

Report to: Strategic Planning Committee



Date of Meeting 05 April 2022

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A

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## Methodology for defining settlement boundaries

### Report summary:

During its deliberations on the 'Working Draft East Devon Local Plan', this committee agreed in principle that settlement boundaries should be drawn around the Tier 1 to Tier 4 settlements. In order to draw the boundaries properly, it is essential that we follow a defined process in a logical and transparent way: this report details the methodology proposed for achieving this. The criteria chosen seek to reflect the discussions and decisions taken by Strategic Planning Committee that boundaries should enable some limited, small scale, incremental growth.

### Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes  No

Policy Framework Yes  No

### Recommendation:

- 1) **That Strategic Planning Committee endorse the proposed methodology for defining settlement boundaries, set out in paragraph 2 of this report, and delegate authority to the Service Lead – Planning Strategy and Development Management to use the methodology in the preparation of the plan for consultation.**

**Reason for recommendation:** To ensure that Members agree with the method to be used to define boundaries so that more detailed work can progress.

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Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

- Climate Action
- Corporate Services and COVID-19 Response and Recovery
- Democracy and Transparency
- Economy and Assets
- Coast, Country and Environment
- Finance
- Strategic Planning
- Sustainable Homes and Communities

**Equalities impact** Low Impact

**Climate change** Low Impact

**Risk:** Medium Risk; It is important that we set out how settlement boundaries are to be defined to ensure a rational process is followed and can subsequently be justified.

**Links to background information** – See links in the attached the report.

Link to [Council Plan](#):

Priorities (check which apply)

- Outstanding Place and Environment
  - Outstanding Homes and Communities
  - Outstanding Economic Growth, Productivity, and Prosperity
  - Outstanding Council and Council Services
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## 1 Introduction

- 1.1 The issues relevant to settlement boundaries were first considered by Strategic Planning Committee in [October](#) 2021, when a topic [paper](#) was [considered](#). These papers set out national policy and other considerations relating to the principles of settlement boundaries and explored alternative options.
- 1.2 The working draft plan included three policies relevant to settlement boundaries. Strategy Policy 6 ‘Development inside settlement boundaries’ set out what kind of development is likely to be acceptable inside settlement boundaries and was accepted by Strategic Planning Committee as shown in the relevant [minutes](#). Strategy Policy 7 ‘Development adjacent to the outside edge of settlement boundaries’ set out a policy of allowing some restricted forms of development on the outside edge of the settlement boundary, but this approach was not supported by the Committee. Members preferred ‘Option C’, which was not to have a policy enabling development on the outside edge of settlement boundaries and to draw settlement boundaries more ‘loosely’ to help provide a supply of smaller sites that would be too small to consider specifically allocating for development. Strategy Policy 8 ‘Development beyond settlement boundaries’ restricted development beyond settlement boundaries so that it is only permitted if in accordance with a specific local or neighbourhood plan policy: this was supported by Committee.

## 2 Proposed Methodology

- 2.1 In order to achieve a consistent approach to the drawing of settlement boundaries we will need to follow a methodology that sets out the circumstances in which land will or will not be included within the settlement boundary. This approach was used successfully during the preparation of the Villages Plan.

2.2 A set of criteria has been devised to guide the detailed work of defining settlement boundaries for inclusion in the next consultation on the local plan. They are set out in the table below and reflect the previous discussions of Strategic Planning Committee.

	Ref	Criteria	Commentary
<b>General Criteria</b>	A1	Boundaries should reflect the existing scale and core built form of the settlement while enabling small scale, incremental growth.	It is important that the settlement boundaries are prepared in accordance with the strategy set out in the local plan. This seeks to encourage and manage growth through policies and allocations, Settlement boundaries have been designed as a policy tool to give a high degree of certainty to both local communities and the development industry about where development is generally encouraged and where it is more closely controlled. Plan allocations and policies provide opportunities for sustainable growth of settlements. This approach, coupled with the drawing of boundaries that limit, but do not stifle all outward growth of settlements will enable the pattern of growth to be managed in line with the NPPF. Where a site is allocated in a made neighbourhood plan, that site may be included within the settlement boundary under criteria B3.
	A2	Where practical, boundaries should follow clearly defined physical features such as walls, fences, hedgerows, roads and water courses.	It is clearly desirable for lines on maps to follow physical features that have a degree of permanence. This enables the plan to be easily read and understood by interested parties and often such features on the edge of settlements mark a change in character from built settlement to rural. However, sometimes the change in character is more gradual, for example where large gardens form a 'buffer' between the main built form of the settlement and the wider countryside. In these circumstances, if there is significant development potential, it may be appropriate for the settlement boundary not to follow physical features. Where this is the case, an assessment will be made to make it clear why the land has been excluded.
<b>Areas to be included</b>	B1	Built and extant planning permissions for residential and employment uses which are both physically and functionally related to the settlement.	Where sites with permission will secure development that will fall in line with the criteria detailed in this methodology it will typically be appropriate to include them in the boundary. However, where planning permission has been granted as an exception to normal planning policy, including any market housing built to enable affordable housing under Strategy 35 of the adopted

Ref	Criteria	Commentary
		East Devon Local Plan 2013 - 2031 OR where planning permission has been granted but due to special circumstances, such as low density development to protect mature trees, exclusion may appropriate.
B2	Built and extant planning permissions for community facilities, such as religious buildings, schools and community halls which are considered to be physically and functionally related to the settlement.	Where buildings are physically well related to the built form of a settlement, inclusion is appropriate. However, where the buildings are set in very extensive grounds that are clearly beyond the built form of a settlement they may be excluded.
B3	Site allocations identified in the draft local plan or any made neighbourhood plan for residential, community or employment uses which are physically and functionally related to the settlement.	Significant areas of open space on the edge of a site allocation may be excluded, together with any neighbourhood plan allocation that restricts the nature of the development (such as requiring only housing for older persons).
B4	Areas of land that are largely contained between site allocations proposed in the draft local plan and the main built-up area of the related settlement.	Any land included on this basis will be considered on a case by case basis having regard to landscape, townscape and any other considerations relevant in specific circumstances. More detailed assessments will be provided of potential sites that could meet this criteria so that it is clear why they have been either included or excluded.
B5	Parcels of land smaller than 0.15 of a hectare <sup>1</sup> that may provide opportunities for no more than 4 homes to be built where generally compatible with the general layout and landscape setting of the settlement	No all sites that would potentially meet this criteria will be will be included within settlement boundaries. The purpose of this criteria is to allow for limited incremental growth in keeping with the scale of settlement and its character. More detailed assessments will be provided of potential sites that could meet this criteria so that it is clear why they have been either included or excluded. These assessment will have regard to landscape, townscape and any other considerations relevant in specific circumstances. This criteria only applies to sites where the existing boundaries are below the threshold set – it will not apply to parcels of larger sites.
B6	Parcels of land larger than 0.15 of a hectare that may not have been considered suitable for allocation, but nevertheless may provide	The inclusion of any site on this basis is likely to be exceptional as our preference is to specifically allocated sites of this scale. However, it is possible that there may be some sites that are constrained so that they

<sup>1</sup> The Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (which forms the main 'supply' of sites to be considered for allocation in the local plan) does not consider sites below this threshold - [HELAA Methodology - May 2021 \(eastdevon.gov.uk\)](https://www.eastdevon.gov.uk/HELAA-Methodology-May-2021) at paragraph 5.2

	Ref	Criteria	Commentary
		suitable development opportunities if applicants demonstrate through the development management process that individual proposals would be acceptable.	are unlikely to yield enough dwellings to justify allocation. It may be difficult to resolve the potential difficulties of developing such sites through the local plan process, but they may still have potential to enable small scale incremental growth of settlements, if specific proposals are found to be acceptable through the development management process. Very few sites are likely to be included based on this criteria.
<b>Areas to be excluded</b>	C1	The curtilage of any property with the capacity to very significantly extend the built form of the settlement.	The definition of Settlement Boundaries is about defining a group of land and buildings that together take the physical form of a settlement plus small scale opportunities for development growth. It is not about including outlying land and buildings simply because they share an address or post code.
	C2	Large areas of open recreational or amenity space at the edge of settlements which have a predominantly open visual character.	
	C3	Development which is physically or visually detached from the settlement (including farm buildings or renewable energy installations).	
	C4	Parts of settlements that might comprise of groups of houses or buildings but which are separated from the main core of the village by fields or open space.	

2.3 In the Villages Plan, following the definition of boundaries using the agreed criteria, further work was undertaken to assess whether all the areas provisionally included in the boundary had good access to services and facilities by means other than the private car. In the case of Newton Poppleford and West Hill some areas were excluded from the boundary on this basis and this approach was supported by the Inspector. It is proposed that we take a similar approach in the Local Plan so that, once boundaries are drawn using the above criteria we ‘sense check’ them against the emerging policies of the plan. It may be that this further step in the process shows that some areas initially included would not be appropriate locations for development and they would then be excluded. The intent is that the above table and other material will feature in an evidence document or audit trail document that will be used to help explain and justify local plan policy and its application to boundary definition. Such a document or documents would be likely to be submitted as part of the Council’s paperwork for plan examination.

## **Financial Implications**

There are no financial implications on which to comment.

## **Legal Implications**

As noted in the report a clear audit trail of evidence and methodology is necessary as part of the plan making process. There are no further legal comments.