



Development Boundary Review



Draft methodology for Local Plan Sub-Committee

August 2024

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 several 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 Local Plan Review 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 (2022 Local Plan), 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 23, 'Broad locations for development should be indicated on a key diagram, and land use designations and allocations identified on a policy map.

2.3 Strategic policies should provide a clear strategy for bringing sufficient land forward, and at a sufficient rate, to address objectively assessed needs over the plan period, in line with the presumption in favour of sustainable development. This should include planning for and allocating sufficient sites to deliver the strategic priorities of the area (except insofar as these needs can be demonstrated to be met more appropriately through other mechanisms, such as brownfield registers or nonstrategic policies).

2.4 The NPPG states in 'Plan Making paragraph 2; Where sites are proposed for allocation, sufficient detail should be given to provide clarity to developers, local communities and other interested parties about the nature and scale of development. Where a local plan contains both strategic and non-strategic policies, the non-strategic policies should be clearly distinguished from the strategic policies.

2.5 Section 19 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 sets out the specific matters that local planning authorities must have regard to when preparing a local plan.

2.6 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, as this helps provide sufficient detail to provide clarity for developments and local communities. 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 are 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 help prevent inappropriate back land 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.
- Extensions which would result in ribbon development would not be included.
- Proposed Local Plan allocations are included, unless it is a proposal for 100% affordable housing such as a rural exception site.
- Individual plots, small scale development sites that would provide a natural 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.
- Proposals for small self-build plots should not be included in the development boundary unless they are part of a larger scale development proposal. However, if a proposal for a self-build or custom housebuilding or other community led approaches could be considered for allocation and inclusion in a

development boundary if appropriate.

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.