

Hauxley Neighbourhood Plan

Settlement Boundary Background Paper

June 2023

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this paper is to explain the process which led to the proposed designation of a settlement boundary around Low and High Hauxley villages in the Hauxley Neighbourhood Plan.
- 1.2 As part of the consultation on the pre-submission draft neighbourhood plan, the parish council invited comments on the proposed settlement boundaries. Comments supported the proposed settlement boundaries.

2. Background

Settlement boundaries

- 2.1 A settlement boundary is a line that is drawn on a plan around a village, which reflects its built form. It is used as a policy tool reflecting the area where a set of plan policies are to be applied. In general, there is a presumption in favour of development within the settlement boundary. Any land and buildings outside of the boundary line are usually considered to be open countryside, where development would be managed with stricter planning policies. Any land which has been included within the boundary line does not have a guarantee of approval of planning permission, as there will be other planning policies which development should accord with.
- 2.2 Settlement boundaries have several advantages, they seek to:
 - Ensure development is directed to more sustainable locations, both in terms of accessibility to and support of existing services and transport;
 - Protect the countryside from encroachment of land uses more characteristic of built-up areas, which can help conserve and enhance cultural heritage and natural beauty, including landscape;
 - Provide an easy-to-understand tool that gives certainty for landowners, developers and the community over where development is likely to be acceptable and where it is not;
 - Direct development to specific parts of the area. This can help increase the viability of local services, as well as encourage new ones to establish;
 - Ensure a plan-led and more managed approach to future development, providing a firm basis for protecting the countryside from unnecessary encroachment;
 - Support the presumption in favour of sustainable development of sites that are too small to be identified as formal allocations;
 - Make it easier for local residents to obtain planning permission for domestic outbuildings within a settlement boundary than outside;
 - Provide a guide for appropriate locations for rural exception sites to deliver affordable housing for local needs (in locations adjoining and outside of the settlement boundary); and
 - Ensure a co-ordinated and consistent approach.
- 2.3 There can also be some disadvantages of settlement boundaries:
 - By restricting development, settlement boundaries can artificially increase land values within the settlement compared with land outside, as the likelihood of successfully gaining planning permission differs;
 - Artificially increase land values on land adjoining the settlement boundary due to future 'hope value', with landowners seeking the possibility of the boundary being realigned at some point in the future to accommodate growth of the settlement. This could mean

fewer rural exception sites coming forward, as the landowner may wish to take a longer-term view;

- The general presumption that development within settlement boundaries is acceptable can result in pressure for the development of unsuitable land, such as valued open spaces within settlement boundaries. Although, this can be overcome by ensuring that any open space valued by the community is protected through formal designation;
- The use of settlement boundaries can lead to the perception that they result in denser development in already well-developed settlements e.g. within private gardens; and
- Settlement boundaries can be crude and inflexible. For small rural communities with a character of dispersed development, it can be difficult to draw a logical boundary around a village.

The Development Plan

- 2.4 The development plan for Hauxley Parish comprises the Northumberland Local Plan (NLP) which was adopted by Northumberland County Council (NCC) in March 2022. The NLP defines settlement boundaries for all main towns, service centres and service villages, unless these are being considered through the neighbourhood planning process.
- 2.5 NLP Policy STP1 defines Low and High Hauxley as small villages, therefore settlement boundaries are not identified. Policy STP1 states that development within small villages should
- Be commensurate with the size of the settlement;
 - Reflect the role and function of the settlement;
 - Not adversely impact upon the character and appearance of the settlement; and
 - Not adversely impact upon the setting of the settlement or the surrounding countryside.

Feedback from early engagement

- 2.6 Feedback from the early engagement on the draft plan which took place during January 2019 and again between September to October 2020, highlighted concern from the local community regarding the loss of the important separation with Amble. There was no suggestion within the feedback that there was a need for additional housing development within the parish. As a result, it was agreed that the neighbourhood plan would include settlement boundaries for both High and Low Hauxley and these would be tightly drawn to manage the location of new development. This approach was supported in the pre-submission draft plan.

3. Settlement Boundary Methodology

- 3.1 As explained in section 1, the concept of settlement boundaries is to identify a policy line which separates built-up areas (within which development is, in principle, acceptable), from the countryside (within which, with limited exceptions, development is not acceptable).
- 3.2 There is a presumption in favour of development if land is within a settlement boundary and therefore land should only be included within the boundary if that is where development is considered acceptable in principle, subject to compliance with other policies. There is a judgement to be made as to whether other development or areas adjacent to, but outside the current settlement relates more to the built environment than to the surrounding countryside.
- 3.3 There is no definitive methodology to establish settlement boundaries and different approaches have been taken by local planning authorities and neighbourhood plan groups across the country. The settlement boundary methodology for the Hauxley Neighbourhood Plan, was

informed by a review of several different approaches and has been prepared in the context of the local plan and feedback from the local community that there was no need for further housing development in the parish. It followed a five-stage process which is described below.

Stage 1 – Desktop review:

- 3.4 Review of existing evidence documents, including:
- Northumberland Local Plan Policies Map;
 - Northumberland Landscape Character Assessment (2010);
 - Northumberland Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (2022);
 - Review of current planning applications/ permissions;
 - Hauxley Design Code (2022); and
 - Aerial mapping (Google Earth).

Stage 2 – Identification of a draft boundary and on-site review:

- 3.5 Following the desktop review, an initial draft boundary was identified which was then viewed on site. To establish robust settlement boundaries for Low and High Hauxley the following principles were applied:
- Where practical, the boundary should follow clearly defined physical features, such as walls, fences, hedgerows, roads and water courses;
 - Areas to be included are:
 - Built development that visually forms part of the settlement;
 - Those with extant planning permissions for built development which is physically and functionally related to the settlement;
 - Agricultural buildings if they are well related in terms of scale and positioning to the rest of the settlement;
 - Community facilities where they are within the built-up area;
 - Areas to be excluded are:
 - Curtilages of properties which have the capacity to extend the built form of the settlement - including large residential gardens;
 - Recreational or amenity space at the edge of settlements which primarily relate to the countryside;
 - Allotments, unless within the built-up area;
 - Isolated buildings, not well related to the settlement;
 - Designated wildlife sites, unless within the built-up area;
 - Woodlands, orchards and other community green spaces, including cemeteries and churchyards, unless within the built-up area;
 - Car parks on the edge of settlements;
 - Community facilities clearly outside the settlement e.g. pubs/ hotels.

Stage 3 – Engagement:

- 3.6 Public feedback on the draft boundaries as part of early engagement and then the consultation on the pre-submission draft plan.

Stage 4 – Review:

- 3.7 Review of comments received and amendment where necessary.

Stage 5 – Submission/ adoption:

- 3.8 Inclusion of proposed settlement boundaries within submission draft plan, if endorsed through examination and referendum, will be adopted as part of the neighbourhood plan.

4. Desktop review – key findings

- 4.1 A number of key considerations were identified as part of the desktop review, these are set out below.

Northumberland Landscape Character Assessment (2010)

- 4.2 The Northumberland Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) describes the essential landscape characteristics of the county. The plan area lies within the South East Northumberland Coastal Plain national character area and falls within two local landscape character areas: 39a Coastal Coalfields and 40a Druridge Bay (see figure 1).

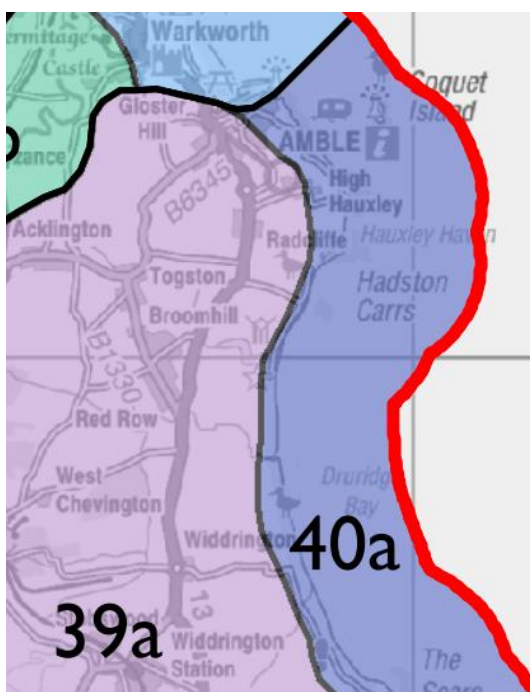


Figure 1: Landscape character areas

- 4.3 Landscape character area 39a (coastal coalfields) is describes as relatively flat coastal plain which has been heavily modified by mining and industrial activity. That restoration has generally resulted in oversimplified geometric landscapes of pasture and conifer blacks, which lack distinctive features. There are however pockets of unaltered rural character, including fragments of ancient woodland and many of the older village centres.
- 4.4 Landscape character area 40a Druridge Bay is describes as an attractive, almost unbroken stretch of sandy beach and mature sand dunes, which is backed by a variety of landscapes, all of which owe their origins to the long history of mining and industrial activity in the area. Reference is made to the creation of accessible wildlife reserves on former derelict land including at Hauxley.
- 4.5 The LCA provides examples of forces for change, key qualities, guiding principles, land management guidelines and development guidelines for each landscape character type.

Development outside of villages are identified as a risk to landscape character and that the principal aim of landscape planning policies should be to arrest the erosion of character.

Northumberland Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (2022)

4.6 The Northumberland SHLAA contains five sites within the parish (see figure 2).

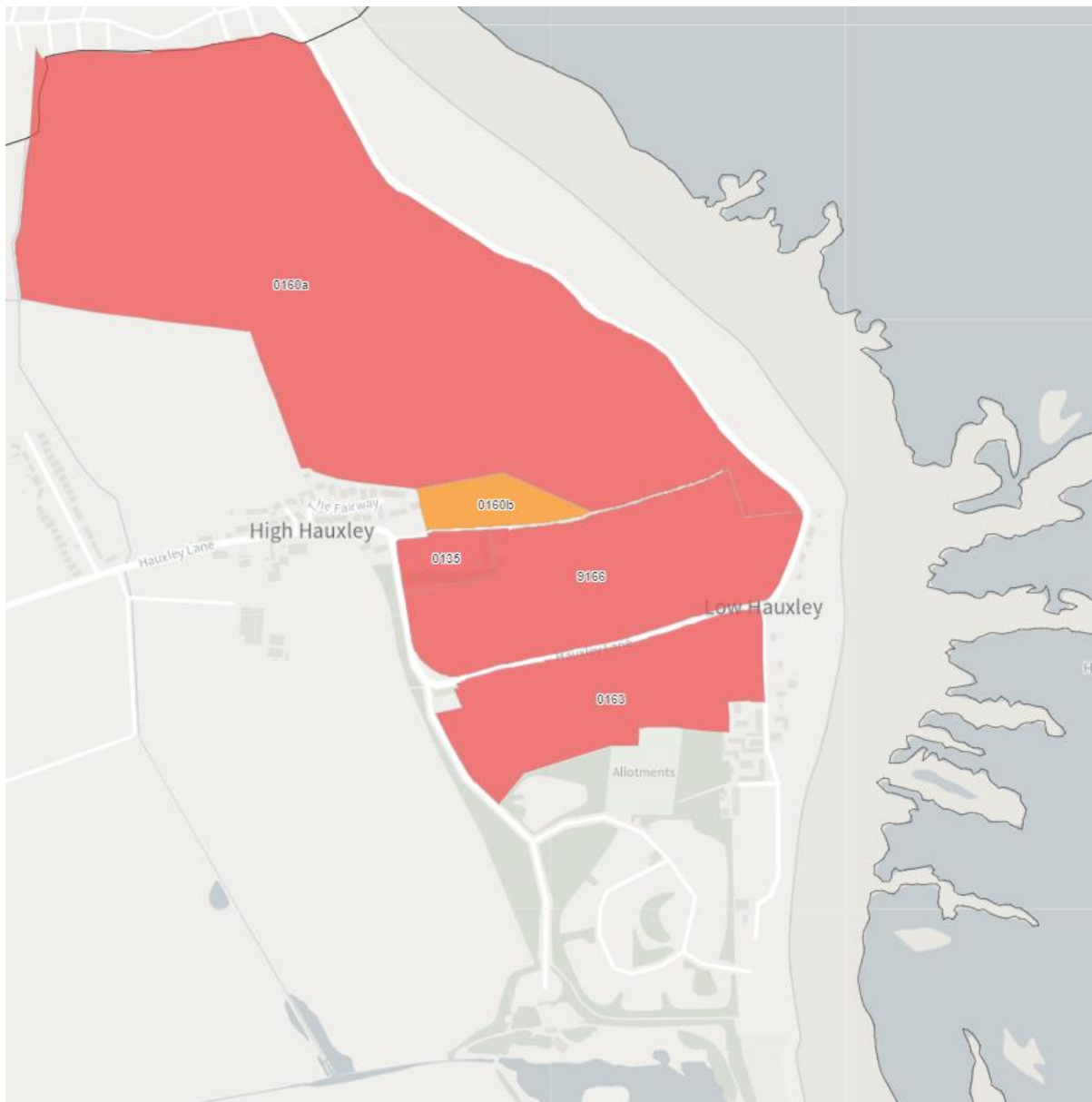


Figure 2: Extract from SHLAA map

4.7 Sites 0160a, 0135, 9166 and 0163 have been discounted by NCC primarily as a result of their size and relationship with international designations on the coast. Site 0160b has been identified as suitable, achievable and deliverable, within a 11-15 year timeframe. The SHLAA assessment states that the site is not compliant with the local plan and does not contribute to the housing requirement, however, it potentially offers a longer-term and/ or post plan contingency. Site 0135 has planning permission, granted on appeal, for a caravan park.

Hauxley Design Code (2022)

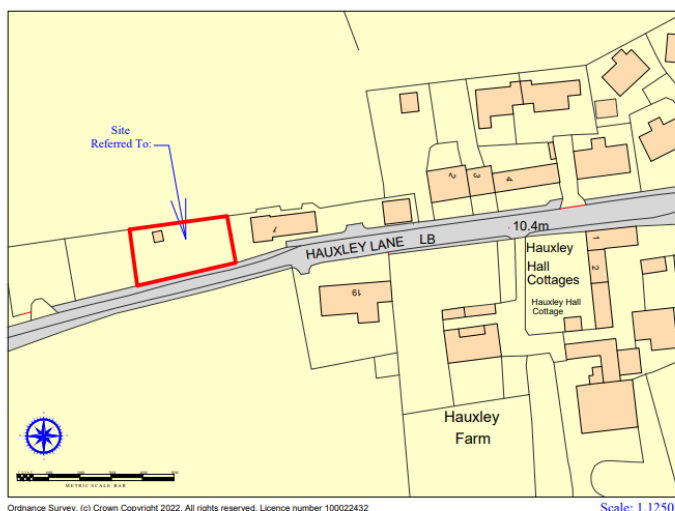
- 4.8 As part of the government’s support programme for neighbourhood planning, the parish council commissioned AECOM to prepare a design guide to inform the work on the plan. The design code highlights that the landscape surrounding the settlements is sensitive to change and should be protected wherever possible. The areas of landscape between Amble, High Hauxley and Low Hauxley were identified within the design code as ‘green gaps’ (see figure 3). The document explains that any development proposed in the green gaps separating the settlements should clearly form part of the existing settlement that it will be associated with.



Figure 3: Green gaps

Current planning applications/ permissions

- 4.9 There are no extant planning permissions for new dwellings within the parish. When the initial draft of the background paper was prepared there was a current application pending consideration for the construction of a dwelling on land west of 1 High Hauxley (22/03803/FUL) – see figure 4. There is no record of this application on the NCC Public Access System, therefore it is assumed that it has been withdrawn.



Location Plan

Figure 4: Site location plan for application 22/03803/FUL

5. Identification of a settlement boundary

- 5.1 The settlement boundary methodology was applied to High and Low Hauxley and engagement on draft boundaries took place during April and May 2022. The proposed settlement boundaries:

- Will manage development to ensure that it does not have a negative impact on the landscape setting of the villages, having regard to the sensitivity of the landscape and its capacity to accommodate new development;
- Establish a logical shape to the edges of the villages, again seeking to conserve and enhance the character of the area;
- Avoid irregular incursions into the open countryside; and
- Have been drawn along features which are easily identified on the ground.

High Hauxley

- 5.2 All early engagement feedback received on the proposed settlement boundary for High Hauxley was positive and supported the boundary. Following the early engagement results the steering group requested that further consideration was given to the inclusion of land to the west of Beacon Hill Farm, which has planning permission for the development of a caravan park with 30 touring pitches, five tent pitches, office/ coffee shop and toilet/ shower block (SHLAA site 0135).

- 5.3 The site was assessed as part of the initial application of the settlement boundary methodology and was excluded for the following reasons:
- It does not comprise built development that visually forms part of the settlement;

- Whilst it has extent planning permission for a caravan park, this is for a touring site, which would not be considered brownfield land;
- Although there are buildings on part of the site, it is considered that these are not well related in terms of scale and positioning to the rest of the settlement. For example, the barn lies approximately 120 metres from Hauxley Lane;
- The development of the site would extend the built form of the village into an area of countryside which has been identified as forming part of the green wedge in the design code;
- The site extends to almost 1ha, based on the SHLAA methodology of 15-20 dwellings per hectare, the potential yield of the site would be at least 15 dwellings. This would be considered a disproportionate addition to the village, conflicting with the requirements of local plan strategic policy STP1.

5.4 The proposed High Hauxley settlement boundary is illustrated in figure 5.

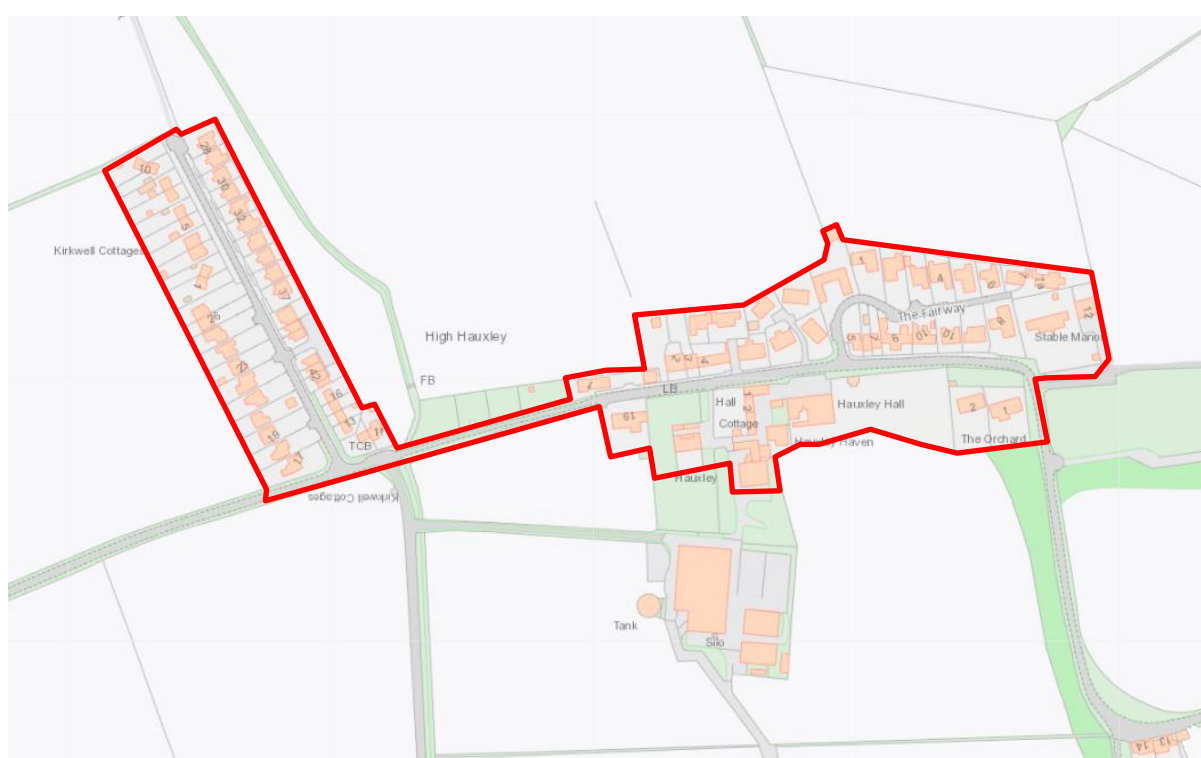


Figure 5: Proposed High Hauxley Settlement Boundary

Low Hauxley

5.5 Feedback on the early engagement for the Low Hauxley settlement boundary identified two issues, the first regarding the inclusion or exclusion of the properties on Hauxley Links and the second regarding a small part of the boundary adjacent to 13 Low Hauxley.

Hauxley Links:

5.6 The properties on Hauxley Links were proposed to be excluded from the Low Hauxley settlement boundary particularly because of a lack of clarity over their established planning use and because several have large grounds. There was concern that if the properties were included within the settlement boundary there was the risk that this could support the principle of additional dwellings either as a result of the demolition of properties or infilling. The Hauxley Design Code highlights the importance of the character of this part of the parish, which is very different to that of the rest of Low Hauxley.

- 5.7 Feedback from the consultation, particularly that from the Hauxley Links Association has illustrated that there are articles of association and a covenant limiting development on the green space surrounding the buildings. Furthermore, the council tax department at the county council has confirmed that all properties are all subject to council tax.
- 5.8 The draft Low Hauxley settlement boundary has therefore been extended to the north to include the properties on Hauxley Links (see figure 6). In order to preserve the character of this part of the plan area, the design policy within the neighbourhood plan will clearly highlight the importance of the spaces between the buildings.

13 Low Hauxley

- 5.9 Feedback from the consultation on the draft settlement boundary illustrated a discrepancy regarding the rear garden of 13 Low Hauxley. This has been amended for inclusion.

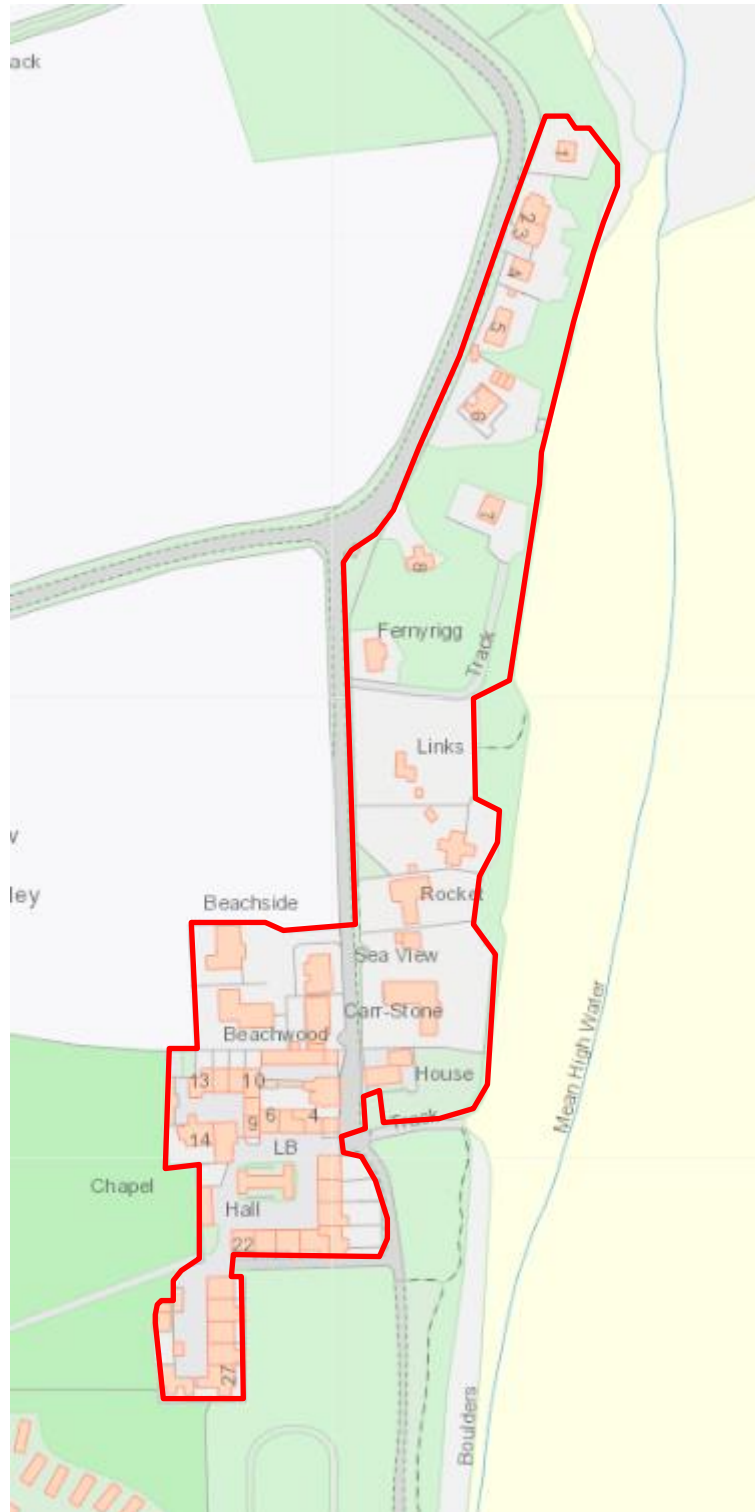


Figure 6: Proposed Low Hauxley Settlement Boundary