

# Settlement Boundary Methodology – Longframlington Neighbourhood Plan (Oct 2020)

## 1.0 Introduction

This background paper sets out a proposed methodology for the definition of a settlement boundary for Longframlington in the Neighbourhood Plan.

The delineation of settlement boundaries is considered to be the best mechanism to achieve some of the main elements of the vision and objectives of the neighbourhood plan, particularly those related to landscape protection and preserving the special character of the village.

The neighbourhood plan must plan positively for housing in the plan area. The housing requirement identified for the plan area by Northumberland County Council, over the proposed plan period up to 2036 (from a starting point of 2018) is 47. The Stage 1 Report produced in May 2020 for the Steering Group identifies that over 138 units have been permitted and/or developed within the Neighbourhood Area within the starting plan period. This is nearly three times the amount identified as required by the County Council. It therefore seems reasonable, if the Parish Council are so inclined, to draw the settlement boundary relatively tightly around the settlement, with the aim of protecting the countryside from further encroachment, as set out in the draft vision and objectives for the Longframlington Neighbourhood Plan.

## 2.0 What is a settlement boundary?

In simple terms, a 'settlement boundary' is a dividing line, or boundary between areas of built/urban development (the settlement) and non-urban or rural areas (often termed the 'open countryside'). Although a settlement boundary does not preclude all development beyond the boundary<sup>1</sup>, it does give clarity as to where new development is likely to be acceptable in planning terms within the Neighbourhood Area.

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 is not suitable for development due to other constraints, for example, where there is land protected as Local Green Space or where there are other reasons why development may be inappropriate.

The benefits of establishing settlement boundaries are as follows:

- Ensure development is directed to the most suitable locations in the village, both in terms of accessibility to and support of existing services and transport, and in terms of landscape and the historic environment.
- Preserve the rural setting and character of the village and the landscape and long reaching views around it.
- Provide greater certainty to communities, landowners and developers over where development could be acceptable in principle.

---

<sup>1</sup> A number of exceptions exist, including 'exceptions' housing sites as defined in the NPPF, some business and employment related activities and development in the countryside in accordance with relevant paragraphs in the NPPF.

## Settlement Boundary Methodology – Longframlington Neighbourhood Plan (Oct 2020)

- Support the plan led approach to development, giving a local context to the strategic intention of providing sufficient housing to meet the housing requirement identified for the parish (which has been met and exceeded).

### 3.0 Current Planning Context

The Longframlington Neighbourhood Plan will propose a general presumption in favour of sustainable development within the settlement boundary of the village. Planning decisions in the Neighbourhood Area are currently made using saved policies in the Alnwick LDF Core Strategy (October 2007) and the Alnwick District Wide Local Plan (April 1997). Northumberland County Council is in the process of preparing a County-wide Local Plan (currently at examination). It is expected that this plan, if it passes examination, will be adopted in 2021.

Longframlington is identified in the Alnwick LDF Core Strategy as being a sustainable settlement, capable of accommodating some development. It has a number of services and facilities, including a pub, a church, a shop, a village hall and a number of valued green spaces. Longframlington is identified in the Alnwick LDF Core Strategy as a 'sustainable village centre'.

The definition of a settlement boundary for Longframlington will be used to direct development to the most sustainable and appropriate locations in the Neighbourhood Area, whilst protecting the special character of landscape surrounding the village, some of which is defined as an Area of High Landscape Value (to the west) with views across to the Northumberland National Park.

The principle of development within the settlement boundary of Longframlington will be supported as part of the wider development strategy for the area, provided it complies with other relevant policies in the Development Plan and is of a scale and nature appropriate to the character and function of the settlement and is in accordance with the spatial strategy for the area. The settlement boundary policy will explain what development will be permitted outside the settlement boundary; these types of development will be in line with those set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (paragraph 79).

Hamlets and farmsteads located outside the settlement boundary (such as Embleton Steads, Low Hall and Framlington Villas) are considered to be part of the 'open countryside' in planning terms. These hamlets are therefore treated as part of the countryside and will not have their own settlement boundaries.

### 4.0 Methodology for defining settlement boundaries

#### 4.1 Background

There is no single established methodology for defining settlement boundaries, and different local planning authorities across the country have taken different approaches to drawing settlement boundaries. However, where a methodology has been used the criteria are generally similar from one local authority to another. These include questions such as whether to draw a boundary around clusters of buildings close to but separate from the main settlement; and whether particular uses should be included or excluded from the boundary, where they occur at the edge of a settlement. This report has drawn on existing methodologies and sought to establish a methodology considered to be most appropriate within the context of the sensitive landscape around Longframlington, and the local context.

## Settlement Boundary Methodology – Longframlington Neighbourhood Plan (Oct 2020)

The methodology does not determine whether a settlement will have a boundary or not. The decision to define settlement boundaries has been taken by the qualifying body, in consultation with the local community, in the production of the Longframlington Neighbourhood Plan, to give clarity and context to policies proposed.

Any methodology must be clear, easy to understand, and replicable. The methodology is similar to that used in the production of a number of other neighbourhood plans in the County which have recently passed examination.<sup>2</sup>

### 5.0 Existing evidence

There is a significant amount of evidence available to the neighbourhood plan Steering Group, and the desk-top element of defining settlement boundaries has drawn on a range of published studies and evidence base relating to landscape, townscape, land ownership and the historic and natural environments.

The following evidence has been used as background information to inform settlement boundaries, as well as the criteria put forward later in this paper. Each evidence base is identified below:

#### 5.1 Existing settlement boundary defined in the Development Plan

An extract is provided below. This can form a starting point for defining a settlement boundary. As that boundary was defined in 1997 it is now significantly out of date; it could however, be used as a starting point.

---

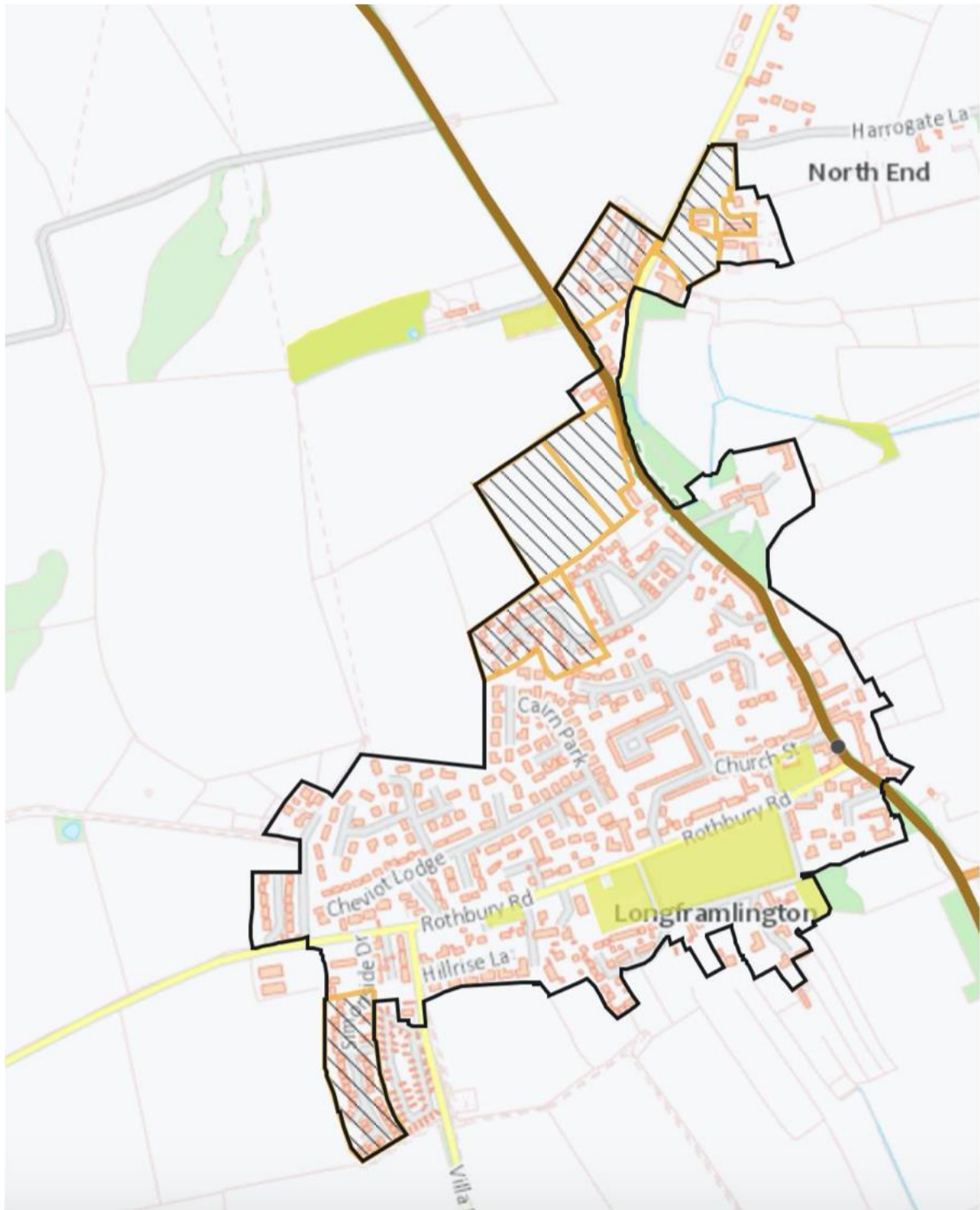
<sup>2</sup> 'Made' North Northumberland Coast Neighbourhood Plan (2018), Lesbury Parish Neighbourhood Plan (2020) (awaiting referendum) Embleton Parish Neighbourhood Plan (2020) (awaiting referendum) and others in development.



5.2 Proposed settlement boundary in emerging Northumberland Local Plan

Again, an extract is provided below. This boundary has been redrawn, and is in draft form at the present time, as the NLP is not yet part of the development plan. It provides a useful guide however and includes much of the land which has implemented planning permissions which should be included in the settlement boundary if the methodology in this document is followed. There may be fine-tuning required by the Parish Council, who will be more aware of specific boundary issues.

Settlement Boundary Methodology – Longframlington Neighbourhood Plan (Oct 2020)



## Settlement Boundary Methodology – Longframlington Neighbourhood Plan (Oct 2020)

### 5.3 Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment Data (Interactive Map)

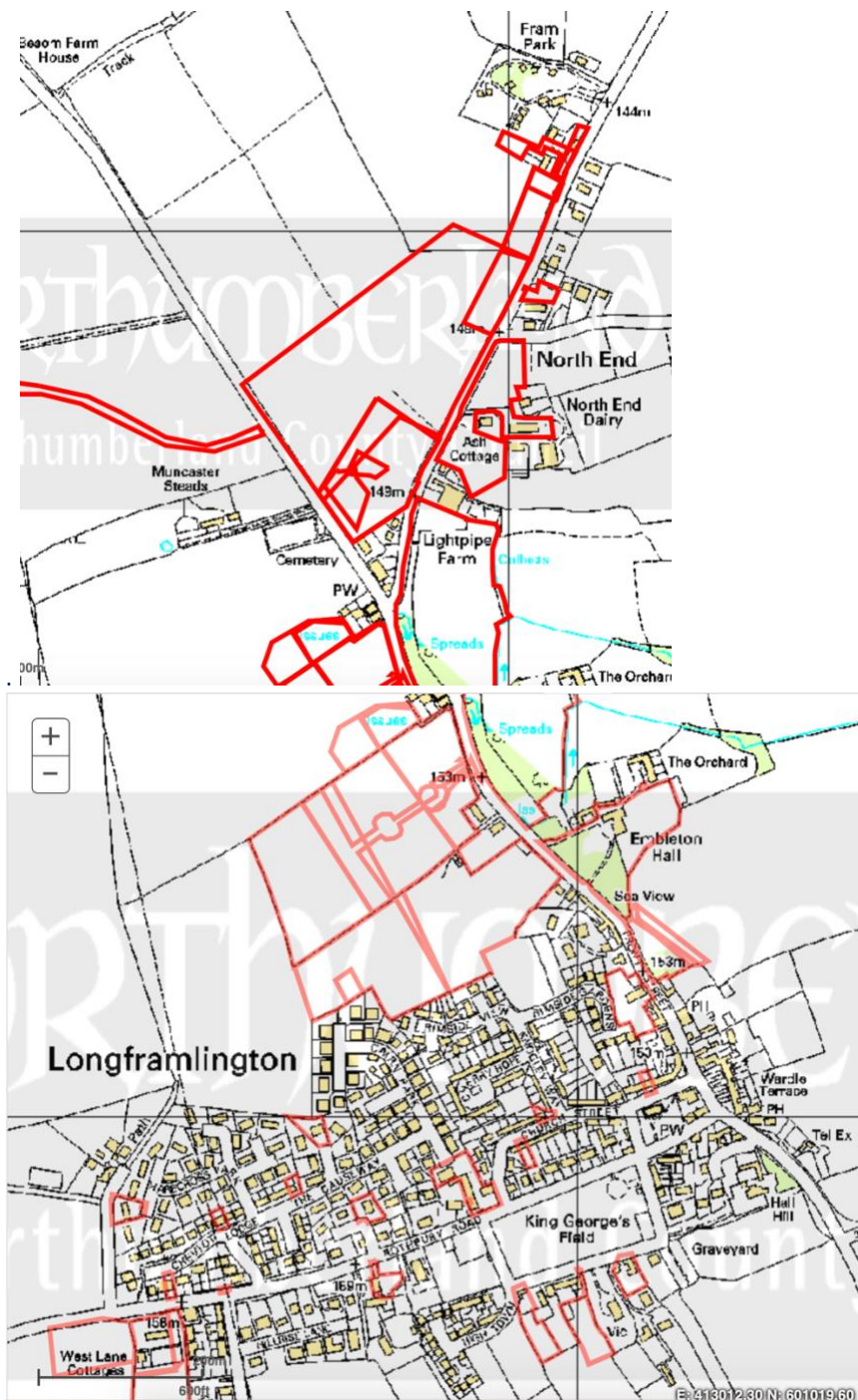
The map below contains the most SHLAA sites that have been submitted in Longframlington. The green sites are available and considered by the County Council (as part of a desktop exercise) to be potentially suitable for housing. A green site does not necessarily need to be included in the settlement boundary; similarly, a red site does not necessarily need to be excluded if the Parish have evidence that the site would be suitable and available.



# Settlement Boundary Methodology – Longframlington Neighbourhood Plan (Oct 2020)

## 5.4 Planning applications/approvals in Longframlington

The map below contains the current/recently (within the last 5 years) sites where planning applications have been submitted in Longframlington. This is derived from the County Council’s planning application register. Sites that have implemented planning permissions should be included (i.e. planning permissions that have ‘started’ and are therefore extant in perpetuity). Not all sites below will necessarily have planning permission, and this should be checked by the Parish Council as part of the exercise in defining the settlement boundary.



## Settlement Boundary Methodology – Longframlington Neighbourhood Plan (Oct 2020)

These maps show there has been/is significant pressure for development on the fringes of Longframlington, particularly to the north, resulting in a merge with North End, which also has a fair amount of pressure for development.

### 5.5 Northumberland Landscape Character Assessment (August 2010) (Land Use Consultants)

This document forms part of the evidence base for Northumberland County Council. It refers to Longframlington as an important medieval settlement and defines Longframlington as falling within Landscape Character Type 38 (Longframlington is specifically identified as Character Area 38a; lowland rolling farmland; an extract of the description is provided below):

#### ***Landscape Character Areas***

##### *38a Longframlington*

4.385. This character area occupies undulating, relatively high ground bordering the coastal plain between the Aln and Coquet valleys. Rectilinear field units are bounded by hedgerows originating from the parliamentary enclosures. Sizeable coniferous plantations can be found around Swarland and north of Shilbottle. Although the last colliery closed in the late 1990s, coal mining was formerly a significant presence in this landscape, with collieries at Shilbottle, Whittle and Longframlington. Although full restoration is yet to have been completed, there is little physical evidence of this industry now. Other former industrial activity included lime and tile manufacturing.

### 5.6 Local Features

Where possible, the settlement boundary should be drawn along defined features such as walls, hedgerows, watercourses, garden curtilages and existing development and roads/footpaths.

Site visits, aerial photographs and use of evidence base documents referred to above as well as criteria listed below will be essential to ensure a consistent approach.

### 5.7 Historic Environment

The historic environment record (HER), and detailed information about listed (and non-listed) buildings provides an idea of the local historic context in Longframlington; interesting features such as burgage plots (particularly along the southern boundary of Longframlington) and old medieval field/plot patterns may be of interest and, if on the edge of the settlement could be excluded depending on the level of interest (alongside other factors).

### 5.8 On the ground assessment

Where no specific recommendations arise from the above evidence base studies, the following principles have been applied to the inclusion or exclusion of specific uses from within the settlement boundary where they occur adjacent to an existing or proposed new settlement boundary. The reasoning for these principles is provided in the paragraphs that follow.



## Settlement Boundary Methodology – Longframlington Neighbourhood Plan (Oct 2020)

The table below describes what types of development will be included or excluded from settlement boundaries. It is important that a consistent and clearly replicable approach is used to define the settlement boundary.

Site by site basis	Include	Exclude
Agricultural fields or paddocks that are surrounded by development on all sides	Built development forming the main settlement	Isolated housing not well related visually and/or functionally to the settlement. Housing in large plots on the edge of settlements, but not well related to the built form, will be excluded.
Former farm buildings, converted to other uses adjacent to the settlement (account will be taken of defensible boundaries and the age of building - i.e. how established it is within the settlement)	Community facilities, allotments and playing fields where within, or on the edge of a settlement and clearly functionally related to the settlement	Community orchards, allotments, community recreational areas if not well related to the existing settlement
Caravan sites should be considered on a case by case basis depending on their geographic and functional proximity to the main settlement.	Community facilities e.g. schools, public houses where they are within the existing built environment	Designated wildlife sites  (unless within the built-up area)
Edge of settlement sites included in the SHLAA or put forward by local landowners;	Local Green Spaces (designated through the neighbourhood plan) within settlements	Woodlands, orchards and other community green spaces, including cemeteries and churchyards (unless within the built-up area)
Land with planning permission in outline form, or with planning permission agreed subject to S.106 agreements (i.e. not yet implemented).	Land with planning permissions that have 'commenced' within or well-related to the settlement	Agricultural units (farmyards and farm buildings) including agricultural workers' dwellings, horticultural nurseries, equestrian facilities where not well related to the settlement
		Community facilities clearly outside the settlement (i.e. pubs/hotels)
		Roads, tracks and public rights of way running along the boundary
		Historically sensitive sites, non-designated heritage assets and field patterns/plots that are of historic interest to the Longframlington (particularly in the south of the settlement) where they are outside or on the edge of the built up area

## Settlement Boundary Methodology – Longframlington Neighbourhood Plan (Oct 2020)

### 6.0 Explanation of exclusion/inclusion criteria:

Most of the table above is self-explanatory. However, some more detailed explanations of some of the areas is given below:

#### 6.1 Agricultural fields and paddocks

Where agricultural fields and paddocks, including those no longer in agricultural use, are entirely surrounded by a built-up area, they will be assessed on a case by case basis. If they contribute positively to the landscape and/or have biodiversity, historic and recreational value then it is likely that they will be designated as Local Green Space through the neighbourhood plan where they can be demonstrated as having particular importance to the local community they serve.

Where these sites have been submitted through the SHLAA process, they will be assessed on a case by case basis, depending on need for housing land, and location of the site in terms of sustainability, impact on landscape character and local context as well as suitability for housing.

#### 6.2 Agricultural buildings

Agricultural farmsteads are characteristically part of the countryside and provide the historical connection between settlements and their agricultural origins. These buildings can provide visual links to the rural context beyond. Therefore, where farmsteads are situated on the edge of the built form of settlements, they will be excluded if they are not well related to the settlement. Where farmsteads are clearly integral to the built up part of the settlement, they will be included within the settlement boundary.

#### 6.3 Other countryside development

Other developments that would be allowed in the countryside or have been allowed under countryside policies in the past are considered to relate more to the countryside than to the settlement and will therefore be excluded where they lie adjacent to the boundary. This category includes equestrian developments; housing for agricultural or forestry workers and tourism/employment sites, tourist accommodation (for example holiday lodges) as well as other development that is generally considered appropriate in the countryside.

#### 6.4 Community facilities

Extensive community facilities such as hard surfaced sports grounds (including pavilions) and car parks, where they have been built outside existing settlement boundaries will be excluded. More intensively built up community uses such as schools (and their playing fields) or public houses have been included in the boundary if they are already within the built up area or if they have been built adjacent to the built up area, and relate well to the settlement.

## Settlement Boundary Methodology – Longframlington Neighbourhood Plan (Oct 2020)

### 6.5 Caravan Sites

Caravan sites not within a settlement are excluded. Where they are on the edge of a settlement, or within a settlement, they will be considered on a case-by-case basis, depending on a number of factors; suitability for housing, landscape impact if housing were to be granted, etc.

### 6.6 Employment sites or other designated sites

Business/employment sites are included within the settlement boundary. Sites allocated for housing or other development in existing Local Plans are included in the settlement boundary. Sites where planning permission has been given for housing should be included in the settlement boundary even if it is not yet built.

### 6.7 Tracks and roads

Where settlement boundaries run along roads, tracks or public rights of way, they have been drawn along the edge closest to the settlement.

### 6.8 Hamlets and farmsteads

There are a number of hamlets and farmsteads in the parish. These are some distance from Longframlington and so will not be contained within the settlement boundary. None of these hamlets are of sufficient size to merit their own settlement boundary.

## 7.0 Conclusion

It is considered that this methodology presents as objective a method as feasible, for establishing a settlement boundary around Longframlington.

## 8.0 Next steps

- Methodology is approved/amended by Longframlington Parish Council
- Desk-top study and site visits where needed
- Proposed settlement boundaries are drawn, based on methodology contained in this paper and a written record produced. The settlement boundary is consulted on.
- Following consultation, proposed settlement boundaries are agreed/amended by Longframlington Parish Council and consulted on at Regulation 14 stage.