

Settlement Boundary Review: Methodology Paper

Introduction

1. Strategic Policy SD22 of the South Downs Local Plan: Preferred Options sets out the development strategy for the National Park. It identifies towns and villages across the National Park that are able to accommodate some growth. These settlements will have defined settlement boundaries. These are shown on the Inset Maps of the Local Plan. Please note that settlements that are preparing neighbourhood development plans (NDP) are not shown on the inset maps. Parishes which are preparing NDPs will formulate their own settlement policy boundaries, but are encouraged to make use of this methodology paper. The National Park Authority (NPA) will engage with neighbourhood planning groups to ensure that any review of settlement boundaries are carried out with due regard to the Statutory Purposes of the National Park.
2. Settlement boundaries are a spatial planning tool used to direct development to the most sustainable locations while protecting the character of the countryside, villages and towns and preventing the actual or perceived coalescence of settlements. As set out in Strategic Policy SD22: Development Strategy of the South Downs Local Plan: Preferred Options, the principle of development within the settlement policy boundaries will be supported provided that it complies with other relevant policies, is of a scale and nature appropriate to the character and function of the settlement and is in accordance with the spatial strategy for the relevant Broad Area (Core Policies SD4/CP: The Coastal Plan, SD4/DS: The Dip Slope, SD4/WD: The Western Downs, SD4/SS: The Scarp Slope and SD/WW: The Western Weald). Development will not normally be permitted outside of settlement boundaries, subject to a number of exceptions as set out in Strategic Policy SD22.
3. The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) restricts the circumstances under which settlement boundaries can be used, stating that blanket policies restricting housing development in some settlements and preventing other settlements from expanding should be avoided unless their use can be supported by robust evidence. The Authority considers that its designation as a National Park and detailed evidence base on landscape provides robust justification for setting settlement boundaries and differing policies for areas within and outwith such boundaries.
4. Villages located outside settlement boundaries are considered to be part of the countryside and will be subject to Criterion 3 of the Development Strategy (Strategic Policy SD22). These settlements have an important role to play in the social, economic and environmental fabric of the South Downs, but are not considered to be appropriate locations for new development other than the exceptions listed in Strategic Policy SD22 of the Local Plan. They are therefore treated as part of the countryside and do not have settlement boundaries. The pattern of settlement in the National Park is the result of many complex historic processes in previous eras, and the presence of certain types of building in the countryside, for example, isolated villas or ribbon development, will not serve as a precedent for further such development.
5. Land within settlement policy boundaries may not be suitable for development due to other constraints, for example, flood risk zones, tree preservation orders, the protection of green space or townscape character.
6. The reasons for establishing settlement boundaries include the ability to:
 - a) Ensure development is directed to more sustainable locations, both in terms of accessibility to and support of existing services and transport, and in terms of landscape.

- b) Protect the countryside from encroachment of land uses more characteristic of built up areas, conserve and enhance cultural heritage and natural beauty.
 - c) Help to sustain the identity of separate communities and maintain the local distinctiveness of settlements and traditional built form.
 - d) Provide greater certainty to communities, landowners and developers over where certain types of windfall development are likely to be acceptable in principle.
 - e) Support the plan led approach to development.
7. Different local planning authorities across the National Park area have historically taken different approaches to drawing settlement boundaries. Not all authorities use a set methodology. Where a methodology has been used the criteria are generally similar from one local authority to another, but there are some differences in approach between different methodologies. These include questions such as whether to draw a boundary around clusters of buildings close to but separate from the main settlement; and whether particular uses should be included or excluded from the boundary, where they occur at the edge of a settlement.
 8. The review of settlement boundaries without a set methodology can be problematic. There is a need to apply principles consistently and to explain how decisions have been arrived at.
 9. The SDNPA is planning comprehensively across the whole South Downs National Park for the first time. This means that this is the first time settlement boundaries will have been applied across the whole area in a consistent and comprehensive way. This may result in some differences between existing and proposed boundaries. This will be reviewed carefully to ensure that decisions are made consistently based on this methodology and on all the available evidence.

Structure of document

10. The methodology set out in this document will be used to identify settlement boundaries for all the towns and villages identified in policy SD22 of the Preferred Options Local Plan unless this is being done through the neighbourhood planning process. This methodology is followed by two appendices. Appendix 1 lists all the proposed changes to settlement boundaries along with a reason for the proposed change. Appendix 2 is a set of maps showing all the proposed settlement policy boundaries in the National Park, where boundaries are not being set through the neighbourhood planning process. Maps showing these changes are also contained in the Local Plan. This methodology has been added to the Neighbourhood Planning Toolkit in order to help neighbourhood planning groups set their own settlement boundaries.
11. The methodology does not determine whether a settlement will have a boundary. This is set out in Strategic Policy SD22: Development Strategy. This methodology applies to the detailed decisions regarding where that settlement boundary is drawn. For reference settlement policy boundaries have been removed or added for the following villages in the South Downs Local Plan:
 - Milland, Watersfield and Friston: settlement policy boundaries added
 - Blackmoor, Blendworth, Bucks Horn Oak, Fulking, High Cross, Hill Brow and Bramber: settlement policy boundaries removed.
12. This exercise is being carried out in parallel with but separately from the identification of site allocations for development, and therefore the maps prepared do not take into account any proposed site allocations. Once the list of proposed allocations is finalised for the Pre-Submission draft of the Local Plan, the settlement boundary maps will be redrawn. The final

maps will incorporate housing and, where appropriate in terms of the methodology, employment allocations as well as any buildings or land that are currently detached from the settlement but would be joined onto it (in terms of the settlement boundary methodology) by the development of proposed allocations.

Methodology

Existing evidence

13. In order to take a landscape-led approach to the drawing of settlement boundaries, the National Park Authority has drawn on the wide range of published studies relating to landscape, townscape, the historic and natural environments.

14. When reviewing the boundary for any given settlement, the following evidence has been consulted:

South Downs Integrated Landscape Character Assessment:

- a) This document identifies that some landscape character areas are characterised by nucleated, linear or dispersed settlements. Settlement boundaries have been reviewed to ensure they protect these distinctive structures.

Extensive Urban Survey

- b) These exist for several of the larger settlements in the National Park. They identify areas of particular historic value and of vulnerability to change, which, where they lie close to existing or potential new settlement boundaries, have been taken into account in the review.

Conservation Area Appraisals/Management Plans

- c) Conservation area appraisals and management plans typically make numerous recommendations for the areas they apply to, all of which have been taken into account in the review of settlement boundaries (where the conservation area lies on or close to existing or potential new settlement boundaries).

Village and Town Design Statements and Local Landscape Assessments

- d) Village and town design statements and Local Landscape Assessments typically make numerous recommendations for the areas they apply to, all of which have been taken into account in the review of settlement boundaries for settlements which have such statements/assessments, where the status of the document is recognised by the National Park Authority.

Principle of inclusion of land uses

15. Where the Development Strategy (Strategic Policy SD22) identifies a settlement as being suitable for a settlement policy boundary then the main built up area of the settlement has been included within the boundary. This will include any residential or commercial developments that have taken place since the boundaries were last reviewed (subject to the exceptions listed below) and sites with extant planning permission. Sites allocated in the Local Plan for development will also ultimately be included in the final settlement boundaries, although they have not been included at this stage. Barring the exceptions below, settlement boundaries have been drawn along defined features such as walls, hedgerows and roads where possible.

16. Where no specific recommendations arise from the above evidence base studies, the following principles have been applied to the inclusion or exclusion of specific uses from

within the settlement boundary where they occur adjacent to an existing or proposed new settlement boundary. The reasoning for these principles is provided in the paragraphs that follow.

- Allotments- **Exclude**
 - School playing fields- **Exclude**
 - Hard surfaced school playgrounds- **Include**
 - Recreation/sports grounds- **Exclude- including buildings**
 - Designated wildlife sites and buffers around them (where relevant)- **Exclude**
 - Woodlands- **Exclude**
 - Orchards- **Exclude**
 - Cemeteries and churchyards - **Exclude**
 - Agricultural fields or paddocks that are surrounded by development on all sides **Site by site**
 - Farm yards and farm buildings- **Exclude**
 - Former farm buildings, converted to other uses – **Site by site (see paragraph 20 below)**
 - Nurseries, garden centres etc. - **Exclude**
 - Agricultural/forestry workers housing- **Exclude**
 - Car parks, sports pavilions etc. – **Exclude (where permitted under countryside policies)**
 - Community facilities e.g. schools, public houses etc –**Include where already within boundary or recently built adjacent to boundary. Otherwise exclude.**
 - Residential caravan sites - **Site by site**
 - Houses in the middle of large plots- **Exclude**
 - Large rear or side gardens (of houses clearly in the settlement)- **Boundary should run 10m from rear or side elevation of house (with exceptions, see below).**
 - Roads, tracks and public rights of way running along the boundary- **Exclude**
17. Green spaces (including but not limited to designated Local Green Spaces) are an important element of the landscape of the National Park and have been excluded from settlement boundaries wherever they occur adjacent to the boundary, except in cases where they have been specifically allocated for development through the Local Plan. This will include allotments, school playing fields, woodland, recreation/sports grounds, cemeteries and graveyards, roadside verges and landscaped areas (where they are significant in size and visually related to the countryside), internationally, nationally or locally designated wildlife sites, agricultural fields, orchards and paddocks.
18. Where they occur within settlements and not adjacent to the boundary, green spaces (other than agricultural fields or paddocks) have been included in the settlement boundary. They will often be protected from development by a Local Green Space policy or by specific policies relating to the type of green space.
19. Certain types of designated wildlife site, for example heathland, or identified ancient woodlands, have the potential to be harmed by certain types of development occurring within a given buffer zone, and where this applies a buffer zone surrounding the wildlife site will also be excluded from settlement boundaries. This may be in the form of the complete exclusion of parts of the settlement within a given distance of the site, or of drawing the boundary along the edge of those buildings that lie closest to the site.
20. Where agricultural fields and paddocks, including those no longer in agricultural use, are entirely surrounded by a built up area, they have been assessed on a case by case basis. If they contribute positively to the landscape and/or have biodiversity, historic, recreational or

agricultural value then a settlement boundary has been drawn around them and they will be subject to countryside policies.

21. Agricultural farmsteads are considered characteristically rural and part of the countryside and provide the historical connection between settlements and their agricultural origins. In addition these spaces can provide visual links to the rural context beyond. Therefore farmsteads standing on the edge of the built form of settlements have been excluded as they relate more to the rural context. This approach also provides an additional safeguard against infilling which has the potential to undermine this distinctly rural feature. The exception is farmhouses where they form an integral part of the built up area of the settlement.
22. Conversions of agricultural buildings in the countryside have generally been required to retain the physical character derived from their former use. Therefore they will not always be suitable for inclusion in settlement boundaries. They have been included within the settlement boundary where they are not visually or physically detached from the settlement. Converted agricultural buildings that are physically separate from the settlement boundary, or physically adjacent but retain a separate character (for example, having an access point that is some distance from the settlement, or remaining part of a larger complex continuing in agricultural use) will not be included in the settlement boundary.
23. Other developments that would be allowed in the countryside or have been allowed under countryside policies in the past are considered to relate more to the countryside than to the settlement and will therefore be excluded where they lie adjacent to the boundary. This category includes equestrian developments; housing for agricultural or forestry workers; garden centres and nurseries; and extensive community facilities such as hard surfaced sports grounds (including pavilions) and car parks, where they have been built outside existing settlement boundaries. More intensively built up community uses such as schools or public houses have been included in the boundary if they are already within it or if they have been built adjacent to the boundary since it was last reviewed; if they are older buildings outside the boundary, or new buildings but not adjacent to the boundary, then they will not be included.
24. Residential caravan sites occurring at the edge of settlements have been assessed on a site by site basis.
25. Existing employment sites and proposed Local Plan allocations for employment on the periphery of a settlement, which are significant in size in comparison with the settlement's scale, or are clearly beyond a settlement and irrespective of scale, are excluded from the development boundary. This will protect the scale and structure of settlements from inappropriately sized or shaped residential developments which may occur on such sites if they become unsuitable for employment in the future.
26. Gardens are an important part of the setting and attractiveness of settlements in the National Park, softening the transition at the settlement edge, marking the edge of settlements in what is generally an attractive way, softening the appearance of built-up areas from the countryside and containing vegetation which shields new development. This role is especially important on the sloping terrain common in the National Park, where the edge of a curtilage can often be noticeably higher or lower than existing buildings within that curtilage. The NPPF states that allowances for windfall development as part of a five-year housing land supply should not include residential gardens, so the inclusion of garden land in settlement boundaries would not affect the windfall allowance in the NPA's housing land supply. Large and long gardens, including landscaped areas ancillary to commercial sites, at the edge of settlements will therefore be excluded from settlement boundaries. This will not

affect permitted development rights or the planning status held by gardens as land ancillary to residential use.

27. Houses in large plots, set back from the road, have been excluded from settlement boundaries where they occur at the edge of a settlement. This will protect vegetation in the garden which is likely to dominate views into the plot from the public domain.
28. Where houses themselves recognisably form part of the settlement pattern, but they have a large or long rear or side garden which stretches away from the rest of the settlement, the settlement boundary will run 10m behind the relevant rear or side wall of the main dwelling house, to prevent backland development and protect any vegetation which shields or may in future shield the settlement in views from the countryside. To avoid making petty deviations from physical boundary features, this criterion will only be applied where the furthest point of the curtilage is 20m or more from the closest wall of the main dwelling house to the boundary. Where boundary features on the ground run within 5m of the proposed resulting line, then they have been followed instead. This principle will not be applied where it would result in minor, isolated bites being taken out of otherwise strong and straight settlement edges. A blanket approach will ensure consistency across the National Park.
29. Where settlement boundaries run along roads, tracks or public rights of way, they have been drawn along the edge closest to the settlement (though having regard to paragraph 15 above).

Detached parts of settlements

30. Detached parts of settlements may have boundaries drawn around them where they:
 - a) Have a density of 30 dwellings per hectare or more (after deduction of any long narrow rear gardens as per paragraph 26 above). Clusters of low density villa style housing or of detached houses with sizeable side or front gardens will not be given settlement boundaries
 - b) Comprise a continuous block of curtilages, of buildings which are in close proximity to one another, without large residential plots, landscaping or other open space breaking up the area (though they may be separated by roads)
 - c) Include at least twenty dwellings and
 - d) Are situated within 150m of the main part of the settlement, are visually related to the main part of the settlement and do not have any identity as a separate settlement or hamlet.
31. Where boundaries are drawn around detached parts of settlements, this will not have any implications for land lying outside the boundary between the main part of the settlement and the detached part.

Appendix I