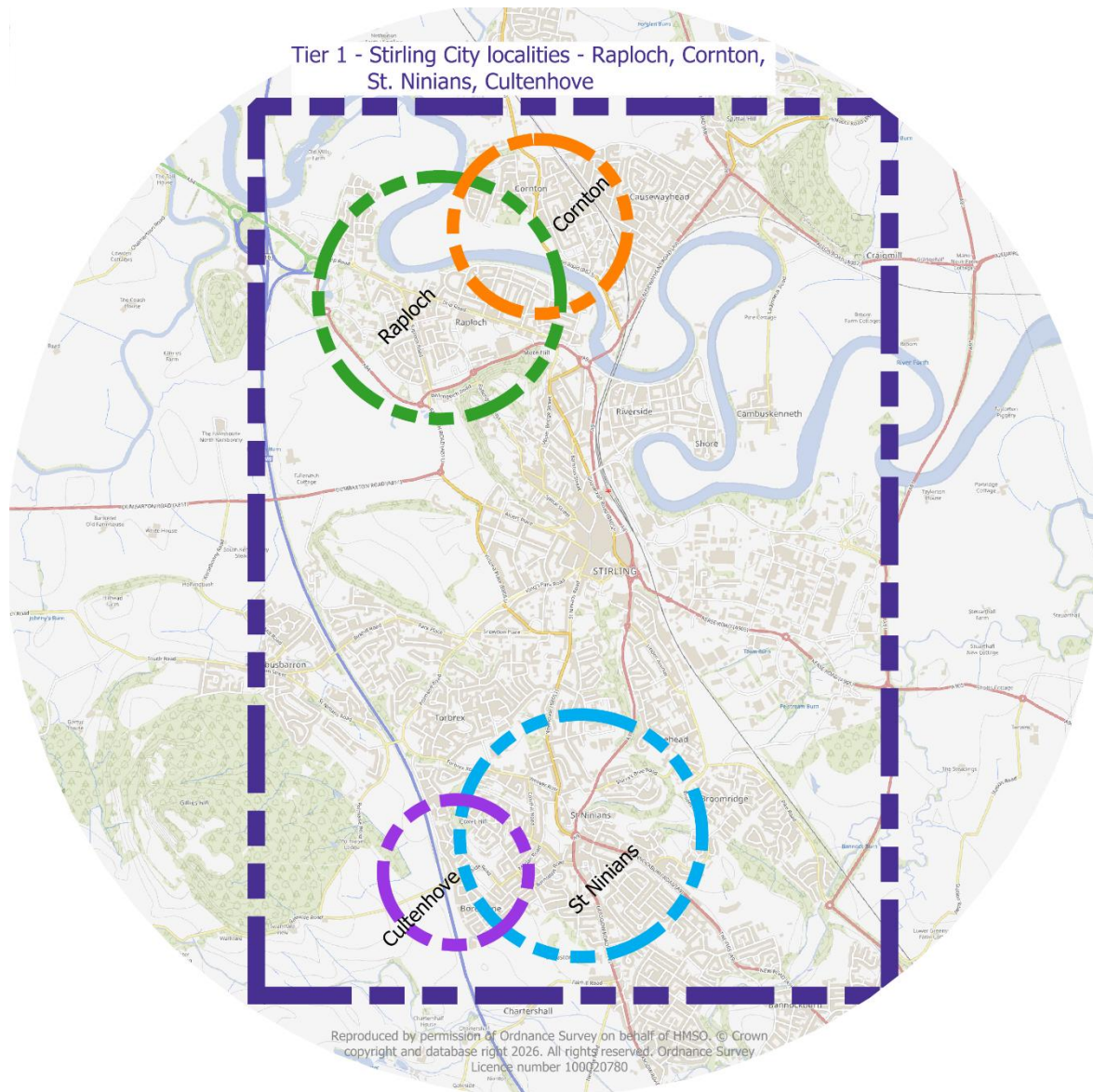
**Springkerse Industrial Estate:** The approach could explore specific policy measures for Springkerse Industrial Estate, and other employment land areas, as part of a wider strategy to safeguard development opportunities and ready-to-occupy premises for small to medium-sized businesses and general industry, considering potential supply chain opportunities linked to the Forthside film studios.

**Stirling West:** There could also be a strengthening of the approach to the west of the area, with a view to enhancing the protection and promotion of the significance of the Royal Park landscape and its historic association with Stirling Castle.

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<sup>2</sup> **Compact Urban Growth:** We will make productive use of existing buildings, places, infrastructure and services, locking in carbon, minimising waste, and building a circular economy – source: [NPF4](#), page 04.

# Tier 1 - Stirling City localities - Raploch, Cornton, St Ninians, Culterhove



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## Option 1

Retain the development approach set out in the existing Local Development Plan, as summarised below:

**Regeneration** – *A residential-led strategy focused on revitalising the Council’s priority communities by addressing local housing needs and delivering socio-economic and environmental improvements.*

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## Option 2

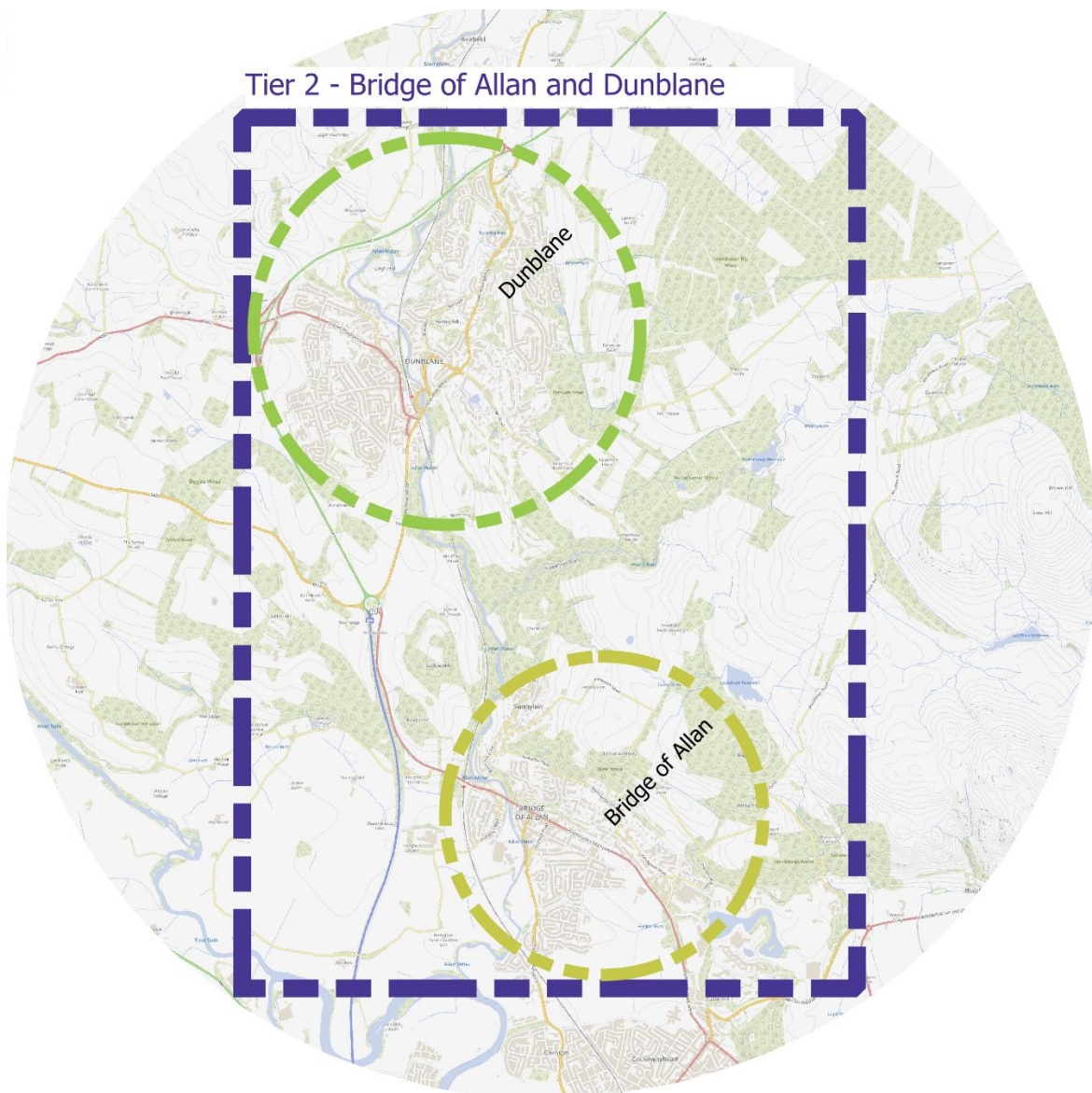
Adopt a **Compact Urban Growth** approach, tailored to these priority areas, while generally aligning with the corresponding Spatial Principle in NPF4.

This approach would shift the emphasis away from residential-led regeneration delivered through relatively large-scale development, either individually or cumulatively. This reflects the limited remaining scope for continuing development at the scale provided for in the current Local Development Plan, as most sites allocated for this purpose have now been completed. Instead, the focus could shift towards exploring smaller-scale development opportunities and/or alternative approaches that enhance the quality of place and the environment.

This approach could also align with Option 2 for Stirling City by placing greater emphasis on prioritising the reuse of brownfield land, while also considering the potential for land use and development on underutilised or lower-value greenfield sites.

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## Tier 2 - Bridge of Allan and Dunblane



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## Option 1

Retain the development approach set out in the existing Local Development Plan, as summarised below:

**Urban Consolidation** - Focuses on limiting greenfield expansion by directing growth within the existing urban areas, while prioritising the protection of built, natural, and historic assets and infrastructure.

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## Option 2

Adopt a **Compact Urban Growth** approach, aligned with the corresponding Spatial Principle set out in NPF4.

This would maintain an emphasis on limiting greenfield expansion, while placing greater focus on development opportunities within the settlement boundary. Such opportunities would include prioritising the reuse of brownfield land and exploring the potential for development on underutilised or lower-value greenfield sites.

The approach could also support more efficient use of infrastructure, improved flood risk management, and the protection of landscape character, local amenity, and natural habitats.

This option focuses mainly on rewording and rebranding, with little substantive change from Option 1.

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## Option 3

Adopt a **Rebalanced Development**<sup>3</sup> approach, aligned with the corresponding NPF4 Spatial Principle.

This option would involve a shift towards supporting sustainable growth that seeks to respond to local housing and employment needs.

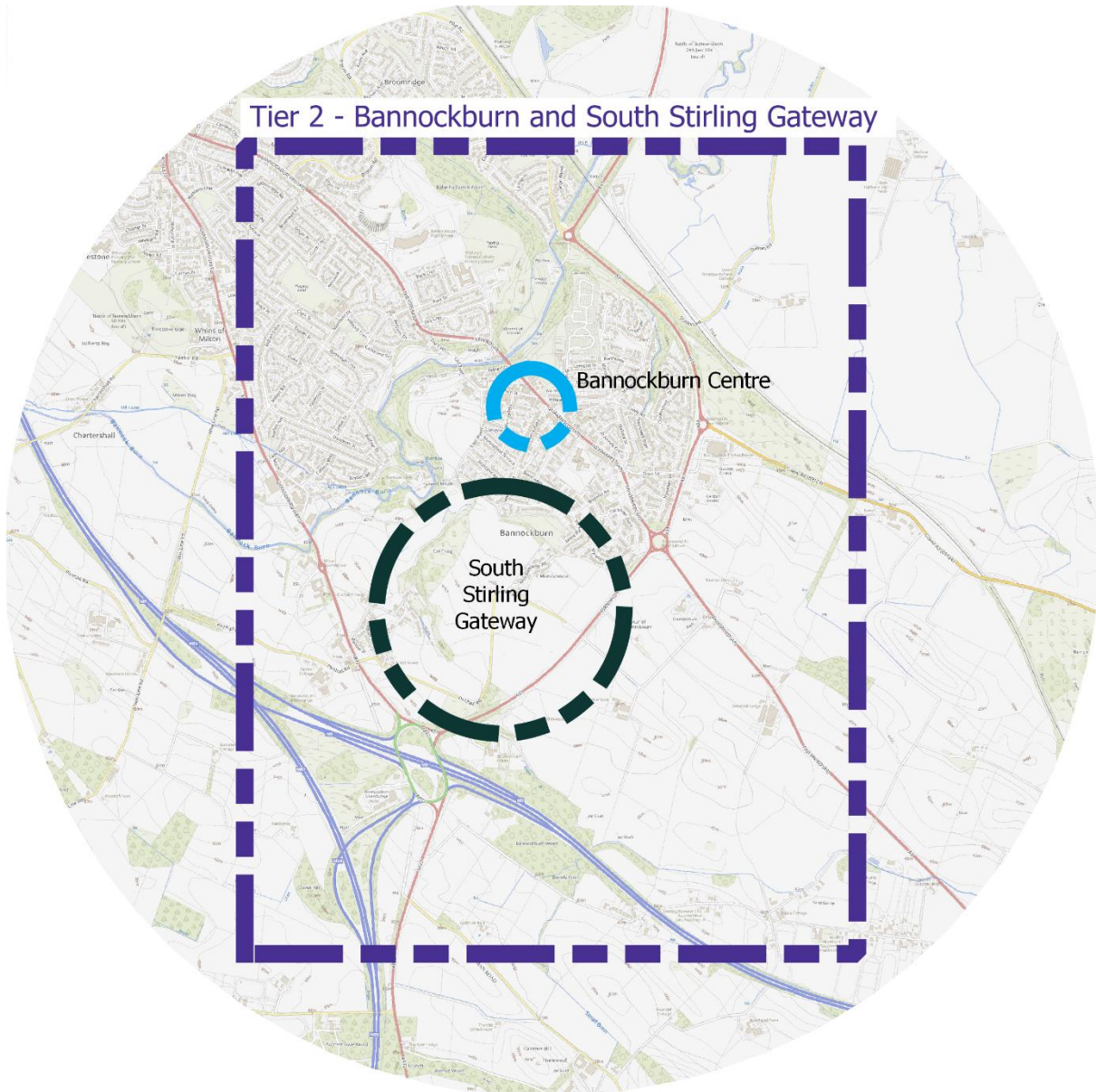
While continuing to prioritise development within existing settlement boundaries where appropriate, consistent with the current Local Development Plan, this option would also allow for the potential of sustainable settlement expansion through the targeted release of greenfield sites, which may include the realignment of green belt boundaries.

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<sup>3</sup> **Rebalanced Development** - We will target development to create opportunities for communities and investment in areas of past decline, and manage development sustainably in areas of high demand – source: [NPF4](#), page 04.

## Tier 2 - Bannockburn and South Stirling Gateway



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## Option 1

Retain the development approach set out in the existing Local Development Plan, which treats these areas separately and allows for distinct approaches to be considered for each, as summarised below:

### **Bannockburn (merged with Stirling City)**

**Urban Consolidation** - Focuses on limiting greenfield expansion by directing growth within the existing urban areas, while prioritising the protection of built, natural, and historic assets and infrastructure.

### **South Stirling Gateway**

**Strategic Development** – Focus on controlled greenfield expansion of Stirling City within the City Corridor in a manner consistent with the size of the City and its role within the settlement hierarchy.

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## Option 2

Adopt a **Rebalanced Development** approach for Bannockburn and South Stirling Gateway.

This option would involve merging South Stirling Gateway with Bannockburn, to reflect the spatial relationship and integration of these areas.

The approach would continue to allow for the sustainable greenfield expansion of Bannockburn through development at South Stirling Gateway (as a currently under-construction site allocated in the existing Local Development Plan), while also potentially providing appropriate land use and development opportunities within the settlement boundary.

This option might therefore be seen as recognising the spatial and functional relationship between South Stirling Gateway and Bannockburn, rather than introducing any significant change in the overall approach to growth from Option 1.

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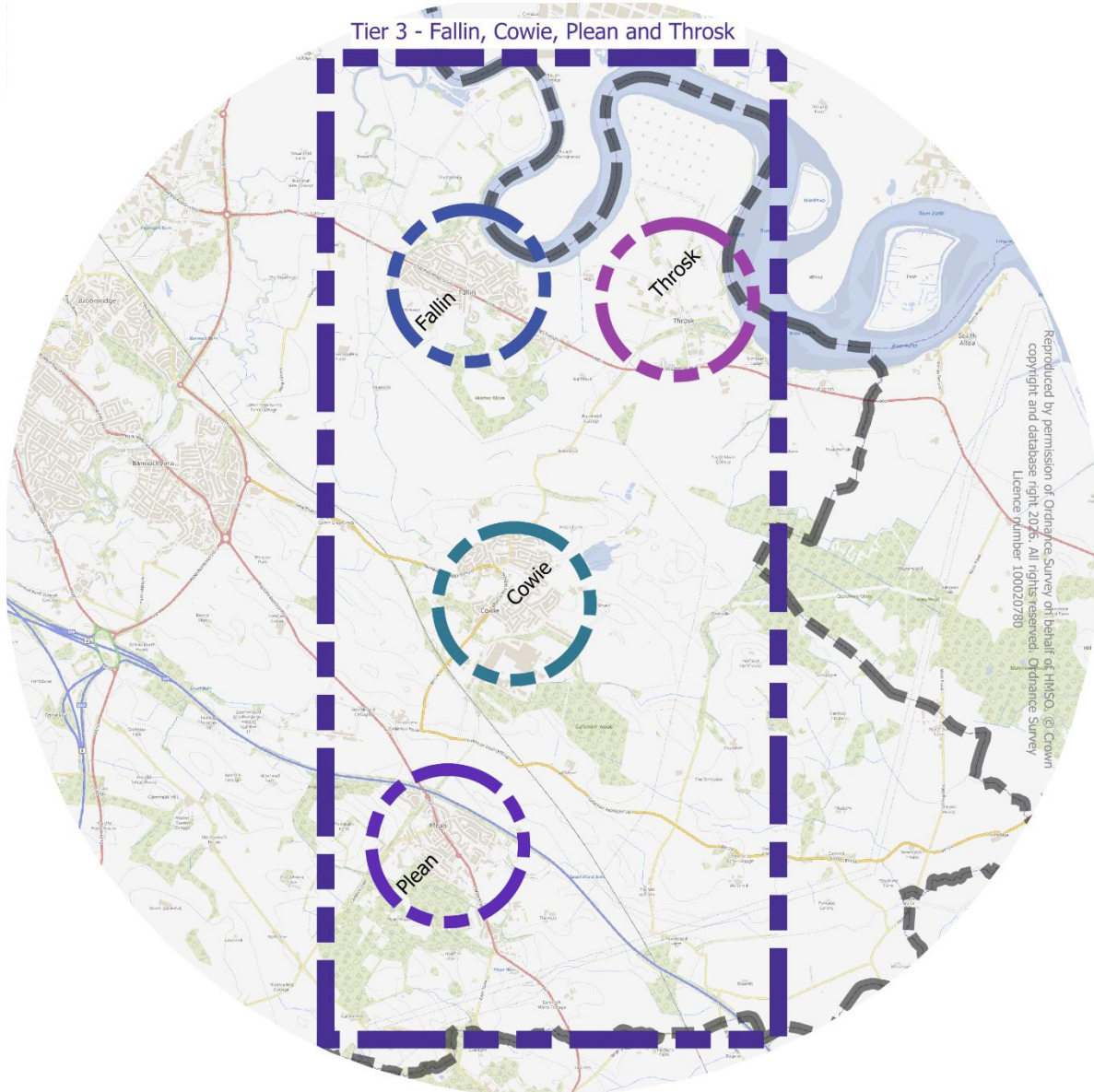
## Option 3

Adopt a **Rebalanced Development** approach, aligned with the corresponding NPF4 Spatial Principle.

This option could involve enhanced support for sustainable growth that responds to local housing and employment needs through a plan-led approach. While it would continue to allow for the expansion of Bannockburn through development at the South Stirling Gateway, it could provide further capacity for growth through the release of additional greenfield sites, potentially including appropriate realignment of the green belt.

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## Tier 3 - Fallin, Cowie, Plean and Throsk



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## Option 1

Retain the development approach within the existing Local Development Plan, summarised as follows:

**Regeneration** – *A residential-led growth strategy focused on revitalising the Council’s priority communities by addressing local housing needs and delivering socio-economic and environmental improvements.*

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## Option 2

Adopt a **Rebalanced Development** approach, tailored to these priority areas, aligned with the corresponding Spatial Principle in NPF4.

This approach could continue to focus on revitalising these areas through residential-led regeneration, making use of sites already allocated in the current Local Development Plan (subject to reappraisal where required), and/or through the allocation of new sites where appropriate.

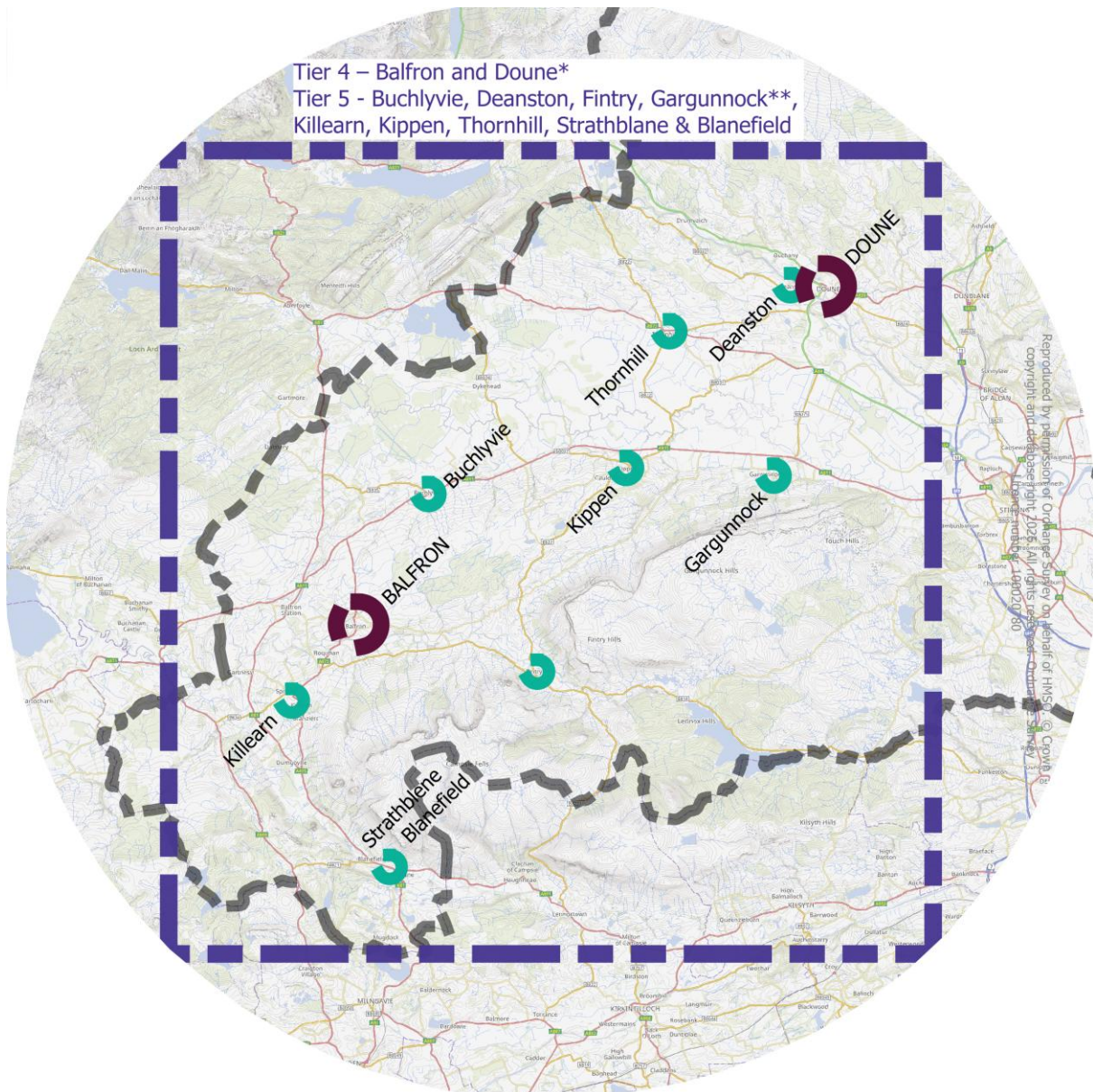
While there is likely to be continued focus on helping to meet housing demand, attract investment, and support wider socio-economic and environmental improvements, the emphasis may shift towards delivering indirect community benefits. This reflects challenges in securing direct benefits through the planning process - such as financial contributions towards regeneration initiatives outlined in the current Local Development Plan.

Indirect benefits could include improved health and wellbeing, broader social and economic outcomes, the delivery of public infrastructure such as active travel connections, and land uses that provide employment and community opportunities, while at the same time being necessary to serve any planned development.

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**Tier 4 – Balfron and Doune\***

**Tier 5 - Buchlyvie, Deanston, Fintry, Gargunnoch\*\*, Killearn, Kippen, Thornhill, Strathblane & Blanefield**



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## Option 1

To retain the development approaches set out in the existing Local Development Plan. This would include the **‘Sustainable Expansion’** approach, applicable to all settlements noted above (excluding Gargunnock), alongside the **‘Rural Development’** approach, which may continue to apply only to Gargunnock:

***Sustainable Expansion:*** *Focuses on concentrating development within existing settlements to support sustainable growth. This includes controlled, small-scale expansion aligned with each settlement’s size and role in the hierarchy, enabling delivery of affordable and market housing, business space, and protection of village centres to maintain their identity and function.*

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## Option 2

Adopt a **Rebalanced Development** approach, tailored to these rural villages and aligned with the corresponding Spatial Principle in NPF4.

This approach could continue to support sustainable growth under a rebranded title, aiming to respond to local housing needs by potentially increasing the supply of homes and offering a broader mix of housing types and tenures across both private and social sectors. It may also seek to promote employment opportunities, local services and facilities, and improved connectivity through a plan-led approach.

It would involve providing a strong place based approach to different areas of our countryside, responding to identified current and emerging demands and pressures.

Specific approaches may include:

\* **Balfron and Doune:** Having regard to the potential changes to the settlement hierarchy outlined above, the reclassification of Balfron and/or Doune as rural hubs could result in a greater concentration of growth in these locations compared with other rural villages. This would reflect their potential higher status and enhanced role within the hierarchy.

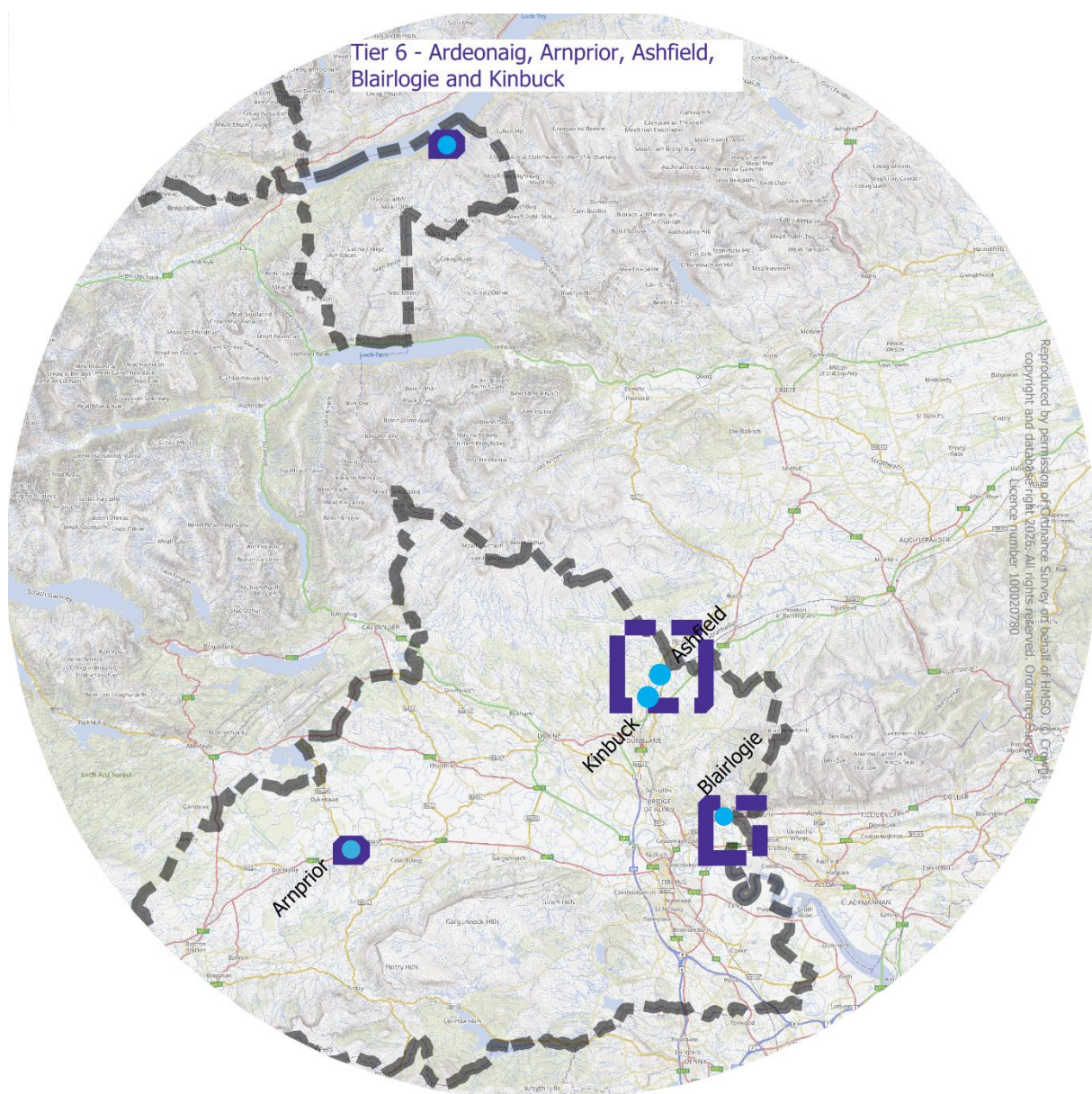
\*\* **Gargunnock:** In addition, the potential reclassification of Gargunnock within the hierarchy, resulting in the settlement being grouped with the rural villages noted above, could lead to a focus on delivering sustainable growth that is commensurate with the scale of the village and the level of local infrastructure, services and facilities. This may result in higher levels of growth than those provided for under the spatial strategy of the existing Local Development Plan.

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## Tier 6 –

**\*Established Small Rural Settlements:** Ardeonaig, Arnprior, Ashfield, Blairlogie and Kinbuck

**\*\*Small site allocations:** residential land allocations, with specific locations and capacities to be determined



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### Option 1 (applies only to \*Established Small Rural Settlements)

Retain the development approach within the existing Local Development Plan, summarised as follows:

**Rural Development:** *Supports limited infill within settlements, dispersed countryside development, and targeted growth to strengthen rural economic activity.*

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### Option 2 (applies only to \*Established Small Rural Settlements)

Adopt a **Rural Revitalisation**<sup>4</sup> approach, tailored to existing rural settlements, aligned with the corresponding Spatial Principle set out in NPF4.

This option would support sustainable growth within identified settlement boundaries through planning policy rather than site allocations and is largely a matter of rewording and rebranding rather than a change in approach from Option 1 above. Applying only to established small settlements, this option would exclude small-scale site allocations.

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### Option 3 (applies only to \*Established Small Rural Settlements)

Adopt a **Rebalanced Development** approach, tailored to existing rural settlements, aligned with the corresponding Spatial Principle in NPF4.

This option may support sustainable housing growth through appropriate small-scale site allocations where development is proportionate to the scale and character of each rural settlement.

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### Option 4 (applies to \*Established Rural Settlements & \*\*Small Site Allocations)

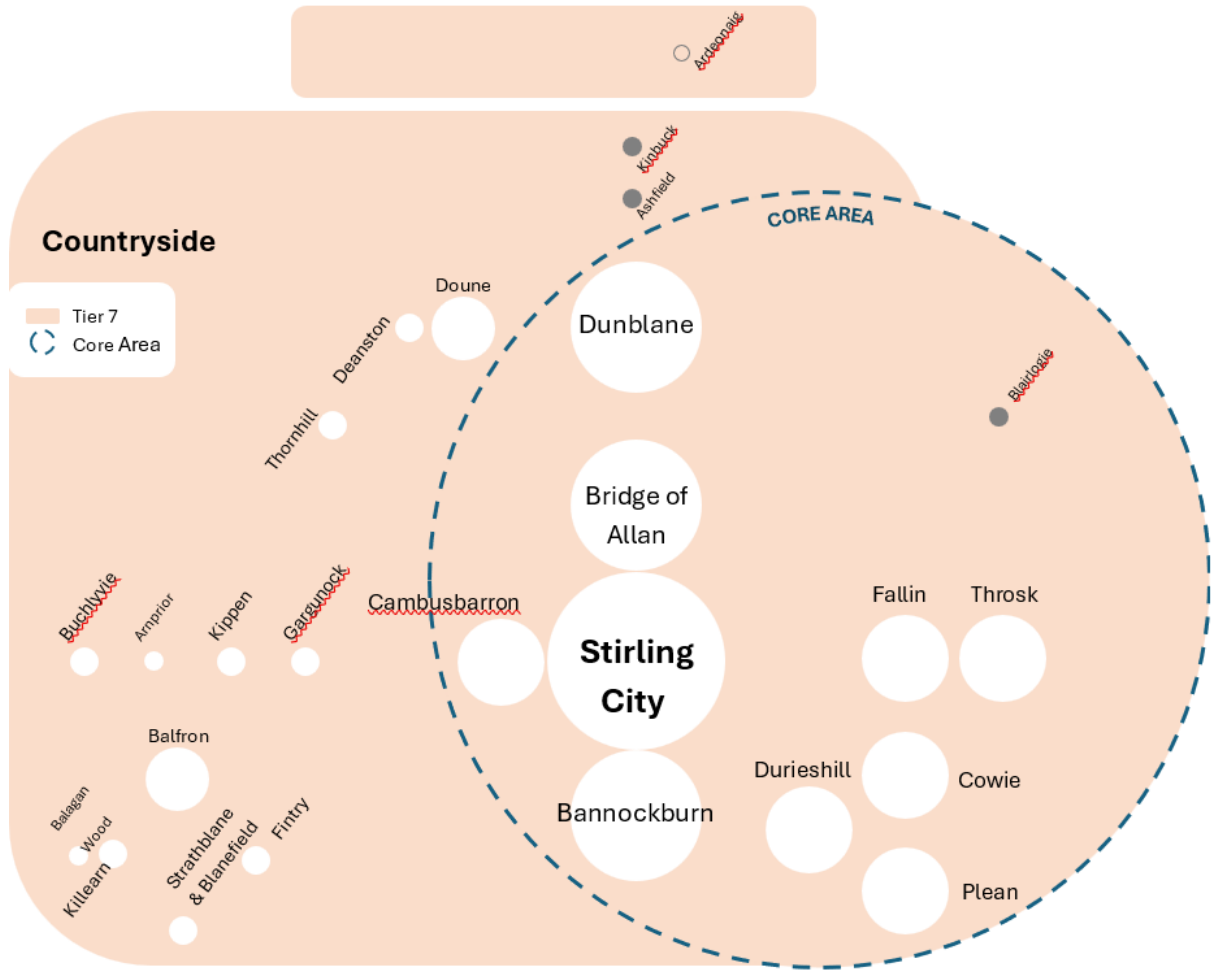
Together with Option 3 above, adopt a **Rural Revitalisation** approach, tailored to local circumstances and aligned with the corresponding Spatial Principle in NPF4.

This expanded option would continue to support residential in the open countryside (i.e. outwith settlement boundaries), through a mix of small site allocations. Such allocations would likely be modest in scale, possibility accommodating no more than ten new homes, and designed to deliver wider place, environmental and social benefits, including affordable housing contributions and self-build opportunities where appropriate. Locations would be expected to have reasonable access to local services and facilities in nearby larger settlements, using public or private transport.

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<sup>4</sup> **Rural Revitalisation:** *We will encourage sustainable development in rural areas, recognising the need to grow and support urban and rural communities together – [NPF4](#), page 04.*

# Tier 7 – Countryside, including Rural Activity Areas



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## Option 1

Retain the development approach within the existing Local Development Plan, summarised as follows:

**Countryside:** *Supports residential and economic development in the open countryside (outwith settlement boundaries) through residential land allocations and Rural Activity Areas within the Local Development Plan (LDP), alongside dedicated policies in both the LDP and NPF4 that enable appropriate proposals on sites not specifically allocated for development.*

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## Option 2

Adopt a **Rural Revitalisation** approach, tailored to local circumstances and aligned with the corresponding Spatial Principle set out in NPF4.

This option would continue to support residential and economic development in the open countryside through a mix of site-specific allocations and planning policy under a revised approach, with a strong place-based focus responding to local needs and pressures. Specific approaches may include:

**Local Living:** Shaping the spatial strategy to strengthen development opportunities for local living in rural communities, including grouping growth within or around settlements with functional connections that together provide a range of facilities and amenities. Where necessary, this may include policies to protect key local services and shops where their loss would undermine community resilience and sustainability.

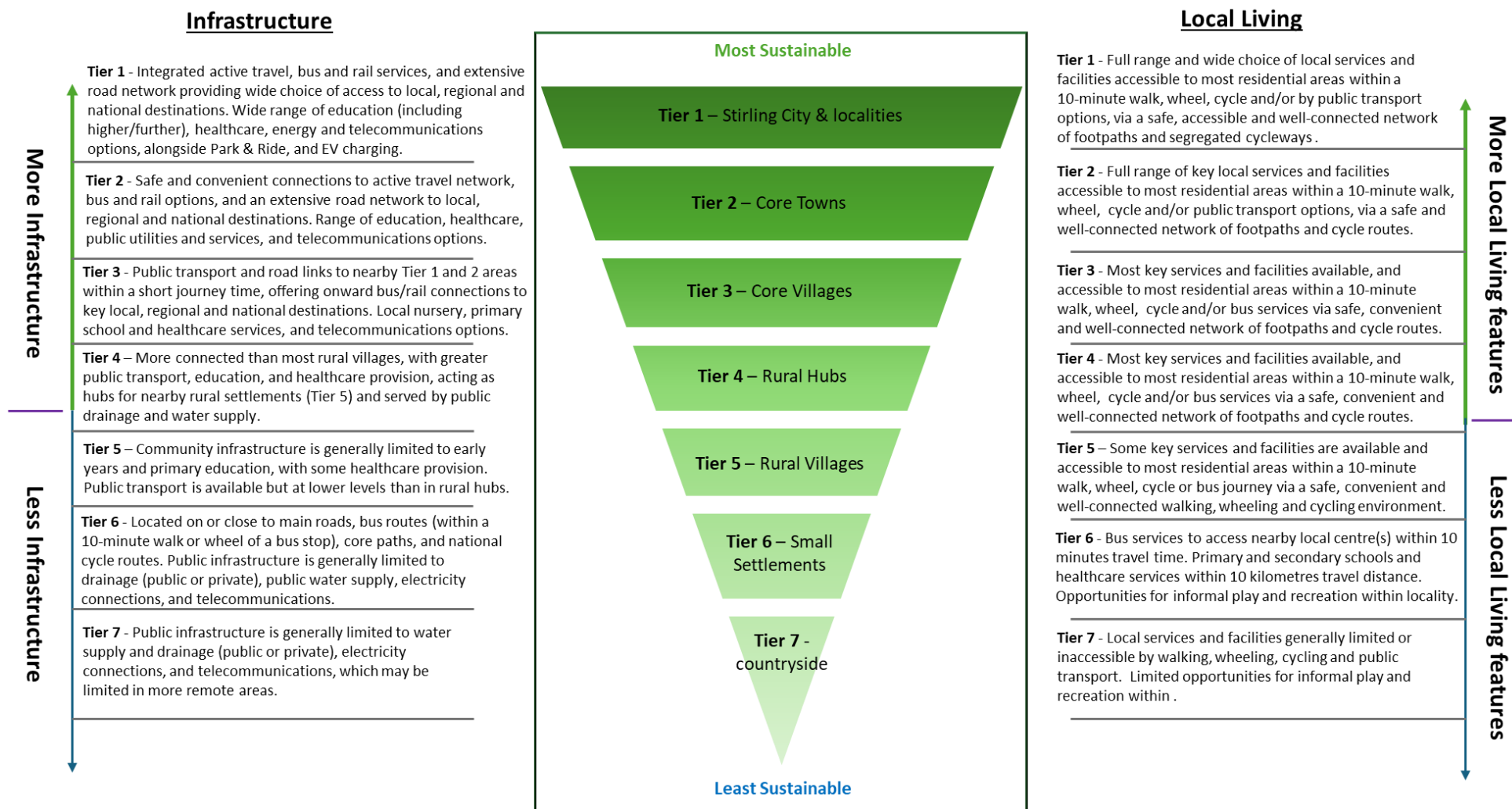
**Residential Development:** A locally tailored policy approach could support housing in the open countryside, reflecting the current LDP approach in LDP North, with NPF4 guiding policy elsewhere. This could be supplemented by limited small-scale housing allocations within existing countryside groupings, consistent with the 'small settlements' approach under Option 4 for Tier 6.

**Economic Development:** Continued support for existing and identified Rural Activity Areas, with consideration of any new and emerging opportunities, particularly those that could further support local living opportunities. Augmented by specific land allocations where appropriate.

**Sustainable Tourism:** This could include targeted policy and site-specific support for tourism growth within the countryside, covering visitor attractions and accommodation.

**Energy Generation / Infrastructure:** Consideration of the implications and opportunities arising from the expansion or repowering of existing renewable energy developments, alongside the identification of potential locations for local and regional energy projects.

**Appendix 1: Diagram 2- changes to the settlement-hierarchy tiers, reflecting the level of infrastructure provision and the availability and accessibility of local services and facilities in line with *Infrastructure-First* and *Local Living* principles.**



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