

Settlement Basics

A **settlement** is a place where people live. They vary dramatically in size, from a single, isolated house to a megacity (a city with over 10 million inhabitants). They tend to be categorised as either **urban** or **rural**.

- **URBAN** – a built up area, any city with a population of over 10 000 people
- **RURAL** – basically the countryside. They may be farmland, forest, desert or savanna depending on where in the world you are studying. Rural settlements tend to be small containing fewer than 10 000 inhabitants, such as a village.



RURAL SETTLEMENTS

- **Isolated building** a single building surrounding by rural land
- **Hamlet** a small group of houses, normally 5 to 10, there is often no services in a hamlet
- **Village** a small settlement up to 10 000 people, they have some services in them like small shops, etc

URBAN SETTLEMENTS

- **Town** a settlement over 10 000 people that does not qualify as a city
- **City** a large town, in the UK a town is classified as a city if it has a cathedral
- **Capital City** the main administrative centre of a country and the home of the national government



Locational Factors

There are several factors which are important to consider when selecting the correct site for a settlement. Early settlers would have looked for natural advantages.

- **WATER SUPPLY** (wet point site) – access to water is essential when building a settlement, not only is it crucial for life but can be used as food source and a transportation route
- **SAFE FROM FLOODING** (dry point site) – whilst it is essential to have easy access to water it is vital that this does not come at the cost of flooding
- **FERTILE LAND** – food is crucial to life therefore many settlers look for fertile land so that farming is possible
- **FLAT LAND** (relief) – it is much easier to build on flat, stable land
- **ACCESSIBLE** – access to transport routes, such as rivers, allows for greater trade
- **RESOURCES** – it is useful being close to resources so that they can be used or sold
- **DEFENSIVE POSITION** – being on a small hill or surrounded by water would have given early settlers a strategic advantage

Settlement Patterns

Settlements do not just grow in a haphazard and random fashion, instead they grow and develop in predictable patterns

DISPERSED

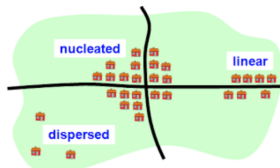
When individual dwellings are separated by large distances. They do not form a single settlement

LINEAR

This is when a settlement grows in a line, usually following a river, road, coastline or valley floor

NUCLEATED

When all the houses are built very close to each other, often around a central green or church



Settlement Functions

The **function** of a settlement is the purpose or use of that particular settlement. Large settlements will often have more than one function and these can change over time. Functions may include:

- Retail
- Commercial Business
- Agriculture
- Residential
- Educational
- Administrative
- Tourism
- Fishing

Rural areas tend to have fewer functions than urban areas, and the predominant function is usually agriculture. This is normally due to the fact that rural areas have smaller populations, poorer infrastructure and poorer communications than urban areas so cannot support as many different functions.

On the other hand, urban areas tend to have a number of functions, with a direct correlation between the number of functions and the size of the settlement.

Settlement Hierarchy

Hierarchies are created when items are placed in order of importance or significance, therefore a settlement hierarchy is when settlements are placed in order of importance. The importance of a settlement is determined using three factors:

- Size of the population
- Range and number of services
- Sphere of influence

These three variables are heavily interconnected and influence each other. For example for high order services to be offered the minimum threshold population must be met which is only going to occur in larger settlements.

Also as you move down the hierarchy the number of settlements within each band increases.

SPHERE OF INFLUENCE - the distance which people are willing to travel to access a service

SERVICE - facilities that are offered to people, e.g. supermarket, cinema, etc

THRESHOLD POPULATION - the minimum number of people required for a service to be offered and remain open

HIGH ORDER SERVICES - services which are used less frequently and usually stock comparison goods (those which are expensive and usually involve people comparing quality and price before buying)

LOW ORDER SERVICES - services which are used frequently and usually stock convenience goods

Land Use Models

Urban land use models are used to show the general patterns of land use within urban areas. Land use is the term used to categorise what the land is being used for, e.g. residential, business, recreation, etc.