

Neighbourhood Planning Guidance Note 20

Guide to settlement boundaries

April 2013 - Revised June 2015



Settlement boundaries are a well utilised planning tool for guiding, controlling and identifying limits to development for an individual village. This guidance details what a settlement boundary is, the advantages and disadvantages to having a settlement boundary, and what the criteria is to helping develop an appropriate settlement boundary for your villages to include in your Neighbourhood Development Plan.

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What is a settlement boundary?

A settlement boundary is a line that is drawn on a plan around a village, which reflects its built form, this is also known historically as a 'village envelope'. The settlement boundary is used as a policy tool reflecting the area where a set of plan policies are to be applied, this could include policies within your Neighbourhood Development Plan. The settlement boundary does not necessarily have to cover the full extent of the village nor be limited to its built form.

In general, there is a presumption in favour of development within the settlement boundary. Any land and buildings outside of the boundary line are usually considered to be open countryside where development would be regulated with stricter planning policies. However, it should be noted that any land which has been included within the boundary line does not have a guarantee of approval of planning permission, as there will be other planning policies which will need to be adhered to also, for example; the protection of the character of a settlement.

The Unitary Development Plan identified main villages with designated settlement boundaries. The Local Plan Core Strategy highlights settlements to which proportional growth should be directed. It also indicated that where appropriate Neighbourhood Development Plans should seek to define the extent of these settlements with a settlement boundary or equivalent tool. Some settlements within the Core Strategy, particularly those within Fig 4.21 are of a character and form which would make the designation of a settlement boundary more problematic. Judgement will need to be used in these cases to assess where there is a more appropriate alternative to define the settlement and the appropriate areas from growth under Policy RA2 of the Core Strategy.

It is key to identify a settlement boundary, or any alternative, by engaging your local community through public consultation. This will help to discuss and designate a settlement boundary which is fitting for your village.

Advantages of settlement boundaries

The advantages of settlement boundaries to each individual or community will invariably differ. There are, however, a few generic advantages to having a settlement boundary which are detailed below:

- Certainty: with a 'black line' being plotted on a plan it is easy to identify the 'settlement' from 'open countryside'.
- Locally, settlement boundaries are an understood and accepted planning tool for guiding and controlling developments.
- Ensure a more plan-led and controlled approach to future housing growth, allowing for allocating sites within your village rather than windfalls.
- Protects the countryside from unnecessary development and prevents ribbon development.
- Co-ordinated and consistent approach providing a firm basis for refusing planning applications which are unacceptable in planning terms.
- Allows for more certainty to developers/land owners with sites/land within the boundary, as long as they adhere to all other plan policies.
- Allows the development of small sites which cannot be identified as allocations.

Disadvantages of settlement boundaries

In addition, everyone will also have different opinions on the disadvantages of settlement boundaries. Below are a list of some of the disadvantages that could be seen with having settlement boundaries:

- Increases land values within the settlement boundary.
- Increases hope values for land adjoining but outside the boundary.
- The use of settlement boundaries has led to criticism that they result in cramming within the village as every available area of land

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competes for development resulting in a potential reduction in the landscape quality and character of that village, unless other policies are in place.

- Settlement boundaries can be crude and inflexible.
- The character of properties and the village, could be altered if development is allowed within the gardens of these houses within a settlement boundary.

Criteria used to define the extent of the settlement boundaries

For those settlements highlighted within the Local Plan - Core Strategy there is encouragement to define a settlement boundary where appropriate. Further advice can be given for those settlements which are more dispersed in nature.

Settlement boundaries which were defined within the Unitary Development Plan will no longer be valid on adoption of the Local Plan - Core Strategy.

A set of criteria should be used when defining your settlement boundary and some examples are detailed below. It will be worth considering these whilst defining your own boundary, as well as incorporating local circumstances and knowledge in defining your boundary.

- Lines of communication - The boundaries trace the edge of the built up area, therefore excluding roads, paths, railways and other lines of communications.
- Physical features - Wherever possible try to allow the boundaries to follow physical features, such as: buildings, field boundaries or curtilages. However, in order to conserve the character and to limit expansion, settlement boundaries can exclude large gardens, orchards and other areas. This may mean that occasionally the boundaries do not relate fully to the physical features surrounding the village.

- Planning History - You may wish to consider existing commenced planning permissions, recent refusals, planning appeal decisions and previous Local Plan inspector's comments concerning areas on the edge of the village.
- Village enhancements - Settlement boundaries should include buildings and associated land that make up the village form. In some edge of village areas, boundaries may need to include small areas of land and/or buildings which offer the opportunity for improvements to the entrance of the village or ensure infrastructure improvements or a general enhancement to the village.
- Recent development - Where appropriate, settlement boundaries should include new developments which may have occurred recently. It is also advisable to include sites that have received planning permission within the settlement boundary.
- Important amenity areas - These form part of the character of the settlement and could be identified and protected by policy and included in the settlement boundary due to their contribution to built form.
- If you choose to allocate land within your Neighbourhood Development Plan for housing, employment or other uses, this should be included within the boundary.
- Your settlement boundaries should be drawn to facilitate an appropriate level of proportional growth within the plan period. If land within the boundary is not formally allocated, there will be a requirement to demonstrate that there is enough available capacity within the boundary to enable development to take place.

If you have any questions or queries regarding settlement boundaries and what should or should not be included in them, please contact a member of the Neighbourhood Planning team.

Guide to settlement boundaries

Neighbourhood Planning guidance notes available:

Deciding to produce a Neighbourhood Development Plan

1. Which is the right tool for your parish
2. What is a Neighbourhood Development Plan
3. Getting started
4. A guide to procedures
5. Funding

Plan Production

6. Developing a Vision and Objectives
7. Generating options
8. Writing planning policies
9. Environmental Assessment
10. Evidence base and information requirements
11. Implementation and Monitoring
12. Best practice community engagement techniques
13. Statutory consultees
14. Writing a consultation statement
15. Planning and other legislation
16. Web enabling your plan
17. Using OS based mapping
18. Glossary of planning terms

Topics

19. Sustainable Water Management in Herefordshire
20. Guide to settlement boundaries
21. Guide to site assessment and choosing allocation sites
22. Meeting your housing requirements
23. Conservation issues
24. Recreational areas
25. Renewable energy
26. Transport issues
27. Community Infrastructure Levy

Additional Guidance

28. Setting up a steering group
29. Creating a questionnaire
30. Community facilities
31. Conformity with the Local Plan (Core Strategy)
32. Examinations of Neighbourhood Development Plans
33. Guide to Neighbourhood Development Plan Referendums
34. Tourism
35. Basic Conditions
36. Your plan - Contributing to sustainable development