



Hinckley & Bosworth
Borough Council

Settlement Boundary Methodology Consultation Topic Paper

1. Introduction

- 1.1. This consultation topic paper sets out the proposed methodology for reviewing and refining settlement boundaries as part of the Local Plan Review. It builds upon the principles established in the previous Settlement Boundary Topic Paper (2013) which informed the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies DPD (2016) and updates them to reflect the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2024).
- 1.2. The role of the settlement boundary (also known referred to as a village envelope) is to delineate the built extent of a settlement and distinguish it from the surrounding countryside. This spatial definition is fundamental for the application of countryside and settlement separation policies in the Local Plan. The settlement boundaries usually define what is considered countryside and therefore define that this type of policy would apply to sites standing outside the settlement boundary, with the exception of designated green wedges.
- 1.3. In accordance with the NPPF, development within settlement boundaries is generally considered acceptable in principle, subject to compliance with other relevant policies. Conversely, land outside these boundaries is treated as countryside, where development is more strictly controlled to protect the intrinsic character and beauty of the rural area, support sustainable patterns of development, and prevent urban sprawl. This approach reflects the NPPF's emphasis on directing development to sustainable locations and making effective use of land, while safeguarding areas of particular environmental or landscape value. Settlement boundaries therefore serve as a key tool in plan-making and decision-taking, helping to manage growth and maintain settlement identity.
- 1.4. Settlement boundaries play a key role in guiding development to sustainable locations by identifying areas with a concentration of existing residential, employment uses and essential services and facilities. Settlement boundaries also provide clarity and certainty for developers, decision makers and the public by indicating where development is more likely to be acceptable in principle, subject to compliance with other relevant policies.
- 1.5. It is important to note that settlement boundaries are a planning tool used for the purposes of spatial planning and decision making. They do not carry any administrative status beyond their role of guiding development. Settlement boundaries do not necessarily reflect land ownership boundaries, parish boundaries or the precise curtilages of individual properties.
- 1.6. While the principle of built development within a settlement boundary is generally considered acceptable, this does not automatically grant planning permission or guarantee that planning permission will be permitted. All proposals must be assessed against the full suite of relevant policies in the adopted Local Plan.

2. Background

- 2.1. This topic paper sets out the approach to be taken to the revision of settlement boundaries to inform the Local Plan Review. The Site Allocations and Development Management Policies DPD (2016) defines settlement boundaries around 37 settlements across the Borough and these revisions were accompanied by the Settlement Boundaries Topic Paper (2013).
- 2.2. The Settlement Boundaries Topic Paper (2013) sets out the methodology and principles used to review and refine settlement boundaries first established in the Local Plan (2001) and updated these for the purpose of the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies DPD. The Topic paper highlights the following:
 - Criteria used to define or revise boundaries (e.g., physical features, planning constraints, sustainability).
 - References to national or local planning policies that influence boundary decisions.
 - Summary of stakeholder input, public consultation, and any feedback received.
 - Proposed changes to boundaries.
 - Justifications for inclusion/exclusion of specific areas.
- 2.3. The above considerations directly informed the extent of the Site Allocations and Development Management DPD (2016) settlement boundaries.
- 2.4. The settlement boundaries defined in the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies DPD remain in use at the time of writing this report. These boundaries will be replaced with revised and refined versions through the adoption of the Local Plan Review. Where Neighbourhood Plans are in place, settlement boundaries may also be defined within those documents.

3. Purpose of Consultation

- 3.1. We are seeking views on the proposed methodology and principles for defining settlement boundaries. This will ensure the approach is consistent, transparent, and aligned with national and local planning objectives.

4. Proposed Settlement Boundary Principles

- 4.1. Table 1 sets out the original settlement boundary principles from the Settlement Boundary Topic Paper (2013), consistency checks against the National Planning Policy Framework and the proposed settlement boundary principles for the purposes of the Local Plan Review.

Table 1: Settlement Boundary Principles – NPPF Consistency and Proposed Amendments

Original Principle	NPPF Consistency	Proposed Principle
<u>Principle 1</u> The boundary will be defined tightly around the built form of settlements, which will be informed by defined features such as walls, fences, hedgerows, roads, canals and woodland. The built form largely includes the curtilages of properties in recognition of the combined status of properties and their curtilages as a single planning unit.	Still relevant: The NPPF 2024 continues to support the use of physical features to define settlement boundaries, especially where they help distinguish between built-up areas and open countryside. The emphasis on curtilage inclusion is consistent with planning practice, though care should be taken to ensure that large curtilages do not dilute the boundary's clarity or lead to unintended development sprawl. This aligns with the NPPF's definition of previously developed land and its emphasis on making effective use of land (Paragraphs 124–130).	<u>Principle 1:</u> Definition around built form Settlement boundaries will be tightly drawn around the built form of settlements. This will be informed by identifiable physical features such as walls, fences, hedgerows, roads, canals, and woodland. The built form includes the curtilages of properties, recognising the combined status of dwellings and their curtilages as a single planning unit, in line with national guidance on previously developed land.
<u>Principle 2</u> The boundary should be continuous.	Still relevant: The NPPF encourages clarity and consistency in plan-making. By including	<u>Principle 2</u> Continuity of boundaries

Original Principle	NPPF Consistency	Proposed Principle
Pockets of development separated by a roadway, situated a short distance from the existing boundary, but where the development clearly physically and visually relates to the character of the settlement have been included within the settlement boundary. To ensure the boundary is continuous in these instances the boundary follows the edge of the roadway.	physically and visually connected development across roadways this aligns with the principle of coherent spatial planning. This supports the NPPF's goal of achieving well-designed places and maintaining coherent spatial planning (Paragraphs 131–141).	Settlement boundaries should be continuous. Where small pockets of development are separated by a roadway but are physically and visually related to the settlement, they will be included. In such cases, the boundary will follow the edge of the roadway to maintain continuity.
<u>Principle 3</u> Settlement boundaries will include: a) Existing commitments, i.e. unimplemented planning permissions and implemented permissions. 4 April 2013 was the date of the settlement boundary revision for the pre-submission version of the Site Allocations DPD and this date forms the cut-off date for existing commitments to be reflected within the settlement boundary revision. Any planning	Generally consistent. Commitments: Including unimplemented permissions is standard practice, the cut-off date (April 2013) will need updating. This reflects the NPPF's requirement to deliver a sufficient supply of homes and ensure land with permission is developed without delay (Paragraphs 61–84). Community facilities: Their inclusion is supported by the NPPF's emphasis on healthy and safe communities and safeguarding local services (Paragraphs 96–108).	<u>Principle 3</u> Inclusions within Boundaries Settlement boundaries will include: a) Existing Commitments Planning permissions (implemented and unimplemented) granted up to the [INSERT NEW CUT OFF DATE] will be included for the purposes of the Local Plan Review. This ensures the boundary reflects planned growth. b) Community Facilities Buildings adjacent to the built form that

Original Principle	NPPF Consistency	Proposed Principle
permissions issued after this date have not been taken into account. b) Buildings adjacent to the edge of the built form which fall within the definition of a community facility. Community facilities provide a focus for community congregation and are often the heart of rural communities and it is for this reason these facilities have been included within the settlement boundary. In addition these facility types will be provided additional safeguards from redevelopment through Development Management policy DM25: Safeguarding Community Facilities. Community facilities are defined and identified through the Community, Cultural and Tourism Facilities Review. c) The curtilages of buildings which closely relate to the character of the built form and have enclosing features.	Curtilages and hardstanding: The NPPF now explicitly includes hardstanding in the definition of previously developed land, reinforcing their relevance (Paragraphs 124–130). Allocations: Including planned allocations is essential and aligns with the NPPF’s focus on delivering housing and employment land (Paragraphs 15–38 and 66).	serve as community facilities will be included. These facilities are central to rural communities and are safeguarded under current Local Plan policy Development Management Policy DM25. Facilities will be identified through the relevant evidence base document. c) Curtilages with Built Form Character Curtilages that are closely related to the built form in terms of proximity, enclosure (e.g. hedgerows, fences), and land use will be included. This may include hardstanding, parking areas, and tennis courts where they contribute to the built character. d) Planned Allocations Site allocations for built development identified in the Local Plan Review will be incorporated into settlement boundaries.

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The curtilages of buildings which clearly relate to the associated building by proximity and character have been included within the settlement boundary. Determining factors include enclosing features such as hedgerows and fences, land-use type and the degree of suburban residential character compared against the surrounding agricultural context. Areas of hardstanding, ancillary parking areas and tennis courts have also been included within the settlement boundary as these are common features within the curtilages of buildings and relate to the built form. d) Planned allocations Site allocations for employment and residential developments identified within the pre-submission version of the Site Allocations DPD have been included within settlement boundaries.		

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<u>Principle 4</u> Settlement boundaries will exclude: a) Open spaces and sports and recreational facilities which stand on the edge of the built form of settlements. Areas of open space, sports and recreational facilities which stand on the edge of the built form of settlements form important recreational facilities for the community. In addition their open character can provide important views from the built form into the open countryside beyond, linking the settlement with its rural context. These spaces can also provide a visual buffer between the built form and the open countryside, softening the visual impact. b) Isolated development which is physically or visually detached from the settlement. Singular houses or developments or small pockets of development which do not stand	Strongly aligned Open spaces: The NPPF continues to protect recreational and green spaces, especially where they contribute to character and visual amenity (Paragraphs 96–108 and 187–201). Isolated development: Exclusion of visually or physically detached development supports the NPPF’s goal of preventing urban sprawl and maintaining settlement character (Paragraphs 7–14 and 131–141). Large curtilages: The NPPF’s emphasis on character and density (para 130) supports excluding parts of curtilages that relate more to countryside than built form. This reflects the NPPF’s guidance on land-use efficiency and protecting countryside character (Paragraphs 124–130 and 187–201). Farmsteads: Their exclusion is consistent with the NPPF’s protection of rural	<u>Principle 4</u> Exclusions from Boundaries Settlement boundaries will exclude: a) Open Spaces and Recreational Facilities These areas, located at the edge of settlements, provide important community functions and visual links to the countryside. Their exclusion helps preserve rural character and amenity. b) Isolated Development Development that is physically or visually detached from the settlement will be excluded to prevent urban sprawl and maintain settlement coherence. c) Large Curtilages with Countryside Character Portions of large curtilages (e.g. long rear gardens) that exhibit rural character or are separated by clear physical or visual boundaries will be excluded.

Original Principle	NPPF Consistency	Proposed Principle
adjacent to the built form and have a detached character (derived from their physical or visual detachment) from the main bulk of the settlement have been excluded. c) Sections of large curtilages of buildings which relate more to the character of the countryside than the built form. Large curtilages at the edge of settlements, i.e. long rear residential gardens have been divided, with their furthest sections omitted from the settlement boundary where there is an observable land-use difference, an open expansive character or dividing feature, delineating between the character of the built form and that of the rural beyond. Consideration has also been given to the character of the settlement and the contribution of the site to that character.	character and heritage, though converted farmsteads may be included if integrated with the settlement (Paragraphs 202–214).	d) Agricultural Farmsteads Farmsteads on the edge of settlements are considered part of the rural landscape and will be excluded. However, farmhouses closely integrated with the built form may be included. Converted farmsteads will be included where they are not visually or physically detached.

Original Principle	NPPF Consistency	Proposed Principle
d) Agricultural farmsteads which stand on the edge of the built form of settlements 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 are 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. Farmhouses are the exception to this principle and have been included within the boundary where they stand in close proximity to the built form. Farmsteads which have been previously converted from agricultural use will be included within the settlement boundary,		

Original Principle	NPPF Consistency	Proposed Principle
where they are not visually or physically detached from the settlement.		

5. Neighbourhood Plans

- 5.1. Neighbourhood Plans form part of the statutory development plan once made and can include settlement boundary designations that reflect locally determined principles. These boundaries are often based on community engagement and local evidence, and they play a key role in shaping development at the neighbourhood level.
- 5.2. The Local Plan Review will adopt the following approach to ensure consistency and alignment with made Neighbourhood Plans:

Table 2 Neighbourhood Plan Settlement Boundary Considerations

Consideration	Methodological Response
Recognition of Made Plans	Settlement boundaries defined in made Neighbourhood Plans will be respected and incorporated into the Local Plan, unless there is a clear strategic justification for amendment, such as alignment with national planning policy or local evidence.
Avoiding Duplication	Where a Neighbourhood Plan has a defined a settlement boundary which does not need updating following the review process, the Local Plan will not seek to redefine it. Instead, it will reference the boundary and ensure it is mapped consistently.
Strategic Alignment	Where a settlement boundary defined in a made Neighbourhood Plan no longer aligns with the strategic growth requirements set out in the Local Plan Review, such as the need to accommodate housing or employment land the boundary will need to be amended to reflect the Local Plan's spatial strategy. This will ensure conformity with the overarching spatial strategy.
Neighbourhood Plans in Preparation	For areas preparing Neighbourhood Plans, the Planning Policy Team will provide technical support and guidance to promote consistency with the Local Plan's emerging spatial strategy and mapping methodology. A consistent map base should be used by groups to aid integration.
Review	The Settlement Boundary Topic Paper will assess the appropriateness and relevance of boundaries defined in Neighbourhood Plans to inform the Local Plan Review. This process will consider whether boundaries are outdated or whether significant new evidence has emerged, such as planning permissions or change in policy/evidence. If any amendments are

Consideration	Methodological Response
	required these will be undertaken in line with the principles set out in Table 1.

5.3. To support a consistent approach across the Borough, the Local Plan will publish a Settlement Boundary Methodology Framework. This will be made available to Neighbourhood Plan Groups as well as Parish and Town Councils preparing or reviewing Neighbourhood Plans.

6. Special considerations and next steps

6.1. Settlement boundaries are used as a spatial planning tool to help guide where development is generally considered acceptable in principle. They are not intended to reflect land ownership, parish boundaries, or administrative areas, and should not be interpreted as such. Being located within a settlement boundary does not automatically mean that planning permission will be granted, each proposal will still be assessed against relevant planning policies and material considerations.

6.2. Some Neighbourhood Plans may define their own settlement boundaries, reflecting local priorities and aspirations. These boundaries will be considered as part of the Local Plan process, alongside national planning policy and up-to-date evidence, to ensure a consistent and strategic approach to growth and development.

6.3. To support transparency and fairness, a cut-off date for including planning permissions and commitments in the assessment of settlement boundaries will be confirmed following this consultation. This will help ensure that decisions are based on the most relevant and current information available.

6.4. We invite feedback on the proposed methodology and principles. Key questions include:

- Are the principles clear and appropriate?
- Do they reflect the aims of sustainable development and countryside protection?
- Is there anything missing or needing refinement?
- Do you agree with the proposed approach to how settlement boundaries defined in Neighbourhood Plans will be considered in the Local Plan Review?

6.5. Following this consultation, the comments received will help to refine and, where necessary, review the principles that guide settlement boundaries, including how boundaries defined in Neighbourhood Plans are considered. This feedback will inform the preparation of settlement boundaries for the next stage of the Local Plan Review (Regulation 19), ensuring they are based

on up-to-date evidence, national planning policy, and constructive engagement with local communities.