

Development Boundary Review



Methodology approved by Members at Local Plan Sub-Committee

11th June 2015

1. Introduction.

1.1 This report proposes a methodology and a series of criteria that will be used in reviewing the development boundaries for the settlements in the District for the emerging Local Plan.

1.2 The development boundary is a black line that is drawn on a plan around a settlement. There are 66 defined development boundaries in the District, although there are a number of smaller settlements (hamlets) which do not have development boundaries and are therefore considered to be in the countryside

1.3 Development boundaries have been used for a considerable time and are recognised as a policy tool which defines the coherent and established built up areas which seek to conserve the character of the open countryside. They prevent unnecessary urban sprawl and the loss of Greenfield sites in the open landscape of the District, and provide a quality built environment/open landscape interface.

1.4 Development boundaries are reviewed periodically to assist in meeting housing targets and to ensure features that define the development boundary have not changed and remain current and relevant.

1.5 Reviewing the development boundaries as part of the new Local Plan will ensure that development is focused in those settlements that are the most sustainable and provide local services/facilities to meet day to day needs. It will ensure that the vitality and viability of the rural areas can be supported however there is also a balance to be achieved in protecting the local landscape and character of the settlements.

2. Policy Context

2.1 Since the development boundaries were drawn up for the settlements in the Braintree District (1995 Local Plan), overall national policy context has changed significantly. Therefore, in reviewing the development boundaries it is important to consider what the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) says in defining development boundaries.

2.2 The NPPF states in paragraph 157, 'indicate broad locations for strategic development on a key diagram and land-use designations on a proposals map;

- allocate sites to promote development and flexible use of land, bringing forward new land where necessary, and provide detail on form, scale, access and quantum of development where appropriate;

- identify areas where it may be necessary to limit freedom to change the uses of buildings, and support such restrictions with a clear explanation;
- identify land where development would be inappropriate, for instance because of its environmental or historic significance'. Paragraph 21, 'set criteria, or identify strategic sites, for local and inward investment to match the strategy and to meet anticipated needs over the plan period'.

2.3 The NPPG states in 'Preparing the Local Plan' paragraph 2, 'The Local Plan should make clear what is intended to happen in the area over the life of the plan, where and when this will occur and how it will be delivered. This can be done by setting out broad locations and specific allocations of land for different purposes; through designations showing areas where particular opportunities or considerations apply (such as protected habitats); and through criteria-based policies to be taken into account when considering development. A policies map must illustrate geographically the application of policies in a development plan. The policies map may be supported by such other information as the Local Planning Authority sees fit to best explain the spatial application of development plan policies.

2.4 Although national policy does not give a detailed steer on definition of development boundaries there certainly appears to be policy support in general terms for identifying clear boundary lines. Based on this it is important to identify a clear, robust and pragmatic methodology and criteria to review and define development boundaries.

3. Criteria for defining Development Boundaries

The criteria for defining development boundaries is set out below;

- In most cases the development boundaries should follow clearly defined physical features such as walls, fences, hedgerows, roads and streams. However, some development boundaries may follow along the rear of built development rather than physical features to prevent inappropriate backland development, for instances where dwellings have large back gardens.
- The curtilages of dwellings are included unless functionally separate to the dwelling on where the land has capacity to significantly extend the built form of the settlement.
- Clusters of less than 10 dwellings will be excluded from having a development boundary and will be defined as a 'hamlet'.

- Isolated and sporadic development which is clearly detached from the main built up area should be excluded from the boundary. Freestanding/individual dwellings in the open landscape should also be excluded.
- Proposed Local Plan allocations are included, unless 100% affordable housing is proposed.
- Individual plots, small scale development sites that would provide rounding off opportunities in areas physically and visually related to the settlement are included.
- Peripheral undeveloped areas that are in defined flood risk areas should not be included within development boundaries.
- The majority of defined development boundaries include at least one community facility i.e. church/community hall/shop/public house etc. These facilities often contribute to the economic and or social life of the settlement.
- Listed buildings with important landscape settings on the edge of the built up area should be excluded.
- Farmsteads and other agricultural buildings, including those on the edge of the built up area should be excluded.
- Developments of an open character, including sports fields, tourism parks, covered reservoirs, horse related developments etc. that are outside the built up area are excluded.
- Existing employment sites if physically related to the settlement should be included.
- Existing retail sites if physically related to the settlement should be included.

4. Next Steps

4.1 It is proposed to use the proposed criteria identified above in reviewing the development boundaries during preparation of the emerging Local Plan