

**Belford Parish Neighbourhood Plan:
Settlement Boundary Methodology and
Background Report**

November 2022

Revision History

Revision date	Details
June 2021	Preparation of first draft
July 2021	Preparation of second draft following site visit and collation of maps
August 2021	Preparation of third draft
September 2021	Draft Final
September 2021	Draft Final for approval by Parish Council
October 2022	Updated final version

Contents

1: Introduction	4
2: What is a settlement boundary?	5
3: Current planning policy context	6
4: Methodology for defining the settlement boundaries	7
The Northumberland Local Plan housing requirements for the Parish	
Recent Planning Decisions	
Local Features on the ground that provide recognisable boundaries	
5: Evidence for proposed settlement boundary for Belford	9
6: Proposed settlement boundary for Belford	12
Appendix A: Proposed settlement boundary and defined features	14
Appendix B: Sites with planning permission, as of 31 May 2021	16
Appendix C: Proposed settlement boundary, defined features and proposals with planning permission	19

1. Introduction

1.1 This background paper sets out a methodology for the definition of a settlement boundary in the emerging Belford Parish Neighbourhood Plan. The delineation of settlement boundaries is a recognised and well-used planning policy tool for the management of development and is considered by Belford Parish Council to be an appropriate mechanism to achieve some of the main elements of the vision and objectives of the Neighbourhood Plan. The Plan's vision is for Belford to be a thriving, economically diverse and attractive rural hub serving the needs of local residents, businesses and visitors, growing its role as a springboard to the Northumberland Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and the Northumberland National Park as well as wider rural destinations.

1.2 The objectives set out in the Plan are:

- To support the development of well-located, well-designed new housing in Belford to sustain a balanced and diverse population, and to ensure that we retain and enhance community facilities to support that population;
- To support our existing community facilities and to support the growth of more services and facilities in Belford. We will protect our special green spaces and recreational areas that are valued by the local community;
- To support the retention of a vibrant, attractive and enterprising retail centre in Belford, and support the wider local economy by supporting existing businesses to grow, and providing a positive environment for the creation of new businesses;
- To promote and encourage investment and improvement in active travel routes which enable walking and cycling within the village with links to the coast and hills; and to support investment in and improvement of important public transport connections which enable sustainable travel to other areas;
- To support the protection and sensitive management of the Belford Conservation Area to maintain its integrity; and to protect our most valued places through encouraging high-quality design in new development, and maintaining the integrity of our valued landscapes and green spaces.

2. What is a Settlement Boundary?

- 2.1 In simple terms, a 'settlement boundary' is a dividing line, or boundary between built-up areas (the settlement) and the land beyond built-up areas. Although a settlement boundary does not preclude all development beyond the boundary¹, it does give clarity as to where new development should be directed and where it is likely to be acceptable in planning terms.
- 2.2 The inclusion of land within a settlement boundary does not mean that all land within the boundary is automatically suitable for new development. There may be areas of land within the settlement boundary that are not suitable for development due to other constraints. This could include, for example, where land is protected as Local Green Space or other areas of special character such as the grounds of listed buildings or other areas that would have an impact on the setting of listed buildings.
- 2.3 Policies in the Neighbourhood Plan should define as clearly as possible what proposals are likely to be acceptable within the settlement boundary, and what proposals are likely to be acceptable in the countryside beyond the settlement boundary.
- 2.4 It is important to recognise that settlement boundaries should only be created through planning policies where they ensure adequate provision is made for land to accommodate the amount of housing needed in an area for a given period. They should not be used solely as a tool to prevent development in certain areas.
- 2.5 The task of establishing the minimum amount of new housing needed in an area is a matter for the Local Planning Authority. For Belford Parish, this is Northumberland County Council. Neighbourhood planning powers allow parish councils to plan for more housing than the minimum requirement should they wish to do that, subject to demonstrating such additional growth is reasonably necessary, can be delivered within the plan period and that it would be in general conformity with the strategic planning policies for the area.

¹ A number of exceptions are defined in the National Planning Policy Framework including 'rural exceptions' housing sites, some business and employment related activities and some tourist development in the countryside.

3. Current planning policy context

- 3.1 Neighbourhood plans must be in general conformity with the strategic policies in the development plan. In Northumberland, the development plan is the Northumberland Local Plan (adopted March 2022).
- 3.2 Policy STP 1 of the Northumberland Local Plan establishes the spatial strategy for managing development across Northumberland until 2036. This policy defines a settlement hierarchy and describes the principal functions of settlements within that hierarchy in relation to future growth. Belford village is classified as a 'Service Centre' through Policy STP 1(b). These are essentially second tier settlement which will accommodate employment, housing and services that maintain and strengthen the role of the settlement.
- 3.3 Policy STP1 defines settlement boundaries for all Main Towns, Service Centres and Service Villages (except in the Green Belt where inset boundaries are defined) unless local communities, through the neighbourhood planning process are defining boundaries. Belford Parish Council confirmed their intention to create a settlement boundary through a neighbourhood plan. Accordingly, the county Council have not included a settlement boundary for Belford in the Northumberland Local Plan.
- 3.4 Policy HOU 3 identifies a housing requirement of 120 additional dwellings during the plan period which runs from April 2016 through until 2036. The County Council considers that this requirement can be met through housing already completed during that period and from existing commitments. Accordingly, the County Council have not proposed any site allocations within Belford for additional housing development through the Local Plan.

4. Methodology for defining the settlement boundary

- 4.1 The Parish Council is keen to support sustainable development, which is managed appropriately in relation to the impact it may have on valued landscapes and on the character of the countryside in the Parish. For this reason, it is intended to introduce a settlement boundary for Belford through the Neighbourhood Plan as a locally distinctive development management planning policy. In addition, the Parish council supports proposals for self-build or custom-build dwellings in or immediately adjacent to hamlets, clusters of buildings or farm steadings across the Parish.
- 4.2 Specifically, the Parish Council considers the following benefits arise from establishing settlement boundaries through planning policies in the Neighbourhood Plan:
- They create certainty for the local community and for landowners and potential developers by defining clear lines on a policy map where it is easy to distinguish the 'settlement' from the 'countryside', thereby allowing consistent interpretation and use of relevant planning policies.
 - Locally, settlement boundaries are an understood and accepted planning tool for guiding and managing developments.
 - They offer a plan-led development management approach to future housing growth by supporting growth within settlements and generally only by exception in the countryside beyond.
 - They serve to recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside whilst allowing for development to meet any identified needs.
- 4.3 There is no single established methodology for defining a settlement boundary; however, the criteria used are generally similar from one local authority to another. The common factors that distinguish well defined and enduring settlement boundaries rely on two key characteristics being exhibited in the final policies:
- The settlement boundary drawn on a policies map follows well defined and easily distinguishable features on the ground in order to prevent any dispute in the implementation of appropriate policies covering development management within the settlement and development management within the countryside; and
 - The land available within the settlement boundary to accommodate housing development is at least sufficient to allow development to meet the housing needs for the area identified by the Local Planning Authority.

4.4 Provided those two key characteristics are respected, the following matters will be relevant in determining the lines along which a settlement boundary should be drawn:

- In circumstances where no additional development is required to meet the identified housing needs, and particularly in rural areas if less dense development patterns exist within identified settlements, it would be appropriate to consider how buildings close to but separate from the identifiable main settlement, such as farm steadings, should be treated. More specifically, it will be important to consider the implications of including any undeveloped land between such divorced buildings within the settlement boundary.
- The implications of including open land on the edge of a settlement within the settlement boundary will need to be considered. Including such land within a settlement boundary creates different planning policy presumptions than those normally applied to land in the countryside beyond settlement boundaries.
- When defining settlement boundaries, it will be important to bear in mind and seek to respect and give spatial expression to the Vision and Objectives of the Neighbourhood Plan. The definition of settlement boundaries must be consistent with the aims of the plan.

4.5 In considering where to draw the settlement boundary for Belford, the Parish Council has taken into account:

- i. the Northumberland Local Plan housing requirement for the Parish;
- ii. recent planning permissions, and whether these have been implemented since this gives greater certainty on meeting housing requirements; and
- iii. local features on the ground that provide recognisable boundaries.

These factors are discussed more fully in Section 5.

5. Evidence for the proposed settlement boundary for Belford

The Northumberland Local Plan housing requirements for the Parish

- 5.1 The County Council has advised the Parish Council that there is a minimum housing requirement of 120 dwellings over the 20 year Local Plan period from 2016 to 2036. Since 1 April 2016 (the commencement date for monitoring purposes for the Northumberland Local Plan), there have been 50 net additional dwellings completed in the Parish (table 1).

Table 1: Net additional dwellings in Belford Parish 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2021

Parish	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	Total
Belford	10	3	9	11	8	41
Middleton	0	0	0	0	0	0
Easington	4	1	0	3	1	9
TOTAL	14	4	9	14	8	50

- 5.2 Full details of these additional dwellings are set out in Appendix A.

Recent Planning Decisions

- 5.3 The table in Appendix B provides details of sites with planning permission in the Neighbourhood Area. It shows that permission exists for an additional 130 dwellings to be delivered on these sites. Nine of the sites are under construction – these sites would provide an additional 66 dwellings. This demonstrates a strong position within the Parish in regard to consistent housing delivery. The data demonstrates from completions and commitments that land has either been used or is available with permission to deliver **180 additional dwellings** during the plan period up to 2036.
- 5.4 The data demonstrates that there is more than an adequate supply of land for housing available to meet the housing requirement for the Parish identified by the Local Planning Authority. In fact, having regard to housing completion data and the current housing supply data, the supply of land through extant permissions significantly exceeds the requirement to deliver 120 dwellings.

- 5.5 The Parish Council recognises that the housing requirement identified by the County Council represents a minimum requirement for the plan period. However, having regard to a consistent local record on delivery, it can also be reasonably anticipated that additional supply will come forward during the plan period to add to existing commitments. It is therefore proposed that the Parish Council defines a relatively tight settlement boundary around Belford village.
- 5.6 This approach allows for windfall development on appropriate sites within the settlement consistent with strategic planning policy and the aims of the Neighbourhood Plan. In addition, policies in the Neighbourhood Plan will support the delivery of housing in the countryside by exception and through self-build and custom-build developments within the smaller settlements and on farm steadings across the Parish.
- 5.7 The Parish Council considers that this approach allows for a sufficient supply of new housing to more than meet the identified requirements.
- 5.8 Planning decisions on proposals on the edge of Belford settlement have been taken into account in defining the settlement boundary. The locational details of these proposals are shown in Appendix C. Having regard to the Parish Council's concerns about the proposed development at land south of Rogerson Road, for which planning permission was granted recently (ref. 19/01346/OUT), it is proposed that this site is not included within Belford village settlement boundary. The site has outline permission for 37 dwellings. That permission will remain in place until it is either implemented or it lapses. Should the permission lapse prior to implementation, and having regard to the current housing supply data, there would remain a supply of **143 additional dwellings**. This is comfortably in excess of the housing requirement for the Parish.

Local Features on the ground that provide recognisable boundaries

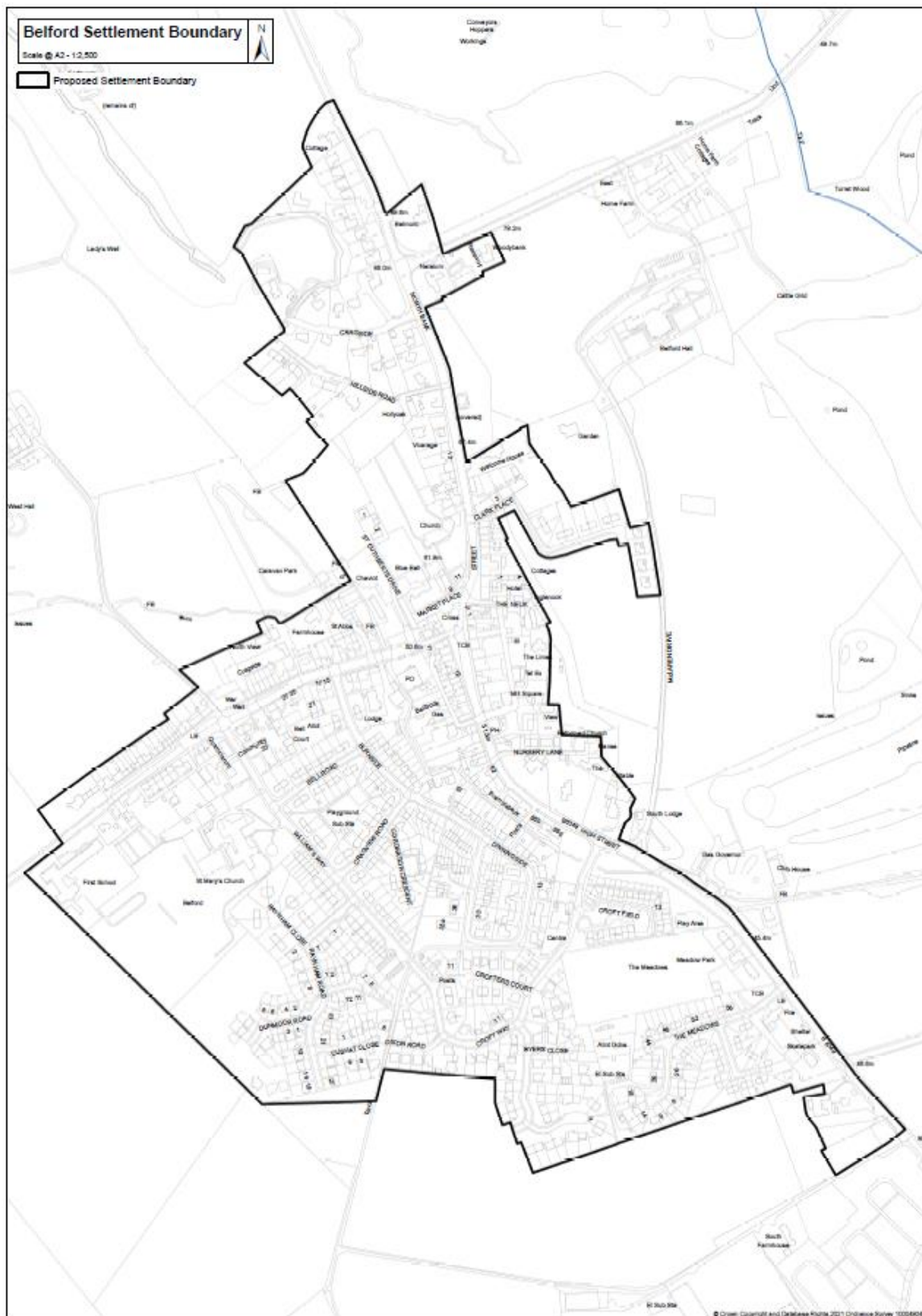
- 5.7 The proposed settlement boundaries have taken account of defined features such as walls, hedgerows, watercourses, garden curtilages and roads and footpaths.
- 5.8 The Parish Council has taken the decision to exclude development that is not well related to the village from the proposed settlement boundary for Belford. Typically, this includes isolated dwellings; agricultural buildings; farm steadings; and recreational or tourism facilities. However, policies in the Plan will support self-build and custom-build new dwellings in a wide range of locations across the Parish.

- 5.9 Inclusion of this site within the settlement boundary would most probably result in a modification to proposals on this site which extends to over 4.5 hectares, since inclusion of land within the settlement boundary would significantly alter its status in regard to development plan policy – it would be tantamount to a housing site allocation. Delivery of housing on the site at anything near normal densities, normally anticipated as 35 to 40 dwellings per hectare, would result in a very significant increase in housing supply in Belford which is not required at the current time. The Parish Council can review the position through any subsequent review of the Neighbourhood Plan. However, currently it is considered unnecessary and inappropriate to seek to accommodate additional housing on this site through policies in the Neighbourhood Plan. This approach is consistent with strategic planning policy.
- 5.10 Appendix C shows how the proposed settlement boundary follows defined features.

6. Proposed settlement boundary for Belford

- 6.1 The proposed settlement boundary for Belford is shown in Figure 1. In considering where to draw the settlement boundary, the Parish has carefully considered the methodology and data set out in this Report, and the vision and objectives for the Neighbourhood Plan. The Northumberland Local Plan sets out planning policies that establish the requirement for additional housing across Northumberland during the period from April 2016 until April 2036. It identifies minimum housing requirements for all designated neighbourhood areas. The requirement for Belford Neighbourhood Area is a minimum of 120 dwellings over the 20 year plan period.
- 6.2 An excess in supply of land for housing has been demonstrated through the available data on housing completions and commitments. There is currently no requirement to provide land for additional housing in the Parish before 2036. This is reflected in the Northumberland Local Plan which does not allocate any land for additional housing in the Parish. Accordingly, there is scope to draw a relatively tight settlement boundary around Belford, whilst allowing for windfall development on appropriate sites.
- 6.3 The settlement boundary includes land with planning permission for housing development that has been implemented and is drawn relatively tightly around the built-up edge of the village in order to ensure that development in the Parish is managed in a way that recognises the valued landscapes around Belford village. In addition, the proposed settlement boundary aligns with defined features. One extant planning permission for a major housing development is excluded from the settlement boundary for the reasons set out in this Report.

Figure 1: Proposed Settlement Boundary for Belford



Appendix A: Details of net additional dwellings in Belford Parish 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2021

COMPLETIONS 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2021				
Year	REF	Address	Description	Units
16/17	12/03757/FUL	Belford Development Trust, Bank House , 5 Market Place, Belford	Change of use from former redundant Bank building to create 3no self -contained residential units	3
	13/01692/FUL	Land South East Of Bricksheds, Belford Industrial Estate, Belford	Change of use from approved holiday home to convert existing redundant building into a four bedroom dwelling	1
	15/02045/REM	Land West Of 30 High Street, Belford	Outline Application for new two storey dwelling	1
	02/B/0455	South Garage, High Street, Belford	Erection of 4 no. two storey dwellings, following demolition of existing garage premises.	1
	12/03228/FUL	Land South East of Tollfield Farm South Road Belford	Erection of a dwelling.	1
	07/B/1058	Land to the south of Raynham Close, Belford	Erection of 92 dwellings, including 26 affordable dwellings for housing assoc.	3
	04/B/1017	Easington Farm, Easington, Belford	Conversion of agricultural buildings to create 8 no. dwellings	4
17/18	02/B/0455	South Garage, High Street, Belford	Erection of 4 no. two storey dwellings, following demolition of existing garage premises	1
	07/B/1058	Land to the south of Raynham Close, Belford	As above.	2
	15/03492/FUL	Land South Of Easington Farm Stead Easington	Proposed new barn conversion and extension	1
18/19	04/B/0896	Old Tennis Courts, Blue Bell Hotel, Belford,	Erection of 1 no. two storey and 1 no. one storey house with integral garages.	1
	07/B/1058	Land to the south of Raynham Close, Belford	As above.	8
19/20	06/B/0871	30 West Street, Belford	Conversion of hostel to 3 dwellings and erection of 2 dwellings + 1du re 07/B/0331	4
	15/00188/COU	Cheviot House 5 - 7 Burnside Belford	Retrospective - Change of use to residential	2

COMPLETIONS 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2021				
Year	REF	Address	Description	Units
	07/B/1058	Land to the south of Raynham Close, Belford	As above.	5
	18/01842/FUL	Mole End Garage Waren Mill Belford	Proposed change of use and external alteration to create one dwelling.	1
	18/00512/FUL	Land South Of The Shire Waren Mill	Erection of single storey dwelling with access and parking	1
	11/01446/FUL	Easington Farm, Easington, Belford	Erection of agricultural worker's dwelling	1
20/21	07/B/1058	Land to the south of Raynham Close, Belford	As above.	7
	18/01265/FUL	16 High Street Belford	COU from shop to 3-bed dwelling with amended frontage.	1
	20/03476/VARYCO	Site Of Stable Block Adjacent To B1342 At Waren Mill Belford	Removal of condition 9 (habitation period) on application N/03/B/0966 to allow living in property	1
				50



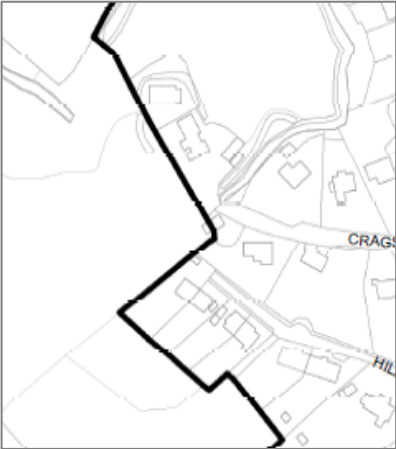
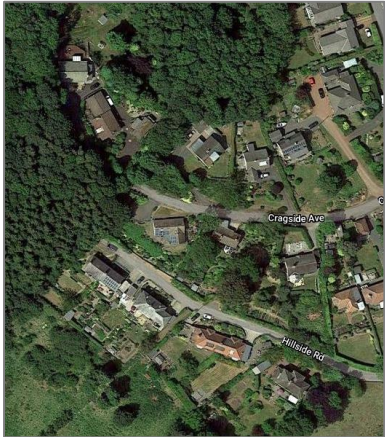
Appendix B: Sites with planning permission, as of 31 May 2021

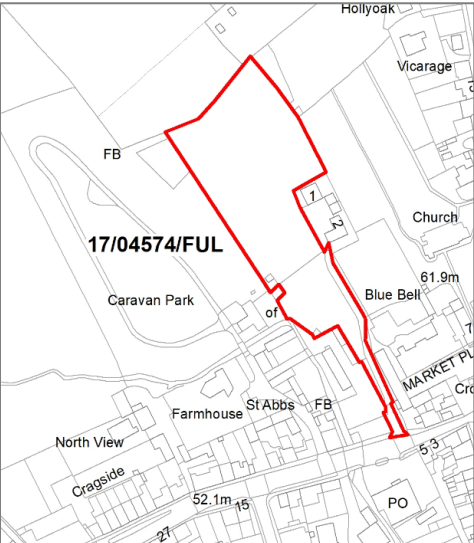
Application ref	Site	Under construction?	Dwellings completed	Residual	Site capacity	Comments
19/01346/OUT	Land South Of Rogerson Road Belford	No	0	37	37	<i>Only permitted in May 2021. Some reserved matters so site unlikely to commence for some time.</i>
11/01381/FUL	Cresswell Farms, Newlands Farm, Belford	Yes	0	12	12	<i>Site technically commenced with drainage works, but no known recent progress on the conversion scheme.</i>
07/B/1058	Land to the South of Raynham Close, Belford, NE61 6JN	Yes	58	33	91	
04/B/0547 04/B/0730 10/B/0133 13/00523/CLPROP	'Spindlestone Farm, Belford NE70 7ED	Yes	0	10	10	<i>Site technically commenced, confirmed with a certificate of lawfulness application approved in 2013 (13/00523/CLPROP), so will not lapse, but no known further progress suggesting uncertainty of delivery within the next 5 years.</i>
N/09/B/0449 N/01/B/0588	Spindlestone Mill, Spindlestone, Bamburgh, NE70 7ED	Yes	0	5	5	<i>All 5 units were commenced in 2010/11, so permission will not lapse, but no evidence of recent progress, so currently considered unlikely the scheme will be completed in the next 5 years.</i>
N/04/B/0896	Tennis Court, Blue Bell Hotel, Market Place, Belford	Yes	1	1	2	<i>Site visit 17.9.21 confirms one house is completed and another is close to completion.</i>
15/00932/FUL	Land To Rear Of 8 The Meadows Belford	Yes	0	1	1	<i>20/02106/SN Addressing of new dwelling (20.11.2020 – Rowan Lodge, NE70 7DP) – registered as 'not yet built'</i>

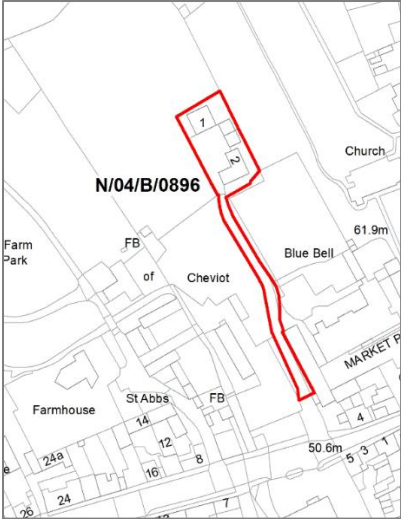
Application ref	Site	Under construction?	Dwellings completed	Residual	Site capacity	Comments
18/01100/OUT	Land South Of 15 West Street Burnside Belford	Yes	0	1	1	No REM attached to this application.
17/00903/FUL	Land North East Of Waren Lea Hall Waren Mill	Yes	0	2	2	Evidence submitted (20 June 2019) that work has begun. 19 photos submitted in evidence.
20/01108/FUL	Land North And North East Of Home Farm Cottages Middleton	Yes	0	1	1	Condition 5 (Demolition / Construction Method Statement) discharged on 14 th April 2021. Pre-commencement condition (Contaminated Land) approved under 21/00431/VARYCO.
17/04574/FUL 20/02945/VARYCO	Land Rear Of Blue Bell Hotel, West Street, Belford	No	0	7	7	VARYCO permitted in Dec 2020 reduces the overall scheme to 7 dwellings. No discharge of pre-commencement conditions.
N/10/B/0442	2A, Williams Way (Land to the rear of), Belford	No	0	2	2	Permission does not appear to be implemented. No discharge of pre-commencement conditions. (Not stated as lapsed)
15/03579/FUL	Seafields, 7 Cragside Avenue Belford	No	0	1	1	Pre-commencement conditions not discharged.
16/04690/FUL	Middle Mousen Belford	No	0	8	8	Pre-development conditions discharged on 17 June 2021 relating to construction method statement and surface water scheme (21/00239/DISCON) N.B. Bat condition not discharged.
17/04530/FUL	Belford Community Club, West Street, Belford	No	0	1	1	20/03156/FUL Belford Community Club – Demolition of redundant community club and construction of 6 residential units – PCO, JB
19/02222/FUL	Land South West Of Gibsons Cottage Highstreet Belford	No	0	2	2	No pre-commencement conditions discharged.

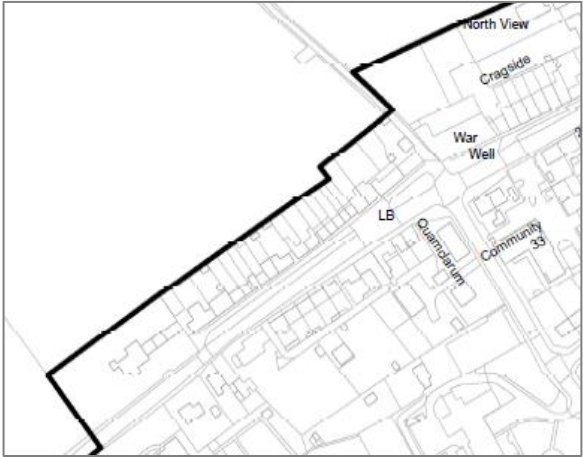

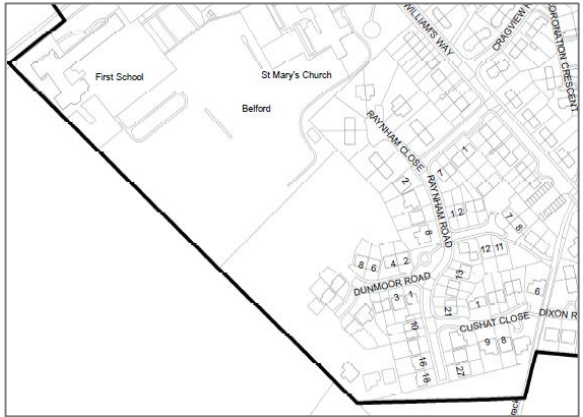

Application ref	Site	Under construction?	Dwellings completed	Residual	Site capacity	Comments
19/03463/AGTRES	Former Agricultural Buildings Middle Mousen Belford NE70 7HN	No	0	2	2	Prior Approval Required and Granted.
20/01797/AGTRES	Agricultural Buildings West Of South Meadows Farm South Road	No	0	2	2	<i>AGTRES = Prior approval agricultural to residential.</i>
20/01175/FUL	Home Farm Cottages (Land East Of), Crag Mill Road, Belford	No	0	1	1	
18/00137/FUL	Kettleburn Farm U34 Road Detchant Lodge To Greymare Farm Detchant	No	0	1	1	<i>Restricted occupancy dwelling (agricultural dwelling). Condition 5 (construction method statement) not yet discharged.</i>
19/04240/FUL	Land North And North East Of Home Farm Cottages Middleton	No	0	1	1	<i>Convert stable block to dwelling. Pre-commencement Condition 5 (Highways) discharged 14 April 2021. Pre-commencement condition 7 (potentially contaminated land) has been discharged (21/00431/VARYCO)</i>
20/02107/FUL	Mill House, Middleton	No	0	-1	-1	<i>Proposed alterations to 2 flats to create 1 dwelling house. (20/03291/VARYCO granted permission 22 October 2020 to alter window design). One to check</i>
				130		




Appendix C: Proposed settlement boundary, defined features and proposals with planning permission

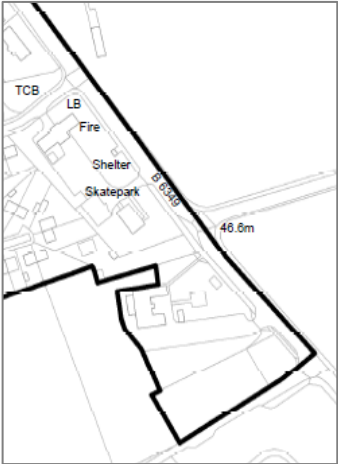
Settlement boundary map	Settlement boundary aerial photo (and site outline if relevant)	Description
		<p>At the northern end of Belford village, the proposed settlement boundary follows the curtilage of residential properties and field boundaries, as well as the eastern edge of the road at North Bank, which continues south into the village.</p>
		<p>The western edge of the settlement boundary continues south, following the line of residential curtilage on Cragside Avenue and Hillside Road.</p>

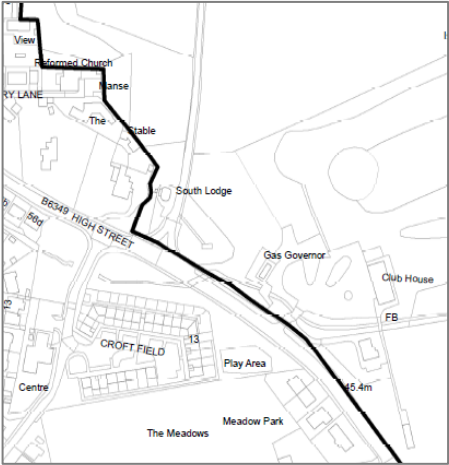

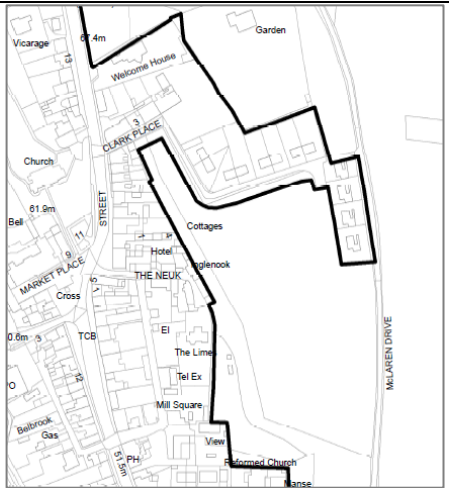

Settlement boundary map	Settlement boundary aerial photo (and site outline if relevant)	Description
	 	<p>Continuing south along the western edge of the settlement, the proposed settlement boundary continues to follow residential curtilage and field boundaries.</p> <p>It includes the permitted sites Land Rear Of Blue Bell Hotel, West Street, Belford (17/04574/FUL) and Tennis Court, Blue Bell Hotel, Market Place, Belford (N/04/B/0896).</p>

Settlement boundary map	Settlement boundary aerial photo (and site outline if relevant)	Description
		

Settlement boundary map	Settlement boundary aerial photo (and site outline if relevant)	Description
		<p>The proposed settlement boundary follows the rear of the curtilage of properties to the north of the B6349 (West Street)</p>
		<p>To the south of the B6349 (West Street), the proposed settlement boundary follows the boundary to Belford primary school and joins up to the development boundary around the recent residential development to the west of Belford south of Raynham Close (application ref N/07/B/1058).</p>

Settlement boundary map	Settlement boundary aerial photo (and site outline if relevant)	Description
		
		<p>To the south of the built up area of Belford village (to the west of South Road), the proposed settlement boundary closely follows the line of residential curtilage and field boundaries.</p>
		<p>At the southern end of Belford village, the proposed settlement boundary follows the boundary of the Sunnyhills Farm Shop and then heads back north along the eastern edge of South Road.</p>

Settlement boundary map	Settlement boundary aerial photo (and site outline if relevant)	Description
	 	<p>It includes the permitted site Land To Rear Of 8 The Meadows (15/00932/FUL).</p>

Settlement boundary map	Settlement boundary aerial photo (and site outline if relevant)	Description
		<p>The proposed eastern side of the settlement boundary follows the eastern edge of South Road, and then turns north to include residential properties and their curtilages</p>
		<p>The proposed settlement boundary follows the boundary of land at Belford Hall, a Registered Park and Garden but includes residential properties at McLaren Terrace.</p>

Settlement boundary map	Settlement boundary aerial photo (and site outline if relevant)	Description
		<p>The north-eastern edge of the proposed settlement boundary again follows residential curtilage as well as the eastern edge of North Bank.</p>