



Northumberland
County Council

Northumberland Local Plan
Draft Plan for Regulation 18 Consultation

Settlement Strategy Technical Paper

July 2018

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Policy STP 1 of the Northumberland Local Plan - Draft Plan for Regulation 18 Consultation sets out a spatial strategy to deliver sustainable development across Northumberland. Key elements of this strategy are a settlement hierarchy and the definition of settlement boundaries, defined on the policies map. This paper provides some background information regarding the spatial strategy to justify the approach taken.

2.0 Settlement Strategy

- 2.1 One of the ways in which the Local Plan can contribute to a more sustainable future for Northumberland is by providing a spatial guide to the location of development. The Local Plan focuses development within settlements where it will help to support the use of local infrastructure and facilities, support economic growth, whilst protecting the countryside and the character of settlements.
- 2.2 A hierarchy of settlements for development is proposed. This approach directs development to locations which benefit from facilities and / or have the greatest potential to support new facilities and services, as a result of their location and / or a result of the size of the population within them. Such an approach will allow for limited resources to be allocated in an effective way that maximises access to facilities and services. The approach taken gives priority to the Main Towns, Service Centres and Service Villages.

Settlement hierarchy

Main Towns

The Main Towns of Alnwick, Amble, Ashington, Bedlington/Bedlington Station, Berwick-upon-Tweed, Blyth, Cramlington, Haltwhistle, Hexham, Morpeth, Ponteland and Prudhoe will be the main focus for employment, housing, retail and services.

Service Centres

The Service Centres of Allendale, Belford, Bellingham, Corbridge, Guidepost/Stakeford, Haydon Bridge, Newbiggin-by-the-Sea, Rothbury, Seahouses/North Sunderland, Seaton Delaval and Wooler will accommodate employment, housing and services that maintains and strengthens their roles.

Service Villages

The Service Villages of Acomb, Barrasford, Bardon Mill/Henshaw/Redburn,

Broomhill/Togston, Chollerford/Humshaugh, Choppington, Ellington, Embleton, Felton, Gilsland, Hadston/South Broomhill/Red Row, Heddon-on-the-Wall, Longframlington, Longhorsley, Lowick, Lynemouth, New Hartley, Newbrough/Fourstones, Norham, Otterburn, Ovingham, Pegswood, Riding Mill/Broomhaugh, Scremerston, Seaton Sluice/Old Hartley, Seghill, Shilbottle, Stamfordham, Stannington, Stocksfield/Broomhaugh, Swarland, Wark on Tyne, Warkworth, West Woodburn, Widdrington Station, Wylam will support the rural economy, and help to sustain local services and facilities.

These villages have one or more key services (school or shop) and / or good access to services, and are of a scale that may support additional services for the benefit of residents and businesses. Development which is commensurate with the size and function of Service Villages will be supported.

2.3 The role of Main Towns, Service Centres and Service Villages varies across the county. In rural parts of Northumberland, a Service Village may provide key services for a wide area, while in more urban parts of the county, the catchment of Service Centres may be more modest.

2.4 Outside of the more urban south east of the county, the roles of different settlements is more easily recognised. While Service Villages may include a primary school or a shop, residents would use a nearby Service Centre or Main Town for higher level services. For some settlements there is an obvious choice of higher level centre, while for others, residents may draw upon more than one main town for services, education or work. In some instances, the lower level centre will have a strong relationship with one larger settlement. In others, they may look to two or more settlements for higher level services. A settlement's status is not reliant on one specific criterion, and may be influenced by its close proximity to other settlements.

3.0 Settlement boundaries

3.1 In order to enable the Local Plan to better control the location of development, settlement boundaries are proposed. While criteria based policies will also be used, it is considered that settlement boundaries will provide a higher degree of certainty to communities regarding future development. They will also help protect the countryside from ad hoc development and encroachment, prevent the merger of settlements, maintain the character and form of settlements, and protect historic and ecological assets and their settings.

- 3.2 A number of current adopted Local Plans¹, and ‘made’ Neighbourhood Plans² currently include settlement boundaries, which are used to inform planning decisions, and direct development to the most sustainable locations. However, some settlements, in parts of the county where there are no defined settlement boundaries, have seen a significant amount of development built and/or consented in recent years. These developments, while supporting local services, have in some cases, changed the character of settlements.

Where are settlement boundaries defined?

- 3.3 The Northumberland Local Plan defines settlement boundaries for all Main Towns, Service Centres and Service Villages, except where settlement boundaries have been defined, or are proposed to be defined, in neighbourhood plans and where settlement boundaries have been discounted through the neighbourhood planning process.
- 3.4 In addition, boundaries are defined for a number of other settlements not shown in the settlement hierarchy. Boundaries are defined to these settlements, principally to protect them from unnecessary development as a result of market pressure, and to maintain the separation of settlements.
- 3.5 Some settlements have experienced significant development in recent years and/or there are a significant number of units with planning permission in place to more than meet the likely needs of the settlement over the plan period. The Regulation 18 Local Plan policies map shows, for information only, where planning permissions for housing³ are in place, and where applications have been minded to approve by the Council’s Strategic Planning Committee. Additional sites which developers, landowners and their agents have put forward for consideration for housing are included in the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA). This information has helped identify where development pressure is, and informed where settlements boundaries may be appropriate to prevent an unnecessary, and undesirable level of growth. Such settlements are for the most part just beyond the Green Belt, along commuter corridors and in areas along the Northumberland coast where there is pressure from second homes. In some parts of the county there is a risk of settlements merging; predominantly in SE Northumberland. Settlement boundaries can reduce the risk of this occurring.

¹ The Castle Morpeth Local Plan (2003) and Wansbeck Local Plan (2007) include settlement boundaries. Policy DC1 of the Blyth Valley Development Control Policies DPD (2007) requires consideration of settlement boundaries defined on the Blyth Valley Local Plan Proposals Map (1999).

² The Morpeth Neighbourhood Plan, and the North Northumberland Coastal Area Neighbourhood Plan (at the time of writing this had passed referendum but had not formally been ‘made’) contain settlement boundaries.

³ Planning permissions for 5 or more dwellings.

- 3.6 In settlements where boundaries are currently defined in a Local Plan, these boundaries have been retained⁴. However the boundaries have been reviewed: to accommodate development needs for the plan period 2016-36 where necessary; taking into account recent developments and extant planning permissions (and minded to approve applications); and accounting for new allocations where they are considered appropriate. Other minor ‘corrections’ have been made to align boundaries with defined features.
- 3.7 In parts of the County where there are currently no settlement boundaries defined⁵, new boundaries have been drawn. New boundaries have been defined using the methodology set out later in this paper. Although settlement boundaries defined in the Alnwick District Local Plan (1997) were not saved, these have been used as the starting point for defining new boundaries in the former Alnwick area.
- 3.8 Where a neighbourhood plan defines a boundary, this boundary will remain as defined and a boundary is not defined in the Local Plan. Where a neighbourhood plan is being prepared, and settlement boundaries are proposed, the Council will work with the NP group to define the boundary. If through the neighbourhood planning process, it has been determined that a settlement boundary for a settlement is not appropriate, no settlement boundary will be included in the Local Plan. Clarification from neighbourhood plan groups has been sought to confirm whether NP groups choose to define boundaries or not.
- 3.9 For settlements without defined boundaries in the Local Plan, or in a neighbourhood plan, the countryside will be protected from encroachment by criteria based elements of Policy STP1.
- 3.10 Appendices 1 and 2 identify which Main Towns, Service Centres and Service Villages have settlement boundaries defined in the Local Plan, those which have boundaries defined in a neighbourhood plan (either ‘made’ or emerging), and those where neighbourhood planning groups have identified that settlement boundaries are inappropriate. Appendix 3 identifies settlements sitting outside of the hierarchy which have settlement boundaries defined in the Local Plan.

⁴ Except in settlements located within the newly defined Green Belt extension in the former Castle Morpeth area where settlement boundaries are replaced by Green Belt inset boundaries.

⁵ The former Alnwick, Berwick-upon-Tweed and Tynedale Local Authority Areas.

Green Belt Settlements

- 3.11 Where settlements are inset from the Green Belt no settlement boundaries are defined. This applies to some settlements in the former Blyth Valley, Castle Morpeth, Tynedale and Wansbeck areas. This means that current settlement boundaries within the defined Green Belt (e.g. Ponteland) will not be retained. However, existing Green Belt insets will be retained.
- 3.12 Within the newly defined Green Belt extension in the Castle Morpeth area, existing settlement boundaries will not be retained⁶ but will be replaced by Green Belt inset boundaries. The methodology for defining Green Belt inset boundaries is informed by work previously undertaken for the withdrawn Core Strategy and is detailed in a separate Green Belt Review Technical paper.

Methodology for defining new settlement boundaries for the Local Plan

- 3.13 The role of a settlement boundary is to define the built limits of a settlement and differentiate between what is considered the built form of a settlement where the principle of development is usually acceptable, and the countryside where, with limited exceptions, development is not acceptable. A settlement boundary is a planning designation only and has no other administrative relevance. Boundaries are defined to take into account the development needs of settlements over the plan period.
- 3.14 This section details how boundaries have been defined, what has been included within boundaries and what has been excluded. These principles have informed where boundaries are being defined to settlements where there is currently no boundary.

How have settlement boundaries be drawn?

- Boundaries have been defined tightly around the built form of settlements and where possible have followed defined features such as walls, fences, hedgerows, roads, and woodland,
- Boundaries have be defined in way that they are logical and easily identifiable, normally following property boundaries,
- While boundaries for settlements are usually continuous, there are instances where it has been considered appropriate, given the nature and form of a settlement, to define two or more separate elements.

⁶ Except where there are settlement boundaries defined in neighbourhood plans.

What has been included within settlement boundaries?

- The main built up area of the settlement,
- Existing commitments i.e. implemented permissions, and unimplemented planning permissions and minded to approve applications,
- Existing and planned allocations:
 - New allocations proposed in the Northumberland Local Plan,
 - Allocations in 'made' neighbourhood plans,
 - New allocations proposed in Neighbourhood Plans which are at an advanced stage of preparation⁷,
- The curtilages of buildings which are contained and closely relate to the character of the built form, and are separated from the open countryside,
- Other land uses which are well related to the settlement and partly enclosed by built development, including schools, open spaces, recreational facilities and allotments.

What has been considered countryside and not included within settlement boundaries?

- Open spaces, sports and recreational facilities which stand on the edge of the built form of settlements (existing or proposed),
- Isolated development which is physically or visually detached from the settlement,
- Sections of large curtilages of buildings (including gardens) which relate more to the character of the countryside than the built form,
- Agricultural farmsteads which stand on the edge of the built form of settlements, unless they are well related to the settlement,
- Camping and caravanning sites (including Gypsy, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople pitches) except where they are in year round permanent residential use, or where they are clearly related to, or partly enclosed by the existing built form.
- Agriculture, forestry, nurseries, garden centres, equestrian development, minerals extraction, landfill, water features, public utilities (sewage treatment plants, substations).

⁷ When a neighbourhood plan has been submitted to the Council.

Appendix 1: Main Towns and Service Centres

Settlement	Defined in emerging Northumberland Local Plan	Defined / to be defined in neighbourhood plan	Not defined
Main Towns			
Alnwick			✓
Amble	✓		
Ashington	✓**		
Bedlington/Bedlington Station	✓**		
Berwick-upon-Tweed			✓
Blyth	✓**		
Cramlington		✓*	
Haltwhistle	✓		
Hexham			✓*
Morpeth		✓*	
Ponteland			✓*
Prudhoe			✓*
Service Centres			
Allendale			✓
Belford		✓	
Bellingham	✓		
Corbridge			✓*
Guidepost/Stakeford	✓**		
Haydon Bridge	✓		
Newbiggin-by-the-Sea	✓**		
Rothbury	✓		
Seahouses/North Sunderland		✓	
Seaton Delaval			✓*
Wooler			✓
*Inset in the Green Belt.			
** Boundary currently defined in an extant Local Plan / Core Strategy.			

Appendix 2: Service Villages

Settlement	Defined in emerging Northumberland Local Plan	Defined / to be defined in neighbourhood plan	Not defined
Acomb			✓*
Barrasford	✓		
Bardon Mill/Henshaw/Redburn	✓		
Broomhill/Togston	✓**		
Chollerford/Humshaugh	✓		
Choppington	✓**		
Ellington	✓**		
Embleton		✓	
Felton	✓		
Gilsland	✓		
Hadston/South Broomhill/Red Row	✓**		
Heddon-on-the-Wall			✓*
Longframlington	✓		
Longhorsley		✓*	
Longhoughton	✓		
Lowick		✓	
Lynemouth	✓**		
New Hartley			✓*
Newbrough/Fourstones			✓*
Norham	✓		
Otterburn	✓		
Ovingham			✓*
Pegswood		✓*	
Riding Mill/Broomhaugh			✓*
Scremerston	✓		
Seaton Sluice/Old Hartley			✓*
Seghill			✓*
Shilbottle	✓		
Stamfordham	✓**		
Stannington			✓*
Stocksfield/Broomley			✓*

Swarland	✓		
Wark	✓		
Warkworth	✓		
West Woodburn	✓		
Widdrington Station	✓**		
Wylam			✓*
*Inset in the Green Belt.			
** Boundary currently defined in an extant Local Plan / Core Strategy.			

Appendix 3: Other settlements with defined boundaries in emerging Northumberland Local Plan

Settlement	Defined in current Local Plan or Core Strategy	Newly defined in Northumberland Local Plan
Acklington		✓
Alnmouth		✓
Bomarsund	✓	
Cambois	✓	
Capheaton	✓	
Cambo	✓	
Craster		✓
Cresswell	✓	
Dunstan		✓
East Sleekburn	✓	
Gunnerton		✓
Holy Island		✓
Ingoe	✓	
Kirkheaton	✓	
Linton	✓	
Matfen	✓	
North Blyth	✓	
Rennington		✓
Scot's Gap	✓	
Stobswood	✓	
Thropton		✓
West Thirston	✓	
Widdrington	✓	
Woodhorn	✓	



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