

Introduction

This paper explains the basis for the settlement boundary and reason for the changes made.

National Planning Guidance (2012)

The National Planning Policy Framework (2012) and accompanying guidance (NPPG) do not specifically prescribe or mention the use of settlement boundaries. They do identify the need for certain specific policy boundaries, such as for town centres for retail-planning purposes and Green Belt.

It therefore is a local decision what is appropriate in terms of development within various settlements and the resultant need for specific boundaries around settlements. Settlement boundaries are a well-recognised tool through which countryside and built-up areas can be distinguished in policy terms, but exactly how they are defined and applied depends on the local policies to which they relate.

The original settlement boundary (2003)

The settlement boundaries for the area were established prior to the 2003 North Dorset Local Plan, and reviewed in the 2003 plan when the settlement boundary around Broad Oak was removed.

Although the 2003 examination documents are no longer readily available, residents of Broad Oak recall the reason for the removal of the boundary from Broad Oak being that, prior to 2003, there had been a specific policy of restraint applied that prevented further development in that settlement due to the inadequacy of the junction with the A357. During the 2003 examination a simpler approach of removing the Broad Oak settlement boundary altogether was agreed, as all parties recognised the continuing access issues and history of appeal decisions that regarded the settlement as not a sustainable location for further development.

The remaining town boundary in the 2003 plan included areas both sides of the town bridge – Sturminster to the north, and Newton to the south, collectively considered to be the town of Sturminster Newton. As such, Newton was not listed as a separate village (and this is confirmed by the fact that it was not considered in the review of village settlement boundaries carried out to inform the Local Plan review).

The policy at that time was that "Moderate' levels of development will be permitted within the settlement boundaries of the town which will include the development of a limited number of 'major' sites" (from Policy 1.3 – Town for Moderate Growth – Sturminster Newton).

The text supporting the Local Plan (para 1.50) made clear that "The Settlement Boundaries shown on the proposals Map define the predominant "edge" between built development and the countryside. Greenfield sites which are allocated for development, in the period up to 2011 are included within the settlement boundaries. Settlement Boundaries will be reviewed at each Plan revision and may be enlarged or reduced to allow for new allocations for development in the "roll forward" period of the Plan."

Under para 1.53 the 2003 Local Plan also made clear that Important Open/Wooded Areas (IOWAs) applied only to land within settlements whose open or wooded quality was important to the character of that settlement, and as such should be "protected from development, especially as there is generally a stronger presumption in favour of granting planning permission for development within a settlement boundary."

The adopted Local Plan (2016)

The alignment of the settlement boundaries to be retained was not reviewed through the work on the Local Plan Part 1. The plan makes clear (para 3.58) that “The settlement boundaries may be reviewed either through Part 2 of the Local Plan or a neighbourhood plan.”

The policy text regarding settlement boundaries says that within these boundaries “sensitive infilling is encouraged” (para 5.36). Policy 7 specifically states that “Where settlement boundaries exist, or are created or modified in neighbourhood plans, local communities are encouraged to develop more detailed policies relating to infilling and should be sensitively designed to the local context and to respect the amenity of adjoining properties”

Settlement Boundary Definition

In reviewing the settlement boundaries for the area it is important to understand how these will be used through the particular Local and Neighbourhood Plan policies that would apply.

There is no requirement that a settlement boundary must include all the buildings within the immediate vicinity of a settlement, or necessarily exclude all areas of undevelopable land. The same applies to site allocations, whether these are contained within or outside the settlement boundary. Policy 19 of the Local Plan distinguishes between development and redevelopment within the settlement boundary, and small greenfield extensions to the north and east of Sturminster, and the Plan makes clear that neighbourhood plans for the four main towns can allow greater levels of growth by allocating additional sites for development, but does not say that these must be within or necessitate a change to the settlement boundary.

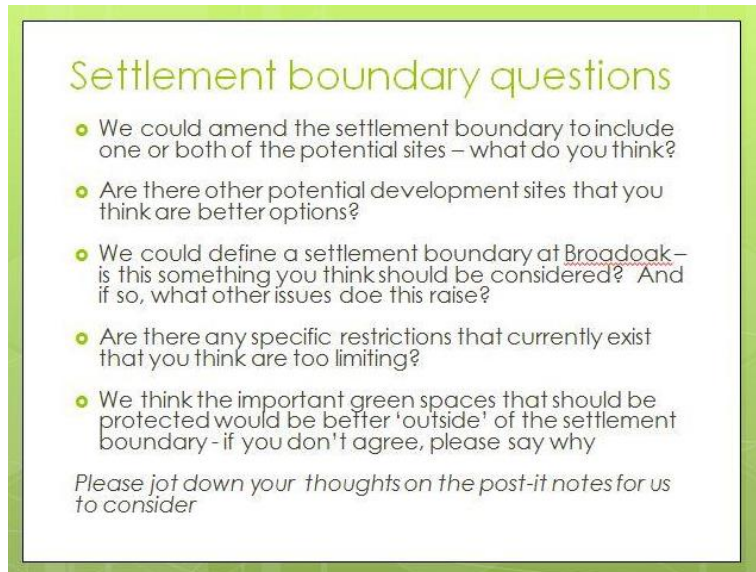
Land within the settlement boundaries is clearly seen as being ‘the broad locations for housing and employment growth and regeneration’ where infilling is encouraged. Outside of settlement boundaries the Local Plan policies would allow:

- new affordable housing, potentially including some limited open market housing to cross-subsidise its delivery, on rural exception sites (*however as any such site has to be within or adjoining defined village settlement boundaries, or at other settlements with a population of 100+ and at least one essential facility within 1km of its physical centre, this does not apply to the existing settlement boundary of Newton (as it is part of the ‘town’), there are no other village settlement boundaries currently defined, and although Broad Oak has a population of over 100, it has no primary school, employment site, general store, post office, community hall or doctor’s surgery, and the public house at Town Bridge is arguably on the margins of 1km from its centre*);
- new rural workers dwellings (*although only where there is a full-time, functional need for someone to live on the site*);
- the replacement or extension of existing dwellings (*but only if it would be of a size and design that is no more visually intrusive in the landscape than the existing dwelling, and no additions that would allow a business / commercial enterprise to be run from the home would be allowed*);
- new community facilities (*but only adjoining a village and only if there is no suitable site within the village*);
- the redevelopment or limited expansion of existing employment sites for employment purposes (*new employment sites would not be supported unless re-using an existing building*);
- the re-use of existing buildings for tourist accommodation, employment or community uses (such as local shops) or as a new house (if the building is attractive, redundant and employment use is not possible and the scheme would enhance the setting)

Consultation focus: the rural area

Given that the early consultation on the Neighbourhood Plan (November 2014) had found that the majority of people thought that some development could be permitted in the villages and hamlets in the area, apart from the site-specific allocations the initial focus of changes to the settlement boundary was through the discussions with the rural population (February 2016).

The consultation aimed to explore whether a settlement boundary should be included for any of the other settlements in the area, or whether a slightly different policy approach may be warranted in terms of what would or would not be allowed adjoining or away from the settlements. Key findings:



Settlement boundary questions

- We could amend the settlement boundary to include one or both of the potential sites – what do you think?
- Are there other potential development sites that you think are better options?
- We could define a settlement boundary at Broad Oak – is this something you think should be considered? And if so, what other issues does this raise?
- Are there any specific restrictions that currently exist that you think are too limiting?
- We think the important green spaces that should be protected would be better 'outside' of the settlement boundary - if you don't agree, please say why

Please jot down your thoughts on the post-it notes for us to consider

→ No residents commented that they would like to see Broad Oak included in the town's settlement boundary.

→ There were many comments from residents on the safety issues related to heavy-goods traffic using the road to Fiddleford Mushrooms factory and that this had increased significantly over the years.

→ There were no significant comments on any strengthening of policy over that already incorporated in the Countryside Policy of the Local Plan.

Proposed changes

The amendments to the settlement boundary are shown on the map in Appendix 1. They are based on the following issues that were identified. No additional settlement boundaries have been proposed on the basis of the above consultation responses. These changes were made clear in the pre-submission draft plan.

Identified issue: The inclusion or protected green spaces (such as IOWAs) within the settlement boundary, and particularly those sites that are contiguous with the adjoining countryside or extend beyond the built-up area, does not sit comfortably with the general presumption in favour of infill development within the boundary.

Proposed approach: Where protected green spaces are on the edge of the settlement, the settlement boundary should be redrawn to exclude these

Changes considered:

→ Excluding the War Memorial Recreation ground and adjoining green spaces (to be confirmed as local green spaces)

→ Excluding the western end of the former railway cutting (designated as an important geological site)

→ Excluding the area around St Mary's Church (to be confirmed as local green spaces)

→ Excluding the area off Honeymead Lane / Northfields junction (to be confirmed as local green spaces)

→ Excluding the High School playing fields and football ground (although not local green spaces, these are identified as part of the important community facilities, and are to be covered under a separate

allocation)

- Excluding the gap between Newton and Town Bridge area (comprising the Mill and the area around Sturminster Castle, both of which are to be confirmed as local green spaces), as taken out of the settlement boundary then creates two discrete built-up areas
- Excluding the field east of the Bull Tavern public house, comprising a greenfield allocation (on land currently designated as an IOWA) and beyond this the churchyard (to be confirmed as a local green space).
- In light of the above two changes, the possible exclusion of the whole Town Bridge area was debated, but discarded on the basis that the cluster of development around the Bull Tavern does provide some infill / redevelopment opportunities (such as on the former petrol station site).

Identified issue: The settlement boundary no longer follows a clear boundary on the ground, and the employment allocation at North Dorset Business Park does not align with the development brief or extant consents.

Proposed approach: Review aerial photos, planning consents and undertake site visits to assess where changes may be warranted (this task was undertaken by a former qualified town planner). If land is to be excluded this should not result in any significant reduction in areas that may be suitable for development

Changes considered:

- Adjustment to the boundary around Ham Gate, Penny Street (cuts through farmyard and some garden areas cut across) – as the currently excluded areas are clearly part of a very sensitive fringe where development would not be encouraged, no changes were made
- Adjustment to the boundary west of Stourcastle, south of Friars Moor (recent development extends gardens beyond boundary) – boundary adjusted to follow rear gardens
- Adjustment to the boundary around the garden of Horsecastles, Manston Road (part of the garden outside) - boundary adjusted to follow garden
- Adjustment to the boundary along Manston Road (part of Sturminster Storage site east of Manston Road is outside of the settlement boundary, part inside) - boundary adjusted to include buildings, but exclude verge running along the road to the north of the site
- Exclusion of North Dorset Business Park – current boundary bears little relationships to the site boundaries or characteristics Exclude from the settlement boundary but include as site-specific allocation, to exclude open hilltop, include natural screening features and more closely mirror the intended future extent of the business park.

Identified issue: The new greenfield sites proposed in the Local Plan are currently unlimited in their extent where they are outside the 2003 boundary.

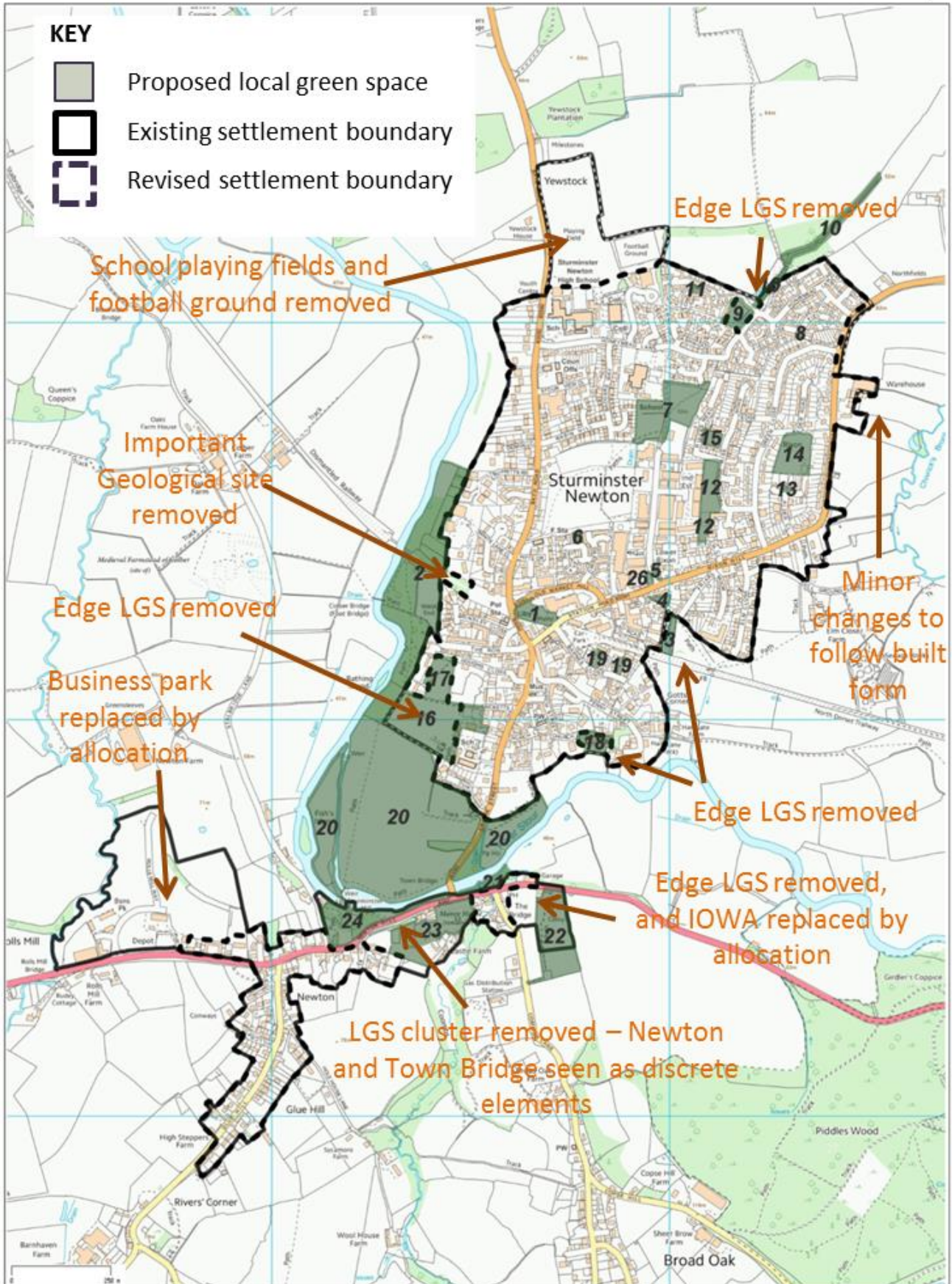
Proposed approach: Define through allocations (as opposed to amending the settlement boundary) in order to more clearly set out the site-specific requirements. These would remain outside of the settlement boundary (in case the allocation is deleted or cannot be delivered, in which case the future of that site should be re-considered through the review of the plan). NB allocations are possible outside of the settlement boundary (as seen in the Shillingstone Neighbourhood Plan policy on White Pit Farm).

Appendix 1



Settlement boundary review

Sturminster Newton CP



Date Created: 23-1-2017 | Map Centre (Easting/Northing): 378513 / 114182 | Scale: 1:12500 | © Crown copyright and database right. All rights reserved (0100052950) 2017