1 Introduction

1.1 In 2005-6 the RERC produced an urban_rural classification of the Parliamentary Constituencies (PCs) of England and Wales used in the 2001 and 2005 General Elections. The procedure used was similar to that applied in creating the rural_urban classification of local authorities but with slightly different criteria to reflect the larger number and more complex geographical configurations of Parliamentary Constituencies compared with local authorities (www.rerc.ac.uk/findings/rural.html).

1.2 This note describes a rural_urban classification of the revised PCs for England and for Wales which came into force on 27 June 2007 and 11 April 2006 respectively. The impact of the changes was to increase the number of PCs overall from 569 at the 2005 General Election (529 in England, 40 in Wales) to 573 in 2007 (533 in England, 40 in Wales). Although the eventual change in the number of PCs was small, changes to boundaries were widespread and often substantial. Only 63 PCs in England and 18 in Wales remained unchanged from their configuration in 2005.

1.3 As with the previous classification, England and Wales are treated as a single set of PC areas for classificatory purposes. The main difference compared with the previous classification is that the order in which criteria are applied now follows that for the revised local authority classification. A more minor change is that the criterion for consideration as a 'Significant Rural' PC is a minimum rural population of 33 percent compared with 26 percent in the 2005 classification.

1.4 As in the previous classification the three largest urban areas in Wales (Cardiff, Swansea and Newport) are assigned to the 'major' and 'large urban' settlement categories on lower population criteria compared with...
those for England on grounds of the differences in scale between the two urban systems.

2 The PC Classification Procedure

2.1 The main principle underlying the classification is the identification of the proportions of the total population of a PC in settlements ranging from those defined as ‘urban’, through smaller (rural) towns and their fringes, to villages, hamlets and dispersed dwellings. These proportions are derived from the Urban_Rural Definition 2004.4

2.2 The classification is implemented in two main stages.

Stage 1

Census Output Areas (COAs) within PCs are assigned to four broad classes according to whether they are located within one of the following types of area:

- the six ‘major’ urban areas with more than 750,000 population in England and the two with more than 250,00 population in Wales,
- the 17 ‘large’ urban areas with between 250,000 and 750,000 population in England and one with 116,000 population in Wales,5
- an urban area over 10,000 population which is not identified as a ‘larger market town’, and
- the remaining ‘rural’ set of COAs deemed to be ‘rural’ under the new rural/urban definition and including those COAs comprising the ‘larger market towns’.6

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4 See http://www.statistics.gov.uk/geography/nrudp.asp
5 The Major Urban Areas and Large Urban Areas defined for these purposes are listed in Annex A.
6 The ONS urban/rural definition identifies all settlements with more than 10,000 population as ‘urban’. However, some towns larger than this should be considered ‘rural’ in functional terms. For the purposes of the LAD/UA classification 207 urban areas with between 10,000 and 30,000 population were identified as of functional importance and were included in the ‘rural’ element of the population for classification purposes. Further details can be found in the papers relating to the LAD/UA classification.
Stage 2

Parliamentary Constituencies are allocated to one of six groups using the following criteria applied in the following order. As noted in paragraph 1.3 these criteria are slightly different to those applied in the classification of the pre 2007 PCs.

- the identification of PCs which have at least 75% of their population living in COAs classified as rural under the rural definition (called *Rural 75* PCs),
- the identification of PCs with 50% to 74.9% of the population living in rural COAs (called *Rural 50* PCs),
- the identification of PCs with 33% to 49.9% of the population living in rural COAs (called *Significant Rural* PCs),
- the identification of LAs which contain at least 50% of their population within one of the 6 Major Urban areas in England or 2 Major Urban Areas in Wales as defined above,
- the identification of LAs which are entirely within, or which contain at least 50% of their population within or one of the 17 Large Urban areas in England or one Large Urban Area in Wales as defined above, and
- the identification as ‘Other Urban’ of those PCs which have less than 33% of their population in rural areas *and* are not part of a Major or Large urban area in England or Wales.

3 The Classification – A Summary

3.1 The numbers of PCs that result from the application of this classification are shown in Table 1. A map of the new PCs classified is given in Annex B.

3.2 Because of the widespread changes in PC boundaries and the application of slightly different criteria compared with the pre 2007 PCs, direct comparison between the two classifications is not possible, even for those PCs which did not change.
Table 1: The Classification of Parliamentary Constituencies of England and Wales According to Rural_Urban Characteristics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Major Urban</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large Urban</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Urban</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significant Rural</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural 50</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural 75</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>573</td>
<td>569</td>
<td>533</td>
<td>529</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.3 Finally, it should be noted that the priority given to the percentage ‘rural’ in the order in which the criteria are applied in Stage 2 results, in some PCs, in an ‘urban’ percentage noticeably larger than the ‘rural’ percentage which classifies that PC. This is generally due to a high degree of polarization in the types of settlements making up a PC. An example with regard to PCs with a high percentage of population living within COAs located within Major Urban areas but nevertheless classified as ‘Significant Rural’ is given in Table 2.

Table 2 The Effect of the ‘Rural’ Prioritization of Criteria on Certain PCs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constituency</th>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>Major Urban</th>
<th>Major Urban %</th>
<th>Total Rural</th>
<th>Rural %</th>
<th>Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>St. Helens North Bor.</td>
<td>98188</td>
<td>56736</td>
<td>57.8</td>
<td>41402</td>
<td>42.2</td>
<td>Sig_rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South West Hertfordshire Co.</td>
<td>100733</td>
<td>55640</td>
<td>55.2</td>
<td>45093</td>
<td>44.8</td>
<td>Sig_rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tatton Co.</td>
<td>80407</td>
<td>34104</td>
<td>42.4</td>
<td>33840</td>
<td>42.1</td>
<td>Sig_rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neath Co.</td>
<td>71437</td>
<td>44277</td>
<td>62.0</td>
<td>23586</td>
<td>33.0</td>
<td>Sig_rural</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.4 The ‘Large Urban’ class also contains some PCs of this type whilst the ‘Other Urban’ category, as a residual can have a range of different types of urban and rural populations. In applications of the classification in which a high level of analytical detail is required or where localized analyses are being carried out, the full range of settlement characteristics of a PC should be taken into consideration. It will be noted in Table 2, for example, that the numbers of rural dwellers in each PC is also large.
Annex A

**Major Urban Areas**

*(a) England*

Greater London Urban Area  
West Midlands Urban Area  
Greater Manchester Urban Area  
Merseyside Urban Area  
West Yorkshire Urban Area  
Tyneside Urban Area

*(b) Wales*

Cardiff  
Swansea

**Large Urban Areas**

*(a) England*

Nottingham Urban Area  
Sheffield Urban Area  
Bristol Urban Area  
Brighton Urban Area  
Portsmouth Urban Area  
Leicester Urban Area  
Bournemouth Urban Area  
Reading/Wokingham Urban Area  
Teesside Urban Area  
The Potteries Urban Area  
Coventry/Bedworth Urban Area  
Birkenhead Urban Area  
Southampton Urban Area  
Kingston upon Hull  
Southend Urban Area  
Preston Urban Area  
Blackpool Urban Area

*(b) Wales*

Newport Urban Area
Annex B

The New Parliamentary Constituencies Classified by Urban_Rural Characteristics.