



Ribble Valley
Borough Council

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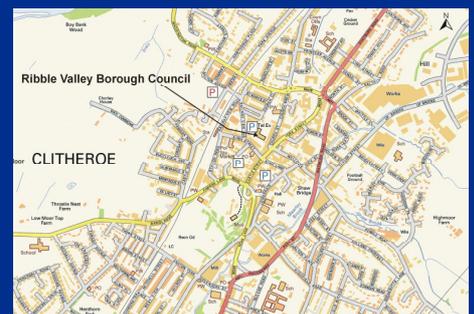
Borough Council

SETTLEMENT BOUNDARY

DEFINITION

Topic Paper

MARCH 2016



INTERIM SETTLEMENT BOUNDARY DEFINITION TOPIC PAPER (March 2016)

1. Introduction.

This report outlines the development of a series of criteria that will enable the effective review of the current settlement boundaries around all the Core Strategy Defined Settlements. These boundaries are very important as it is to the Borough's Defined Settlements that most of the area's future development will be directed and that also much of the remaining parts of the Borough fall within relatively restrictive designations of either AONB or Green Belt. The settlement boundaries thus effectively separate the settlements from the surrounding Open Countryside or Green Belt, each with its own separate policies within the Core Strategy.

The development of finalised boundaries, using the above criteria, will take place in two main phases. The first phase will be to establish the boundaries as they are at present (*ie as of 31st December 2015*) taking the current boundaries established in the 1998 Districtwide Local Plan (DWLP) as the starting point and including all current planning permissions granted since 1998 that have been built out or are currently awaiting a start or completion. They may also be influenced by new designations, such as the Mineral Safeguarding Areas, that have been developed since 1998. These phase one settlement boundaries are termed "Interim Settlement Boundaries". The establishment of these interim boundaries will be helpful in the consideration of planning applications as they are currently coming to the Council and will be determined using the recently adopted Core Strategy.

It is important to emphasise that therefore these "interim" boundaries do not incorporate any forward land allocations. These allocations will be a part of the second phase of the development of the area's settlement boundaries and the allocations and their influence on settlement boundaries will be formally consulted on within the regulatory process of producing the Housing and Economic Development DPD.

In producing the interim boundaries the criteria that were applied to the existing 1998 boundaries were re-considered. Their underpinning justifications were examined in the light of new planning policy and, where relevant, elements were retained. They were combined with new criteria that flow from more recent planning policy. These combined criteria were approved by the Council's Planning and Development Committee in September 2014 and subsequently applied within an extensive on site and desk based survey of all the Borough's Defined Settlements.

The criteria were further refined through practical application during the actual survey and therefore this paper sets out the criteria that have emerged from the September 2014 approach in the light of survey experience.

2. Policy Context

The original definitions of a settlement and the criteria established for the setting of settlement boundaries around them were originally developed for the District Wide Local Plan (DWLP) of 1998. While some of the detail and methodology of these DWLP definitions may still be relevant, as is outlined below in section 3, the overall national policy context of the 1998 plan has now significantly changed. It is necessary therefore to consider what current policy says about defining settlements and settlement boundaries.

The starting point is the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and its associated web-based Planning Practice Guidance. It is equally important to consider how settlement boundaries relate to the various policies within the Core Strategy itself.

2.1 NPPF

The parts that have a general relevance to setting boundaries around different land uses within plans are set out below.

Para 157 bullet 4

Plans should “indicate broad locations for strategic development on a key diagram and land use designations on a proposals map.”

bullet 5

“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”

bullet 6

“identify areas where it may be necessary to limit freedom to change the use of buildings, and support such restrictions with a clear explanation.”

bullet 7

“identify land where development would be inappropriate, for instance because of its environmental or historic significance..”

Para 17 Core planning principles

bullet 5 states that the process should

“ take account of the different roles and character of different areas, promoting the vitality of our main urban areas...”

This is interpreted here as acknowledging the differentiation of areas for different uses such as settlements and the Open Countryside.

bullet 11

“actively manage patterns of growth to make fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling, and focus significant development in locations which are or can be made sustainable..”

This encourages the focusing of development into settlements as they are the most sustainable places.

Para 21 bullet 2

“Set criteria, or identify strategic sites, for local and inward investment to meet anticipated needs over the plan period”

This emphasises the need to consider the inclusion of employment land allocations within settlements, which potentially may influence the setting of settlement boundaries.

Para 23 bullet 6

“Local Planning Authorities should therefore undertake an assessment of the need to expand town centres to ensure a sufficient supply of suitable sites” (for a wide range of economic activity).

Though this is mainly within the context of town centre uses bullet 7 goes on to indicate that this could involve sites outside town centres. This could also influence the position of a settlement boundary, especially in relation to the three principal settlements.

Para 28 bullet 3

Stresses that in supporting tourism and leisure developments in the wider rural economy this may involve possible development within rural service centres.

This is interpreted as potentially including some of the area’s defined settlements and could therefore affect their settlement boundaries.

Para 47

Emphasises the need to plan for the full objectively assessed housing needs of the Borough, this will result in housing allocations that may influence the form of a settlement boundary.

Para 50 also emphasises the need to plan for a variety of types and mixes of housing that could also influence the location and shape of the above allocations.

2.2 Planning Practice Guidance

Local Plans Chapter, Para 002 states that,

“planning authorities should set out broad locations and specific allocations of land for different purposes; through designations showing areas where particular opportunities and considerations apply.... A Policies Map must illustrate geographically the application of policies in a development plan.”

Para 010 sub section 4 also states,

“Where sites are proposed for allocation, sufficient detail should be available to provide clarity to developers, local communities and other interests about the nature and scale of developing (addressing the “what, where, when and how “ questions.”

This emphasises the need for allocations to be clearly set out and that may encompass parts of new settlement boundaries.

2.3. Core Strategy Policies

The two Core Strategy policies most directly relevant to settlement boundaries are DS1 and DMG2 . However there are also several others that involve the presence of a settlement boundary in their interpretation.

2.3.1 Key Statement DS1.

Settlement boundaries are most immediately relevant to the Core Strategy Key Statement DS1- Development Strategy, which outlines the status of the Borough's various defined settlements and their relationship to future development.

2.3.2 Development Management Policy DMG2- Strategic Considerations

This policy refers directly to the defined settlements and mentions the terms rounding off, consolidation and expansion mentioned below and the treatment of areas outside the defined settlements. The position of a settlement boundary is therefore very important in the interpretation of this policy.

2.3.3 Other relevant Core Strategy

Other policies that could also involve land delineated by a settlement boundary include:

- **Key Statement H3** - Affordable Housing – relates to sites and thresholds within Clitheroe and Longridge ie within their settlement boundaries.
- **Key Statement EC2** - Development of Retail, Shops and Community Facilities and Services - specifically mentions the defined Principal Settlements of Clitheroe, Longridge and Whalley in terms of their role as service centres and in relation to the specific provision of amounts of new retail floorspace. The boundaries defining these settlements will obviously be important in this context.
- **Development Management Policy DME4** - Protecting Heritage Assets - as mentioned in the settlement boundary criteria below (see Section 4), may also have implications for the position of a boundary, for instance in relation to Conservation Areas.
- **Development Management Policy DMB3** - Recreation and Tourism Development - deals in part with proposals being well related to main settlements or villages.
- **Development Management Policy DMB4** - Open Space - deals with types of recreational and formal and informal play uses that are significantly related to the area's settlements and therefore potentially may affect their boundaries.

2.3.4 Specific Adjustments to Clitheroe Settlement Boundary within Core Strategy Submission Documents in Relation to the Standen Strategic Site.

In addition a specific adjustment to the Clitheroe Settlement Boundary was made in relation to the Standen Strategic site.

2.4 Summary of Policy Position

In conclusion there is general policy support for setting clear boundary lines as opposed to any other approach. Therefore it is necessary to construct a set of robust and locally pragmatic guidelines from local experience and in relation to local circumstances that would enable new settlement boundaries to be set. This would, among other matters, necessarily include the specific adjustment made to Clitheroe's boundary within the Core Strategy mentioned above in relation to the Standen Strategic Site (see 2.3.3 above).

3. What is a "settlement" in planning terms and which of the Borough's settlements should have a settlement boundary?

3.1 Defining a Settlement

There are many places within the Ribble Valley that local residents call their settlement. A dictionary definition of a settlement is, "settlement; being settled; place occupied by settlers, small village...". This definition would encompass a wide variety of settings within the area in which people live close to each other in smaller or larger groups of dwellings that they would naturally call their settlement.

In planning terms however it is important to be able to define those places capable of hosting future development, and those that are not, on a logical basis. This is an important part of promoting overall sustainable development and of protecting sensitive parts of the area from excessive or inappropriate levels of development.

From that overall definition of what and what is not a settlement there is the further need to draw settlement boundaries around those settlements that could sustain, to varying degrees, some further growth to ensure that new development is genuinely physically linked to them and to prevent sprawl. In doing so this will also implicitly define those areas that are not in settlements ie are in the open countryside around them and define the settlement in terms of the AONB or Green Belt.

Given that over 70% of the Borough lies within AONB or Green Belt, both of which are relatively restrictive designations in terms of future development, the treatment and mutual definition of open countryside and the Borough's settlements is therefore very important. It is towards the Borough's Defined Settlements (see below) that the significant bulk of future development will be guided to deliver a more sustainable long term future. The relationships of AONBs and Green Belts to settlement boundaries are described in more detail below (see sections 5 and 6 below).

Also, as mentioned above, the process of setting new boundaries will involve re-visiting the logic and justification of the current definition of a settlement. The 1998 District Wide Local Plan (DWLP) contained the following definition of a "settlement" to which a variety of its policies related and which was agreed at the DWLP's Public Inquiry.

"A defined settlement is one which contains at least 20 dwellings and a shop or public house or place of worship or school or village hall ie they are of a size and form that justifies treatment as a settlement. Settlements smaller than this limit will not be given settlement boundaries as they are not considered to be large enough or to contain enough facilities to allow for growth beyond that delivering regeneration benefits or local needs housing."

This definition was used to set boundaries around over 30 of the Borough's settlements, including one based around the Calderstones ex-hospital site that related to a specific DWLP Area Based policy (Policy A3).

This definition has been tested since 1998 through many planning applications without revision and has been re-examined in relation to current policy and the Core Strategy and is considered to remain a pragmatic and useful definition in Ribble Valley terms. It acknowledges the nature of local settlements in relation to their surroundings, their relative scales and, in sustainability terms, the importance of the facilities and services that they have.

3.2. Sustainability Issues and Settlements.

In terms of sustainability the Core Strategy Settlement Hierarchy evidence document (2008) revealed that the settlements with boundaries defined in the DWLP remained those that had the best combinations of facilities, services and access. More recent work following the Core Strategy Examination within the document "Defining the More Sustainable Settlements" (April 2014) also confirmed the above view. In short the DWLP definition appeared to remain workable on the ground in defining those places that were more sustainable.

The DWLP settlement definition (and the settlements that were defined by it) was subsequently carried through into various Core Strategy consultations without challenge. This definition is now included within the Core Strategy Glossary under the term "Defined Settlement".

The 2008 Settlement Hierarchy examined all the area's settlements that fell within the definition in 3.1 above in terms of their detailed service provision and other attributes and helped define the position of the three Principal Settlements of Clitheroe, Longridge and Whalley into which the bulk of new development within the plan period would be guided.

Research also revealed that, since 2008, significant development within the permitted Brockhall site (also covered by a DWLP Area Policy A2 and subsequent planning permissions) has now produced a built form that justifies consideration as an additional settlement within the above definition and Brockhall has therefore been added to the existing list of settlements and is included within the Core Strategy as a Tier 2 defined settlement (see below).

In the Submission version of the Core Strategy that was examined in early 2014 was a group of 32 of the smaller Defined Settlements called "Other Settlements". This group comprised those Defined Settlements excluding the three Principal Settlements of Clitheroe, Longridge and Whalley. Various levels of development were proposed for each of the three individual Principal Settlements and one quantum of housing development collectively for the Other Settlement group to be apportioned in more detail within the future land allocations DPD (Housing and Economic Development DPD).

Following the Core Strategy Examination more work was requested to elaborate individual levels of development for each of the settlements within the "Other Settlements" group as a recognition of their varying levels of sustainability. This work (within the document "Development Strategy – Defining the More Sustainable Settlements and Patterns of Housing Development" consulted on in May to July 2014) produced two separate tiers within the original Other Settlement group.

The first, Tier 1, is a group of settlements that were judged more sustainable and capable of hosting new development. The second is a larger Tier 2 group with less capacity for future growth and into which only local needs housing and those developments able to deliver appropriate regeneration benefits would be considered. These are listed within Core Strategy Key Statement DS1.

Within the Core Strategy therefore all the above settlements, the three Principal Settlements and the 32 Tier 1 and Tier 2 settlements, are together termed as “Defined Settlements” to distinguish them from the open countryside, AONB or Green Belt and the smaller groups of dwellings, hamlets and farms that lie within them.

4. Criteria for the Definition of a Settlement Boundary

The definition of Defined Settlement used in the Adopted Core Strategy Glossary also includes statements that were intended to help set a settlement boundary around them. These were also based on the 1998 DWLP and were considered to still be generally relevant. They were not challenged within associated consultations or within the 2014 Examination in Public and its subsequent Main Modifications consultations. However, in the light of new policy and the on the ground survey experience, they have in places been amended.

A settlement boundary should:

- Include all properties physically linked to the main (built) part of the settlement, except those, such as operating farms, that principally functionally relate to the surrounding countryside.
- Include all developed and undeveloped areas of existing planning consents relating to the settlement.
- Include, as a general first principle, all residential curtilages. However in some circumstances the area immediately around some dwellings is extensive enough to potentially become developable. In these circumstances, to avoid these sites effectively predicating the site allocations process by creating developable “infill” or “rounding off” voids along the settlement boundary the boundary has been drawn tightly to the building line to exclude them at this stage for consistency.
- Its boundaries should not include properties separated from the main body of the settlement by areas of open land not forming a residential curtilage.
- In most cases single depth development (ribbon development) along roads leading out of settlements will be excluded unless they are physically well related to the settlement.
- Include sites that are so damaged by visual intrusion as to be unworthy of designation in the open countryside beyond. An example of this approach could be a site on the boundary almost completely surrounded by built development. This was originally cited as a part of the DWLP boundary definition of Main Settlement boundaries but also could equally potentially apply to Core Strategy Principal and Tier 1 and 2 Defined Settlements.

However in considering the application of this particular criterion it should also

be borne in mind that again this may create unintentional “infill” plots in some settlements that have already received their permitted sustainable quantum of development in the plan period. It also, with reference to the point mentioned above, may also create unintentional “infill” sites that may effectively predicate the allocations process that has yet to take place in relation to a settlement. Therefore in some circumstances plots that are significantly, though not completely, surrounded by a boundary line may continue to be excluded from the settlement.

Also within the DWLP the issues of “rounding off”, “consolidation” and “expansion” of settlements were set out as they also have a bearing on settlement boundaries. These three definitions were also re-examined in relation to the new settlement hierarchy proposed within the Core Strategy and were also considered to remain substantially relevant to general boundary setting ie could be applied to all the Core Strategy Defined Settlements. More specifically they could now be applied to all settlements whereas previously in the DWLP they had only related to Wilpshire, Clitheroe, Billington, Longridge and Whalley within now superseded strategic planning documents.

These amended terms are contained within the Core Strategy Glossary of Terms.

They are:

- **Rounding Off** - Development which is essentially part of rather than an extension to the built up part of the settlement. It can be defined as the development of land within the settlement boundary (which is not covered by any protected designation) where at least two thirds of the perimeter is already built up with consolidated development.
- **Expansion** - This is the limited growth of a settlement. Generally it should be development that is in scale and keeping with the existing urban area.
- **Consolidation** - Locating new development so that it adjoins the main built up area of a settlement and where appropriate both the main urban area and an area of sporadic or isolated development.

Additional Criteria

In setting clear and consistent future settlement boundaries it is therefore proposed to retain the DWLP related criteria mentioned above together with a series of additional ones mentioned below. These flow from internal discussions and post-1998 changes to wider planning policy. Note that the criteria below are not currently within the Core Strategy’s Glossary. These are:

- **General point** - Development boundaries should follow clearly defined physical features, such as walls, fences, hedgerows, roads and streams.
- **Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings (both lying within the overall term Heritage Assets) and their settings** - the re-positioning of the settlement boundary, for reasons of land allocation or for other reasons, may have some effect. This will have to be carefully assessed in the light of current legislation and specific Core Strategy Key Statement EN5 and Development Management Policy DME4.

- **Include necessary land – use allocations.** The settlement boundaries should not pre-empt new allocations but will need to take them into account.
- **Treatment of Calderstones and Brockhall** - The A3 and A2 Policy boundaries within the DWLP have not been carried into the Core Strategy. New boundaries will need to be developed for these settlements and should, as a starting point, relate to the General Development Limit within the extant Permissions on these sites and also all the other boundary setting criteria outlined in this paper.
- **Presence of Mineral Safeguarding Areas (MSAs)** – these are defined by the County Council as they are the minerals planning authority. Comments should be made regarding the proximity of any new boundary to a MSA, but an MSA is not to be regarded as a fundamental constraint to development or allocation and therefore does not preclude a settlement boundary being placed over a part of it.
- **Flood Zone (FZ) boundaries** – a FZ is not an absolute constraint to settlement boundaries, as some defined settlements already have a settlement boundary and a built form that includes part of a FZ. The type of FZ is important and if necessary also the implications of any relevant Sequential and Exception tests within NPPF. The starting point should be to note the possible relationship of the FZ to a current and potential settlement boundary.
- **Neighbourhood Planning (NP)** – as yet no NP has emerged in the area, though one could during the production of the Housing and Economic Development DPD. It is possible that a NP could relate to a settlement boundary and any potential allocations. Close liaison with localities currently progressing a NP will therefore be needed.
- **Safeguarded Land** – the DWLP contained a small number of areas under its policy ENV5 Open Land, eg adjacent to the current settlement boundaries of Wilshire and Billington that were effectively safeguarded for development beyond the DWLP plan period. DWLP Policy ENV5 has not been carried into the Adopted Core Strategy. If not covered in part or whole by current permissions, and therefore included within the settlement boundary, they should now be considered to be land without a specific safeguarding designation that now lie outside the relevant settlement boundary.
- **Open Space issues-** as a part of more general work in relation to the forthcoming Housing and Economic development DPD all open space sites within the Borough (ie sports and recreation pitches, play areas, formal parks and gardens, informal public recreation sites, allotments and cemeteries and churchyards) have been resurveyed broadly based on their public access opportunities. Where such sites abut settlement boundaries they have been included within the settlement.

- **Traditional rural buildings which have been converted to residential use**, together with their residential curtilages, will be included within the boundary. Modern agricultural buildings and working farms, where they relate to a boundary, will be excluded as they principally relate to activities within the surrounding countryside rather than those within the settlement.
- **Where uses have been carried over an existing settlement boundary without permission** – if a use has been observed to have been carried over an existing boundary since 1998 without planning permission, or a new use created that involves the existing boundary without permission, and there is no other relevant reason to extend the boundary in this location, the boundary will not be extended at this point to enclose the extended use or new use as this could involve the creation of developable land without sufficient justification or the recognition of development without planning permission. The Council will reserve the right in these circumstances to take enforcement action if it deems it appropriate.

5. Green Belt

It is also important to clarify the relationship of any settlement boundary to the Green Belt boundaries which will also form a part of the Core Strategy and Housing and Economic Development DPD. It is important to be clear which of the area's defined settlements relate to the Green Belt and the exact status of Green Belts within the Core Strategy.

Of the Principal Settlements of Clitheroe, Longridge and Whalley only Whalley has a settlement boundary that partly adjoins the Green Belt.

Of the Tier 1 Defined Settlements only Barrow, Chatburn and Gisburn do **not** have significant parts of their current settlement boundary adjoining Green Belt. The stated position in the Core Strategy (see Key Statement EN1) is that the Authority does not propose to amend its Green Belt boundaries in relation to "exceptional substantial strategic changes". The supporting text of the Statement goes on to state that, "Some minor changes will be considered where appropriate to rationalise the existing Green Belt boundaries in response to the findings of the evidence base."

Given the above and that Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) sites have been excluded on the basis of their position within the Green Belt it is suggested that those specific parts of current settlement boundaries that adjoin Green Belt will not be extended into the Green Belt and are therefore likely to remain very similar to their current extent. This may also have implications for any future adjustments to the parts of settlement boundaries that do not adjoin Green Belt and issues such as future allocations.

None on the Tier 2 settlements have a boundary adjoining Green Belt.

6. AONB

A large part of the Borough's area is covered by the Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and its relationship to and bearing on current

and future revisions to settlement boundaries are also important. The following Tier 2 settlements lie wholly within the AONB:

- Bolton by Bowland
- Chipping
- Downham
- Dunsop Bridge
- Holden
- Newton
- Sabden
- Sawley
- Slaidburn
- Tosside

Of the remainder the following are significantly affected by it:

- Grindleton – nearly all (90%) lies within the AONB, only the southern boundary adjoins open countryside.
- Hurst Green - nearly all settlement within AONB
- Pendleton – eastern most part (c 20% of total) of settlement lies in AONB
- Waddington – northern and north-western part of settlement inside AONB
- West Bradford - roughly northern third of settlement lies in AONB

Also the north – western extremity of Tier 1 Gisburn’s settlement boundary adjoins the AONB.

Core Strategy Key Statement EN2- Landscape does not preclude development within the AONB, though it emphasises that the protection, conservation and enhancement of the AONB are the primary objectives. Therefore it is possible to consider the expansion of the settlement boundaries of the above settlements if it is considered necessary and justified in terms of any effect on the AONB and within the levels of development considered appropriate in these settlements.

7. Other Potential Considerations

It should also be noted that a significant part of the current settlement boundary of Longridge, the Borough’s second largest Principal Settlement, abuts the Borough boundary with Preston City Council and this section will therefore remain in its current position.