

# Neighbourhood Planning Guidance Note 20

## Guide to settlement boundaries

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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 the correct 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 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.

Within the Unitary Development Plan only the identified main villages were given settlement boundaries, however now with changes to the planning legislation (introduction of neighbourhood planning powers) and the flexibility given within the Local Plan (Core Strategy) communities will be able to decide for themselves if they wish to have a settlement boundary around their villages, and if so, the extent of that boundary.

It may be beneficial if, initially, you ask the community, through one of your consultation exercises, about their thoughts on whether the village should have a settlement boundary, or if they have any thoughts or preferences on how the settlement boundary is defined.

## 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 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.

# Guide to settlement boundaries

## Criteria used to define the extent of the settlement boundaries

It will be up to you to decide if the villages included within your Neighbourhood Development Plan would benefit from having a settlement boundary or not. You (with the support of the community) may decide to keep an existing boundary defined within the Unitary Development Plan (UDP) or you may decide to alter the line of an existing settlement boundary to allow for the development that has already taken place and to still allow for growth. Please note that even though your village may have a defined settlement boundary through the UDP, this will no longer apply when the Local Plan (Core Strategy) is adopted.

If you do decide to have a settlement boundary, a set of criteria that have been used during the development of settlement boundaries through previous local plans are detailed below, it may be worth adopting this approach whilst defining your own boundary, of course, also do not forget the 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
- Important amenity areas - Important amenity areas which form part of the character of the settlement should be identified, protected by policy and included in the settlement boundary due to its 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

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.

## **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. Water issues in Herefordshire
20. Guide to settlement boundaries
21. Guide to site assessment and choosing allocation sites
22. Affordable housing
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