

## Settlement Boundary Methodology Note

The purpose of this note is to provide some guidance to the BWKM Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group on setting a new Settlement Boundary.

### Current position

The Adopted North Dorset Local Plan Part 1 from 2016 removed settlement boundaries around most settlements in the former district including Buckhorn Weston and Kington Magna. A part 2 local plan was intended to provide a policy basis for re-establishing them where needed, or they could be re-established through the making of Neighbourhood Plans. The previous settlement boundaries are included in this document (see **Appendix 1**).

Following the creation of Dorset Council to replace the former districts within Dorset, the Part 2 Local Plan was not progressed. Draft policies within the emerging Dorset Plan retain the approach set out in the North Dorset Plan Part 1, allowing Neighbourhood Plans the ability to re-establish the boundaries where desired.

It is the acknowledged position that restrictive open countryside policies formally apply where land is not within a settlement boundary. There is support for very limited development for housing of infill and backland plots within settlement boundaries, subject to policy considerations and amenity impacts.

### Setting a New Settlement Boundary

Some background work on the considerations required in setting a settlement boundary have been made available informally by Dorset planning policy officers. This refers to work undertaken in other areas which indicate a common set of approaches to the consideration of settlement boundaries. These are set out below. The note provided by Dorset is attached at **Appendix 2**.

The main purpose of setting a boundary is to define an area of built settlement within which some limited development might be supported. The main benefit is that small development can occur, utilising existing infrastructure. It also means that small amounts of new development in rural settings avoid village sprawl. Insofar that any local services are available, this type of development improves the prospect of access to them on foot.

A settlement boundary is primarily about development potential inside it. It has no other effect and does not mean that people outside the boundary are not living in the village.

The Table below takes the principles from the notes provided to discuss what they mean for the BWKM steering group in setting out to propose new settlement boundaries. A sample checklist is provided that could be used to assess specific parcels/plots of land that are being considered through the exercise.

### Recommended Steps

1. For each village, it is recommended that largescale maps are used to cover separate sections of the settlement edge for each village. (1:1250 or 1:2500 scale). The same is needed for separate areas which might be candidates for inclusion within the settlement boundaries.
2. Identify boundary features to draw proposed boundaries.
3. Identify individual plots of open land created by the boundaries proposed
4. Use the checklist provided below (based on the main principles and criteria) to assess the boundaries.
5. Make appropriate decisions/revise the proposed boundaries accordingly.
6. Produce a final proposal for the settlement boundary
7. Short consultation with the community (3-4 weeks), presenting the draft settlement boundary map and showing the criteria used in the process.
8. Listen to responses and address as required.
9. Produce further draft settlement boundary map for Reg 14 Consultation.

### Principles and Criteria

Key Consideration	How Consider	Factors
<b>Tight Boundaries</b> - A settlement boundary should be tightly drawn around an existing built settlement so that land within the boundary is functionally, physically and visually linked to the settlement.	Use clear enclosing boundary features like hedges, walls, roads etc.	<p>Is the boundary selected very open to the countryside such that land on the inside of the boundary, if developed, would 'impact on' or 'intrude into' the countryside? i.e. it is physically and visually linked to the countryside.</p> <p>Or,</p> <p>Does the boundary enclose land behind it such that land on the inside is functionally, physically and visually linked to the settlement?</p> <p>Apply this to large back gardens and curtilages and also apply it to other open land on the edges of the settlement.</p>
<b>Avoid inclusion of open areas that could result in larger scale development</b> – Where land on the edge of settlements is in open use this should not be included within the settlement boundary.	Undeveloped land within settlement boundaries is potentially available for development subject to adopted development plan policies. This prospect is acknowledged, expected and accommodated within adopted local plan policies.	The key consideration in applying the boundary to individual properties or groups of properties is to consider the matters above about enclosure and relationship to the settlement and then also consider the functional amenity the land provides to the property such as in the case of a back

	<p>There will be a threshold (an informal one based on judgement) above which infill land, backland, or other plots suitable for redevelopment, becomes something more strategic, and this would be considered a site allocation.</p> <p>The consideration would be based on matters of scale, impact, fairness, transparency etc. As a guide to thinking, including land that could accommodate more than two dwellings is akin to a site allocation, requiring a different procedure.</p>	<p>garden.</p> <p>If the back garden is long or large, consider whether it could have an alternative access that could serve a development within the plot, consider if it is well-enclosed and well related to the house and the settlement etc.</p> <p>Consider the effect that drawing a settlement boundary around a particular area of land will have on the potential scale of development that could result and consider the potential impacts on neighbours and the community.</p> <p>If wishing to accommodate such development at scale, think about other potential sites that could be developed and give people a chance to put them forward (a call for sites and allocation process).</p> <p>If not wanting to allocate a site formally through such a process, then avoid creating this possibility in defining the settlement boundary by sticking to the principle of tightly drawn boundary and not including larger open areas (including within larger gardens and grounds).</p>
<p><b>Continuous and Separate Elements</b> – Whilst you should seek to identify a continuous, contiguous area, it is possible to identify two or more separate elements if there is a functional linkage between them.</p>	<p>Define countryside development as distinct from settlement development e.g. a row of former council houses could be seen to be settlement features even if separated from the settlement, whereas a farmstead complex might be considered a countryside feature even if located on the edge of the</p>	<p>Consider the physical linkages between built development and the main settlement – can people walk it or cycle it safely?</p> <p>In terms of population, how is this distributed across the village?</p> <p>Is the built development functionally or visually linked to</p>

	<p>settlement.</p> <p>It depends on the nature of the development and its context. Clear objective assessment is required.</p>	<p>the village?</p> <p>Think about proximity and distance of built development to the 'main' settlement.</p> <p>Think about clear boundary features – would including an area of built development address the first consideration above, on clear boundaries?</p>
<p><b>Allocations and Planning Permissions</b> – Include allocated sites and sites with planning permissions which have started, or which could yet commence.</p>	<p>Review published Dorset Council Local Plan information and planning applications information.</p> <p>Adjust the boundary if including new development sites.</p>	<p>Review proposals maps and live permissions</p>
<p><b>Important community buildings and local green spaces</b> - Include built development which plays an important economic or social function for the settlement.</p>	<p>Consider buildings of importance and seek to include these – such as village hall, church, employment sites etc.</p> <p>Consider whether open areas and green spaces important to the local community that would lie within the settlement boundary are adequately protected from development.</p>	<p>Review position of existing facilities and other employment sites e.g. the village hall could be brought inside the settlement boundary.</p> <p>Review the status of green/open areas within the settlement – are they protected from development as you would wish?</p>
<p><b>Farms</b> – Avoid including farm development which is not related to the settlement.</p>	<p>Consider whether farm buildings relate to the settlement or to the countryside.</p>	<p>Identify and assess the form and use of farm buildings and consider their functional, physical and visual relationships – are they focused to the settlement or to the countryside?</p>
<p><b>Isolated development</b> – Exclude isolated, physically and visually detached development.</p>	<p>A farm or building on its own, separate from a settlement, is unlikely to be suitable for inclusion within the settlement boundary.</p>	<p>Adopt criteria by which buildings and curtilages must be adjacent and close to each other.</p>
<p><b>Designated features</b> – Avoid potential harm to Conservation Areas, listed buildings, Scheduled Ancient Monuments, SSSI, other nature conservation sites, or other important features, that</p>	<p>Bearing in mind that land within the settlement boundary is potentially capable of some development, consideration needs to be given to the effect that the inclusion of land in the</p>	<p>Identify and map designated features and consider the potential impact that new development would have on them.</p>

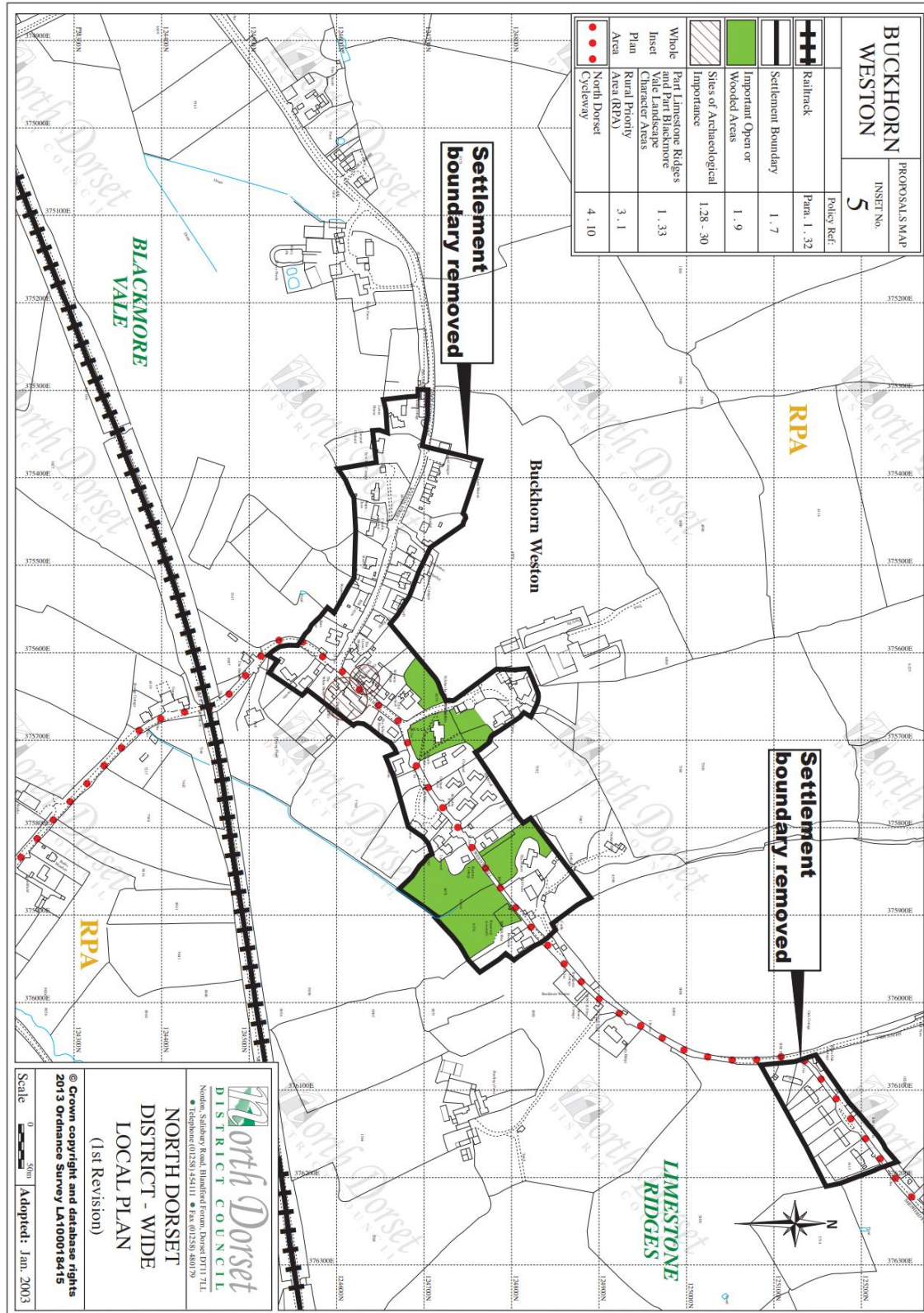
could be created by defining the new settlement boundary.	settlement could have on heritage and other designated features.	
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### Plot Checklist

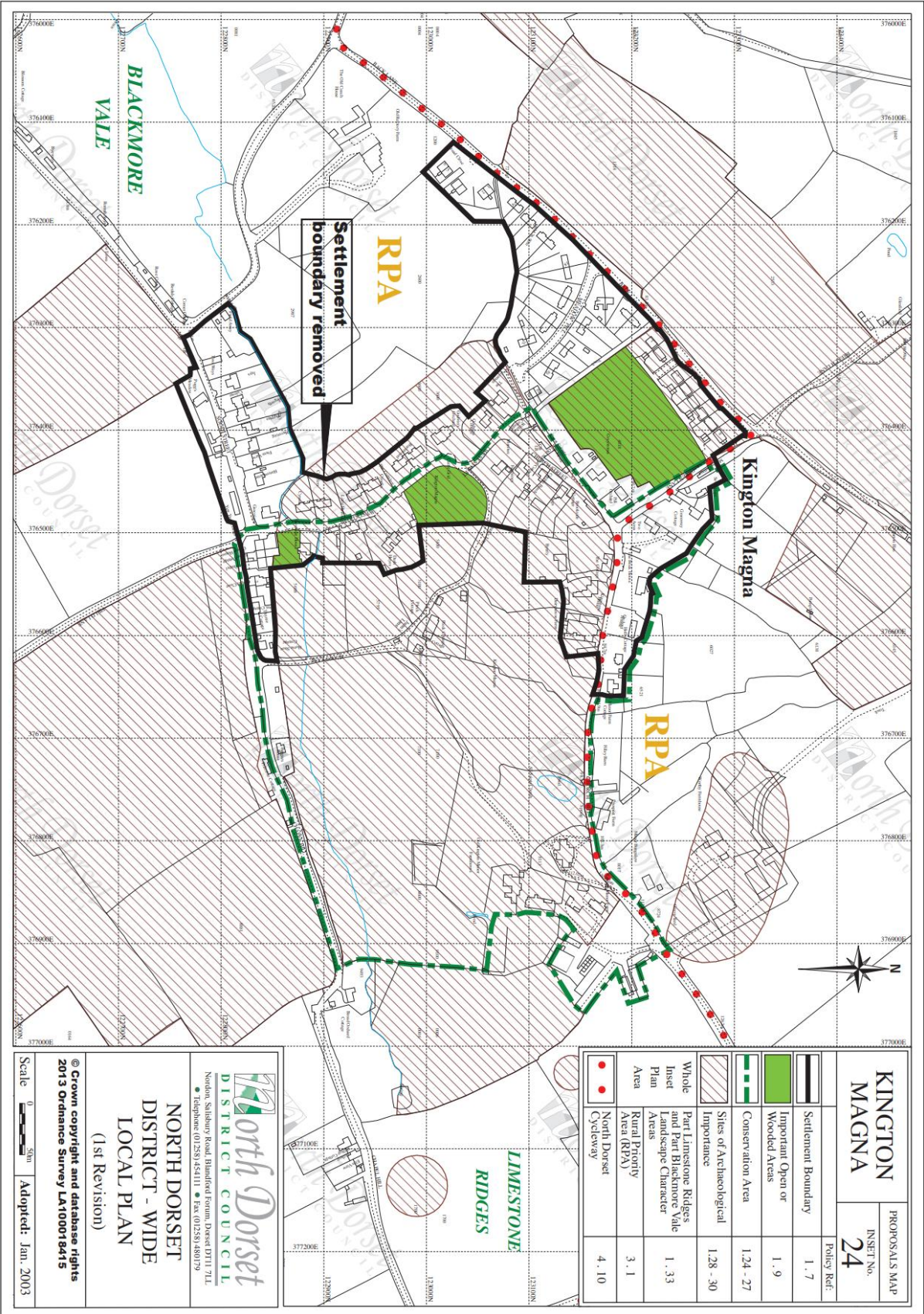
<b>Questions for all plots</b>	<b>Answer</b>
Is the plot a permanent development feature?	
Is the plot considered to be isolated development?	
Is there a good external boundary creating clear definition?	
Does the boundary enclose the plot <i>into</i> the settlement and <i>from</i> the countryside?	
How strong are the physical links to settlement?	
How strong are the visual links to settlement?	
How strong are the functional links to settlement?	
How strong are the physical links to countryside?	
How strong are the visual links to countryside?	
How strong are the function links to countryside?	
Is the plot providing an important community function?	
If the plot is open and you want to keep it that way, is it protected from development?	
Is the plot an allocated site or is consented for development?	
What is the area of the plot? (square metres)	
What role would the plot play in supporting the amenity of the property?	
Can the plot be accessed separately?	
If the plot were to be proposed for development, what would the capacity be in terms of houses	
Is the plot close to a designated feature?	
What constraints would exist if the plot was proposed for development?	
Is the plot in the floodplain or at higher level of surface water flood risk?	
<b><i>In addition, where the plot is separate to the main settlement.....</i></b>	
Is the plot in a settlement or countryside focused use?	
Is the plot accessible to the main settlement on foot or by bike?	
What is the distance to the main settlement as the crow	

flies?	
Approximately how many properties and people are there?	
<b><i>Overall Summary and Recommendation</i></b>	
What is the summary assessment of the plot and whether it should be included or not in the settlement boundary?	

## Appendix 1 – Previous Settlement Boundaries









**Appendix 2 – Informal notes from Philip Reese (Dorset Council) on Setting a Settlement Boundary**

## North Dorset District Council Settlement boundary review Proposed draft methodology March 2019

### **Purpose of the settlement boundaries**

The settlement boundaries are intended to indicate the extent of the contiguous built up area of the District's more sustainable settlements. In policy terms, new development, particularly intensification and infill or similar uses, will generally be acceptable within the boundary without encroaching further onto the wider countryside and causing additional impact on the landscape (other factors such as impact on amenity and heritage assets will still need to be considered). This allows development to come forward on windfall sites (sites that have not been allocated by a local or neighbourhood plan). Past trends have shown that a sizeable proportion of new housing in the District can come forward from infill sites, and this reduces the need to develop sites that extend out into the countryside. Furthermore, infill development often requires less new infrastructure as it can make use of the roads and utilities that are already in place. They also reduce 'sprawl' and help make more compact settlements in which shops and services are more likely to be within a walkable distance of where people live. This in turn reduces the impact on the road network and encourages healthy lifestyles.

### **Need for a review**

The current settlement boundaries are based on those defined by the 2003 Local Plan. The 2016 Local Plan deleted settlement boundaries from a number of the smaller villages and increased the boundary of Gillingham to include the strategic site allocation to the south of the town. This leaves settlement boundaries for the District's four main towns, Stalbridge, and the 18 larger villages.

Since the current settlement boundaries have not been reviewed since 2003, it is necessary to re-consider whether the boundaries logically reflect the extent of the settlements. Some settlements have had small extensions since 2003 (for example, through rural exception sites), or extensions have been planned (for example, growth points indicated by the 2016 Local Plan). There will have been some changes to physical features; where appropriate it makes sense for the settlement boundaries to follow physical features rather than arbitrary lines. Finally, a review offers an opportunity to resolve any anomalies that are present with the 2003 settlement boundaries, and to establish a clear methodology for defining the boundaries.

Settlement boundaries support national policy objectives, both in terms of encouraging development within existing settlements and generally resisting it in the open countryside. Specifically NPPF (as revised in 2018) states:

- “To promote the development of a good mix of sites local planning authorities should ... support the development of windfall sites through their policies and decisions – giving great weight to the benefits of using suitable sites within existing settlements for homes.” (para 68)
- “To promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. Planning policies should identify opportunities for villages to grow and thrive, especially where this will support local services.” (para 78)
- “Planning policies and decisions should avoid the development of isolated homes in the countryside unless one or more of the following circumstances apply ... [rural worker dwelling; optimal use of heritage asset; reuse of disused buildings; subdivision of existing dwellings; or design of exceptional/outstanding quality].” (para 79)
- “Significant development should be focused on locations which are or can be made sustainable, through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes.” (para 103)

Despite this, there is no national guidance on defining settlement boundaries. Therefore, a review has to begin by considering recent methodologies used by a sample of comparative authorities in order to determine a methodology appropriate to North Dorset.

## Examples

### Kettering – defining principles (April 2018)

#### Principle 1:

The boundary will be defined tightly around the built up framework and where possible will follow defined features such as walls, hedgerows and roads.

#### Principle 2:

Boundaries will include:

- a) Existing commitments for built development i.e. unimplemented planning permissions;
- b) Buildings on the edge of settlements which relate closely to the economic or social function of the settlement e.g. churches, community halls;
- c) Curtilages which are contained and visually separated from the open countryside;
- d) New allocations.

**Principle 3:**

Boundaries will exclude:

- a) Playing fields or open space at the edge of settlements (existing or proposed);
- b) New allocations for affordable housing;
- c) Isolated development which is physically or visually detached from the settlement (including farm buildings or agricultural buildings on the edge of the settlement which relate more to the countryside than the settlement);
- d) Large gardens and other open areas which are visually open and relate to the open countryside rather than the settlement;
- e) Large gardens or other area whose inclusion or possible development would harm the structure, form and character of the settlement.

**Principle 4:**

Settlement boundaries do not need to be continuous. It may be appropriate given the nature and form of a settlement to define two or more separate elements.

## Teignbridge – principles (May 2018)

### Primary Principle - The Settlement Boundary will be:

1. Tightly defined around the built form of settlements

### Principle 2 - The Settlement boundary will include:

- a) Existing commitments, i.e. unimplemented but active planning permissions, implemented permissions and GESP, Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan residential and employment allocations where they form a continuous part of the built form of the settlement.
- b) The curtilage of buildings which closely relate to the character of the built form and have enclosing features.
- c) Brownfield land which stands on the edge of the built form but is not physically or visually detached from the settlement.
- d) Permanent Park Home sites which stand adjacent to existing settlement boundary.

### Principle 3 - The Settlement boundary will exclude:

- a) Open spaces, orchards and sports and recreational facilities which stand on the edge of the built form of settlements.
- b) Isolated development which is physically or visually detached from the settlement.
- c) Sections of large curtilages of buildings which relate more to the character of the countryside than the built form.
- d) Agricultural farmsteads and or buildings which stand on the edge of the built form of settlements
- e) Where an extension could lead to development which has a potential to adversely affect the character and/or setting of a Conservation Area
- f) Caravan sites which serve a primarily temporary and/or holiday purpose



### Wiltshire – revised methodology (June 2017)

**The settlement boundaries define the built form of the settlement by, where practicable, following but not including clearly defined physical features, such as walls, fences, hedgerows, roads and water courses.**

**Areas which have been included are:**

- Built and commenced residential and community facilities development such as religious buildings schools and community halls, that is physically related to the settlement
- Built and commenced employment development in principal settlements, market towns and local service centres<sup>12</sup> that is physically related to the settlement
- The curtilage of a property that relates more closely to the built environment (e.g. a garden) or has limited capacity to extend the built form of the settlement in terms of scale and location
- Recreational or amenity space at the edge of a settlement that relates more closely to the built environment

**Areas which have been excluded are:**

- Employment development, farm buildings and farmyards, at the edge of large villages
- Isolated development that is physically detached from the settlement (including farm buildings or agricultural buildings and renewable energy installations)
- The extended curtilage of a property that relates more closely to the open countryside (e.g. a field or paddock) or has the capacity to substantially extend the built form of the settlement in terms of scale and location
- Recreational or amenity space at the edge of the settlement that relates more closely to the open countryside
- All types of unimplemented planning permission
- Site allocations

## Winchester – principles (October 2014)

### Principle 1

The boundary will be defined tightly around the built up framework and where possible will follow defined features such as walls, hedgerows and roads. It is important to use a feature that is likely to have a degree of permanence as some features can change over time e.g. fences can be moved and hedgerows can be removed.

### Principle 2

Boundaries will include:

- (a) New development allocations proposed in LPP2.
- (b) Developments of previously allocated sites (e.g. Local Reserve Sites) that are built out and existing commitments for built development where development is underway i.e. commenced planning permissions.
- (c) Small scale development opportunities that are below the threshold size for allocation which would provide infill and rounding off opportunities that are physically, functionally and visually related to the existing urban area, taking account of any environmental development constraints.
- (d) Curtilages which are contained, are visually part of the urban area, and are separated from the open countryside.

### Principle 3

Boundaries will exclude:

- (a) Playing fields or other open space at the edge of settlements e.g. allotments, cemeteries (existing or proposed).
- (b) Affordable housing permitted on exception sites, and Strategic Development Areas allocated in LPP1.
- (c) Loose-knit buildings on the edge of settlements, which may relate closely to the economic or social function of the settlement e.g. employment development, shops, schools, churches, community halls.
- (d) Outlying or isolated development which is physically or visually detached from the settlement (including farm buildings or agricultural buildings on the edge of the settlement which relate more to the countryside than the settlement).
- (e) Large gardens and other open areas which visually relate to the open countryside rather than the settlement.
- (f) Large gardens or other areas e.g. adjacent paddocks and orchards whose inclusion or possible development would harm the structure, form and character of the settlement.
- (g) Important gaps e.g. where a settlement is fragmented the open gaps between developed areas should be retained.
- (h) Camping and caravanning sites except where in year round permanent residential use.
- (i) Agriculture, forestry, equestrian development, minerals extraction, landfill, water features, public utilities (sewage treatment plants, substations).

**Principle 4**

Settlement boundaries do not need to be continuous. It may be appropriate given the nature and form of a settlement to define two or more separate elements.

**Proposed North Dorset methodology****Principle 1:**

Settlement boundaries will be drawn tightly around the built form of the District's towns and larger villages.

- a) Where possible, boundaries will follow permanent/semi-permanent physical features such as walls, fences, hedgerows, roads or water – preferably where they are marked on an OS base map.
- b) Where possible, boundaries should be continuous. However, where there are thought to be safe pedestrian and cycling links between separate parts of a town/village, it may be appropriate to define two or more separate elements.

**Principle 2:**

Settlement boundaries will include undeveloped areas adjacent to the existing built form when they are:

- a) Development allocations proposed by the Local Plan Review or by neighbourhood plans that have passed the referendum stage;
- b) Growth areas identified by the Local Plan Part 1 that have been granted planning permission; or
- c) Under construction (in particular, planning consents that have technically started so that they cannot expire).

**Principle 3:**

Settlement boundaries will exclude:

- a) Playing fields, allotments, cemeteries, extended gardens, paddocks, orchards and other open or wooded areas that extend into the countryside;
- b) Isolated development which is physically or visually detached from the settlement;
- c) Camping and caravanning sites except where in year round permanent residential use.
- d) Areas with planning consent for development that have not been allocated for that purpose and have not commenced.

**Principle 4:**

Where a neighbourhood plan has recently undertaken a review of its settlement boundary, this will be accepted unless it is necessary to amend it to fulfil the strategic policies of the Local Plan. (Note NPPF para 29: "Neighbourhood plans should not promote less

development than set out in the strategic policies for the area, or undermine those strategic policies.”