

Assessment of whether settlement and green belt boundaries need to be changed to address an existing anomaly

Conclusion

1. This report sets out the findings for considering whether green belt and settlement boundaries need to be changed around the north western corner of Lytchett Matravers along Jennys Lane. It assesses whether there is an anomaly along the existing boundary by considering: i) whether the site (that is positioned next to the village) has an urban rather than rural character (which would justify a change to the existing settlement boundary), and ii) the site's contribution to the function of the green belt.
2. After taking account of the site's character, its relationship with Lytchett Matravers and its contribution to the function of the green belt, officers are not satisfied that there is sufficient justification to change either the settlement or green belt boundaries.

Background

3. The Council received enquiries that primarily relate to Hill House and Chartley. There are a number of other homes to the north of Jennys Lane including: The Rectory; Pigeon Plotte; Tithe Barn; and Lytchett St Mary. Because of the similarities between the position, size and appearance of these homes, and to avoid undertaking further assessments on a piecemeal basis, officers extended the current assessment to include this neighbouring land.
4. Part of the site has been promoted for new homes through the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA/0136). The site covers 2.7 hectares and is positioned next to the north western corner of Lytchett Matravers. It includes 6 homes, with a density of approximately 3 dwellings per hectare. There are outbuildings and other structures (including swimming pools and a tennis court) in the gardens of some of the existing homes. The Rectory (positioned in the eastern corner of the site) is surrounded by an undeveloped field. Jennys Lane has a rural character created by earth banks rising from the edge of the road and established hedgerows / mature trees growing next to the road.
5. The existing green belt and settlement boundary for Lytchett Matravers runs along Jennys Lane. The following homes in the assessment site (on the northern side of Jennys Lane) are outside the settlement of Lytchett Matravers and within the green belt:
 - The Rectory;
 - Pigeon Plotte;
 - Chartley;
 - Hill House;
 - Tithe Barn; and
 - Lytchett St Mary.
6. The following homes on the opposite (southern) side of Jennys Lane are located inside the settlement boundary for Lytchett Matravers and are outside the green belt:
 - Corfe View;
 - Hollyoaks;
 - Swallow Court;
 - Abbots Orchard;
 - Quoins;
 - Whytewood Lodge; and
 - Kit Robins.

7. The aerial photograph below shows the site that officers have considered in the current assessment and the neighbouring land to the south which forms part of the settlement of Lytchett Matravers which is also excluded from the green belt.



Assessment

8. In order to complete the assessment the case officer visited site and reviewed the Council's mapping records and aerial photographs.

Anomaly in existing boundaries – does the site have an urban or rural character?

9. National planning policy recognises that green belts may wash over large areas and include buildings and settlements (paragraph 140 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that it would be appropriate to include villages within the green belt where they make a contribution to the green belt's open character). The existing homes on the site, and associated development in their gardens, are not therefore a reason by themselves for excluding the site from the green belt.
10. There are a number of similarities between the characteristics of the land to the north and south of Jennys Lane. The land on both sides of the road:
 - is in a similar position in relation to typical urban / sub-urban built development on High Street and Hopmans Close; and
 - includes large homes set back from the edge of the road in large gardens with generous gaps between neighbouring buildings.
11. The Purbeck District Townscape Character Appraisal for Lytchett Matravers recognises these similarities in character by categorising the homes on both sides of the road as part of the same 'low density residential' character area'.
12. Despite these similarities there are also a number of differences between the characteristics of land on the northern and southern sides of Jennys Lane.
 - The density of development on the northern side of Jennys Lane is around 2.2 dwellings per hectare (DPH) (in the green belt) compared to 3 DPH on the southern side of the lane (outside the green belt and inside the settlement of Lytchett Matravers). Reflecting this difference in density, more of the land on the northern side of Jennys Lane is undeveloped – there is a field around The Rectory – and the gaps around buildings are more generous.
 - The land on the northern side of Jennys Lane is related to the edge of Lytchett Matravers, but it also has a strong rural setting and context with boundaries onto undeveloped fields to the north, east and west. In contrast the land on the southern side of Jennys Lane has a closer relationship with the edge of Lytchett Matravers – the edges of the site have a closer relationship with neighbouring buildings / roads / hardstandings (the rear gardens of Corfe View, Hollyoaks and Swallow Court all back onto more densely developed suburban roads (High Street) and cul-de-sacs (Hopmans Close)).
13. Officers are not satisfied that the site has an urban / sub-urban character that could justify enlarging the existing settlement boundary for Lytchett Matravers.
14. In regards to the green belt, the field surrounding The Rectory makes a positive contribution to the undeveloped character of the surrounding countryside. Existing homes, and other structures (including tennis courts, hardstandings and swimming pools) in the gardens of the homes in the site, do harm the green belt openness. The low density of homes (around 2 dwellings per hectare) and the gaps between buildings moderate these adverse effects.
15. Officers are satisfied that the character of the site makes a positive contribution to the countryside and therefore continues to support the purpose of safeguarding green belt from encroachment. Officers do not consider that the site's character justifies (as an exceptional circumstance) changes to green belt boundaries.