

# South Worcestershire Development Plan Review

## Development Boundaries Review

### Assessment of Development Boundaries



**March 2022**

## **1. Background and Purpose**

- 1.1. The purpose of the Development Boundaries is to direct development to the more sustainable locations, prevent encroachment into the open countryside, thereby protecting its character, and inform where windfall development would generally be acceptable in accordance with the Development and Hierarchy Strategy (SWDP2). Rather than defining what constitutes a settlement, which is a common misconception, Development Boundaries are drawn to show the main built-up area of a settlement and where new development, through infilling, would be considered appropriate in principle. Development Boundaries traditionally are often tightly drawn to control land supply, taking into account the character of the settlement in terms of its size and form. Wherever possible it follows physical features that can be easily defined on the ground. Extensive open curtilages are usually excluded where the potential for development would have an adverse impact on its surroundings.
- 1.2. There are 133 existing Development Boundaries in south Worcestershire; 96 in Wychavon, 36 in Malvern Hills and 1 for Worcester City (its administrative boundary). The Development Boundaries for the towns and villages in Malvern Hills and Wychavon, where applicable, were first defined in the respective 1998 Local Plans and have only been amended since to include minor revisions and to incorporate the conterminous South Worcestershire Development Plan (SWDP, February 2016) housing and employment allocations. Worcester City's Development Boundary is defined as its administrative boundary and the outer site boundaries of the Wider Worcester Area allocations excluding SWDP45/6 Worcester Technology Park as it is not conterminous to the City's administrative boundary.
- 1.3. Given the length of time since the last review of the Development Boundaries and the scale of development on the ground since, a review was deemed necessary as part of the SWDP Review. In addition, there are a number of higher category villages (defined as Category 1, 2 and 3 villages in the Village Facilities and Rural Transport Study, May 2019) which do not have a Development Boundary and it therefore may be appropriate in these instances for one to be drawn. There are also a number of lower category villages (defined as Category 4 and Open Countryside villages in the Village Facilities and Rural Transport Study, May 2019) where a Development Boundary is no longer appropriate. The above measures will allow relevant policies to be applied appropriately and consistently, as well as helping to justify the continuation of a windfall development allowance.

## **2. National and Local Planning Policy Background**

- 2.1. National Planning Policy set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, February 2019), puts sustainability at the heart of its requirements for the planning system. Paragraph 7 of the NPPF states that "the purpose of the planning system is to contribute towards the achievement of sustainable development", and Paragraph 8 sets out the three overarching sustainable development objectives: an economic objective, a social objective and an environmental objective.

- 2.2. In Chapter 5, which gives guidance on “Delivering a Sufficient Supply of Homes”, Paragraph 68 supports the promotion of a good mix of housing sites including through the support of windfall housing developments, affording “great weight to the benefits of using suitable sites within existing settlements for homes”.
- 2.3. Paragraph 77 continues “in rural areas, planning policies and decisions should be responsive to local circumstances and support housing developments that reflect local needs”. Paragraph 78 adds “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”. Paragraph 79 seeks to avoid the development of isolated homes in the open countryside.
- 2.4. Local Planning Policy is consistent with the principles set out in the NPPF. The provision of sufficient and appropriate housing to meet local needs and the safeguarding and enhancement of the open countryside are at the heart of the SWDP Development Strategy and Settlement Hierarchy. SWDP2 B supports infill development within the defined Development Boundaries of the city, towns and villages subject to satisfaction with the other relevant SWDP policies. SWDP2 C defines the open countryside as land beyond the defined Development Boundaries and seeks to restrict development in the open countryside, limited to dwellings for rural workers, employment development in rural areas and development specifically permitted by other SWDP policies.

### **3. Methodology and Assessment**

- 3.1. A consultation on the proposed Development Boundaries Review Methodology was undertaken from August to October 2018. 73 responses were received from a range of stakeholders, and the Methodology was subsequently amended where appropriate. Subsequently the SWDP Review Issues and Options consultation was undertaken in November and December 2018; Option 2 asked:

*“Should the Development Boundaries Review:*

- a. Make no changes to the current Development Boundaries.*
- b. Progress with current Development Boundaries and only amend to include SWDP Review housing, employment and mixed use allocations where they share a common boundary with a Development Boundary.*
- c. Review existing Development Boundaries and identify new Development Boundaries in high category villages where one does not already exist, using Methodology which was subject to consultation (amended where appropriate) in August-October 2018.*
- d. As for Option c above, plus extend Development Boundaries to include proposed SWDP Review allocations where they share a common boundary with a current Development Boundary.*

e. *Accept that certain smaller settlements can accommodate development of an appropriate scale even if a Development Boundary can not be readily identified in accordance with the Methodology referred to in c above.*”

3.2. There was a mixed response to this Option, but given the length of time since the last review of the Development Boundaries and the scale of development on the ground since, a review was considered necessary in line with a combination of Options c and d. There then followed the detailed Development Boundary assessments, which were conducted during the Spring and Summer of 2019. These were based on the agreed Methodology, detailed below, with all Assessment Forms available at Appendix 1 with the associated mapping available on the SWDP Review Interactive Policies Map (<http://swdp.addresscafe.com/app/exploreit/default2.aspx>).

### Assessing Existing Development Boundaries

3.3. Existing City, Towns and Category 1, 2 and 3 village Development Boundaries were assessed in order to either include or, in some instances, exclude areas of land which no longer serve a Development Boundary function.

3.4. The following are included in the revised Development Boundaries:

- areas of land which are physically related to the settlement and have planning permission for residential (excluding Rural Exception Sites and large curtilages which have the capacity to extend the built form of the settlement), employment or community buildings, and have been subsequently built out or are under construction as of 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018;
- non-conterminous SWDP residential, employment and mixed use allocations which are considered physically and visually related to the settlement; and
- areas of land which measure less than 0.16 hectares and are physically and visually related to the settlement and are capable of being developed without compromising:
  - i. residential amenity of neighbouring properties;
  - ii. both direct and setting impacts on heritage assets of all types including Scheduled Monuments, Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas, Registered Parks and Gardens, Undesignated Heritage Assets and Registered Battlefields;
  - iii. the natural beauty of an AONB;
  - iv. the openness of the West Midlands Green Belt;
  - v. an internationally or nationally designated wildlife site (e.g. Site of Special Scientific Interest, Special Protection Area or Special Area of Conservation), Local Wildlife Site, Habitats of Principal Importance or Local Geological Site;
  - vi. flood risk (i.e. is not within Flood Zones 2 or 3);

- vii. protected Public Open Space;
- viii. the character of the existing settlement pattern; and
- ix. Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land (BMVAL).

3.5. The following are omitted in the revised Development Boundaries:

- large curtilages of existing dwellings which have the capacity to extend the built form of the settlement, where the potential for development would have an adverse impact on its surroundings;
- recreational or amenity space at the edge of settlements;
- Habitats of Principal Importance.

3.6. In addition to the above, minor amendments have been made to 'tidy-up' existing Development Boundaries in order to provide more consistency and clarity. This might have been, for example, where an amendment has been made to include a conterminous SWDP allocation but this has resulted in an area of land surrounded by the Development Boundary but excluded from it.

#### Identifying New Development Boundaries

3.7. Category 1, 2 and 3 villages which did not benefit from an existing Development Boundary were assessed to determine whether a Development Boundary was appropriate having regard to their size, character and form. Where a new Development Boundary was deemed appropriate, its extent was tightly drawn to show the main built-up area, and the assessment was based on the same criteria for amending existing Development Boundaries as set out in Paragraphs 3.2 - 3.3. Only one higher category village which did not benefit from an existing Development Boundary was not deemed appropriate for a new Development Boundary; this was Lindridge, Category 2, where the small-scale dispersed nature of the settlement meant that a Development Boundary would be inappropriate.

#### Removing Existing Development Boundaries

3.8. Where Category 4 villages and villages within the Open Countryside had an existing Development Boundary, this was removed as such villages are no longer considered suitable for windfall housing development. There are 58 Development Boundaries being removed, most of which fall within Wychavon District; these are listed at Appendix 2.

#### Including / Excluding Proposed SWDP Review Allocations

3.9. The SWDP Review will include the allocation of sites to meet the housing and employment needs to 2041. It is considered appropriate to include SWDP Review residential, employment and mixed use allocations which are considered physically related to the nearby settlement. An assessment of the proposed allocations will be

made prior to the submission of the SWDP Review on whether or not they are suitable to be included in the Development Boundary, based on the established methodology.

#### **4. Next Steps**

- 4.1. The proposed changes are being publicised as part of the SWDP Review Publication consultation, having been amended in line with pertinent representation made to the SWDP Review Preferred Options consultation in late 2019 and changes on the ground since.
- 4.2. The revised Development Boundaries will come into force on adoption of the SWDP Review, currently scheduled for October 2023.

## **Appendix 1 – Development Boundaries Review Assessment Forms**

See Village Assessment Forms below.

## Appendix 2 – List of Development Boundaries Removed

Village / Settlement	District
Abberton	Wychavon
Abbots Morton	Wychavon
Aldington	Wychavon
Aston Somerville	Wychavon
Atch Lench	Wychavon
Birlingham	Wychavon
Blackminster	Wychavon
Bradley Green	Wychavon
Bredon's Hardwick	Wychavon
Bredon's Norton	Wychavon
Broughton Hackett	Wychavon
Bushley	Malvern Hills
Charlton	Wychavon
Childswickham	Wychavon
Conderton	Wychavon
Cookhill	Wychavon
Crossway Green	Wychavon
Dunhampstead	Wychavon
Earidston	Malvern Hills
Earl's Croome	Malvern Hills
Fladbury	Wychavon
Great Comberton	Wychavon
Guarlford	Malvern Hills
Hatfield	Wychavon
Hinton on the Green	Wychavon

<b>Village / Settlement</b>	<b>District</b>
Kington	Wychavon
Kinsham	Wychavon
Little Comberton	Wychavon
Little Witley	Malvern Hills
Long Lartin	Wychavon
Longdon	Malvern Hills
Longley Green	Malvern Hills
Naunton Beauchamp	Wychavon
Norton and Lenchwick	Wychavon
Norton juxta Kempsey	Wychavon
Oldfield	Wychavon
Pendock	Malvern Hills
Peopleton	Wychavon
Rous Lench	Wychavon
Sale Green	Wychavon
Severn Stoke	Malvern Hills
Sinton Green	Malvern Hills
Sneachill	Wychavon
Stoke Green	Wychavon
Stoulton and Hawbridge	Wychavon
Sytchampton	Wychavon
Uphampton	Wychavon
Upper Strensham	Wychavon
Upton Warren	Wychavon
Wadborough	Wychavon
Westmancote and Lower Westmancote	Wychavon

<b>Village / Settlement</b>	<b>District</b>
White Ladies Aston	Wychavon
Wick	Wychavon
Wickhamford	Wychavon
Wyre Piddle	Wychavon