The Location of Development: methodology

This page describes how the twelve city-regions were selected and defined, and the approach to mapping planning permissions, major employment clusters and railway stations. It then explains how the planning permissions were analysed based on location and scale.

Selecting the city-regions

The twelve city-regions analysed in this report were selected in order to provide a balance of different settlement patterns from across the English regions. Each recorded strong population and employment growth.

Defining the city-region boundaries

The city-region is a useful scale at which to consider the relationship between a city and surrounding areas. This study defines city-regions using Travel to Work Areas (TTWAs). These represent commuting patterns (or travel to work flows) between local authorities, and this directly captures the link between households (origin) and employment (destination). TTWAs are defined as areas with a working population of at least 3,500, within which at least 75% of the people who work in the area also live in the area.

To identify meaningful flows of inward commuting, this methodology defines a city-region as including any local authority in which 3.5% or more its employed resident population travel into the main city for employment. The 3.5% threshold was chosen as it highlights the surrounding local authorities which have a functional economic relationship with the main city.

Local authorities in each city-region*

Blackburn: Blackburn with Darwen, Hyndburn, Ribble Valley, Burnley

Bournemouth: Bournemouth, Poole, East Dorset, Christchurch

Brighton: Brighton and Hove, Lewes, Adur

Bristol: Bristol, South Gloucestershire, North Somerset, Bath and North East Somerset, Wiltshire

Cambridge: Cambridge, South Cambridgeshire, East Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire

Coventry: Coventry, Nuneaton and Bedworth, Warwick, Rugby

Leeds: Leeds, Bradford, Wakefield, Kirklees, Harrogate

Newcastle: Newcastle upon Tyne, North Tyneside, Gateshead, Northumberland, Country Durham, South Tyneside, Sunderland

Nottingham: Nottingham, Gedling, Broxtowe, Rushcliffe, Ashfield, Erewash

Oxford: Oxford, Vale of White Horse, Cherwell, West Oxfordshire, South Oxfordshire

Plymouth: Plymouth, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, South Hams, West Devon

Warrington: Warrington, St. Helens, Wigan, Halton, Cheshire West and Chester

These city-region boundaries provides a consistent approach for data collection and analysis, and may therefore differ from existing political or administrative city-regions.

Mapping permissions, major employment cluster and rail stations

For each city-region, data was collected on:

a) the location and scale of planning permissions granted for housing schemes of over 50 units between 1 January 2012 and 18 September 2017.

b) significant employment clusters, defined as Middle Layer Super Output Areas (MSOAs) with 10,000 jobs and over.

c) rail stations including all forms of rail transport, such as inter-city rail, light-rail, metro and tram

Planning permission data was sourced from EGi, the Estates Gazette database. It is a live data source, and the data was extracted at a given point in time. The data comprises outline planning permissions, permissions, and reserved matter applications. Duplication of data was avoided. If there was more than one reserved matter application for the same phase of a development then it was counted as a single planning permission, and if a development had an outline planning permission and a reserved matter application between 2012 and 2017, then only the outline planning was considered. The data does not include appeal information.

Measuring the proximity of planning permissions to major employment clusters and rail stations

The distance was then calculated between each scheme and the nearest major employment cluster and railway station. This distance was calculated as a straight line (as the crow flies), and each scheme was ranked accordinng to the following categories:

Distance to major employment cluster	Distance to railway station
Under 10km	Under 800m
10 to 20km	800m to 2km
Over 20km	Over 2km

Categorising planning permissions by location

Using GIS mapping, each scheme was categorised based on its location within either the existing built-up areas, land designated as green belt, including previously developed sites in the green belt, or outside the built-up area (including locations those on the edge of built-up areas, those beyond the green belt, and those in rural locations).

Measuring the scale of planning permissions by the number of housing units

Each scheme was also categorised by the number of housing units that it represents, using the following nine categories:

- 50-99 units
- 100-149 units
- 150-199 units
- 200-249 units
- 250-299 units
- 300-349 units
- 350-399 units
- 400-449 units
- 450+ units

NB. Schemes of under 50 housing units are not included in the mapping and spatial analysis, but are included in graphs showing the distribution of units by scheme size.