

Date of Meeting: 22 November 2024

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A

East Devon Local Plan – Defining Settlement Boundaries

Report summary:

This report summarises the considerations that have been taken into account in the definition of settlement boundaries. Details of the assessments for individual settlements are set out in the accompanying Settlement Boundaries Evidence Paper.

Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes No

Policy Framework Yes No

Recommendation:

1. That committee endorse policies SP 05 and SP 06, as set out in paragraphs 1.2 and 1.3 of this report for inclusion in the Regulation 19 draft of the plan.
2. That committee endorse the boundaries defined in the Settlement Boundaries Evidence Paper for inclusion in the 'Regulation 19' Local Plan.

Reason for recommendation:

To seek committee approval for the proposed settlement boundaries.

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Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

- Climate Action and Emergency Response
- Coast, Country and Environment
- Council and Corporate Co-ordination
- Democracy, Transparency and Communications
- Economy and Assets
- Finance
- Strategic Planning
- Sustainable Homes and Communities
- Tourism, Sports, Leisure and Culture

Equalities impact Low Impact

Climate change Low Impact

Risk: High Risk; The local plan needs to progress in a timely manner if it is to meet potential Government deadlines for plan preparation and settlement boundaries are an important mechanism to deliver the plan strategy.

Links to background information

Links to background documents are contained in the body of this report.

Link to Council Plan

Priorities (check which apply)

- Better homes and communities for all
- A greener East Devon
- A resilient economy

1. Report

1.1 There are two main policies relating to settlement boundaries in Chapter 3 of the draft plan: 'Development inside settlement boundaries' (SP 05) and 'Development beyond settlement boundaries' (SP 06). At the Strategic Planning Committee meeting on 5th November, when Chapter 3 was considered, it was agreed to include these policies with this report on the proposed settlement boundaries so that the policies and the boundaries could be considered together.

1.2 SP 05 states that:

"Within the settlement boundaries defined on the Policies map development will be supported in principle. This does not mean that all development will be acceptable within settlement boundaries: proposals will be considered on their own merits having regard to other policies in this plan and any made neighbourhood plan.

This is a strategic policy and significant changes to the boundaries defined through neighbourhood planning would be incompatible with it. However, neighbourhood plans that propose modest adjustments to the settlement boundaries to increase the opportunities for additional development are likely to be compatible with this policy."

A minor change has been made to replace "may be" with "are likely to be" to provide greater certainty to the neighbourhood plan process.

1.3 SP 06 states that:

"In locations outside of the defined settlement boundaries development will not be permitted unless it is in accordance with a specific Local or Neighbourhood Plan policy that explicitly permits such development."

There has been some minor re-drafting to remove a final section which previously read "and where it would not harm the distinctive landscape, amenity and environmental qualities of the area within which it is located". This wording has been removed because it is superfluous and could conflict with other plan policies.

1.4 Strategic Policy SP 01: Spatial Strategy sets out the settlements where growth is to be focussed and settlement boundaries defined. This Committee agreed a methodology for defining settlement boundaries in April 2022. This was used to defined boundaries in the 2022 draft plan. Further work has been undertaken to refine the proposed

boundaries and take account of proposed allocations and responses to the 2022 consultation.

- 1.5 The process for defining settlement boundaries is undertaken in two stages. Firstly, the existing built-up areas are defined together with areas that could enable some limited small scale growth: criteria are used to guide this process, as set out in Appendix 1 of the evidence paper. Secondly, the boundaries drawn in 'stage 1' are assessed to determine if they are appropriate locations for development. Most settlements boundaries were not altered as a result of the 'stage 2' assessment. The exceptions to this were: Exmouth; Newton Poppleford; Otterton; Sidmouth and West Hill.
- 1.6 An evidence paper has been produced to set out how the boundaries have been drawn for individual settlements and why any changes have been made. The paper sets out the general principles that have guided the process. These include that all site allocations are included in the settlement boundary and that, generally, predominantly open land in a green wedge or the coastal preservation area has been excluded to avoid policy conflicts. Constraints like flooding or heritage impacts have not usually been taken into account because the aim is to set out areas that are broadly acceptable for development, recognising that further details will be addressed through the development management system. An exception to this is the village of Stoke Canon, where the whole built-up area is at risk of flooding, and no settlement boundary is proposed.
- 1.7 The bulk of the evidence paper comprises a settlement by settlement analysis, with a map showing any existing and the proposed settlement boundaries, a summary of representations received, and any changes highlighted. Members are referred to the evidence paper for details of individual settlement boundaries.

Implications for Neighbourhood Planning

- 1.8 Both policies SP05 and SP06 have been drafted to specifically make provision for the role of future new and revised neighbourhood plans. It is however acknowledged that the introduction of some new settlement boundaries where there were not previously BUAB's under the adopted LP (or similar set by NPs) will somewhat conflict with made NPs where they exist. This is a result of applying a consistent approach across the whole district through the Local Plan which is not a requirement of the neighbourhood plans. It is however necessary to follow the evidence produced and consistently apply it and so this is unavoidable.

Financial implications:

There are no specific financial implications impacting the council in this report.

Legal implications:

There are no specific legal implications requiring comment within this report (002533/22 November 2024/DH)