

Development Boundary Review – Proposed Methodology

1. Background and Purpose

- 1.1. The purpose of the Development Boundaries is to direct development to the more sustainable locations and prevent encroachment into the open countryside, thereby protecting its character. 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 are often tightly drawn to control land supply, taking into account the character of the settlement in terms of its size and form, and 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 currently 133 Development Boundaries in south Worcestershire; 96 in Wychavon, 36 in Malvern Hills and 1 for Worcester City. 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 Worcester Urban Extensions (see SWDP45; excluding SWDP45/6 Worcester Technology Park).
- 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 is deemed necessary as part of the SWDP Review process. In addition, there are a number of higher category villages (defined as category 1, 2 and 3 villages in the SWDP Development Strategy and Annex D of the SWDP) which do not have a Development Boundary and it therefore may be appropriate in these instances for one to be drawn. The above measures will allow relevant policies to be applied appropriately and consistently which may not currently be the case.

2. National and Local Planning Policy Background

- 2.1. National Planning Policy, in particular the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, July 2018), 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 echoes 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. Proposed Methodology

Assessing Existing Development Boundaries

- 3.1. Existing Development Boundaries will be assessed in order to either include or, in some instances, exclude areas of land which no longer serve a Development Boundary function.
- 3.2. It is proposed to include the following:
- areas of land which are physically related to the settlement and have planning permission for residential (excluding Rural Exception Sites), employment or community buildings, and have been subsequently built out or are under construction as of 1st April 2018;
 - non-conterminous SWDP residential, employment and mixed use allocations which are considered physically related to the settlement; and
 - areas of land which measure less than 0.16 hectares and are physically related to the settlement, are defined by a strong physical boundary, and are capable of being developed without compromising:
 - i. residential amenity of neighbouring properties;
 - ii. the setting of a Listed Building or Conservation Area;
 - iii. the natural beauty of an AONB;
 - iv. the openness of the West Midlands Green Belt;
 - v. an internationally designated wildlife site (e.g. SSSI, SPA or SAC);

- vi. flood risk (i.e. is not within Flood Zones 2 or 3);
- vii. protected Public Open Space; and
- viii. the character of the existing settlement pattern.

3.3. Areas to be omitted from the existing Development Boundaries:

- large curtilages of existing dwellings which have the capacity to extend the built form of the settlement;
- recreational or amenity space at the edge of settlements.

3.4. It is also suggested that minor amendments be made to 'tidy-up' existing Development Boundaries to give more consistency and clarity. This might be, 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

3.5. Category 1, 2 and 3 villages which do not currently benefit from a Development Boundary will be assessed to determine whether a Development Boundary is appropriate having regard to their size, character and form. Where a new Development Boundary is deemed appropriate, its extent will be tightly drawn to show the main built-up area, and the assessment will be based on the same criteria for amending existing Development Boundaries as set out in Paragraphs 3.2 - 3.3.

3.6. As part of the SWDP Review, work on an updated Village Facilities and Rural Transport Survey (VFRTS) has commenced. The VFRTS categorises villages by their level of sustainability with regard to level of facilities and access to public transport. It is anticipated that this work will be completed by early 2019, so it is deemed necessary to use the updated VFRTS categorisations to identify the category 1, 2 and 3 villages which do not currently benefit from a Development Boundary and assess those to determine whether a new Development Boundary is appropriate. It is anticipated that the majority of newly categorised 1, 2 and 3 villages which do not have a Development Boundary will be proposed to be assigned one.

Including / Excluding Proposed SWDPR Allocations

3.7. The SWDPR will include the allocation of sites to meet the housing and employment needs to 2041. It is considered appropriate to include SWDPR 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 SWDPR on whether or not they are suitable to be included in the Development Boundary based on the above.

4. Next Steps, Timetable and How to Comment

4.1. Consultation on the proposed Development Boundary Review methodology runs until 5pm Monday 5 October 2018. The SWDP Review Issues and Options

consultation will take place in November and December 2018, and part of that consultation will seek views on whether a Development Boundary Review is necessary. Subject to support for the Development Boundary Review process as part of the Issues and Options consultation, work will then commence on assessing existing Development Boundaries and identifying new Development Boundaries where appropriate. The proposed changes to existing Development Boundaries and proposed new Development Boundaries will then be consulted on as part of the SWDP Review Preferred Options consultation in November and December 2019.

4.2. The above is summarised in the below table:

Stage	When?
Development Boundary Review Proposed Methodology Consultation	20 August - 5pm 8 October 2018
SWDP Review Issues and Options Consultation	November - December 2018
Apply Development Boundary Review Methodology (incorporating appropriate consultation comments)	January - July 2019
SWDP Review Preferred Options Consultation	November - December 2019

4.3. Responses should be made using the Comments Form and returned by no later than 5pm on Monday 8 October 2018:

- by post to South Worcestershire Development Plan Team, Civic Centre, Queen Elizabeth Drive, Pershore, WR10 1PT
- by email to contact@swdevelopmentplan.org

4.4. For further information, please do not hesitate to contact Reiss Sadler, Planning Officer (Policy) who is leading on the Development Boundary Review:

- by telephone on 01386 565 430
- by email to reiss.sadler@wychavon.gov.uk
- by post to Reiss Sadler, Civic Centre, Queen Elizabeth Drive, Pershore, WR10 1PT