

Revised Settlement Boundary Review Criteria

The Council will take a landscape led approach to the drawing of settlement boundaries.

When reviewing the boundary for any given settlement the Council will consult the following sources, where relevant:

- Landscape Character Assessment for West Berkshire (2019)
- North Wessex Downs AONB Landscape Character Assessment (2002)
- Landscape Sensitivity Studies (2009) for Newbury, Thatcham, Hungerford and West Reading
- Landscape Sensitivity Assessments (2011) for the rural service centres and service villages in the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).
- Landscape Capacity Assessments (2014 and 2015) for potential housing sites in the AONB
- Historic Landscape Characterisation and Historic Environment Character Zoning
- Historic Environment Record
- Settlement character studies such as Village, Town and Parish Design Statements
- Conservation Area Appraisals
- Adopted Parish Plans and Neighbourhood Development Plans

In conjunction with any relevant recommendations from the above studies the Council will also apply the following principles in the revision of settlement boundaries:

Principles of inclusion of land uses

Settlement boundaries identify the main built up area of a settlement within which development is considered acceptable in principle, subject to other policy considerations. While allowing for development, settlement boundaries protect the character of a settlement and prevent unrestricted growth into the countryside. They create a level of certainty about whether or not the principle of development is likely to be acceptable.

Where practicable and barring the exceptions set out below, boundaries will usually follow clearly defined features such as walls, hedgerows, railway lines and roads. Where possible, preference will be given to using features that are likely to have a degree of permanence as some features can change over time. Where development is on one side of the road only, the settlement boundary will be drawn along the edge closest to the settlement. Some boundaries may also follow along the rear of built development in order to prevent inappropriate development, for instance where dwellings have large back gardens.

Boundaries will include:

- The main settlement area. i.e. the area of close knit physical character
- Sites allocated through the Local Plan and Neighbourhood Development Plan processes
- Curtilages which are contained, are visually part of the built up area and are separated from the open or wider countryside

- Recreational or amenity open space which is physically surrounded by the settlement (or adjoined on three sides by the settlement)
- Existing community facilities (such as churches, schools and village halls) which are physically and visually related to the settlement
- Single plots or other similar small scale development opportunities which would provide infill and rounding off opportunities that are physically, functionally and visually related to the existing built up area, taking account of any environmental development constraints.

Boundaries will exclude:

- Highly visible areas such as exposed ridges, land forms or open slopes on the edge of settlements
- Open undeveloped parcels of land on the edges of settlements which are not either functionally or physically or visually related to the existing built up area
- Recreational or amenity open space which extends into the countryside or primarily relates to the countryside in form and nature. This includes designated Local Green Space.
- Tree belts, woodland areas, watercourses and other features which help to soften, screen existing development and form a boundary to the settlement
- Areas of isolated development which are physically or visually detached from the settlement and areas of sporadic, dispersed or ribbon development
- Large gardens or other areas, such as orchards, paddocks, allotments, cemeteries and churchyards, which visually relate to the open countryside rather than the settlement
- The extended curtilages of dwellings where future development has the capacity to harm the structure, form and character of the settlement
- Loose knit arrangements of buildings on the edge of a settlement
- Farmsteads, agricultural buildings, or converted agricultural buildings on the edge of a settlement which relate more to the rural context
- Horse related development, minerals extraction, landfill, water features, public utilities (sewage treatment plants, substations) on the edge of a settlement
- Important gaps between developed areas in fragmented settlements. Settlement boundaries do not need to be continuous. It may be appropriate, given the nature and form of a settlement, to define two or more separate elements of it.
- Roads, tracks and public rights of way running along the edge of a settlement.

Specific issues to be considered on a site by site basis:

- The wider setting and important views both into and out of the settlement will, where appropriate, be taken into account
- School playing fields
- Garden centres and plant nurseries
- Employment and leisure uses located on the edge of settlements will be considered according to their scale, functionality, visual and physical relationship to the settlement.
- Existing commitments for built development where development is underway and built out or substantially built out will be considered according to their scale and physical relationship with the settlement.